

DISCOURSE AND COLONIAL ENCOUNTER:
SITUATING ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S
SOUTH SEAS FICTION

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is of my own composition except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that it has never been submitted, in part or in whole, for any other degree.

Signed

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For My Parents

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ABSTRACT

The thesis begins with an inquiry into the literary romance and realism that formed the background of R. L. Stevenson's South Seas fiction, and the Orientalist discourse that has influenced contemporary criticism of colonial and post-colonial literature. Within this theoretical context, Stevenson's realistic and liberal representation of the late nineteenth century Pacific is seen as offering an alternative both to the romance of the exotic and to the archetypal modes specified in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. By looking into his correspondence, essays and travel writings during the period, I try to argue that over the last six and a half years of his life in the South Seas, Stevenson was emotionally torn between Scotland and Samoa, while rationally he was searching for the common ground of identity with the Polynesians, partly as a result of the paradoxical nature of his Scottish identity in relation to the British Empire. Two groups of the author's South Seas works are examined subsequently: his ballads and short stories that reflect Stevenson's fascination with Polynesian folklore and oral tradition, and his novels that are primarily ethnographic allegories of white men's tales. Central to both are the issues of race, language and faith. The thesis proposes that the colonial encounters in Stevenson's South Seas fiction show as much destructive impact upon Europeans as upon natives, and that the value of his fiction lies in his ability to transcend the boundary of nationality to achieve humanistic significance. The serious moral concerns which were not so obvious in his previous popular fiction reached their full development as he became associated with the colonial realities of the Pacific, and this represents the rich potential of his South Seas fiction that has until recently been neglected despite the revival of critical attention to Stevenson's major works.

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INTRODUCTION

Text within Context

Being a White Man was therefore an idea and a reality. It involved a reasoned position towards both the white and the non-white worlds.

----- Edward Said, *Orientalism*

1

Romance, Realism and Orientalism

In her introduction to *Island Landfalls: Reflections from the South Seas*, Jenni Calder concludes that ‘had Stevenson lived longer he might now be remembered more as a novelist of Britain’s nineteenth-century imperialist present than of Scotland’s contentious past’.¹ To me, Jenni Calder’s observation reveals two things about Stevenson. Firstly, Stevenson was distanced from the great Victorian literary tradition of realistic social analysis. He had been an ardent advocate of romance against the emerging supremacy of realism in his age. If we search the dozens of biographies of him and the volumes of his letters for reference to Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, or George Eliot and their influence, we are likely to find little or nothing. Stevenson’s dominant literary interest seemed always to lie in Scotland’s past and in the tales of adventure. He read a great deal about the Scottish history, which was to bear fruit in several of his novels located in Scotland’s past such as *Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae*. Secondly, Stevenson’s later literary career when he settled in the South Pacific saw a shift from romance to realism – one that is not concerned with domestic issues as in Dickens or Thackeray. Rather it is informed by a colonial reality as a result of his direct encounter with Polynesia and the

¹ *Island Landfalls: Reflections from the South Seas*, ed. by Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Canongate Publishing Ltd, 1987), p. xxiii.

Polynesian peoples. These two aspects of Stevenson --- his passion for Scotland and his sympathy for the South Seas islanders --- were to be brought into harmony as he tried to find out the parallels between the two cultures.

Comments upon Stevenson's fiction in relation to romance and realism had appeared as early as 1914 when Frank Swinnerton proclaimed Stevenson's progress as a novelist and tale-teller 'from romance to realism', i.e., 'from *Treasure Island*, which he wrote when he was a little over thirty, to *Weir of Hermiston*, upon which he was engaged at the time of his death at the age of forty-four'.¹ Swinnerton also observed that 'it is in the latest novels, the realistic novels, that Stevenson rose to a fuller stature; that was because in the last years of life he truly for the first time was able to taste the actually air of physical danger'.²

Swinnerton regarded *Kidnapped* to be the best Scottish historical romance since Scott, and even one of the best modern historical romances written in English.³ Paradoxically, he was critical of Stevenson's romances in general for lack of moral depth and appealing to children only, a view which is highly debatable today. 'If it [romance] is dead', he concluded, 'Stevenson killed it'.⁴ Edwin Eigner, on the other hand, maintained that the whole of Stevenson's fiction was closely related to the nineteenth century tradition of prose romance, including *The Ebb-Tide* and *The Beach of Falesá*. In his view, during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, the literature of the romance tradition was based on the scientific theory of psychological dualism that characterised all Stevenson's fiction.⁵

With the revival of interest in Stevenson's South Seas fiction since the 1980s, critical attention has begun to focus on the social, historical and especially cross-cultural significances of Stevenson's Pacific works as expressed in Jenni Calder's succinct remark. Other important studies include Barry Menikoff's *Robert Louis Stevenson and The Beach of Falesá: A Study in Victorian Publishing with the Original Text* (1986), Robert Hillier's *The South Seas Fiction of Robert Louis*

¹ Frank Swinnerton, *R. L. Stevenson: a Critical Study* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), pp. 133-34; first edition was published in 1914.

² *ibid.*, p. 167.

³ *ibid.*, pp. 153-54.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵ Edwin Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 32.

Stevenson (1989), Katherine Linehan's "Stevenson's Complex Social Criticism in *The Beach of Falesá*" (1990), and more recently, Vanessa Smith's *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth Century Textual Encounters* (1998). In her introduction to the book, Smith offers an important account of Stevenson's transition from romance writer to realist in the context of the nineteenth century literary tradition and the changing narratives of the Pacific by the West.¹

Of course Stevenson was far from being alone among his fellow Victorians to have his literary career influenced by the colonial realities. The expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century worked its way naturally into the Victorian fiction in general. It is hardly surprising that most of the realistic novelists of the time touched upon colonial issues by incorporating colonial settings, plots and characters into their works. Dickens, in *David Copperfield* (1850), sends the Micawbers to Australia to make their fortune. Colonel Newcome in Thackeray's *The Newcomes* (1853-55) has lived most of his life in India. St. John Rivers in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) departs to India to be a missionary among the natives, while Mr Rochester's west Indian connection through his marriage to Bertha Mason set the story in its colonial context. In the texts mentioned above, however, the focus usually lies on the domestic scene. Patrick Brantlinger observes that in these novels, the Empire and colonial reality "may intrude only as a shadowy realm of escape, banishment, or return for characters who for one reason or another need to enter or exit from scenes of domestic conflict".² This is also true of Stevenson's own Scottish novel *Kidnapped*, in which David Balfour's uncle had David abducted in order to sell him as a slave in the colonies. In his short story 'The Rajah's Diamond', Prince Florizel advises Mr Rolles to go to Australia as a colonist and try to forget that he has ever been a clergyman or that he ever set eyes on the accursed stone.

¹ I am indebted to Vanessa Smith for the argument of Stevenson's transition from romancist to realist in his late literary career in the Pacific and the attention to the broad literary and historical background, though the bulk of my thesis had been written when Smith's book was published. The main body of Smith's work actually offers an alternative to this argument by focusing on Polynesian responses to the imported metropolitan culture and writing as a material process as experienced by Stevenson; the present thesis, on the other hand, concentrates on Stevenson's representations of the Polynesian peoples and their cultures, in comparison to the archetypal depictions of the Pacific by his fellow European writers, and in relation to his own cultural background.

² Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 12.

The peripheral elements of colonial reality in the early and mid-Victorian fiction constitute what Jenni Calder calls ‘Britain’s nineteenth-century imperialist present’ that significantly forms the broad historical background of Stevenson’s literary career in the South Pacific. According to Brantlinger, “studies of British imperialism as an ideological phenomenon have usually confined themselves to the period from the 1870s to World War I, in part because those years saw the development of a militantly expansionist New Imperialism. In the 1870s Germany, Belgium, and the United States began an intense imperial rivalry against the older colonial powers, above all Great Britain, for their own ‘place in the sun’”,¹ – an imperial reality that Stevenson was to personally witness with a critical response in the early 1890s in Samoa. For Britain, anxiety over the external threat to her imperial hegemony was intensified by the declining industrial growth and the ‘Great Depression’ at home from 1873 to the 1890s. Therefore the word ‘imperialism’, as Bernard Porter puts it, ‘was for Britain a symptom and an effect of her decline in the world, and not of strength’.² The mounting anxiety could be compared to the confidence of the earlier Victorian years in the condition of the British Empire. According to Brantlinger, ‘that the early and mid-Victorians did not call themselves imperialists...suggests merely that they did not feel self-conscious or anxious about their world domination’.³ In literature, the imperial anxiety and a re-assertion of an imperial ideal were expressed in the revival of romance which, as Robert Dixon notes, served ‘to deflect attention away from the dangerous unpleasantness of realism, which fostered introspection, unmanliness and morbidity’.⁴

Stevenson’s voluntary exile to the South Pacific from 1888 to 1894 and his fiction relating to his life there coincided with this late nineteenth-century revival of romance which was embraced as an alternative to the dominant practice of literary realism. Instead of being associated with the historical past as Stevenson’s Scottish

¹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

² Bernard Porter, *The Lion’s Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995* (London: Longman, 1996), p. xii.

³ Patrick Brantlinger, p. 23. Brantlinger also argues that between 1830 and the 1870s ‘the colonies’ and ‘colonial interests’ were familiar terms, but the word ‘imperialism’ was not used with reference to Britain, as it was to the French Second Empire, until the 1870s. See p. 21.

⁴ Cited in Vanessa Smith, p. 13. Apart from this kind of escapist romance, late nineteenth century also saw the re-creation of the medieval romance, such as in Alfred Tennyson’s *The Idylls of the King* (1859-72) and William Morris’s *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70), as an alternative to the emergence of individualism and materialism.

novels were, this new type of romance was represented by a shift in space from the domestic to the exotic, by an immediate desire for adventure and escapism, and, as Smith puts it, by ‘vicariously fulfilling a wish for masculine conquest displaced into the context of Britain’s expanding empire’, and ‘within its fictional parameters the Pacific figured as an idealised adventure playground, realm of noble savages and cannibals, of shipwrecks and castaways’.¹ These preconceived images of the Pacific provided what Stevenson called (in his essay ‘A Gossip on Romance’) ‘the charm of circumstance’, that is, perfect materials for romance writings.

It is to be argued, however, that in Stevenson’s case the move from the domestic to the exotic did not correspond to the revival of romance, just as he had been against the main literary trend at home by advocating romance. In Scotland, he wrote about romance; once surrounded by the romantic settings, his fiction became realistic. His concern for scientific accuracy when describing island cultures was much in the mode of contemporary literary realism at home. As Gillian Beer has noted: ‘part of the delight of romance is that we know we are not required to live full-time in its ideal worlds. It amplifies our experience; it does not press home to us our immediate everyday concerns’.² Beer’s remark throws light upon Stevenson’s difference in literary style from his predecessors writing about the Pacific, for Stevenson not only lived full-time but made his home in Samoa.

This case of Stevenson’s transition from romance writer to realist parallels changing narratives in Western literature about the Pacific which occurred during the three hundred year period, from the first landfall made by Europeans in the sixteenth century to the substantial scale of commercial settlement and religious missions in the nineteenth century. ‘As the texts of exploration were succeeded by the documents of settlement and colonisation,’ Smith observes, ‘an idealised vision of Polynesian “noble savagery” was displaced by unromanticised, purportedly “scientific” description’.³ The earliest European accounts of the Pacific were of a paradise where nature was bountiful and the islanders sensual, indolent, and often childlike. Among

¹ *ibid.*, p. 13.

² Cited in Vanessa Smith, p. 13.

³ Vanessa Smith, p. 14. For detailed discussions of Western literature about the Pacific, see Bernard Smith, *European vision and the South Pacific* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) and Bill Pearson, *Rifled Sanctuaries: Some Views of the Pacific Islands in Western Literature to 1900* ([Auckland]: Auckland University Press, 1984).

those European explorers who contributed to the romantic view of the South Pacific was French navigator Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1729-1811), who explored the South Pacific as leader of the first French naval force that sailed around the world (1766-69). His widely read account, *Voyage autour du Monde* (1771) helped popularize a belief in the moral worth of man in his natural state, a concept of considerable influence upon writers of European Enlightenment. The concept was further advocated by the German naturalists Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) and his son Georg Forster (1754-1794), both of whom emigrated to England in 1766 and were invited to accompany Captain James Cook on his second voyage around the world (1772-75). J. R. Forster, who translated Bougainville's *Voyage* into English (1772), also admired the Polynesians' natural state that he metaphorically likened to 'childhood' among his schema of the four stages of development of human society.¹ He recorded Tahiti, for example, as a paradise of abundant food and sensual love:

Such is the great abundance of the finest fruit, growing, as it were, without cultivation, that none are distressed for food. The sea is another great resource for the inhabitants of this and all the Society Isles. They catch great numbers of fine and delicious fish; they collect numberless shells, crabs, fish, sea-eggs... Inhabitants are hitherto fortunate enough to have none of the artificial wants which luxury, avarice, and ambition have introduced among Europeans....The great plenty of good and nourishing food, together with the fine climate, the beauty and unreserved behaviour of their females, invite them powerfully to the enjoyments and pleasures of love.²

Both Bougainville and the Forsters viewed the natives as denizens of a Golden Age. Such a discourse of the noble savage was also elaborated by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who hypothesised man's happy stage, in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men* (1755), before mankind developed private property and its accompanying passion of greed.³

¹ The four stages in J. R. Forster's schema are *animality, savages, barbarians* and *civilisation*. See his *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World* (London: Printed for G. Robinson..., 1778), p. 304.

² *ibid.*, pp. 215-31.

³ Strictly speaking, Rousseau's hypothesis of man's Golden Age is not identical with the romantic speculation of the European explorers in the Pacific. Though both featured a paradise free from labour, the former emphasised the innocence of man in a 'state of nature' which, if not idyllic, was wholly untouched by misery and greed; while the latter stressed the physical aspects such as the

As the European contact with the Pacific progressed from the passing visits of explorers to the closer focus of scientific observation on the one hand and the prolonged settlement of missionaries, traders and castaways on the other, the romantic view of Pacific peoples as ‘noble savages’ was displaced by a conflicting stereotyping. The scientific observation of the Pacific, which began with Captain James Cook’s first voyage in 1768 commissioned by the Royal Society, provided new evidence out of which the theory of evolution was fashioned. At the same time, missionaries were sent out to the Pacific with a deliberate intention of changing the native society. Both social Darwinism and the religious mission helped create an archetypal Pacific of backwardness and savagery, and a belief that the native peoples in their natural state were depraved and ignoble. In this regard it is worth noting that ‘whereas in Europe evolutionary theory was strenuously opposed by organised religion, in the Pacific it combined with social Darwinism, in the business of destroying traditional Pacific societies’.¹

The changing European discourse about the Pacific can be understood in the light of Edward Said’s Orientalist theory. The publication in 1978 of Said’s *Orientalism* helped to establish a new area of academic inquiry: colonial discourse. Orientalism as a body of texts, doctrines, ideas, and beliefs based on Western assumptions about the East, is believed to have begun its existence as early as the Middle Ages. As European exploration and colonisation of the rest of the world continued, the imaginative geography of the Orient was pushed further east considerably beyond the Islamic lands. At the same time, Orientalism accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse into an imperial institution. Being itself a product of Western power over the East, Orientalism played an indispensable role during European colonial expansion. Speaking of the relationship between colonialism as a practice and Orientalism as a discourse, Said observes: ‘To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalisation of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact.’² Thus, colonial discourse can be seen as Orientalist discourse relating to its particular

bountifulness of nature and the indolence of the natives. For Rousseau, the Golden Age was irrecoverable once the human society had passed that age.

¹ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. ix.

² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1985; first published by Routledge, 1978), p.39.

historical moment --- its colonial or post-colonial phase. Said's book presents a paradigm for colonial discourse --- the variety of textual forms in which the European colonising Self produced and codified knowledge about the non-European colonised Other. Though Said focuses on the Near East, his critics and supporters alike have extended his model far beyond the confines of that part of the world.

A new reading of Stevenson's South Seas fiction from the post-colonial hindsight is likely to enable discussions on the author's complex representations of social, psychological and colonial thinking. I have come to it preoccupied by such questions as: to what extent can literature be interpreted as a representation of thoughts on race and culture? Is there anything to be gained from subjecting Stevenson's South Seas fiction to 'Orientalist' scrutiny? Is it possible to determine how, if at all, Stevenson participates in or contributes to that cultural and literary canon? What critical stance does he adopt in making assumptions about the white man's effect upon, and constructions of, native culture?

Such a perspective opens up different strategies of reading for Stevenson's South Seas fiction, which in turn offers meaningful alternatives to the conventional modes of Orientalist thought specified in Said's book. My argument is that Stevenson's South Seas fiction falls both within and without the framework of *Orientalism*, the evidence of which is as discernible in the complex duality of character typical of Stevenson the man, as it is in the co-existence of colonial and anti-colonial tendencies in his fiction.

For Said, writings about the Orient do not necessarily contribute to the discipline of Orientalism which he considers to be science rather than mere literature. He observes:

Residence in the Orient involves personal experience and personal testimony to a certain extent. Contributions to the library of Orientalism and to its consolidation depend on how experience and testimony get converted from a purely personal document into the enabling codes of Orientalist science. In other words, within a text there has to take place a metamorphosis from personal to official statement; the record of Oriental residence and experience by a European must shed, or at least minimise, its purely autobiographical and indulgent descriptions in favour of description on which Orientalism in general and later Orientalists in particular can draw, build, and base further scientific observation and description.¹

¹ *ibid.*, p. 157.

Therefore, a distinction becomes necessary 'between writing that is converted from personal to professional Orientalism, and the second type, also based on residence and personal testimony, which remains literature and not science.'¹ This consideration leads to Said's methodological emphasis on authoritative reports by scholarly travellers, missionaries, political memoirs and government documents as primary texts in Orientalist discourse. His sources range from the decision of the Church Council of Vienna in 1312 to establish a series of chairs in Oriental languages, to Napoleon's expedition to Egypt with the resultant erudite twenty-three-volume *Description de l'Egypte*; from Marco Polo's travel writing to Sir William Jones' translations from Arabic and Persian. Upon this range of reference, Said grounds his double critique of Orientalism: as a highly textual attitude and as a more or less systematic distortion of the Orient resulting from that attitude.

The fact is that during the eighteenth century's development of international commerce, interest in the East (Near, Middle and Far) burgeoned and began to influence literature in Europe. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Orient --- predominantly the Near East for Said, but the Pacific of the Far East might also be included for the definition --- was a favourite place for Europeans to travel in and write about. Consequently, a large body of European literature with the Orient as its subject matter was created. Among those literary figures who drew from their personal experiences in the Pacific were Stevenson's predecessors Robert Michael Ballantyne (1825-94), Charles Warren Stoddard (1843-1909), Herman Melville (1819-91), and also his younger contemporary Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). Each of these writers of the sea contributed to the 'density' (Said's word) of public awareness of the Pacific as part of the Orient. The quantity and quality of their works testify that Orientalism as a discourse was fashioned out of the experiences of many Westerners, and that creative writings, as works of art in comparison with scholarly writings, can likewise be treated as a playground for Orientalist scrutiny. Said, who has much to say about Melville and Conrad might also have mentioned Stevenson, whose views on race and culture were formed very much within that Orientalist and colonial background.

¹ *ibid.*

Travels and Writings

Robert Louis Stevenson seemed to have been destined to spend the last six and a half years of his life in the South Seas, though little did he realise when he departed from San Francisco Bay on board his chartered yacht *Casco* on June 28, 1888, that he would never set foot on his native land Scotland again. It was nearly ten months later from Honolulu that he wrote to Sidney Colvin in retrospect about an old prophecy coming true: ‘It is a singular thing that as I was packing up old papers ere I left Skerryvore I came on the prophecies of a drunken Highland Sibyl, when I was seventeen. She said I was to be very happy, to visit America *and to be much upon the sea*’.¹ Stevenson did visit America and even married an American wife; and he was several times upon the deep.

Stevenson’s love for the sea was certainly of long standing, a love that originated from his family profession: his father and grandfather being builders of lighthouses. ‘Whenever I smell salt water, I know I am not far from the works of my ancestors,’ he once said. One of the little poems that recaptures the memory of his childhood imagination is about his longing for the sea:

O it’s I that am the captain of a tidy little ship,
 Of a ship that goes a-sailing on the pond;
 And my ship it keeps a -turning all around and all about;
 But when I’m a little older, I shall find the secret out
 How to send my vessel sailing on beyond.

(‘My Ship and I’)

As early as in childhood Stevenson met R. M. Ballantyne, author of *The Coral Island*, who came to the family to seek authentic knowledge about lighthouse keeping for his stories. Stevenson worshipped the man and was enchanted by the

¹ *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994-95), VI, 276. Subsequent references to this edition will appear in parentheses in the text as *Letters* followed by the volume and page numbers.

boys' adventure story set on a South Sea island. When he was twenty-four his family saw another visitor named J. Seed who came from New Zealand. Seed made the important suggestion that Stevenson should go to the South Pacific, especially the Navigator Islands (old name for Samoa), for his health.¹ Stevenson recalled hearing about the South Sea Islands in his letter to Mrs Sitwell:

Awfully nice man here tonight. Public servant – New Zealand. Telling us all about the South Sea Islands till I was sick with desire to go there; beautiful places, green forever; perfect climate; perfect shapes of men and women, with red flowers in their hair; and nothing to do but to study oratory and etiquette, sit in the sun, and pick up the fruits as they fall. Navigator's Island is the place; absolute balm for the weary.

(*Letters*, II, 145)

This South Seas idea was to lie dormant in Stevenson for five years until it began to surge again and was also brought closer to its destination in 1880 when he followed Fanny Osbourne to San Francisco. Here he was fascinated by the mingling of the races that combined to people the town, and was fired with imagination about the mysterious 'ocean of the East' and the 'isles of summer', to and from which he saw sailors, adventurers, traders of all skin colours make their movements. His experience and imagination are reproduced autobiographically in Loudon Dodd, the narrator and central character of his South Seas novel *The Wrecker*. Lingering in water-front bars and on wharves, Dodd is enchanted that San Francisco 'keeps the doors of the Pacific, and is the port of entry to another world and an earlier epoch in man's history. Nowhere else shall you observe so many tall ships as here convene from round the Horn, from China, from Sydney, and the Indies'.² Meanwhile, away in the back quarters, sitting in the small informal South Sea club, he can hear their yarns with an unfading pleasure:

From their long tales, their traits of character and unpremeditated landscape, there began to piece itself together in my head some image of the islands and the island

¹ J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952), p. 267.

² R. L. Stevenson, *The Wrecker*, in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd.; Tusitala edition, repr. 1926), XII, p. 117. All subsequent references to Stevenson's works, with the exception of *The Beach of Falesá*, will be from this edition and appear in parentheses in the text as *Tusitala* followed by the volume and page numbers.

life; precipitous shores, spired mountain-tops, the deep shade of hanging forests, the unresting surf upon the reef, and the unending peace of the lagoon; sun, moon, and stars of an imperial brightness; man moving in these scenes scarce fallen, and woman lovelier than Eve; the primal curse abrogated, the bed made ready for the stranger, life set to perpetual music, and the guest welcomed, the boat urged, and the long night beguiled with poetry and choral song.¹

Here in San Francisco, Stevenson also met Charles Warren Stoddard, author of *Summer Cruising in the South Seas*, who later became Stevenson's lifelong family friend. Stoddard presented Stevenson with copies of Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo*, only to infect him more with the South Seas desire.

When, eight years later, the *Casco* lay waiting in San Francisco Bay bound for the ocean and islands of Stevenson's dream, there had been an additional stimulus from an American newspaper syndicate. Seeing the popularity of *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*, the representative of the syndicate Samuel S. McClure (1857-1949) encouraged Stevenson's proposed South Seas adventure offering \$200 for each letter from Stevenson describing his experiences in the Pacific and \$10,000 in all for fifty letters. McClure also sent him several books about the South Seas including a South Pacific directory. (In the end Stevenson sent thirty-seven letters which McClure ran in the New York *Sun* and *Black and White*).

Accompanied by his wife, mother and step-son, Stevenson reached the Marquesas on July 28, 1888. He had expected to find the Marquesans backward, barbarous and even cannibalistic, as it was reported that they had recently been cannibals. He was astonished to discover how mistaken his preconceived notions had been. To his friend Sidney Colvin in London, he wrote: 'It is all a swindle: I chose these islands as having the most beastly population, and they are far better, and far more civilised than we'. He found the Marquesans kindly, generous, well-mannered, and sociable. In his subsequent encounters with the islanders, Stevenson always adopted this liberal and humanistic view and became the champion of the cause of the Polynesian race.

The voyage in the *Casco* had originally been intended to last seven months. However, as time went on, Stevenson became more and more attracted by the life of the islands. With his health improving, he continued his travels in the South Pacific,

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 123-24.

first still in the *Casco*, then in the schooner *Equator*, visiting Tahiti, Hawaii, the Gilberts and Samoa. On December 7, 1889, the *Equator* arrived at Apia, the main harbour of Samoa. He had planned to stay in Samoa for a few weeks so he could include the island in his projected study of the South Seas. Gradually he found that the climate and setting proved more agreeable than he had anticipated. He purchased a large piece of land on the hills above Apia. Here for over four years he wrote fiction, made friends, and battled for the natives against the imperial powers of Germany, Britain and America.

Unlike his younger contemporary Conrad, who could draw on first-hand experience of the sea when he wrote *Heart of Darkness* and other works, Stevenson went the other way round --- writing first and then venturing into the South Seas. By the time he arrived there he had already achieved literary recognition as a stylist and popular success as a creator of adventure stories. He was keenly sensitive both to the literary advice of such friends as Sidney Colvin and Henry James, and to the popularity of what he wrote. Paul Maixner summarises the conflict Stevenson faced in writing his South Seas fiction: 'He was put in the uncomfortable position of having to live up to their idea of what he should accomplish. As a result he came into his own later than otherwise he might, and was obliged to spend too much of his limited energy trying to placate supporters by doing work they would approve or by trying to justify work he knew they would not'.¹ A notable example is the publication of *The Beach of Falesá* for which he had to make compromises with his literary agent Colvin and his publishers.²

Despite this disadvantage, Stevenson was able to get a good grip of his new subject matter by adopting a highly serious and scientific attitude as well as by identifying himself with the native culture. During his travels he made friends with all kinds of people: from kings and chiefs of various island tribes to his own servants; from common natives to white missionaries, traders and colonial officials. He drew from them information about Polynesian folklore, oral tradition and sea yarns which were to be incorporated into his fiction. Arthur Johnstone, who accuses Stevenson of

¹ Paul Maixner, ed., *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 2.

² A full treatment of this episode is given in Barry Menikoff's *Robert Louis Stevenson and The Beach of Falesá: A Study in Victorian Publishing with the Original Text* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986).

overestimating the Polynesian race and speaking and writing of the white man in the Pacific offensively, praises the method by which Stevenson gathered information:

He was not satisfied with the mere gathering of material for stories, as his predecessors had been, but he went deeply into the habits of savage life and tribal customs of the different groups. In the Marquesas Islands and Low Archipelago, beside the native side of the question, he made a careful study of the French laws in force, and examined as closely as his time would permit into their effect on Polynesian customs and nationality. Folklore, with the customs concerning death, marriage, and adoptions, he examined quite fully, and took great store of facts with him for future use.... He would traverse an island or cross a sea to secure such in his notebook.¹

Stevenson's scholarship about the South Seas is also reflected in the extensive range of his reading. One visitor to Vailima in the 1890's wrote to *The Spectator* about Stevenson's library: 'Next came books of travel on almost every country in the world, the bulk of them, however, dealing with the Pacific. From Captain Cook down, it would be hard to name a Pacific travel book that has not found itself on the shelves at Vailima.'²

The results of his observations, experiences and research proved fruitful for him. Apart from his Scottish novels such as *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Weir of Hermiston*, he significantly contributed to the literature of the Pacific with several types of his writings. They include a travel book *In the South Seas* (1890), a contemporary political history of Samoa entitled *A Footnote to History* (1892) and newspaper 'letters' on Hawaii; two short stories called 'The Isle of Voices' (1892) and 'The Bottle Imp' (1891); two ballads called 'The Feast of Famine' and 'The Song of Rahèro' (1890); and finally, three novels entitled *The Beach of Falesá* (1892), *The Wrecker* (1892) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1894).

Among these works, his travel book *In the South Seas* and the two novels *The Ebb-Tide* and *The Beach of Falesá* best deserve to be known in view of Stevenson's development as a writer and as a contributor to the literature of the South Pacific. As far as the latter is concerned, these works produce both a reflection of European

¹ Arthur Johnstone, *Recollections of Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1905), pp. 4, 49-50.

² Cited in Robert Hillier, *The South Seas Fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 14.

prejudice towards Polynesian natives and a critique of that prejudice. Robert Hillier, in the first comprehensive treatment of Stevenson's South Seas fiction, observes how Stevenson's travel writing became a source book for his more important novels and other writings. My discussion of Stevenson's fiction will also include *In the South Seas*, but it will be treated as a source of reference and parallel study of Stevenson's views on race and culture rather than as a source of fictional materials.

3

A Contemporary View

Critical judgements on Stevenson's South Seas fiction have changed over the past hundred years. The process of change is itself an interesting manifestation of colonial and anti-colonial discourse with which the present thesis started. An antagonistic view was found in Arthur Johnstone's *Recollections of Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific*, published in 1905, about ten years after Stevenson's death. Since colonialism was still in its prime of life, Johnstone's view may have been quite representative of his contemporaries. While praising Stevenson's genius and popularity as a writer, Johnstone maintained that Stevenson was mistaken and naive in his defence of Polynesians against the intrusion of the white man:

Not satisfied with a literary protest against what he thought was the intrusion of the white man, he hastened without discrimination to grasp the literary cudgel in defence of Polynesians; and, without hesitation or misgiving regarding his facts, he threw himself into the fray with the ardour of a boy, yet with the strength of a giant. But unfortunately, from his actual plan -- nay, from his entire policy -- on behalf of the Polynesians, he excluded the facts that justified the white man's presence in the Pacific.¹

'At times,' Johnstone argued, 'his expressions appear to be extremely rude and quite uncalled for by the facts,' though 'it is more charitable to assume that he was placed by circumstances in a position where he was overwhelmed with the incongruities found among many new and strange phases of life'.² He then predicted that had fate allowed Stevenson another decade, 'he would have grown into still

¹ Johnstone, p. 11.

² *ibid.*, p. 9.

closer touch with his white brethren and would have held a clearer and perhaps a juster view of the Polynesian as a social and political element, to be dealt with as gently as might be under the somewhat strict requirements of our civilised code.’¹

For Johnstone, comparing Stevenson with Stoddard, Stevenson’s error lies in his over-heated passion. ‘At most times he overestimated the Polynesian race, ... but of the white man in the Pacific he spoke and wrote repeatedly, often offensively, and with an ironic scorn not wholly merited’.² Stoddard, on the other hand, was able to exclude personal sympathy and prejudice, and to see and appreciate the poetry of a South Seas existence without overestimating the Polynesians or underestimating the domiciled white men:

[Stoddard] clearly saw that the docility and indolence of the natives were sprung from inherent weaknesses of character quite beyond remedy. As a consequence, he justly estimated their faults while sympathising with their amiable traits; but he admitted there were controlling necessities which demanded that the Islanders, under present conditions, should be treated as *children*, taught as *children*, and ruled as *children*, because they were unfitted to care for themselves when not reposing in an undisturbed state of savagery.³

My purpose here in presenting lengthy citations from Johnstone is not to trace the critical history of Stevenson’s South Seas fiction, nor to offer overall comments on Johnstone’s book. My primary concern is to show that Stevenson’s views on race are a complicated case, exemplified both inside and outside his fiction. It is not that Stevenson overestimated the Polynesian race, but that Johnstone overestimated and oversimplified Stevenson’s racial sentiment. Johnstone’s accusation comes from his own biased position formed by the racist assumptions of his age.

To a large extent, as we have seen, Johnstone was right in claiming that Stevenson fired an angry protest in his fiction against European exploitation in Polynesia while at the same time praising the Polynesian people. In fact Stevenson’s deep concern about race was not caused by ‘the ardour of a boy’. Instead, it is the result of both a humanitarianism in his character formed long before he arrived in the South Seas, and of his scientific investigation with the eye of a reporter and the objectivity of a historian, disclosed in *In the South Seas*.

¹ *ibid.*, p. 11.

² *ibid.*, p. 4.

³ *ibid.*

In a travel essay called 'Despised Races' written shortly after his 1897 train journey across America, Stevenson condemns the hostility shown by whites towards Chinese: 'Of all stupid ill-feelings, the sentiment of my fellow-Caucasians towards our companions was the stupidest and the worst' (*Tusitala*, XVIII, 116). His own attitude to the Chinese was just the opposite:

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. Gunpowder 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...; religion so old that our language looks a halfling boy alongside; philosophy so wise that our best philosophers find things therein to wonder at.

(117-18)

Another despised race among Stevenson's fellow-passengers was the American Indian, of whom Stevenson speaks with the same sympathy: 'My fellow-passengers danced and jested round them with a truly Cockney baseness. I was ashamed for the thing we call civilisation. We should carry upon our consciences so much, at least, of our forefathers' misconduct as we continue to profit by ourselves' (118-19). What he saw and experienced during the train journey produced angry reflections about the European settlement in America accompanied by injustice done to the Indians:

If oppression drives a wise man mad, what should be raging in the hearts of these poor tribes, who have been driven back and back, step by step, their promised reservations torn from them one after another as the States extended westward, until at length they are shut up into these hideous mountain deserts of the centre -- and even there find themselves invaded, insulted, and hunted out by ruffianly diggers?

(119)

Sympathy for non-whites and indignation over white exploitation continue in his South Seas writings. *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa* is his most vehement protest against the white exploitation of the islanders, though in this book his attitude towards the British and American presence in the region is milder than towards the German. More important, however, is his *In the South Seas*. The book is valuable not only as a source of information about the life, customs, and folklore of the Polynesians, but also as a useful guide to our understanding of

Stevenson's views on race. Despite its flaw in the lack of unity, the comparative methodology Stevenson adopts in his argument is consistent and convincing.

First, he argues that the supposed racial status, whether of superiority or of inferiority, is in fact relative to historical circumstances. 'A polite Englishman comes today to the Marquesans and is amazed to find men tattooed; polite Italians came out long ago to England and found our fathers stained with woad; and when I paid the return visit as a little boy, I was highly diverted with the backwardness of Italy: so insecure, so much a matter of the day and hour, is the eminence of race.' (*Tusitala*, XX, 13). And so it is with cannibalism among some of the Polynesians (namely Marquesans), a practice that disgusted and horrified so many civilised outsiders. 'And yet we ourselves make much the same appearance in the eyes of the Buddhist and the vegetarian' (79). Stevenson found that the cannibals were not cruel in every way: 'apart from this custom, they are a race of the most kindly; rightly speaking, to cut a man's flesh after he is dead is far less hateful than to oppress him whilst he lives.' (80).

Second, Stevenson is constantly looking for 'a sense of kinship' between the Polynesians and his own people. By referring back to his own Scottish background, he seeks similarity rather than difference. Of the people, he detects parallels between the Polynesians and the Highlanders and Islanders of his native Scotland a century or so earlier: '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....Hospitality, tact, natural fine manners, and a touchy punctilio, are common to both races' (12). Of the language, he observes that 'the elision of medial consonants, so marked in these Marquesan instances, is no less common both in Gaelic and the Lowland Scots' (12), so 'the alien speech that should next greet my ears must be Gaelic, not Kanaka' (18). Of the landscape and seascape, he fancies that 'I had slipped ten thousand miles away and was anchored in a Highland loch; that when the day came, it would show pine, and heather, and green fern, and roofs of turf sending up the smoke of peats' (18).

By identifying himself with the South Sea islanders, Stevenson demonstrates an attachment to humanity, regardless of race or nationality. No matter where he goes, he strives to know and love the heart, the soul, the language, and the nature of the

country and its people, and to picture them as he does his own Highland folk. *Humanitarianism* is the essence of Stevenson's views on race.

He does not, as Johnstone suggested, make hasty assumptions by prejudicing himself against his fellow white men. It is important to recognise that throughout his Pacific travels he made friends not only with natives but also with European missionaries, traders and politicians domiciled in those islands. He did ask such angry questions as: 'Will you please to observe that almost all that is ugly is in the whites?' (*Letters*, VII, 282). 'Were not whites in the Pacific the usual instigators and accomplices of native outrage?' (*Tusitala*, XX, 7). However, he also balanced what might have been an indiscriminate rebuking of the white men by saying: 'The whites are a strange lot, many of them good, kind pleasant fellows, others quite the lowest I have ever seen in the slums of cities' (*Letters*, VI, 327). He voiced his passionate disapproval of the drastic changes brought about by European missionaries --- 'Experience begins to show us (at least in Polynesian islands) that change of habit is bloodier than a bombardment.' (*Tusitala*, XX, 37). At the same time he did not hide his opinion that 'the missionaries are the best and the most useful whites in the Pacific'(73). A most famous example of his testimony on behalf of Christian missions in the Pacific is his 'Open Letter to the Reverend Dr. Hyde of Honolulu' in defence of Father Damien, the Catholic missionary to the lepers of Molokai.

Nor does Stevenson intend to overestimate the Polynesians. If he was appalled by the destructive aspects of Western intrusion, he was equally conscious of, and horrified by, the miserable and ugly aspects of indigenous life. In the Marquesas he is sickened by the sight of a cannibal feasting place:

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 has 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, these fervours of self-righteous old ship-captains, who would man their guns, and open fire in passing, on a cannibal island.

(87)

In *Falesá*, Stevenson also touches on the narrow-minded prejudice and deceitfulness of the natives. Uma and her mother are looked down upon by their fellow natives and find themselves under taboo just because they are ‘kinless folk and out-islanders’.¹ By making copra with his own hands, Wiltshire discovers the native trickery in the copra trade: ‘I never understood how much the natives cheated me till I had made that four hundred pounds of my own hand’ (*F*,158). And both Namu and Black Jack are easily tempted to become accomplices in Case’s conspiracy.

More significant is the irony underlying Johnstone’s accusation that Stevenson did not treat Polynesians like *children* as Stoddard had done. Stevenson’s writing reveals that while rejecting white superiority as an overall assumption, he did share in that ideology ardently supported by Johnstone. Linehan identifies that ideology as the recapitulation theory which was widespread throughout Europe in the late nineteenth century. ‘This theory argues that human development, whether within individuals or social groups, recapitulates earlier evolutionary stages along the path towards maturity. The proposition that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny (itself now understood as questionable) was thus manipulated to support a view of whites as fully-evolved, brown-skinned people as at a “childhood” level of development, and African blacks as more hedonistically primitive.’²

Within the colonial discourse, the linkage of ‘coloniser-colonised’ to ‘parent-child’ has been as enabling as the ‘male-female’ linkage. To quote Jo-Ann Wallace, “the child” represents to the West our racial as well as our individual past: the child is that “ancient piece of history.”³ Bill Ashcroft and others have adopted the ‘parent-child’ metaphor to describe other models of post-colonial literature.⁴

Stevenson, like Stoddard, carries over this patronising conception of the Polynesians, often at an unconscious level, into his fiction. The most conspicuous part is to dub Polynesians as children, which in Stevenson’s case coincides with his

¹ Menikoff, p. 144. Subsequent references to *Falesá* will be all from Menikoff’s scholarly edition and will appear in parentheses in the text as *F* followed by the page numbers.

² Katherine B. Linehan, ‘Stevenson’s Complex Social Criticism in “The Beach of Falesá”’, *English Literature in Transition (1880-1920)*, 33 (1990), 411.

³ Jo-Ann Wallace, ‘De-Scribing the Water-babies: “The Child” in Post-Colonial Theory’, in *De-Scribing Empire* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 175.

⁴ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 16.

long-standing interest in childhood: he first won recognition as a writer of children's literature, and his *A Child's Garden of Verses* reappraises childhood. A paternalistic attitude surfaces, for example, in the characterisation of the Kanakan crew in *The Ebb-Tide* as 'kindly, cheery, childish souls' (*Tusitala*, XIV, 48). In *the South Seas* refers to a white missionary who enjoys the prestige of being a 'smiling father' to his 'barbarous children' (*Tusitala*, XX, 72). *Falesá* provides more exhaustive evidence of authorial superiority. At a thematic level, 'Uma and the other natives *do* act and speak like children'¹ while sophistication belongs to the white men. In the Wiltshire-Case struggle, natives remain only in the background as spectators. At a linguistic level, such expressions as 'like a child', 'like a baby' occur at least a dozen times in connection with natives. 'She was a woman, and my wife, and a kind of baby' (F,143), as Wiltshire speaks of Uma. 'She looked so quaint and pretty as she ran away and then awaited me, and the thing was done so like a child or a kind dog' (125), to give just a few examples. Sometimes parent-child metaphors are applied without using those expressions, as the following example shows:

I was so greedy of her nearness that I sat down to dinner with my lass upon my knee, made sure of her with one hand, and ate with the other.

(143)

Wiltshire's boast that he easily knows what is in the minds of natives is again a demonstration of European paternalistic assertion: 'It's easy to find out what kanakas think. Just go back to yourself any way round from ten to fifteen years old, and there's an average kanaka.' (169).

With Wiltshire as the teller of the tale, Stevenson's patronising conception of the natives is not immediately obvious. If fictional complication lies in his creation of a highly controversial first-person narrator in Wiltshire, the authorial complication derives from Stevenson's own unconscious assertion of white maturity confusingly mingled with his self-conscious critique of white racism. This interaction of colonial and anti-colonial attitudes reflects duality in Stevenson's racial thinking which can be usefully related to Said's discrimination between 'latent' and 'manifest'

¹ Robert Kiely, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 171.

Orientalism,¹ confirming our earlier proposition that Stevenson's South Seas fiction falls both within and without the Orientalist pattern. Nonetheless, Stevenson's anti-colonialism and anti-racism outweigh his racial prejudice. Considering that he was subject to the ideology of his time when imperialism and racism were predominant, we become more appreciative of his ability and courage to transcend the cultural assumptions he had grown up with.

¹ Said, p. 206.

CHAPTER I

From Scotland to Samoa: Stevenson's Paradoxical Quest for Identity

It might seem a far cry from Samoa to Scotland, and yet in many ways one recalled the other.

----- Fanny Stevenson, 'Prefatory Note' to *Catriona*

1

Theorising the Multiplicity of Identity

Robert Louis Stevenson was a man of paradoxes: a bohemian with a strong moral sense; a romance writer with realist tendencies; a pursuer of art deprived of artistic integrity; an invalid who lived a life of arduous travel and adventure. This last aspect provides a physical coordinate for a quest for identity which is also characterised by a paradoxical nature. He was born in Scotland, but spent nearly four-fifths of his adult life away from his native land --- in Germany, Switzerland and England; much time in France, twice visiting America and finally, six and a half years in the South Seas. These shifting localities constantly sharpened his sense of exile, of home and belonging, constituting some basic meanings of identity which, in Stevenson's case, keeps shifting between Scotland, England and Samoa.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'identity' as something unitary and static: 'the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness, oneness' or 'the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances.' This traditional model of identity stresses the view that all of an individual's factors, such as birth, class, gender and race, operate simultaneously to produce a coherent, unified, fixed identity. That is, identity must have some 'core' or

essence that remains absolute. Postmodernists, however, believe in dispersed identities. According to some theorists, we are subjects with shifting and constantly changing identities -- Identity is to do not with being but with becoming.¹

One of the well-known negations of the traditional theories of identity is a psychoanalytic objection to the Cartesian view of the self which stresses the conscious mind -- 'I think, therefore I am'. From the Freudian point of view, the identity of the self is three-fold. Beneath the conscious or the *ego* there lies *id*. Above the *ego*, organising and directing it is the unconscious or the *superego*. The influence of the unconscious is powerful in what we say and do. The conscious aspects of private experience -- reflections upon experiences, memories, etc. -- and the unconscious and its effects constitute what is known as 'subjectivity'.² Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian psychoanalyst writing in French, carries the Freudian view of the unconscious further to the notion of the 'foreigner within'. She argues that though Freud does not speak of foreigners, he teaches us how to detect foreignness in ourselves. She argues that the foreigner is within us. And when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious -- that 'improper' facet of our impossible 'own and proper'.³ Then there are sociological notions of the multiple nature of identity. According to some theorists, men and women are not born with an identity. We have to identify to get one, in a process of identity-construction criss-crossed by such social dynamics as class, ethnicity, gender, nation, religion, etc. That is, our identity is multiple as it is from the psychoanalysts' point of view. We are cultural, racial, sexual, national, and religious beings simultaneously.

The postmodernist model of identity is pertinent to our discussion of Stevenson's quest for identity. Or, I would rather say, Stevenson was a precursor of the postmodernist model of identity. Nothing reveals his concern over the duality and multiplicity of human existence more explicitly than *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. The novel can be read as a dramatisation of the conflict between man's two selves in their separate identities. The relationship between Jekyll and Hyde is one between a man's ego and his superego, between his good self which is conscious and his evil 'other'

¹ Madan Sarup, *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 6.

² Sarup, p. 52.

³ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 191.

which is unconscious. In terms of postmodern psychoanalysis, the human subject -- Jekyll's own conscious self -- is 'decentred' by the unconscious which strives to assert itself all the time. 'Yes,' says the protagonist, 'I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde....All things therefore seemed to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse' (*Tusitala*, V, 64; 66). Through the protagonist's self-destruction, Stevenson seems to tell us that the duality of identity is destined to abide within each individual. That is the human reality you have to live with. By separating the two identities physically, you destroy the body as well. Henry Jekyll's final statement contains reflections about the multiple nature of identity:

With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens. I for my part, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction and in one direction only. I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; ...If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable...It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots were thus bound together -- that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were they dissociated. (58)

To a certain extent, the novel is a projection of Stevenson's own personality -- a duality of identity in contrast with the rigid moral codes of the time. As a bohemian child of conventional parents, Stevenson often had to adopt more than one posture at the same time. Biographers record him as prowling the seedier parts of Edinburgh and London late at night, sometimes dressed as a gentleman, sometimes as a ruffian, noting the difference in how he was treated. He sometimes identified himself with Robert Fergusson, 'the poor, white-faced, drunken, vicious boy' (*Letters*, VII, 110) who Stevenson thought lived a life of dissipation by drinking too much in Edinburgh's noisome closes. Stevenson conjured up an image of himself as a bohemian in one of his poems:

Hail! Childish slaves of social rules
 You had yourselves a hand in making!
 How I could shake your faith, ye fools,
 If I but thought it worth the shaking.
 I see, and pity you; and then
 Go, casting off the idle pity,
 In search of better, braver men,
 My own way freely through the city.
 My own way freely, and not yours;
 And, careless of a town's abusing,
 Seek real friendship that endures
 Among the friends of my own choosing...
 I take my old coat from the shelf --
 I am a man of little breeding,
 And only dress to please myself --
 I own, a very strange proceeding.
 I smoke a pipe abroad, because
 To all cigars I much prefer it,
 And as I scorn your social laws
 My choice has nothing to deter it...
 O fine, religious, decent folk,
 In virtue's flaunting gold and scarlet
 I sneer between two puffs of smoke
 Give me the publican and harlot.

(Tusitala, XXIII, 124-25)

Another side of Stevenson is characterised by a deep concern with morality. As a boy he delighted his parents by playing at being a minister and acting out a church service. In his Vailima household in Samoa he actually acted as 'minister' to his large family and retainers by writing and offering his own prayers almost every evening in pious devotion.

The complex issue of Stevenson's moral sense of himself has been explored by some of his biographers and critics. In the following sections of this chapter, I wish to focus on the equally paradoxical nature of Stevenson's identity -- national, racial and cultural -- enabled by his foreign travels and especially by his colonial encounters. My argument is based on the premise that colonialism and imperialism, the historical phenomena that Stevenson experienced, were not only territorial and economic but inevitably also a subject-constituting project. This project is actually a two-way process in its impact on the construction of identity. On the one hand, the imperialist project to educate and 'civilise' the natives has influenced the identities of millions of colonised people. On the other hand, people who belonged to the imperial

centre also had their identities tested and influenced through their encounter with the natives. As a theorist of colonialist literature observes:

Colonialist literature is an exploration and a representation of a world of the boundaries of 'civilisation'.... Faced with an incomprehensible and multifaceted alterity, the European theoretically has the option of responding to the Other in terms of identity or difference. If he assumes that he and the Other are essentially identical, then he would tend to ignore the significant divergence and to judge the Other according to his own cultural values. If, on the other hand, he assumes that the Other is irremediably different, then he would again tend to turn to the security of his own cultural perspective. Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the Self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions and ideology of his culture.¹

Since identity is always related to what one is not -- the Other, the process of identification can comprise methods of comparison and contrast. That is, one has to define oneself with and/or against the Other. Stevenson's sense of identity in terms of nation, race and culture can be considered from this perspective. Reflections on these matters had preoccupied him from his first important visit to England in 1873 to his final settlement in Samoa. Research into his various writings in this period reveals that it was through both difference and similarity that Stevenson constructed his paradoxical, overlapping identities. As a Scot, his national background constitutes a grey area with regard to colonial reality, in which boundaries between binary oppositions -- Self/Other, metropolis/periphery, dominant/dominated -- are blurred. When he moved towards a dominant culture -- England -- he tended to stress difference; When he moved towards a dominated culture -- the South Seas -- he was apt to look for similarities to his own. To put it in another way, Stevenson's paradoxical quest for identity is situated to some extent within the paradox of Scottish identity.

In Stevenson, therefore, identity is not only multiple but mobile. It is not fixed or static, but shifting with his crossing of national, racial and cultural boundaries. Rooted as he was in the Scottish soil, his greater tendency was to move from regional to global, from national to cosmopolitan. Closely connected with his shifting sense of identity is the meaning of 'home' and 'exile'.

¹ Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature', in *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1), 1985; also in Bill Ashcroft and others, ed., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 18.

J. C. Furnas, a highly-regarded Stevenson biographer, compares the cross-cultural stimuli that Stevenson received from crossing the boundaries -- especially when he was in the South Seas -- to the 'hybrid vigour', a term of genetics meaning that the crossing of two varieties may produce in certain consequent individuals a plant or animal larger or stronger than either parent.¹ If not overstated, the analogy can be applied to Stevenson: his engagement with both cultures did much to bring his talent into maturity.

In the following pages, I wish to explore this cross-cultural significance of Stevenson's literary career from a different angle. By looking into his correspondence, essays and travel writings during the period from his permanent departure from Scotland to his final days in Samoa, I try to argue that over the last six and a half years of his life in the South Seas, Stevenson was emotionally torn between Scotland and Samoa, while rationally he was searching for the common ground of identity which transcends the boundary of nationality to achieve humanistic significance; that Stevenson's paradoxical quest for identity results, to a large extent, from the paradoxical nature of Scottish identity in relation to the British Empire; that there are different connections between Stevenson's colonial encounter in the South Seas and the prior shaping of his own subjective cultural formation; that he was surprisingly aware of both the gulf and parallels between the colonised and the colonising cultures, and he operated a resistance to the prevailing imperialist ideology through literature -- his South Seas fiction.

Stevenson's South Seas fiction considers two important aspects of colonial encounter and its impact on the construction of identity: what happens to 'the civilised' white colonist when he is confronted with an alien culture? And what happens to the natives and their culture under colonialism? Interestingly, we may ask a third question: What happens to the author who, like his fictional characters, was himself caught between two civilisations?

¹ J. C. Furnas, "Stevenson and Exile" in *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland* ed. Jenni Calder, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p. 138.

Home and Exile

The concept of 'home' evokes a feeling of belonging, which is in some way tied to the notion of identity. It is especially so with a man like Stevenson who was constantly on the move. If home is the place where one is born and brought up, or where one's parents live, Scotland must constitute the true definition of 'home' for Stevenson. If home refers to wherever one lives with a family or where one finds a final resting place, then Samoa is the right place. Stevenson's tomb on Mt. Vaea above his Vailima plantation in Western Samoa bears the inscription of his own 'Requiem':

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

(*Tusitala*, XXII, 83)

Literally, 'home' in this context is not a physical place but an abstract domain where Stevenson found peace after lifelong travel and hard work. Given his devotion to the Samoan people and their cause, however, Samoa is a fitting and proper place that Stevenson could have associated with 'home'. This is evidenced in Stevenson's own words just two months before his death. The occasion arose after a number of chiefs belonging to the party of Mataafa had been imprisoned at Apia, and Stevenson had visited them and sent them gifts of food. Upon their release, to thank Stevenson for his sympathy and friendship, the chiefs determined to build a road of six feet wide from the public highway to Stevenson's house Vailima. It was to be called 'The Road of the Loving Heart'. The work began in September 1894 and completed by early October. Stevenson gave a great feast to his Samoan friends and delivered a moving speech for the occasion:

I love Samoa and her people. I love the land; I have chosen it to be my home while I live and my grave after I am dead; and I love the people, and have chosen them to be my people to live and die with.

(*Tusitala*, XXXV, 193)

Commenting on Stevenson's locality in relation to his sense of identity and belonging, J. C. Furnas points out: 'The importance of where a rootless man takes root and happens to die is almost equal to that of his birth-place'.¹ The equation of Samoa with Scotland in Stevenson's imagination is certainly true. But it is equally true that Stevenson was far from considering himself a rootless man. In spite of his actual involvement in Samoan life, his mind dwelled constantly in Scotland. As he wrote to J. M. Barrie from Vailima in 1892, 'It is a singular thing that I should live here in the South Seas under conditions so new and so striking, and yet my imagination so continually inhabit that cold old huddle of grey hills from which we come' (*Letters*, VII, 412).

