

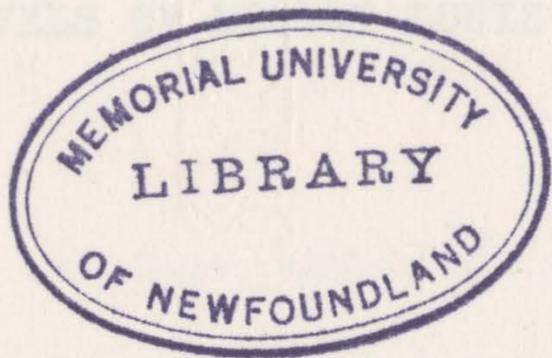
THE NOVELS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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WILLIAM H. ROMPKEY



Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts,
Memorial University of
Newfoundland, St. John's, 1961.

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ABSTRACT

Stevenson first entered fiction in the romantic novel of action, more specifically the boys' adventure story. Treasure Island is handled skilfully both in development and style, and, while The Black Arrow is somewhat inferior, Kidnapped is again of the calibre of the first book. Although it is an adventure story, plot and character developments in Kidnapped, which occur when Stevenson introduces the elements of Scottish history and topography, suggest the later dramatic novels.

The triumph of evil, a dominant theme, is treated most vividly in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and The Master of Ballantrae. Concurrent with this theme is the presentation of 'The Devil as Angel' in Silver, Alan Breck, James Durie and Frank Innes. Moreover, these two novels mark the transition from romantic to dramatic. Although the characters are still flat, Jekyll and Henry Durie do make moral choices which determine their destinies. In The Master of Ballantrae, also, is the father-son estrangement and the integration of the Scottish national character as background for the psychological situation.

In conception and execution Weir of Hermiston is magnificent, and Stevenson's greatest novel. Here, once more, is the father-son relationship, set against the Scottish background. But Weir of Hermiston is also a great love story.

The quality of Weir of Hermiston and Stevenson's perspicacity as a critic suggest he consciously produced inferior work. While a harsh judgement of this should be tempered by consideration of his physical disability, the weaknesses in his novels force him, certainly not into oblivion, but at least into the second class.

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PREFACE

The following is a critical study of Stevenson's major novels: Treasure Island, Kidnapped, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The Master of Ballantrae, and Weir of Hermiston. It was intended originally to treat Stevenson as representative of writers of such novels as are now studied in secondary schools; however, it soon became apparent that Stevenson could not be confined to this class, and, although some remarks are made on children's literature in general, and that of the nineteenth century in particular, to dwell on this aspect would do injustice to the man, and would, in fact, add incongruously to an already rather diverse thesis.

Diversity on the whole is unavoidable. Although Stevenson began as a practitioner in the novel of adventure, a genre with its own methods and standards, he progressed to novels of human drama, bringing his career to a climax with the unfinished masterpiece, Weir of Hermiston. But the adventure element flows through all his fiction, although later mingled with Scottish history and topography as well as human tragedy, wherein the Jekyll and Hyde and other minor themes find expression. Because of this admixture a neat, unified thesis is difficult. However, an attempt is made to view each novel in the light of not only the requirements of the novel in general, but those of the particular type of which it is a specimen.

The development follows, generally, the chronology of the novels. Among the novels of adventure Treasure

Island and Kidnapped will be given prominence. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and The Master of Ballantrae provide a transition between the two types represented at the poles by Treasure Island and Weir of Hermiston. The latter will receive detailed analysis, as befits a masterpiece of its stature. The final chapter will discuss Stevenson's ability and integrity as an artist.

Stevenson was a versatile and prolific writer, and while the study is mainly concerned with his novels, references to his other works, especially his essays and letters, will be made when they throw light on some aspect of his fiction. It will be necessary also to refer to his biography, for he was a writer who leant heavily on the circumstances of his own life.

References to letters and novels are to the Tusitala Edition of his works, while quotations from his essays refer to The Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson, London, Macdonald, 1950.