'Home' in his imagination is a paradox, divided between Scotland and Samoa. For one thing, the connotation of home in his 'Requiem' is ambiguous, because the original version of the poem appears in a letter to Sidney Colvin from San Francisco in February 1880 (*Letters*, III, 66) when Stevenson seemed to have little expectation of surviving his consumption disease. This was significantly before he set out on his Pacific voyage. He could not have had any idea where his final resting place was going to be. Furthermore, if we look at his correspondence after his settlement in Samoa, we find a heightened sense of contradiction in Stevenson who was torn between his loyalty to, and deep love of, his native country on the one hand, and his equally strong commitment to the Polynesian people on the other. He would confide his joy of living in Samoa to his friends and then quickly contradict this by showing regret at not being able to return to Scotland. A desirable but impossible solution to his dilemma would have been to remove the physical site of his home 'Vailima' to be planted somewhere in Scotland. He wrote to Colvin in 1893:

And then you could actually see Vailima, which I would like you to, for it's beautiful and my *home* and *tomb* that is to be; though it's a wrench not to be planted in Scotland -- that I can never deny -- if I could only be buried in the

¹ Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 308.

hills, under the heather and a table tombstone like the martyrs, where the whaups and plovers are crying!

(*Letters*, VIII, 159)

But even this solution may not have represented Stevenson's true self. After all, it was not Vailima but the people and life in Samoa that held him there.

To make things further complicated, somewhere between Scotland and Samoa in his imagination lay England when he thought of home. This is because it was upon his friends in England that he depended for literary success. After his father died, Sidney Colvin stood as a fatherly figure for Stevenson: 'My dear fellow, now that my father is done with his troubles, and 17 Heriot Row no more than a mere shell, you and that gaunt old Monument in Bloomsbury are all that I have in view when I use the word home' (*Letters*, VI, 337).

What helps to account for his shifting sense of home is his half-enforced, half voluntary exile. In the original, narrow sense, 'exile' means something punitive: 'enforced removal from one's native land according to an edict or sentence' (*The Oxford English Dictionary*). This obviously does not apply to Stevenson who left Scotland for good out of his own free will. Sometime during his settlement in Samoa, he was threatened with deportation for his involvement in Samoan politics (*Letters*, VII, 305, 411). Even if this had been realised, the enforced removal would not have amounted to exile within this definition because Samoa was not Stevenson's native land. According to the *Dictionary*, 'exile' can also mean 'expatriation, prolonged absence from one's native land, endured by compulsion of circumstances or voluntarily undergone for any purpose'. Both definitions fit Stevenson's situation: the compulsive circumstance was his search for better health and his ambivalent attitude towards Scotland, while the voluntary element was his love of romantic adventure.

Unlike some other famous literary men such as Joyce, Nabokov and Conrad who 'wrote of exile with such pathos, but of exile without cause or rationale',¹ or those contemporary theorists of post-colonial literature such as Said, Bhabha, Spivak and Kristeva whose direction of exile has been from the periphery to the metropolis, Stevenson moved from the imperial centre to the colonised regions. It is useful,

¹ Edward Said, quoted by Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form', in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 60.

therefore, to explore under what compulsive and voluntary circumstances Stevenson went on that kind of exile before we examine its influence on his shifting sense of cultural identity.

Of all mysteries of the human heart, according to Stevenson, one's feelings for his native country is perhaps the most inscrutable. His own are paradoxical: a mixture of pride and mockery, of nostalgia and estrangement. In the chapter entitled 'The Scot Abroad' in *The Silverado Squatters* (1889), Stevenson tried to come to terms with the double quality of a Scotsman's feelings for his native country:

A man belong[s], in these days, to a variety of countries; but the old land is still the true land, the others are but pleasant infidelities. Scotland is indefinable; it has no unity except upon the map. Two languages, many dialects, innumerable forms of piety, and countless local patriotisms and prejudices, part us among ourselves more widely than the extreme east and west of that great continent of America....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 corn-lands; 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. I will say it fairly, it grows on me with every year: there are no stars so lovely as Edinburgh street-lamps. When I forget thee, auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning!

(*Tusitala*, XVIII, 172-73)

This is a typical example of Stevenson's complex attitude towards Scotland. He deplored the effect of the cold, wet and windy Scottish climate on his ill health. In addition he had what could be called a moral objection to the gentility and respectability of Victorian Scotland, especially of Edinburgh. These two factors, together with his longing for new and adventurous places and experiences, accounted for his absence from his native land for much of his adult life. 'The Scot Abroad' was written to record his impressions during his stay with his newly married wife in Silverado, California in 1880, eight years before travelling to the South Seas. When he embarked on the Pacific voyage and settled there for the rest of his life, his ambivalent feelings for Scotland continued.

To a large extent Stevenson found what he wanted in the South Seas: better health and the excitement at something new and adventurous. 'It is never hot here -- 86 in the shade is about our hottest -- and it is never cold except just in the early mornings. Take it all in all, I suppose this island climate to be by far the healthiest in the world -- even the influenza lost its sting.' Stevenson thus recorded the Samoan weather to James Barrie in December 1892. Earlier in February 1889 he wrote from Honolulu to Charles Baxter that "the extraordinary health I enjoy and variety of interests I find among these islands would tempt me to remain here.' Three years later in November he expressed to Charles Lowe a similar wish that he would never think of going back to Europe: 'As for Europe, not even the German Emperor could get me there. I have no use for the place. Not amusing. There is nothing to go to Europe for but music, and I can do without that; having here health, work, adventure.' In a reply to Colvin's petition that Stevenson should return to the 'civilised' world from those savage islands, Fanny confirmed the improved health condition of her husband since they moved to the South Seas, 'You could hardly believe your own eyes if you could see Louis in his present state of almost rude health, no cough, no haemorrhage, no night sweat. He rides and walks as much as he likes without any fatigue, and in fact lives the life of a man who is well. I tremble when I think of a return to England.'¹

It was, of course, more than improved health that persuaded Stevenson to remain. He was essentially a man of the world who could make himself at home anywhere and with any human being, whatever his colour or culture, and especially so concerning the South Seas people. Besides elements of sympathetic identification, there are also expressions of love and admiration. Less than a year into his Pacific cruise, he declared 'I love the Polynesian: this civilisation of ours is a dingy, ungentlemanly business; it drops out too much of man, and too much of that the very beauty of the poor beast: who has his beauties in spite of Zola and Co' (*Letters*, VI, 302). This perhaps explains why in his South Seas fiction such as *The Ebb-Tide* and *The Beach of Falesá*, the 'civilised' and sophisticated characters like Attwater and Case are portrayed in an unfavourable light, in contrast to the crude beauty and innocence of the natives like Uma, or even to the arrogant but uneducated, simple-minded white hero Wiltshire.

¹ Sidney Colvin, *Memories & Notes* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1921), p. 147.

The significance in looking at Stevenson's sense of identity in terms of 'home' and 'exile' lies in the fact that it provides a useful background against which Stevenson's views on other races and their cultures could be judged. The historical conditions of his homeland in particular shed light on the shaping of his views during the colonial encounter. Beneath Stevenson's shifting identities is a relevant connection between Scotland's paradoxical national identity and the Stevenson's paradoxical position in the South Seas -- a position of power and responsibility, of detachment and sympathy at the same time. This is because a writer's temperament can hardly be analysed independent of the culture in which he grew up.

The kind of argument we are suggesting here might perhaps be clarified in comparison with Conrad whose novels of colonial experience concern the same issues as Stevenson's South Seas fiction. Conrad's earliest memories were of imperial oppression --- exile to Russia under conditions which killed his mother and hastened the death of his father. In his actual colonial encounter which forms the setting of his stories, Conrad was well placed to study the colonial presence as at best an intrusion and at worst a violation.¹ In Stevenson's case, his sensitivity towards the racial conditions of the South Seas was a direct result of his engagement with his own cultural origins. That is, we cannot grasp the full significance of his South Seas fiction unless his patriotism is taken into account.

The great value of Stevenson's South Seas fiction lies in his willingness and ability to disassociate himself from the master race in favour of sympathetic identification with the islanders. Seen from a broader historical context, Stevenson's efforts are testimony to what Edward Said calls the tendency, in representations of the Orient from the eighteenth century onwards, to compare European experience with other civilisations and to seek elements of kinship between the Occident and the Orient.²

¹ M. M. Mahood, *The Colonial Encounter: A Reading of Six Novels* (London: Rex Collings, 1977), pp. 166-168.

² Said, pp. 117-18.

The Paradox of the Scottish Identity

Being a Scot, Stevenson belongs by birth to the dominating side of the colonial encounter. This is not necessarily the case, however, when the ambiguity of Scotland's national identity is considered. Scotland's important role in the British colonial enterprise is counterbalanced by the fact that Scotland itself has been marginalised by England within the Empire. Recent post-colonial theory has given rise to a discussion of Scottish literature in light of the post-colonial condition of Scotland. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have introduced a comparative model based on the relationship between the dominated and the dominating within one country or area:

Dorsinville's model...accounts for conflicting postures of the dominant society which might itself be subtly dominated by another power. In Australia, for instance, Aboriginal writing provides an excellent example of a dominated literature, while that of white Australia has characteristics of a dominating in relation to it. Yet white Australian literature is dominated in its turn by a relationship with Britain and English literature. A study of the contradictions which emerge in such situations, and of the reflection of changes through time of imperial-colonial status within, say, the American or British traditions, would be a fascinating one.¹

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin also apply this model to the situation of Irish, Welsh and Scottish literature in relation to the English 'main stream'. They argue that while 'these societies were the first victims of English expansion, their subsequent complicity in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonised peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial.'²

Berthold Schoene and Caroline McCracken-Flesher think differently by perceiving Scotland as nothing less than a colony, though 'Scotland's colonisation depended on the quiet appropriation and perversion of its defining institutions and

¹ Bill Ashcroft and others, *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 32-33.

² *ibid.* p. 33.

signs over time rather than on physical violence'.¹ Schoene bases his argument on the fact that 'many Welsh, Irish and Scottish people perceive themselves as citizens of colonised nations which neither represent fully equal constituents of Great Britain nor independent member states of the Commonwealth'.² With regard to Scotland's national identity, 'Scottish people are Scots first, then British'.³ This view is echoed by Anthony King in a recent issue of *The Economist*: 'Surveys invariably find that most Scots feel themselves to be Scottish first and British second'.⁴

The reinterpretation of Scottish history in terms of hegemony or conquest by England also finds its voice in historians like Angus Calder and Michael Lynch. Lynch sets the starting-point of Scotland's colonial condition as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, right after the first 'War of Scotland' (1296-1304) when 'a *junta* of English officers was set up to conduct the government of Scotland; an exchequer was established at Berwick on the Westminster model. Scotland had become a virtual colony'.⁵ Calder's *Revolutionary Empire* (1981), published eight years earlier than Ashcroft's *The Empire Writes Back*, emphasises his particular concern with England's political, military, cultural and economic power over Ireland, Wales and Scotland, a phenomenon properly termed by Gavin Wallace and Christopher Harvie and others as 'internal colonisation'.

In fact, the term 'internal colonisation' carries another meaning: the collaboration of Scottish local chiefs and factions with the English in the oppression of Scottish people. Unlike the native non-settler colonies of Asia or Africa, Scotland was never overtly colonised through long-standing physical occupation by its overwhelming neighbour. Even when briefly conquered, the country was never threatened by any large-scale attempts at ethnic extirpation comparable to the traumatic experiences of the colonised peoples of the Third World. In some cases, after a war the English calculated a balance between retaining the loyalty of Scottish nobles and subjecting

¹ Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'English Hegemony / Scottish Subjectivity: Calvinism and Cultural Resistance in the Nineteenth-Century "North British" Novel' (PhD dissertation, Brown University, 1989), p. 2.

² Berthold Schoene, 'Britain's Postcolonial Condition' in *Scotlands* (periodical) 2.1, 1995, ed. by Robert Crawford, p. 108.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Dudley Fishburn, *The Economist: The World in 1996* (London: the *Economist* Newspaper Ltd., 1995), p. 29.

⁵ Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 118.

the country to English dominance. As Lynch has noted, for instance, the Edwardian conquest at the beginning of the fourteenth century was immediately followed by the English policy of enlisting Scottish nobles' participation in the government of Scotland: 'Although the chief officers in the government were to be English, Scots nobles (including three ex-Guardians) were given a voice in the King's council in Scotland, and most of the local offices such as sheriffs and constables went to Scots'.¹ In more extreme cases, the conquering English army allied with some significant local faction, the latter implementing the conqueror's policies aimed at oppressing some other Scottish group. After Charles Edward Stuart's defeat at Culloden, as Harvie has pointed out, 'the internal colonisers were Scots ... More Scots had fought for Cumberland than for Charles Edward; more Scots than English soldiers thereafter wasted the glens; it was Scots landlords and factors, not Englishmen who forced the Highlanders on to the emigrant ships'.² Another historian observes that 'at the Battle of Culloden, a third of the government army were Scots, and many Highlanders fought against the Jacobites'.³ To a considerable degree, the Highland Clearances were effectuated by the Highland landlord class driving their tenants, as well as leading them, out to India to fight for the British Empire, while ironically surviving soldiers 'came home at last to find their glens empty, their houses pulled stone from stone, and their families dispersed'.⁴

Scotland's colonisation, therefore, did not need to rely on the physical occupation of its territory by England. Instead it involved the gradual absorption of Scotland's institutions and identity into England's orbit. The geographical and religious conditions seemed to have favoured the chance for a union between the two kingdoms: there were no physical barriers to divide the territories, and after the Reformation the State religion in both countries was Protestant. Yet, when the actual Union came into being --- first of the Crowns in 1603 and then of the Parliaments in 1707, the relationship between the two was not on an equal footing. When Scotland

¹ Lynch, p. 120.

² Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707-1977* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977), p. 73.

³ Donald Gunn and Mari Spankie, *The Highland Clearances* (London: Wayland Publishers Ltd., 1993), p. 19.

⁴ Cited by courtesy of Prof. Colin Nicholson, *Close Reading of the Post-Colonial: Origin, Voice and Context in Scottish and Canadian Writing*, p. 18.

offered up her crown and her constitution to the Union for shared economic prosperity, she lost her separate statehood at the same time. Scotland became, 'if not quite a provincial colony, certainly a satellite state'.¹

The Union of the Crowns appeared to have favoured the Scots, for it was their king who inherited the English throne, and not vice versa. But in fact, when James VI of Scotland moved the geographical location of his power from Edinburgh to London, he effectively distanced himself from his Scottish subjects. In a notable speech in 1607 before the English parliament, shortly after he received the English Crown, James VI described his relations to the kingdom he had left in these words: 'This I must say for Scotland,' he said, 'Here I sit and govern it with my pen: I write and it is done, and by a clerk of the Council I govern Scotland now, which others could not do by the sword'.² Since he could rule over Scotland from England, the divorce between Scotland and her king was inevitable. Once south of the border, James VI, who was now also James I, did not bother to come back to his northern kingdom until fourteen years later. Even his only one return visit in 1617 was resolutely opposed by his English privy council intent on the total 'Englishing' of James I.³ After him the next monarch actually to visit Scotland was George IV in 1822, with a lapse of over two hundred years in between.

The process of the two kingdoms becoming one nation was not complete until the Union of the Parliaments in 1707. During the century between the two halves of the complete Union, suspicion about the benefits of the Union had always existed among the Scots. Their apprehension manifested itself in the hostile attitudes of the Scottish parliament, which in 1607 daringly voiced its fears of union turning Scotland into 'a conquered and slavish province to the government by a Viceroy or Deputy'.⁴ On the English side, despite minor suspicions that free trade would flood the English market with cheap Scottish goods, the attempt to subject her partner within a greater Britain was accompanied by economic blackmail and bribery. In 1705, the English parliament passed the 'Allien Act' which threatened that, unless Scotland accepted the Hanoverian succession by Christmas Day 1705, Scots would be treated as aliens

¹ Lynch, p. 326.

² Cited in Lynch, p. 240.

³ Lynch, p. 239.

⁴ *ibid.*

and Scottish commerce would be severely paralysed.¹ At the same time, many Scottish aristocrats accepted bribes in return for voting for a union. According to the memoirs of George Lockhart of Carnwath (1817), the bribes accepted by Scottish aristocrats range from £50 to £2,325.²

The Act of Union guaranteed Scotland's separate Church, law and education. After the 'Forty-Five' and right through the nineteenth century, however, the three main institutions that protected Scotland's identity were increasingly threatened. The Kirk, which had become a symbol of Scottish identity after the Union of the Crowns, now had to try 'to bargain for greater patronage from the British state and ended up in conflict, both with it and with itself. Its distinctive identity retreated into a narrow, legalistic defence of its own privileges; its status slipped from that of a national Church to a minority Establishment'.³ Education, which used to be the other special apparatus for perpetuating national identity, also experienced encroachment from the English:

[It] began in 1834 with George Lewis's provocatively titled tract *Scotland: a half-educated Nation* and lasted through a series of royal commissions which inquired into the workings of the universities. The sense of crisis had been heightened by the introduction of competitive examinations for entry into the Indian civil service in 1852 which were geared to the Oxford and Cambridge system. Scottish-trained candidates did badly; jobs, the basis of the new imperial vision first offered by Dundas in the 1780s, were now more difficult to get. The sense of superiority of Scotland's parochial schools was under threat. Nowhere were Scottish feelings more sensitive, and objections to Anglicisation --- both real and imagined --- louder.⁴

In fact, the attempt to 'bring Scottish highlanders to civility' had begun earlier, right after James's accession to the English throne. The practice was similar to the civilising mission carried out by the colonists among the South Pacific islanders, which incurred Stevenson's criticism: the clan chiefs were forced to have their eldest sons or daughters educated on the mainland and taught to speak, read and write in English.⁵

¹ J. P. Mackie, *A History of Scotland* (1964) p. 259, cited in McCracken-Flesher, p. 4.

² Gunn, p. 16.

³ Lynch, p. 357.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*, p.241.

The English intrusion into Scottish legislation was particularly notable. New laws were passed at Westminster to cover areas previously uncovered by Scots law. As Lynch observes, the intention ‘was not so much Anglicisation as an assault by the collective British state, which has continued into the late twentieth century’.¹ There were replacements of Scottish jurisdiction by the Westminster parliament as well. The Heritable Jurisdiction Act of 1747, for example, substituted royal jurisdiction for the private jurisdiction previously exercised by clan chieftains. The purpose was, as one MP candidly put it, to ‘carry off the King into every part of the United Kingdom’.² Politically the Scottish role within Great Britain was marginalised. The Scottish representation at Westminster was out of proportion to the size of its population. This phenomenon continued into Victorian Scotland. According to Lynch, Scotland had until 1868 only fifty-three MPs out of 658, whereas its population entitled it to nearly ninety. When the post of a Secretary for Scotland was created in 1885, it had only a token presence in Edinburgh. The Secretary did not command a place in the Cabinet until 1892 and the office did not become a full Secretaryship of State until 1962. At Westminster, debates on Scottish issues were relegated to the small hours, and Scottish MPs were encouraged to reach ‘an understanding on Scottish questions’ to hurry business through.³ This odd situation against the Scottish representation in the Westminster parliament was vividly captured by the Scottish novelist Tobias Smollett (1721-1771) in his novel *Humphry Clinker* (1771). Smollett’s sympathy with Scotland is seen through the exchange between Matthew Bramble and Captain Lismahago, with a touch of sarcasm:

“Softly, captain, (cried I) you cannot be said to have lost your own parliament, while you are represented in that of Great Britain.” “True, (said he, with a sarcastic grin) in debates of national competition, the sixteen peers and forty-five commoners of Scotland, must make a formidable figure in the scale, against the whole English legislature.” “Be that as it may, (I observed) while I had the honour to sit in the lower house, the Scotch members had always the majority on their side.” “I understand you, Sir, (said he) they generally side with the majority; so much the worse for their constituents.”

Lismahago continues:

¹ *ibid.*, p. 357.

² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1873* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992) p. 119.

³ Lynch, p. 415-6.

“But even this evil is not the worst they have sustained by the Union. Their trade has been saddled with grievous impositions, and every article of living severely taxed, to pay the interest of enormous debts, contracted by the English, in support of measures and connections in which the Scots had no interest nor concern.” I begged he would at least allow, that by the union the Scots were admitted to all the privileges and immunities of English subjects; by which means multitudes of them were provided for in the army and navy, and got fortunes in different parts of England, and its dominions.¹

The second half of their conversation bears immediate relation to the paradoxical nature of Scottish identity: the questionable economic gain of the union for Scotland coincides with her role in the imperial expansion.

First, the tangible economic fruits for Scotland, that primary aim of the union, were limited or slow to materialise. The free trade area which opened up after 1707 brought prosperity only to a few Scots such as the Glasgow tobacco lords. In agriculture, the most important sector of the Scottish economy where ninety percent of the Scots were still employed, the effects of Union were marginal.² Another group who really benefited financially were Scotland’s nobility who looked up to England for the source of wealth and had relocated themselves as such. The image was drawn in Dr Johnson’s words of denigration in 1763: ‘The noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees is the high road to England’.³ Seen from another perspective, Scotland’s relative prosperity was due largely to the population decline: masses of Scots, especially Highlanders, went or were evicted from their homes for emigration as victims of the Clearances. During the century of the Clearances (1762-1886), almost 100,000 people left the Highlands either to escape poverty at home, or to preserve their traditional way of life.⁴

Second, the comparative poverty and resultant emigration spurred on Scottish interest in British imperial expansion. Among the Highland Scots who had to leave their homeland during the Clearances, some moved to the coast and the Lowlands, while many more, relevant to our present discussion, went to join the armed forces or went abroad to settle in the British colonies. In other words, they became empire-builders. And this has not included the increasing number of elite Scots heading

¹ Smollett, Tobias, *Humphry Clinker* (1771), ed. O. M. Brack, Jr. (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 1960), pp. 266-67.

² See Lynch, p. 323.

³ James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, 1791; ed. R.W.Chapman (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980) p. 302.

⁴ Gunn, p. 28.

south of the border after the Union in search of greater opportunities in politics. Linda Colley in *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* attributed this duality of Scotland's national identity to a general shift in Britain's official attitude towards Scotland after the 'Forty-Five', and to an urge for prosperity and a share for imperial gains and glory on the part of Scotland. After the 'Forty-Five', while remaining in a position of marginalisation within the British state, Scotland, with her manpower and rich resources of talent, was no longer regarded as the old enemy in official eyes. 'Instead, Scotland was coming to be seen by those in power as useful, loyal and *British*...The rulers of the British state betrayed their absolute conviction that trade and patriotism were inseparably linked. If more Scottish Highlanders could be hooked into the commercial system, the argument went, their loyalty would be bound to blossom. And once that happened, they could be safely absorbed into the imperial war machine'.¹ Consequently, one of the few state 'trades' wide open to Scottish ambition was the British army. The aftermath of the 'Forty-Five' marks the transition in Scotland's national identity: For the first time the British army was ready to recruit men on a massive scale from the Scottish Highlands. 'Those clans that had taken up arms against the Union in 1715 and 1745 had been wooed to the British cause by way of favours and promotions for their former chieftains, and transformed into the cannon-fodder of imperial war'.² Between 1793 and 1815, 72,385 Highlanders were recruited to fight for Britain's foreign wars.³

The loyalty and bravery of the Scottish soldiers won admiration from the leaders of the British imperial wars. 'I sought for merit wherever it was to be found,' as William Pitt the Elder boasted, 'I found it in the mountains of the North...a hardy and intrepid race of men...They served with fidelity as they fought with valour, and conquered for you in every part of the world'.⁴ Lord Barrington, the Secretary of War, told Parliament in 1751:

I am for having always in our army as many Scottish soldiers as possible; not that I think them more brave than those of any other country we can recruit from, but because they are generally more hardy and less mutinous: and of all

¹ Colley, pp. 119-120.

² *ibid.*, p. 103. According to Colley, limited numbers of Highlanders had been recruited before 1745 to serve in the Black Watch regiment.

³ Gunn, p. 35.

⁴ Cited in Colley, p. 103.

Scottish soldiers I should choose to have and keep in our army as many Highlanders as possible.¹

Major General James Wolfe, who was to lead a successful attack on Quebec in 1759, saw the Highlanders fight at the Battle of Culloden and was so impressed as to make the following observation:

They are hardy, intrepid, accustomed to rough country and no great mischief if they fall. How can you better employ a *secret enemy* than by making his end conducive to the common good?²

The prominence of the Scots in their military participation in empire-building could be explained in terms of the quality, as well as the quantity, of Scots in the colonies at the time. Well-born or well-educated Englishmen usually had the pick of jobs back home. Those who abandoned their opportunities on their doorstep for the discomfort and dangers of the colonial life tended to be outsiders in some way. By contrast, even the toughest frontiers of the empire attracted men of first-rate ability from the Scottish Highlands because they were usually poorer than their English counterparts with smaller prospects on the British island kingdom.³ If it is not surprising that one in four regimental officers in the mid-eighteenth century was a Scot,⁴ the island of Skye offers a convincing specimen of Scotland's military talent available for the service of the Empire: 'In a period of forty-five years, straddling the Napoleonic Wars, it has been claimed that the island of Skye, with a population of 16,000, produced twenty-one generals, forty-five colonels, four governors of colonies, one governor general, and one adjutant general'.⁵ Among the Scots who rose to prominence in the colonies were Lachlan Macquarie and James Murray. The former, born on a small Scottish island, had a long military career before becoming governor of New South Wales in Australia in 1808. The latter, after performing a good service under James Wolfe in North America, was rewarded by being made Britain's first Governor of Canada. That Murray's father and brothers had been Jacobites is a convincing example of a shift in the Empire's attitude towards Scotland

¹ *ibid.* p. 120.

² *ibid.* p. 34.

³ See Colley, p.128.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.126.

⁵ Cited by courtesy of Prof. Colin Nicholson, p. 19.

after the 'Forty-Five'. It also signifies that Scotland was gradually leaving the category of subject nations to join the ranks of the imperialist.¹

For some Scots, the path to glory and the path to fortune were identical. Imperialism served as Scotland's opportunity in terms of self-respect which was otherwise denied her within the island kingdom. Until the ban on tartan ended in 1782, for example, only members of the British army could legally wear it. Pride in the kilt encouraged Highlanders to become recruits. Perhaps nothing bears out the paradox of Scottish identity within the empire more clearly than the language: foreigners are still inclined to make the mistake of referring to the United Kingdom as 'England', while neither historians nor others have ever substituted 'English' for 'British' in the name of the great empire.

However, the importance of Scotland's role in the imperial enterprise did not eliminate entirely her condition of being subjected to marginalisation -- racially at least -- within the island kingdom. Notions of racial prejudice had been developed, of course, before the actual union. King James VI of Scotland identified himself with the English view when he looked askance at the Gaelic culture: 'As for the highlanders, I shortly comprehend them all in two sorts of people: the one dwelleth in our mainland that are barbarous, and yet mixed with some show of civility; the other that dwelleth in the isles and are all utterly barbarous'.² Daniel Defoe, who took part in the negotiations for the Union, wrote with arrogance two years after the event in his *History of the Union* that the Scots would 'more and more bless God for the Union which had removed them from the petty tyranny of their own constitution to be made one with the freest nation in the world'.³ As to the name of the great empire, there were people like John Wilkes (1727-1797), viewed as the personification of English imperial arrogance in his attitude towards Scotland, who

¹ I owe the above information to Colley, p.127. The importance of the Union for Scotland in terms of colonialism could be perceived from another angle. Before the 1707 Union, Scotland had made an attempt -- the only one of its kind -- at overseas colonisation, but failed. The Company of Scotland was established in 1695 on the lines of the West Indian Company. In 1698, 1,200 Scottish settlers were shipped westward across the Atlantic for the establishment of a colony at Darien, on the narrow isthmus of Panama, in Spanish territory. Only fewer than one in four survived the hostility of the natives, disease and Spanish attacks. By 1700 the few survivors returned to Scotland, and the Company of Scotland collapsed. See Lynch, p. 308.

² Lynch, p. 241.

³ Angus Calder, *Revolutionary Empire: The Rise of the English Speaking Empires from the Fifteenth Century to the 1780s* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1981), p. 430.

used the pages of his newspaper *The North Briton* to protest against the growing popularity of the term 'Great Britain'. His preference for using 'England' as a word to describe the entire island, and for 'Englishman' over 'Briton' was taken up by many of his supporters. The narrative of English supremacy even went into the 1775 edition of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary. His definition of oats as 'A grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people' is a famous example of racial prejudice.

4

Representations of the Scottish Identity in Literature

How did the post-Union Scot respond to such a diversity of colonial discourse? Given the historical tragedies of the 'Fifteen' and the 'Forty-Five' rebellions, and Scotland's continuing need to share the economic benefits from the Empire, the post-Union Scot could not win back his difference and pride through violence, but through his participation together with England in the military conquest and colonisation of the other parts of world. Literature, on the other hand, became a more intricate reflector of what the Scot truly felt about himself in relation to the imperial centre -- England.

Eighteenth and the nineteenth-century Scottish literature constituted a multi-faceted structure of different and overlapping identities in response to the English intrusion on Scottish life and culture. There was an attitude of resignation of the Scottish identity in favour of the English, as was expressed in Boswell's self-disparaging statement to Dr Samuel Johnson: 'Mr Johnson, (said I) I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it'.¹ People like him felt themselves too Scottish to settle comfortably in England, and yet becoming too English to return to their native land. A similar attitude was adopted by writers of the 'Kailyard' school who went south in pursuit of money, though their Scottish culture remained the source of their

¹ James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, 1791, ed. by R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 277.

literary inspiration: 'We poor authors may get our fame and our inspiration from our homelands, but we have to get our money elsewhere than where the heather grows'.¹

A balanced position was represented by Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), also a novelist and travel writer like Stevenson, and a historian such as Stevenson once tried to be. Smollett turned professional author in London only after he became disillusioned over his medical practice in the English capital where the establishment of the profession was generally hostile to outsiders including a Scotsman. His literary success ensured his position south of the border, which he was to repay by writing his *Complete History of England* (1755-1758) in four volumes that was popular enough to rival David Hume's prestigious *History of Great Britain* (1754-1763). Yet, the very first of his publications was the ballad *The Tears of Scotland* (1746) on the defeat of the Jacobite rebellion on 16 April. His poem very movingly represents the sufferings of his countrymen and his indignation over the atrocities committed by Duke of Cumberland's troops. The opening lines illustrate his attitude:

Mourn, hapless CALEDONIA, mourn
Thy banish'd peace, thy laurels torn!
Thy sons, for valour long renown'd,
Lie slaughter'd on their native ground;
Thy hospitable roofs, no more,
Invite the stranger to the door;
In smoaky ruins sunk they lie,
The monuments of cruelty.²

Smollett, though a Tory, was not a Jacobite. But he had the feelings of a Scotch gentleman on the reported cruelties that were said to be exercised after the battle of Culloden. The difference in sentiment and political views set him apart from his Whig friend John Wilkes who was notorious for his arrogant attitude toward the Scots as a nation. Their angry attacks of each other could be imagined when Smollett

¹ Cited in William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), p. 120. The Kailyard School refers to a literary movement of the late nineteenth century Scotland whose authors were all Scottish but most of them moved to prosper in London. Its themes centred on Scottish kailyard, characterised by mawkish sentimentality and a limited use of the Scots vernacular intended for English and American readership. The main representatives include J. M. Barrie, John Watson (pseud. 'Ian Maclaren'), S. R. Crockett and the publisher W. R. Nicoll, of whom Crockett had regular correspondence with R. L. Stevenson and was a great admirer of the latter.

² Byron Gassman, ed., *Tobias Smollett: Poems, Plays, and The Briton* (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), pp. 23-4.

assumed the editorship of a Tory weekly paper *The Briton* (1762-1763) and Wilkes started his, *The North Briton*, a week later.¹

Despite his feelings for Scotland, Smollett aimed at the ideal of reconciliation and balance in the social and national conflict. In *The Present State of All Nations* (1768-69) that he compiled, Smollett generally praised England, whereas in *Humphry Clinker* (1771) this praise just as often turns to satire, with the praise reserved for Scotland instead.²

Then there was also the Burns and Fergusson type of rejection of Scotland's subjugation to England. In 'Such a Parcel of Rogues' composed in 1792, Robert Burns (1759-1796) expressed his contempt about the Treaty of Union and the way it was achieved:

Fareweel to a' our Scottish fame,
Fareweel our ancient glory;
Fareweel even to the Scottish name,
Sae fam'd in martial story!
Now Sark rins o'er the Solway sands,
And Tweed Rins to the ocean,
To mark where England's province stands,
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

What force or guile could not subdue,
Thro' many warlike ages,
Is wrought now by a coward few,
For hireling traitors' wages.
The English steel we could disdain,
Secure in valour's station;
But English gold has been our bane,
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

O would, or I had seen the day
That treason thus could sell us,
My auld grey head had lien in clay,
Wi' BRUCE and loyal WALLACE!
But, pith and power, till my last hour,
I'll mak this declaration;
We're bought and sold for English gold,
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!³

¹ See Oliphant Smeaton, *Tobias Smollett* (Edinburgh and London, 1897), pp. 103-04.

² See Jerry C. Beasley, ed., 'Introduction' to *Tobias Smollett: The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), p. xxiii.

³ James Kinsley ed., *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), Vol. II, p. 643.

Robert Fergusson (1750-1774), the Edinburgh poet who was born exactly a hundred years before Stevenson, responded angrily to Dr Samuel Johnson being ‘entertained with all the elegance of lettered hospitality’ by the University of St. Andrews, for Fergusson still remembered the latter’s definition of *oats* with bitterness:

But hear me lads! gin I’d been there,
How I wad trimm’d the bill o’ fare!
For ne’er sic surly wight as he
Had met wi’ sic respect frae me,
Mind ye what *Sam*, the lying loun!
Has in his Dictionary laid down?
That Aits in England are a feast
To cow an’ horse, an’ sican beast,
While in Scots ground this growth was common
To gust the gab o’ *Man* an’ *Women*.
Tak tent, ye *Regents!* then, an’ hear
My list o’ gudely hamel gear,
Sic as ha’e often rax’d the wyme
O’ blyther fallows mony time;
Mair hardy, souple, steive an’ swank,
Than ever stood on *Samy*’s shank.¹

In Fergusson’s opinion, Dr Johnson should have been treated with such food as sheep’s head, haggis, brose and certainly oatcakes, instead of with an expensive and exotic dinner. Fergusson returns to the attack in the poem, ‘To Dr Samuel Johnson: food for a new Edition of his Dictionary’, written in English.

It should be mentioned, however, that Dr Johnson’s definition of *oats* is only a rare example of his prejudice against the Scots. He obviously liked the Highlanders of Scotland for their loyalty and warmheartedness. In spite of their difference in language and race, Johnson seemed to be willing to accept the Highlanders as part of the British nation, in a way that he never accepted Americans. Apart from his colonial view that colonies existed only for the economic well-being of the mother country, and his refusal to admit American colonists or Scottish adventurers to full and equal community with ‘true-born Englishmen’, he was quite liberal in his racial

¹ Robert Fergusson, ‘To the Principal and Professors of the University of St Andrews, on their superb treat to Dr Samuel Johnson’, in *Scottish Satirical Verse: An Anthology*, ed. Edwin Morgan (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1980), p. 65. ‘The superb treat’ took place on 19 August 1773.

assumptions and held that underneath superficial differences of colour and language and customs, human nature was essentially the same throughout the world.¹

Robert Louis Stevenson participated in the construction of that paradoxical, overlapping identity that formed an important aspect of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Scottish literature. Again, duality characterises this part of Stevenson. His familiarity with the post-Union Scottish history and his personal experience of the disparity between England and Scotland served to sharpen his sense of Scottish identity. Yet, the urge for literary fame and money subjected him to English standards of taste. The resistance that he formulated against English encroachment loosened its grip when he willingly situated his literary circle of friends in the imperial centre, London. It was in the South Seas, when confronted with an indigenous culture, that he was able to elevate himself from nationalism to humanitarianism. The result was his ability to recognise similarities between the South Pacific culture and that of his own, and his readiness to regard both Scotland and Samoa as his home.

It is important to note that Stevenson had always kept an interest in the post-Union Scottish history, both before and after he travelled to the South Seas. Early in 1873 when he was spending the winter at Mentone in the south of France for his health, he did a great deal of reading about Scottish history and thought seriously about problems of Scottish character and society. He wrote to Mrs Sitwell that he was planning a book to be entitled *Four Great Scotchmen*, on John Knox, David Hume, Robert Burns and Walter Scott --- 'These, their lives, their work, the social media in which they lived and worked, with, if I can so make it, the strong current of the race making itself felt underneath and throughout -- this is my idea'. (*Letters*, I, 464-65). In the end, though, he wrote only essays on Knox and Burns which were to be included in his *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*.

From August 1880 to September 1882, Stevenson spent three summers in the Scottish Highlands, during which period he professionalised his hitherto amateur interest in Scottish history.

¹ See Donald J. Greene, *The Politics of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 218-19, 237.

In early December 1880 he wrote to his father from Davos, Switzerland, about his plan to write a book on the history of the Highlands from the defeat of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, and asking for books relevant to the subject: 'I see very clearly that I shall have a lot to say about the Highlands... It is simply one of the most interesting fields of inquiry in the world, and there is a noble book to be written on the Highlands from then to now, social, religious and military. Two crosses, I am most anxious for; if you find anything else about the Highlands from 1700 down to *yesterday*, please collar it at once' (*Letters*, III, 127). A few days later he sent his father a scheme of his book in five chapters explaining that 'I begin the book immediately after the '15, as then began the attempt to suppress the Highlands'.¹ He intended to expand the book into two volumes, *The Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* and *Scotland and the Union*, under the title *A History of Modern Scotland*, and was fully aware that he was embarking on a significant project. The confidence and great joy he felt about his project can be seen in his letters to his friends. Writing to Dora Norton Williams, he said:

I have got on to a splendid subject on which I shall be busy for a year: an account of the transformation of the Scottish Highlands from a populous, wild land of clans to its present desolate, law-abiding condition: the subject is scientific, romantic, picturesque, and a great deal of it has never been written about heretofore. It makes me a very happy (literary) man.²

He added in a letter to W. E. Henley that the book would be 'touching the privates of the old mystery of race.' '[U]ntil the book is done,' he told his friend Colvin, 'I must live as much as possible in the highlands, and that suits my book as to health. It is a

¹ Stevenson first conceived the book in his letter to Sidney Colvin on 9 December 1880. The book was to be called *The Transformation of the Highlands* with five parts:

Part I. The Thirty Years' Lull --- Suppression of the '15. Rob Roy. The Highland Watches. The Independent Companies. Lady Grange. The Military Roads. The Disarmament. Burt.

Part II. The Heroic Age --- Duncan Forbes of Culloden. Flora Macdonald. Lovat. The Highland Dress. The Forfeited Estates. etc.

Part III. Literature Intervenes --- The Ossianic Controversy. Boswell and Johnson. Mrs Grant of Laggan.

Part IV. The Eviction Period --- Highland Economics. The Reinstatement of the Proprietors. The Evictions. Emigration.

Part V. Religion --- The Men. The Disruption. Etc.

² *ibid.*, p. 136.

most interesting and sad story, and from the '45 it is all to be written for the first time'.¹

It is not known why Stevenson did not eventually fulfil his plan. The project might have been too big for him to handle, and he was certainly busy at the same time with something else, such as *The Black Man and Other Tales*, a group of supernatural stories set in Scotland, and a little later with *Treasure Island*. In June 1881 he wrote to John Tulloch: 'I fell in love with the Highlands: a very strange story, but so little opened up that it may be long before I can find my way from the one end to the other.' He then asked if his projected book would interfere with Tulloch's *Eighteenth Century*.² Therefore fear of a delayed, possibly redundant effort might also have been Stevenson's concern.

Had he had time to do his project, he would have been in a better position to win support for his attempt to become Professor of History. The opportunity occurred in the summer of 1881 when he was back from the Alps and staying in Pitlochry. He heard that the Professor of History and Constitutional law at Edinburgh University was retiring and he thought of applying for the chair himself. The chair was worth £250 a year for duties consisting only of three months' lectures in summer. In Stevenson's words, 'with my health this summer class is a great attraction; it is perhaps the only hope I may have of a permanent income' (*Letters*, III, 201). The selection of candidates lay in the hands of the Faculty of Advocates, of whom Stevenson was a member. He wrote letters to gather support and planned further work on Scottish history to prove his fitness. He was too late in his application. As Stevenson himself admitted several times that he did not have much of a hope, and that he was standing only to make himself known for future vacancies: 'I am told I am too late this year; but advised on all hands to go on, as it is likely soon to be once more vacant; and I shall have done myself good for the next time' (*Letters*, III, 198).

There was to be no next time for Stevenson, though. John Kirkpatrick (1836-1926) the successful candidate for the chair held the position until 1909. When the nomination came out, Stevenson was already high in the Alps at Davos. Except commenting briefly to Charles Baxter that he was pleased the chair issue was over,

¹ *ibid.*, p. 148-9.

² *ibid.*, p. 196. Tulloch's *Literary and Intellectual Revival of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* appeared in 1883.

Stevenson did not refer to the matter again, nor to his projected book on Scottish history. From September 1882 onwards, he travelled extensively to France, England, America and finally the South Seas, returning to Scotland only once for his father's funeral. But this turn of his serious attention to Scottish history had consequences: it supplied him with materials for his Scottish novels such as *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* set against the Jacobite rebellion. More important for our discussions, it sharpened his sense of Scottish identity on which he was to reflect during his own colonial encounter. Indeed the history of Scotland was never far away from his mind even when he was preoccupied with the people and life of the South Seas. His cousin Graham Balfour, who was to be the authorised biographer of Stevenson, came to visit him at Vailima in 1892 and he later gave a description of Stevenson's library: 'The library was lined with books, the covers of which had all been varnished to protect them from the climate. The most important divisions were the shelves allotted to the history of Scotland, to French books either modern or relating to the fifteenth century, to military history, and to books relating to the Pacific'.¹ The ambition he had cherished to write a book of responsible history was in a way realised in his travel book *In the South Seas* which, according to him, is 'all history', and also scientific, romantic and picturesque. It is still a subtle and comprehensive treatise on the Polynesian races. The interesting thing is that in this book Stevenson combined what he had learnt about the history of the Scottish Highlands with his observations of the Polynesian races, and made comparisons.

The shift in place and perspective does not represent a break with Scottish identity for Stevenson. Instead we find him constantly identifying himself, even in distant Samoa, with such Scottish poets as Robert Burns and Robert Fergusson, whose strong sense of Scottishness in response to English supremacy is a distinguishing characteristic. Writing in April 1891 to W. Craibe Angus,² who was organising a Burns exhibition in Glasgow in 1896 to commemorate the centenary of the poet's death, Stevenson professed his persisting interest in Burns with a touch of sorrow at not being able to return to his native land:

¹ Cited in David Daiches, *Robert Louis Stevenson and His World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 92.

² William Craibe Angus (-1899) was a noted fine-art dealer and Burns collector in Glasgow.

My interest in Burns is, as you suppose, perennial. I would I could be present at the exhibition, with the purpose of which I heartily sympathise; but the *Nancy* has not waited in vain for me, I have followed my chest, the anchor is weighed long ago, I have said my last farewell to the hills and the heather and the lynns; like Leyden; I have gone into far lands to die, not stayed like Burns to mingle in the end with Scottish soil. I shall not even return like Scott for the last scene. Burns Exhibitions are all over. 'Tis a far cry to Lochawe from tropical Vailima.

But still our hearts are true, our hearts are highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

(*Letters*, VII, 109)

He then went on to associate himself also with Robert Fergusson as the 'three Robins' of Scotland:

When your hand is in, will you remember our poor Edinburgh Robin? Burns alone has been just to his promise; follow Burns, he knew best, he knew whence he drew fire -- from the poor, white-faced, drunken, vicious boy that raved himself to death in the Edinburgh madhouse. Surely there is more to be gleaned about Fergusson, and surely it is high time the task was set about. I may tell you (because your poet is not dead) something of how I feel; we are three Robins who have touched the Scots lyre this last century. Well, the one is the world's, he did it, he came off, he is for ever; but I and the other -- ah! What bonds we have -- born in the same city, both sickly, both vicious, both pestered, one nearly to madness, one to the madhouse, with a damnatory creed; both seeing the stars and the dawn, and wearing shoe-leather on the same ancient stones, under the same pends, down the same close, where our common ancestors clashed in their armour, rusty or bright....If you will collect the strays of Robin Fergusson, fish for material, collect any last re-echoing of gossip, command me to do what you prefer -- to write the preface -- to write the whole if you prefer: anything, so that another monument (after Burns's) be set up to my unhappy predecessor on the causeway of Auld Reekie. You will never know, nor will any man, how deep this feeling is; I believe Fergusson lives in me.

(*Letters*, VII, 110)

Subsequently, more than once Stevenson showed deep concern for his Edinburgh namesake. He wrote to Angus again in the summer of 1891 about erecting a monument to Fergusson in the Haddington churchyard. In May 1894 he wrote to Charles Baxter from Vailima that he had always a great sense of kinship with poor Robert Fergusson:

I feel that I must do something for Fergusson; Burns has been before me with 'The Gravestone'. It occurs to me you might take a walk down the Canongate

and see in what condition the stone is. If it be at all uncared for, we might repair it and perhaps add a few words of inscription.... I wonder if an inscription like this would look arrogant:

This stone originally erected by Robert Burns, has been repaired at the charges of Robert Louis Stevenson and is by him re-dedicated to the Memory of Robert Fergusson as the gift of one Edinburgh lad to another.

In spacing the inscription I would detach the names of Fergusson and Burns but leave mine in the text, or would that look like sham modesty and is it better to bring out the three Roberts?

(*Letters*, VIII, 290-91)

Stevenson was within a few months of his death when he wrote this letter to Baxter. Lloyd Osborne, Stevenson's step-son, recalled the final days of Stevenson's life in this way:

Stevenson had never appeared so well as during the months preceding his death, and there was about him a strange serenity which it is hard to describe, for in quoting from his talks I might easily convey a sense of depression and disillusionment that would read like a contradiction. I think he must have had some premonition of his end; at least, he spoke often of his past as though he were reviewing it, and with a curious detachment as though it no longer greatly concerned him. 'I am the last of Scotland's three Robbies,' he said once. 'Robbie Burns, Robbie Fergusson, and Robbie Stevenson, and how hardly life treated them all, poor devils! If ever I go back I shall put up a stone to poor Fergusson on that forgotten grave of his.' Then he repeated the words in broad Scots as though their cadence pleased him: 'Scotland's three Robbies!'¹

While it is true that Stevenson had made quite severe comments on Burns's moral faults in his *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882) and called him a 'vulgar, bagman-like, professional seducer' in his letter to Edmund Gosse on 24 July 1879, just as he exaggerated Fergusson's dissipation by describing him as a 'white-faced, drunken, vicious boy', Stevenson still found a close kinship between himself and the other two. The reason, I think, is two-fold: being a Bohemian himself, Stevenson felt a common sense of moral inadequacy or *debauchery* (the word he used for Burns) that linked them together. A stronger tie, however, was the common ground of Scottishness, a deep love for his own country and his native city, as can be demonstrated through his relationship with S. R. Crockett.

Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1860-1914), minister of the Free Church (Penicuik, 1886) and an advocate of the Kailyard school, was ten years younger than Stevenson and was immensely proud of his acquaintance with the latter. In June 1893 he dedicated the first edition of *The Stickit Minister* '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 has not forgotten how' (*Letters*, VIII, 153). Stevenson was moved so greatly by the dedication that it stirred his thoughts of home from distant Samoa. He wrote to Colvin three months later:

If I could only be buried in the hills, under the heather and a table tombstone like the martyrs, where the whaups and plovers are crying! Did you see a little man who wrote *The Stickit Minister*, and dedicated it to me, in words that brought tears to my eyes every time I looked at them. 'Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying. *His* heart remembers how.' Ah, by God, it does! Singular that I should fulfil the Scots Destiny throughout, and live a voluntary exile, and have my head filled with the blessed, beastly place all the time!

(*Letters*, VIII, 159)

In spite of the emotion with which he read Crockett's dedication, Stevenson never sought any kind of identification with the man as he did with Fergusson or Burns. Rather, in their exchanges of correspondence, Stevenson kept a certain distance from Crockett, for whom national identity was a problem and *North Britain* was but the proper name for Scotland. The very first letter Stevenson wrote to Crockett from America in April 1888 shows their difference:

Dear Minister of the Free Kirk at Penicuik, -- for O, man, I cannae read your name! -- that I have been so long in answering your delightful letter sits on my conscience badly....I get a good few such; how few that please me at all, you would be surprised to learn -- or have a singularly just idea of the dullness of our race; how few that please me as yours did, I can tell you in one word -- *None*. I am no great kirkgoer, for many reasons -- and the sermon's one of them, and the first prayer another, but the chief and effectual reason is the stuffiness -- I am no great kirkgoer, says I, but when I read yon letter of yours, I thought I would like to sit under ye. And then I saw ye were to send me a bit buik, and says I, I'll wait for the hit buik, and then I'll mebbe can read the man's name, and onyway I'll can kill twa birds wi'ae stane. And, man! the bit buik was ne'er heard tell o'!

¹ Lloyd Osborne, *An Intimate Portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson*, cited in Alanna Knight, *The Robert Louis Stevenson Treasury* (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1985), p. 214.

.....

Don't put 'N.B.' on your paper: put *Scotland*, and be done with it. Alas, that I should be stabbed in the house of my friends! The name of my native land is not *North Britain*, whatever may be the name of yours. R.L.S.

(*Letters*, VI, 156)

The move into Scots indicates Stevenson's warm feeling for his own countryman. The effect is nostalgic and humorous, but with a touch of irony here: it serves as a reminder to Crockett of his Scottish identity. Except in his stories and novels set in Scotland, Stevenson seldom uses Scots, more so in his correspondence. We are not sure of Stevenson's idea on Crockett's Scottishness (or of the Kailyard) being intended for an English taste, but he was certainly not happy that Crockett substituted 'N.B.' for Scotland.

Stevenson was likewise dissatisfied when he heard that Crockett had published an unfavourable review of *A Footnote to History* (1892) which Stevenson had written to protest against colonial rule in Samoa. He said in his letter to Crockett in May 1893: '...I detected you early in the *Bookman*, which I usually see; and noted you in particular as displaying a monstrous ingratitude about the *Footnote*. Well, mankind is ungrateful; "Man's ingratitude to man makes countless thousands mourn", quo' Rab - or words to that effect' (*Letters*, VI, 156). Though it later transpired that Crockett did not actually write the unfavourable review as Stevenson supposed, the enthusiasm with which Stevenson defended his position in the South Seas was equal to that with which he guarded his Scottish identity.

5

'The Foreigner at Home'

Stevenson had been, from an early age, sensitive to contrasts between Scotland and England. On his first independent visit to England from July to October 1873, he more than once wrote to his mother expressing the great 'culture shock' that befell him as a 23-year-old Scot: 'I cannot get over my astonishment -- indeed it increases every day, at the hopeless gulph 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 unfamiliarity; I walk among surprises, for just where you think you have them, something wrong turns up' (*Letters*, I, 283).¹ A few days later he wrote again that 'I own to the enormous advantages of Scotland, just as strongly as I hold to the opposite. The people in this parish are horribly debased, I must say; centuries of education would scarcely bring them up to our Scotch level' (*Letters*, I, 284-85).

Stevenson worked the impressions of the racial and national contrasts received during this visit into his essay 'The Foreigner at Home' (*Cornhill Magazine*, May 1882): 'The dull, neglected peasant, sunk in matter, insolent, gross and servile, makes a startling contrast with our own long-legged, long-headed, thoughtful Bible-quoting ploughman. A week or two in such a place as Suffolk leaves the Scotchman gasping' (*Tusitala*, XXIX, 6). This essay, together with 'The Scot Abroad' in *The Silverado Squatters* (1884), articulates Stevenson's earnest concern about his own country in terms of race and culture.

In his view, though English culture in the wake of imperial conquest had exerted its influence in most of North America, in the South Sea Islands, in India, along much of the coast of Africa, and in the ports of China and Japan, there existed within the United Kingdom so much difference in local dialects, local custom, law and religion as well as prejudice that assimilation was far from being achieved, and that people at home were virtually foreigners to each other by reason of contrasts in their language, temperament, social constitution, as well as their natural scenery and urban architecture.

Three things emerge from Stevenson's shifting identity within the cross-cultural boundaries of his own country. First, he found that the difference between England and Scotland was such that he felt more of a cultural affinity with other parts of Europe like France than with England. 'A Scotchman may tramp the better part of Europe and the United States,' he observed, 'and never again receive so vivid an impression of foreign travel and strange lands and manners as on his first excursion

¹ On 26 July 1873, Stevenson paid a visit to Cockfield Rectory in Suffolk, the home of his cousin Maud and her husband. It was during this first visit to England that he made the acquaintance of Sidney Colvin, his literary mentor.

into England' (4). While the intensely exotic, tame and ancient look of the landscape south of Tweed affected Stevenson with 'delighted wonder' as something romantically pleasurable, the region remained a cultural puzzle for him, and as a matter of fact, he never professed to understand England or the English well. His *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882), for example, deals with three Frenchmen, two Scotsmen, two Americans, and only one Englishman. In its preface he spoke of Scotland as 'a country far more essentially different from England than many parts of America' (*Tusitala*, XXVII, xi).

Second, Stevenson was equally aware of the division of races within the borders of Scotland, which he regarded as even more sharply marked than between the countries. These have been three races --- the Norse, the Celtic and the Saxon; and three languages --- Gaelic, Scots and English. That difference, however, was not of a nature that could forge separate national identities within Scotland. 'When I am at home,' said Stevenson, '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 Manor or the braes of Mar, some ready-made affection joins us on the instant' (*Tusitala*, XVIII, 172). In the same way, 'Galloway and Buchan, Lothian and Lochaber, are like foreign parts; yet you may choose a man from any of them, and, ten to one, he shall prove to have the headmark of a Scot' (*Tusitala*, XXIX, 10). The gap between the Lowlander and the Highlander was likewise perceived as insignificant:

The fact remains: in spite of the difference of blood and language, the Lowlander feels himself the sentimental countryman of the Highlander. When they meet abroad, they fall upon each other's necks in spirit; even at home there is a kind of clannish intimacy in their talk. But from his compatriot in the south the Lowlander stands consciously apart. He has had a different training; he obeys different laws; he makes his will in other terms, is otherwise divorced and married; his eyes are not at home in an English landscape or with English houses; his ear continues to remark the English speech; and even though his tongue acquire the Southern knack, he will still have a strong Scotch accent of the mind.

(11)

If the division of races characterised both Scotland itself and Britain as a whole, then what was it, in Stevenson's perception, that contrasted the 'ready-made

affection' within Scotland on the one hand, and the 'hopeless gulph' between England and Scotland on the other? There was certainly a special and closer attachment between Stevenson and his native land, as well as substantial differences in the constitution of society between England and Scotland. But Stevenson saw something else --- the fundamental contrast in temperament between the dominating and the dominated. This leads to a third point regarding Stevenson's sense of identity as a Scot: he was apt to draw comparisons unfavourable to England, and often in light of the imperial connections which marked centuries of Anglo-Scottish relationship. Not surprisingly, it was in the context of the post-colonial condition that Stevenson situated his critique of the imperial pride represented by England: 'But it is not alone in scenery and architecture that we count England foreign. The constitution of society, the very pillars of the empire, surprise and even pain us' (6). He elaborated his point a few pages earlier in the same essay:

In spite of these promptings to reflection, ignorance of his neighbours is the character of the typical John Bull. His is a domineering nature, steady in fight, imperious to command, but neither curious nor quick about the life of others. In French colonies, and still more in the Dutch, I have read that there is an immediate and lively contact between the dominant and the dominated race, that a certain sympathy is begotten, or at the least a transfusion of prejudices, making life easier for both. But the Englishman sits apart, bursting with pride and ignorance. He figures among his vassals in the hour of peace with the same disdainful air that led him on to victory. A passing enthusiasm for some foreign art or fashion may deceive the world, it cannot impose upon his intimates. He may be amused by a foreigner as by a monkey, but he will never condescend to study him with any patience.

(2)

Stevenson compared what he saw as the condescension of the Englishman with the curiosity of the Scot, his eagerness to establish serious human relations, and his desire to invite a return of interest from his southern neighbour. But the attitude of the Scot merely put him in the position of a 'suitor' and a 'poor relation'. Thus, 'even the lowest class of the educated English towers over a Scotchman by the head and shoulders' (7).

In his letters, however, Stevenson's attitude is more humorous than morally or politically observant, as was the case when he wrote to Edmund Gosse in July 1879:

‘*English*, the, a dull people incapable of comprehending the Scottish tongue. Their history is so intimately connected with that of Scotland, that we must refer our readers to that heading. Their literature is principally the work of venal Scots.’

Stevenson’s *Handy Cyclopaedia*; Glasgow¹: Blaikie & Bannock.

(*Letters*, II, 328)

Perhaps we can say that Stevenson’s critique of English imperial arrogance was carried into his South Seas fiction. The two best-drawn English characters are Attwater and Wiltshire. In spite of differences in education, both are portrayed as pretentious, ruthless types having much in common with villainous opponents. Of the other two English characters, Herrick is capable of moral judgement but a coward, and Huish the “slimiest little rat ever bred in a London sewer”. We may also argue, however, that Stevenson’s racial assumptions were based upon his moral sense rather than upon any biased position of being a Scot. The characters may be very English, both in their manners and mentality, but often they have little more association with the motherland than a mild feeling of nostalgia like Wiltshire’s home thoughts as he faces the prospect of assimilation with the native people. Stevenson did not choose to link the destinies of his English characters with that of the state. Most of them, with the possible exception of Attwater, are godless renegades or outcasts from their own society totally cut off from any formal contact with Britain. For to be a colonist is to lose the possibility of clear national identity and to become assimilated into a strange assortment of people, whether English, French, German, American or Scots, as Stevenson described in *The Ebb-Tide*: ‘Throughout the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease’ (*Tusitala*, XIV, 1). The ethno-cultural contrast that informs so much of his South Seas fiction is between whites and natives rather than between Caucasians.

Here rises the question of what position Stevenson took to in response to the cultural diversity and cultural differences that many of his foreign travels had enabled him to encounter. Again, duality played a part: he was both emotionally engaged with his own culture and detached from it rationally as well as physically.

For one thing, he was and felt himself to be a Scot throughout his life, and passionately so when brought face to face with English culture and society. In the South Pacific, geographical and anthropological associations with Scotland came readily in his imagination. Yet he did not seem to allow himself to be prejudiced against any nation or to show any blind worship thereof. We know that Stevenson had an equally strong antipathy to the Scotland that he knew best, that of Victorian gentility and respectability, as to the imperial arrogance of England. So was his attitude towards France as compared to Britain. After seeing much of France between 1874 and 1883, he sent Simoneau, his great French friend in California, a double column of racial comparisons which, regardless of their accuracy, indicate Stevenson's detached and unbiased stance in making his racial assumptions:

The English:

hypocrites
 good, stout, reliable friends
 dishonest to the root
 fairly decent to women

The French:

free from hypocrisy
 incapable of friendship
 fairly honest
 rather indecent to women

(*Letters*, IV, 197)

The observation that he made was to emphasise the strength of hybridity: 'All races are better away from their own country...And by travel, each race can cure much of its defects and acquire much of the others' virtues' (*Letters*, II, 328). The remark is relevant to Stevenson's own case. As J. C. Furnas has noted: his travels in Europe, America and the South Seas not only afforded him physical benefits but also exposed him to environmental and cross-cultural differences that did much to bring his talent into maturity. However, the attitudes he formed on European racial differences would undergo some fundamental change during his colonial encounter in the South Seas. Racial divisions between coloniser and colonised are far greater than between French and English or between English and Scottish as Stevenson knew. In his South Seas fiction, the strength of hybridity gives way to the destructive potential of cultural conflict. The whites do not necessarily fare better though they

¹ Glasgow: in the Tusitala edition (XXXII, p. 63) and *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson to His Family and Friends* (London: Methuen and Co. 1906; first published 1899; Vol. I, p. 135), both edited by Sidney Colvin, it reads 'Glescow'.

are ‘away from their own country’, and native culture faces destruction as a result of invasive western ‘civilisation’.

Stevenson’s racial assumptions within the context of Europe nearly strike a balance in the form of a broader national identity. We say ‘nearly’ because of his strong sense of Scottishness ever existent throughout his life and his alienation from England. Yet he could be fierily *British* when occasion rose. J. C. Furnas in his biography records that during his third visit to France in 1875, Stevenson lost his temper on overhearing a flamboyant Frenchman abusing the British in a café. He crossed the room and slapped the Frenchman’s face. ‘*Mais vous m’avez frappé!*’ ejaculated the Frenchman. ‘*A ce qu’il paraît,*’ replied Stevenson, sharply. In Honolulu in 1893 he flew into a violent rage, for which he soon apologised, merely at the mention of an English writer who had abused the Royal Family in print.¹ Another example was recorded vividly by Stevenson himself in his letter to Mrs Frances Sitwell on 26 January 1874 during his health-seeking visit at Mentone, France. This time the quarrel, from which we can see how deeply concerned Stevenson was about politics, involved an American:

Last night, I had a quarrel with the American on politics. It is odd how it irritates you to hear certain political statements made. He was excited and he began suddenly to abuse our conduct to America; I, of course, admitted right and left that we had behaved disgracefully (as we had); until somehow I got tired of turning alternate cheeks and getting duly buffeted; and when he said that the *Alabama* money had not wiped out the injury, I suggested, in language (I remember) of admirable directness and force, that it was a pity they had taken the money in that case. He lost his temper at once and cried out that his dearest wish was a war with England; whereupon, I also lost my temper and, thundering at the pitch of my voice, I left him and went away by myself to another part of the garden. A very tender reconciliation took place;²

(*Letters*, I, 464)

¹ Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 114.

² Mehew explained in his footnote: ‘The Confederate privateer *Alabama*, was built in a British port in breach of strict neutrality, inflicted immense damage on the shipping of the North during the American Civil War. The prolonged negotiations over the US Government’s claim for compensation from Britain strained relations between the two countries. In December 1871 an Arbitration Tribunal awarded the USA \$15 million compensation for damage by the *Alabama* and two other vessels. In *The Amateur Emigrant* (‘New York’) RLS wrote: “The first American I ever encountered after I had begun to adore America, quarrelled with me, or else I quarrelled with him, about the *Alabama* claims”’.

On the same day, Stevenson wrote to his father about the quarrel and told him that, following the reconciliation, the American vowed he would shed his best blood for England; while Stevenson felt that he himself had learnt something: 'I scarcely appreciated how badly England had behaved and how well she deserves the hatred the Americans bear her. It would have made you laugh, if you could have been present and seen your unpatriotic son thundering anathemas in the moonlight against all those that were not the friends of England' (*Letters*, I, 465).

So there is a continuing paradox in Stevenson: As a Scot he loved his homeland only to stay away from it for the most part of his life; he felt a foreigner in England and yet he could turn passionately against those who were not friendly to the country. To some extent, this shift of his allegiance can be attributed to the shift of his locality. That is, his sense of national identity became widened with the increasing scope of his travel. Within the United Kingdom he felt he was a Scot and England a foreign country. Outside he was both Scottish and British. The paradoxical nature of Stevenson's identity necessarily influenced his literary practice, especially when it concerned colonial issues.

6

The Literary Construction of the Post-colonial in the South Seas

Superficially, the paradox in Stevenson's national identity does not seem to form a pertinent connection with his literary career after he travelled to the South Seas. As I have suggested earlier, characters in his South Seas fiction can hardly be identified by their national concerns or even by their national origins. They are better recognised collectively as European whites living among Polynesian natives. Nor is it easy for us to detect in either his fiction or correspondence of the period his position with regard to the complex political and cultural issues of his own country with which he had been so preoccupied. The paradox that characterised Stevenson throughout his literary career, be it artistic, moral or racial, manifests itself in the literary dilemma that affected him during this period; it also pushed him towards a broader concern with humanity rather than with nationality, himself being caught

between sympathy with Polynesian natives and his patronising pride as a white man. Both his literary dilemma and the shift of his moral concern bear direct testimony to the domination/subjugation pattern, a pattern that is related to Stevenson's Scottish background.

Before we discuss the literary dilemma that Stevenson faced after he travelled to the South Seas, we may take a brief look at the relationships between the author, his literary circle of friends, and his readers in the early stages of his career. The evidence suggests that the story of Stevenson's literary career and the strange phenomenon of the rise, decline and revival of his fame, has as much to do with the literary domination and subjugation -- often with an English sentiment -- as with the actual value of the works themselves.

It was good fortune for Stevenson to be the subject of attention and admiration among his literary friends early in his career, especially when he first met Sidney Colvin ten years before he actually rose to fame with the publication of *Treasure Island* (1883). Stevenson received practical advice and constant encouragement throughout his career from his literary friends and was recommended to editors and publishers, which helped to secure him a sizeable readership capable of appreciation of his work. Neil Munro, one of Stevenson's contemporaries, noted in 1912 that 'no other writer in our time had his artistic reputation so carefully fostered and guarded by friends, themselves accomplished and discerning. They nursed it like a flower'.¹ This kind of adulation, when carried to excess, can also have ambivalent or even negative effects. This is certainly the case with a man like Stevenson who was highly sensitive to the public acceptance of him as a professional writer. The influence that his literary critics exerted on Stevenson can be discerned in two ways. On the part of the reading public, his friends and reviewers tended to make overstated claims and predictions that led readers to approach Stevenson with impracticably high expectations. If these readers did not find in Stevenson what they had been led to expect, they were most likely to be disappointed.

Stevenson was also affected by his literary friends in a more direct way. As Paul Maixner points out, Stevenson 'was put in the uncomfortable position of having to live up to their idea of what he should accomplish... and was obliged to expend too

much of his limited energy trying to placate supporters by doing work they would approve or by trying to justify work he knew they would not'.² When the American publisher S. S. McClure visited London in 1888, the year when Stevenson set out on his first Pacific voyage, he was surprised by the domination to which Stevenson was subjected and understood the incongruity between the warm reception of Stevenson's published works and the unusual circumstances under which those works were created:

Some of his friends there, those in whose critical powers he had most faith, were always condemning his new book, whatever it was. They could stand for what was already printed, but when he sent them the manuscript of a new work, they usually declared that that was fatal, that would be the end, and entreated him, for the sake of his reputation, not to publish it.³

To a certain extent, this phenomenon is the result of Stevenson's own paradoxical views about his role in relation to his critics and readers. At certain points in his career, he tended to regard himself as an artist working without any immediate concern for a reading public and motivated by a desire to produce a highly finished artistic object. He even showed open disapproval of editors' too great liberty in altering author's own intentions. In his essay on Samuel Pepys, for example, Stevenson defended the authors' integrity by saying that it was no part of the duties of the editor of an established classic to decide what might or might not be 'tedious to the reader' and that the readers were 'entitled to be treated rather more like scholars and rather less like children' (*Tusitala*, XXVII, 179). More often, however, he thought of his art as a means of fulfilling obligations to others. Duty is a key word in his life and he regarded it his duty to satisfy his friends and readers by offering what they would approve of and like. A Bohemian in life style, he was artistically dependent on the opinions of his literary friends and eager to win approval from his readers.

Furthermore, for Stevenson writing was not only a road to fame, but also more or less a steady occupation and means of financial support. Throughout his life, he felt a

¹ Sidney Colvin and others, *Robert Louis Stevenson: His Work and His Personality* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), p. 136.

² Maixner, p. 2.

³ Janet Adam Smith, *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), pp. 16-17.

sense of financial urgency. As a young man he depended on his father long after both felt he should be independent; when he married Fanny and settled in the South Seas, a large family and a dozen servants depended on him despite his weak health. Inevitably he had to make compromises in matters of publication to maximise his income. An early example is that soon after his marriage and being unable to increase his income from writing due to poor health, Stevenson returned home, accepted an annual allowance from his father of £250 and agreed to let his father pay £100 to have the manuscript of *Amateur Emigrant* withdrawn from the publishers.¹

Stevenson's literary dilemma echoes that of the Kailyard school of Scottish writers who depended on England for literary fame and source of income. S. R. Crockett's remarks at a public dinner in his honour in Galloway are particularly revealing:

We authors cannot always do just exactly what we would like. The publisher tells you to cut down the dialect because the *English* public does not understand it... The editor must have a book on a certain subject, because public interest calls for it. The land that holds the heather and the sheep does not hold the money for the man who has to live by his pen. So that to a certain extent the author is dependent upon a more distant public.²

Though Stevenson distanced himself from Crockett and associated himself with Burns and Fergusson over the issue of national identity, in language and style he was the other way round. The tradition of Scots vernacular continued in the poetry of Burns and Fergusson, while it assumed only a subsidiary role in the fiction of the Kailyard and Stevenson whose principal medium was standard English. Most of Stevenson's early works bore the marks of an English author. But Stevenson's literary dilemma has implications beyond language and style. It can be as usefully explained in light of the post-colonial domination/subjugation paradigm, relating to nation, race and culture.

Stevenson's circle of literary friends included Charles Baxter, Sidney Colvin, Edmund Gosse, Leslie Stephen, William Ernest Henley and Henry James, of whom

¹ See Maixner, p. 11.

² Cited in William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), p. 147.

the first two were closest during his life, and only Baxter lived in Scotland.¹ Stevenson's friendship with Baxter began against the background of their youthful bohemianism and dissipation in Edinburgh and as fellow members of the Speculative Society -- a debating club of Edinburgh University. From the South Seas in 1890 Stevenson addressed to Baxter his poem 'To My Old Familiar' which began as:

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?
...
Do you remember? -- Ah, could one forget!

(*Tusitala*, XXII, 154)

With the growth of Stevenson's literary success, Baxter became his legal and financial agent. Two things surface from their friendship in connection with Stevenson's quest for identity. It was with Baxter that he shared his most profound nostalgic feelings for Scotland, dedicating to him two of his finest Scottish novels, *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Catriona* (1892). In the dedicatory words of the latter made from the South Seas, Stevenson remarked that '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'. In a letter of February 1890, he regarded Baxter as a reflection of his truer self: '...you remain alone of my early past, truer now than ever, and I cling to the thought of you' (*Letters*, VI, 361). And it was with Baxter that Stevenson was more at ease about his writing -- he could write anything he pleased. Perhaps that is why Stevenson's wife Fanny could comment on the relationship in this way: 'Colvin was a friend of the intellect, but Charles of the heart. Louis's affection for Charles never wavered' (*Letters*, I, 43). In company or in correspondence with his English friends, however, Stevenson's sense of identity as a Scot and his integrity as an artist came under question; his dignity as a champion of the South Seas people came under attack. These three aspects -- his identity, integrity and dignity -- reinforce our

¹ Charles Baxter (1848-1919) was of English origin whose father came to Edinburgh from Liverpool as a boy. He was educated at the Edinburgh Academy and then went on to Edinburgh University. He

understanding of Stevenson's paradoxical views on race, nation and culture in the post-colonial context. His close and complicated relationship with Colvin illustrates this point.

Sir Sidney Colvin (1845-1927) came from a colonial family background with close ties with the East India Company: his father David Colvin was a partner in a leading firm in London of East India merchants; his uncle John Russell Colvin was Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces; and his maternal grandfather, William Butterworth Bayley, was for a few months in 1828 acting Governor-General of India and for many years Chairman of the Board of Directors of the East India Company.¹ Sidney Colvin himself grew up in East Suffolk of England, received his education at Cambridge, and settled in London afterwards, where he established a reputation as a critic of the fine arts. In 1873 he became Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge and in 1883 Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum. In a word, he had something that Victorian society admired: respectability and colonial glory.

Stevenson first met Colvin at Cockfield Rectory in Suffolk in July 1873, at a critical point in his life when he was deeply hurt by the bitter religious disagreements with his father and uncertain about his future career. Colvin recognised in the young Scot a potential talent as a writer, introduced him to publishers and editors, and helped to get Stevenson's early works published in the 'Cornhill' magazine, by which he established his reputation as a writer. For most of his life, Stevenson looked to Colvin as his mentor as well as friend. Similarly, Colvin's loyalty to his friend never wavered both before and after Stevenson's death and through the early 1920s that saw a sharp decline of public interest in Stevenson. Their friendship even survived the awkward fact that Stevenson was, from their first meeting for the next two years, in love with and emotionally dependent upon Frances Sitwell, the woman Colvin intended to marry. According to Furnas, the two men sometimes wrote to her from opposite sides of the same room, though Stevenson never challenged Colvin's priority.

followed his father in becoming a Writer to the Signet in 1871 and practised law in his father's law firm. See *Letters*, I, p. 41.

¹ I owe the above information to *Letters*, Vol. I., p. 45.

None of Stevenson's critics has doubted Colvin's influence on Stevenson's literary success, yet it was only recently that critical attention began to be paid to the full implications of that special relationship. Barry Menikoff pointed out that Colvin's intimacy with Stevenson and his superior position gave him the privilege of acting on Stevenson's behalf with the publishers, though he by temperament was unlikely to understand or sympathise with Stevenson's artistic aims and liberal thinking. Consequently 'he systematically diminished the value of all work that touched on the Pacific'.¹

The point I wish to make here is that the devaluation of Stevenson's South Seas writings is preconditioned by Stevenson's willingness to relocate his literary career within England, and by his partial willingness to negotiate a compromise with the predominant political and cultural convictions of his age as represented by Colvin out of concerns for financial security and literary reputation. The connection here works in a similar way, though paradoxically, as the logical connection between Stevenson's sympathy with the Polynesians under colonial rule and the peripheralisation of his own Scottish culture discussed earlier.

Although there was only a five-year gap between the two men, Stevenson looked upon his senior as a fatherly figure. 'Since my dear wild noble father died,' he wrote to Colvin from Vailima in August 1890, 'no head on earth is more precious to my thoughts than yours' (*Letters*, VI, 405). In February 1889 he admitted to Charles Baxter that for Lloyd (his stepson) and Colvin to whom he owed a 'filial duty', he would be ready to go back to England in spite of his improved health living in Samoa: 'The extraordinary health I enjoy and variety of interests I find among these islands would tempt me to remain here; only for Lloyd, who is not well placed on such countries for a permanency; and a little for Colvin, to whom I feel I owe a sort of filial duty. And these two considerations will no doubt bring me back -- to go to bed again -- in England' (*Letters*, VI, 249). At the same time, Stevenson must have been aware of the inequality in his relationship with Colvin, for he was rather in awe of him and described him as having 'the air of a man accustomed to obedience'. He further expressed this notion in his letter to his cousin Bob Stevenson in April 1879: 'I get fonder of Colvin, steady, and wish he was one to whom one could talk more

¹ Menikoff, p. 7.

equally. He is a person in whom you must *believe* like a man of the Trinity, but with whom little relation in the human sense is possible. A difficult, shut up, noble fellow' (*Letters*, I, 50). Yet Stevenson was willing to accept and obey Colvin's superiority, not only on account of his five years' seniority but by virtue of his position in the imperial centre. And with that acceptance his sense of cultural identity shifted to England, coming to regard England as his home. The previously quoted letter to Colvin ended with a poem he had composed in Apemana. Again, his thoughts of home went to England: '...To other lands and nights my fancy turned, / To London first, and chiefly to your house, / The many-pillared and the well-beloved...'

Colvin felt free to exercise his power of authority over Stevenson and told readers in his editorial note to *Vailima Letters* that 'it belonged to the richness of [Stevenson's] nature to repay in all things much for little ... and from these early relations sprang both the affection ... and the habit, which it pleased him to maintain after he had become one of the acknowledged masters of English letters, of confiding in and consulting me about his work in progress. It was my business to find fault; to 'damn' what I did not like; a duty which, as will be inferred from the following papers, I was accustomed to discharge somewhat unsparingly. But he was too manly a spirit to desire or to relish flattery, and too true an artist to be content with doing less than his best: he knew, moreover, in what rank of *English* writers I put him and for what audience, not of today, I would have him labour'.¹ Of course, Colvin was not alone in his effort to bring Stevenson into an English orbit. Neil Munro observed in 1912 that in Stevenson's prolonged valetudinarian absences, 'those friends at home, in closest touch with *English* sentiment, appraising tendencies, certain of his power and jealous for his fame, saw to it that no inferior performance should be permitted to discount his merits'.²

Neither Colvin nor others openly stated what it was in Stevenson that they did not like and wished to 'damn', or what of Stevenson's 'inferior performance' should not be permitted to discount his merits. It soon became clear, however, that the English standards they wanted to impose on Stevenson were not so much concerned with his

¹ R. L. Stevenson, *Vailima Letters*, edited by Sidney Colvin (London: Edinburgh edition, 1897), p. xiv.

² Sidney Colvin and others, *Robert Louis Stevenson: His Work and His Personality*, p. 137.

artistic style as with his moving away from England and the subject matter of his fiction set in the South Seas. Stevenson depended on foreign travels for the improvement of his health and for literary creativity, but his English friends did not seem to have recognised his personal needs.

First of all, Colvin and others were strongly opposed both to Stevenson's journey to America in 1879 and to his marriage with a divorced woman. The tone in Henley's letter to Colvin in February 1880 suggests an attempt to bring Stevenson under English domination by means of literary fame and money: 'Don't defer expostulation because he is ill. On the contrary, it is absolutely necessary that he should be brought to see that England and a quiet life are what he wants and must have if he means to make -- I don't say a reputation -- but money by literature'.¹ Though Colvin shared Henley's view, he was gentler in his attitude, and as a close friend, he worked hard to bring about a reconciliation between Stevenson and his father over the issue of Stevenson's marriage. But when Stevenson ventured further out of the European norm to settle in the South Pacific, Colvin became openly critical, describing Stevenson's announcement as 'a rude shock to those who loved him and were looking forward eagerly to his return'.² If we examine Colvin's memoirs and their correspondence during this early period of Stevenson's settlement in Samoa, we may find two obvious reasons for Colvin's strong disapproval of Stevenson's decision. His imperial belief that living among those uncivilised natives would damage Stevenson's creative values is mingled with his private worry over his own decreasing capability to exert influence on Stevenson because of the distance. Beneath these two presuppositions are not only his genuine concern for his friend but also implications of imperialist pretensions and literary subjugation.

In reply to Stevenson's announcement to settle in Samoa, Colvin wrote a bitter letter of denunciation. The letter has not survived, but we can still trace the core of this disagreement in Colvin's memoirs. He explained:

I persuaded myself that from living permanently in that outlandish world and far from cultivated society both he and his writing must deteriorate, and wrote warning him as much in plain terms. Translating unconsciously my own need and desire for his company into a persuasion that mine was needed, as of old, for

¹ Cited in Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 155.

² Sidney Colvin, *Memories & Notes*, p. 145.

criticism and suggestion to him in his work, and that he no longer valued it, I wrote reproachfully, pleading against and prophesying evil from his purpose.¹

He openly admitted his own selfishness in persuading Stevenson to return:

...on the side of his friends at home, speaking at least for myself, I fear that our joy in the news of his returning strength and activity had been tempered by something of latent jealousy that so much good could befall him without help of ours and at a distance of half the world away from us. I know that I was inclined to be hypercritical about the quality and value of some of the work sent home from the Pacific.¹

Colvin's strong opposition put Stevenson in a moral dilemma. He and his wife Fanny jointly wrote a long, emotional letter to Colvin to plead for his sympathy, but at the same time to assure him of their love. Stevenson's tone smacked of total capitulation: 'I see no harm in my dying like a burst pig upon some outlandish island, but if you died, without due notice and a chance for me to see you, I should count it a disloyalty: no less' (*Letters*, VI, 406). The solution that Stevenson sought to the dilemma is to remove his bodily self from Colvin's custody, while 'spiritually, we are yours and always shall be'.

Often, Stevenson was to hide his disagreement out of love and respect for Colvin. It was to Henry James that Stevenson confided his innermost feelings concerning the issue. About the same time that he and his wife wrote a joint letter to Colvin to explain their decision to settle in Samoa, he wrote to Henry James:

I must tell you plainly -- I *can't* tell Colvin -- I do not think I shall come to England more than once, and then it'll be to die. Health I enjoy in the tropics; ... Mr James: how should I do in England? I fear not at all. Am I very sorry? You may conceive how Colvin weighs on my mind; I feel it the worst kind of desertion; but yet, to go home and get buried, would not help him greatly. I am sorry about Henry James, old lady Taylor, about four more people in England, and one in the States. And outside of that, I simply prefer Samoa. These are the words of honesty and soberness.

At this stage, Stevenson took Colvin's opposition to his settlement in Samoa as something solely personal -- the need for his friendship and company in England. So Stevenson went on to tell Henry James the following which was later excluded by Colvin in his edited versions of 'Letters':

¹ *ibid.*

It is plain then that for me, my exile to the place of schooners and islands can be in no sense regarded as a calamity. But for Colvin perhaps it may be. I am glad you know him now: it makes him less lonely by one; for as you doubtless have found out, in the midst of that bustle of society, the man is almost dead alone. Almost none knows him, he has a husk; inside, it is good meat, but the husk is by most teeth invincible.

(*Letters*, VI, 402-3)

In the Yale edition of *Letters*, the Stevensons' joint letter to Colvin closely follows Stevenson's letter to Henry James and both were written in August 1890. Reading them together, we find an interesting example of the moral dilemma working in Stevenson. Should we regard it as something of dishonesty on Stevenson's part, we might be underestimating the degree of that kind of moral dilemma that is so characteristic of Stevenson's life including his South Seas period.

Occasionally, Stevenson was able to launch an open resistance to Colvin's imperialist views so representative of their age. This did not occur until three and a half years later when it was approaching the end of his life. Seeing that Stevenson's letters from Samoa were concerned with nothing but the native affairs, Colvin wrote in March 1894 in racist terms blaming Stevenson for not being interested in 'our white affairs', and not uttering a single word about anything but '*your beloved blacks -- or chocolates --* confound them'. He complained that native affairs, 'beloved no doubt to you; to us detested', were shutting out Stevenson's thoughts 'from that main currents of human affairs', and were "so much less interesting than any dog, cat, mouse, house, or jenny-wren of our own known and hereditary association, loves and latitudes' (*Letters*, VIII, 279). Colvin's reprimand prompted an angry response, or in Colvin's words, 'a shake of displeasure', from Stevenson. 'Please remember,' Stevenson wrote back, 'that my life passes among my "*blacks or chocolates*". If I were to do as you propose, in a bit of a tiff, it would cut you entirely off from my life. You must try to exercise a trifle of imagination, and put yourself, perhaps with an effort, into some sort of sympathy with these people, or how am I to write to you? I think you are truly a little too Cockney with me' (*Letters*, VIII, 281-2). Colvin apologised in June for having been a 'beast' and asked him to 'put down anything

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 148-9.

that reads horribly to the mere clumsiness of an over-anxious affection' (*Letters*, VIII, 282).

This argument in the context of the colonial or European / non-European encounter indicates where Stevenson might have departed from the dominant imperialist views represented by his closest friend. Its implications can also be felt in Colvin's complicated feelings in his treatment of Stevenson's letter in the several editions produced by him. The letter appeared in the 1895 *Vailima Letters*, but was excluded in his 1899 edition of *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson to His Family and Friends* and in his 1911 edition of *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, though the five volumes of *Letters* published as part of the Tusitala edition in 1925 --- the final version edited by Colvin, retained the letter.

Colvin's imperialist views provoked an antagonistic attitude towards most of Stevenson's works set in the South Seas. His criticisms were based mainly on two assumptions: he deplored Stevenson's involvement in native affairs and, as far as Stevenson's work was concerned, Colvin wanted him to remain faithful to the archetypal depictions of the South Seas.

Of Stevenson's non-fictional works, Colvin thought of *In the South Seas* as 'overloaded with information and the results of study, and disappointingly lacking in the thrill and romance one expected of him in relating experiences which had realised the dream of his youth'.¹ He also frowned upon *A Footnote to History* which described the Samoan struggle against German, British and American imperialism during the decade before Stevenson arrived. 'I thought it a pity,' he stated in his memoirs, 'that Stevenson should spend so much toil in setting out, in the volume *A Footnote to History*, the details of certain complicated, very remote and petty recent affairs in which none except perhaps a few international diplomatists could well be expected to take interest'.¹

Of Stevenson's correspondence, Colvin thought in his editorial note to *Vailima Letters* that archetypal notions of the Pacific travel -- impressions of the beauties of the tropics and the captivating strangeness of the island people and their ways -- should have filled more space. Again, he cautioned readers against 'what to some of them may be hardly so welcome, the observation of a close student of native life,

¹ Colvin, *Memories & Notes*, p. 149.

history, and manners and some of the perplexities and preoccupations of an island politician'.²

Of Stevenson's fictional works, he regarded *The Wrecker* 'below his mark' and *The Ebb-Tide* 'a comparatively dull and rather brutal piece of realism'.³ Though he acknowledged the merits of *The Beach of Falesá*, his approbation occurred only after he, having the privilege of acting on Stevenson's behalf, collaborated with publishers in producing the 'expurgated' version of the story to the effect that the anti-colonial sentiment of the author was toned down.

The pressure and objection that Stevenson encountered in writing his South Seas work have drawn attention from his critics and biographers. Some take up Colvin's admission that the hypercritical attitude of Stevenson's friends in England resulted from something of a latent jealousy and fear at Stevenson's increasing independence from their influence. Others see the objection as part of a strategy to discourage Stevenson from his Pacific cruises and to persuade him to return home. Both suggestions imply an attempt to subordinate the Scottish author to English values, beyond the demands of genuine friendship. Corresponding to this is a less tacit but deeper level of assertion of imperialist superiority over the colonised Pacific regions, a place with which Stevenson happened to identify himself partly through his Scottish background.

Therefore, the sharp discrepancy displayed by Colvin between his applause for Stevenson's earlier works and his disparaging remarks over his South Seas writings signifies the border line that Stevenson had crossed, culturally as well as geographically, by travelling to the South Seas. From a post-colonial perspective, those travels placed him in a broader context of ethnic encounter. Cross-cultural comparisons and inter-racial relations had fascinated him both before and after his Pacific travels. The important difference is that the European / non-European encounter -- the colonial conditions of the Pacific -- forced a shift in his identity from Eurocentric to cosmopolitan. It also enabled a change in his artistic method from romantic adventure to more realistic modes of representation. Stevenson's growing

¹ *ibid.*

² *Vailima Letters*, p. xviii.

³ Colvin, *Memories & Notes*, p. 149.

identification with the islanders and his increasing criticism of imperialism were something that some of his friends in England did not like.

Among Stevenson's South Seas writings *In the South Seas*, like his fictional work *The Beach of Falesá*, bore the brunt of the collective colonialist intolerance.

Before setting out on his Pacific voyage, Stevenson had contracted with the American publisher Samuel S. McClure to write an account of his travels in the form of letters for serial publication. McClure reasoned that if more commonplace European travels could draw out of Stevenson such popular writings as *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*, the exotic and mysterious Pacific Ocean and islands, scarcely touched by western civilisation and therefore beyond European laws and norms, might inspire more provocative observations. Edmund Gosse said to Stevenson that 'since Byron was in Greece, nothing has appealed to the ordinary literary man as so picturesque as that you should be in the South Seas'.¹ They expected him to write in the modes of his earlier travel works and be confined within the western archetypes of the region. Stevenson gradually changed the idea into that of a book partly of travel and partly of research and when he was on board the schooner *Janet Nicoll*, he began to compose the chapters of such a book under the nominal title of 'Letters'. Instead of fulfilling his friends' expectations -- that the centre of the book should be the romantic figure of the writer-adventurer offering what Victorian readers would like to hear -- Stevenson concerned himself with a solid, thorough and scientific study of his subject matter with a particular interest in island history, customs, beliefs, and traditions.

To emphasise Stevenson's changing perspective and method is not to disconnect him from his past. Actually his approach to his new South Seas material has some of its beginnings over nine years before he undertook the writing of *In the South Seas*. In 1880 soon after his marriage with Fanny, Stevenson was engaged in two projects, *A History of Modern Scotland* and *The Amateur Emigrant*. The first, as we have seen, was an abortive attempt because he found the subject too big for him to handle; the second, his account of the journey to America, was judged harshly by his father and critics and it was held from publication until after Stevenson's death. This is because the book was more directly observant than anything he had written before

¹ Cited in Janet Adam Smith, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Duckworth, 1937), p. 106.

and it moved towards a broader context of ethno-cultural encounter. *In the South Seas* suffered a combination of the unfortunate factors that had befallen the two previous projects.

The ambition he cherished in writing *In the South Seas* (The intended title was *The South Seas*; the posthumous publication assumed the present title.) is very much similar to that concerning *A History of Modern Scotland*. He worked out a detailed and thorough outline for both. Like his highland project, *In the South Seas* saw a regression on the author's part from confidence to despair. He first conceived the idea when he set out on his first Pacific voyage to the Marquesas on board the yacht *Casco*, from which he wrote to Charles Baxter on 6 September 1888 that 'I shall have a fine book of travels, I feel sure; and will tell you more of the South Seas after very few months than any other writer has done -- except Herman Melville perhaps' (*Letters*, VI, 207). Fifteen months later when he was on his second ocean cruise to the Gilberts on board the *Equator*, he sent a chapter outline to Colvin, boasting that the book would make 60 chapters with 300 to 500 'Cornhill' pages:

My book is now practically modelled: if I can execute what is designed, there are few better books now extant on this globe; bar the epics, and the big tragedies, and histories, and the choice lyric poetries and a novel or so -- none. But it is not executed yet; and let not him that putteth on his armour, vaunt himself. At least, nobody has had such stuff; such wild stories, such beautiful scenes, such singular intimacies, such manners and traditions, so incredible a mixture of the beautiful and horrible, the savage and civilised. I will give you here some idea of the table of contents, which ought to make your mouth water.

(*Letters*, VI, 335)

When he first landed on Samoa, he continued to think well of his project, though with priority given to the Samoan chapter, now planned as a separate book which later came out as *A Footnote to History*. He wrote to Baxter on 28 December 1889: 'I shall ... be in a position to write a very singular and interesting book, or rather two: for I shall begin, I think with a separate opuscle on the Samoan Trouble.... And then hey! for the big South Sea Book: a devil of a big one, and full of the finest sport' (*Letters*, VI, 345).

His optimism lasted until after his final settlement in Samoa in September 1890. He became increasingly aware of his inability to control such a large subject. By

November that year, he had completed only eight 'letters': 'The job is immense; I stagger under material,' he admitted to Colvin. '...my problem is architectural-creative -- to get this stuff jointed and moving' (*Letters*, VII, 29). To Henry James he poured out a similar kind of frustration over his project: '... gracious, what a strain is a long book! The time it took me to design this volume, before I could dream of putting pen to paper was excessive. And then think of writing a book of travels on the spot; when I am continually extending my information, revising my opinions, and seeing the most finely finished portions of my work come part by part in pieces. Very soon I shall have no opinions left. And without an opinion, how to string artistically vast accumulations of fact?' (*Letters*, VII, 65-65).

The project of his South Seas book was finally dropped in April 1891 when he was already half way through. The reason he gave is rather curious in a way that it contradicts his earlier ambitions and confidence. He wrote to Colvin on 22 April:

One thing embarrasses me. No one ever seems to understand my attitude about that book; the stuff sent was never meant for other than a first state, I never meant it to appear as a book: knowing well that I have never had one hour of inspiration since it was begun, and have beaten out my metal by brute force and patient repetition ... I cannot fight longer; I am sensible of having done worse than I hoped, worse than I feared: all I can do now is to do the best I can for the future, and clear the book, like a piece of bush, with axe and cutlass.

(*Letters*, VII, 101-2)

It is true that lack of training as a historian and his engagement in several works at the same time made it difficult for Stevenson to cope successfully with such a large project, just as he had failed with his planned Highland book. He may have underestimated the magnitude of his subject. The vast expanse of the Pacific might seem to the Western eye a single community for its remoteness and primitiveness, more so in Stevenson's time when colonisation and travel had just made the whole region available. But actually the region incorporates three main ethnic groups with broad cultural divisions and linguistic diversity. Within his planned sixty chapters, he had intended to encompass history, ethnology, language, geology, religion and folklore centring on six groups of islands. At the same time, we may also argue that Stevenson was well suited to do the project, for he had always been a close observer of his environment and sensitive to cross-cultural and racial differences. His effective

use of topography in his fiction and his early acute analysis of differences between the English and the Scot can prove this point. Above all, he never attempted to apply the standards of one society to another where they would be irrelevant. Part of the reason for his not completing the South Seas book, therefore, lies elsewhere.

Unlike his Highland project which was actively supported by his friends, his father and his wife, his South Seas book received no encouragement at all. We might sympathise with Stevenson's position more readily for the pressure he was under if we consider the representative nature of Colvin's criticism. For Colvin was never alone in imposing imperialist criteria upon Stevenson's South Seas writings. S. McClure, for example, was disappointed with Stevenson's 'letters' and complained that it had too much of Stevenson 'the moraliser' and too little of Stevenson 'the romancer'.¹ Edmund Gosse was equally dissatisfied. After criticising the South Seas 'letters' he generalised in blunt words: 'The fact seems to be that it is very nice to live in Samoa, but not healthy to write there. Within a three-mile radius of Charing Cross is the literary atmosphere, I suspect'.²

While Colvin, McClure and Gosse expressed their disappointment from thousands of miles away in metropolitan England and America, Stevenson's wife exerted her pressure from within the household. Fanny's role in Stevenson's literary career was a complicated one. On the one hand, she distanced herself from her husband's English friends Colvin by her support of her husband's South Seas travels -- she endured over twenty-five thousand miles of ocean cruises with her husband and was his partner in their involvement in native affairs, and it was partly for this reason that she incurred heavy criticism from among Stevenson's friends. On the other hand, she regarded her doings as an act of self-sacrifice out of her love for her husband. On one occasion she even admitted her dislike of the Samoan people. Let us return to the Stevensons's joint letter to Colvin in August 1890, part of which has already been quoted. After defending her husband's decision not to return to England, Fanny concluded:

I know you think that at least I am having my heart's desire in the chance to staying in Samoa. I haven't. The climate does not agree with me. Louis knows

¹ Quoted in Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, p. 304.

² Gosse's letter to an American friend, George Armour, on 31 January 1891. Quoted in *Letters*, VII, 106-7.

that, and yet he is willing to stay... Dear friend, because I make my sacrifice with flowers on my head and point out the fine views on the way do not think it is no sacrifice, and only for my own pleasure. *The Samoan people are picturesque, but I do not like them. I do not trust them. My time must be so arranged as not to clash with them.* I shall be able to get no servants but cannibal black boys, runaways and discontents from the German plantations... I cannot ask you to forgive me, but -- I do want Louis, and I do want everybody to think I like going to Samoa -- and in some ways I do like it; I don't want people to think I am making a sacrifice for Louis.

(*Letters*, VI, 407-8)

Fanny was also a woman with literary aspirations of her own. She was known to be strong-minded in her criticism of Stevenson's writings. Concerning his plan for the South Seas book, she sided with Colvin in opposing Stevenson's scientific, historical and impersonal treatment of his material. She wrote to Colvin in May 1889 from Honolulu to employ his help in managing her 'overbred horse' of a husband:

I am very much exercised by one thing. Louis has the most enchanting material that any one ever had in the whole world for his book, and I am afraid he is going to spoil it all. He has taken into his Scotch Stevenson head, that a stern duty lies before him, and that his book must be a sort of scientific and historical impersonal thing, comparing the different languages (of which he knows nothing, really) and the different peoples, the object being to settle the question as to whether they are of common Malay origin or not. Also to compare the Protestant and Catholic Missions, etc. In fact to bring to the front all the prejudices, and all the mistakes and all the ignorance concerning the subject that he can get together; and the whole thing to be impersonal, leaving out all he knows of the people themselves.... Louis says it is a stern sense of duty that is at the bottom of it, which is more alarming than anything else. I am so sure that you will agree with me that I am going to ask you to throw the weight of your influence as heavily as possible in the scales with me. Please refer to the matter in the letters we shall receive at our first stopping place, otherwise Louis will spend a great deal of time in Sydney actually reading up other people's books on the islands. What a thing it is to have a 'man of genius' to deal with. It is like managing an overbred horse.

(*Letters*, VI, 303-4)

Colvin responded to Fanny's request by commenting negatively on the first fifteen of the South Seas Letters. These fifteen letters or chapters of *The South Seas* were privately printed in London by Cassell's on 12 November 1890 in a small edition of twenty-two copies (*Letters*, VI, 394, n.1). Colvin's letter has not survived, but his critical attitude can be traced in Fanny's correspondence to him and her husband. In

her letter of 12 April 1890 from Sydney, she said to Colvin: 'I am very glad you spoke of the historical and scientific question. It has been rather heavy on my mind' (*Letters*, VII, 79n). Meanwhile she wrote to her husband: 'One from Colvin with the Letters and his criticisms, all, I am pleased to see, the same as mine' (*Letters*, VII, 85, n.1).

Nothing reveals more clearly the impact of Fanny's discouragement than what Stevenson wrote to Colvin (This seems ironic in light of Colvin's same opposing attitude as Fanny's). Having made his decision to drop his South Seas project on the ground that 'I cannot fight longer' in a letter already quoted, Stevenson concluded: 'Perhaps I could not make the book after all, and anyway, I'll never be allowed for Fanny has strong opinions and I prefer her peace of mind to my ideas' (*Letter*, VII, 102).

In the South Seas, therefore, is only part of the work originally planned. The 'Letters' were published three times during Stevenson's lifetime but the book form did not come out until almost two years after the author's death. Neil Munro, Stevenson's contemporary, saw the difficulty of its publication as an act of suppression: the high estimate of what Stevenson was destined to achieve seems 'to have led to the suppression in permanent form in England, till after his death, of several works regarded as inferior in quality, like *The Amateur Emigrant*, *In the South Seas* and *The Misadventures of John Nicholson*'.¹ And strangely, Colvin's introduction to the book has the effect of dissuading the reader from going ahead into it: 'Before serial production had gone very far,...[Stevenson] realised that the personal and the impersonal elements were not very successfully combined nor in proportions that contented his readers.'

It took Henry James and Joseph Conrad to see the merit of Stevenson's work. After reading the privately printed edition of *The South Seas* (1890), Henry James wrote to Stevenson: 'I read with unrestricive relish the first chapters of your prose volume (kindly vouchsafed me in the little copyright-catching red volume,) and I loved 'em and blessed them quite'.¹ Conrad's appreciation of Stevenson's book was known through Colvin in his *Memories*. After repudiating Stevenson's book, Colvin was frank enough to mention that 'a far better qualified judge, Mr. Joseph Conrad,

¹ Sidney Colvin and others, *Robert Louis Stevenson: His Work and His Personality*, p. 137.

differs from me in this, and even prefers *In the South Seas* to *Treasure Island*, principally for the sake of what he regards as a very masterpiece of native portraiture in the character of Tembinok, King of Apemama'.²

¹ Janet Adam Smith, p. 198.

² Colvin, *Memories & Notes*, p. 149.

CHAPTER II

Writing between Two Cultures: Archetypes in Ballads and Short Stories

Modern colonial discourses have represented native peoples in a number of ways: as savages to be wished away, as primitives defined through the negation of modernity and as distinct 'races' or 'cultures' possessing particular natures.

-----Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*

1

Polynesian Legends and Folklore

In his fictional writings of the South Seas, as in his works in general, Stevenson shows himself to be a virtuoso of narrative styles: his Pacific fiction ranges from the folklore of ballads to the moral allegory of fables, from the supernatural elements of short stories to the realistic intensity of novels. Beyond their stylistic diversity these works are linked by their common concern with representing the multi-racial, cross-cultural society of which Stevenson himself had become a member. As far as their subject matter is concerned, these works fall into two groups with two inseparable social aspects of the region and their respective objects of representation: the exotic indigenous culture or the colonial 'other' on the one hand, and the harsh imperialist reality or the imperial 'self' on the other. The first group comprises his ballads, short stories and fables that reflect Stevenson's fascination with Polynesian folklore and oral tradition. Corresponding to this island culture is the second group -- the sea yarns of European colonists featured in three novels with their focus on racial prejudice, moral degradation and even piracy. The first group of Stevenson's South

Seas writings is important not only because they represent Stevenson's keen interest in the Polynesian people and their culture, but also that they are the first serious attempts by a European writer to re-create Polynesian myths and legends in a form that indicates a transition from western archetypal notions of the region to colonial reality.

By archetypes in Stevenson's South Seas works I mean two things: the 'primordial images' of the islanders and the region represented by western assumptions, and the rich oral tradition of myths, legends and folk tales by which Polynesian culture and history were handed down from one generation to another. To the collective European mind, the archetypal image of the vast expanse of ocean and islands known as the South Seas might have consisted of two different but related pictures. As a geographical region, the South Seas are endowed with tropical beauty and rich resources. All one needs comes directly from nature and free for the picking, as is symbolised in Stevenson's short story 'The Isle of Voices' where seashells can be turned into silver coins through burning of tree leaves, or in 'The Bottle Imp' where an infinite source of wealth comes from a sinister bottle. This aspect of the South Seas archetype lured European adventurers to come to explore, to colonise, to set up trading posts, to seek their fortune, or to share with natives in God's glory. Attwater in *The Ebb-Tide*, Case and Wiltshire in *The Beach of Falesá* are such kinds of people, for whom pearl fishing and copra trading are easy sources of wealth offered by the ocean and islands.

But the archetypes of the South Seas are more than its geographical meaning. It also represents a psychological area lying beyond the mores of civilisation. The Polynesians, the largest ethnic group of Pacific people that Stevenson was to meet, were still considered to be primitive or at best 'the finest of the uncivilised races' striding 'from barbarity to enlightenment; from the past Stone Age to the present age of civilisation'.¹ The region was full of danger as well as mystery. The violent death of Captain Cook in Hawaii a century before (1778) was still fresh in European memory despite the fact that he was worshipped among natives as White God both before and after his tragic murder. Though such barbaric practices as human sacrifice

¹ Johannes C. Andersen, *Myths and Legends of the Polynesians* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1969), p. 5.

and cannibalism were things of the recent past, cannibal tales, ghost stories and superstitious beliefs were still prevalent among Pacific islanders when Stevenson arrived. The social and anthropological aspects of the South Seas raised fear as well as curiosity and wonder among European travellers and adventurers.

Western accounts of the Pacific before Stevenson had mostly functioned as an archetype from the European point of view. Melville in *Typee* cherished happy memories of his life among Marquesans only after he returned to civilisation from that forbidden ground. In Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, Ralph Rover best sums up this double image of the archetypal region:

But of all the places of which they told me, none captivated and charmed my imagination so much as the Coral islands of the Southern Seas. They told me of thousands of beautiful fertile islands that had been formed by a small creature called the coral insect, where summer reigned nearly all the year round; where the trees were laden with a constant harvest of luxuriant fruit; where the climate was almost perpetually delightful; yet where, strange to say, men were wild, bloodthirsty savages, excepting in those favoured isles to which the gospel of our Saviour had been conveyed.¹

Stevenson arrived in the South Seas with this European archetypal notion -- a mixture of geographical paradise and social primitiveness. Apart from his fascination with the beauty of the islands and the easy life of the island people that he had heard of from the New Zealand official, his impressions of the island landfall provided the possibility of the other side of the picture:

I was now escaped out of the shadow of the roman empire, under whose toppling monuments we were all cradled, straining 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 Caius or Papinian.

(*Tusitala*, XX, 8)

His extensive travel in the Pacific, especially his settlement in Samoa, enabled him to observe island life firsthand. The first result was his South Seas 'letters' which transcend the romantic, sensational image of the region with his highly scientific attitude and sympathy for the Polynesian people. At the same time, he was fascinated by the rich oral tradition of myths, legends and folk tales that had barely

¹ R. M. Ballantyne, *The Coral Island* (New York: Dutton, 1949), p. 13.

been represented in scribal literature and hardly known to Europeans --- they had hitherto been circulated through the ages only by word of mouth. 'I am going on with a lot of island work, exulting in the knowledge of a new world, "a new created world", and new men', he wrote in 1891. 'I have a whole world in my head, a whole new society to work' (*Letters*, VII, 461).

The new world that Stevenson became interested in was to re-create Polynesian oral tradition in literary form. During the first year of his Pacific travels he planned to write two books for that purpose. One was to consist of ballads such as 'The Song of Rahéro', 'The Feast of Famine' and 'The Priest's Draught'. In his letters to an American publisher, Stevenson intended to write more pieces to be put into the volume which would be called *South Sea Ballads*. The project was not fulfilled as 'The Priest's Draught' was never written, and as the West Highland legend 'Ticonderoga' and the Galloway legend 'Heather Ale' joined the volume which was published in 1890 under the title *Ballads* (*Letters*, VI, 246; 257). The other book would feature supernatural tales such as 'The Bottle Imp' and 'The Isle of Voices'. This project, too, was diminished in the author's original intention when the tales were grouped together with the realistic novelette *The Beach of Falesá* in *Island Nights' Entertainment* (1893). He expressed his dissatisfaction with his publisher's arrangement to Sidney Colvin: 'What annoyed me about the use of "The Bottle Imp", was that I had always meant it for the centre piece of a volume of *Märchen* which I was slowly to elaborate...and that was why I loved to keep it in portfolio till I had time to grow up to some other fruit of the same *venue*' (*Letters*, VII, 461). Stevenson also tried his hand on the composition of fables, which were not published until after his death. According to Colvin's prefatory note to the Tusitala edition, 'The fable, as a form of literary art, had at all times a great attraction for Mr Stevenson... Then came his voyage in the Pacific and residence at Samoa. Among the multitude of new interests and images which filled his mind during the last six years of his life, he seems to have given little thought to the proposed book of fables. One or two, however, were added to the collection during this period' (*Tusitala*, V, 77). The two newly composed fables during his Pacific period are 'The Cart-Horses and the Saddle-Horse' and 'Something in It'. Like his two supernatural tales, they are informed by colonial reality.

‘The Song of Rahéro’ and ‘The Feast of Famine’ depict the island life before the arrival of white men. To a large extent, the two ballads offer an encyclopaedic coverage of Polynesian customs and manners that functions as an archetype to a European audience. They contain such popular themes as human sacrifice, revenge, cannibalism, superstition, tattoo and taboo. The first relates the story of a Tahitian lad named Tāmátéa who travels to give the finest of his fishing catch to the ruthless king of Taiárapu. Rahéro, a former warrior who is now lazy, proud and crafty, delays Tāmátéa’s journey by inviting him to a meal and serves himself and his guest with the fish which the lad intends for the king, leaving within the wrapping of leaves only the marred remains of the tribute which soon draws flies. Without knowing this trick, Tāmátéa continues his journey, delivers the parcel to the king, and then turns homeward, to the relief of Rahéro who wishes to humiliate the king but means no harm to the innocent lad. The king, discovering the insulting impudence, orders his men to chase Tāmátéa to have him executed. The revenge of Tāmátéa by his mother is the most dramatic episode in the story. She goes to each rival chief on the island and finally incites King Hiopa of Paea to help her seek revenge. Hiopa’s scheme is a rather peculiar one. He declares all kinds of good food in his clan, such as pigs and fish, to be *tapu* (native word for ‘taboo’) until the fame of their plenty reaches every corner of the island. The king of Taiárapu leads the whole of his clan, forty score in all including Rahéro, to demand hospitality from Paea. When they get drunk and to sleep in the middle of the night, their hosts set fire to the hall of the feast. Only Rahéro manages to escape from the flames. He then murders a fisherman of Paea and kidnaps his wife for breeding new generations of his race as his hope for future revenge.

In his brief note to the text, Stevenson proclaims the credibility of the story:

This tale, of which I have not consciously changed a single feature, I received from tradition. It is highly popular through all the country of the eight Tevas, the clan to which Rahéro belonged; and particularly in Taiárapu, the windward peninsula of Tahiti, where he lived. I have heard from end to end two versions; and as many as five different persons have helped me with details. There seems no reason why the tale should not be true.