The writer wishes to thank the staffs of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Library and the Gosling Library, St. John's, for their assistance, and Dr. George Story for his criticism and advice.

Chapter I

I N T R O D U C T O R Y

A clear view of Stevenson's novels is clouded by mists that obscure their essential worth. One of these mists is particularly Scottish in character: although he travelled widely, Stevenson was bound inextricably to Scotland, a country which has been often somewhat removed from the currents in the main stream of English literature. For this and other reasons, although an attempt can be made to place Stevenson in his literary setting, he refuses to be confined to one school. Another obfuscation is Robert Louis Stevenson the personality, for the literary artist for many years has been overshadowed by the literary deity. That at least one novel has been based on his life may indicate the colour, the drama, the romance of his biography. This apotheosis of the man to the neglect of his contribution to letters was largely the result of inaccurate and false biography, and subsequent information provoked reaction and counter-reaction to his novels and his reputation. But his biography cannot be avoided, for he was a writer who drew extensively on his rather meagre experience of life. Finally, their diversity makes an integrated, unified study of his novels difficult: several themes and intentions are,

to the last, commingled; so that no neat thesis is possible.

Any inquiry would be inadequate which did not see him in relief against the proper background and in the proper atmosphere. Physically his background is Edinburgh, the Lowlands, or the sombre, gray Scottish moors, for he is the heir of Scott; artistically, he belongs to that romantic trend, and shared that cognizance of the art of fiction, which the English novel illustrated in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a romance which Scott had helped to prepare. So that he is the signal successor of Scott.

Scott was not greatly concerned with theories of fiction, but with the time-honoured stories and traditions passed on to him by his venerable ancestors or invented on their model. His stories were 'romances' because his object was not so much a profound interpretation of life as the description of scenery and manners. He found in history what others found in their imaginations and memories; he was the popularizer of the historical romance.

There is really no school of Scott in the history of the English novel, or, if there is, Stevenson is the only disciple who has distinguished himself; but the strain of romance, however subdued, is woven distinctly into the harmony of the novel after 1850. There is a strong note of the earlier Romanticism in the Brontës; there is romance of a sort in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland and in Kingsley's The Water Babies, Hypatia, Westward Ho, and Hereward the Wake; the historic succession came to

George Eliot, and she wrote Romola; Charlotte Yonge wrote under the influence of the Oxford Movement, and attempted to enforce its principles in fiction; R.D. Blackmore wrote Lorna Doone, a quasi-historical novel of the West Country.

The prose romances of William Morris are certainly part of this trend. He was a part of it from the beginning, with his contributions to The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine (1856), for the most part reminiscences of Malory and Fouque. These exercises provided him with a language, and in the last ten years of his life he used this constantly in a long series of romances from The House of the Wolfgangs (1889) to the posthumous Sundering Flood (1898).

The portfolio of Romance passed to the Aesthetes of the eighties and nineties. In poetry the Pre-Raphaelites had been influenced by Ruskin, who had started the movement as a protest against the indifference to art and the beautiful of industrialized Victorian England. But in spite of the pious and medieval colour of their sentimental archaisms, they made room for sensuousness: Swinburne glorified the beautiful with a reckless and blasphemous ardour and, through him, as well as through other channels, the doctrine of art for art's sake crept into England. The high priest of the movement was Walter Pater, an ascetic hedonist, concerned with cultivating an appreciation for the past, especially through its art. The secret of happiness, he maintained, lay not in action or endeavour, but in heightened awareness - 'to burn always with a gem-like flame,' to maintain ecstasy

was success in life.

This decadence was for the most part the outbreak of instincts which had been repressed by the constraint of the Victorian period; then, too, at the end of the century England's increasing wealth and consequent refinement resulted in improved tastes, in the dissatisfaction with the limits of insularity, and a fondness for the exotic. In literary circles there was a conscious worship of beauty; French influences, particularly those of Verlaine, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and Flaubert, were welcomed.

The French had a composite influence on Stevenson as part of this aesthetic movement. About 1850 a change occurred in the English and French novels, although in the latter case it was not so much a renaissance as in the former. For the past quarter century the chief bent of the French novel had been historical, or at any rate in the direction of the romance of incident. In Hugo's romances, for example Les Miserables (1862), or Quatre - Vingt - Treize (1874), the properties of the novel as we know it had very little place. The plot was ill-constructed, without verisimilitude, sometimes hardly existent; the characters were large, airy sketches rather than men and women; and both were subjected to description, preaching and prophesying.

In the subsequent reaction, the novel came to be regarded as an art form. The new French school was characterized by its objective attitude, its realism, and its attention to the perfection of style. The champion of the school, Flaubert,

endorsed de Maupassant's proposition that there is only one word or one phrase that can fully or adequately express a writer's idea. His practice matched his theory. But the style gained at the expense of the story, for it produced a sense of the unnatural, a lack of freshness and spontaneity; moreover, this objective approach and the striving for realism led to a pessimistic outlook, for real life is often dissatisfying. It would be impossible to go much beyond Flaubert in perceiving and rendering the dismal ironic side of life. But in its realism, in its struggle with style, in its cult of the ugly, in its divorce from faith and morals, Flaubert's work influenced literature up to the early twentieth century.

This was the school which influenced the English novel, and enhanced the vein of romance, which reached its climax with the Aesthetes or the Decadents, characterized by their extraordinary hobbies, and caring little if they were the products of moral decay. George Moore kept a python, fed on live guinea pigs, and Stevenson, living in Scotland, somewhat removed from the current of the times, kept his hair long and wore his velvet jacket.

Another who indulged in affectations of speech, manner and dress was Oscar Wilde. His Picture of Dorian Grey (1891), inspired by Huysmann, is a variant of Balzac's Peau de Chagrin, the story of a portrait growing old and hideous, while the sinister voluptuary it represents preserves his youthful beauty. Dorian Grey, for ever testing new opinions and

courting new impressions, in love with art and completely cold to genuine feeling, was, in spite of his charm, his wit, and his vocabulary, an evil thing. The novel remains an unconsciously severe comment on Wilde's own theory of life, the pursuit of the sensual and intellectual delight with no acceptance of moral responsibility. Although they do not treat particularly the pursuit of the sensual and intellectual, but deal with morality in general, the same theme - man selling his soul to the Devil - is dealt with in Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The Master of Ballantrae, and such short stores as 'Markheim', and 'The Merry Men'. This would seem to reveal in Stevenson the same frame of mind that characterized the Aesthetes; but he is a special breed.

Stevenson's heritage was a rigid Scotch puritanism. During childhood and youth his devoted nurse, Cummy, told him stories of Scottish history and stories of the Devil, in whose personal existence on earth she fervently believed; later in 'Markheim' and 'The Merry Men', the Devil appeared in human form; and the Master of Ballantrae was called 'a very devil of a son'. Cummy expounded to the young Stevenson her fierce religion, the religion of Knox and Calvin, in which the notions of Hell fire and damnation were prominent, a religion not differing greatly from that of his parents, but perhaps more fanatically, because more superstitiously held. Night after night the boy went to bed in terror of nightmares, the result of one of which was

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. So, while Stevenson would appear to have obvious affinities with the Decadents, unlike Oscar Wilde, his view of man growing all to flesh emanates from a source other than that of the French Naturalists.

And it is true, in fact, that Stevenson is a hybrid; of no particular school, yet romantic in a profound sense, for he inherits from all. From Flaubert and the French he learned to cultivate a style, and while at times sedulousness left him open to factitiousness and artificiality, generally speaking his style is polished and attractive. Ironically, the genre in which he began as a prose writer was the adventure story, or the novel of incident, so that it might be said he married Flaubert to Dumas. But while he is read today chiefly by children and adolescents, a great deal of his work was not intended for young people.