(*Tusitala*, XXIII, 75)

Though there is no information about the two versions from which Stevenson derived his story, and that *In the South Seas* does not have a chapter on Tahiti that would have otherwise provided relevant sources, the authenticity of the tale is maintained through his personal contacts with native chiefs and his deep interest in Tahitian folklore. Of the five persons in Tahiti who helped Stevenson with details, we can trace at least three names that figure constantly in Stevenson's correspondence: Princess Moë, Prince Tati Salmon and Prince Ori-a-Ori. From the first two, according to Fanny (*Letters*, VI, 239n), Stevenson heard the legend of Rahéro. Ori-a-Ori also contributed to Stevenson's knowledge of the Tahitian folklore, for which he received the dedication of Stevenson's ballad. Before writing the ballad, Stevenson had been collecting and trying to translate traditional Tahitian songs into English. He submitted his drafts to Tati Salmon for comments, the latter being a recognised authority on Tahitian legends.¹ The archetypal pattern of violation, revenge and counter-revenge seems common to Tahitian oral history. A comparison has been made by Robert Hillier between Stevenson's 'The Song of Rahéro' and Henry Adams' accounts of Tahitian legends, in which a chief out of pride, anger, or avarice kills his enemy or the offspring of his enemy. The survivors then journey to the districts of the other chiefs to request a boon in the form of revenge or warfare against the offending chief. At times a cycle of revenge and counter-revenge develops, but more often brief warfare establishes a new equilibrium.² An important difference should be pointed out, however, between Stevenson's version of the Tahitian legend and Henry Adams' accounts: while Adams' *Memoirs* remains impressions of a traveller, Stevenson was trying to get at the roots of the Polynesian culture by writing not only about, but also from within and through that culture, without making European presence felt.

Stevenson's experiment with re-creating Polynesian oral tradition as literature continues in 'The Feast of Famine'. This ballad follows the archetypal ideas of the Polynesian customs. In this case, human sacrifice and rituals of cannibalism become

¹ See *Letters*, VI, 228n; 235 and n. Mehew notes that the manuscripts of seven of Stevenson's translations are at Yale University's Beinecke Collection. One of them, a Teva clan song, is published in Ben Finney's article, 'Robert Louis Stevenson's Tahitian Poems', *Journal de la Societe des Oceanistes* (Paris), xx, (December 1964), pp. 94 - 95.

² Robert Irwin Hillier, *The South Seas Fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: P. Lang, 1989), p. 63.

a thematic concern. When famine strikes the tribe, it is their usual practice to resort to cannibalism for survival. The victims are chosen by the divinely frenzied priest. Rua, kinless and low born, is naturally selected for the benefit of the tribe. His lover Taheia happens to be the priest's daughter who informs Rua of the danger and gives him courage to hide in the deep recess of the mountain. While in hiding Rua spots warriors of an enemy tribe approaching. He rushes out to warn his people, only to be seized for their prescribed sacrifice. His tribe in turn become victims of their enemy's ambush and feast.

In contrast with 'The Song of Rahéro', Stevenson claimed no authority from the source material. He tells his readers that 'In this ballad, I have strung together some of the more striking particularities of the Marquesas. It rests upon no authority; it is in no sense, like 'Rahéro', a native story; but a patchwork of details of manners and the impressions of a traveller' (*Tusitala*, XXIII, 78).

This does not, however, rule out the credibility of Stevenson's narrative. Apart from numerous accounts of the savage customs of a similar kind by other travellers in the Pacific, notably by Herman Melville in his *Typee*, Stevenson's own observations reported in *In the South Seas* provide factual basis for the story. In the Marquesan section of his travel book, Stevenson tells of man-hunting ambushes among Marquesans in time of famine. Occasionally, the victims could be members of one's own tribe. 'The Feast of Famine' is but a literary re-creation of the following account:

...perhaps in famine, the priest would shut himself in his house, where he lay for a stated period like a person dead. When he came forth it was to run for three days through the territory of the clan, naked and starving, and to sleep at night alone in the high place. It was now the turn of the others to keep the house, for to encounter the priest upon his rounds was death. On the eve of the fourth day the time of the running was over; the priest returned to his roof, the laymen came forth, and in the morning the number of the victims was announced.... Upon one point there seems to be no question: that the feast was sometimes furnished from within the clan. In times of scarcity, all who were not protected by their family connections -- in the Highland expression, all the commons of the clan -- had cause to tremble. It was vain to resist, it was useless to flee. They were begirt upon all hands by cannibals; and the oven was ready to smoke for them abroad in the country of their foes, or at home in the valley of their fathers.

Besides cycles of revenge and human sacrifice, other archetypal patterns of Polynesian customs feature in these two ballads. A most notable one is their superstitious fear of the night and the ghost. As Stevenson observes in his travel book, 'The fear of ghosts and of the dark is deeply written in the mind of the Polynesian' (30). The fisherman's wife in 'Rahéro', without being aware that she is being abducted, takes the speechless oarsman beside her for a ghostly figure, a belief that, according to Stevenson's textual note, was held by ninety percent of Polynesians under similar circumstances:

And fear, there where she sat, froze the woman to stone:
Not fear of the crazy boat and the weltering deep alone;
But a keener fear of the night, the dark, and the ghostly hour,
And the thing that drove the canoe with more than a mortal's power
And more than a mortal's boldness. For much she knew of the dead
That haunt and fish upon reefs, toiling, like men, for bread,
And traffic with human fishers, or slay them and take their ware,
Till the hour when the star of the dead goes down, and the morning air
Blows, and the cocks are singing on shore. And surely she knew
The speechless thing at her side belonged to the grave.

(*Tusitala*, XXIII, 51)

In 'The Feast of Famine', Rua's fear of falling victim to the cannibalistic desire of his own tribe is compounded by the horror of the night and the dead when he goes hiding in a what he believes to be a haunted part of the jungle. As he conveys his fear to his lover:

"Taheia, the pit of the night crawls with treacherous things,
Spirits of ultimate air and the evil souls of things;
The souls of the dead, the stranglers, that perch in the trees of the wood,
Waiters for all things human, haters of evil and good."

(39)

Even the sound of a little wind passing overhead is interpreted as 'sudden crowings of laughter' and 'the quiet passage of souls'. Such superstitious fears were to gain particular significance in Stevenson's fictional world where Polynesian natives were thrown into direct contact with white men. The missionary in 'Something in It' is

forced to believe in Samoan devils after going through actual experiences, while Case in *Falesá* knows how to manipulate natives by exploiting their superstitious beliefs.

Both of Stevenson's South Sea ballads have remained among the least read of his works. The reason for that, I think, is two-fold. First, both ballads were considered to be lacking in sustained poetic power. Sidney Colvin said of it: 'I never very much admired his South Sea ballads for any quality except their narrative vigour, thinking them unequal and uncertain both in metre and style' (*Letters*, VI, 216n). To Colvin's criticism Stevenson seemed to agree, but at the same time emphasised the narrative merit of his poems: 'I have a sneaking idea the ballads are not altogether without merit -- I don't know if they're poetry, but they're good narrative, or I'm deceived' (*Letters*, VI, 411).¹ 'Rahéro' is also marred by its disunity in the characterisation of the title hero. Rahéro's abrupt change, from an idle, mischievous trickster intent on humiliating his chief to a courageous, determined warrior vowing to rebuild his tribe for revenge, is left unaccounted for. A second but more important reason for the critical neglect of the ballads was the unfamiliarity of the world they presented. The Polynesian traditions before the arrival of whites seemed too remote in time and space, too eccentric to be of serious interest to western readers. Unlike colonial India with which British culture and society were closely associated by a huge structure of colonising institutions, the Pacific world seemed too marginal for literature of any value. Edmund Gosse, for example, wrote to his American friend George Armour in January 1891 on Stevenson's ballads: 'I confess we are all disappointed here. The effort to become a Polynesian Walter Scott is a little too obvious, the inspiration a little too mechanical. And -- between you and me and Lake Michigan -- the versification is atrocious'.² Though Stevenson admitted his lack of knowledge about verse,³ in what seems to be his last comment on his ballads he defended his works for

¹ A different view was held by Arthur Johnstone who insisted that though neither of the ballads showed the artistic finish of his prose work, Stevenson could hardly have selected a better measure to express the monotonous cadence and languorous existence of island life. See his *Recollections of Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific*, p. 230.

² Maixner, p. 374 - 5.

³ He wrote to Gosse in April 1891 about *Ballads*: 'Verse is always to me the unknowable. You might tell me how it strikes a professional bard: not that it really matters, for of course, good or bad. I don't think I shall get into that galley any more' (*Letters*, VII, 106).

their historical and cultural interest. His comment was carried in his letter to H. B. Baildon in autumn 1891:

Glad the ballads amused you. They failed to entertain a coy public: at which I own I wondered. Not that I set much account by my verses, which are the verses of Prosator; but I do know how to tell a yarn, and two of the yarns were great. "Rahéro" is for its length, I think, a perfect folk tale; savage and yet fine, full of a tail foremost morality, ancient as the granite rocks; if the historian not to say the politician could get that yarn into his head, he would have learned some of his A. B. C. But the average men at home cannot understand antiquity; he is sunk over the ears in Roman civilisation; and a tale like that of "Rahéro" falls on his ears inarticulate.

(*Letters*, VII, 187)

Stevenson's own judgement holds the key to our understanding of his intention that lies behind the writing of the ballads. Since he was dissatisfied with some people of his own civilisation for their inability and reluctance to reach across the cultural boarder to sympathise with the 'other', it can be assumed that, while re-creating Polynesian oral traditions, fidelity to native culture rather than appeal to European tastes or patterns of thinking was his highest goal. A list of the persons to whom Stevenson sent complementary copies of *Ballads* indicates this point. Over one third of the recipients were native chiefs some of whom were authorities on Polynesian folklore.¹ This proportion should be thought a fairly substantial amount considering his wide attachment to the literary circle of friends at home. Stevenson's two South Seas ballads, therefore, should be evaluated not only for their poetic interest (or lack of poetic interest) but also for their cross-cultural significance that is represented by the author's tendency to move beyond the archetypal descriptions of the Polynesian world. Evidence for that can be found both within and outside the texts.

While it is true that the two ballads combine to offer a paradigm of Polynesian customs that fit into western readers' expectations -- lawless and primitive, the narratives are characterised not so much by feelings of fear and curiosity as by plenty of vigour, psychology and picturesque features. The primitive world impresses the reader as a realm of crude beauty and grace rendered possible through figures of speech such as metaphor and simile. The title figure of 'Rahéro' and the priest in 'Feast', for example, are presented as noble savages. Rahéro is 'a man of a godly

¹ See *Letters*, VI, 424.

race' who 'inherited cunning of spirit and beauty of body and face' (*Tusitala*, XXIII, 7). The priest 'neither feared the dark nor the terrors of the dead. He knew the songs of races, the names of ancient date' (33). The most powerful passages in both ballads are descriptions of love --- the love of a mother for her son in 'Rahéro' and that between the two lovers in 'Feast'. The strong passion and psychology of Támatéa's mother, whose mood changes from protective devotion to her son to despair at his death, then from despair to thirst for vengeance, are described with brilliant vividness. She 'ruled him and loved him beyond the wont of a wife, / Serving the lad for eyes and living herself in his life' (5). After her son's murder,

...the mother of Támatéa arose with death in her eyes.
All night long, and the next, Taiárapu rang with her cries.
As when a babe in the wood turns with a chill of doubt
And perceives nor home, nor friends, for the trees have closed her about,
The mountain rings and her breast is torn with the voice of despair:
So the lion-like woman idly wearied the air
For awhile, and pierced men's hearing in vain, and wounded their hearts.
but as when the weather changes at sea, in dangerous parts,
And sudden the hurricane wrack unrolls up the front of the sky,
At once the ship lies idle, the sails hang silent on high,
The Breath of the wind that blew is blown out like the flame of a lamp,
And the silent armies of death draw near with inaudible tramp:
So sudden, the voice of her weeping ceased; in silence she rose
And passed from the house of her sorrow, a woman clothed with repose,
Carrying death in her breast and sharpening death with her hand.

(13-14)

The burning of her enemy makes her shake 'for terror and joy like a girl that is a bride':

...the mother of Támatéa threw her arms abroad,
"Pyre of my son," she shouted, "debited vengeance of God,
Late, late, I behold you, yet I behold you at last,
And glory, beholding! for now are the days of my agony past,
The lust that famished my soul now eats and drinks its desire,
And they that encompassed my son shrivel alive in the fire.
Tenfold precious the vengeance that comes after lingering years!..."

(23)

In the same way, the theme of love in 'Feast' offers something that transcends archetypal depictions of Polynesian 'savage' life. Stevenson may have been well aware of this new dimension he was introducing to his readers, for he remarked in his note to the ballad, 'It may seem strange, when the scene is laid upon these profligate islands, to make the story hinge on love. But love is not less known in the Marquesas than elsewhere' (78). What is interesting about the theme of love is not just that it breaks away from the traditionally all-male world of Stevenson's fiction, but that such a transition should have happened after Stevenson travelled to the South Seas. Roslyn Jolly has noted that in all the three stories that make up *Island Nights' Entertainment*, the theme of love becomes a major focus; and that those stories contain such positive representations of native women that in each case a husband is rescued one way or another by his wife's resourcefulness and courage.¹ In this respect, the female characters in Stevenson's ballads in question anticipate those in his short stories and the novelette *The Beach of Falesá*. Though neither Támatea's mother nor Taheia succeeded in saving their loved ones, the strong passion and will of the former and the courage and intelligence of the latter are the first examples of favourable representations of native women in Stevenson's South Seas fiction.

Stevenson's attempt to lay hold of authentic Polynesian culture without getting into preconceived notions is also demonstrated in extra-textual evidence of his ballads. The way he gained knowledge of Polynesian oral tradition is quite unusual for his time: being keenly aware of the parallels between Polynesian customs, traditions and tribal systems and those of his own Scottish Highlands, he sought to swap stories with his native hosts. The legend of Rahéro was obtained in this way:

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 *Rahéro*; and what I knew of the Cluny Macphersons, or the Appin Stewarts, enabled me to learn, and helped me

¹ Roslyn Jolly, ed. *Robert Louis Stevenson: South Sea Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. xxi.

to understand, about the *Tevas* of Tahiti. The native was no longer ashamed, his sense of kinship grew warmer, and his lips were opened.

(*Tusitala*, XX, 13)

Contrary to the prevailing method of representations, the theme of human sacrifice in 'Feast' was treated in an unsensational and unvarnished manner. The theme further received unconventional comments characteristic of Stevenson in his travel book. The Marquesan section of *In the South Seas* not only provides useful information about the source of the ballad but also serves as an alternative to the archetypal representations of the subject matter that makes up the ballad. Like so many Western travellers in the Pacific before him, Stevenson was to view the savage custom with abhorrence and attributed to it the partial cause of depopulation of the Marquesas. More often, however, he allowed himself to cool down and reasoned that much depended upon different points of view. Without attempting to justify cannibalism, he pointed out that 'we ourselves make much the same appearance in the eyes of the Buddhist and the vegetarian. We consume the carcasses of creatures of like appetites, passions, and organs with ourselves; we feed on babes, though not our own; and the slaughter-house resounds daily with screams of pain and fear' (*Tusitala*, XX, 79).

This kind of moral debate that Stevenson underwent by drawing comparisons with his own culture sounds very much like the one conducted by Robinson Crusoe when he observes a place of savage feast. Crusoe's initial fear and impulse to kill those savages gives way to cooler and calmer thoughts as he argues with himself that these savages 'do not commit this as a crime,' and that 'these people were not murderers in the sense that I had before condemned them in my thoughts, any more than those Christians were murderers who often put to death those prisoners taken in battle; or more frequently, upon many occasions, put whole troops of men to the sword, without giving quarter, though they threw down their arms and submitted'.¹ It is hard to know to what extent Stevenson was influenced by Defoe's book, but his enthusiasm in reading *Robinson Crusoe* at an early age should have cultivated his

interest in moral issues in cross-cultural contexts. It is interesting to see that his first articulation of that interest was to re-create savage customs as faithfully as he could while leaving the related moral debate in his travel book.

‘The Song of Rahéro’ and ‘The Feast of Famine’ set up experimental landmarks in the representation of Polynesian legends and folklore. There was nothing experimental with the subject matter of the two ballads, for the archetypal patterns of sacrifice, superstitions or cycles of revenge had been recurrent in the numerous accounts and memoirs of such writers as Herman Melville, Henry Adams and many other western travellers. Stevenson’s efforts achieved something new by combining Polynesian oral tradition with the ancient form of European ballad, to determine how far the Polynesian oral tradition could be used for *belle lettres*. His experiment did not meet much success with the reading public, which led him to discard verse in favour of prose as a means of communicating traditions of an alien culture. At the same time, his subject matter saw a gradual but significant transition from archetypal depictions of South Sea islanders to something more contemporary informed by colonial reality. That is, European elements -- European characters and their material culture as well as their Christian moral values -- began to feature in his supernatural short stories and fables.

2

The Supernatural and European Material Culture

In ‘The Isle of Voices’ Stevenson carried the literary experiment further by mixing Polynesian folklore with European culture, fantasy with facts drawn from his real life experience.

In its use of Polynesian folklore, the story stands somewhere between ‘The Song of Rahéro’ and ‘The Feast of Famine’, containing both derivations from folk tradition and ‘impressions of a traveller’. The two elements correspond respectively to the two parts of the story divided according to the sequence of action or

¹ Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1895), p. 190.

topography. The first half of the action occurs in Hawaii, from Keola's discovery of his father-in-law's sorcery at Molokai to his abandonment by the latter at open sea. In this part, Stevenson drew from several Hawaiian legends to make his story faithful to the native tradition. The second half features Keola's rescue first by a trading schooner and then by his Hawaiian wife in the low islands -- the Low Archipelago or Paumotus (now called Tuamotus). In this part Stevenson made use of what he had learnt about Polynesian customs and superstitions.

According to Fanny, 'The Isle of Voices' had been inspired by the supernatural stories told by their friend Donat-Rimareau, the acting Vice-Resident or the ruler of the island of Fakarava in the Paumotus when the Stevensons visited in 1888. Arthur Johnstone wrote in 1905, however, that the source of the story might have been one of the three versions of the same Hawaiian legend, marking three distinct stages in the development of the myth with regard to the degree of supernaturalism. The oldest version, the name of which was not identified, hinges upon the introduction of the Polynesian black art. The second version, known as 'The Sorcerers' Island', depends less on the supernatural and more on the human element for its dramatic force and movement than does 'The Isle of Voices'. In the final version called 'The Isle of Dreams', the supernatural element almost disappears, and is replaced by a weird element of savage preternaturalism. Johnstone thought that it was probably Stevenson's leaning towards the supernatural, which can be detected in various parts of his work, that led him to select the first and the oldest, and also the most improbable version for his story.¹

Though it is now difficult to trace the three original versions, Stevenson's use of Hawaiian legend can still be detected in the story. When Kalamake tricked Keola into Pili's boat and launched it to the 'Sea of the Dead', the sorcerer threw his legs over the side and his body grew thirty to forty times in size so that he stood in the deep seas to the armpits, and his head and shoulders rose like a high isle. This supernatural episode is connected with the Hawaiian legend of Hina, who was kidnapped and held at the fortress of Haupo on the north coast of Molokai. Her son used his magical powers to swell to a great size and wade through the deep water

¹ Johnstone, pp. 201-02.

assisting and rescuing his defeated warriors when the attack failed.¹ Describing his visit to the leper colony Molokai, Stevenson wrote: ‘Just beyond Walkolu stood the fort of Haupu, of whose siege and fall readers may find the hyperbolic story in a recent volume; it was in these profound waters, where no ship may anchor, that the elastic Kana waded unembarrassed, and the Lady Hina, from the battlements of her prison, looked across the sea of Kalawao’ (*Tusitala*, XXI, 336).² Likewise, the mention of the Hawaiian islands being fished out of the sea is also of mythological origin connected with the fisherman Kapuheeuanuu or Maui.³

What Fanny believed to be the low island setting occurs in the second part of the story featuring Polynesian, especially Paumotuan, customs and superstitions as were observed by Stevenson. The people of the Isle of Voices choose to dwell by the lagoon because they believe that the seashore is beset with invisible devils. This kind of superstitious belief agrees with Stevenson’s account of low island customs in his travel book: ‘the life of an atoll, unless it be enclosed, passes wholly on the shores of the lagoon; it is there the villages are seated, there the canoes ply and are drawn up; and the beach of the ocean is a place accursed and deserted, the fit scene only for wizardry and shipwreck, and in the native belief a haunting ground of murderous spectres’ (*Tusitala*, XX, 130). In the same section about Paumotus, Stevenson notices the importance native people attach to their woven mats which they seem to take with them so often (157- 60). Hence the use of a magic mat by Kalamake to carry him to and from the Isle of Voices. The fact that residents of the ‘Isle of Voices’ are cannibals is a reworking of the theme of ‘The Feast of Famine’, a barbaric custom that Stevenson mainly attributes to the Marquesas.

Some of Stevenson’s personal experiences in the South Seas also go into the story. The native girl on the Isle of Voices mentions a personal name ‘Donat-Kimaran’ on their home island who ‘comes and talks for the French’ (*Tusitala*, XIII,

¹ King Kalakaua’s *The Legends and Myths of Hawaii: The Fables and Folklore of a Strange People* (New York: Webster, 1888), pp. 67-94. Cited in Roslyn Jolly, p. 276.

² By ‘a recent volume’ Stevenson may be referring to King Kalakaua’s book. In his preface to *The Ebb-Tide* (*Tusitala*, XIV, ix) Lloyd Osbourne, his step-son, recorded that Stevenson and King Kalakaua became great friends and found their strongest bond in Polynesian lore and antiquities: ‘Together they would pore for hours over the king’s notebooks, in which in his fine, slanting hand he had transcribed the legends of his dying people’.

³ Two different accounts of the origin of the Hawaiian islands as being fished out of the sea exist respectively in Abraham Fornander’s *An Account of the Polynesian Race, its Origin and Migrations*

128). It is now believed that 'Donat-Kimaran' in *Island Nights' Entertainments* is a misprinting of 'Donat-Rimaraui' (spelled as 'Donat-Rimareau' by Fanny) due to a misreading of Stevenson's handwriting, the story having been set without Stevenson seeing the proofs.¹ This allusion to his friend together with the low island setting confirms that Stevenson had Fakarava in mind as the permanent home island of the people of the Isle of Voices. The furnishings and decorations of Kalamake's parlour described in the story were modelled upon those of a house that Stevenson visited in the village of Hookena in the Kona district of Hawaii, the owner of which was the ex-judge, Nahinu, with whom Stevenson stayed briefly. In 'The Eight Islands', Stevenson described the house as 'on the European or, to be more descriptive, on the American plan. The parlour was fitted with the usual furniture and ornamented with the portraits of Kamehameha the third, Lunalilo, Kalakaua, the queen consort of the isles, and Queen Victoria. There was a Bible on the table, other books stood on a shelf.' (*Tusitala*, XX, 183). In the story, the sorcerer was able to turn sea shells into silver coins through burning tree leaves. In some parts of the Pacific, sea shells were actually used as a form of money. R. H. Mackellar, who travelled in the Pacific at about the same time as Stevenson, reported that 'The "dewarra", which is the native money of New Britain, is comprised of a particular kind of small shell, resembling the cowrie... It is very much sought after by the natives, as with it they purchase their wives, their slaves, pigs, and in fact all articles of trade.'² Finally, Stevenson's own travel experience is used in the story. After Keola was saved by a trading schooner off the coast of Molokai, 'they were about a month from Honolulu when they made the land' which turned out to be none other than the Isle of Voices. The time they took was obviously based on the last part of Stevenson's first Pacific cruise in the yacht *Casco* from Tahiti (near Paumotus) to Hawaii: it was exactly thirty days before he and his family reached Honolulu on 24 January 1889 and the only land sighted was an outlying island of the Paumotus.

(London: Trübner, 1878-85, Vol. II. 18-19) and Johannes C. Andersen's *Myths and Legends of the Polynesians*, p. 216).

¹ See Jolly, p. 278.

² R. H. MacKellar, "A Naturalist in Cannibal-Land", in *The Wide World Magazine* (London: George Newnes, Ltd., Vol. III:B, April, 1899, 32-39), p. 33.

Such references to real people, places and events that Stevenson knew from his travels in Hawaii and Paumotus make the fairy tale highly circumstantial in its details and help create realistic effects. Stevenson may have had this in mind when he commented on the three stories making up *Island Nights' Entertainment* that 'they all have a queer realism, even the most extravagant, even 'The Isle of Voices': the manners are exact" (*Letters*, VII, 436).

But it is not just the circumstantial elements that make the story verge on 'queer realism'. Almost as important as its geographical settings is the social and historical background against which the tale unfolds itself. By setting the story at a time of the incoming of Western civilisation among the islands, Stevenson inevitably introduces colonial and multi-racial issues into his supernatural plot. A modern reader may still be carried away by its fantastic legendary interest. Yet he may equally be impressed by its interesting representation of natives gradually giving way to European culture and manners.

The story takes the form of the supernatural adventures of Keola, the son-in-law of Kalamake, a much-feared sorcerer on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. At the beginning of the story, Keola is described as a lazy, useless but vain and greedy young Hawaiian who thinks of wealth in terms of 'bright new dollars'. Wondering at Kalamake's infinite but inconceivable source of money, Keola accompanies his father-in-law on one of his journeys transported on a mat of fine texture to the ocean beach on the Isle of Voices where the sorcerer collects sea shells and, by performing the rite of burning certain tree leaves on the mat, turn them into silver coins. Keola receives his share of five dollars. The way he uses his money seems quite modern --- to buy both material and spiritual happiness. Having spent all the five dollars on fine clothes, he provokes his father-in-law's malice by craving a concertina so that he can entertain himself all day long. His rescue from the sea by a trading schooner throws him into direct contact with white men.

In the first place, Keola's decision to be hired on as a sailor in the place of a lost man is an expedient one, that is, to escape from his dangerous father-in-law. Of course European food is also something he desires: 'In some ways the ship was a good place. The food was extraordinarily rich and plenty, with biscuits and salt beef every day, and pea-soup and puddings made of flour and suet twice a week, so that

Keola grew fat' (*Tusitala*, XIII, 123). However, whether he can stay long on the ship depends on the relationship between him, a 'Kanaka', and the rest of the crew who are white. Like other white men making their living in the Pacific, the crew of the trading schooner are a mixed lot. Keola finds most of them good including the captain, or at least 'no worse than other whites'. The trouble is with the mate, 'who was the most difficult man to please Keola had ever met with, and beat and cursed him daily, both for what he did and what he did not. The blows that he dealt were very sore, for he was strong; and the words he used were very unpalatable' (123).

Cruel, arrogant and racially prejudiced, the mate can be regarded as an antecedent to Huish in *The Ebb-Tide* and Case in *The Beach of Falesá*. His distrust and dislike of Polynesian natives are carried in his generalisation that 'Kanaka was for no use in the world' (124). Two things in the story, trivial as they are to the main supernatural plot, indicate that Stevenson was well aware of what kind of character he was creating and by that characterisation his critical attitude filtered through. When the schooner approaches an isle the crew have never heard of, the mate shows his usual conceit by claiming to know the place because, as he says, 'I've been past here one night in the schooner *Eugenie*' (123). Information behind the text provided by Fanny tells us that the schooner *Eugenie* was a slave-ship which had visited the Gilbert Islands in 1871.¹ That the mate should have worked on a slave-ship must have been Stevenson's deliberate touch added to the mate's brutal, racist character. If this extra-textual reference is not designed for the sake of the reader, then the mate's absurd death much desired by Keola surely is. The incident is reported to Keola by people of the Isle of Voices:

It was there [an island where people of the Isle of Voices make their permanent home] the schooner had gone after Keola deserted; there, too, the mate had died, like the fool of a white man as he was. It seems, when the ship came, it was the beginning of the sickly season in that isle when the fish of the lagoon are poisonous, and all who eat of them swell up and die. The mate was told of it; he saw the boats preparing, because in that season the people leave that island and sail to the Isle of Voices; but he was a fool of a white man, who would believe no stories but his own, and he caught one of these fish, cooked it and ate it, and swelled up and died, which was good news to Keola.

(*Tusitala*, XIII, 126-27)

¹ Cited in Jolly, p.278.

With Keola as the protagonist, the colonial contact in the story is largely perceived from the native's point of view. Obviously Keola comes into that contact with preconceived, stereotyped notions about whites. For as soon as he is saved by the crew, he is given gin, biscuit and dry clothes, and asked how he has come where they found him and whether the light they saw was the lighthouse. His instinctive response is one of a makeshift or even a lie: 'Keola knew white men are like children and only believe their own stories; so about himself he told them what he pleased, and as for the light (which was Kalamake's lantern) he vowed he had seen none' (*Tusitala*, XIII, 122). To compare white men to children is consistent with Keola's vain character. It also adds a humorous touch to the racial issue in the story, because in Stevenson's other South Seas stories, namely *The Ebb-Tide* and *The Beach of Falesá*, it was a common phenomenon for white men to treat natives as such. That 'white men only believe their own stories' occurs in the story like a refrain. The ship mate dies of this bigotry. At the end of the story, Keola and his Hawaiian wife decide to take counsel of a white missionary. This time, probably the first time, Keola tells a white man everything. Again, the white man does not seem to understand his story. Instead 'the missionary was very sharp on him for taking the second wife in the low island; but for all the rest, he vowed he could make neither head nor tail of it,' and 'as for this extraordinary rigmarole, you cannot do better than keep it to yourselves' (133).

What is interesting about the racial relations in the story is that Stevenson does nothing to idealise natives while denouncing white racism. Kalamake is depicted as a strange, relentless, and tyrant-like creature who shows no mercy to whoever crosses him, not even his son-in-law. People of the Isle of Voices are still living in a barbaric age resorting to cannibalistic practices. Keola, the victim of a series of dangerous events, is a good-for-nothing young man who unleashes his father-in-law's ruthlessness by his own greed and vanity. 'Why should I work when I have a father-in-law who makes dollars of sea-shells?' he thinks after knowing Kalamake's wizardry. Ignoring his wife's warning, he congratulates himself by saying: 'There is nothing needed in this world but a little courage,' and 'Perhaps she will understand in the future that her husband is a man of some intelligence' (120). Keola is vain because he is not an ordinary native. His conceit comes from his well-connected

family relationships. As he tells people of the Isle of Voices, he is 'a chief friend of the king and the missionaries' (126) and he is 'come from a good family and accustomed to respect' (123). His character prejudices him against whites and natives alike even before any real contact occurs. As with most of Stevenson's South Seas stories, more favourable descriptions are reserved for native women. Both Lehua, Keola's Hawaiian wife, and the native girl given to him as wife on the Isle of Voices, are capable not only of love but also of courage and wit to save their husband from perilous situations.

While Stevenson kept himself from making hasty racial assumptions, he did not in the least withhold his critique of imperialism as an institutional enterprise. In this story, the isle serves as a miniature of the Pacific region under imperialist plunder which is expressed in the form of a linguistic metaphor. Kalamate is only one of many sorcerers world-wide extracting wealth from the island, for the voices Keola hears are multi-national: 'All tongues of the earth were spoken there; the French, the Dutch, the Russian, the Tamil, the Chinese' (130). Having witnessed the scene, Keola reaches the conclusion that 'it is clear that all the new coin in all the world is gathered on these sands!' (130).

Desire for Western material culture is another important aspect of the colonial issue in the story. Both European ways and those of the indigenous culture are mixed together, often with the former as having a dominant impact upon the latter. Kalamake, while practising what is to the European mind ancient, mysterious sorcery, watches for the arrival of the steamer from Kalaupapa to feed his taste for tinned salmon and gin. When he takes Keola out to the deep sea, the two sit in the boat smoking cigars. He furnishes his parlour in the manner of 'a man of substance' with 'a rocking-chair, and a table and a sofa in the European style' plus 'a shelf of books' and 'a family Bible in the midst of the table'. There is also 'a lock-fast writing desk against the wall', in which he stores 'a pair of necklaces hung with charms and shells, a bundle of dried herbs, and the dried leaves of trees, and a green branch of palm' (115) --- an interesting mixture of European elegance and native enigma. The most interesting decoration in Kalamake's parlour is the print of Kamehameha the fifth and a photograph of Queen Victoria, symbolic of two civilisations being brought together. By faithfully re-creating Nahinu's house in his

fiction, Stevenson showed his keen awareness of a Pacific culture in transition in the late nineteenth century colonial era.

Unlike Kalamake, Keola's fondness of western food and luxuries undergoes some change when he comes through his adventures. He learns to love his Hawaiian staple food again: 'Now, when Keola could see his wife at last he was mighty pleased, and he was mighty pleased to be home again in Molokai and sit down beside a bowl of poi¹--- for they make no poi on board ships' (132-33). However, to be acquainted with Western ways is a non-stopping process. Following the white missionary's advice, Keola learns to 'buy' peace of mind and safety from dangerous Kalamake through charity -- by giving some of his ill-gotten money to lepers and some as missionary fund.

3

The Importation of 'Imp'

'The Bottle Imp' presents similar techniques that are used in 'The Isle of Voices', juxtaposing a fantastic plot of the supernatural with intense realism of the Western material culture as well as Christian values. The Hawaiian protagonists and the supernatural plot make the story as indigenous as the setting itself. Were it not for Stevenson's own note preceding the story, anyone acquainted with the legends and folklore of the Pacific would possibly assume that the tale, like its companion piece, had been drawn from Polynesian sources, which more than once relate how familiar spirits were kept in coconut-shells for safe-keeping or other practical purposes.² But Stevenson honestly tells us in his note that 'any student of that very unliterary product, the English drama of the early part of the century, will here recognise the name and the root idea of a piece once rendered popular by the redoubtable O. Smith. The root idea is there and identical, and yet I hope I have made it a new thing. And

¹ Jolly, p. 279: 'a bowl of poi' is Hawaiian staple food -- 'a paste made from the boiled roots of the taro plant, mashed, mixed with water, and not served till slightly fermented'.

² A legend of Hawaii, for example, relates how Hiku went down to the nether world to save his lover by imprisoning her spirit within coconut-shells and then forcing the reluctant spirit into her body to restore her life. See Andersen, pp. 302-6.

the fact that the tale has been designed and written for a Polynesian audience may lend it some extraneous interest nearer home' (78). A close reading of the story in the context of cross-cultural impact which is characteristic of the late nineteenth century colonialism reveals that 'The Bottle Imp' is an interesting importation from Europe both in source material and moral message, just as the bottle imp itself is imported from America – a cultural extension of Europe.

The redoubtable O. Smith that Stevenson mentioned was Richard John Smith, a popular actor in the two or three decades before Stevenson's birth, nicknamed Obi Smith from his successful part in *Three Fingered Jack*.¹ In 1828 he 'rendered popular' on the London stage another play called *The Bottle Imp* by his memorable role as the demon. The play, 'a melo-dramatic romance in two acts' composed by R. B. Peake, was the immediate source of Stevenson's story.² In December 1892 Stevenson wrote to Colvin about providing a sub-title, 'A Cue from an Old Melodrama', in place of the note (*Letters*, VII, 436). According to Fanny, Stevenson first encountered the play among the stock of melodramas collected by Sir Percy and Lady Shelley for private theatrical performances. The couple were the Stevensons' neighbour at Bournemouth, England, in 1885-87. Upon Sir Percy Shelley's death, Lady Shelley gave their collection to Stevenson, and as Fanny remembered, 'One of these, adapted from an old German legend, caught my husband's fancy; he spoke of it several times when we were living in Honolulu, as being, in its ingenuity and imaginative qualities, singularly like the Hawaiian tales.'³ That Fanny associated the play with a German legend may lead us to suppose that Stevenson probably also knew about the prose source lying behind the play, and he once referred to his story as a centre piece of a volume of *Märchen* that he planned to write (*Letters*, VII, 461).

The German legend translated as 'The Bottle Imp' first appeared in 1823 in an anonymous collection called *Popular Tales and Romances of the Northern Nations* (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, J. H. Bohte), then as 'The Mandrake' in Thomas Roscoe's *German Novelists: Translated from the Original with Critical and*

¹ J. Edwin Beinecke, *A Stevenson Library: Catalogue of a Collection of Writings by and about Robert Louis Stevenson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951-64), p. 183.

² The play is located in Benjamin Webster, *The Acting National Drama* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1838), Vol. II.

³ Prefatory Note to *Island Nights' Entertainments* (*Tusitala*, XIII, xii). Fanny identified Fitzball as the playwright, which must have been a mistake.

Biographical Notes (London: Henry Colburn, 1826, Vol. II. 327-366). Its recent appearance in the original title was in Peter Haining's *Gothic Tales of Terror from Europe and America* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1972, Vol. II. 601-625). Opinions vary about the German authorship.¹ But what concerns us more is the way in which an identical idea of a story should have taken root in three different cultures. It is all possible that Samoan readers little guessed nor did Stevenson himself fully realise the transformations undergone by the tale since it was told in remote German villages.

The German original is set in the Thirty Years' War. A young German merchant named Richard visits Venice on a pleasure trip. After squandering all his fortunes, a Spanish captain makes him an offer of a strange bottle which may give him the power of possessing as much money as he desires. 'I know not whether you are acquainted with a certain creature which they call a Mandrake. It is a very diminutive black-looking imp, enclosed in a phial. Whoever possess one of these creatures may by its means obtain whatever is most desirable in life, particularly an unbounded quantity of money. In return the Mandrake requires the soul of the possessor for his master Lucifer, provided he dies without having transferred the Mandrake into other hands. This can only be done by selling it, and that too for a smaller sum than the possessor himself has given for it. Mine cost me ten ducats, and if you will give me nine for it, 't is yours'.² Richard purchases the phial with five ducats and then abandons himself to uncontrollable desires. He is overcome with sickness as a result of his dissipation.. While in a feverish state he seems to see the imp grow long and thin, crawl out of the bottle and throw its loathsome body upon his own. Seized with an agony of fright, Richard succeeds in selling the fiendish bottle to other people including his mistress and his doctor, only to buy it back either by mistake or by other people's tricks. The story concludes with Richard being saved from damnation by a supernatural giant who is already bound to the devil for 100,000 gold pieces per year but desires more money offered by the bottle.

¹ Joseph Warren Beach and Thomas Roscoe attribute the original to LaMotte Fouqué (1777-1843) while Peter Haining thinks that J. K. August Musäus (1735-1787) was the original author. See Beach's article 'The Sources of Stevenson's *Bottle Imp*', in *Modern Language Notes* (Vol. XXV, No. 1, 1910), pp. 12-18, and Roscoe's and Haining's notes preceding their respectively collected versions of the story.

² Quoted from Thomas Roscoe, p. 329.

In Peake's play the setting remains the same but the characterisation and plot are changed a great deal. Richard is renamed Albert and the Spanish captain becomes a Nicola, a more criminal-like figure wanted by Inquisition for practising sorcery connected with the bottle imp. An additional set of characters are introduced in the play to make it a proper melodramatic romance and to adapt it to the talents of actors and the taste of the time. Albert leaves behind his lover Marcellia to seek pleasure in Venice. There he is tricked by Niccla into buying the bottle imp and then undergoes similar experiences as does the protagonist in the German story. In the end of play, just before his execution, Nicola buys back the fatal bottle in order to ask for something to drink. Marcellia forgives Albert for his betrayal and the couple are happily reunited in marriage.

Except for the basic core of the bottle imp and some vague parallel incidents, there is very little resemblance between Stevenson's story that was meant to appeal more particularly to the native mind, and the original German version or Peake's play. Time, place and characters are changed almost beyond recognition. Set in the modern colonial era in Hawaii and with native Polynesians as protagonists, Stevenson's story significantly introduces a new dimension to the ancient European legend as well as to the archetypal depiction of Polynesians. The bottle imp serves not only as a technical necessity for the plot but also as a focal point around which connection and comparison between European and Polynesian cultures are made. Within the universal human problem that the story deals with is a gentle touch on colonial reality in much the same way as 'The Isle of Voices'.

The initial motive behind Keawe's interest in the fiendish bottle is to imitate European manners, namely to own a house similar to that of the old man that he sees in San Francisco. While Lopaka intends to buy the bottle in order to get a schooner, Keawe thinks otherwise. 'That is not my idea,' says Keawe; 'but to have a beautiful house and garden on the Kona Coast, where I was born, the sun shining in at the door, flowers in the garden, glass in the windows, pictures on the walls, and toys and fine carpets on the tables, for all the world like the house I was in this day – only a storey higher, and with balconies all about like the King's palace; and to live there without care and make merry with my friends and relatives' (*Tusitala*, XIII, 84).

Once his wish is carried out with the help of the imp, he employs a Chinese servant just as the old man in San Francisco has done.

The unlimited source of wealth offered by the bottle imp, similar to the infinite supply of coins through sorcery in 'The Isle of Voices', symbolises the archetypal image of the Pacific with its easy-to-pick rich resources. The characterisation of the two protagonists, however, departs significantly from the traditional archetypal depictions of South Sea islanders. While still retaining some native superstitions, Keawe and Kokua are almost ideal products of Christian missionary work. Both are educated and intelligent. Keawe is described as being able to 'read and write like a schoolmaster' besides being 'a first-rate mariner' (79). As soon as he is in possession of the bottle, he systematically tests what the seller has told him about the bottle much as a western scientist would have done. Kokua is likewise literate and highly resourceful. When she learns that Keawe's melancholy comes from the foreseeable consequence of his possessing the bottle imp, she feels not only sympathetic but also confident that she can save her husband's soul. Her quick-wit and sophistication are beyond the popular stereotyping of island girls:

'You know nothing,' said she. 'I was educated in a school in Honolulu; I am no common girl. And I tell you, I shall save my lover. What is this you say about a cent? But all the world is not American. In England they have a piece they call a farthing, which is about half a cent. Ah! Sorrow!' she cried, 'that makes it scarcely better, for the buyer must be lost, and we shall find none so brave as my Keawe! But, then, there is France; they have a small coin there which they call a centime, and these go five to the cent or thereabout. We could not do better. Come, Keawe, let us go to the French islands; let us go to Tahiti, as fast as ships can bear us. There we have four centimes, three centimes, two centimes, one centime; four possible sales to come and go on; and two of us to push the bargain. Come, my Keawe! Kiss me, and banish care. Kokua will defend you.'

(99)

Just as European manners and sophistication influence their aspiration and thinking, so Christian values shape their moral sense. From the outset, 'The Bottle Imp' may well be interpreted as much a missionary parable as a fusion of European and Polynesian folklore. The biblical message in it is much more emphasised than in either the German original or Peake's play: namely, one must not risk eternal damnation in the next world for the sake of wealth and a good life in this one. Images

of fire in hell are more vivid than in any missionary sermon. The temptation of the bottle lies in its power to bring its owner all that he desires – money, fame, love, houses – at the appropriate word uttered. But there is a fatal drawback to the bottle: it cannot bring eternal happiness to its owner; he risks being sent to hell unless he sells it before he dies, and the sale must be carried out at a loss. All the characters in the story revolve around the moral anguish that accompanies possession of the bottle. Keawe and Kokua in particular are tormented by their intense fear of hell and despair following their reciprocal rescue. ‘A dreadful thing is the bottle,’ thinks Keawe, ‘and dreadful is the imp, and it is a dreadful thing to risk the flames of hell’ (93). Again and again ‘he fell into a brooding horror, and heard the flames crackle, and saw the red fire burn in the bottomless pit’ (97). When the bottle has passed into Kokua’s hands, ‘all that she had heard of hell came back to her, she saw the flames blaze, and she smelt the smoke, and her flesh withered on the coals’ (104).

As a moral tale, ‘The Bottle Imp’ is more concerned with the psychological impact upon people who own the bottle than with actual mischief the imp can do. Almost as soon as Keawe buys the bottle, he becomes afraid of it and begins to shake and sweat with fear upon testing and discovering that there is no way of getting rid of it except obeying its law of purchase. There is a similar moment of discovery in the German tale, but Richard’s joy thereupon forms an interesting contrast with Keawe’s more Christian fears:

But how agreeably was he surprised when the first thing he found, on putting his hand into his pocket, was the phial with the little Mandrake! The golden chain indeed was left at the bottom of the brook, but the phial and the little imp were duly returned to their rightful owner. He could not avoid a sudden exclamation of joy. “And now,” said he, “I possess a treasure of which no power on earth can rob me!” And he would have pressed the dear little phial to his lips, if the little jumping imp had not looked so grim at him.¹

One defining psychological moment in the story is when Lopaka demands a look at the imp itself before buying the bottle from Keawe. Both are turned to stone:

‘There is only one thing I am afraid of,’ said Keawe. ‘The imp may be very ugly to view; and if you once set eyes upon him you might be very undesirous of the bottle.’

¹ *ibid.*, 332.

‘I am a man of my word,’ said Lopaka. ‘And here is the money betwixt us.’

‘Very well,’ replied Keawe. ‘I have a curiosity myself. So come, let us have one look at you, Mr Imp.’

Now as soon as that was said, the imp looked out of the bottle, and in again, swift as a lizard; and there sat Keawe and Lopaka turned to stone. The night had quite come, before either found a thought to say or voice to say it with.

(88)

The missionary message conveyed in the story is a complicated one. For one thing the imp does not seem to represent absolute evil. In fact it carries some good with it. ‘All you have to do is to use the power of the imp in moderation, and then sell it to someone else ... and finish your life in comfort,’ as the old man in San Francisco assures Keawe (81). Sometimes devil’s help can only be employed at the expense of devil’s work, just as Keawe’s house is obtained at the expense of his uncle’s death. More often, however, owners of the bottle do not have to do what Keola does with his ill-gotten money in the end of ‘The Isle of Voices’: they can get rid of the bottle while still retaining their satanically acquired gifts from the little imp. During each transfer of ownership, the person who sells the bottle can easily take a favour from the devil and get away with it. The old man in San Francisco still has his wealth, Lopaka his schooner and Keawe his house. When the bottle goes out of the story, ‘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’ (110).

‘The Bottle Imp’ was expected to have some civilising effect on the natives, as Fanny believed (xii). This explains why the story, originally being ‘designed and written for a Polynesian audience’ (78) was quickly translated into Samoan and published in a local religious periodical the *Sulu* (the Torch) run by the London Missionary Society. Ironically, what was believed to be the first piece of fiction ever offered to the Samoan people did not quite fulfil the missionaries’ expectations. After reading the tale, natives readily assumed that Stevenson’s wealth in Vailima came from his actual possession of such a magic bottle as that in the tale. As Stevenson said to the missionary who did the translation: ‘I sometimes almost wish I had not agreed to the printing of “The Bottle Imp” in your paper, for I get such a lot of Samoan visitors who stay a long time keeping me from my work, and when I am

obliged to excuse myself they shyly ask if they might just have a peep at the Imp himself before they go away. They think I keep him in my safe'.¹

While the religious aspect of the story's moral concern illustrates the influence of the European culture upon natives, the fundamental human nature put to test by possession of the bottle imp sets forth two basic contrasts which are important in light of Stevenson's consistent attitudes toward the cross-cultural contact in the colonial Pacific. The first contrast is an inter-textual one, between Stevenson's version of 'The Bottle Imp' and the two previous versions set in Europe. In both the German tale and Peake's play, the possession of the bottle imp tends to bring out unscrupulous qualities within human nature: greed, deception, disloyalty and even murder. The protagonists have half destroyed themselves morally while in possession of the bottle before the devil may actually lay hold on their soul. Richard in the German tale, for example, is delighted to abandon himself to every kind of sensual pleasure with the help of the bottle imp:

But if Richard had before led an abandoned life, it was now ten times more so. He looked down with pity and contempt on all the potentates and rulers of the earth, convinced that there was not one who could command so many pleasures of life as he. In the luxurious city of Venice no one could count so many rarities of the table as were to be found at his costly banquets. And whenever any moderate man admonished him for his extravagance, "Richard is my name, and my riches are so boundless that no expense in the world can exhaust them." And he would often laugh at the Spanish captain in an extravagant manner, for having parted with so invaluable a treasure, and for having afterwards, as was reported, retired into a monastery.²

Albert in Peake's play is similarly engaged in wild pleasure once in possession of the bottle: 'Possessed of my treasure, I regard even the potentates and princes of the world with disdainful compassion! My riches are boundless!'³ He betrays his fiancée Marcelia in favour of another woman who in like manner turns her back on him and threatens him with inquisition when his health degenerates as a result of dissipation. On most occasions, transfer of the bottle into different hands is carried out by

¹ Rev. A. E. Caxton, 'Stevenson as I knew him in Samoa', in Rosaline Masson, *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers Ltd., 1922), p. 249.

² Roscoe, p. 332.

³ R. B. Peake, *The Bottle Imp: a Melo-dramatic Romance in Two Acts* in Benjamin Webster, ed. *The Acting National Drama* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1838), Vol. II, p. 15.

trickery. The outright evil is the parricide committed by Nicola under the influence of the imp. The dialogue between Nicola and Imp makes clear this point:

Nic. ...The possession of thee has embittered each moment of my existence!
'tis thou hast led me on!

Imp. To crime! ha! ha!

Nic. Crime! true; be it so, tormenting fiend! Thou art my slave, and darest to accuse me.

Imp. Your own conscience will accuse you of every vice that can be engendered in a human being with a bad heart, and in the possession of unbounded means to gratify his passions.

Nic. I scorn thee.

Imp. An unprincipled destroyer of female innocence!

Nic. 'Tis you have aided me!

Imp. Revelling in the sighs and groans of the wretched victims of your wild desire.

Nic. 'Tis you have urged me on.

Imp. Ay, parricide!

Nic. Oh! horror! my father's blood still streams across my hands; I cannot bear the thought – tormenting fiend, away.¹

My purpose in citing scenes from the two previous versions of 'The Bottle Imp' is to illustrate the big change that the moral issue underwent in Stevenson's hands when he decided to use Polynesian natives as his fictional protagonists. Although the gist of the story still concerns greed and covetousness, the kindness and generosity of the Hawaiian characters balance their guilt. Keawe in the first place is not particularly tempted to buy the bottle, but rather is half tricked into his purchase. Once the bottle is under his arm, he thinks: 'If all is true about this bottle, I may have made a losing bargain' (83). On his return to Honolulu, Keawe finds himself heir to a wealthy uncle deceased, enabling him to build a great house to his liking. This episode may have been suggested by Nicola's parricide in Peake's play. The difference is that Nicola personally commits his crime under Devil's influence, while Keawe is an unwitting cause of his uncle's death arranged solely by Devil's work. He realises that 'it is a very ill way to serve me by killing my relatives' (85). All he wants to do, therefore, is to keep his desire within sensible limits: 'he had sworn he would utter no more wishes, and take no more favours from the devil' (86).

¹ *ibid.*, 9.

The possession of the bottle in the German tale and Peake's play corrupts human relationship and love, whereas in Stevenson's version the warmth of human relationship and love is borne out through sympathy and self-sacrifice. When Keawe has first purchased the bottle and told Lopaka everything about it, his friend agrees to buy the bottle from Keawe. But before that he advises Keawe first to 'take the good with the evil'. The same thing happens when Kokua persuades an old man to purchase the bottle for her from Keawe. Mutual trust and care prevail over greed and selfishness:

Then she saw the old man returning, and he had the bottle in his hand.

'I have done your bidding,' said he. 'I left your husband weeping like a child; tonight he will sleep easy.' And he held the bottle forth.

'Before you give it me,' Kokua panted, 'take the good with the evil – ask to be delivered from your cough.'

'I am an old man,' replied the other, 'and too near the gate of the grave to take a favour from the devil. But what is this? Why do you not take the bottle? do you hesitate?

'Not hesitate!' cried Kokua. 'I am only weak. Give me a moment. It is my hand resists, my flesh shrinks back from the accursed thing. One moment only!'

The old man looked upon Kokua kindly. 'Poor child!' said he, 'you fear; your soul misgives you. Well, let me keep it. I am old, and can never more be happy in this world, and as for the next –'

'Give it me!' gasped Kokua. 'There is your money. Do you think I am so base as that? Give me the bottle.'

(103-04)

The most impressive part of the story is the sincerity with which the young couple face their problem and the ensuing reciprocal rescue between them. This starts when Keawe suddenly discovers himself infected with leprosy following his brief courtship with Kokua (he forgets a warning that 'unless a man remains content with what he has, ill will befall him'). His honesty is shown in his decision not to wed Kokua with his disease, as the narrator feels it proper to point out: 'Now you are to observe what sort of a man Keawe was, for he might have dwelt there in the Bright House for years, and no one been the wiser of his sickness; but he reckoned nothing of that, if he must lose Kokua. And again, he might have wed Kokua even as he was; and so many would have done, because they have the souls of pigs; but Keawe loved the maid manfully, and he would do her no hurt and bring her in no danger' (93). But he cannot give up his love either. His only choice is again to 'take the good along

with the evil' by hunting down the bottle and buy it back. To his great dismay the bottle has dropped so much in value that it is now worth only a cent. According to his knowledge whoever buys it can never sell it again. It takes him great courage to risk eternal damnation for the sake of love.

Keawe's honesty is returned with generosity of heart from Kokua. On discovering the cause of his depression, she assures him in a manner that most of the female characters in Stevenson's South Seas fiction behave to protect their loved ones: 'no man can be lost because he loved Kokua, and no other fault. I tell you, Keawe, I shall save you with these hands, or perish in your company. What! You loved me, and gave your soul, and you think I will not die to save you in return?' (99). She comes up with the suggestion of coins lower than a cent. Without finding any buyer on the French islands, Kokua determines to risk her own fate by purchasing the bottle from her husband with the help of an old man. Keawe discovers Kokua's sacrifice; and, not to be outdone in altruism and shrewdness, he buys the bottle back through a drunkard. The 'trickery' and 'deception' involved here are for the purpose of buying the bottle to save the other, rather than of selling it to pass the evil spirit on to others as in the two previous European versions of the story.

A second contrast works within the text itself between natives and whites. From the time when Keawe first buys the bottle in San Francisco at fifty dollars down to the end of the tale when the drunkard has it for two centimes, the bottle has passed through numerous hands. Within the story Stevenson gives us only a sample of different owners with their own specific needs and problems. The protagonists are Hawaiians, yet the infinite wealth the bottle can offer appeals to natives and whites alike. Stevenson introduces white people in such a way that their fortunes in their colonial habitat are presented in relation to the bottle and in contrast with natives. Of the two white men connected with the bottle, the one from whom Keawe buys the bottle a second time has embezzled money and risked his soul to avoid the proper punishment of his disgrace: 'For God's sake buy it!' pleads the young man to Keawe. 'You can have all my fortune in the bargain. I was mad when I bought it at that price. I had embezzled money at my store; I was lost else; I must have gone to jail' (96). The other is 'an old brutal Haole drinking with him, one that had been a boatswain of

a whaler, a runaway, a digger in gold mines, a convict in prisons. He had a low mind and a foul mouth; he loved to drink and to see others drunken' (106).