While he shows the frame of mind of the Decadents and Flaubert, he is also the successor of Scott, and in Kidnapped, Catriona, Weir of Hermiston, and St. Ives, as well as in many essays and short stories, he is the Scottish patriot, intensely aware of his country's history, and his characters in these stories, in their reactions and in their speech, are seen not only - indeed not so much - as human beings, as products of their national environment. In childhood and youth, although his activities outside the house were limited, in his own way, through his nurses stories, and through such expeditions as he could manage

he had come to love his native land. When at the University he walked the streets of Edinburgh, its past came alive to him, leading him to identify himself with earlier Scottish writers such as the eighteenth century Robert Fergusson. This feeling for the hills and glens of Scotland, and the people who inhabited them, for picturesque and romantic atmosphere, was to inform the greater part of his work; and here Stevenson is the true heir of Scott.

He made a formal statement of his attitude in an essay on romance in 1882:

One thing in life calls for another; there is a fitness in events and places; the effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, would happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it ... The right kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; the right kind of thing should follow; and not only the characters talk aptly and think naturally, but all the circumstances in a tale answer one to another like notes in music. The threads of a story come from time to time together and make a picture in the web; the characters fall from time to time into some attitude to each other or to nature, which stamps the story home like an illustration. 1.

He quotes examples from Ulysses to Crusoe, then proceeds to extract the heart of the matter:

This, then, is the plastic part of literature; to embody character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye ... It is one thing to describe scenery with the word picture painters; it is quite another to seize on the heart of the suggestion and make a country famous with legend. 2.

Stevenson seems to have been as sensitive to gesture as others are to sound. He was also sensitive to associations of places and states of mind: a sudden wave of emotion left him literally staggering one day in Samoa; 'a frame of mind and body that belonged to Scotland and particularly to the neighbourhood of Callander.'

This kind of romance had been practised by Scott and Hugo, and from these Stevenson learnt that he could make a story without a hero: surely the Revolution is the hero of Quatre- Vingt - Treize as, in Waverley, it is the death of an old order. Henley missed the point of the 'Merry Men' when he criticized 'my uncle'. 'My uncle is not the story as I see it,' Stevenson insisted. 'It's really a story of wrecks as they appear to the dweller on the coast. It's a view of the sea.' This conception of romance need not exclude character. It only requires that where character is the end action should be the means.

This particular vein of romance in Stevenson can be traced through to Weir of Hermiston, and after Stevenson one can follow the line of romance to Quiller-Couch, Neil Munro, John Buchan, and A.E. Mason. Perhaps only Buchan evoked, through his action, the sense of youthful high spirits and expectancy, which is the mainspring of Stevenson. But these are only partial inheritors. The essential Stevenson romance has a far more erratic progression: it is present in the stories of J. Meade Falkner; it is present in the Conrad of The Shadow Line, or Heart of Darkness, though Conrad moved away from

the novel of action to the novel of atmosphere and sensibility. A really impressive Stevensonian story is The Third Man, whose hero is surely the racked and dismembered city itself; and when people complained that Harry Lime wasn't real enough, their complaints were as beside the point as Henley's of 'The Merry Men.'

But the current in English fiction after 1850 was away from this romance. A reaction similar to Flaubert's occurred in the English novel, but in the latter it was a renaissance. Stevenson was caught somewhere between the old school and the new and torn by both. By the 1880s the mutation that had occurred in the novel with George Eliot and Meredith had become dominant; art had come to the novel, as Henry James indicated in his essay, 'The Art of Fiction' (1884):

Certain accomplished novelists have a habit of giving themselves away, which often must bring tears to the eyes of the people who take their fiction seriously. I was lately struck, in reading over many pages of Anthony Trollope, with his want of discretion in this particular. In a digression, a parenthesis or an aside, he concedes to the reader that he and his trusting friend are only 'making believe'. He admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to be, I confess, a terrible crime; it is what I mean by the attitude of apology, and it shocks me every whit as much in Trollope as it would have shocked me in Gibbon or Macaulay.

James described the novel as history. Trollope's apologetic⁴ attitude to his art implied, he said, that the novelist was

less occupied with truth than the historian. This fidelity to nature was, and is, what distinguishes the novelist as artist. The question is not one of realism in any narrow interpretation of the word; rather, the novelist is saying that, given the nature of man, the situation he has created through the characters enacting it, can resolve itself only in this way. A novelist like Stevenson, whose material was mainly romantic, in this respect conformed to the law as well as James.

It was with Stevenson that James debated in 1885 the nature of the novel and the function of the novelist. When he wrote 'A Humble Remonstrance', Stevenson was opposed to realism as it had been practised by Zola: 'The root of the whole matter,' he said, 'is that the novel is not a transcript of life, to be judged by its exactitude; but a simplification of some side or point to life, to stand or fall by its significant simplicity.' With this James agreed. But while the novel may be a simplification⁵ of life, it must be judged by its success in actually standing for life itself. For the novel to be successful, the reader must feel that the events in it could happen only as the novelist describes them; the appeal is to the reader's knowledge of the nature of man, and this is true whether the novelist is aiming at profundity or entertainment. With Stevenson the reader often is inclined to think, not that events could not happen this way, but certainly that characters would never look or act this way; his novels

on the whole lack this fidelity to nature. Stevenson's presentation of character is often unnatural, and although this is sometimes excusable or even meritorious, according to the genre he is prosecuting, the defect keeps him out of the first rank of novelists. And the interesting question this poses is why, considering his perception of the nature of art, his critical appreciation of it did not prevent him from a resort to inferior work, to pot-boiling and 'tushery'.

From the eighteen eighties onwards, when the results of the Education Acts of 1870 providing compulsory primary education for all were manifest, the character of fiction changed. More novels were published each year, a great many of which, indeed, the majority of which, could not be called art; fiction became stratified as it had not been earlier. Dickens and Thackeray had commanded all the reading public there was in their time; now there were many publics, some existing in complete isolation from the others, and no novelist captured them all. What is important, however, is the effect of this stratification on the novelists themselves. Some felt an alienation from, or a complete disregard of, the public as irresponsible. In fact Stevenson himself, an author with a large public following, felt this. In a letter to Edmund Gosse, 2 January 1886, he says:

What the public likes is work (of any kind) a little loosely executed; so long as it is a little wordy, a little slack, a little dim and knowless, the dear public likes it; it should (if possible) be a little dull into the bargain 6

He goes on to say he knows good work sometimes 'hits' but believes it is by accident; he says he knows a good work eventually succeeds, but it is not the doing of the public; 'they are only shamed into silence or affection'. Stevenson denies he writes for the public; he writes for money, 'a nobler deity', and 'most of all for myself ... both more intelligent and nearer home'. But whether he wrote for the public, or for money - and the two can hardly be dissociated, - this indictment of his work would seem to exclude him from the company of the purists such as James, Conrad, and Joyce that this stratification of the novel produced. These latter were careless of the public, and when the public left them it only justified them in their own eyes. By his own admission Stevenson was not one of them. Some distinction, then, would seem to be necessary between Stevenson the artist and Stevenson the entertainer.

Objective criticism of Stevenson has been made difficult by his apotheosis. For thirty years after his death he was canonized: Quiller-Couch moaned: 'Put away books and paper and pen ... Stevenson is dead, and now there is nobody left to write for.' Richard le Gallienne called him the 'Virgil of prose'.⁷ E.F. Benson's study was right on one point:⁸ the man suffered from the 'indignity of being pilloried in stained glass'.

⁹
However, it was not surprising: in the nineteenth

century (as well as the twentieth: Ernest Hemingway, Dylan Thomas and Brendan Behan are cases in point) writers were made famous by newspapers and periodicals, and Stevenson owed much of his fame to the friends who aided his career and obtained favourable publicity for him. In personal interviews, too, his charm, wit and good temper, in spite of the physical disability that he suffered, won him a great deal of fame. All this resulted in a hero-worship which collected every possible personal reminiscence and recorded traits and episodes even of his most childish years. The scale on which this was done indicates the extreme of the R.L.S. cult; much less has been recorded of more important personages.