Stevenson's concern over cross-cultural contacts is also demonstrated in his treatment of the bottle imp. As a fictional device the bottle imp reflects Stevenson's long-standing interest in the supernatural that once generated *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Just as the 'drug' in *Jekyll and Hyde* and the 'mat' in *The Isle of Voices*, the 'bottle imp' functions as a key element in the development of the plot. At the same time the employment of such kind of device in this particular story might also be usefully interpreted in its colonial settings. We are told that the glass of the bottle, in which the imp lives, 'was tempered in the flames of hell', and that 'the devil brought it first upon earth' (81). When the story begins, however, the bottle comes from San Francisco where Keawe admires great houses of European fashion. Perhaps it was with the European version in mind when Stevenson wrote the tale, so that he retained the source of the bottle while removing the setting to the Pacific. What interests us is the way in which the bottle goes out of the story. It ends up in the hands of a white boatswain with his full knowledge of the consequences of owning that bottle:

'This is a pretty good bottle, this is; that's what I mean. How I got it for two centimes I can't make out; but I'm sure you shan't have it for one.'

'You mean you won't sell?' gasped Keawe.

'No, *sir!*' cried the boatswain. 'But I'll give you a drink of the rum, if you like.'

'I tell you,' said Keawe, 'the man who has that bottle goes to hell.'

'I reckon I'm going anyway,' returned the sailor; 'and this bottle's the best thing to go with I've struck yet. No, *sir!*' he cried again, 'this is my bottle now, and you can go and fish for another.'

'Can this be true?' Keawe cried. 'For your own sake, I beseech you, sell it me!'

'I don't value any of your talk,' replied the boatswain. 'You thought I was a flat; now you see I'm not; and there's an end. If you won't have a swallow of the rum, I'll have one myself. Here's your health, and good-night to you!'

(109-10)

If we put this episode of European-imported bottle in a broader literary context of the author's time, we may be interested to find that what Stevenson did with the 'bottle imp' was something new to a popular theme of late Victorian literature – an

invasion of civilisation by the forces of barbarism or demonism, termed by Patrick Brantlinger as ‘imperial Gothic’.¹ As Brantlinger points out, ‘In numerous late Victorian and Edwardian stories, occult phenomena follow characters from imperial settings home to Britain...western science discovers or triggers supernatural effects associated with the “mysterious Orient”’.² In one of Stevenson’s early stories of *New Arabian Nights* (1882), for example, the Rajah’s Diamond of India follows a colonial officer back to Britain, spreading evil during its transfer of hands, much in the same way as the ‘bottle imp’ does in the ancient European legend. The diamond is believed to be a ‘vengeance upon the men of Europe’ desired by the Rajah of Kashgar, Prince of India (*Tusitala*, I, 111). But ‘The Bottle Imp’ by the same author offers an interesting alternative to the mystic phenomenon involving the Orient and the Occident. It is true that there is a pervading element of demonism in Polynesian folklore. But the satanic bottle is an ancient European thing transported to the colonial Pacific just as the story itself was removed from its original setting.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Stevenson believed in the original innocence of Polynesians. In *The Ebb-Tide* and *In the South Seas*, for example, he lays the blame on European colonists for the introduction of new diseases among native population. In ‘The Bottle Imp’ Stevenson touches upon the subject again not only by importing the fiendish bottle from Europe, but also by naming the abhorrent disease of leprosy as Chinese Evil:

Now the truth of it was this: as Keawe undressed for his bath, he spied upon his flesh a patch like a patch of lichen on a rock, and it was then that he stopped singing. For he knew the likeness of that patch, and knew that he was fallen in the Chinese Evil.

(*Tusitala*, XIII, 92)

In a chapter of ‘Letters from the South Seas’, Stevenson elaborates on the source of the disease by saying that ‘Asia, since the dawn of history, has been a camping-ground for this disease’ (*Tusitala*, XXI, 313). He also praises Polynesians for their brave and humanistic treatment of those infected by the disease. ‘There is no doubt, at least, about the savage rapidity with which it spread when introduced,’ he observes. ‘And there is none that, when a leper is first seen, the islanders approach

¹ Brantlinger, p. 227.

² *ibid.*, p. 231.

him without disaffection and are never backward to supply him with a wife. I find this singular; for few races are more sensitive to beauty, of which their own affords so high a standard;...To refuse the male is still considered in most parts of Polynesia a rather unlovely rigour in the female; and if a man be disfigured, I believe it would be held a sort of charity to console his solitude. A kind island girl might thus go to a leper's bed in something of the same spirit as we visit the sick at home with tracts and pounds of tea' (313-4). Therefore, Kokua's willingness to accompany Keawe with his disease is well grounded on Stevenson's observation of Polynesian kindness.

Stevenson was too careful a writer to introduce these aspects into his story without any serious intention. Further instances can be drawn from the text to prove Stevenson's praise of Polynesian natives and his negative treatment of European colonialism. For example, Stevenson associates the names of the young couple with positive symbolic meanings: Keawe was the reigning and the hallowing saint in Hawaiian folklore while 'Kokua' in the Hawaiian language means 'a clean assistant', as Stevenson himself observes in 'The Eight Islands' (*Tusitala*, XX, 191 and 210). In a similar way, the association of the bottle imp with Napoleon and Captain Cook is highly suggestive of imperialist power. As Roslyn Jolly properly points out, 'Stevenson links Cook to Napoleon through the motif of hubris and, perhaps with an eye to European expansionist ambitions as well as personal greed, warns that "unless a man remains content with what he has, ill will befall him"'.¹

¹ Jolly, p. 271.

CHAPTER III

Parables of Language: Mapping Out Colonial Space

Even the acquiring of the barest smattering of a foreign language is imaginatively equivalent to some measure of identification with a people or a culture.

-- Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality*

1

The Gift for Language

Writing to Edward Burlingame¹ from the South Seas in February 1890, Stevenson made a passing critique of Herman Melville as a writer of whom 'I could judge I have thought more than ever', but he 'had no ear for languages whatever: his Hapar tribe, should be Hapaa etc' (*Letters*, VI, 367). It was Stevenson's own residence in the Marquesas that lent him confidence in exposing Melville's inaccurate transcription of the native tongue in *Typee*. In *In the South Seas*, the same criticism appears in the form of a humorous gibe in which the literary predecessor's linguistic inaccuracy becomes an infantile defect as the ear undermines the pen:

Take the valley of Hapaa, known to readers of Herman Melville under the grotesque misspelling of Hapar. There are but two writers who have touched the South Seas with any genius, both Americans: Melville and Charles Warren Stoddard; and at the christening of the first and greatest, some influential fairy must have been neglected: 'He shall be able to see,' 'He shall be able to tell,' 'He shall be able to charm,' said the friendly godmothers; 'But he shall not be able to hear,' exclaimed the last.

(*Tusitala*, XX, 25)

¹ Burlingame, Edward L. (1848-1922), editor of *Scribner's Magazine* from 1886 to 1914, with whom Stevenson was in continuous correspondence from 1887 onwards on matters of publication.

As Mehew's new edition of *Letters* reveals, this is Stevenson's sole criticism of Melville with regard to the latter's South Seas writings. Otherwise Stevenson was a great admirer of Melville: '[I] will tell you more of the South Seas after very few months than any other writer has done,' he wrote to Charles Baxter over a year earlier, '--except Herman Melville perhaps, who is a howling cheese' (*Letters*, VI, 207). Stevenson's ambivalent commentary on his American predecessor as a writer about the South Seas indicates the importance that he attached to the function of language as a representation of colonial realities.

As a stylist, Stevenson of course laid much emphasis on the art of language in prose and poetry, himself being celebrated in his lifetime and for many years after for his masterly use of the English language. His essay 'On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature' sums up his view on literary language as a form of art that he practised throughout his life. According to him the fundamental goal of prose and poetry, like other forms of art, is to please the public. Different from its sister arts, the art of literature relies on the 'the acknowledged currency of our daily affairs', that is, writing and speech that the public is already familiar with. Therefore to achieve that goal the author needs to pay particular attention to the 'choice of words', 'stylistic pattern' and 'rhythm of the phrase', so that 'every word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph must move in a logical progression, and convey a definite conventional import' (*Tusitala*, XXVIII, 34).

In one of his early essays entitled 'Truth of Intercourse' (1879), he observed that much of our life depended upon our skill in language. Without due and proper utterance of our feelings, love could perish, forgiveness could be withheld, and misunderstanding could arise. The gist of his mild criticism of Melville can be traced in this early essay in his analogy between language and music:

The world was made before the English language, and seemingly upon a different design. Suppose we held our converse not in words, but in music; those who have a bad ear would find themselves cut off from all near commerce, and no better than foreigners in his big world. But we do not consider how many have "a bad ear" for words, nor how often the most eloquent find nothing to reply.

(*Tusitala*, XXV, 35)

Stevenson's emphasis upon the constant interplay between language and experience anticipated by seventy years Edward Sapir, an influential sociolinguist in the middle of the twentieth century, though Sapir used a different analogy:

It is generally difficult to make a complete divorce between objective reality and our linguistic symbols of reference to it; and things, qualities, and events are on the whole felt to be what they are called. For the normal person every experience, real or potential, is saturated with verbalism. This explains why so many lovers of nature, for instance, do not feel that they are truly in touch with it until they have mastered the names of a great many flowers and trees, as though the primary world of reality were a verbal one and as though one could not get close to nature unless one first mastered the terminology which somehow magically expresses it.¹

As a traveller and writer of cross-cultural significance, Stevenson's interest in language reached beyond its aesthetic dimension. He showed great enthusiasm for languages other than English, partly for practical purposes and partly out of respect for non-English cultures. In cross-cultural encounters, language is the first thing that one has to cope with and therefore holds the key to understanding an alien culture. But can speech and writing in one language convey the reality of a different culture? Stevenson's answer might have been both 'yes' and 'no'. The affirmation lies in the fact that all his South Seas fiction was written in English, including those ballads and fables that present Polynesian cultures most faithfully. Yet at the same time he was keenly aware of the necessity to learn other people's languages. As Sapir puts it, 'even the acquiring of the barest smattering of a foreign language is imaginatively equivalent to some measure of identification with a people or a culture'.² Again in his 'Truth of Intercourse', Stevenson stressed the need to acquire a foreign tongue by citing the last book he was reading – Leland's captivating *English Gipsies*:

It is said that those who can converse with Irish peasants in their own native tongue form far higher opinions of their appreciation of the beautiful, and of the elements of humour and pathos in their hearts, than do those who know their thoughts only through the medium of English.

(31)

¹ Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language, and Personality: Selected Essays*, ed. David G. Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p. 9. A comparison might be drawn between the Western view of language and that of the Chinese. The tradition of Chinese literature advocates that the best of human feelings are not to be expressed fully in words but to be shared silently through empathy.

² Sapir, pp. 43-44.

Indeed Stevenson himself was amazingly gifted for his knowledge of several languages. When he was working on his projected book of Scottish Highland history, for example, he resolved that he must learn Gaelic to assist himself with his work (*Letters*, III, 128). His command of French began at the age of thirteen when he accompanied his parents to Mentone. Accordingly to Fanny, ‘the child acquired an accent and vocabulary that remained with him all the rest of his life. He knew little of French grammar (or, indeed, of any grammar) but spoke the vernacular with a freedom and accuracy which caused him to be accepted everywhere by the French as one of themselves, though perhaps from another province’ (*Tusitala*, XVII, ix). Lloyd Osbourne also recorded that his step-father could speak French admirably and read it like his mother-tongue (*Tusitala*, I, xx). After moving to the Pacific, Stevenson’s interest in learning other people’s languages continued. He respected Polynesians and their culture and languages as equal to those of Europe, and delved into study of native tongues such as Tahitian, Hawaiian and Samoan in order to get firsthand stories from venerable chiefs. He studied Hawaiian with a native and soon was able to read a pretty story in it (*Letters*, VI, 265). His Samoan lessons were taken with a missionary teacher. He ‘learned enough to make set speeches in form and to admire highly the beauties of a tongue so full of liquid, connotation-packed adjectives and verbs’.¹ His teacher Rev. S. J. Whitmee (of London Missionary Society in Apia) was impressed by the enthusiasm that Stevenson showed about the language:

I found him to be a keen student; and the peculiarities and niceties of the language greatly interested him. He thought the language was wonderful, and quite agreed with me that the Samoans must have descended from a much higher condition of intellectual culture, to possess such a tongue. The extent of the vocabulary, the delicate differences of form and expressive shades of meaning, the wonderful varieties of the pronouns and particles, astonished him.²

In summer 1892 he even tried his hand at writing a story in the Samoan language. The unfinished story, entitled “Eatuiian”, now exists in four pages of manuscript at Yale.

¹ Furnas, *A Voyage to Windward*, p. 331.

² Rosaline Masson (ed.), *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: W. & R. Chambers, Ltd., 1922), p. 232.

Stevenson's masterly command of English and his knowledge of several languages prepared him to present the Pacific world from different points of view, Polynesian as well as European, and to closely link differences in perspective to differences in language in a way that he thought Melville did not do. In other words, he allowed the linguistic reality of the South Pacific to become part of his thematic concern.¹ His anti-colonial stance, as does his fictional characterisation, works to a large extent through the relationship between language and culture, speech and racial identity.

2

Linguistic Diversity and Racial Identity

Language in cross-cultural texts, as it is in Stevenson's South Seas fiction, has been an important issue of recent post-colonial literary criticism. One of its critical theories puts colonial and post-colonial literature into two categories: those written in the language of the imperial centre such as English by European settlers and travellers, and those at a later stage by natives either in their own indigenous tongue through rejection of the imperial language or in the imperial language through appropriation.¹ What I would like to suggest is that Stevenson's use of language in his South Seas fiction presents an alternative model for post-colonial study. Unlike other European writers of colonial background whose literary medium was mainly the imperial language such as the received standard English, Stevenson applied multiple levels of English ranging from authorial and Oxford-educated English to trade jargons and sea lingo, from Scots and Australian English to American slang and Chinese pidgin English. Within the texts of the standard English and its 'lesser' variants is the insertion of indigenous vocabulary, translated or untranslated, as a

¹ Stevenson's experiment with language as his thematic concern did not begin with his South Seas fiction. In a public lecture on Stevenson's language, Prof. Ian Campbell drew attention to Stevenson's use of Scots/English alternation in his Scottish novels as a representation of the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scotland in transition – 'the fascinating and irritating contradictions of being Scots, or thinking about Scotland'. Quoted by courtesy of Prof. Ian Campbell, 'Stevenson and Language', a lecture given on the 9th January 1995 at Osbourne Hotel in Edinburgh).

means of communicating a non-English, non-European meaning. This experiment by Stevenson with the potentials of language in colonial contexts can be seen as a continued development of his literary career. As a Scot, he adopted standard English as his literary medium before travelling to the South Seas. He did this not for the purpose of rejecting his own Scots, but to achieve literary recognition and to gain a wider audience. When he arrived in the South Seas he had already established himself as a writer. He could afford to experiment freely, in spite of some objections from literary friends and critics at home, with new methods of realism by adopting the indigenous language to his own standard English.

Stevenson was acutely aware of the nineteenth-century Pacific as a melting-pot of races linguistically represented by different kinds of speech. In his major Pacific novels, the linguistic diversity is presented in two ways: that within the Polynesian races and that across European and non-European racial lines as a result of the European colonial expansion. According to our contemporary survey, there are about 1200 languages, and many more dialects, spoken in the Pacific Islands. The area contains nearly one quarter of all the world's languages, yet the Pacific Islands populations average less than 5000 speakers per language. Moreover, few island nations are in the convenient position of having only one language each, and Samoan is the only language which is spoken in more than one country or territory.² Being linguistically sensitive, Stevenson must have been impressed by the diversity of Polynesian languages when he arrived in the South Seas:

In the small isle of Tana, Mr. F. A. Cambell counts no fewer than six languages; and on New Caledonia I was assured there were not less than fifty; the latter figure struck me with incredulity. M. Gallet (who gave it me for a round number) immediately called into the office one of his native assistants, asked the lad what languages he could understand and which he could not, and as each was named, showed me its territory on the map. The boy spoke three; he mentioned (I think) four of which he was quite ignorant; and they were all close neighbours in a narrow belt across the island.³

The linguistic differentiations among Polynesian natives are given fictional representation in *The Ebb-Tide*. The Kanakas on board the *Farallone* do not have a

¹ Bill Ashcroft and others, *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 4-6, 38-9.

² Ron Crocombe, *The South Pacific: An Introduction* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1987), p. 42.

³ Quoted in Barry Menikoff, p. 71.

multi-lingual gift that the boy does. Therefore they have to rely on English as a means of communication among themselves: ‘Upon the Sunday each brought forth his separate Bible – for they were all men of alien speech even to each other, and Sally Day communicated with his mates in English only, each read or made believe to read his chapter’ (*Tusitala*, XIV, 48-49).

The differences between Polynesian languages, however, were not as significant as Stevenson had expected. In Chapter II of *In the South Seas*, he commented upon the similarities between Polynesian languages:

The impediment of tongues was one that I particularly over-estimated. The languages of Polynesia are easy to smatter, though hard to speak with elegance. And they are extremely similar, so that a person who has a tincture of one or two may risk, not without hope, an attempt upon the others.

(*Tusitala*, XX, 10)

The examples that Stevenson gave were two widespread Polynesian words ‘house’ and ‘love’. I reproduce his table here so that by comparing words of the same meaning, we can find that the consonants are different, but the vowels and the arrangement of syllables are similar:

	<i>House</i>	<i>Love</i>
Tahitian	fare	aroa
New Zealand	whare	
Samoan	fale	talofa
Manihiki	fale	aloha
Hawaiian	hale	aloha
Marquesan	ha’e	kaoha

(12)

That is why in ‘The Bottle Imp’, when Keawe and Kokua from Hawaii went to Tahiti to sell the bottle, they did not find much difficulty with the Tahitian language: ‘They got on well after the first with the Tahitian language, which is indeed like to the Hawaiian, with a change of certain letters, and as soon as they had any freedom of speech, began to push the bottle’ (*Tusitala*, XIII, 100). In ‘The Isle of Voices’, when Keola made his first invisible visit with his father-in-law to the small island, a native girl ran away in terror. As she ran, ‘the girl kept crying in some speech that was not practised in Hawaii, yet some of the words were the same’ (117).

Despite the diversity of Polynesian languages, the significance of the Pacific as a linguistic melting-pot lies in its multi-cultural reality with the arrival of whites, and it is with this aspect of linguistic diversity that Stevenson's South Seas fiction is more concerned. He went on to say that 'not only is Polynesian easy to smatter, but interpreters abound. Missionaries, traders, and broken white folk living on the bounty of the natives, are to be found in almost every isle and hamlet; and even where these are unserviceable, the natives themselves have often scraped up a little English, and in the French zone (though far less commonly) a little French-English' (*Tusitala*, XX, 11). The many bodiless 'voices' of trade and imperialism that figure in 'The Isle of Voices' constitute a vivid linguistic metaphor for the international mixture of races in the Pacific. We are told that 'all tongues of the earth were spoken there; the French, the Dutch, the Russian, the Tamil, the Chinese. Whatever land knew sorcery, there were some of its people whispering in Keola's ear' (*Tusitala*, XIII, 130).

The Wrecker is the lengthiest of Stevenson's South Seas fictions in which people of different nationalities and speeches meet. While introducing Loudon Dodd the narrator to the reader, the Prologue 'In the Marquesas' provides the reader with a highly international atmosphere. The arrival of a schooner revives the entire town of Tai-o-hae, the French capital and port of entry of the Marquesas Islands. A large part of the population – the native Queen, the Tahitian missionary, half-cast merchants, and 'the various English, Americans, Germans, Poles, Corsicans, and Scots' – all deserted their places of business and gathered, according to their custom, at the port to exchange guesses as to the nationality and business of the strange vessel. It is through speech that their nationalities are identified:

"I told you she was a Johnny Bull – knew it by her headsails," said an evergreen old salt, still qualified (if he could anywhere have found an owner unacquainted with his story) to adorn another quarter-deck and lose another ship.

"She has American lines, anyway," said the astute Scotch engineer of the gin-mill; "it's my belief she's a yacht."

"That's it," said the old salt, "a yacht! Look at her davits, and the boat over the stern."

"A yacht in your eye!" said a Glasgow voice. "Look at her red ensign! A yacht! not much she isn't!"

"You can close the store, anyway, Tom," observed a gentlemanly German. "Bon jour, mon Prince!" he added, as a dark, intelligent native cantered by on a neat chestnut. "Vous allez boire un verre de bière?"

(*Tusitala*, XII, 5)

The fact that the German switches from English to French when he addresses a native presents a number of interesting sociological issues in the colonial Pacific. French is officially used in this part of the Pacific under French colonial rule, and the person he speaks to is an 'intelligent' native who is supposedly a product of missionary education as Keawe is in 'The Bottle Imp'. Therefore in the international community of the Pacific, such ethnic aspects as race, language and nationality do not need to coincide: one language can be shared by people of different ethnic groups and one person might be capable of two or more speeches. Quite a number of characters in Stevenson's South Seas fiction inhabit more than one linguistic zones. The German here is fluent in both English and French apart from his native language. In *The Beach of Falesá* and *The Ebb-Tide* respectively, Case and Attwater are both described as masters of the Polynesian native tongue. When Loudon Dodd is formally presented, he is quite popular partly because of his language ability: '...by all (since he was a man of pleasing exterior, smooth ways, and an unexceptionable flow of talk, whether in French or English) he was excellently well received' (*Tusitala*, XII, 9).

The overlapping territories of race, language and nationality are held by modern sociolinguists as universal to human society. Sociolinguists frequently make the point that 'peoples sharing substantially the same culture speak languages belonging to disparate stocks, and, contrariwise, that peoples whose languages are related may have very different cultures'.¹ Stevenson's earlier fiction *Kidnapped* demonstrates this point, in which the interplay of race and national identity is seen through language. Within the borders of Scotland three languages existed side by side: English, Scots and Gaelic. England was regarded as a foreign country by many Scottish people, though the Union of the Crowns had happened over a century and a half before. While the Lowlanders used Scots or shared the same language with 'foreigners' south of the border, it was with their brethren in the north, whose language was Gaelic, that they were identified. When David Balfour ventured into the Highland, he found himself embarrassed because of the differences in language:

¹ Harry Hoijer, 'Linguistic and Cultural Change', in *Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology*, ed. by Dell Hymes (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 455.

...Few had any English, and these few (unless they were of the brotherhood of beggars) not very anxious to place it at my service. I knew Torosay to be my destination, and repeated the name to them and pointed; but instead of simple pointing in reply, they would give me a screed of Gaelic that set me foolish.

(*Tusitala*, VI, 101)

Therefore language, race and nationality do not often coincide in reality. While these ethnic aspects tend to be regarded as but different facets of a single identity, the identification of race and nationality does not need to correspond to the identification of language. As Edward Sapir observes:

So far as language and race are concerned, it is true that the major races of man have tended in the past to be set off against each other by important differences of language. There is less point to this, however, than might be imagined, because the linguistic differentiations within any given race are just as far-reaching as those which can be pointed out across racial lines.¹

It must have been from this standpoint that Stevenson made the comment: 'Is it common education, common morals, a common language or a common faith, that join men into nations? There were practically none of these in the case we are considering' (*Tusitala*, XXIX, 11).

To a certain extent, the fictional world of Stevenson's Pacific novels is a case in point with its crisscross linguistic and racial lines. This does not mean, however, that the modern sociolinguistic theories of nationality, language and race can fully explain the complicated cross-cultural issues of the late nineteenth Pacific where colonialism was still in full play and the islands had yet to evolve into self-conscious, independent political entities. If, as in *Kidnapped*, Scots or Gaelic was the fitting expression of a single national identity, Polynesian speeches were not. As we will see in Stevenson's South Seas fiction, language becomes not only a representation of cultural differences, but a representation of power, of domination of one language over the other(s), of writing over orality. This will be discussed later in the chapter.

The internationalisation of the Pacific as seen through language in Stevenson's South Seas fiction is also coupled with the denationalisation of some of the white beachcombers. Although they are still of European speech such as English, we can never be sure of their native tongue as it is impossible to trace their national identity.

The typical examples of the domiciled whites without a clear national identity are Case in *Falesá* and Johnson, the third officer on board the schooner *Norah Creina* in *The Wrecker*. We are told that no one knows Case's country, except that he is of English speech (*Tusitala*, XIII, 3). Of Johnson, Loudon Dodd tells us a similar story and points out that Johnson is only one of those who have lost their native speech through loss of their national identity:

I could never learn this man's country; and though he himself claimed to be American, neither his English nor his education warranted the claim. In all likelihood he was of Scandinavian birth and blood, long pickled in the forecastles of English and American ships. It is possible that, like so many of his race in similar positions, he had already lost his native tongue. In mind, at least, he was quite denationalised; thought only in English – to call it so...; let him but open his lips, and it was Fo'c's'le Jack that piped and drawled his ungrammatical gibberish.

(121-22)

Whether it should be Case's refined speech or Johnson's 'ungrammatical gibberish', English in Stevenson's opinion remained predominant over other imperial languages in the Pacific. It was used by missionaries, traders, beachcombers, and natives alike. Missionary-educated natives like Keawe and his wife Kokua in 'The Bottle Imp' abandoned their native tongue in favour of more or less standard English; more natives, however, acquired some vocabulary from English to mix it with the syntactic structures of their own speech, resulting in a certain English-based pidgin. The problems caused by the linguistic diversity of the Pacific were thus solved by the evolution of such a 'lingua franca' – described by Stevenson in *In the South Seas* as 'an efficient pidgin, what is called to the westward "Beach-la-Mar"', which 'may be called, and will almost certainly become, the tongue of the Pacific' (*Tusitala*, XX, 10).

¹ Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language, and Personality*, p. 40.

'Beach-la-Mar' as a Marginal Language

Linguists make a distinction between 'lingua franca' and 'pidgin'. We can have that kind of difference by taking a look at the three linguistic situations when people of different speech are thrown into contact and must engage in verbal communication. First, members of one speech group may learn enough of the language of a second speech group. Usually those with less power (speakers of substrate languages) are more accommodating and ready to learn the language of those with more power (speakers of superstrate languages).¹ Second, members of two speech groups may use a third language which they have learnt in other contacts, i.e., a 'lingua franca'. A lingua franca may not necessarily carry power implications since both speech groups can be equal in social or racial terms. If neither group may be in a position to learn the other's language or a common third tongue at all, a third situation may occur. That is, both will be content with an imperfect approximation of one of these languages, the grammar and vocabulary of which are very much reduced in extent and which is native to none of those who use it. This debased or jargonised form of language is a 'pidgin'.² Both lingua franca and pidgin function as a

¹ The linguistic terms *substrate* and *superstrate* are used by John A. Holm in his *Pidgins and Creoles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, Vol. I, p.5), while Leonard Bloomfield used the terms of the *lower* and *upper* languages instead in his *Language* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1933, p. 461). In some instances, conquering people use the language of the conquered. For example, Norman-French, brought into England by the Conquest (1066), gave way to English within three hundred years; Likewise, it happened more than once that the Chinese language was adopted by conquering foreign dynasties.

² Otto Jespersen thinks that pidgin English refers only to the jargon used in China, and to some extent also in Japan and California, as a means of communication between English-speaking people and the yellow population. The name is derived from the Chinese distortion of the English word *business*. See his *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1922, pp. 221-22). Recent linguists point out the direct link between Chinese Pidgin English and South Pacific Jargon English, especially because of the great Chinese immigration (or influx of Chinese laborers) to the Pacific in the 1880s. See John Holm, pp. 512-27 and Suzanne Romaine, *Pidgin and Creole Languages* (London: Longman, 1988, pp.101-02). It is worth noticing that the pidgin English used by the Chinese cook in *The Wrecker* (p. 236) is identical to Uma's speech. Stevenson may have picked up some knowledge about Chinese Pidgin Chinese from his own Chinese cook Ah Foo 'whose vocabulary, crossing that of the beachcomber with Far Eastern pidgin, remained incorrigible.' (Furnas, p. 277).

serviceable bridge between people of different speech groups. A lingua franca may be a full-fledged, normal language native to a certain speech group, while a pidgin is only a makeshift or 'marginal' language which is 'often held in contempt by a large section of their speakers, by speakers of the parent languages, or by both' because of its broken-down structure and the circumstances under which it is spoken.¹

Pidgin languages in the Pacific arose directly out of European colonising activities in the region. Documents establish a 'South Seas Jargon' in use in various parts of the Pacific from the 1830s onwards. According to linguists, the South Seas pidgin English came into being mainly under four circumstances (or through four stages of development). It was used primarily between European seamen and islanders who sailed with them. With the flourishing of trade in the 1840s in the sandalwood and then in a kind of edible sea-slug called *bêche-de-mer* (prized in China as a favourite ingredient of soup), South Seas pidgin English became widely spread in southern Melanesia. Finally in the 1860s it was taken to the cotton and sugar plantations of Queensland and Fiji by Melanesian indentured labourers where it formed the basis of Melanesia creole languages such as 'Bismala' in Vanuatu.²

According to William Churchill, the South Seas pidgin English 'Beach-la-mar' derived its name from sailors' mispronunciation of *bêche-de-mer*,³ a popular object of trade at the time. Strictly speaking, Beach-la-mar was initially associated with Melanesia rather than Polynesia, though Stevenson regarded it as being the future tongue of the entire Pacific. The significance of Stevenson's prediction lies in the fact that he was among the first European writers and travellers to realise the value and validity of this 'marginal' language and to feel the need of giving it full expression in his fiction. In other words, Stevenson anticipated modern linguists in their recent recognition that:

By now, it has become obvious that pidgins and creoles can no longer be neglected, but must be given their rightful standing as the equals of other

¹ John E. Reinecke, 'Trade Jargons and Creole dialects as Marginal Languages', in *Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology*, ed. by Dell Hymes (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 535.

² For the evolution of the South Seas pidgin, see Suzanne Romaine, *Pidgin and Creole Languages* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 98-99; John Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Vol. II, pp. 526-28.

³ William Churchill, *Beach-la-Mar: The Jargon or Trade Speech of the Western Pacific* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1911), p. 4.

languages. We can therefore no longer afford to go without a clear idea of the nature, structure, and function of these languages.¹

Perhaps nothing illustrates Stevenson's interest in the South Seas pidgin English better than his planned book which was to be called *Beach de Mar*. Ernest Meheew records that in December 1891 Cassell's (the British publisher) signed an agreement with Stevenson for the sole UK rights to publish 'a volume the size of *Kidnapped* or *The Master of Ballantrae* which would include "The Beach of Falesá" and other stories: the volume to be called *Beach de Mar* "or some such title" (*Letters*, VII, 178n). In May 1892 Stevenson mentioned this volume again in his letter to Sidney Colvin. Having commented upon the publishing difficulties that he encountered about 'The Beach of Falesá', he told his friend that 'the idea of publishing "The Beach" substantively is dropped – at once, both on account of expostulation, and because it measured shorter than I had expected. And it was only taken up, when the proposed volume *Beach de Mar*, petered out' (*Letter*, VII, 282).

Like several of Stevenson's other projected titles, *Beach de Mar* did not make its appearance and was never mentioned again. But *The Beach of Falesá* remained and was incorporated into *Island Nights' Entertainments*. The story might have fulfilled the author's concern about the language that he considered to be so important a part of realistic fiction. Set on an imaginary island in the South Pacific against the historical background of colonialism in the nineteenth century, *Falesá* presents a realistic account of life in the Pacific narrated by Wiltshire, a rough and ready South Seas trader who takes a native wife, Uma. While the main plot revolves around the rivalry between Wiltshire and Case, much of the realistic power of the story comes from the characterisation of Uma, through whom the native pidgin English is faithfully recorded.

There are actually two kinds of speeches used by Uma that signify the cultural difference between Polynesia and Europe. One is the native tongue which Stevenson included in the text through exact phonetic transcriptions. They are often short, individual utterances and are usually supplied with translations by the narrator with or without parenthesis, as the following examples show:

¹ Robert A. Hall, Jr., *Pidgin and Creole Languages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. xi.

“Ese no tell you?” she asked again.

(*Ese* was the name the natives had for Case; it may mean foreign, or extraordinary; or it might mean a mummy apple; but most like it was only his own name misheard and put in a kanaka spelling.)

(*F*, 141)

And

About six miles up the coast there is a sheltered cove they call *Fanga-anaana* --- ‘the haven full of caves’.

(162-63)

The other is Uma’s pidgin English, or ‘beach-la-mar’, which is transcribed on the basis of a European orthography. Aiming at a European readership, Stevenson did not feel any need to provide translations for those who were already familiar with West European standard writing systems. Judged against the great imperial ‘language of civilisation’ from which pidgin English acquired the majority of its vocabulary, Uma’s speech is ‘corrupted’, ‘degraded’ and even child-like. Its grammar and syntax are reduced so that it has no gender, tense, plural, prepositions, determiners or conjunctions, such as in ‘Every man he savvy that’¹ (131) and ‘I think die’ (178). Reduced vocabulary leads her to extensive use of paraphrase and metaphor, for example in ‘I belong you all-e-same pig!’ (126) and ‘white sand --- bad sand’ (131), meaning ‘poison’.

Most often Western English-speaking readers would not have any difficulty in getting the meaning. Occasionally, however, ambiguities can occur out of the cultural differences that the language conveys. For example, Uma’s first greeting in English to Wiltshire after the bogus marriage service is ‘You good!’ (124). It can mean ‘Hello!’, ‘How are you!’, or ‘You are a good man!’ to express her grateful feelings to Wiltshire for accepting her as his wife. Later when she learns that Case has cheated Wiltshire by hiding from him the fact about her tabooed status, she cries out, ‘Damn Ese!’ The narrator quickly explains to the reader that the word ‘damn’ does not carry the usual meaning of profanity in proper English when used in this way. Instead it is used in its pure theological meaning, condemning Case to hell: ‘You might think it funny to hear this kanaka girl come out with a big swear. No such thing. There was no swearing in her --- no, nor anger; she was beyond anger,

¹ *Savvy* (to know) is one of the most common words, almost a characteristic word marking a pidgin (See Robert A. Hall, Jr., p. 100). It appears most often in Stevenson’s story.

and meant the word simple and serious' (141). Ambiguity in this context arises from the fact that words in the imperial, parent language could take on a new shade of meaning when appearing in the related pidgin language.

Beach-la-Mar (or the native pidgin English) in *Falesá* functions in two ways.

As a stylistic device, Stevenson used it to give local colour and add authenticity to the scenes portrayed in the story. Its exotic flavour helped capture the imagination and fascination of Western readers interested in romance and foreign adventures. Stevenson's real intention, of course, was to create a realistic rather than romanticised picture of the South Seas life in the closing years of the nineteenth century, of which language such as pidgin formed a crucial part. In Stevenson's own words, 'It is the first realistic South Sea story;...But there is always the exotic question; and everything, the life, the place, the dialects – traders' talk, which is a strange conglomerate of literary expressions and English and American slang, and Beach de Mar, or native English – the very trades and hopes and fears of the characters, are all novel and may be found unwelcome to that great, hulking, bullerling whale, the public' (*Letters*, VII, 161).

Stevenson's prediction turned out to be right, for it was the language that provoked mixed reactions among the first readers of *Falesá*. On the whole the story was well received. Many reviewers agreed that Stevenson had created a unique and to some extent radical style. Those who felt uneasy about the style mainly because they found it difficult to reconcile the 'glowing prose' with the 'dialect' and profanity. The critical dilemma was best reflected by one reviewer who admired the dramatic appropriateness of Stevenson's diction in *Falesá* but felt relief at returning to Stevenson's 'own language' in the companion stories.¹

In fact, we can find those three linguistic styles in *Falesá* itself: Stevensonian prose, profanity, and of course the 'dialect' – native pidgin English. The interplay of the three styles is woven into the narrative structure of the story, and it is through the narrator's attitude to the last that much of the colonial space is defined. This is another way in which Beach-la-mar in the story functions.

As a 'contact' language, Beach-la-Mar is perceived to act as a linguistic mediation between Wiltshire and his wife Uma, just as it is used by Sally Day in *The Ebb-Tide*

¹ Menikoff, p. 97.

as a unifying force between the rest of the crew on board the *Farallone*. It signifies the cultural differences and at the same time helps to bridge that gap. Uma's knowledge of both the native speech and the native form of English provides that role and enables her to act as 'interpreter' for Wiltshire. This is of crucial importance for Wiltshire because his ignorance of the native speech prevents him from learning the truth and puts him in a dangerous position of being manipulated by Case. At least on three occasions Uma offers that help to Wiltshire. The first occasion arises after Father Galoshes, a French-speaking white priest, tries to warn Wiltshire of Case's murderous nature:

[A]bout three in the afternoon, I went out for a stroll to cheer me up. On the green I saw a white man coming with a cassock on, by which and by the face of him I knew he was a priest. He was a good-natured old soul to look at, gone a little grizzled, and so dirty you could have written with him on a piece of paper.

"Good day, sir," said I.

He answered me eagerly in native.

"Don't you speak any English?" said I.

"French," says he.

"Well," said I, "I'm sorry, but I can't do anything there."

He tried me awhile in the French, and then again in native, which he seemed to think was the best chance. I made out he was after more than passing the time of day with me, but had something to communicate, and I listened the harder I heard the names of Adams and Case and of Randall – Randall the oftenest – and the word "poison", or something like it, and a native word that he said very often. I went home, repeating it to myself.

"What does fussy-ocky mean?" I asked of Uma, for that was as near as I could come to it.

"Make dead," said she.

(*F*, 130-31)

'Fussy-ocky' is Wiltshire's mispronunciation of the Samoan word *fasioti* (to kill).¹ Uma's translation helps Wiltshire gain important information about the death of his predecessor and puts him on his guard against Case.

¹ Here Stevenson obviously made use of his knowledge of the Samoan language that he had learnt with the missionary. In writing the story, he drew heavily on his experience in Samoa. Some place names in the story, for example, are Samoan names. His originally planned name for the island setting is *Ulufanua* meaning 'a land of trees'. He wrote to Colvin: '*Ulufanua* is a lovely Samoan word, *ulu* = grove, *fanua* = land, grove land – "the tops of the high trees". *Sāvao*, "sacred to the wood", and *Fa'avao*, "wood-ways", are the names of two characters. *Ulufanua* the name of the supposed island.' (*Letters*, VI, 27-28).

A second occasion occurs when Wiltshire cannot make out the native word *Tiapolo* that he has heard from a Kanaka in connection with Case. Wiltshire's own way of transcribing the word is humorous if not pertinent:

All this time, and all the time I was following home, I kept repeating that native word, which I remembered by "Polly, put the kettle on and make us all some tea": tea-a-pollo.

"Uma," says I, when I got back, "what does *Tiapolo* mean?"

"Devil," says she.

"I thought *aitu* was the word for that," I said.

"*Aitu* 'nother kind of devil," said she; "stop bush, eat Kanaka. *Tiapolo* big chief devil, stop home; all-e-same Christian devil."

"Well then," said I, "I'm no farther forward. How can Case be *Tiapolo*?"

"No all-c-same," said she. "Ese belong *Tiapolo*; *Tiapolo* too much like; Ese all-e-same his son. Suppose Ese he wish something, *Tiapolo* he make him."

(161)

Uma's role as interpreter is formally carried out during Wiltshire's conversation with the big young native chief Maea. 'We cracked jests together, mostly through Uma for interpreter, because he had mighty little English, and my native was still off colour' (171).

The validity of Uma's Beach-la-Mar as a linguistic mediation lies in Wiltshire's ability to understand and his readiness to use it himself. If he were to use normal English only, then Uma's reduced English would simply be counted as 'broken English'. An important phenomenon that characterises the growth of a pidgin in colonial context is that 'the superstrate speakers adopt many of these changes to make themselves more readily understood, and no longer try to speak as they do within their own group. They co-operate with the other groups to create a make-shift language to serve their needs.'¹ Wiltshire's use of Beach-la-Mar is therefore a linguistic necessity. It is a mimicry of Uma's speech. At the same time it also bespeaks much of Wiltshire's personality through the narrative pattern that he employs.

Wiltshire's narrative pattern alternates between standard (or Stevensonian) English, uneducated English and Beach-la-Mar. The first narrative feature should be regarded as an act of authorial intrusion which is used mainly for descriptive

¹ Holm, p. 5.

passages. They occur at the beginning of the story, preceding his discovery that he is tabooed, and for the scene before the fight, to form a contrast between natural beauty and the hidden danger in human life. Only the last descriptive paragraph after the fight is symbolic of Wiltshire's joy at his victory over Case:

When I came to myself the second time, the clouds had all cleared away, except a few that sailed there, white as cotton. The moon was up – a tropic moon. The moon at home turns a wood black, but even this old butt-end of a one showed up that forest as green as by day. The night birds – or, rather, they're a kind of early morning bird – sang out with their long, falling notes like nightingales.

(183)

The second narrative feature reflects Wiltshire's true self, in his own words, 'just a common, low, God-damned white man and British subject, the sort you would like to wipe your boots on' (149). It is used for showing his imperialist arrogance and for speaking rough to Uma. But when he desires to talk lovingly to her, he can move into the third linguistic zone by switching to Beach-la-Mar. His first mimicry of Uma's speech occurs when he is at once moved by Uma's innocence and ashamed of the bogus marriage and the certificate she has treasured in her kilt. Partly for the girl's sake, he decides to empty the bottles of a whole case of gin. One by one he draws the bottles with a pocket corkscrew and sends Uma out to pour the stuff from the verandah:

She came back after the last, and looked at me puzzled like.

"No good," said I, for I was now a little better master of my tongue. "Man he drink, he no good."

She agreed with this, but kept considering. "Why you bring him?" she asked presently. "Suppose you no want drink, you no bring him, I think."

"That's all right," said I. "One time I want drink too much; now no want. You see, I no savvy I get one little wifie. Suppose I drink gin, my little wifie he 'fraid."

To speak to her kindly was about more than I was fit for; I had made my vow I would never let on to weakness with a native, and I had nothing for it but to stop.

(126)

The last sentence indicates that Wiltshire uses Beach-la-Mar when he wants to 'speak to her kindly', an act that his racist views lead him to regard as 'weakness'.

The dialogue taking place after the quarrel scene between them also illustrates this point. Annoyed at not knowing why he is under taboo, Wiltshire goes home in a hot

temper. He finds Uma 'trying on a lot of trade goods like a baby' and so gives her 'a bit of the rough side of my tongue'. Uma decides to help him get rid of the taboo by leaving him. The style of Wiltshire's language changes as he tries to persuade her not to go: ' "Uma," said I, "hear reason. I didn't know, and that's a fact; and Case seems to have played it pretty mean upon the pair of us. But I do know now, and I don't mind; I love you too much. *You no go 'way, you no leave me, I too much sorry*' (142). Wiltshire's use of Beach-la-Mar occurs mainly on occasions like this, that is, to bring himself emotionally closer to Uma.

Wiltshire's attitude towards language is complicatedly mixed. Sometimes he goes further across the linguistic zone than just using Beach-la-Mar by starting to learn the native tongue with Galoshe the white missionary (just as Stevenson himself learned Samoan with his missionary teacher Rev. S. J. Whitmee). The proper marriage ceremony that he asks Mr Tarleton to perform is purposely done in native to make Uma happy. 'Fire away, Mr Tarleton,' says Wiltshire, 'And I guess you'd better do it in native; it'll please the old lady' (151). At other times, however, he withdraws into his own racial prejudice by casting away his idea of relying on Uma for language assistance. 'I thought awhile whether I should ask her more [about taboo],' he confesses to the reader, 'but it's a bad idea to set natives up with any notion of consulting them, so I went to Case' (135). Realising that Case may possibly be the very man behind his isolation, he calls upon Mr Tarleton the white missionary for information which is otherwise denied him because of the language barrier. Wiltshire's lack of trust in Beach-la-Mar is born out in his method of relating Uma's story of her life:

A lot she told me, ...a lot about herself and her mother and Case, all which would be very tedious, and fill sheets if I set it down in Beach de Mar, but which I must give a hint of in plain English, and one thing about myself, which had a very big effect on my concerns, as you are soon to hear.

(143)

Native, Beach-la-Mar, and English --- Wiltshire is caught in a linguistic dilemma. This is because, in colonial situations and for a language to be true pidgin, social distance must be maintained between speakers of the imperial language and of the native language. Otherwise if the native speakers so desired, they could eventually

acquire enough information about the imperial language to speak it in a non-pidginised form like Namu the black pastor in *Falesá*. The reverse is also true: speakers of the imperial language could pick up sufficient native language to talk like a native like Case in the story. In either case the language ceases to be a pidgin. Wiltshire's linguistic dilemma indicates the psychological barrier which he is yet to traverse. His descent from imperialist arrogance depends very much upon his changing attitude toward language as well as his growing love for Uma. Other forms of barrier such as profession, class and culture, are also expressed by differences in language, with or without authorial intrusion.

The linguistic style of *Falesá*, as seen from our discussions above, works through inclusion and exclusion of speakers: while Beach-la-Mar serves to encompass as many speakers as possible and to erase racial distinctions between them, the native speech and English exclude each other, therefore empowering those who can traverse both (like Case) and disempowering those who cannot (like Wiltshire).

4

Language as a Representation of Power

Language in colonial context has been a fundamental site of study for recent cross-cultural literary theories because the Western colonial process itself began in language. Said's *Orientalism* shows the collusion between the literary text and the process of Western political domination, and the creation of images of the 'Orient' through language that separate the world of the coloniser from that of the colonised. The international spread of the English language is often seen to have resulted from Britain's 350 years of global empire through trade and colonisation. Today 415 million speakers of English circle the planet, and approximately the same number speak it as a second language. English is the only official language of over thirty countries, and one of the official languages of over twenty more.¹ Apart from its regional varieties overseas, English also accounts for many pidgins and creoles around the world.

While European powers vied with each other for domination, their languages also competed. Language as a representation of power can therefore first be seen within the group of European imperial languages with English as predominant over the rest. Stevenson was clearly impressed by the supremacy of English when he travelled in the South Seas:

I met in Majuro a Marshall Island boy who spoke excellent English; this he had learned in the German firm in Jaluit, yet did not speak one word of German. I heard from a gendarme who had taught school in Rapa-iti that while the children had the utmost difficulty or reluctance to learn French, they picked up English on the wayside, and as if by accident. On one of the most out-of-way atolls in the Carolines, my friend Mr. Benjamin Hird was amazed to find the lads playing cricket on the beach and talking English; and it was in English that the crew of the *Janet Nicoll*, a set of black boys from different Melanesian islands, communicated with other natives throughout the cruise, transmitted orders, and sometimes jested together on the fore-hatch. But what struck me perhaps most of all was word I heard on the verandah of the Tribunal at Noumea. A case had just been heard – a trial for infanticide against an ape-like native woman; and the audience were smoking cigarettes as they awaited the verdict. An anxious, amiable French lady, not far from tears, was eager for acquittal, and declared she would engage the prisoner to be her children's nurse. The bystanders exclaimed at the proposal; the woman was a savage, said they, and spoke no language. '*Mais, vous savez,*' objected the fair sentimentalist; '*ils apprennent si vite l'anglais!*'

(*Tusitala*, XX, 10-11)

In some parts of the South Seas, there had been efforts to uproot pidgin English and replace it with other imperial languages. As linguists have noted, when the German imperial government took over Micronesia and part of Melanesia in the 1880s, an order went out that the governors were to discourage the use of pidgin English, and it was declared that it would be a source of lasting disgrace for the world standing of Germany if pidgin English were not rooted out. They succeeded in the Carolines, but not in Melanesia.²

Within Britain itself conditions of subjugation and submission, centre and periphery, were also reflected in the question of linguistic supremacy. While Samuel Johnson put his naughty definition of 'oats' into the first English Dictionary, the Scots tongue was made light of in the dialogues of Smollett's novel *Humphry*

¹ Holm, p.405.

² Hall, p. 10.

Clinker, as Matthew Bramble observes with his usual mixture of generosity and bigotry:

The Scots would do well, for their own sakes, to adopt the English idioms and pronunciation; those of them especially, who are resolved to push their fortunes in South-Britain. --- I know, by experience, how easily an Englishman is influenced by the ear, and how apt he is to laugh, when he hears his own language spoken with a foreign or provincial accent, --- I have known a member of the house of commons speak with great energy and precision, without being able to engage attention, because his observations were made in the Scotch dialect, which (no offence to Lieutenant Lismahago) certainly gives a clownish air even to sentiments of the greatest dignity and decorum.¹

Because of the supremacy of English, the Scots tongue declined as a prose medium across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although the main line of the vernacular tradition continued in poetry with Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns, Scots prose assumed a subsidiary role in the fictional dialogues of novelists like Scott, Hogg, and of course Stevenson, whose principal medium was standard English.

When it comes to the European and non-European contact, language turns into a more overt expression of a power relationship. As we have discussed earlier in the chapter, pidgin English in the Pacific is a demonstration of that power relationship: it came into being as a result of European presence in the region in the form of trade and colonisation. It was Eurocentric by nature because the writing of pidgin English was a European invention. It was the people with less power that had to adapt themselves to the language of those with more power, but not the other way round. In his influential book *Language*, Leonard Bloomfield commented upon the power implications of cross-cultural linguistic behaviour, pointing out that in the case of 'intimate borrowing', 'the situation arises for the most part in conquest, less often in the way of peaceful migration. Intimate borrowing is one-sided: we distinguish between the *upper* or *dominant* language, spoken by the conquering or otherwise more privileged group, and the *lower* language, spoken by the subject people.'²

Only under rare circumstances did an indigenous tongue or a marginal language like pidgin intrude upon the prestigious language of the imperial centre during the cross-cultural encounter. The word *tabu* (a variant form of 'taboo', as frequently

¹ Tobias Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, pp. 232-33

² Bloomfield, p. 461.

used by Stevenson in his South Seas fiction), for example, originated in Polynesia, Melanesia and New Zealand, and is 'one of the very few words which the English language has borrowed from the speech of savages'.¹ When that kind of intrusion assumed a tendency to become something more substantial, it was bound to provoke a protest from the imperial centre. One example was that in 1829 the British and Foreign Bible Society in London published the first complete edition of *Da Nioe Testament* in Sranan Creole English for the Moravians in Suriname. The founder of an Edinburgh newspaper attacked the translation and rebuked the Moravians for 'putting the broken English of the Negroes...into a written and permanent form,' which would 'embody their barbarous, mixed, imperfect phrase in the pages of schoolbooks.'²

On the other hand, the intrusion of English into the native tongue was self-evident. In his South Seas fiction, Stevenson did not set out to demonstrate the process of that intrusion. Except for the two ballads, all the stories in his fiction took place against the background of linguistic diversity with English being predominant. Thus the protagonists in 'The Bottle Imp' are both depicted as already finished products of missionary education. Both can speak perfect English like whites. What Stevenson did was to weave the linguistic reality of the power relationship into the narrative plot. Examples can be taken from *The Ebb-Tide* and *The Beach of Falesá*.

At a certain level, both stories can be read initially as parables of linguistic power games between whites. The 'Quartette' of *The Ebb-Tide* progresses with Attwater as the domineering figure throughout, linguistically as well as physically. His absolute control over the trio is effected by his complete manipulation of their dialogue. His gentlemanly civility, biblical quotations and knowledge of the classics immediately win over Herrick who blushes over his own degradation and yet feels pleased that he should be accepted as an equal. Their dialogue is full of menace on Attwater's part as he carries out his verbal play. On the surface he entertains his guests with his charming hospitality, but the dialogue reveals that he is really a man exercising his full control. From his deliberate mispronunciation of Huish's name, through his boast about his deadly shooting skills, to his story of the two natives, much of his speech is

¹ Cited in Vanessa Smith, p. 69.

² Quoted in Holm, p. 21.

intended for dominating the trio. On hearing Attwater's story about Sullens and Obsequiousness, Herrick bursts into hysteria which nearly deprives him of his speech ability: ' "Murderer and hypocrite – murderer and hypocrite – murderer and hypocrite –" he repeated, and his tongue stumbled among the words' (*Tusitala*, XIV, 105). Even Huish, the most vulgar and brave of the three, can hardly hide his nervousness and fear:

'E's like a bloomin' poultr yard!' observed Huish, helping himself to wine (of which he spilled a good deal) with gentlemanly ease. 'A man should learn to beyave at table,' he added.

'Rather bad form, is it not?' said Attwater. 'Well, well, we are left *tête-à-tête*. A glass of wine with you, Mr Whish!'

(106)

Part of Attwater's power comes from his linguistic exclusion of the trio by switching to the native speech while talking to his servants. This kind of bilingual ability becomes a focal point in *Falesá* by which Case gains advantage over his trade rival Wiltshire. At the beginning of the story, Wiltshire expresses his admiration of Case's linguistic competence: 'He could speak when he chose fit for a drawing-room; and when he chose he could blaspheme worse than a Yankee boatswain, and talk smut to sicken a kanaka' (*F*, 117). However it is Case's knowledge of the native speech that has the most delusive effect upon Wiltshire who wrongly regards him as a helpful friend: 'Case used me like a gentleman and like a friend, made me welcome to Falesá, and put his services at my disposal, which was the more helpful from my ignorance of the native' (117-18). Ironically, Case's bilingual ability proves a weapon in his manipulation of both the natives and Wiltshire. He partially loses his exploiting power when he fails to keep Wiltshire apart from Tarleton the missionary who might serve Wiltshire as interpreter (Wiltshire regards Tarleton's English more reliable than Uma's pidgin, and also 'it's a bad idea to set natives up with any notion of consulting them'). An important moment in the story is that Wiltshire is able to get across the linguistic barrier to obtain truth about his taboo, therefore freeing himself from Case's control: 'As I had begun to pick up native, and most of them had a word or two of English, I began to hold little odds and ends of conversation, not to much purpose to be sure, but they took off the worst of the feeling, for it's a miserable thing to be made a leper of' (160).