One reason for this hero-worship was Stevenson's lifelong struggle with ill-health, in spite of which he yielded such a copious output, and managed to be generally cheerful and in high spirits. Even at twenty-nine months he was slight with a weak nervous system and a predilection for fever. For the rest of his life he was thin and spare; 'to use a Scotch word,' wrote Eve Simpson, '... he had a 'shilpit' look, which is starveling, crined, ill-thriven, all in one and more'.¹⁰ This continuous ill health plagued him throughout childhood and youth, and at twenty-three he was emaciated, with a grim history of feverish colds, nervous exhaustion, spells of facial tic, dyspepsia, and cold feet. Arriving in London in 1873 he had a physical collapse, and was ordered to the Riviera for

convalescence: the doctor feared consumption. En route he wrote to Mrs. Sitwell:

I have been very tired all day; lying outside my bed and crying in the feeble way that you recollect ... I finished up my day with a lamentable exhibition of weakness. I could not remember French, or at least I was afraid to go into any place lest I should not be able to remember it ... I walked about the streets in such a rage with every person who came near me, that I felt inclined to break out upon them with all sorts of injurious language ... If you knew how old I felt! I am sure that this is what age brings with it - this carelessness, this disenchantment, this continual bodily weariness, I am a man of seventy; O Media, kill me, or make me young again. 11.

This was the first of a number of visits abroad; in fact he was to spend the rest of his life in search of health. Yet in spite of his known disposition, he undertook a journey to America in 1879 (at the call of Fanny Osbourne, with whom he professed to be in love), culminating in a trip across the plains to California.

Every schoolboy is familiar with his journey across America, as described in 'The Amateur Emigrant': the train was badly lit, heated, and ventilated, requiring passengers to sleep on boards. Stevenson wrote to Henley:

I can see the track straight before and straight behind me to either horizon. Peace of mind I enjoy with extreme serenity; I am doing right. I know no one will think so; and don't care. My body, however, is all whistles. 12.

This was the first time in his life he had come near dying; upon arrival in Monterey, ranchers found him

lying in the open, collapsed and barely conscious. While Fanny's divorce was in progress he inhabited an abandoned hut but on a dwindling purse and in ominous ill health, his work on the 'Emigrant' hampered by weakness, forcing him to lie down between pages. He wrote to Gosse from Monterey:

I have that peculiar and delicious sense of being born again in an expurgated edition which belongs to convalescence. It will not be for long; I hear the breakers roar. I shall be steering head first for another rapid before many days; ... I am going for thirty now; and unless I snatch a little rest before long, I have, I may tell you in confidence, no hope of reaching thirty-one. My health began to break last winter, and has given me but fitful times since then. This pleurisy, though but a slight affair in itself, was a huge disappointment to me, and marked an epoch. To start a pleurisy about nothing, while leading a dull, regular life in a mild climate was not my habit in past days; ... I believe I must go. It is a pity in one sense, for I believe the class of work I might yet give out is more real and solid than people fancy. (How right he was.) But death is no sad friend; a few aches and gasps, and we are done; like the truant child, I am beginning to grow weary and timid in this big jostling city and could run to my nurse, even although she should have to whip me before putting me to bed.

13

Henceforth he was a fragile man, writing propped up in bed, and defying the sinister disease that kept him from being notably close to a whole human person. In 1888, still in search of health, he, with his wife, mother, and stepson, sailed for the South Seas, arriving finally at Honolulu, which he left in 1889 for the Gilberts, and then Samoa. Although his plan was to return home, fearing the recurrence of disease, he decided to remain in Samoa, where his health was assured. He wrote to Sidney Colvin:

In the South Seas, I have health, and strength. I can walk and ride and be out of doors, and do my work without distress. There are great temptations on the other hand, to go home. I do not say it is to die, because I seem incapable of dying, but I know it is to go back to the old business ... remember that, though I take my sicknesses with a decent face, they represent suffering, and weakness, and painful disability; as well as the loss of all that makes animal life desirable ... my feeling for my friends at home has pulled me hard; but can you wonder if the hope of ... some snatch of a man's life after all those years of the sickroom, tempted me extremely? 14

The amazing thing, and the endearing, was, of course, his resilience after these crippling attacks, and, although this is one aspect of his life that has been over-emphasised, one must admire his courageous determination to lead his chosen career, in spite of his semi-invalid state. Moreover, what he wrote was copious; for a man who lived only to forty-four, the abundance of his work is extraordinary. He wrote constantly and diversely: essays, poems, novels, plays, short stories, letters, travel books.

Other aspects of his personality and character that drew people to him were his charm, his charity, and his sense of honour. His virtue was that, unlike his friend Henley, he refused to be twisted by his affliction. He always kept before him his ideals, his respect for human dignity, his sense of humour, and his sense of honour, and these he applied not only to his immediate circle of friends, but to mankind at large.

For example, believing the Samoans were being denied their rights and exploited, Stevenson did everything he could, by writing in the English and American press and by more direct action, to defend them. When the leaders of an unsuccessful revolt were put in jail, he and his family openly took the prisoners gifts of tobacco and kava. In return for his patronage the people built him a road across the island to Vailima. To them he was 'Tusitala' - the teller of tales.

It was honour that demanded he defend the Samoans against their imperialistic exploiters, for his sense of honour was scrupulous. In a letter to Mrs. Sitwell he wrote:

How curiously we are built up into our false positions. The other day, having toothache, and the black dog on my back generally, I was rude ~~to~~ one of the servants at the dinner table. And nothing, of course, can be more disgusting than for a man to speak harshly to a young woman, who will lose her place if she speak back to him; and of course I determined to apologize. Well, do you know, it was perhaps four days before I could find courage enough and I felt as red and ashamed as could be. Why? because I had been rude? not a bit of it; I was doing a thing that could be called ridiculous in this apologizing. I did not know I had so much respect of middle class notions before; this is my right hand which I must cut off ... let us hope I shall never be such a cad any more as to be ashamed of being a gentleman. 15.

At times his notions of honour were quixotic. In 1887, a troubled period in Ireland, the farm of John Curtin, consisting mainly of women, was boycotted by a group called the Moonshiners, and cut off from social intercourse.

Stevenson determined that he and his family should go to the Curtins, and thus arouse the country's conscience; because he was a famous person, he thought, the country would take notice and follow his lead. Two things stopped him from going: he had a book to finish, and then his father died.

These moral values of Stevenson inform his work; they are shown directly and dramatically in his fiction. Largely they are the values of a generous and spirited boy, though, of course, Stevenson was aware of the baffling complexities of life.

It is little wonder that such a man should attract, not only fellow writers, but all sorts of people within range of the press that he generated, for Stevenson became a legend during his own lifetime. His career was aided by association with such men as W.E. Henley, Edmund Gosse, Sidney Colvin, Henry James, J.M. Barrie, J.A. Symonds, and to a lesser extent George Meredith.

Graham Balfour, his cousin and first biographer, had been one of these early friends, and was careful not to destroy the image of the clique. Henley's protest against Balfour's 'barley sugar effigy' of Stevenson as a 'Seraph in Chocolate', coming two years before Henley's death in 1903, provided an excuse for a conspiracy to smother Stevenson's reputation. Henry James recorded that Graham Balfour knew, as James suspected, how much he had suppressed and distorted to show only the Jekyll side of

Stevenson and research justified Henley's protest; criticism based on defective biography vindicated his belief that his friend's reputation would be served better by biographical honesty.