But language as a representation of power goes well beyond racial lines in these two stories. The domination of whites over natives as a result of the former's linguistic advantage is presented with far more subtlety than the rivalry between the whites.

When Davis takes command of *Farallone*, for example, his first assertion of authority over the Kanaka crew is through the language:

“What's your name?” said the captain. “What's that you say? Oh, that's not English; I'll have none of your highway gibberish on my ship. We'll call you old Uncle Ned, because you've got no wool on the top of your head, just the place where the wool ought to grow.”

(*Tusitala*, XIV, 35)

The speech used by Uncle Ned is a kind of pidgin English which Davis dismisses as ‘highway gibberish’. By replacing his real name with something insulting in ‘proper’ English, Davis simply strips the other's identity and therefore exerts power over him. It is in front of Herrick who has far less racial prejudice than Davis that Uncle Ned is able to re-establish his identity: “‘Ah, no call me Uncle Ned no mo'!” cried the old man. “No my name! My name Taveeta, all-e-same Taveeta King of Israel.”” (49). The irony in this episode is that ‘Taveeta’ is the Polynesian pronunciation of David, King of Israel in the Christian Bible, which means that it can only be a missionary-conferred name. In neither case is his name exclusively his own. He feels insulted by one and proud of the other, but he cannot give, or may not even have, his Hawaiian name. The demonstration of Western influence and power is seen through the assertion of language which provides the function of naming, as the ‘superstrate’ language becomes the way in which people of the ‘substrate’ language are known.¹ The complication lies with the third-person narrator who seems to share Davis's dismissal of Uncle Ned's pidgin English (much as Wiltshire's distrust of Uma's pidgin English as he reports her story): ‘The reader shall be spared Uncle

¹ A useful (if not apt) analogy can be drawn here with Stevenson's personal experience. While in Tahiti in 1888 Stevenson developed a friendship with the sub-chief Ori. They exchanged names to show their brotherhood: Ori became *Rui*, the Tahitian form of Louis, while Stevenson was known as *Teriitera*. According to Stevenson and Fanny's accounts (*Letters*, VI, 262 and 229), *Teriitera* was Ori's Christian name, *Ori a Ori* being his clan name. Therefore Stevenson ended up getting a native name shaped by Western Christianity. Conversely, *Tusitala* was Stevenson's proper Samoan name. However, it was not given by natives as was commonly believed, but by a white missionary (See Masson, p. 233).

Ned's unwieldy dialect, and learn in less embarrassing English, the sum of what he now communicated' (49).

In *Falesá*, language as a demonstration of Western power works at a more subtle level than a mere question of attitude. Language not only brings about through dialogue the power relationship between whites and natives. It also offers an important comment, through written document, upon the fundamental advantage of the European culture distinguished by script and scripture over the Polynesian culture which was largely oral and pantheistic.

My point is built upon a central episode of the story – Wiltshire's illicit 'marriage' to Uma. The episode starts with Case's intention to get Wiltshire connected with Uma. Since she is isolated from the local population along with her mother, anyone connected with her also gets under taboo. By joining Wiltshire with Uma, Case effectively gets the upper hand of his new rival in their competition for copra trade. The marriage ceremony is performed by Papa Randall and Black Jack, while the certificate is written by Case himself:

This is to certify that Uma daughter of Fa'avao of Falesá island of -----, is illegally married to Mr John Wiltshire for one night, and Mr John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell next morning.

John Blackamoor
Chaplain to the Hulks.

Extracted from the register
by William T. Randall
Master Mariner.

(*F*, 124)

Such a 'legal' document for the illegal marriage is not just a joke at the expense of the ignorant Kanaka girl. It is a question of domination through the medium of language. The European contact with the Polynesians brought forward a fundamental difference between the two cultures: the sophisticated writing systems in contrast with a simple, purely oral form of communication. The story suggests that Uma is a naïve, uneducated Polynesian girl not yet 'enlightened' by missionary work as Keawe and Kokua are in 'The Bottle Imp'. Her knowledge of English is restricted to a debased form and is communicated by speech rather than by writing. Her immediate, total acceptance of this document shows that she cannot possibly understand the meaning of the certificate. In fact she does not even bother to read it.

As soon as the paper is written, it is put in her hand and 'see her hide away like gold' (124). Until Wiltshire later tells her to hand it up for destruction in front of the missionary, 'she had it about her person...and thought it was a pass to heaven, and if she died without having it handy she would go to hell' (150). Because of Uma's linguistic disadvantage, Black Jack makes a mockery of the marriage ceremony to the effect of shameless deception: 'the mountebank was dressed with a big paper collar, the book he made believe to read from was an odd volume of a novel, and the words of his service not fit to be set down' (123).

Wiltshire's ambivalent attitude is crucial to the development of the story. Throughout the fraudulent marriage ceremony he feels a sense of shame, not because of his own sexual misconduct, but because of the way in which it is achieved. In other words, he regards the deceitful document unnecessary and dishonest. As he admits to himself, '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' (124). Without being so well educated as Case, he feels no need to bother about the formality of language. Not always so, though; for when he comes to realise Uma's inherent worth and decides to commit himself to her, his first act is to ask the missionary to re-conduct the marriage ceremony in the native language, to please 'the old lady' as he now calls Uma. The irony is that the whole intent of the ceremony is white and Christian. To a woman who believes in island gods and devils, a Christian ceremony does not convey much meaning. Neither is it relevant to Wiltshire who has clearly rejected Christianity. If Case's legal document prepared in proper English indicates the advantage of the European culture over the Polynesian culture, the same is true with Wiltshire's marriage ceremony in a proper Christian manner, in whatever language is it conducted. This sense of European cultural superiority in terms of language and religion is aptly summed up by Stephen Greenblatt in this way:

With very few exceptions, Europeans felt powerfully superior to virtually all of the peoples they encountered.... The sources of this sense of superiority are sometimes difficult to specify, though the Christians' conviction that they possessed an absolute and exclusive religious truth must have played a major part in virtually all of their cultural encounters. On many occasions, this conviction

was bound up with what Samuel Purchas in the early seventeenth century called the Europeans' 'literal advantage' -- the advantage, that is, of writing.¹

The power implications in the language of the sham marriage certificate are so notorious that the editors of the early editions of *Falesá* felt compelled either to omit or to modify the stated document. When it first appeared in 1892 in the serial version published in the *Illustrated London News*, the editor of the newspaper deleted it completely; in its first edition in book form *Island Nights Entertainments* by Cassell & Co. in 1893 the phrase 'for one night' was replaced by 'for one week' and to 'hell next morning' by 'to hell when he pleases'; and in the American edition by the Scribner's, the first phrase was omitted and the second changed to 'to send her packing when he pleases'. All the subsequent book editions followed the version by Cassell & Co. until 1979 when the first unexpurgated edition was published by Penguin Books edited by Jenni Calder.²

The expurgation and alteration made in the early editions went against Stevenson's intention, to whom realism was at the heart of the story. He responded to the matter several times in his letters to Sidney Colvin: 'The plaintive request sent to me, to make the young folks married properly before "that night", I refused; you will see what would be left of the yarn, had I consented' (*Letters*, VII, 230-31). Despite Stevenson's demand, Clement Shorter, editor of the *Illustrated London News*, went ahead without eventual compromise for considerations of money and popularity. Stevenson's dissatisfaction with Cassell & Co. was the same: 'Well, well, if the dears prefer a week, why I'll give them ten days, but the real document, from which I have scarcely varied, ran for one night' (*Letters*, VII, 281). The real document that Stevenson referred to is found in Part III of his travel book *In the South Seas*. In the section called 'Husband and Wife', he described how he had encountered a sham marriage certificate and a marriage ceremony which he obviously used his fiction:

¹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: the Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). Quoted in Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth Century Textual Encounters*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 4.

² Apart from the marriage certificate, the copy right edition of Cassell & Co. contained many other alterations not intended by Stevenson. The first 'original text' was edited by Barry Menikoff and published by Edinburgh University Press in 1984. Referring to Jenni Calder's unexpurgated edition, Menikoff remarked: '...had the marriage certificate remained intact, Stevenson's art would have been no less abused' (Menikoff, p. 76).

It is true that the certificate of one, when she proudly showed it, proved to run thus, that she was 'married for one night', and her gracious partner was at liberty to 'send her to hell' the next morning; but she was none the wiser or the worse for the dastardly trick. Another, I heard, was married on a work of mine in a pirated edition; it answered the purpose as well as a Hall Bible.

(*Tusitala*, XX, 267)

It is easy to label sex and religion as the issues of this episode. But underlying the act of deception is the issue of language – the domination of the European print-based culture over the Polynesian oral culture. I would like to take this issue a little further by suggesting that as a linguistic representation of power, a motif of 'child' runs through the text which links this episode with Uma's pidgin English previously discussed.

The child in colonial context has been likened to the savage or the primitive, both being considered pre-literate (the word 'infant', from the Latin *infans*, meaning literally 'without speech' or 'tongue-tied'). As literary critics have pointed out, a European, print-based culture has assumed that 'Groups of humans who do not use script are – by definition – inferior, and often less than human'.¹ Linguists have also drawn their own analogy between child language and pidgin English by their 'baby-talk' theory. They have noticed that pidgin speakers and children share some linguistic features: both use a high proportion of content words and relatively few function words; their vocabulary is extremely limited, and such grammatical features as gender, plural and pronominal contrasts are absent. Otto Jespersen, for example, called attention to this phenomenon in his attempt to explain the reason for the rise of pidgin in terms of both the mental factor of pidgin speakers and the attitude of the speakers of the imperial language from which the pidgin came. Instead of a simple combination of English vocabulary with Chinese grammar, he said of Beach-la-mar, a mental factor was at work, that is, 'imperfect mastery of a language, which in its initial stage, in the child with its first language and in the grown-up with a second language learnt by imperfect methods, leads to a superficial knowledge of the most indispensable words, with total disregard of grammar'.² Then the superior,

¹ Chris Tiffin & Alan Lawson, *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonial and Textuality* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 175-76.

² Jespersen, p. 234.

paternalistic attitude of the speakers of the imperial language also contributed to the rise of pidgin. 'It being a popular superstition amongst the Europeans', Jespersen claimed, 'that to enable a native to understand English he must be addressed as if he were deaf, and in the most infantile language'.¹ He called this tendency 'to meet the 'inferior races' half-way in order to facilitate matters for them'. He therefore concluded:

My view, then, is that Beach-la-mar as well as Pidgin is English, only English learnt imperfectly, in consequence partly of the difficulties always inherent in learning a totally different language, partly of the obstacles put in the way of learning by the linguistic behaviour of the English-speaking people themselves. The analogy of its imperfections with those of a baby's speech in the first period is striking.²

Bloomfield also equated cross-cultural linguistic situations with the 'baby-talk' theory. He pointed out that:

Speakers of a lower language may make so little progress in learning the dominant speech, that the masters, in communicating with them resort to 'baby-talk'. This 'baby-talk' is the masters' imitation of the subjects' incorrect speech. There is reason to believe that it is by no means an exact imitation, and that some of its features are based not upon the subjects' mistakes but upon grammatical relations that exist within the upper language itself. The subjects, in turn, deprived of the correct model, can do no better now than to acquire the simplified 'baby-talk' version of the upper language. The result may be a conventionalised *jargon*. During the colonisation of the last few centuries, Europeans have repeatedly given jargonised versions of their language to slaves and tributary peoples.³

Whether it is 'to meet the "inferior race" half-way' or it is 'the masters' imitation of the subjects' incorrect speech', Wiltshire's mimicry of Uma's speech is certainly a case in point. After all Wiltshire does this not so much to display his racial and linguistic superiority as to show his love for Uma, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter. My intention is to show that the analogy between child's language and the disadvantage of the Polynesian oral culture which is evidenced in the sham marriage certificate, between child's acquisition of language and the linguistic behaviour in the cross-cultural contact, runs parallel to the consistent metaphor of

¹ Ibid., p. 225.

² Ibid.

³ Bloomfield, p. 472.

'child' used by the narrator throughout the story as we have already discussed in the 'Introduction' of this thesis.

Such linguistic representations of power through attitude, denomination, script and figures of speech form an important part of the racial issues with which Stevenson was most concerned.

CHAPTER IV

White Men's Tales: Fiction as Ethnographic Allegory

This cruise is deeply interesting; questions of race and civilisation at every step; I wish you had been here to discuss as we went.

R. L. Stevenson, *Letters*, 1888

1

The European Construction of Race Ideas

In the year when Robert Louis Stevenson was born, Robert Knox (1791-1862), lecturer on anatomy in Edinburgh, published his *The Races of Men: a Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations* (1850). The book was the first European attempt to come up with a comprehensive exposition on race, though earlier scholars had advanced racial classifications and some of Knox's contemporaries made equally, or even more, important contributions to the theory. It also sounded a new note in the history of the European race concept by insisting that 'race is everything: literature, science, art – in a word, civilisation, depends on it'.¹ As the title of the book suggests, race determines the destinies of nations: the course of history, the culture of peoples, the moral or intellectual qualities of individuals, and the behaviour of one nation to another. If this is what 'racism' means in its original sense, Knox made the first racist remark.

As a biology-based treatise on race, Knox's book was one of the series of studies on the subject in the mid-nineteenth century that ushered in the beginning of modern race ideas of Europe, signifying the transition from the theological notion of race to the scientific description. The following decades after Knox's book were a critical

¹ Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations*, 2nd edition (London: Henry Renshaw, 1862), p. v.

period in the history of the race concept. They saw the professionalisation of anthropology - the discipline that formalised racial thinking - which coincided with the nineteenth-century expansion of European colonisation and imperialist enterprise.

Stevenson responded to this ideological and historical movement in his South Seas fiction. Like most European writers of the age who travelled to the edge of the imperial establishment, Stevenson used the exotic setting and plot to represent complicated racial issues arising from colonial encounter. In this chapter I wish to explore the context and motif of that representation, that is, the historical heritage of race ideas that formed the background to Stevenson's South Seas fiction and the recurrent themes characterised by the author's ethnographic and humanist concerns. Stevenson's race ideas, as we will see, fall both within and without the European tradition. His representation of race was a paradoxical one, just as he was torn between Scotland and Samoa with regard to identity.

It might be easily assumed that the European race concept stemmed from the contacts between white people and coloured people that followed European exploration overseas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and that the theories of racial inequality were produced to justify colonial and imperial expansions. In *An Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (1921) by Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, for example, Park advanced a general conception of race relations as the product of European expansion.¹ More than three decades later Marvin Harris (1927-), an influential modern anthropologist, thought that racial prejudice arose as an ideological justification of the European interest in the exploitation of the primitive peoples. Commenting on the relationship between Spencerism and imperialism, he remarked that 'adumbrated in colonial policy, it [Spencerism] was a perfect rationalisation of the status quo of conquest. Missionaries, merchants, industrialists, and administrators, each in their own way, used the imagined biocultural specialities of the "inferior" races as the justification for inferior treatment'.² The connection between colonialism and the emergence of the race concept is more obvious in Harris's statement about race patterns in the Americas:

¹ Quoted in Michael Banton, *The Idea of Race* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), p. 8.

² Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (London: Routledge, 1968), p. 134.

The absence of preconceived notions about what ought to be the treatment of enslaved peoples forms a central theme in Tannenbaum's explanation of United States race relations...One might reasonably conclude that the first settlers were not overly concerned with race differences, and that they might have remained that way (as many Englishmen have) had they not been brought into contact with Negroes under conditions wholly dictated by the implacable demands of a noxious and 'peculiar' institution.¹

Recent ethnologists, however, have expressed disagreement with Park and Harris's view by pointing out that racial theories preceded the European colonial expansion rather than following upon it. Like religion in earlier times, and nation and class in the last two hundred years, the concept of race came into being as a way of categorising people. It was a classification invented by Europeans first to address the political and national interests within or between European countries. It was only after the potentialities of this way of labelling people were extended and biological theories integrated with social ones, that the racial classification was imposed upon the rest of the world. Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood have argued, for example, that the racial theories were extended to non-European regions to head off the yawning divisions between classes within Europe itself, and 'as European interests in Africa increased, and, with the extension of the franchise, the working classes were drawn into support for imperial adventures, there was a warmer welcome waiting for doctrines of white superiority, but that was a feature of a later period'.²

Take Knox's book for example. Of the twelve lectures, seven deal with differences between European races such as the Saxon, Celtic, Scandinavian, German, Slavonian, Russ, Sarmatian, and so on; four with the Jewish, Phoenician, Gipsy, and Copt; only one lecture comments on the dark races of men. In Knox's scheme the Slavonian and Gothic races were foremost among men, first and greatest in philosophy, while the Saxon race would be shocked to learn that 'his race cannot domineer over the earth – cannot even exist permanently on any continent to which he is not indigenious'.³ Knox's argument for the predominance of one European race over another may not be convincing, but his emphasis on the racial differences

¹ Marvin Harris, *Patterns of Race in the Americas* (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1980), p. 70.

² Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood, *The Race Concept* (London: David & Charles, 1975), p. 34.

³ Knox, p.vi.

within Europe helps us to understand the origin of the European race concept. His point is expressed more clearly in the first lecture on the history of the Saxon and Scandinavian race:

When the word race, as applied to man, is spoken of, the English mind wanders immediately to distant countries; to Negroes and Hottentots, Red Indians and savages. He admits that there are people who differ a good deal from us, but not in Europe; there, mankind are clearly of one family. It is the Caucasian race, says one; it is the primitive race, says another. But the object of this work is to show that the European races, so called, differ from each other as widely as the Negro does from the Bushman; the Caffre from the Hottentot; the Red Indian of America from the Esquimaux; the Esquimaux from the Basque.¹

The Oxford English Dictionary gives three basic meanings of the word 'race': a breed or type of animal or plant; a group of people with the same history, language, customs, etc.; and one of a number of divisions of human beings, each with a different type of body. It can be assumed that the European concept of race has evolved through three stages corresponding to the three definitions. The term was first used loosely to denote a class of people or even things². Thus John Milton writes of the 'race of Satan' in *Paradise Lost*; John Bunyan prefaces *The Pilgrim's Progress* by saying that he had been writing 'of the Way and Race of Saints'; and Robert Burns addresses the haggis as the 'chieftain o' the pudding race'. Gradually the word 'race' began to be used in the sense of a line of descent, such as Knox's division of Europeans into the Celt, Saxon, German, Slavonian, Sarmantian, etc., whose distinctive characteristics were thought to have resulted from the circumstances of their history and social customs. From the seventeenth century up to Knox's time this notion of race was largely dominated by the biblical theory of genesis. The orthodox doctrine was that the world was about six thousand years old, that God had in the beginning created a limited number of species which remained unchanging, and that all men descended from Adam or Noah through his three sons. Such a monogenist view was challenged by the polygenists who believed that the varieties of men were created upon separate thoughts of God and were unrelated to each other. This controversy over the origin of human species culminated in a

¹ *ibid.*, pp.44-45.

² According to Michael Banton, the first recorded use in English of the word 'race' was in a poem by William Dunbar of 1508. See Banton and Harwood, p.13.

famous debate in France in 1830 between Georges Curvier and his former collaborator, the polygenist Geoffroy St. Hilaire before the Academy of Sciences.

Knox referred to the debate in his book. Like his former teacher Curvier, Knox maintained that mankind were divided into distinct and unchanging types which Knox called 'permanent varieties', and that the ways of peoples' life were determined by their physical constitutions, the study of which Knox defined as 'transcendental anatomy'. The ideas of permanent racial types and of the physical cause to human variations were important, I think, in two ways: they signify a shift of emphasis in the European race concept from the 'origin' theory to that of 'difference', and from the biblical notion of race to that of biological science. Knox summarised his argument as follows:

The races of men differ from each other, and have done so from the earliest historic period, as proved –

1st. By their external characters, which have never altered during the last six thousand years.

2nd. By anatomical differences in structure.

3rd. By the infertility of the hybrid product, originating in the intermingling of two races.

4th. By historic evidence, which shows that no distinct hybrid race can be shown to exist anywhere.¹

The infertility of the hybrid is used by Knox to support his argument against racial interbreeding and his argument for the permanent nature of racial types. Consequently certain primitive races are non-progressive while the superiority of 'civilised' races remains unchangeable. Knox's argument for permanent racial varieties is based on his anatomical 'findings' or hypotheses, especially of those regarding the dark races, which leads him to conclude that the dark races are doomed to perish in their feeble struggle against the stronger races:

I feel disposed to think that there must be a physical and, consequently, a psychological inferiority in the dark races generally. This may not depend altogether on deficiency in the size of the brain *en masse*, nor on any partial defects; to which, however, I shall advert presently; but rather, perhaps, to specific characters in the quality of the brain itself. It may, perhaps, be right to consider first the different obvious physical qualities of the dark races, before we enter on the history of their position as regards the mass of mankind, and especially as

¹ Knox, p. 503.

regards those races which seem destined, if not to destroy them altogether, at least to limit their position to those regions of the earth where the fair races can neither labour nor live – the equatorial regions and the regions adjoining the tropics, usually termed by romanticists and travellers, and not unfairly, the grave of Europeans.¹

Few late-Victorian scientists and anthropologists could have made racist remarks in such explicit terms.² They contributed significantly to Europe's imperial arrogance at the end of the nineteenth century. Knox's pseudo-scientific theory of 'permanent racial varieties', however, was very soon cut down from its feet, within the science of biology, by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1858. Darwin's evolution theory also put an end to the false debate between the monogenists and polygenists by pointing towards an explanation of gradual but continuous change in man's heredity.³

Social Darwinism, by which is meant the application to society of principles believed to have been established by Charles Darwin, rejected the notion of fixity of racial types implicit in Knox's theory and insisted that there was no clear-cut line between the civilised and the primitive. Nevertheless, it retained the notion of racial hierarchy by positioning peoples at various levels of human progress. In *The Savage in Literature*, Brian Street refers to Godfrey Lienhardt's observation on this point:

They [ethnographers] were themselves reared in a strongly hierarchical society, taking for granted great and seemingly fixed distinctions of rank, wealth and privilege and, in surveying the peoples of the world, they saw them also as hierarchically arranged in a scheme of evolution or creation in which 'higher' and 'lower' races, 'higher' and 'lower' customs and beliefs formed a gradation between the apeline and godlike or the infant and the adult in Man.⁴

This observation is important as it points out that social Darwinism was applied to social classes and racial groups alike. It inspired eugenic doctrines within imperial

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 224-26.

² The classic document of racism during this period was *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1853-57) published by a Frenchman, Count de Gobineau, several years after Knox's book.

³ Anthropologists in Darwin's age had also challenged the idea of permanent racial types. Theodor Waitz, for example, published his *Anthropology* in the same year as the *Origin of Species*, arguing against the notion of permanent racial types on the basis of physical measurements of different races. He showed that the Yellow Man or the Red Man included whole series of types, some of them more like Europeans than they were like other groups of their own race. See Ruth Benedict, *Race and Racism* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 21.

⁴ Quoted in Brian V. Street, *The Savage in Literature* (London: Routledge, 1975), p. 80.

Europe (The Eugenics Education Society in Britain was founded in 1908) and justified the European superiority in its contact with the rest of the world. The general tendency of Social Darwinism was to stress competition and natural selection as the process of human evolution, which provided further grounds for imperial conquests over less civilised regions. Social Darwinism, therefore, only offered an alternative, within the biological science, to an equally biology-based argument for racism as had been developed by polygenists like John Knox. The difference between the two is that Knox's theory of separate, non-progressive racial varieties brought time to a standstill while social Darwinism, as one critic of anthropology has put it, spatialised time.¹

The three stages in the development of the European race concept that we have analysed so far – from the pre-nineteenth century controversy over the origin of the human race, through the nineteenth century pre-Darwin theory of permanent racial types, to Darwin's theory of evolution – demonstrate that the notion of racial inequality was largely a product of biological science rather than imperial enterprise. As Brian Street writes in 1975:

'Imperialism' has customarily taken the blame for the distorted picture of 'primitive' life disseminated in the nineteenth century. The notion that 'primitive' peoples were inferior is assumed to be a political excuse for taking their lands. But many of the stereotypes had already hardened before the 'scramble for Africa', and imperialists tended to use theories already worked out by scientists and which lent themselves to political manipulation. Scientific theories of race provided a framework of thought with regard to primitive peoples which justified the actions of imperialists, but they arose, not out of an imperial situation, but in a pre-imperial world of science.²

Street's remark anticipated a parallel argument made by Edward Said in *Orientalism* in 1978. According to Said, political conquests were aided by the scholarly advances of Orientalism. He observes that 'to say simply that Orientalism was a rationalisation of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact'.³ The Orientalist

¹ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 15.

² Street, p. 5.

³ Said, p. 39.

discourse in its nature is about racial stereotyping and racial inequality, about the images and structures of the representation of non-European peoples.

To say that the European notion of racial inequality arose in a pre-imperial world of science is not to underestimate the impact that the early contacts between the European adventurers and colonists and the peoples of other regions had on the development of the European race concept. After all the race concept was an European invention precisely because Europe was in a position of power which emerged right after its discovery of the New World in the fifteenth century. The natives were regarded as outside the pale of humanity. However, as Ruth Benedict observes, this was 'a consequence of the fact that they [the natives] were not Christians, not of the fact that belonged to the darker races'.¹ That is to say, racism had not yet appeared on the horizon during the early period of European colonist expansion. 'The early European settlers', Benedict continues, 'divided mankind into the conquering "believer" and the victim "unbeliever"'. Even the slave-trade was originally justified on the grounds that the victims were lost souls and heathen.... And for the native who professed the faith the chasm that separated the white Christian from the coloured heathen was theoretically bridged'.¹ The shift from one basis for the European racial superiority to the other did not occur until three centuries later when a strong tendency to rank all the things in the world appeared and the science of biology went apace.

The development of biological science in the mid-nineteenth century went hand in hand with the formalisation of anthropology. In 1846, ethnology was given scientific recognition with a subsection at the British Academy; and in 1863 the Anthropological Society was formed in London. When New Imperialism manifested itself in the 'scramble for Africa' in the 1870s and 1880s, the justification for European domination had already been well formulated.

The combination of scientific interest in primitive man with the growing awareness of European racial superiority is reflected in the popular literature of the day. The growth of the British Empire and the experiences of adventurers, explorers and travellers in distant, exotic lands provided a literary alternative to Victorian drawing-room fiction. Leo Henkin, in *Darwinism in the English Novel 1860-1910*,

¹ Benedict, p. 107.

elicits some of the themes that the novels of the period derived from post-Darwinian science, such as the struggle for survival, the portrayal of ‘survivals’ and prehistoric monsters, the disequilibrium brought about by loss of faith in the Bible – to list but a few. However, I would like to stress two fictional motifs in the period in connection with the notions of the savage and the primitive influenced by Darwin’s evolution theory, namely the temporal regression and the closeness of man to the apes, both bearing close resemblance to the motif of child-like natives manifested in Stevenson’s South Seas fiction.

In Darwin’s scheme of evolution theory, different peoples have reached different levels of human progress. The regions they occupy are deemed to embody symbolic temporal meanings. To travel through these regions is to travel through time. Johannes Fabian calls it ‘evolutionary Time’ which ‘promoted a scheme in terms of which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time – some upstream, others downstream. Civilisation, evolution, development, acculturation, modernisation ... are all terms whose conceptual content derives, in ways that can be specified, from evolutionary Time’.² One of the most popular examples is Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, in which the disparity between European civilisation and African primitiveness is symbolised in Marlow’s regressive journey through time: ‘Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings’.³ The narrator reminds his readers again and again of the great gap between European modernity and the African jungle, and the word ‘prehistoric’ is used most often in connection with the latter’s primeval condition:

We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet.... The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell? ... We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories.⁴

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 107-08.

² Fabian, p. 17.

³ Joseph Conrad, *Three Short Novels*, with an introduction by Edward Weeks (New York: Bantam Books, 1960), p. 39.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

The motif of Europeans travelling back in time through primeval landscapes finds a parallel theme in the motif of Europeans descending from a higher state to a lower state in the evolutionary hierarchy. This must have been a subversion of Darwin's evolution theory since the idea of regression permitted a cyclic return instead of a linear progress in human evolution. In Stevenson's short story 'The Suicide Club', a man joins the club simply because he cannot bear the thought of having descended from apes. The man 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" (*Tusitala*, I, 18). His fear should be compounded if he were to know about the horror of the man travelling beastwards in Stevenson's other story *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).

At the psychological level, *Jekyll and Hyde* is about the man's double identity; at the sociological level, it is about the man regressing to his remote ancestral past. Stevenson stresses Hyde's ape-like features through a cluster of striking images. Hyde is described as something 'hardly human' (*Tusitala*, V, 14), something 'troglodytic' (14), who not only has a 'savage laugh' (13), a hand 'lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair' (64), but he moves 'like a monkey' (42), acts with 'mere animal terror' (44), exhibits 'ape-like fury' (21), and plays 'ape-like tricks' (73). What is worse about this post-Darwinian nightmare is that Jekyll's metamorphosis into an ape-like creature becomes increasingly irreversible. He goes to bed Henry Jekyll, awakens Edward Hyde, and 'that insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born' (73). Although Jekyll's metamorphosis is achieved through the agent of drugs, the bestial nature is inherent in man. From an early age, Jekyll 'learned to recognise the thorough and primitive quality of man' (58). A few years before *Jekyll and Hyde*, another Scottish writer, George MacDonald, included this interchange in his children's story, *The Princess and Curdie* (1882):

"...Have you ever heard what some philosophers say – that men were all animals once?"

"...But there is another thing that is of the greatest consequence – this: that all men, if they do not take care, go down the hill to the animals' country; that many

men are actually, all their lives, going to be beasts. People knew it once, but it is long since they forgot it.”¹

In an age when the fictional portrayal of ‘primitive’ peoples as representing earlier stages of the European civilisation was just becoming popular, Stevenson’s story about the debasement of the European man was a significant attempt against the trend. To a certain extent, *Jekyll and Hyde* could be regarded as a pure, exaggerated fantasy. It is true that the story was born of the author’s nightmarish dream, and since the story was written it has often been classified as an early representative of science fiction. But the significance of Mr Hyde’s regression reaches beyond the story’s stylistic category: it reflects Stevenson’s art of transforming an ordinary story of man’s moral degradation into a unique biological metaphor. His concern about the fortunes of Europeans in their tendency to fall is given a more realistic representation in his South Seas fiction.

For Stevenson, European experience of travelling to the South Seas is much like what Marlow feels about his journey up the Congo River – temporal as well as spacial. In fact Stevenson’s impression on his arrival at the Gilberts may have anticipated Conrad’s observation of temporal regression in *Heart of Darkness*, the South Seas being at the primordial stage that Europe has passed through:

In such a scene, and at such an hour, the impression received was not so much of foreign travel – rather of past ages; it seemed not so much degrees of latitude that we had crossed, as centuries of time that we had re-ascended; leaving, by the same steps, home and to-day.

(*Tusitala*, XX, 236)

It is important that the impression of ‘past ages’, as evoked in Stevenson by the exotic landscape and seascape, is not the one of barbarism but of romance, ‘like a landing-place in the *Arabian Nights* or from the classic poets’ where ‘some adventurous prince might step ashore among new characters and incidents’ (236). In spite of this romantic, innocent background, there exists a common motif of Europeans travelling backwards -- biologically in *Jekyll and Hyde* and geographically in the South Seas fiction, but morally in both. Stevenson’s South Seas

¹ George MacDonald, *The Princess and Curdie* (Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1975; first published in 1883), p. 69.

fiction can be read as an inquiry into the savage within and at home, like Hyde within Jekyll, just as it is about the savage outside and abroad; as a construction of the Self through the Other as much as of the Other. As one critic has noted, Hyde's behaviour is just 'an urban version of "going native"'.¹

2

White Men's Tales

Anthropologists traditionally distinguish their discipline from sociology. In an article published in 1964, Jacques Maquet observes:

Anthropology is the study of nonliterate societies and their cultures; it emerged in the nineteenth century as the discipline devoted to peoples considered by evolutionists of that time as 'primitive' and 'inferior', and is distinguished from sociology, which is the study of 'advanced', 'complex', industrial, literate, large-scale societies.²

Ethnography, defined by Tim Youngs as the written practice of anthropology,³ is concerned with the textual representation of other peoples and their cultures. From this point of view, much of Stevenson's South Seas writings are ethnographic in nature. The anthropological interest with which he went to the South Seas yielded rewarding results. His *In the South Seas* is still one of the most informative ethnographic treatises on the Polynesian races so far. He formed his own theories as to the formation of the islands, their scientific history, and where the people came from originally. Fanny's complaint to Sidney Colvin about her husband not writing down his own adventures bears witness to Stevenson's research: 'He [Stevenson] had got "Darwin on the Coral Insect" – no, Darwin was *Coral Reefs*; somebody else on Melanesian languages, books on the origin of the South Sea peoples, and all sorts scientific pamphlets and papers....Instead of writing about his adventures in these wild islands, he would ventilate his own theories on the vexed questions of race and

¹ David Punter, quoted in Brantlinger, p. 232.

² Jacques J. Maquet, 'Objectivity in Anthropology', *Durrent Anthropology* 5,1 (February 1964), p. 50.

³ Youngs, p. 2.

language' (*Letters*, VII, 79). Stevenson made use of his knowledge about the Polynesian oral tradition in his ballads and short stories, except for 'The Bottle Imp' the theme of which he transported from Europe.

One important difference, however, sets his novels apart from the rest of his South Seas writings mentioned above. *The Beach of Falesá*, *The Ebb-Tide*, and *The Wrecker* are all white men's tales with the natives remaining only in the background. The first depicts the trade rivalry between two white traders; the second is about three beachcombers embarking on a criminal voyage and their subsequent clash with an equally brutal pearl fisherman; the third centres on the white protagonist in his quest for the exotic and the solution to the mystery of a wrecked ship. The relationship between the whites and the natives exhibits itself more through their racial contrast than through their intricate interaction with each other as might have been required by the plots. There are almost no questions of cultural conflicts, as we might expect in the novels of E. M. Forster or Graham Greene, because the Polynesian races are fictionally represented by Stevenson as good-natured but unsophisticated. Most important of all, there is a lack of heroic adventure in the white men in these novels, *Falesá* and *The Ebb-Tide* in particular. The tropics provide an extraordinary milieu for the incoming Europeans' experience, but that experience is often anti-heroic and in some extreme cases liberates the repressed primitive element in the incomers themselves. Under these circumstances, the motif of Europeans travelling 'back in time' has a double meaning: it signifies physical travel from the 'centre' of modern human civilisation back to the primeval landscapes, a stage that the Europeans have already passed in Darwin's scheme of evolution theory, and symbolic travel from the civilised social norms to the savage state within, much like Jekyll's half voluntary regression to atavism.

I think it useful here to apply James Clifford's term of 'ethnographic allegory' to this aspect of Stevenson's South Seas fiction. The narrow definition of allegory (from Greek *allēgoria* 'speaking otherwise') refers to 'a story in verse or prose with a double meaning: a primary or surface meaning; and a secondary or under-the-surface meaning'.¹ Allegory can also refer to the method by which a piece of literature is interpreted, the way of 'understanding a work as containing meanings

other than those explicit on the level of its literal surface'.² I am using the term allegory in its more extended sense defined by Clifford, that is, it 'denotes a practice in which a narrative fiction continuously refers to another pattern of ideas or events'; allegorical writings are 'extended metaphors, patterns of associations that point to coherent (theoretical, esthetic, moral) additional meanings'.³ Ethnographies, according to Clifford, use other places and other peoples to tell stories that are really about the storyteller's own society. He argues that 'every version of an 'other', wherever found, is also the construction of a "self", and the making of ethnographic texts...has always involved a process of "self-fashioning"'.⁴ To focus on the ethnographic allegory in Stevenson's South Seas fiction – although he is equally concerned with the Polynesian races – draws attention to the 'sociological' aspect of his 'anthropological' texts that has until recently been minimised, that is, the study of 'advanced', 'complex' whites located within the descriptions of the 'simple', 'primitive' Polynesian peoples. The ethnographic allegory, therefore, stresses the impact of the Pacific upon Europeans rather than the opposite.

The stories of whites – traders, adventurers, beachcombers, and remittance men – are often stories of their going down the scale of civilisation rather than their going native. When Knox contends that 'man sinks rapidly in the scale of civilisation when removed from the great stream',⁵ he simply lays blame upon the negative effects of hybridity from the biological point of view. Stevenson does not offer easy explanations for the causes of the degradation of whites in the Pacific. Instead he concentrates on the moral complexities of whites in their process of degradation. The keynote of white men's fortunes in Stevenson's three novels is their loss of heroic adventure. At its best their adventure is reduced to domesticity as it is for Wiltshire; at its worst it degrades into piracy such as swindling, violence, opium smuggling as it is in *The Ebb-Tide* and *The Wrecker*. The motif of degradation is reinforced by images of parasites and diseases.

¹ J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Penguin Books, 1992), p. 22.

² Martin Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Harlow: Longman York Press, 1992), p. 15.

³ James Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Allegory', in *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 98-121.

⁴ James Clifford and George E. Marcus, p.p. 23-24.

⁵ Knox, p. 62.

Colonial Trade as Corrupt Business

Falesá produces accounts of the decadence of imperial adventure in the life of European traders in the South Seas represented by Case and Wiltshire. In this story the heroic adventure of early colonialism is diminished to trade which in turn gives way to crime. John Wiltshire, the narrator of the story, is himself no rugged explorer or pioneer but a semi-educated trader sent to the island to operate a trading station. Upon his arrival he feels excited at what he is told to be the ‘best station in the South Pacific’ (*F*, 115). In his opening remark he hints at a lack of adventure in his previous assignments and a longing for new and invigorating experiences, as he tells the reader that ‘I had been for years on a low island near the line, living for the most part solitary among natives. Here was a fresh experience: even the tongue would be quite strange to me; and the look of these woods and mountains, and the rare smell of them, renewed my blood’ (115).

It soon becomes clear that the adventure he is looking for is anything but heroic – it is just a sailor’s paradise of unlimited sensual pleasure like drinking, dancing, women and tobacco. ‘*Falesá* seemed to be the right kind of a place’ (118), he assures himself as he sits drinking with Case, because it promised such a paradise:

The world was like all new painted; my foot went along to music; *Falesá* might have been Fiddler’s Green, if there is such a place, and more’s the pity if there isn’t! It was good to foot the grass, to look aloft at the green mountains, to see the men with their green wreaths and the women in their bright dresses, red and blue.

(119)

Trade itself – the very white presence on the island – seems diseased, parasitic and felonious. First of all, trade is as unreliable as Wiltshire, a trader himself, can imagine. In a climatic finale when he lights up a match to blow up Case’s creation of devil images, his mistrust in trade persuades him not to rush back into the tunnel to rescue his lantern. ‘Who was going to trust the match?’ he confides to the reader. ‘You know what trade is. The stuff was good enough for Kanakas to go fishing with,

where they've got to look lively anyway, and the most they risk is only to have their hand blown off. But for anyone that wanted to fool around a blow-up like mine that match was rubbish' (180). Wiltshire's mistrust of the match is borne out in the tragic ending for old Captain Randall, who loses his hand while using dynamite for fishing and dies as a result of that: 'Where was papa's hand? Well, there's nothing to hurt in that; the islands up north are all full of one-handed men, like the parties in the "Arabian Nights"; but either Randall was too old, or he drank too much, and the short and the long of it was that he died' (185).

The decline of trade as a corrupt business is evidenced in the trading station of Wiltshire's competitors – Captain Randall, Case, and their sidekick Black Jack. Wiltshire discovers that their dilapidated house exhibits almost no sign of proper trade except for several items of smuggled goods:

It was a board house with a strip of rickety verandah. The store was to the front, with a counter, scales, and the poorest possible display of trade: a case or two of tinned meats; a barrel of hard bread; a few bolts of cotton stuff, not to be compared with mine; the only thing well represented being the contraband, firearms and liquor.

(120)

Secondly, trade gives way to crime. Wiltshire's first introduction to the island by the captain includes tales of mysterious death and disappearance of his predecessors, signifying at the very beginning of the story that trade in Falesá involves crime which includes even murder. As the story unfolds we come to realise that Case is behind all these heinous events. In his attempt to corner the copra market he has killed or driven away Wiltshire's predecessors one after another: old Underhill was declared a devil and was virtually buried alive by Case; Adams was poisoned; and Vigours, the last man at the trading station, ran away out of fear. In Mr Tarleton's words, 'white men die very suddenly in Falesá' (154).

Thirdly, trade degenerates from a lucrative follow-up of colonial exploration to the depravity of parasitism. Wiltshire's description of Captain Randall offers a powerful suggestion of the decadence of imperial adventure. Randall, once representative of the noble and glorious pioneer of imperialism – the British sea captain, is now a diseased, degenerate and boozy ghost of a man with nothing heroic left in him:

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

(120-21)

The image of decadence in Randall – a body ‘crawled with flies’ – is carried over to convey the image of parasitism. ‘Trade and station belonged both to Randall’, says Wiltshire; ‘Case and the negro were parasites; they crawled and fed upon him like the flies, he none the wiser’ (121). Case is the worse of the two. When he comes to die, it is found that he has made a will to leave his Samoan wife all his fortune, all Black Jack’s and most of Randall’s, because it was Case that kept the books.

The decadent, parasitic nature of colonial trade finds a parallel theme in the anti-heroic behaviour of the white traders in their relation to the natives. A felt incongruity between Case and Wiltshire’s pronouncement of imperial domination and the debasement of their conduct results in a narrative that links together racial arrogance, profit motive, sexual exploitation, and murder. Despite their competition in the copra trade, both characters claim innate superiority as white men. Case’s contempt for the natives is clearly revealed in the episode when Wiltshire, finding himself tabooed, presses him for an explanation. In order to avoid a direct answer and to further confuse Wiltshire, Case proclaims his alliance with Wiltshire in asserting white men’s supremacy whether it is English or German:

I would never have believed it. I don’t know where the impudence of these kanakas’ll go next; they seem to have lost all idea of respect for whites. What we want is a man-of-war --- a German, if we could -- they know how to manage kanakas.¹

¹ Roslyn Jolly notes that Case’s statement about sending a German man-of-war is unintentionally ironic (Jolly, pp. 263-24) in view of the Samoan war of December 1888 when German men-of-war fired several times on native villages. In a newspaper interview during his second visit to Honolulu, Stevenson tells the reporter that ‘I am certainly not of the opinion that the German warships could keep the peace alone, but quite otherwise. The two German vessels at present there (for several reasons unnecessary to repeat) are incapable of either controlling or defeating the Samoans’ (Johnstone, p. 91). The reference to the failure of German warships can be found in *A Footnote to History* in which Stevenson comments on ‘the inefficacy of the warships’ (*Tusitala*, XXI, 190). Before the war, ‘the prestige of the European powers was still unbroken. No native would then have

In Case's view, not only the European military but also the European traders have the legitimate power over the Polynesian natives, as he assures Wiltshire that 'we traders have a lot of gall, I must say; we make these poor kanakas take back their laws, and take up their taboo, and that, whenever it happens to suit us' (140).

His demand for natives' respect for whites is echoed by Wiltshire at the beginning of the climatic scene between him and Uma, four days into their relationship, when he vents on her a frustration for his inability to understand, and rid himself of, the taboo mysteriously imposed upon him:

I went straight home, in a hot temper, and found Uma trying on a lot of trade goods like a baby.

"Here," I said, "you quit that foolery! Here's a pretty mess to have made, as if I wasn't bothered enough anyway! And I thought I told you to get dinner!"

And then I believe I gave her a bit of the rough side of my tongue, as she deserved. She stood up at once, like a sentry to his officer; for I must say she was always well brought up, and had a great respect for whites.

(141)

Apart from his emphasis on 'respect for whites', Wiltshire's use of the metaphors of parent-child relationship ('like a baby') and military subjugation ('like a sentry to his officer') obtains special significance along with the metaphor of political control. As he emerges from his meeting with the island chiefs, he admires Case's resourcefulness by saying that 'he had the brains to run a parliament' (138). The imperial arrogance culminates, however, in Wiltshire's earlier speech through Case's translation to the council of island chiefs in which the 'civilising mission' of colonisation is brought to the forefront of the story's political and racial concern:

'...You tell them who I am. 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 civilisation; and no sooner have I got my trade sorted out than they go and taboo me, and no one dare come near my place!...If they think they're going to come any of their native ideas over me, they'll find themselves mistaken. And tell them

dreamed of defying these colossal ships, worked by mysterious powers, and laden with outlandish instruments of death' (ibid., 151). After Mataafa's supporters defeated a German landing party at Fangalii, 'all Samoa drew a breath of wonder and delight. The invincible had fallen; the men of the vaunted war-ships had been met in the field by the braves of Mataafa: a superstition was no more' (ibid., 185). The irony bespeaks of Stevenson's criticism of Case's imperial belligerence.

plain that I demand the reason of this treatment as a white man and a British subject.'

(137)

The irony lies in the contradiction between Case and Wiltshire's claim to bring civilisation to Polynesians and their self-bestowed right to do whatever they wish to regardless of law. The debasement of their conduct involving trade has lost any heroic significance of early Victorian imperialism. Case is in particular the main villain in relation to not only to his fellow white men but to the natives. He is also depicted as a skilful manipulator of the islanders, gaining control of them by taking advantage of their Polynesian superstitions, by scaring them with old-wives' tales, and by convincing them of his demonic power through magic tricks and his 'devil-work', a haunted cave which he has created with Tyrolean harps, imitation skull idols, and luminous paint. Even the native chiefs fall under his influence, as he confides to Wiltshire: 'They're afraid of me, or they used to be' (22). Case's mind and soul as a trader prompts him to think of racial and sexual domination in commercial terms as he assures Wiltshire of the easiness in finding a mistress among the native girls: 'You can have your pick of the lot for a plug of tobacco' (6).

The pretentious behaviour of white traders as seen in Case and Wiltshire has its prototype in the actual experience that Stevenson encountered. In his travel book *In the South Seas*, he recorded his impressions of the traders whom he had met around his house in the town of Butaritari on Great Matin Island of the Gilberts:

The traders, all bred to the sea, take a humorous pride in their new business; 'South Sea Merchants' is the title they prefer. 'We are all sailors here' -- 'merchants, if you please' -- '*South Sea* merchants',-- was a piece of conversation endlessly repeated, that never seemed to lose in savour.

(*Tusitala*, XX, 231)

If he recalled the average traders of Butaritari with mild reproach and amusement for their pretensions, his attitude towards one of them was of strong dislike:

There was one black sheep indeed ... and the man is typical of a class of ruffians that once disgraced the whole field of the South Seas, and still linger in the rarely visited isles of Micronesia. He had the name on the beach of 'a perfect gentleman when sober,' but I never saw him otherwise than drunk. The few shockings and savage traits of the Micronesian he has singled out with the skill of a collector,

and planted in the soil of his original baseness. He has been accused and acquitted of a treacherous murder; and has since boastfully owned it, which inclines me to suppose him innocent ... The best of his business is to make natives drink, and then advance the money for the fine upon a lucrative mortgage. 'Respect for whites' is the man's word: 'What is the matter with this island is the want of respect for whites.'

(231-32)

It seems obvious that Case embodies all the worst qualities of the trader of Butaritari: exploitative, vicious, and murderous; while the racial conceit is shared between him and Wiltshire.

There is complexity, however, in the characterisation of Wiltshire. The main plot portrays him as the only man that challenges Case's evil power. While searching in the jungle, Wiltshire discovers the handiwork of fake devils which Case uses to play upon the superstitions of the natives. He dynamites this source of Case's power just before Case shoots him in the leg. Wiltshire cuts the villain's throat as the jungle flames up around them. This episode alone raises Wiltshire to what seems to be the exalted position of heroism and therefore tempts the reader to treat him as the moral superior to, as well as the total opposite of, Case. In a certain sense, our preference for Wiltshire is justified, especially when we consider his great courage in ridding the island of the utmost evil embodied in his opponent. On the other hand, we may also argue that the life-and-death struggle with Case does not necessarily put Wiltshire in alliance with the natives. The motivation of that struggle suggests that it is only a competition in colonial trade turned into violence, and therefore it is symbolic, in a broader sense, of an imperialist rivalry for colonial spoils. Furthermore, what Wiltshire overcomes is the European villainy transported to the Pacific setting rather than the savage force that early imperial adventurers would have to encounter from the 'savages'.

As a matter of fact, much of the two characters' conduct and attitude overlaps: both have come to the South Seas island for copra trade; both assume white men's superiority over the natives; both are capable of relentless violence in their struggle with each other. Even Wiltshire's love for the island girl does not make him weighty in the scales of our moral assessment. For, according to Wiltshire, Case is also fond of his Samoan wife, and kind to her. Some critic has suggested that 'the complexity

of judgement invited by Wiltshire's moral character is best summarised by reference to the Jekyll and Hyde motif Stevenson weaves into Wiltshire's relationship to Case'.¹ Case may be the worst part of Wiltshire enlarged. Politically, the struggle between them signifies imperialist rivalry; psychologically, it can be seen as the struggle between the impulses of good and evil within a divided self. We can at least see Case's violent tendency in Wiltshire when he gives a relentless beating to Case so that 'I could hear his head rattle and crack', and 'the blood spread upon his face like wine upon a napkin' (*F*, 148), or when he contemplates his final victory in cold-blooded satisfaction:

When I came to myself ... the first thing I attended to was to give 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.

(183)

He admits that 'every time I looked over to Case I could have sung and whistled. Talk about meat and drink! To see that man lying there dead as a herring filled me full' (184).

But what concerns us here is Wiltshire's racial attitude. A close reading of the text reveals that most of his racist remarks occur in the first half of the story. With his shifting loyalty from Case to Uma in the second half, Wiltshire is shown to have achieved some moral development. His love for the island girl triumphs over solidarity with his fellow trader, forcing him to renounce the superior status and authority he previously laid claim to. Wiltshire's moral growth is best demonstrated in the gradual change of his racial assumptions that is brought about by his love for Uma.

Early in the story Wiltshire sets himself apart from the native community by feeling 'sick for white neighbours' after four years at the line, which he has always counted as 'years of prison'. He is 'one of those most opposed to any nonsense about native women, having seen so many whites eaten up by their wives' relatives, and made fools of in the bargain' (125). As he concludes his tale, Wiltshire salutes Uma, now 'a powerful big woman' who 'could throw a London bobby over her shoulder...and there is no manner of doubt that she's an A one wife' (186).

¹ Linehan, p. 419.

While Wiltshire's retreat from racism is convincingly depicted in his love relationship with Uma, he himself only partially understands the changes he has undergone. His conversion to the native way of life occurs far more strongly at the emotional than the intellectual level. Part of the mastery in Stevenson's depiction is to let Wiltshire do the narration. The reader needs to be careful that throughout his flashback first-person account, Wiltshire's point of view shifts between his racial assumptions upon arriving at *Falesá* and the not wholly different attitude he holds as he tells his story. Despite his apparent change in several ways, that he still clings to his fair share of racial prejudice is obvious through his arrogant *present-tense* pronouncements about natives: 'I know how to deal with kanakas ... They haven't any real government or any real law, that's what you've got to knock into their heads; and even if they had, it would be a good joke if it was to apply to a white man. It would be a strange thing if we came all this way and couldn't do what we pleased' (137). His worry about his mixed-race offspring at the end of his narrative also betrays his ever present racial prejudice, as he admits that 'there's nobody thinks less of half-castes than I do' (186).

That Wiltshire is shown to be less of a villain than Case, and to a certain extent even to be an attractive figure in his own rough way, results partly from the different social status that they come from. As we have discussed earlier in the chapter, racism itself was first formulated in relation to class conflicts within Europe. It was at a later stage of colonial development that the working class were drawn into the overseas expansion. Beneath the racial arrogance of those who were themselves socially excluded at home might be more or less of a subconscious identification with those in colonial regions who were marginalised because of their skin colour. As the narrator of the story, Wiltshire reminds the reader of the class difference between Case and himself. Although 'no man knew his [Case's] country...it was clear he came of a good family and was splendidly educated. He was accomplished too; played the accordion first-rate', and 'he could speak, when he chose, fit for a drawing-room' (117). As for Wiltshire himself, he is 'no end of a big chief at home' but just 'a white man and a British subject' (137). However, it is against the missionary that Wiltshire defines his own social status, and the difference between

him and Case is seen through that definition: 'I'm just a common, low, God-damned white man and British subject, the sort you would like to wipe your boots on' (149).

The traders' sexual exploitation of native women gives evidence of their non-heroic behaviour. Nothing in Stevenson's South Seas fiction offers a more subtle critique of racial domination than the fraudulent marriage certificate that Case arranges for Wiltshire and Uma. As it is indicated before, the episode is based on a real document that Stevenson saw during his travels in the Gilberts. In his *In the South Seas* he also records his discovery that prostitution, like disease, is one of the vices introduced by white settlers. For instance, 'the really decent women of Samoa prostituted themselves in public to the French'. As a result, 'the standard of female chastity had declined since the coming of the whites' (*Tusitala*, XX, 38). In the same chapter as the one that contains the shabby marriage document, Stevenson tells how since 1860 fourteen white traders had been murdered on a single island because they mistook island women's scanty dress for promiscuity and so provoked the revenge of angry fathers, brothers and husbands. 'The strange persistence of these fourteen martyrs might seem to point to monomania or a series of romantic passions' (266). Underlying these 'romantic passions' is the traders' tendency to exploit the natives not only economically but also sexually. The introduction of the fraudulent marriage certificate in *Falesá* is of particular significance in the light of colonial and anti-colonial discourse.

Among the several related issues of colonial and anti-colonial discourse, the examination of race is most often and most closely connected to the examination of gender and sexuality. As Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams remark, 'women, as the biological "carriers" of the "race", occupy a primary and complex role in representations of ethnicity, popular and academic, black and white, and it is women's exercise of their sexuality which is an often unacknowledged major concern underlying such representations.' Therefore, 'the dynamics of gender and sexuality are, of course, central issues for both post-colonial and colonial discourse theory'.¹ The gender issues in the story work on both the biological level and the socio-psychological level. On the biological level, Wiltshire's marriage with the native girl Uma produces a new generation that represents at once a possibility for

¹ Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*

assimilation --- Wiltshire and his family are more likely the heirs to the South Seas than to the white world. On the socio-psychological level, racial domination models itself perfectly upon sexual domination, the two lines running parallel to each other through the story until they finally converge in Wiltshire's limited moral development: his racial prejudice is partly overcome as his love deepens for Uma he has initially wronged.

Throughout the story Wiltshire disapproves of the false marriage certificate prepared by Case, for different reasons at different stages of his development, but never for the proper realisation of racial and sexual inequality. His first dubious attitude to Case's written document is for the sake of convenience: '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' (124). Later, Uma's love kindles his sense of shame and urges him to abandon the forgery in favour of a proper marriage by the local missionary. Obviously his moral conscience and sense of shame never goes so far as to free him from the racial assumptions rooted in the imperial domination.

The parallel workings of racial and sexual domination in colonial settings does not find its first expression in Stevenson. Commenting on Gustave Flaubert's adventures in Egypt which provided Oriental material for the early nineteenth century French novelist, Edward Said makes the following observation which sheds much light on the gender issue in colonial discourse as well as on our understanding of Stevenson's story:

Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but also to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was 'typically Oriental'... Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled.¹

(New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 17.

¹ Said, p. 6.

Stevenson's description of the Wiltshire-Uma relationship falls within that pattern. The relationship between the two is based on power, the power of the coloniser over the colonised, of masculinity over femininity. Wiltshire himself is quite conscious of his own superiority as a white male when he declares that 'to speak to her kindly was more than I was fit for' (*F*, 126). Uma for her part acts out her total devotion and obedience to Wiltshire by throwing herself at his feet with a cry, 'I belong you all-e-same pig!' (126). The marriage certificate she hides away 'like gold', and regards it to be 'a pass to heaven'.

Stevenson's description of the Wiltshire-Uma relationship also steps outside that pattern. What begins as sexual deception turns into true love, which in turn casts their racial relationship in a more liberal light. Wiltshire starts out being impressed only by Uma's sensuous beauty – 'Who's she? ... She'll do' (119). Gradually her innocence, loyalty and good sense cause him to fall in love. Ashamed of the deceitful wedding, he condescends to negotiate with a much-disliked missionary to legitimise their marriage. He confesses his love to Uma: 'I would rather have you than all the copra in the South Seas' (143). In making this important declaration, Wiltshire is putting human values above trade which is in sharp contrast to Case's equation of the native girl to a piece of commodity – 'a plug of tobacco'. Stevenson's liberal thinking about gender identity within racial difference becomes more apparent when he associates Wiltshire more with the native female than with the white male in his social contacts. Wiltshire's most intimate companionship is largely restricted to the two women who are his co-sharers in Uma's taboo: Uma and her mother. Uma's mother owns the coconut trees which become Wiltshire's livelihood as long as the taboo lasts. The three work together to produce copra needed for Wiltshire's chief trading commodity. The taboo itself carries symbolic meaning as a reflection of society's devaluation of the non-white and the non-male. The important thing is that Wiltshire shares in Uma's taboo. Wiltshire's moral advance, little visible in his racial assumptions, becomes discernible in his feminist associations. The duplex portrayal of Wiltshire points to the strong possibility that Stevenson meant his character to be a vehicle for as well as an object of an anti-colonial critique.

Possibly the highlighting of the gender issue within racial difference in *Falesá* is a tendency towards assimilation. There are three interracial marriages concerning the

three major characters. Apart from the one between Wiltshire and Uma, Case is married to a Samoan woman and Uma's mother to a white man. In *Falesá* Stevenson shows that racial difference is bridgeable through the exercise of gender; that Polynesians, while they can not withstand the changes that the western world brings, do manage to alter their colonisers in the slow process of assimilation. Disapproved as it might have been by Victorian society, this message provides an alternative to the conventional treatment of the pattern in similar colonial fiction. Ruth Benedict in his *Race and Racism* has a relevant point to make about assimilation. He observes that 'the English dealt with natives as with a low, though sometimes useful, caste: they practised a rigid separatism. Whereas in the French, the Spanish, and the Portuguese colonies marriage with native women was common and a mixed population sprang up, in English colonies intermarriage was the great exception and there was strong feeling against it'.¹ Although nothing in the story suggests that Falesá is an English colony,² Wiltshire, being English, violates the conventional code of conduct for colonial traders. The fact that both he and Case are fond of their native wives is also based on Stevenson's findings in the Gilberts. 'The trader must be credited with a virtue: he often makes a kind and loyal husband', Stevenson observes in Chapter VII of *In the South Seas*; and 'the position of a trader's wife in the Gilberts is, besides, unusually enviable. She shares the immunities of her husband....The resources of the store are at her hand; she goes arrayed like a queen, and feasts delicately every day upon tinned meats' (267). Therefore Case's Samoan wife becomes rich upon her husband's death because he has left her all his fortune in his will, and Wiltshire is no less devoted to his family at the end of the story.

Herein we see a contradiction in the sexual morality of the traders: they are both exploitative but capable of domestic commitment. Their moral dilemma can be explained in the decreasing adventurousness of early Victorian imperialism. In other words, they are caught in a cultural limbo and stranded in the backwaters of the

¹ Benedict, p. 109.

² Roslyn Jolly notes that although many of the place-names used in the story are similar to Samoan place-names, Falesá is clearly not meant to be a part of Samoa, for Case's wife is identified as a 'Samoa woman' (*F*, 117) who is 'in a hurry to get home' (185) at the end of the story (See Jolly, pp. 264-65). However, Stevenson did mention a place by the name of Falesá in Samoa as he recorded in *A Footnote to History* that 'Mataafa set forth from Falesá, and came to Mulinuu to Tamasese' (*Tusitala*, XXI, 108). Samoa was not an English colony at the time when Stevenson wrote the tale, but was dominated by three powers: Germany, Britain and the United States.

Empire with nowhere to go. Both Case and Wiltshire are marooned – not isolated by themselves like Robinson Crusoe whose abandonment provokes a heroic struggle against nature and savages. Instead traders like Case and Wiltshire are left with plenty of company, surrounded by natives and half-castes whom they consider their inferiors, and by a mixed group of Europeans, some like themselves with whom they cannot get along well. Wiltshire's concluding remarks indicate the reason why he chooses not to return to England – a combination of parental love with racial prejudice that is both his own and something institutionalised beyond his control:

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've 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?

(*F*, 186)

Here is another way that the story marks the end of imperial adventure: their seemingly heroic struggle is brought to an ironically happy but domestically problematic ending with Wiltshire worrying about his children's futures. Still, this is the best outcome that the white characters in Stevenson's South Seas fiction can achieve. The homeless beachcombers in Stevenson's next novel fare far worse than the marooned traders in *Falesá*.

4

Beachcombers

Unlike *Falesá* which is set on an imaginary island, *The Ebb-Tide* begins its grim story of white men's fortunes on the Papeete beach, Tahiti, where Stevenson stayed in September, 1888. The story suggests in its opening paragraph that it is to be a white men's tale. The third-person narrator enables a general comment on the mixed fortunes of the whites in the Pacific:

Throughout the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease. Some prosper, some vegetate. Some have mounted the steps of thrones and owned islands and navies. Others again must marry for a livelihood; a strapping, merry, chocolate-coloured dame supports them in sheer idleness; and, dressed like natives, but still retaining some foreign element of gait or attitude, still perhaps with some relic (such as a single eye-glass) of the officer and gentleman, they sprawl in palm-leaf verandahs and entertain an island audience with memoirs of the music-hall. And there are still others, less pliable, less capable, less fortunate, perhaps less base, who continue, even in these isles of plenty, to lack bread.

(*Tusitala*, XIV, 1)

While the story can be treated as an ethnographic allegory for its dominating description of white men with natives remaining only in the background, it is allegorical in its literal sense. The novel begins as realistic fiction. The depiction of the grim, harsh realities of the region is a breakaway from Stevenson's earlier romance before he moved to the South Seas. As the story unfolds itself, symbolism becomes intense so that allegorical tendency gradually dominates the mode of narration. The theme of the mixed fortunes of the three white men is metaphorically carried out in the form of a voyage --- a quest on board the schooner *Farallone* which is mysteriously driven by fateful winds. Unlike the heroes in traditional allegories, Stevenson's characters set out in quest of evil instead of ideals which are worth pursuing. By the end of their voyage they have learned nothing from their experience except for Herrick who is seen to have achieved limited moral growth.

The story brings together two extreme types of these whites: the most 'successful' one in Attwater who owns an island and natives, and the most pitiable one in the three beachcombers who have sunk deep into poverty and crime. The latter group in particular illustrates the motif of Europeans going down the scale of civilisation in the context of the colonial Pacific. If Case and Wiltshire's going downward is seen through the contradiction between their imperial arrogance and the diminishing of their heroic adventure, the beachcombers in *The Ebb-Tide* have no arrogance left, for 'each had made a long apprenticeship in going downward' before the story begins. In Davis we have another example of the disgraced sea captain, much like Captain Randall in *Falesá*. Davis has lost any sense of heroic adventure after losing his ship and six of his former crew through drunkenness. Huish is the worst of the three in moral degradation. He has been employed in every store in Pateete but discharged

from each in turn, for he is able in his way but vile in character, and his former employers 'passed him in the street as if he was a dog' (6).

Unlike Davis and Huish, Robert Herrick (who gets most of the narrative attention) begins his fall into disgrace on land. His career is also one of 'unbroken shame'. While at university he 'wandered in the bypaths of study, worked at music or at metaphysics when he should have been at Greek, and took at last a paltry degree' (5). 'He had no head for figures, no interest in affairs, detested the constraint of hours, and despised the aims and the success of merchants', and 'to grow rich was none of his ambitions' (5). 'Having nothing but failure to communicate, he ceases writing home; and about a year before the tale begins, he was suddenly turned upon the streets of San Francisco by his employer. He had broken the last bonds of self-respect, and upon a sudden impulse, changed his name and invested his last dollar in a passage on board the mail brigantine, the *City of Papeete*' (4) and came onto the beach in the literal sense of the word. The South Sea islands offer him a way of escape rather than an opportunity for adventure, where he knows the climate to be soft, bread cheap, and manners easy – 'a skulker from life's battle and his own immediate duty. Failure, he had said, was his portion; let it be a pleasant failure' (4).

His flight to the South Seas by no means cuts him off from Europe as in the case of Huish or Case in *Falesá*. Instead he is frequently haunted by memories of England. While Wiltshire who eventually goes native remembers England as 'a nasty, cold, muddy hole, with not enough light to see to read by' (*F*, 130), Herrick sees visions of England with nostalgic fondness only to form a contrast with his present wretched condition on the Tahitian beach:

Visions of England at least would throng upon the exile's memory: the busy schoolroom, the green playing-fields, holidays at home, and the perennial roar of London, and the fireside, and the white head of his father. For it is the destiny of those grave, restrained and classic writers, with whom we make enforced and often painful acquaintanceship at school, to pass into the blood and become native in the memory.

(*Tusitala*, XIV, 3)

Herrick's fantasy of travelling back to London within minutes on a flying mat – a cross-cultural location of a European man in the context of Polynesian legend which Stevenson has used in his short story 'The Isle of Voices' -- is but another instance of

his longing for England -- his home which he has sunk too low to return to in reality. Only in imagination does he feel 'like a fellow caught up out of Hell and flung down into the dandiest part of Heaven' (10).

It is through his cultural bonds with Europe, however, that Herrick distinguishes himself from the two of his companions. His habitual quotation from his classical education serves to stress his cultural superiority to Davis and Huish as well as to establish a contrast between his civilised past and his degradation at present. His first opportunity to show his classical education arises, ironically, within an abandoned calaboose which is now their habitation. The rude jottings on its walls prompt him to leave some memorial of his own because 'vanity, so hard to dislodge, awoke in him' (23). The result is his quoting famous phrases from the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven, poems of Horace, Virgil and Heine. Virgil in particular is his favourite author. He carries a tattered copy of *Aeneid* in his pocket which often consoles him in his hunger and which he dips into randomly for supernatural guidance as some people do with the Bible. The book is his last possession by which he clings to European civilisation, his classical education being a token of self-respect as a white man. Therefore when Attwater describes his island empire as '*nemorosa Zacynthos*' ('wooded Zacynthos'), Herrick finds himself spontaneously completing the Virgilian line with '*Jam medio apparet fluctu*' ('now appears amid the waves', 87). Herrick's institutional and cultural communion with Attwater is just as powerful as his personal aversion to the man's empire-building methods.

David Daiches regards Herrick's cultural affectation as an authorial projection into the characterisation. He points out that 'the mutual recognition of educated gentlemanliness between Herrick and Attwater is both an exposure of upper-class English cultural snobbery and an assertion of Stevenson's own high culture'.¹ According to a recent biography, Stevenson was much drawn to Virgil in his Latin classes during his university days in Edinburgh. He appreciated the classical author without bothering to use dictionaries: 'When I come to a word that puzzles me I just guess its meaning and pass on; and my guesses are so often correct, that I think Latin must have been my mother tongue in some previous existence'.² One of the few

¹ Stevenson, R. L., and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and Quartette*, ed. and intro. by David Daiches (J. M. Dent: Everyman, 1994), p. xxv.

² Cited in Frank McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson: a Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), p. 40.

books that Stevenson had on *Casco* during his first Pacific voyage was Virgil's *Aeneid*. He obviously made use of what he had in his creation of a culturally superior character in Herrick.

The connection between the *Aeneid* and the Pacific through Herrick carries a deeper meaning than the mere autobiographical hints in the story. For Stevenson himself, the interpenetration of past and present, of east and west, had always been a potent theme in his South Seas fiction. In April 1891 Stevenson accompanied Harold Sewall, U.S. Consul-General, on a visit to Tutuila in Eastern Samoa, an event which he recorded in his essay 'Tutuila'. He spent a morning at the bay of Oa in solitude, likening the place to the haven described in Virgil's book and calling it 'a bay of the *Aeneid*' (*Tusitala*, XXI, 60) or 'Virgil's bay':

I had Vigil's bay all morning to myself, and feasted on solitude and the overhanging woods, and the retiring sea. The quiet was only broken by the hoarse cooing of wild pigeons up the valley, and certain inroads of capricious winds that find a way hence and thence down the hillside and set the palms clattering; my enjoyment only disturbed by clouds of dull, voracious, spotted and not particularly welcomed mosquitoes. When I was still I kept buhac powder burning by me on a stone under the shed, and read Livy, and compared today and two thousand years ago, and wondered in which of these epochs I was flourishing that moment; and then I would stroll out and see the rocks and the woods, and the arcs of beaches, curved like a whorl in a fair woman's ear, and huge ancient trees jutting high overhead out of the hanging forest, great as mountains, and feel the place at least belonged to the age of fable, and awaited Aeneas and his battered fleets.

(64)

While Stevenson makes the comparison to seek parallels between Europe and the South Seas, Herrick sees the Pacific through the language of Virgil not only to assume his cultural superiority to his companions but to unconsciously link that personal superiority to European cultural supremacy over the Pacific. For Europeans, Virgil's *Aeneid* is partly a discourse of imperialism. It presents a legendary account of the territorial expansion of the Roman Empire under Augustus, the spirit of the Latin civilisation, the prophecy of Christianity, and a set of values on which the modern Western world is based and built.

Despite Herrick's assumption of cultural superiority, the difference in class and education between him and his companions seems insignificant in view of the

common calamity shared by the three. What matters to them is the non-heroic present rather than the imperial past, and the Pacific provides a more relevant and realistic milieu than Europe. In this oriental setting, they are all reduced to destitute conditions 'as the three most miserable English-speaking creatures in Tahiti' (2), far away from civilisation and material comfort, and with ruined prison cells as their night shelter which they call their home. The three 'crept together into one wet mass, and lay until day came, shivering and dozing off, and continually reawakened to wretchedness by the coughing of the clerk' (12). Hunger conquers all sense of shame. Davis, once a dignified sea captain, disgraces himself by performing songs and dances for a crew of Polynesian sailors in exchange for some breakfast:

The captain stopped suddenly, appeared to perceive his audience in his private hour of pleasure.

'Hello!' said he.

The Kanakas clapped hands and called upon him to go on.

'No, *sir!*' said the captain. 'No eat, no dance. Savvy?'

'Poor old man!' returned one of the crew. 'Him no eat?'

'Lord, no!' said the captain. 'Like-um too much eat. No got.'

'All right. Me got,' said the sailor; 'you tome here. Plenty toffee, plenty fei. Nutha man him tome too.'

(14)

The adoption of alias betrays their inability ever to regain their self-respect. Once at sea all the three men assume false identities: Davis becomes 'Captain Brown'; Herrick is called 'Hay' and Huish changes to 'Tomkins' or shares the same alias as Herrick. In Huish's words, 'Everybody has a false nyme in the Pacific' (20). The use of alias also helps free them from responsibility for their actions, much like Dr Jekyll who does not wish to be answerable for his own deeds committed in the name and body of Mr Hyde.

Devoid of any serious purpose in life, their existence becomes a meaningless burden to themselves. The episode of 'night on the beach' at the beginning of the story in particular raises an existentialist question which reveals how close Stevenson's story comes to the absurdist drama represented by Samuel Beckett over half a century later. The exchange of dialogue between the three men about the storytelling is everything that Vladimir and Estragon would have said in *Waiting for Godot*. The dialogue is initiated by Huish suffering from a bad cough:

'I think one of you other parties might wake up. Tell a fellow something.'
'The trouble is we've nothing to tell, my son,' returned the captain.
'I'll tell you, if you like, what I was thinking,' said Herrick.
'Tell us anything,' said the clerk, 'I only want to be reminded that I ain't dead.'
Herrick took up his parable, lying on his face and speaking slowly and scarce above his breath, not like a man who has anything to say, but like one talking against time.

(7)

Herrick's imaginary return trip to Europe is carried on by Huish and Davis. Like the farcical interruptions of dialogue in *Godot*, Huish and Davis's fanciful accounts are cut short either by a fresh attack of coughing or by a sudden remembrance of the lost daughter. For Herrick, as much as for Estragon, the idea of committing suicide occurs at least three times in the story. The first occasion occurs when he is under Davis's pressure to steal the plagued schooner *Farallone*. He would rather die than join in this criminal act. This might seem to be a commendable moral choice, but as we learn from Herrick himself, he thinks of suicide more as a way of escape from his wretched condition: 'You forget, captain,' says the young man. 'There is another way! I can die; and to say truth, I think I should have died three years ago' (28). He urges Davis to do the same:

The light of a strange excitement came in Herrick's face. 'Both of us,' said he, 'both of us together. It's not possible you can enjoy this business. Come,' and he reached out a timid hand, 'a few stokes in the lagoon --- and rest!'

(28)

His second attempt at throwing himself overboard happens when he is faced with a choice between the temptation of champagne, which he knows Huish has stolen from the cargo of the *Farallone*, and his sense of moral justice. Towards the end of the story he actually reaches that 'open door of suicide'. Seeing that a violent confrontation with Attwater is imminent, he slides into the starry water and persuades himself not to swim for life. He is instantly aware of an invincible opposition in his limbs clinging to life with a single and fixed resolve. His weakness is such that his suicide will never be more than a mere attempt.

Just as parasitism is a controlling image in *Falesá*, the image of disease runs through this story. First it is an influenza brought by ship from Peru to rage uncontrollably. The natives suffer. 'The sick natives, with the islander's impatience

of a touch of fever, had crawled from their houses to be cool, and squatting on the shore or on the beached canoes, painfully expected the new day' (6). What renders the three beachcombers sleepless at night are sounds of coughing: 'Even as the crowing of cocks goes about the country in the night from farm to farm, accesses of coughing arose, and spread, and died in the distance, and sprang up again' (6). Then, in the second part of the story, we learn that a plague has reduced Attwater's once vibrant colony of thirty-three inhabitants to an almost abandoned island of four souls. 'Twenty-nine deaths and thirty-one cases, out of thirty-three souls upon the island,' Attwater tells his intruders, 'That is why the house is empty and the graveyard full' (78). The irony is that the white imported diseases turn to re-infect those from whom they originated. Of all the sufferers, the most pitiable is the Cockney clerk Huish. 'The disease shook him to the vitals; and his companions watched his endurance with surprise' (6). The former captain and mate of the schooner *Farallone* chanced to land upon an island infected with smallpox. Unaware of the sounds of lamentation, 'they rollicked along unconcerned, embraced the girls who had scarce energy to repel them' (54). It was too late when they discovered the truth. They fled to their boat only to die a week later.¹

The existential and physical degradation of the beachcombers culminates in their tendency to commit crime. Davis learns that the colonial authorities are eager to rid the bay of the *Farallone* whose captain and mate have died of smallpox. He gets permission to complete the voyage, but instead of sailing the ship to its original destination Australia, he plans a course for Peru to illegally sell the ship with its cargo of California champagne. Huish's discovery that the bulk of the cargo contains plain water instead of champagne indicates that the ship's owners have sent the *Farallone* to be lost at sea in order to cheat the insurance company. This discovery provokes in Davis and Huish a new scheme of sailing the ship to Samoa, getting extradited to San Francisco, and once there blackmailing the owners. Hungry and exhausted, they cannot reach their planned destination. When the schooner hits upon an uncharted atoll --- a privately owned pearling island, thoughts of piracy finally

¹ Stevenson's concern about the spread of disease by Europeans is found in *In the South Seas*. There he attributes the depopulation of the Marquesas and the Eight Islands of Hawaii to three factors: apart from the 'decay of pleasure' and the 'change of habit' brought about by the missionaries, the

lead to their own ruin at the hands of Attwater, a missionary figure just as scheming and ruthless as themselves.

The loss of the heroic nature of white men's adventure in the Pacific is therefore demonstrated in several types of characters who are presented both directly and indirectly in the story: beachcombers, thieves, insurance frauds, blackmailers and would-be murderers. Stevenson refers to the characters who make up the trio in the first half of the story as 'three rogues', commenting that they are 'three types of the bad man, the weak man, and the strong man with a weakness, that are gone through and lived out' (*Letters*, VIII, 160). Davis is a villain of melodramatic type. Apart from his initiative role in the conspiracy of blackmail and piracy, he represents the dominating racial attitude of white men towards the natives. A typical example is his speech to the Kanaka crew as soon as he takes command of the schooner *Farallone*, in which he draws a clear racial line between the subjugating white men (reverting again to alias) and the submissive brown men:

'Now,' he said, twisting his cigar in his mouth and toying with the spokes of the wheel, 'I'm Captain Brown. I command this ship. This is Mr Hay, first officer. The other white man is cabin steward, but he'll stand watch and do his trick. My orders shall be obeyed smartly. You savvy, "smartly?" There shall be no growling about the kaikai, which will be above allowance. You'll put a handle to the mate's name, and tack on "sir" to every order I give you. If you're smart and quick, I'll make this ship comfortable for all hands.' He took the cigar out of his mouth. 'If you're not,' he added, in a roaring voice, 'I'll make it a floating hell.'

(*Tusitala*, XIV, 35)

Davis's contemptuous attitude towards the Kanaka crew is contextualised in Uncle Ned's 'simple and hard story of exile, suffering, and injustice among cruel whites' (48) which he tells Herrick during their long nocturnal conversations.

The most villainous of the three is Huish, 'a bad man' in Stevenson's words. Huish remains passive in the first half of the story, but his evil nature gains momentum and goes beyond control as the action moves on. His defining moment occurs towards the end of the story as he is ready to confront Attwater with vitriol. Ironically the embodiment of evil in Huish is perceived through Davis who initially sets the idea of piracy in motion:

'introduction of new maladies and vices' partly explains the decrease in population (*Tusitala*, XX, 33).

The captain looked at him. Huish sat there, preening his sinister vanity, glorying in his precedency in evil; and the villainous courage and readiness of the creature shone out of him like a candle from a lantern. Dismay and a kind of respect seized hold on Davis in his own despite. Until that moment, he had seen the clerk always hanging back, always listless, uninterested, and openly grumbling at a word of anything to do; and now, by the touch of an enchanter's wand, he beheld him sitting girt and resolved, and his face radiant. He had raised the devil, he thought; and asked who was to control him?

(126)

Side by side with the villainous whites are the Polynesian natives who make up most of the crew. Their interaction with each other on board the schooner forms a sharp racial contrast -- a theme within the overall fictional scheme of the mixed fortunes of the white men.

In his introduction to the 1994 edition of *The Ebb-Tide*, David Daiches has an illuminating comment on the racial encounter in the novel:

The Kanakas are everywhere in the background. Attwater dominates and uses them. Davis and Huish take them for granted as a convenient workforce and part of the scenery. Herrick alone has the occasional awareness of their human reality. *The Ebb-Tide* is a story about the white man in the tropics, and it is grim if not, as Stevenson asserted, in its portrayal of character, at least in its assessment of the moral reality of that encounter.¹

While presenting the three beachcombers in their moral crisis, Stevenson praises the Polynesian natives for their hospitality and innocence. In the early part of the story when Davis offers to dance for a Kanaka crew in exchange for breakfast, the Kanakas reacted with sympathy and generosity:

They were welcomed on board with the shaking of hands; place was made for them about the basin; a sticky demijohn of molasses was added to the feast in honour of company...With the unsightly greed of hounds they glutted themselves with the hot food and coffee; and even the clerk revived and the colour deepened in his eyes. The kettle was drained, the basin cleaned; their entertainers, who had waited on their wants throughout with the pleased hospitality of Polynesians, made haste to bring forward a dessert of island Tobacco and rolls of pandanus leaf to serve as paper.

(14-15)

¹ R.L.Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and Quartette*, p.xxvii.

To such friendly treatment, both Davis and Herrick respond with gratitude. 'You're a credit to the South Pacific' (15) is Davis's tribute to the Kanaka crew. He then takes the accordion and strikes into 'Auld Lang Syne'. Herrick makes an even more passionate utterance by identifying himself with his native entertainers: 'I wish to God I was a Kanaka!' (15). Later in the story we know that Davis's sense of racial superiority is only temporarily overcome by his basic need for food. His racism is to surface again once he resumes his self-appointed role as the captain for the *Farallone*. Herrick, on the hand, shows real improvement in his moral stature in respect of racial relations. Their contrast is established in their attitudes toward Uncle Ned, a member of the *Farallone*'s original crew who is black. Davis treats him with contempt, and freely strips him of his identity. Herrick, in contrast, makes real human contact with Uncle Ned who in turn is able to restore his own identity before him:

"He tell you thue," said Uncle Ned. "You sleep. Evely man hea he do all light. Evely man he like you too much."

Herrick struggled, and gave way; choked upon some trivial words of gratitude; and walked to the side of the house, against which he leaned, struggling with emotion.

Uncle Ned presently followed him and begged him to lie down.

"It's no use, Uncle Ned," he replied. "I wouldn't sleep. I'm knocked over with all your goodness."

"Ah, no call me Uncle Ned no mo!" cried the old man. "No my name! My name Taveeta, all-e-same Taveeta King of Israel..."

(49)

When Davis, Herrick and Huish are being treated with hospitality by the Kanaka crew, the arrival of the crew's Captain Tom, also a white man, casts that budding interracial exchange into a shadow. In a symbolic gesture of breaking up friendship, he rudely interrupts Davis's thankful tune of 'Auld Lang Syne' and then drives his fellow white men away. Davis's parting speech to the kanakas is ironic in view of his own subsequent racist behaviour. 'Goodbye, you fellows!' he said, 'you're gentlemen, anyway! The worst nigger among you would look better upon a quarter-deck than that filthy Scotchman' (17).

Comparison and contrast in the story between whites and natives are too carefully wrought to fall outside the category of authorial intention. Comparison and contrast can be done by an omniscient third-person narrator like the examples cited above, or

by a less vicious character such as Herrick, whose limited moral development is achieved upon his realisation of the moral degeneracy of his fellow men in contrast with the virtues of the natives. On one of such occasions, Herrick became deeply moved as he witnessed the piety of the natives in their religious worship which has originally introduced to them by white missionaries:

They were kindly, cheery, childish souls. Upon the Sunday each brought forth his separate Bible --- for they were all men of alien speech even to each other, and Sally Day Communicated with his mates in English only, each read or made believe to read his chapter, Uncle Ned with spectacles on his nose; and they would all join together in the singing of missionary hymns. It was thus a cutting reproof to compare the islanders and the whites aboard the *Farallone*. Shame ran in Herrick's blood to remember what employment he was on, and to see these poor souls -- and even Sally Day, the child of cannibals, in all likelihood a cannibal himself -- so faithful to what they know of good.

(48-49)

It would be wrong, however, to oversimplify Stevenson's characterisations of white people in the tropics. For even as he was moving away from his earlier notions of romance towards something more contemporary and more realistic, he was not entirely abandoning his earlier vein: moral ambivalence and ambiguity, for example, have always been at the centre of his work. So it is with his South Seas fiction. Robert Herrick is obviously a study in moral complexity as well as weakness. Throughout the story he alternates between the good that is still left within his nature, and the evil that comes from Davis and Huish; between admiration for Attwater and his loyalty to his companions; between his pity for Attwater's vulnerability and his fear for the lives of his friends. Because of him the victory based on three persons against one never occurs.

Captain Davis, despite his irresponsible drunkenness and criminal behaviour, is not without moments of tenderness and remorse. It is he who gives Herrick courage that the latter badly wants in distress. 'This thing's got to come to an end,' he comforts Herrick. 'You don't fancy I'm going to skip and leave you rotting on the bench perhaps? I'm not that sort, old man' (17). Between him and Herrick we find true feelings of sympathy, repentance and forgiveness. Herrick considers Davis as 'the endearing blend of his faults and virtues', and is even moved by Davis's 'sudden shining forth of a tenderness that lay too deep for tears' (93-4). Davis's love of his

children is reaffirmed at the end of the story when he makes prayer for death: 'My Lord, for Christ's sake, look after my two kids.' It is this feeling of tenderness and love that saves him from the bullet of an otherwise ruthless Attwater.

Even the degraded Cockney clerk Huish, the most despicable of the three, is not without a certain degree of virtue – in Herrick's opinion at least. As he tells Attwater, 'I do not like Huish. And yet ... he has his merits too' (91). In fact, the difficulty in Herrick's choice between his companions and Attwater arises partly from his own moral sense, partly from the moral ambivalence in others.

This moral ambivalence is richly explored in the characterisation of Attwater. Equally ruthless as Huish but stronger, more intelligent and more determined than the three, Attwater appears to be a force which brings about the destruction of the outright evil embodied in Huish. However, Attwater's eventual triumph is ironic in the way that it does not represent an exultation of the good. Part of Stevenson's mastery of fictional art is the ambivalence of characterisation. That is, the opponent of the evil does not necessarily stand for its moral opposite. Wiltshire in *Falesá*, for example, is such a character. The difference between him and Attwater is that the latter is better educated, more sophisticated but also more repugnant. Stevenson's letter to Henry James in June 1893 reveals the authorial intention to treat Attwater as not totally different from the three beachcombers, hence the grimness of the story and the negative picture of all the four white characters. "My dear man", he writes to his literary friend, "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" (*Letters*, VIII, 107).

In physical features and manners of speech, Attwater is partially based on a university technician called A. G. Dew-Smith, whom Stevenson met during his visit to Sidney Colvin at Cambridge. Colvin records this association in this way:

He [Dew-Smith] was tall, with finely cut features, black silky hair and neatly pointed beard, and withal a peculiarly soft and silken, deliberate manner of speech. Considerable were our surprise and amusement when some dozen years later we found his outward looks and bearing, and particularly his characteristic turns of speech, with something of dangerous power which his presence suggested

as lying behind so much polished blandness, evoked and idealised by Stevenson in his creation of the personage of Attwater in that grimmest of island stories, *The Ebb-Tide*. In telling anything of special interest that had happened to himself, Dew-Smith had a trick of avoiding the first person singular, and instead of saying "I did" or "I felt" so and so would say abstractly in the third, "one did" or "one felt." ... It is this aspect of Dew-Smith's character which no doubt suggested, although it did not really much resemble, the ruthless task-master, the man of stern Calvinistic doctrine and iron fatalism, who is the other half of Stevenson's Attwater.¹

The connection may consequently explain Attwater's having been educated at Cambridge. As a man well adapted to the South Seas, however, Attwater may have been modelled upon Dorence Atwater (1845-1918), American consul at Tahiti (1871-1897) which is the setting for the first part of Stevenson's story. Henry Adams (1838-1918), the American historian who visited the Stevensons in Samoa in 1890, writes of an acquaintance called Atwater: "...he was formerly our consul at Tahiti; a Yankee who married into the chief native family, and, through his wife got large interest in cocoa-nut plantations and pearl islands...Mr. Atwater has perhaps been long enough in the South Seas to reach the universal lava-foundation of commonplace.... He wanders between San Francisco to Sydney, and back again, as though the ocean were a French play".²

Stevenson must have known Dorence Atwater personally through his connection with the chief native family that the latter married into. Atwater's brother-in-law was Prince Tati Salmon (1848-1918) who, as it has been noted before, was a recognised authority on Tahitian legends and who helped Stevenson with his ballad 'The Song of Rahéro' and his translation of traditional Tahitian songs into English. As Henry Adams observes, 'Atwater was very friendly and promised to prepare the way for us at Tahiti, especially with his brother-in-law, Tati Salmon, the head of the greatest native family on the island, to whom Stevenson had already given us a letter'.³ While Stevenson's fictional character differs from the real life personage by opposing strongly the idea of marriage, the two of them do share a common interest in pearl-fishing. Adams writes again in his letter about the former American consul,

¹ Sidney Colvin, *Memories & Notes*, pp. 126-27.

² J. C. Levenson and others, ed., *Letters of Henry Adams* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), Vol. III:1886-1892, pp. 374-75.

³ *ibid.*, p. 375.

He [Atwater] told us much about his pearl-fishing, which seems to have amused him most, but he says that in New York or Paris he can buy pearls cheaper than he can fish them, and in infinitely larger quantities and of better quality. He says that he can buy pearls at San Francisco and sell them at a profit in Tahiti, and that the pearl industry is but an adjunct to that of mother-of-pearl; a sort of accidental margin for the business.¹

In spite of these physical resemblances to the Cambridge technician and the American consul in Tahiti, the moral aspect of the character in Stevenson's fiction illustrates the author's deep concern about the corruption and contradictions of the late nineteenth-century imperialism. Attwater combines in himself a number of roles that the three beachcombers are not. Despite his lack of institutional authorisation, he is a personal empire-builder as well as a trader and a missionary. The uncharted island which he discovered by accident ten years ago has become his personal colony, in a way similar to the early European colonisation of the Pacific Islands following the explorations of the region by European adventurers from Ferdinand Magellan to Captain James Cook. The association of Attwater's private colony with the British Empire is symbolised in the red ensign of England displayed from a flagstaff at the pierhead of his island. The colony, in which Herrick finds 'a strong impression', is in effect an imperial outpost on the decline though still in operation. The place is full of contradictory implications: a sense of desertion against a dream-like, beautiful scenery; a strong, dominating imperial figure amid ruins of an empire. When he first sees the island, Herrick is impressed with the surrealistic quality and frailty of its existence in spite of its enchanting beauty:

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.....He tortured himself to find analogies. The isle was like the rim of a great vessel sunken in the waters; it was like the embankment of an annular railway gown upon with wood: so slender it seemed amidst the outrageous breakers, so frail and pretty, he would scarce have wondered to see it sink and disappear without a sound, and the waves close smoothly over its descent.

(71-2)

¹ *ibid.*

A closer look reveals to Herrick 'a sense of desertion that was almost poignant, no human figure was to be observed going to and fro about the houses, and there was no sound of human industry or enjoyment' (74). The store-houses are filled with junk from wrecked ships – 'two wrecks at the least must have contributed to this random heap of lumber' (86). The once heroic imperial adventurers and sailors are now but a shadowy past, just as unreal as the isle itself. It seems to Herrick 'as if the two ships' companies were there on guard, and he heard the tread of feet and whisperings, and saw with tail of his eye the commonplace ghosts of sailor men' (86).

In some way the desolation of Attwater's island colony resembles what Marlow would discover in the colonised regions of the Congo River in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in which there are traces of colonisation begun and discarded: 'I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass, then found a path leading up the hill. It turned aside for the boulders, and also for an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off. The thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal. I came upon more pieces of decaying machinery, a stack of rusty rails....'¹ While the ruins of an empire are symbolised in the rusty railway in Conrad's story, Stevenson finds a useful image in the junk of wrecked ships. Attwater himself is able to see the parable which Herrick cannot, or which he can but does not wish to see:

'Junk,' it [Attwater's voice] said, 'only old junk! And does Mr Hay find a parable?'

'I find at least a strong impression,' replied Herrick, turning quickly, lest he might be able to catch, on the face of the speaker, some commentary on the words.

Attwater stood in the doorway, which he almost wholly filled; his hands stretched above his head and grasping the architrave. He smiled when their eyes met, but the expression was inscrutable.

'Yes, a powerful impression. You are like me; nothing so affecting as ships!' said he. 'The ruins of an empire would leave me frigid, when a bit of an old rail that an old shellback leaned on in the middle watch, would bring me up all standing....'

(86)

¹ Conrad, p. 16.

The loss of imperial adventure is also signified in the figure-head of a naval ship which is now forever stranded on the beach:

On the top of the beach and hard by the flagstaff, a woman of exorbitant stature and as white as snow was to be seen beckoning with uplifted arm. The second glance identified her as a piece of naval sculpture, the figure-head of a ship that had long hovered and plunged into so many running billows, and was now brought ashore to be the ensign and presiding genius of that empty town.

(74)

The most fitting example of the decline of imperial enterprise is of course the depopulation of Attwater's colony as a result of disease – 'twenty-nine deaths and thirty-one cases, out of thirty-three souls upon the island' (78), as Attwater tells his intruders.

While Marlow finds total corruption of imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*, Attwater's island colony still has 'the indescribable but unmistakable appearance of being in commission' (74). Visionary, cryptic and sinister, Attwater is a precursor for Conrad's more famous character Kurtz as a figure embodying late nineteenth-century European notions of racial supremacy, the imperialist will to conquer as well as the contradictions of the conqueror himself. He possesses many personal qualities of a successful European coloniser in the tropics: a vigorous physical body with an iron will, a rigid pursuit of his own interests which is uncompromised by his equally rigid religious zeal. He is described as 'a huge fellow, six feet four in height, and of a build proportionately strong, but his sinews seemed to be dissolved in a listlessness that was more than languor' (76); his eyes are 'of an unusual mingled brilliancy and softness', and 'of unimpaired health and virility' (76). Educated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Attwater can behave like a perfect gentleman who 'took off his hat and bowed' and the blood burned in Herrick's face' (92); he is also a dead shot who never misses unless he means to and knows that 'to miss nicely is the art' (94). As a trader, he is more like Case than Wiltshire in respect of adaptability to the native way of life: apart from his knowledge of the native language, his complexion, naturally dark, 'had been tanned in the island to a hue hardly distinguishable from that of a Tahitian' (76). Unlike the other two traders, however, Attwater is never likely to be assimilated through interracial marriage, for in his own words, 'I dislike men, and

hate women' (90); 'I do not take at all the romantic view of marriage,' and 'a man never knows when he may be inclined to be a fool about women' (95).

What characterises Attwater as an imperialist is his total domination of the native population. In his small island colony, as his story about the death of 'Obsequiousness' and 'Sullens' reveals, he is the absolute but arbitrary ruler: 'Now the regulations of the place are formal upon one point: we allow no explanations; none are received, none allowed to be offered' (104). In this aspect Attwater is a monster -- a diabolical figure with 'iron cruelty, an iron insensibility to the suffering of others, the uncompromising pursuit of his own interests, cold culture, manners without humanity' (88). The contradictions in Attwater both attracts and repels Herrick. Despite his identification with Attwater for being a university man, Herrick regards his handling of the case (which Attwater thinks would have puzzled Solomon) 'a cold-hearted, bloody-minded murder' and Attwater himself a 'murderer and hypocrite' (105).

Emphasising his ability as a marksman, Attwater compares himself to 'an old king one knew in the western islands, who used to empty a Winchester all round a man, and stir his hair or nick a rag out his clothes with every ball except the last; and that went plump between the eyes' (94-5). The comparison, featuring absolute and arbitrary power, is drawn from Stevenson's experience with Tembinok, the King of Apemama in the Gilbert Islands, under whose protection the Stevensons lived for about six weeks in 1889.¹ Although Stevenson is in no way in favour of the king's iron rule, he admires the 'orderly, sober, and innocent' life that 'flows in the isle from day to day as in a model plantation under a model planter' (*Tusitala*, XX, 308), where 'the slaves are certainly not overworked – children of ten do more without fatigue – and the Apemama labourers have holidays, when the singing begins early in the afternoon' (307). Perhaps Stevenson wants to show that when the absolute power wielded by the native king is transferred to a European man in the imperialist context, the result could be worse.

¹ In Part IV of *In the South Seas*, Stevenson wrote 'I am told the king is a crack shot; that when he aims to kill, the grave may be got ready; and when he aims to miss, misses by so near a margin that the culprit tastes six times the bitterness of death' (*Tusitala*, XX, 301).

CHAPTER V

Faith, Religion and Mission

Being what we are, the descendants at least of savages, the creatures of our fathers, the inheritors of every nerve and feature, the true wisdom for mankind must be ever to explain and to subsume in wider knowledge, not to deny, the faith and experience of predecessors.

----- R. L. Stevenson, 'Introduction' to
Lay Morals and Other Ethical Papers

1

The Ambivalence of the Missionary Endeavour

Attwater in *The Ebb-Tide* is more than a relentless, imperialist ruler. In fact, he appears in three capacities at the same time so that trade, empire-building and the Christian mission are brought into a unified whole. In Attwater's view, missionary work should be a profitable business rather than merely sharing God's grace with the native people. What the native people really need is not clothes but 'a judge in Israel, the bearer of the sword and scourge'. In a word, religion itself has more to do with savagery than civilisation. The exchange of dialogue between him and Herrick illustrates this point:

'What brought you here to the South Seas?' he [Herrick] asked.

'Many things,' said Attwater. 'Youth, curiosity, romance, the love of the sea, and (it will surprise you to hear) an interest in missions. That has a good deal declined, which will surprise you less. They go the wrong way to work; they are too parsonish, too much of the old wife, and even the old apple-wife. *Clothes, clothes*, are their idea; but clothes are not Christianity, any more than they are the

sun in heaven, or could take the place of it!¹ They think a parsonage with roses, and church bells, and nice old women bobbing in the lanes, are part and parcel of religion. But religion is a savage thing, like the universe it illuminates; savage, cold, and bare, but infinitely strong.'

'And you found this island by an accident?' said Herrick.

'As you did!' said Attwater. 'And since then I have 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 avoirdupois; 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!'

(*Tusitala*, XIV, 89)

Like the native king in Apemama, Attwater always goes armed with a Winchester rifle with which he has actually crushed a mutiny on the island and he calls the mutiny, in a typical way of combining empire-building with the Christian mission, 'one of my incidents of missionary life' (97).

To a certain extent, the fictional representation of Attwater's role as trader, law-giver and missionary exemplifies the material significance of the missionary endeavour in the Pacific both before and during the time when Stevenson wrote the story. Historically, the commercial activities of the missionaries were thought to be motivated by three factors which were ironically at odds with each other: out of necessity, as part of the civilising mission, and for profit-making. In the Pacific, both the directors of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the missionaries themselves believed in the necessity for commerce to support the missionary work:

The missionaries were sent out at first with the confident expectation that they would be able to live, as the natives did, on the bountiful natural products of Tahiti. The directors believed that as soon as christianity obtained a footing native industries would spring up, superintended by the missionaries, which would soon enrich the community. Then, as now, there was a party at home somewhat impatient for the time when the native Churches would be self-supporting. But the

¹ Attwater's criticism of the wrong approach to missionary work echoes Stevenson's own view: 'The mind of the female missionary tends, for instance, to be continually busied about dress. She can be taught with extreme difficulty to think any costume decent but that to which she grew accustomed on Clapham common; and to gratify this prejudice, the native is put to useless expense, his mind is tainted with the norbidities of Europe, and his health is set in danger' (*Tusitala*, XX, 73-4). Stevenson also commented that 'the celibate missionary, on the other hand, and whether at best or worst, falls readily into native ways of life'. Attwater's opposition to marriage and his resemblance to the native in skin colour and language must be considered in this light.

missionaries found they could not live properly on native produce alone. Nor could they induce the natives to work steadily and industriously at any task. Repeated attempts were made, but they were not marked by anything like the success anticipated at home. And the mental wear and tear involved in all these experiences was no small hindrance to the distinctively religious work.’¹

The material interest of the missionaries was also interpreted in a broader, cross-cultural context with implications of the European civilisation being superior to the backwardness of other cultures. In the opening chapter of *The Foreign Missionary*, Arthur Brown associates the missionaries’ commercial activities with opening new markets and extending trade, and in so doing the missionaries export their European civilisation to the native culture. ‘The missionary is the representative of a higher civilisation’, according to Brown, and ‘one of the most effective agents of modern commerce’. This is ‘not because he intended to be, not because he reaped any personal profit from the goods that he introduced, but because of the inevitable tendencies that were set in motion by the residence of an enlightened family among unenlightened people’.²

Attwater the missionary shares in the superiority of the European civilisation, but Attwater the trader certainly regards personal profit as his ultimate goal which runs counter to the civilising motive of the missionary endeavour that Arthur Brown emphasises. Attwater achieves his goal by acquiring an undeclared island as his own and by throwing the natives into slave labour. This illustrates a negative aspect of what was known as the ‘missionary element’ in the Pacific which was recorded by Stevenson’s friend Arthur Johnstone. As Johnstone observes, the term ‘missionary’ has two local interpretations – one of good, and one of evil import:

The term *missionary* in the good sense is applied to those persons actually engaged in mission work, and who attend strictly to the advancement of that good work. The epithet in its evil sense is interpreted to include all the evil done, or alleged to have been done, in the past, by the first missionaries arriving in the Pacific, or by any or all of their descendants since. This last interpretation includes a long array of charges, which, for the present, may be made clearer under the following heads: (1) Missionaries who have used their opportunities for the purpose of accumulating lands and chattels either for themselves or for the mission board or organisation whereunder they serve. (2) Missionaries who have

¹ Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society* (London: Henry Frowde, 1899), p. 295.

² Arthur Judson Brown, *The Foreign Missionary: an Incarnation of a World Movement* (London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), p. 22-3.

used their prerogatives as preachers and teachers to interfere in the civil government of the Island groups, or who have used their personal influence with the natives in order to shape and determine local politics, or to build up local commercial agencies to handle industries in which they are interested.¹

In Tahiti, which was regarded by the LMS as ‘the most promising part of “the heathen world” for a mission’² and where Stevenson’s story is set, it was not uncommon during the first half of the nineteenth century that missionaries consolidated their position as law-givers and traders, and that auxiliary societies of the LMS were established on many of the converted islands which paid tribute, in the form of oil, hogs and the proceeds of trading, to the Society in London.³ A similar concern was addressed by Stevenson who, in his well-known open letter of 1890 to Reverend Dr. Hyde in defence of Father Damien, states that ‘in the course of their [missionaries] evangelical calling, they --- or too many of them --- grew rich. It may be news to you, that when I returned your civil visit, the driver of my cab commented on the size, the taste, and the comfort of your home’ (*Tusitala*, XXI, 29).

By depicting Attwater as an exploitative trader and ruthless tyrant, Stevenson wanted to show that missionaries in the South Seas in the era of imperialism were not simply representatives of a personal, religious faith. Their presence and practices were hinged upon broader economic, political and institutional forces. However, while expressing his strong disapproval of missionaries’ involvement in profit-making and empire-building, Stevenson did not want to attack the missionary work itself due to his personal respect for Christianity (though sometimes with a mixed response which we shall discuss later), just as he equally respected the religious faith of the Pacific islanders. The Christian mission, once freed from material interest and tyranny, was actually seen in a positive light. This is evidenced in the concluding part of *The Ebb-Tide* when Attwater’s power of gun gives way to his power of mission. The ending of the ‘cruel game’ is prompted by Davis when he, at the point of death and also for the first time since the story unfolds, attempts to make peace with God, a gesture which awakens in Attwater a call of his missionary duty. Their

¹ Johnstone, pp, 253-54.

² Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 98.

³ *ibid.*, p. 100.

exchange of dialogue acquires a Christian moral tone with Attwater drawing directly from the language of the Bible:

‘My God, for Christ’s sake, look after my two kids,’ he said; and then, after a pause and a falter, ‘for Christ’s sake, Amen.’

And he opened his eyes and looked down the rifle with a quivering mouth.

‘But don’t keep fooling me long!’ he pleaded.

‘That’s all your prayer?’ asked Attwater, with a singular ring in his voice.

‘Guess so,’ said Davis.

‘So?’ said Attwater, resting the butt of his rifle on the ground, ‘is that done? Is your peace made with Heaven? Because it is with me. Go, and sin no more,¹ sinful father. And remember that whatever you do to others, God shall visit it again a thousandfold upon your innocents.’

(*Tusitala*, XIV, 136-37)

As a result Attwater not only spares Davis’s life but saves his soul: ‘O! what must I do to be saved?’ Davis exclaims ‘like a child among the nightmares of fever’, to which Attwater responds by thinking that ‘here is the true penitent’ (137). In the tail-piece -- two weeks after the climactic event, Davis is again seen praying on the beach with total devotion, so meditative and pious as to be unaware of the things and people around him. The power of mission has converted him completely: with Huish dead, the *Farallone* burnt, the crew dismissed and Attwater forgiving, everything turns out in his favour. He could return safely to his wife and children without being traced for his criminal conduct. Yet he chooses to stay on the island simply because he has found something to believe in. ‘I’d most rather stay here upon the island,’ he tells Herrick. ‘I found peace here, peace in believing. Yes, I guess this island is about good enough for John Davis’ (140). He persuades Herrick to do the same:

O! why not be one of us? why not come to Jesus right away, and let’s meet in yon beautiful land? That’s just the one thing wanted; just say, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief! And He’ll fold you in His arms. You see, I know! I been a sinner myself!

(140)

By regarding himself as ‘sinner’, Davis is just repenting his criminal behaviour in Christian terms. So Attwater prevails: not only by might but also by his mission. It is for this reason that he is regarded by some critics as representing Stevenson’s

¹ From Christ’s injunction to the woman taken in adultery, whom he has refused to condemn; see John 8: 11.

missionary hero rather than simply a despot.¹ However, Stevenson's intention for Attwater to be not much different from the other three is obvious, as he makes it clear in his letter to Charles Baxter: '... the three main characters – and there are only four – are barrats, insurance frauds, thieves and would-be murderers; so the company's good' (*Letters*, viii, 29). In the same letter, Stevenson also reveals that in its old form *The Ebb-Tide* might have had an ending not necessarily with religious connotations: 'This may make a difference. There is a peculiarity about this tale in its new form: it ends with a conversion!.... 'Tis a most – what's the expression – unconventional work' (*Letters*, viii, 29).

If, by the word 'unconventional' in this context, Stevenson simply means the crude reality of colonial adventure with Christian moral overtones, much of his South Seas fiction can be regarded as original in its diverse treatment of the missionary element which was such an important part of the South Seas life in the nineteenth century.

Like *The Ebb-Tide*, 'The Isle of Voices' is brought to a conclusion by the triumph of the Christian mission: Keola and Lehua take counsel with a white missionary by giving much of their ill-gotten money to the lepers and the missionary fund, therefore to keep their enemy father at bay, since 'no doubt the advice must have been good, for from that day to this, Kalamake has never more been heard of' (*Tusitala*, XIII, 133). There is no missionary figure in 'The Bottle Imp', yet everything suggests that Keawe the protagonist is a product of the missionary education, and throughout the story he is dominated by a strong sense of evil and hell.

Not all the missionaries' beliefs went unchallenged by the Polynesian religious faith in Stevenson's South Seas fiction. His fable 'Something in It' is an attempt to explore an ambivalence of faith when the European religion and the Polynesian pantheism come into contact and conflict with each other. The missionary in the fable denies the existence of ancient Polynesian gods and believes only in his own 'stories' and 'taboos'. 'There is nothing in it', as he keeps saying, and 'who's afraid? My stories are the true ones'. While deliberately challenging the native saying by bathing in the tabooed bay, he is snatched away by those very gods and nearly becomes the prey of Akaānga and Miru, spirits of the underworld who stupefy the

¹ Hillier, p. 133.

souls of the dead with kava¹ before cooking and eating them. Ironically, among those captured was a convert of his own who embarrassingly questioned the missionary's moral teachings: 'Aha,' said the convert, 'so you are here like your neighbours? And how about all your stories?' The conclusion is simple and yet rich in interpretations: the missionary is forced to acknowledge the existence of native gods by admitting that 'there is something in it after all', but what saves him is his dogged loyalty to his own moral belief in teetotalism. The contrast in his attitude towards the native taboo and that of his own illustrates the cultural imperialism of whites represented by the missionary:

'What!' cried the convert. 'Are you going to respect a taboo at a time like this? And you were always so opposed to taboos when you were alive!'
'To other people's,' said the missionary. 'Never to my own.'
'But yours have all proved wrong,' said the convert.
'It looks like it,' said the missionary, and I can't help that. No reason why I should break my word.'²

(*Tusitala*, V, 99)

The concluding poem 'Moral' indicates that the missionary has learned nothing from his experience and that the narrow moral foundation on which he stands remains unshakeable:

The sticks break, the stones crumble,
The eternal altars tilt and tumble,
Sanctions and tales dislimn like mist
About the amazed evangelist.
He stands unshook from age to youth
Upon one pin-point of the truth.

(100)

¹ *Kava*: a beverage in the South Seas islands which was made from the root of the pepper plant *piper methysticum* and drunk on great social and ceremonial occasions. It was believed to have an intoxicating effect.

² In *In the South Seas*, Stevenson observed that the nature of the native taboos was much misunderstood in Europe, and that Europeans, who dismissed native taboos as meaningless and incomprehensible, often had their own taboos which were no less arbitrary (*Tusitala*, XX, 43). He also pointed out that while Polynesians generally exempted whites from their taboos, the whites could impose their taboos on the natives: 'All the world must respect our tabus, or we gnash our teeth' (47; 237).

The Trader-Missionary Relationship

In *Falesá*, Stevenson returns to the tales of such white men as missionaries and traders. Unlike *The Ebb-Tide*, however, mission and trade in *Falesá* are represented as separate and even in conflict with each other. *Falesá* is a place where the rivalry between traders is almost matched by the contest between Catholics and Protestants for influence upon the native islanders, and all the missionaries are condemned by the traders.

Within the missionary group, the centuries-old European rivalry between Catholics and Protestants is brought to the island of *Falesá*,¹ where the latter gets the upper hand because ‘our chiefs are Protestant here’ (*F*, 133). This is one of the first things that Wiltshire is acquainted with when he comes to the island. ‘Are you a Papist?’ he asks Captain Randall, who repudiates the idea with contempt: ‘Hard-shell Baptis’ (123). The same question is put to Uma. ‘“*I le ai*” says she. She always used the native when she meant “no” more than usually strong, and, indeed, there’s more of it. “No good Popey,” she added’ (133). The rivalry culminates in the violent struggle between Captain Randall and Father Galoshes at Adams’s grave. Case manipulates the situation by branding his trade rivals as the Evil Eye – a Catholic devil that frightens away the native customers.

But more important is the distrust between traders and missionaries. Mr Tarleton, the missionary, tells Wiltshire of his displeasure with Case getting in the way of the missionary work in his capacity as a trader, because Mr Tarleton ‘cannot think a trader at all a good man to advise or have an influence upon my pastors’ (153). Case, for his part, holds the missionary up to public ridicule by a common conjuring trick, to the effect that the latter appears to be money-maker instead of soul-saviour when the native contributions to the missions are received.

While Case delivers his mockery for his own wicked purpose, Wiltshire’s dislike of missionaries is based on his class and racial consciousness. Alienated from his home country, he regards himself and his like as objects of contempt in the eyes of

¹ For examples of the rivalry between Catholics and Protestants in the Pacific see Lovett, p. 311.

missionaries who belong to the official representatives of European culture in the South Pacific. In his own words, 'I am just a trader; I'm just a common, low, God-damned white man and British subject, the sort you [missionaries] would like to wipe your boots on. I hope that's plain!' (149). In his relation to missionaries, Wiltshire's position as trader is not much different from that of beachcombers. Commenting on the beachcomber culture in the Pacific, Vanessa Smith observes: 'Within his home culture the beachcomber was an "other" in class and often in racial terms. Generally of working-class, and sometimes of criminal background, frequently the unfit:... his status as representative of European culture to the Pacific societies was ultimately a forged identity'.¹ Although as a trader Wiltshire fares better than beachcombers like those in *The Ebb-Tide*, he certainly shares the anti-missionary views with the latter group. Therefore the reason for his disrespectful attitude towards the missionaries is a contradictory one -- resulting partly from his awareness of his own inferior social status in his home country and partly from his sense of racial superiority among Pacific islanders. This is a psychology that haunts white traders and beachcombers alike in Stevenson's fictional world. In *The Ebb-Tide*, for example, Herrick finds himself much in common with Attwater the missionary while Davis and Huish cannot but feel much humbled, which of course is in sharp contrast to their arrogance in relation to the Kanaka crew. As for Wiltshire, he would never have talked to a missionary but for some practical purpose about his marriage, as his narrative to the reader reveals:

This was the first time, in all my years in the Pacific, I had ever exchanged two words with any missionary, let alone asked one for a favour. I didn't like the lot, no trader does; they look down upon us, and make no concealment; and, besides, they're partly Kanakaized, and suck up with natives instead of with other white men like themselves.

(148)

Missionaries' involvement in native life even leads Wiltshire to exclude them from the ranks of white men when he blames them for having introduced among natives the idea of a marriage certificate in European fashion: '... But it was the practice in these parts, and (as I told myself) not the least the fault of us White Men,

¹ Vanessa Smith, p. 19.

but of the missionaries' (124). Ironically, the missionary he dislikes most proves to be his ally in his struggle with his trade rival Case after the latter's attempt to exploit Wiltshire's distrust of the missionary fails. The final episode of the story leaves us in doubt as to whether Wiltshire has done away with, or just partially alleviated, his prejudice against the missionaries: 'Mr Tarleton set my leg, and made a regular missionary splice of it, so that I limp to this day' (185).

The animosity between traders and missionaries in *Falesá* demonstrates Stevenson's deep concern about these two groups of people who made up a most important proportion of whites in the Pacific. Although in this white men's quarrel the missionary appears to stand for decency and uprightness, the author's attitude towards the despised trader is more of sympathy than of simple disapproval. To some extent, Wiltshire's accusation against the missionary of looking down upon traders is a reflection of the author's own view. In a public address entitled 'Missions in the South Seas',¹ Stevenson stresses that many missionaries are making a great mistake 'when they expect, not only from their native converts, but from white men (by no means of the highest class) shipwrecked or stranded at random on these islands, a standard of conduct which no parish minister in the world would dare to expect of his parishioners and church members'.² According to Stevenson, traders' dislike of missionaries is caused by missionaries themselves who treat the other party as 'the Other' instead of with respect. It is typical of Stevenson to believe in the duality of man, traders and missionaries alike:

There is here in these despised whites a second reservoir of moral power, which missionaries too often neglect and render nugatory. Many of these despised traders are in themselves fairly decent and more than fairly decent persons. They dwell, besides, permanently amidst the native population, whereas the missionary is in some cases, and perhaps too often, only there upon a flying visit. The trader is therefore, at once by experience and by influence, the superior of the missionary. He is a person marked out to be made use of by the intelligent missionary. Sometimes a very doubtful character, sometimes a very decent old gentleman, he will almost invariably be made the better by some intelligent and

¹ The address was read before the Women's Missionary Association and members of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, at Sydney, on March 18, 1893. According to Graham Balfour, Stevenson's first biographer, Stevenson was unable to be present at the meeting, but the proofs of the article were revised by him for the *Sydney Presbyterian*. The address is quoted in full in Balfour's *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Methuen and Co., 1901).

² Balfour, Vol. II, p. 194.

kindly attention for which he is often burning; and he will almost invariably be made the worse by neglect or by insult.

And I am sorry to say that in too many cases I have found these methods to be followed by the missionary. I know very well that, in part from the misdeeds of the worst kind of traders, and in part by the harshness of otherwise excellent missionaries, this quarrel has become envenomed. Well, it is just this quarrel that has to be eliminated. By long-suffering, by kindness, by a careful distinction of personalities, the mission and the traders have to be made more or less in unison.¹

However, the trader-missionary relationship is not only a matter of difference in personalities. It is also a question of faith, just as it is demonstrated in *The Ebb-Tide* and 'Something in It'. Faith, or rather the lack of it, differentiates traders from both natives and missionaries. Though the natives are pious in their belief, whether it is Christianity, pantheism or even superstition -- for superstition is a godless religion after all, neither Wiltshire nor Case has any religious faith. For Wiltshire, the Christian ideas with which the missionaries 'fill up the natives' are nothing but 'old wives' tales and bumptiousness' (*F*, 149). His disgust with Christianity is reflected in his trader's method of bargaining with Mr Tarleton: 'I want a service -- I want two services, in fact; and, if you care to give me them, I'll perhaps take more stock in what you call your Christianity' (149). Like Wiltshire, Case has no religion, though he and his 'disciples' accept a belief in evil spirits which prove to be of his own making and are destroyed by Wiltshire in the final episode. This is to be compared to the conflict of faith in 'Something in It', in which the natives' beliefs, when they are not manipulated by Europeans like what Case does in *Falesá*, are shown to be more sensible than the missionary's own belief.

3

Stevenson's Spiritual Adventures

The issues of mission, faith, and religion in Stevenson's South Seas fiction, like those of race and identity, can be regarded as a certain projection of the author's own spiritual adventures which extended well before, and far beyond, his physical adventures in the Pacific. As Stephen Gwynn argued over a century ago, '[i]t was

only after Stevenson went to Samoa that his work became closely and obviously related to his own experiences; first, to his material environment; lastly, and in its highest development, to the spiritual adventures which had left their marks upon his youth'.² Therefore the religious aspect of Stevenson's work can be usefully explored in the context of his own preoccupation with religion which had exercised his mind throughout his life – from childhood to his last days in the Pacific, and of his direct encounter with missionaries once he arrived in the South Seas.

Given his well-known stance against the religious orthodoxy in his youth, there seems to be an impression that Stevenson's interest in religion and mission was a late development in his Samoan years. It is true from the above analysis that the theme of religion has never occurred in such intensity in his earlier works as in his South Seas fiction. At the same time, controversy over his religion has largely centred on the simple question of whether he was religious or not. Dr Hyde, American missionary in Hawaii to whom Stevenson was to write the famous open letter in defence of Father Damien, dismissed Stevenson as irreligious: 'He [Stevenson] is not a religious man, nor is his wife a pious woman. Very far from it: but his mother is a godly woman' (*Letters*, VI, 270n). Others regarded him as a true Christian. Among them there were missionaries' wives who witnessed his love for their husbands in the Samoan years. To Mrs. Clarke and Mrs. Newell, for example, Stevenson 'was a Christian' and 'certainly a religious man, although not in the conventional way'.³

I would like to suggest that faith and religion in such a complex personality as Stevenson cannot be put into simple, clear-cut categories. As H. J. Moors, author of *With Stevenson in Samoa*, states that 'Stevenson, more or less a dual personality, was mostly Bohemian. Yet it is true that he moralised and preached in his own peculiar way, and true that he wrote some exquisite prayers. The truth is, there were two Stevensons'.⁴

The paradoxical existence of the 'two Stevensons' in terms of faith and religion can be traced to the time before his arrival in the South Seas. On the one hand, as a

¹ *ibid.*, pp. 194-5.

² Stephen Gwynn, 'The Posthumous Works of Robert Louis Stevenson', *Fortnightly Review*, os 69 (1898), pp. 561-75.

³ Henry J. Cowell, *Robert Louis Stevenson: An Englishman's Re-study, after Fifty Years, of R.L.S. the Man* (London: The Epworth Press, 1945), p. 84-5.

⁴ Quoted in Cowell, p. 67.

minister in 1896 commented, Stevenson as the Scot could rarely escape the pressure of those profound and serious thoughts which constitute religion, so that he ‘carried religion into his very bones and marrow’;¹ On the other hand, the Bohemian constitution in his character made him sceptical of the religious orthodoxy he was brought up with, so that when he returned to what Furnas called the ‘chirping piety of his childhood’,² his belief was never the same. It had actually attained a new, cross-cultural dimension.

The fact that both his parents were devout Calvinists must have had its religious impact upon Stevenson. His mother was daughter of a Presbyterian minister and an enthusiastic amateur of foreign missions. Her letter-diary of life at Vailima reveals touchingly a true note of faith. His father was also a seriously religious man who, according to Stevenson’s essay on his father, bore ‘a clansman’s loyalty’ to the Church of Scotland, and whose published contributions to the defence of Christianity were equally valued as his works on harbour engineering.³ At Heriot Row an evening reading from the Bible was a routine.

The influence of his parents’ faith and character filled his earliest years with holy thoughts which took the form of child’s play and intellectual contemplation. According to his biographer J. C. Furnas, one of young Stevenson’s favourite games was playing church, himself as minister in a pulpit made of an upturned chair. At the age of three, hearing that sheep and horses knew nothing of God, he wanted the Bible to be read aloud to them. His sweet reasoning before the age of six bore early signs of independent thinking about religion: he had deduced that since the purpose of Christ’s death was to save mankind in general, he – Stevenson himself, must be saved without having to worry whether he was good enough or qualified for salvation.¹ It is an interesting but revealing coincidence that as a writer Stevenson’s earliest creative literature had something to do with the Bible. When he was six a Balfour uncle offered a prize of £1 for the best *History of Moses* from any of the

¹ Rev. W. J. Dawson, papers on ‘The Gospel According to the Novelists’, contributed to the *Young Man*, September 1896. Quoted in J. A. Hammerton, *Stevensoniana* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1907), p. 218.

² Furnas, p. 336.

³ R. L. Stevenson, ‘Thomas Stevenson’ in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Tusitala, xxix, p. 69). In Masson, *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson* (p. 46), Mrs Douglas MacLagan speaks of Thomas Stevenson as ‘a great Theologian’ who ‘presented me with a book of his own, with the not unassuming title of *Christianity Confirmed*.’

Stevenson cousins. Stevenson's dictated entry, with his own illustrations showing the Children of Israel wearing top hats and smoking pipes like his father, won a special award (*Tusitala*, XXIX, 156).

In an incident related to his later encounter with missionaries in the South Seas, Stevenson as a child talked to his mother about growing up to be a missionary to the savages.² Years later in Honolulu, he was to write to an American missionary there about his childhood fascination with missionaries:

...From my childhood I have been thrown much in contact with Mission workers, and count among them several of my friends. Though, perhaps from the accident of special knowledge I had not previously been every much interested in any Mission but the Zenana Mission in India, I have conceived a very high impression of the necessity and the excellence of the work in the South Seas.

(*Letters*, VI, 270)

But the influence of religion in his early years was more than a rosy picture of 'chirping piety'. The stern Calvinist doctrines, especially the stories told by his nurse Alison Cunningham, also filled him with the horror of hell and sin. In his posthumously published selections from his note book, Stevenson observes that 'all the rose-water theology in the world cannot quench the great fire of horror and terror that Christianity has kindled in the hearts of the Scottish people.', who are constantly 'haunted by vain aspiration after impossible good and fated, generation after generation, to settle down into mournful recognition of the inevitable evil'. He continues to say that 'Calvinism is the religion of the strong; like the shrewd, hard climates of our northern coasts, it is fatal to the weakly but makes more manly and vigorous the selected few who can survive' (*Tusitala*, XXIX, 192). In his autobiographical fragment *Memoirs of Himself*, he also recalls the terrors he was thrown into, even to the astonishment of his mother, by the harsh side of such religious beliefs:

My mother was shocked when, in days long after, she heard what I had suffered. 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 awoke, into eternal ruin. I remember repeatedly, although this was later on, and in

¹ Furnas, pp. 30, 45.

² Furnas, p. 334.

the new house, waking from a dread 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 still remains upon me in my thirtieth year.

(*Tusitala*, XXIX, 154)

In spite of his fond memories of his nurse whom he lovingly called Cummy and 'my second mother', he could not hold himself from being critical of the strong sense of 'sin' imparted by Cummy's religious influence. He remembers that 'I was lovingly, but not always wisely treated, the great fault being Cummy's overhaste to make me a religious pattern' (157). Obsession with the doctrine of sin, according to Stevenson, tends to produce a result contrary to the educator's purpose. Far from repelling, the idea of sin exerts an attraction on young minds: 'Probably few over-pious children have not been tempted, sometime or other, and by way of dire experiment, to deny God in set terms.... But the worst consequence is the romance conferred on doubtful actions; until the child grows to think nothing more glorious, than to be struck dead in the very act of some surprising wickedness. I can never again take so much interest in anything, as I took, in childhood, in doing for its own sake what I believed to be sinful' (157).

It is difficult to determine, going through biographies of him, what he actually did that he believed to be sinful. But attraction to the darker side of humanity as taught him through religion certainly produced results in literary terms – not only in such stories as 'The Merry Man', 'Markheim' and more importantly *Jekyll and Hyde*, but also in much of his South Seas fiction. They are more or less, in Stevenson's own words, 'morbidly religious'.

The religious ecstasies and terrors – perhaps with some fascination with sin and evil, was only part of Stevenson's spiritual life in childhood. At other times, his imagination would lead him through heroic romances in which, to his own astonishment, religion played no part. His *Memoirs* betrays an early sign of his 'irreligious' tendency which existed paradoxically side by side with his dormant religious devotion:

When at night my mind was disengaged from either of these extremes [religious ecstasies and terrors], and there was no high wind, for I always hated and do still

bitterly hate the noise of a storm about a house, I told myself romances in which I played the hero. Now and then the subject would be the animation of my playthings; but usually these fantasies embraced the adventures of a lifetime, full of far journeys and Homeric battles. I note these peculiarities. They had no reference to religion; although that filled my mind so greatly at other moments, I was pure old pagan when I came to practice.

(155)

This paradoxical attitude of preoccupation and renunciation is typical of Stevenson's early involvement with religion. When he went to church with his father, his attention would sometimes focus upon something that more interested him. For him, the urge for literature was stronger than the call of religious duty. Friends found him interested in the Bible more as literary texts than in its religious meanings. As a minister in Stevenson's Edinburgh days remembered, on one occasion both father and son were at a sermon in Old Greyfriars' Church, during which 'I saw Robert Louis scribbling his note-book, which he carried wherever he went. I knew very well that he was about the last man in Scotland who would think of taking notes of a sermon; and when I met him at the close I said, "Were you scribbling 'original nonsense' in that note-book of yours instead of listening to the sermon?" And he replied, "I was copying out some beautiful sentences from an Evening Prayer in a volume of *Family Prayers* that I found in the pew."...Then he bade me good-night, saying, "Before I see you again, I shall have these words by heart." And two days later he repeated them.'¹ This interest of his was to yield result when he prepared his eloquent *Vailima Prayers* in the South Seas, which in literary style and moral message bear close resemblance to the prayer that he committed to memory on this occasion.²

On other, non-religious occasions, his mind would strangely dwell upon religious matters, and when he did this there was usually a touch of doubt as was expressed in

¹ Masson, pp. 54-55.

² Stevenson read to the minister the following prayer that he had recorded in his note-book: 'O God, Who hast appointed unto man the night for rest, and the day for the works and labours of life, we beseech Thee to grant us quiet repose this night, that our bodies being refreshed with sleep, our minds may be more wakeful and strong to serve Thee: that so we may abide all our nights and days in Thy love. Laying aside all cares and anxieties may we sleep in the peace of a good conscience, in the faith of Thy presence and protection, and in the hope of Thine eternal glory. Let not our sleep, or any bodily indulgence, degenerate into intemperance and sloth, but be in such measure as is needed to restore our wasted strength and to fit us again for the duties of our calling: that so even our sleep may be holy, and that whatever we do we may do all to Thy glory.' *ibid.*

the verses that he had casually jotted down while waiting for his tutor before class. This good example of his religious thoughts in the form of creative literature was discovered long afterwards in the leaf of a Greek lexicon of his classmate's:

Morrisonian! Morrisonian!
How I wonder what you are!
From the orthodox religion
Do you differ very far?

Burghers I have known a-many,
Anti-Burghers, not a few,
Baptists, Quakers, Plymouth Brethren,
But the ne'er a one like you.

Are you regularly christened?
Or a living *loup-garou*?
Is your credo like what mine is?
Do you think the Bible true?

Do you take the Bible wholly,
Or *réchauffé* in a mince
As the heretics of yore did,
And the orthodox do since?¹

However, a more serious scepticism about religion surfaced in his rebellious youth as he became increasingly attracted to Darwin and Herbert Spencer. In 1870, we have this entry in his diary: 'Decline of religion: I take to the New Testament: change startling: growing desire for truth: Spencer: should have done better with the New Test.'² In his essay *Books Which Have Influenced Me*, he admitted that he had come under the influence of Herbert Spencer: 'No more persuasive rabbi exists, and few better. How much of his vast structure will bear the touch of time, how much is clay and how much brass, it were too curious to inquire. But his words, if dry, are always manly and honest; there dwells in his pages a spirit of highly abstract joy, plucked naked like an algebraic symbol but still joyful; and the reader will find there a *caput-mortuum* of piety, with little indeed of its loveliness, but with most of its essentials; and these two qualities make him a wholesome, as his intellectual vigour makes him a bracing, writer. I should be much of a hound if I lost my gratitude to

¹ Masson, p. 55.

² John Kelman, Junr., *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1903), pp. 15-6.

Herbert Spencer.’ Since he had found a new religion in Darwin and Spencer, he saw the authoritarian obscurantism of formal Christian theory as a mere rhetorical trick. He insisted that any one with a certain effort of imagination would read the New Testament like a book, and not droningly and dully like a portion of the Bible. ‘Any one would then be able to see in it those truths which we are all courteously supposed to know and all modestly refrain from applying. But upon this subject it is perhaps better to be silent’.

Clearly Stevenson was aware of the growing gap between the orthodox Christian theory and his liberal view which was often interpreted as his creeping irreligiousness. The issue also sparked a bitter quarrel between father and son which, according to Sidney Colvin, clouded Stevenson’s home life for the next twelve months. The storm fell on 31 January 1873 when his father found a copy of the impudent constitution of the L. J. R.¹ Stevenson’s letter to Charles Baxter two days after the incident reveals his moral crisis and the difficulty for a reconciliation with his father on religious beliefs:

The thunderbolt has fallen with a vengeance now. On Friday night after leaving you, in the course of conversation, my father put me one or two questions as to beliefs, which I candidly answered. I really hate all lying so much now – a new-found honesty that has somehow come out of my late illness – that I could not so much as hesitate at the time; but if I had foreseen the real hell of everything since, I think I should have lied, as I have done so often before. I so far thought of my father, but I had forgotten my mother. And now! They are both ill, both silent, both as down in the mouth as if – I can find no simile....If it were not too late, I think I could almost find it in my heart to retract, but it is too late; and again, am I to live my whole life as one falsehood? Of course, it is rougher than hell upon my father, but can I help it? They don’t see either that my game is not the light-hearted scoffer; that I am not (as they call me) a careless infidel....I am, I think, as honest as they can be in what I hold. I have not come hastily to my views. I reserve (as I told them) many points until I acquire fuller information, and do not think I am thus justly to be called ‘horrible atheist’.

(Letters, I, 297)

During the ensuing year, the quarrel with his father on religious grounds went so deep as to affect the inheritance issue. As he wrote to Mrs Sitwell, ‘I promised my

¹ A miniature club of six members organised in September 1872 to meet weekly in a pub in Advocates’ Close. Bob Stevenson was a chief founder. Its principles were Liberty, Justice, Reverence (L.J.R.). See Furnas, p.69, 426 n.15. Thomas Stevenson told his friend that ‘he had laid a heavy hand on rules for club of the boy’s own forming, which began with the precept: “Disregard everything our parents have ever taught us!”’ (Masson, p. 46).

father ...that I shall never use a farthing of his money unless I am a Christian', because his father had explained to him that there were certain conditions that superseded the call of blood, such as religious beliefs (*Letters*, II, 97).

According to Furnas (207), Stevenson's 'horrible atheism' began to fade in the mid-eighties because his 'Lay Morals' (1883) represented a return of interest in Christianity. In this long essay, 'the name of God and such expressions as "sin" and "the soul" have been allowed to find a place' which, as Stevenson assumed, would 'be galling to the conscientious atheist, that strange and wooden rabbi' (*Tusitala*, XXVI, 2). Actually, the spiritual turning point in his life should have occurred earlier than as Furnas says. For one thing, 'Lay Morals' started to be written in 1879 though published four years later. And even as early as 1878, Stevenson wrote about an 'unknown steersman' who had changed his life from idleness to industry. The interesting autobiographical passage shows that the spiritual turning point in Stevenson's life occurred not as a result of pressure from his father but of the age of maturity:

I remember a time when I was very idle; and lived and profited by that humour. I have no idea why I ceased to be so, yet I scarce believe I have the power to return to it; it is a change of age. I made consciously a thousand little efforts, but the determination from which these arose came to me while I slept and in the way of growth. I have had a thousand skirmishes to keep myself at work upon particular mornings, and sometimes the affair was hot; but of that great change of campaign, which decided all this part of my life, and turned me from one whose business was to shirk into one whose business was to strive and persevere, -- it seems as though all that had been done by some one else. The life of Goethe affected me; so did that Balzac; and some very noble remarks by the latter in a pretty bad book, the *Cousine Bette*. I dare say I could trace some other influences in the change. All I mean is, I was never conscious of a struggle, nor registered a vow, nor seemingly had anything personally to do with the matter. I came about like a well-handled ship. There stood at the wheel that unknown whom we call God.

(*Tusitala*, XXVI, 89-90)

This remarkable change in Stevenson's spiritual life is further evidenced in a letter that he wrote in the same year to his father from Paris, which should represent a reconciliation with his father in the matter of religious faith. The letter is entirely devoted to a religious discussion. After making comments about Christian asceticism, he concludes: 'Still I have a good heart and believe in myself and my

fellow men and the God who made us all.... I am lonely, and sick and out of heart. Well, I still hope; I still believe; I still see the good in the web, and cling to it. It is not much, perhaps, but it is always something.... There is a fine text in the Bible, I don't know where, to the effect that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord.... Strange as it may seem to you, everything has been, in one way or another, bringing me a little nearer to what I think you would like me to be. 'Tis a strange world, indeed, but there is a manifest God for those who care to look for him' (*Letters*, II, 241). However, the ending of the letter still finds him reserving differences with his father: 'I hope I have taken a step towards more friendly – no, not that (that could scarcely be) – but more intimate, relations with you. But don't expect too much of me' (241).

The religious reservations that Stevenson had were no longer a question of belief but a question of emphasis – an emphasis on the present world rather than on afterlife; and on moral responsibilities rather than on what he saw as rigid Christian doctrines. As he states in the same letter, 'I feel every day as if religion had a greater interest for me; but that interest is still centred on the little rough-and-tumble world in which our fortunes are cast for the moment. I cannot transfer my interest, not even my religious interests, to any different sphere. If I am to be a fellow worker with God, I still feel as if it must be here' (*Letters*, II, 240-1). In 'Lay Morals' he insists that 'a man, or an education, may be very sufficiently Christian although it leave[s] some of these sayings upon one side' (*Tusitala*, XXVI, 8). What he meant by 'faith' was not to believe the Bible, but to believe in God (*Letters*, III, 150). And the idea of 'sin', which used to terrorise him as a child, no longer struck him as deadly sinful except for 'sloth' and 'unkindness'.

This continued belief in Christianity while at the same time admitting the differences between morality and the Christian doctrines activated in him a transition from theory to practice, and from the speculative to the practical side of religion. The transition holds the key to our understanding of Stevenson's spiritual life in the South Seas, his relationship with the missionaries and the representation of religion in his fiction.

First of all, the family routine of evening prayers at Heriot Row was carried on and extended to morning worship as well in his residence in Samoa. Once settled

there, his Vailima became the only white man's household on the island, except those of the missionaries, where the day naturally passed with prayers. As Fanny recorded, 'the service began by my son reading a chapter from the Samoan Bible, Tusitala following with a prayer in English, sometimes impromptu, but more often from the notes'.¹ The custom continued throughout the rest of his life in Samoa, even on the night before his death. This is the provenance of the *Vailima Prayers* which, posthumously published, locate the European tradition of Christian worship within the paternalist, multi-racial organisation of the Vailima estate in tropical Samoa. The *Prayers* were filled with ethical values that Stevenson himself took seriously and considered the 'folk of many families and nations' to need – such as truthfulness, charity, and industry.

It might be argued that Stevenson led the household prayers partly for the sake of his devout mother. The argument would have been strongly supported by H. J. Moors, an American trader with whom the Stevensons stayed upon their first arrival in Samoa. In Moors' view, 'up to the time of his mother's arrival in Samoa, Stevenson's attendance at church was very casual; but after she came he was a most regular attendant. He frankly told me that he went principally to please her'.² This alone, however, cannot explain Stevenson's consistent practice in Christian worship throughout his six and a half years' life in the Pacific. The truth is, there were multiple facets in Stevenson's spiritual life in the South Seas. Apart from his renewed faith in the Christian religion which, as we have discussed before, had come about with the maturity of age, his respect for the religious piety of the natives played an important part. For Samoans were newly converted Christians and were quite formal in their religious observance. Conversely, only by the same observance could the Vailima household qualify as respectable in the native eye. As Fanny says in her prefatory note to the *Prayers*, 'in every Samoan household the day is closed with prayer and the singing of hymns. The omission of this sacred duty would indicate not only a lack of religious training in the house chief, but a shameless disregard of all that is reputable in the Samoan social life' (*Tusitala*, XXXI, 1). Therefore, for Stevenson, the daily worship in the multi-racial community of Samoa

¹ See Fanny's Prefatory Note to *Vailima Papers* (*Tusitala*, xxi), p. 2.

² Harry J. Moors, *With Stevenson in Samoa* (London and Leipsic: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), p. 33.

was not only an expression of his love for his mother or of his religious faith, but a moral duty of white men.

The highlight of his duty as white man was reached when, for a month or so, he volunteered to teach a Sunday-school class in an LMS school in Apia. Hearing that the lady missionary in charge was obliged to serve both as superintendent and as teacher, Stevenson offered his help. Moors states that the interest that Stevenson took in the Sunday-school was more that of the student of human nature, the psychologist, the writer of stories, than of one who was really concerned for the spiritual welfare of his pupils.¹ It is true that it was the humanist in him, rather than the Christian worker, that caused him to volunteer to take the class of boys. His own comments tend to confirm this view. 'The Sunday-school racket,' he writes to Sidney Colvin, 'is only an experiment which I took up at the request of the late American Land Commissioner; I am trying it for a month, and if I do as ill as I believe, and the boys find it only half as tedious as I do, I think it will end in a month. I have *carte blanche*, and say what I like; but does a single soul understand me?' (*Letters*, VIII, 281).

I read Stevenson's comments on his Sunday-school 'racket' as an expression of the conflict within himself between following his own inclination and doing his white man's duty where religion was concerned. The conflict was symbolically shown in a paper-chase incident on a certain Sunday in the August before his death, when the underlying boy and bohemian in Stevenson bubbled up. He tells the story himself to Sidney Colvin:

We had a paper-chase in Vailele plantation; about fifteen miles, I take it, from us; and it was all that could be wished. It is really better fun than following the hounds.... We had quite the old sensations of exhilaration, discovery, an appeal to a savage instinct; and I felt myself about seventeen again, a pleasant experience. However, it was on the Sabbath Day; and I am now a pariah among the English.... I must not go again; it gives so much unnecessary tribulation.

(*Letters*, VIII, 343)

The disregard for the Sabbath aroused anger in Stevenson's missionary friend W. E. Clarke who declined an invitation to dine at Vailima on the following Tuesday.

¹ *ibid*, p. 31.

The missionary's wife did go and she persuaded Stevenson, in the presence of British and German naval officers who had taken part in the paper-chase, to apologise for the bad example he had set in breaking the Sabbath. After musing in silence for some minutes, Stevenson held out his hand: 'Forgive me, Mrs. Clarke; you are quite right, and I was altogether wrong. I regret it exceedingly'.¹ The whole story, as recorded by Clarke in his *Reminiscences* (1908), is one of credit to Stevenson and his sense of white man's duty in matters of religion. As Clarke commented, 'to make such an avowal in a place like Apia, where the Sabbath was systematically disregarded by most of the white population, required plenty of moral courage'.² Stevenson's penitence served its purpose, for Apia saw no more paper-chases on Sunday afterwards. It also contributed to Mrs. Clarke's view that Stevenson 'was a Christian'.³

It would be inappropriate, however, to overemphasise either the religious or the irreligious aspect of Stevenson's behaviour in this particular case as elsewhere. This is because beneath the bubbling of his boyish nature in a paper-chase on the Sabbath is also a sense of duty – an obligation to form a good relationship with his white neighbours. He writes to J. M. Barrie: 'I am...intending to ride a paper-chase next Sunday..., for I am trying every means to live well with my German neighbours' (*Letters*, VIII, 322). The incident tells much about Stevenson's intended role among the white community of which religion forms a part. For him, the moral (rather than theological) aspects of religion, such as responsibility and love, are the very essence of life. Already in 1890, he addressed the Samoan students at Malua training school for native pastors on his favourite theme: 'We may learn a great deal about religion, yet not learn religion,' he tells the Samoan students; 'We may know a thousand texts, and get no sense from them....The meaning of religion is a rule of life; it is an obligation to do well.... There is love, and there is justice. Justice is for oneself; love for others. It did not require any gospel to teach a man to love himself or to be stern to his neighbours.'⁴ This humanitarian belief enabled him to form a comfortable relationship with both the godless local whites and the missionaries.

¹ Cowell, p. 68.

² *ibid.*, p. 69.

³ *ibid.*, p. 84.

⁴ Balfour, Vol. II, pp. 188-192.

In the European-Polynesian racial context, Stevenson's sense of white men's religious obligation and his humanitarian concern constituted what he thought the Christian mission in the Pacific should be. His judgement of the Christian mission was always based upon what missionaries did in promoting native causes rather than their achievement of spiritual conversion. On the whole, his attitude towards the missionary work was one of growing respect and understanding. During his first year in the Pacific, he admitted to an American missionary in Hawaii that 'from my childhood I have been thrown much in contact with Mission workers, and count among them several of my friends...I have conceived a very high impression of the necessity and the excellence of the work in the South Seas' (*Letters*, VII, 270).¹ A year later, in 1890, he addressed the Samoan students at Malua training school for native pastors, during which he regarded them highly as the hope of their race. His sympathy with the missionary work was summed up in an address in 1893, read before the Women's Missionary Association and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales at Sydney.² He depicts himself as a convert to missionary activity:

I had conceived a great prejudice against Missions in the South Seas, and I had no sooner come there than that prejudice was at first reduced, and then at last annihilated. Those who deblatterate against missions have only one thing to do, to come and see them on the spot. They will see a great deal of good done; they will see a race being forwarded in many different directions, and I believe, if they be honest persons, they will cease to complain of mission work and its effects.³

If he paid tribute to missionaries in their presence, he made equally positive comments about them in *In the South Seas*, in which he declares that 'those who have a taste for hearing missions, Protestant or Catholic, decried, must seek their pleasure elsewhere than in my pages. Whether Catholic or Protestant, with all their gross blots, with all their deficiency of candour, of humour, and of common sense,

¹ The missionary was Revd Francis Williams Damon (1852-1915), member of the American Board of Missions. The Stevensons visited and liked him during their five-month stay in Hawaii (January - June 1889). In March that year, they requested his permission to be taken as passengers on board the missionary ship, the *Morning Star*, to Micronesia.

² Illness prevented Stevenson from attending the meeting, but according to Graham Balfour's *Biography*, he revised the proofs of the articles for the Sydney *Prebyterian*. See Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Methuen and Co., 1901), Vol. II, p. 193.

³ *ibid.*

the missionaries are the best and the most useful whites in the Pacific' (*Tusitala*, XX, 73).

The words 'best' and 'most useful' throw a gleam of light upon Stevenson's conception of the true place of a missionary in the Pacific. That is, it was more of the social and humanitarian side of the missionary work, rather than the spiritual, that appealed to Stevenson most. Missionaries were considered by Stevenson as 'most useful' not in the simple sense that they brought the Gospel to the South Seas peoples, but in their distinctive role as mediators between European and Pacific cultures, as interpreters, as well as for the way in which they identified themselves with the natives. On the basis of this judgement, he counted them, both Protestant and Catholic, among his best friends.

During his residence in Samoa, his personal relations with the Protestant missionaries were most pleasant. Among them there was Rev. W. E. Clarke, Rev. A. E. Claxton who translated *The Bottle Imp* into the Samoan language by spending one evening every month with the author discussing the translation chapter by chapter; Rev. S. J. Whitmee who taught Stevenson the Samoan language; and Rev. J. E. Newwell from whom Stevenson got his Samoan name *Tusitala* – 'Writer of Stories'.¹

In August 1890 Stevenson paid a second visit to Sydney. The return voyage aboard the *Lübeck* in early September was a memorable one in terms of his relationship with South Seas missionaries. He and his wife Fanny had as only travelling companions three missionaries with their wives: James Chalmers and Archibald Hunts of the London Missionary Society, and George Brown of the Wesleyan Society. The Stevensons spent many happy hours with their new missionary friends by exchanging yarns and stories. As James Chalmers recorded, 'the gentle novelist did well. His best stories were personal. We were the only passengers, and the events of the voyage must have made an impression on all of us'.¹ Stevenson for his part gained a better understanding of the missionary work and became 'a terrible missionaryite' as a result. Writing on board *Lübeck* only three days out from Sydney, he told his mother that there was an interesting party on board who were 'pioneer missionaries, splendid men with no humbug, plenty courage, and the love of adventure'. He added: 'I have become a terrible missionaryite of late

¹ Masson, pp. 232-33, 249.

days; very much interested in their work, errors and merits: perhaps it's in the blood, though it has been a little slow of coming out. No, to be sure, I am wrong; I remember I always liked the type' (*Letters*, VII, 6).

Of the three missionaries, the one Stevenson described as 'the only hero I have ever met' was James Chalmers (1841-1901), Scottish missionary and explorer in New Guinea. Stevenson took the chair at Chalmers's lecture in Apia about New Guinea in September 1890, but uncertain health and his responsibilities at Vailima prevented him from accepting the latter's invitation to visit him in New Guinea. However, Stevenson's admiration for the missionary fills the letters he wrote during this period. In one he proclaims: 'O, Tamate,² if I had met you when I was a boy and a bachelor, how different my life would have been' (*Letters*, VII, 48). To Sidney Colvin he wrote: 'I wish you to get *Pioneering in New Guinea*, by J. Chalmers. It's a missionary book, and has less pretensions to be literature than Spurgeon's sermons. Yet I think even through that, you will see some of the traits of the hero that wrote it; a man that took me fairly by storm; for the most attractive, simple, brave, and interesting man in the whole Pacific' (*Letters*, VII, 59).

But Stevenson was not to be drawn to the unreserved support of the missionary work even by the personal magnetism of the great missionaries whom he so admired. What he loved in Chalmers, for example, was his integrity and his outgoing love for his fellow-man. In other words, the missionaries appealed to Stevenson more as men than as missionaries. He could be a candid critic of mission when he thought that his criticism was justified, especially in situations where the native culture was in danger of being uprooted and missionaries involved themselves in the native politics. In the first chapter of *In the South Seas*, he attributed the depopulation of the Marquesas to the harm done by missions:

'Upon the whole, the problem seems to me to stand thus:--Where there have been fewest changes, important or unimportant, salutary or hurtful, there the race survives. Where there have been most, important or unimportant, salutary or hurtful there it perishes. Each change, however small, augments the sum of new conditions to which the race has to become inured. There may seem, *a priori*, no comparison between the change from "sour toddy" to bad gin, and that from the island kilt to a pair of European trousers. Yet I am far from persuaded that the one

¹ Cited in Cowell, p. 66.

² 'Tamate' was Chalmers's native name while working at Rarotonga.

is any more hurtful than the other; and the unaccustomed race will sometimes die of pin-pricks. We are here face to face with one of the difficulties of the missionary. In Polynesian islands he easily obtains pre-eminent authority; the king becomes his *mairedupalais*; he can proscribe, he can command; and the temptation is ever towards too much. Thus (by all accounts) the Catholics in Mangareva, and thus (to my own knowledge) the Protestants in Hawaii, have rendered life in a more or less degree unliveable to their converts. And the mild, uncomplaining creatures (like children in a prison) yawn and await death. It is easy to blame the missionary. But it is his business to make changes. It is surely his business, for example, to prevent war; and yet I have instanced war itself as one of the elements of health. On the other hand, it were, perhaps, easy for the missionary to proceed more gently, and to regard every change as an affair of weight. I take the average missionary; I am sure I do him no more than justice when I suppose that he would hesitate to bombard a village, even in order to convert an archipelago. Experience begins to show us that change of habit is bloodier than a bombardment.'

(*Tusitala*, XX, 37)

A balanced attitude of sympathy for the mission on the one hand, and respect for the native way of life on the other, is best illustrated in Stevenson's advice in 1894 to Adelaide Boodle who was going into mission work:

So, at last, you are going into Mission work? where I think your heart always was. You will like it in a way, but remember it is dreary long. Do you know the story of the American tramp who was offered meals and a day's wage to chop with the back of an axe on a fallen trunk? "Damned if I can go on chopping when I can't see the chips fly!" you will never see the chips fly in Mission work, never; and be sure you know it beforehand. The work is one long dull disappointment, varied by acute revulsions; and those who are by nature courageous and cheerful, and have grown old in experience, learn to rub their hands over infinitesimal successes. However, as I really believe there is some good done in the long run – *gutta cavat lapidem non vi* in this business—it is a useful and honourable career in which no one should be ashamed to embark. Always remember the fable of the sun, the storm, and the traveller's cloak. Forget wholly and for ever all small pruderies, and remember that *you cannot change ancestral feelings of right and wrong without what is practically soul-murder*. Barbarous as the customs may seem, always hear them with patience – always judge them with gentleness – always find in them some seed of good; see that you always develop them; remember that all you can do is to civilise the man in the line of his own civilisation such as it is. And never expect, never believe in, thaumaturgic conversions. They may do very well for St Paul; in the case of an Andaman islander they mean less than nothing. In fact, what you have to do is to teach the parents in the interests of their great-grandchildren.'

(*Letters*, VIII, 325-6)

CONCLUSION

Beyond the History and Border

In the end I am certain I shall find I have fully digested what I intend shall be my complete story of Polynesia.

----- Stevenson, 'Interview' with a Hawaiian morning newspaper.

In the world of English literature there are probably not many writers whose fame has waxed and waned so dramatically as Stevenson's. The headlong fall started five years after the author's death with a bitter attack from his once closest friend W. E. Henley. In his review of the first Stevenson biography by Graham Balfour in 1901, Henley made negative comments on Stevenson's personality, style and talent, and stated that 'if I want reading, I do not go for it in the Edinburgh Edition,...if I crave the enchantment of romance, I ask it of bigger men than he, and of bigger books than his: of "Esmond" (say) and "Great Expectations", of "A Tale of Two Cities"; while, if good writing and some other things be in my appetite, are there not always Hazlitt and Lamb'.¹ Frank Swinnerton regarded Stevenson as a writer of the second class (1914) while Maurice Hewlett thought him overpraised (1922).

Then came the opposing voices. In 1924, thirty years after Stevenson's death, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll predicted: 'Will Stevenson live? Undoubtedly. He is far more secure of immortality than many very popular writers. The sale of his books may not be great, and he may even disappear from the marts of literature now and then, but he will always be revived, and it may turn out that his reputation will wear as well as that of Charles Lamb for he engages his readers by the double gift of personality and style'.² Nicoll's prediction was materialised in three publications of the period important in the history of Stevenson criticism: Rosaline Masson's *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson* (1922); *Robert Louis Stevenson: His Work and His*

¹ Maixner, p. 498.

² Sidney Colvin and others, *Robert Louis Stevenson: His Work and His Personality*, p. 128.

Personality by Sidney Colvin and others (1924); and the Tusitala edition of Stevenson's complete works (1924). Admirers formed a Robert Louis Stevenson club in Edinburgh on his birthday 13 November 1920. Then, fifty years after Stevenson's death, Isaac Foot put the same question: 'Will Stevenson live? Well, he has lived so far; and my conjecture is that in the year of grace 1995 *Treasure Island* will still be read; John Silver will still be one of the best-known characters in fiction; *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* will still enthral; *A Child's Garden of Verses* will still be in nearly every children's nursery; and *Requiem* will still be reckoned one of the few great short poems in the English tongue'.¹ Again, this prediction came true. Fifty years on, over 30 full biographies of varying length and focus, and over 200 works of criticism have been published. More than a hundred events were organised across the world in 1994 alone to mark his centenary. The vitality of Stevenson's literary fame is confirmed by the material test of continued publications of Stevenson study since his centenary year.

However, two minor incidents occurring on the periphery of Stevenson's centenary commemorations indicate that the Stevenson debate is still going on. They also carry implications as to the nature of that debate. The Royal Bank of Scotland issued a banknote with Stevenson's head on, while the British Postal Board in London did not issue postal stamps to commemorate the occasion as most admirers might have expected. The Edinburgh *Evening News* of 27 August 1994 carried a reader's letter as follows:

I am not in the least surprised to learn that the British Postal Board has refused to sanction the issue of a commemorative stamp on behalf of Robert Louis Stevenson. Away back in 1987, which was the 400th anniversary of the death of Mary Queen of Scots, it also adopted this stance on the basis that it could not cope with the amount of requests made on it each year! The reason it gave this time, deeming Stevenson not sufficiently important, is absolutely ludicrous. Why don't we have a Scottish Postal Board when at the end of the day all decisions are taken down south by the British (English?) Postal Board?

The sentiment voiced by the reader of the Edinburgh *Evening News* might not be unsusceptible to argument, for over a year later (December 1995) the same British

¹ Foreword to *Robert Louis Stevenson: An Englishman's Re-study, after Fifty Years, of R.L.S. the Man.* by Henry J. Cowell, p. 6.

Postal Board issued commemorative stamps to mark the bicentenary of Robert Burns's birth. An article in *The Scotsman* 10 December 1994 mildly denounced the over sensitivity of racial or national considerations in evaluating such a Scottish writer as Stevenson: 'Critical opinion does usually change complexion when you cross the border. But frequently Scottish reviewers take views that seem to react against their southern counterparts, rather than rise above them. This can be justified as a necessary political act to safeguard the reputations of Scottish cultural figures in the face of English indifference. But it can also do violence to an independent, assured self-assessment of Scottish culture --- whose figures are so often of undeniable world stature anyway.'

Contrary to *The Scotsman's* wish, national considerations did shape Stevenson criticism. In 1945 Henry J. Cowell, despite his admiration for the Scottish author, was conscious of the national differences between Stevenson and himself in his capacity as Vice-Chairman of RLS Club of London:

I am really surprised at my own temerity, as an English man, in essaying to interpret to others so Scottish a Scotsman as Robert Louis Stevenson... I feel I am just as much an English Englishman as Stevenson was a Scottish Scotsman... While I do not profess to understand Scotland or the Scottish, any more than R. L. S. understood England or the English, there is nevertheless a realm - the realm of letters - where Stevenson and myself, or any other Scotsman and Englishman, can meet as friends and comrades. It is as a citizen of that world of literature - where the spirit of humanity rather than the spirit of nationality prevails.¹

Cowell's readiness to cross the gulf of national difference to appreciate Stevenson and the vast show of public enthusiasm since then for the Scottish author are incongruously compromised by what I perceive as the continued neglect of Stevenson in 'orthodox' English literature. Anyone who consults *Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research* by Lionel Stevenson must be surprised at the exclusion of Stevenson from this influential book. The Preface says that 'Robert Louis Stevenson has been omitted, in spite of his influence on romantic fiction, because his adult novels are few and of debatable rank'.² In a similar way, there is no entry for

¹ Cowell, p. 9.

² Lionel Stevenson, *Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. v. In *Victorian Fiction: A Second Guide to Research* edited by George H. Ford (New York: the Modern Language Association of America, 1978) Stevenson was added to the list.

Stevenson in any of the six editions of the widely used *Norton Anthology of English Literature* though there are entries for other Scottish authors such as Burns, Carlyle, Scott and MacDiamid. The only difference from *Victorian Fiction* is that no explanation is given for the exclusion. Behind this literary phenomenon has been the claim that Stevenson's writings often fall short of our expectations of a serious novelist. In the words of a critic in 1924, Stevenson 'appeals to the child or to the primitively childish in grown men and women'.¹

The present dissertation does not profess to argue against this long-held view, for scholars in recent years have already challenged it by pointing out the serious moral concerns in Stevenson's popular fiction. It is my modest aim, through chapters presented above, to draw attention to the fact that an important body of Stevenson's work had been left out of count by most critics when they came to reckon up his achievements after his death. In terms of both generic diversity and subject matter, his South Seas works are as rich as his previous writings. They range from the supernatural short stories to realistic novels, from the depiction of indigenous customs, legends and folklore to the representation of white men's fortunes. At the same time, his travel and history writings offer a rich, historical background for his fictional creation. The serious moral concerns not so obvious in his previous popular fiction reached their full development as he became associated with the colonial realities of the Pacific.

The major works discussed in the above chapters represent two important points in the development of Stevenson's literary career. First of all, there was a significant shift in focus: from the domestic to the exotic, and more importantly from historical romance to the realistic depiction of contemporary life. His move towards realism was best demonstrated in *Falesá* and *The Ebb-Tide*, both of which offer a psychological depth in characterisation and a critical commentary upon the European imperialist presence in the region. Secondly, there was a closer connection than anywhere else in his previous works between the author and his fiction. This was achieved either through his frequent extra-fictional comments or by the projection of his own personality, which is often paradoxical itself, into the complexity of characterisation. In this respect, his *Letters* have provided a valuable source for the

¹ Maixner, p. 518.

study of Stevenson the man in relation to his work. In my view, a study of Robert Louis Stevenson's works would be incomplete without a study of the man behind those works. As J. B. Priestly testified in 1931, those who loved R.L.S. not only read his works, but were conscious of the man behind and in the words.¹ This is especially true with his South Seas writings, because his voluntary exile in a different culture undoubtedly raised his awareness of identity, race concept as well as conflict of faith, which in turn fed into his fiction.

Instead of attempting an exhaustive study, this research only serves as a pointer to the rich potential of Stevenson's South Seas works. For example, both his experiment with his newly-found style of realism and his authorial intrusion into his work were continued in a novel not yet covered by this dissertation. His full-length novel *The Wrecker* carries on the narration of white men's tale, namely their criminal behaviour like insurance fraud, opium smuggling, blackmail, piracy and murder. As in *The Ebb-Tide*, the sea represents a lawless domain, an escape from failure on land by assuming a false identity, as well as an opportunity for restoring manhood. In the central character and the narrator Mr Loudon Dodd, Stevenson introduces remittance man in addition to traders, missionaries and beachcombers in his other stories. What distinguishes this novel from the others is its autobiographical element. Parallel experiences exist between Stevenson and Loudon Dodd: both share a longing for adventure; both moved from Edinburgh through Paris, London, San Francisco to the Pacific. Just as Stevenson himself says, 'Much of the experience of Loudon Dodd is drawn from my own life' (*Letters*, VI, 375).

It is regrettable that Stevenson's literary career in the Pacific should have been cut short by his sudden death in December 1894. His projected writing indicates that he was going to experiment with new and more complex conditions of island life. In a rare interview with a Hawaiian morning newspaper during his second visit to Honolulu in September 1893, he not only expressed his views on contemporary Pacific politics but also hinted at his ambition to continue to explore island life and to expose the 'evils' of civilisation in the age of imperialism:

In the end I am certain I shall find I have fully digested what I intend shall be my complete story of Polynesia. In this I will set face to face the extremes of native

¹ Cowell, p. 83.

and foreign island life, as already mentioned; but I expect to do more, and raise the story out of the ordinary by making its dramatic bearing national as well as individual. At present the whole thing is in the nebular state, but I have in mind several shorter stories, and one longer – all laid in the South Seas – that, if successfully finished, will have cleared the horizon.... I have not told you that, no matter what else it may be, its bearing will be upon the unjust (yet I can see the inevitable) extinction of the Polynesian Islanders by our shabby civilisation. In such a plan I will, of course, make liberal use of the civilised element, but in the most and best the story shall remain distinctively Polynesian.¹

At least two of his projected stories laid in the Pacific had already got underway before his newspaper interview: *The Go-Between: A Boy's Romance* would have been 'of about the length of 30,000 words' in twelve chapters (only the first two chapters were actually written and remain unpublished, *Letters*, VIII, 2n); *Sophia Scarlett* was planned in January 1892 (only a fifteen-page outline dictated to Belle Strong which gives a detailed summary of the first ten chapters survives, *Letters*, VII, 231). The second one in particular is worth our attention with regard to his potential literary development. In this projected story, it was clearly his intention to treat of the absorbing question of plantation labour, under which the commercial instinct becomes strongly developed by the urge of personal greed. As he told Sidney Colvin, the novel would be set 'in a big South Sea plantation run by ex-English officers – à la Stewart's plantation in Tahiti. There is a strong undercurrent of labour trade, which gives it a kind of Uncle Tom flavour' (*Letters*, VII, 231). Given the contemplated length of ten or more chapters, it is not impossible that the evils of 'blackbirding' or slave trade would have been described and sharply criticised -- a theme which is already touched upon though slightly enough to escape notice in *Falesá*: in the early part of the story Wiltshire was told that his predecessor 'had fled the place at half an hour's notice, taking a chance passage in a labour ship from up west' (*Tusitala*, XIII, 4). While the treatment of plantation labour and slave trade would have added to the subject matter of his white men's tale in his published works, his plan to achieve the 'effect of a society' by including 'three ladies, and a kind of a love affair between the heroine and a dying planter who is a poet' (*Letters*, VII, 282) would also have signified a new development, since critics had so often complained about the lack of women characters in Stevenson's fiction.

¹ Johnstone, pp. 102-3.

In the late nineteenth century social, political and literary context, it was not surprising that Stevenson's South Seas works did not receive as much critical attention as they are today. His anti-imperialistic and pro-native sentiments were well ahead of his time when the fantasy of imperialist glory was still being played out in the collective consciousness and popular literature at home. An exception to this critical silence came from Stephen Gwynn. Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Gwynn predicted that Stevenson's name would become permanently associated with the group of writers whose works had geographically definitive significance:

What Mr Kipling has done for British India, Mr Stevenson is doing for the Southern Seas. He is peopling a definite field in our imaginations; there at least his work takes root in life; and, if I mistake not, to future generations his name and personality will suggest these islands of the Pacific, as Smollett makes us think of a ship, Fielding of the fleet or an inn, Thackeray of London, Scott of the Border, George Eliot of the Midland Countries.¹

To have his name associated with the Pacific is also a great step forward for Stevenson criticism, leaving behind the historical child/adult debate and the national differences across the border between England and Scotland. For Stevenson's South Seas works do look beyond national interests to witness the transformation of the nineteenth-century imperial culture into the twentieth-century global culture. In many ways Stevenson's works anticipated the post-colonial literature of the South Pacific which emerged almost a hundred years later in the 1970s and 80s. For example, the contemporary Samoan writer Albert Wendt (1939-) was encouraged by Stevenson's writings about the Pacific. Wendt's *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (1979), now considered a modern classic of Pacific literature, is an epic saga of Samoan life undermined by the psychological impact of colonialism. The Samoan author's critical approach was certainly inspired by his Scottish predecessor, just as the narrator of the novel, who wishes to become a second Tusitala, remarks: 'If my novel is as good as Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, I will be satisfied'.²

¹ Stephen Gwynn, 'Mr Robert Louis Stevenson: A Critical Study', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. LVI, New Series, July to December, 1894 (London: Chapman and Hall), p. 778.

² Albert Wendt, *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 157.

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