Stevenson was an indefatigable letter writer, and his letters (edited by Sidney Colvin in 1899) provide an accurate picture of the man and his life. But Colvin omitted many of the most interesting letters and compressed and dovetailed others, so that many important facts about Stevenson's emotional life remained unknown until all the letters were available. Colvin presented Stevenson's letters to Mrs. Sitwell to the Advocate Library (now the National Library of Scotland) with the proviso that they were not to be used until 1949; the revealing letters to Charles Baxter, given by Baxter to the Savile Club, were much later acquired by Edwin Beinecke, who deposited them in the Yale University Library. With the acquiring of fresh information came a reaction to the apotheosis. Led by Frank Swinnerton in 1914, later writers built up a counter picture, which eventually emerged as that of an immoral swaggerer, restrained into reluctant respectability by a jealous wife. When Swinnerton argued that 'this debonair philosopher who finds himself never in a quandary' was petted too much as a child to permit 'wanton and morbid self distrust'; that his 'whole life was deliciously joined together by his naive and attractive vanity', which enabled him in deceiving himself to delight in 'the supreme cleverness of his own self deception',

that 'the ease of his environment conspired to keep sweet his happy complacency', his adverse criticism seemed so well founded on fact that almost an entire generation was converted to the view that Stevenson was an overrated writer, who owed his ephemeral fame to the cultivation of a clique. Once Swinnerton had shown that the material which went into the making of the idol was not altogether pure, he attempted to show that it had feet of clay.

(His novels) include occasional pieces of distinguished imagination, a frequent exuberance of fancy, and a great freshness of incident which conceals lack of central or unifying idea and poverty of imagined character. Intrinsically, although their literary quality is much higher, the romances - with the possible exception of *Kidnapped* - are inferior to the work of Captain Marryat .. 16.

Stevenson, reviving the never-very-prosperous romance of England, created a school which brought romance to be the sweepings of an old costume-chest. He has already become a greatly-loved writer of the second class, because his ideals have been superseded by other ideals and shown to be the ideals of a day, a season, and not the ideals of an age. In fact, we may even question whether his ideals were those of a day, whether they were not merely treated by everybody as so much pastime; whether the revival of the pernicious notion that literature is only a pastime is not due to his influence. We may question whether Stevenson did not make the novel a toy when George Eliot had finished making it a treatise. If that charge could be upheld, I am afraid we should have another deluge of critical articles upon Stevenson, written as blindly as the old deluge, but this time denouncing him as a positive hindrance in the way of the novel's progress. However that may be, Stevenson seems very decidedly to have betrayed the romantics by inducing them to enter a cul-de-sac; for romantic literature in England at the present time seems to show no inner light, but only a suspicious phosphorescence. And that fact we may

quite clearly trace back to Stevenson, who galvanised romance into life after Charles Reade had volubly betrayed it to the over-zealous compositor.

Stevenson, that is to say, was not an innovator. We can find his originals in Wilkie Collins, in Scott, in Mayne Reid, in Montaigne, Hazlitt, Defoe, Sterne, and in many others. No need for him to admit it: the fact is patent. 'It is the grown people who make the nursery stories; all the children do is jealously to preserve the text.' That is what Stevenson was doing; that is what Stevenson's imitators have been doing ever since. And if romance rests upon no better base than this, if romance is to be conventional in a double sense, if it spring not from a personal vision of life, but is only a tedious virtuosity, a pretence, a conscious toy, romance as an art is dead. The art was jaded when Reade finished his vociferous carpet-beating; but it was not dead. And if it is dead, Stevenson killed it. 17.

Conversion to this school was so complete that when Chesterton attempted an essay of rehabilitation in 1927, Edmund Gosse, who had applauded the Balfour biography, and abused Henley's protest, wrote to express 'sentiments ... of joy, of satisfaction, of relief, of malicious and vindictive pleasure' excited by 'the book in which you smite the detractors of Stevenson hip and thigh.'

Access to the crucial letters yielded a picture of Stevenson that was neither the 'Seraph in Chocolate' against whom Henley protested, nor a low-living rake, nor an optimistic escapist, nor the happy invalid, but a sensitive and intelligent writer. Later studies by Janet Adam Smith, D.N. Dalglish, Stephen Gwynn and David Daiches took a balanced and objective view of his work.

Miss Smith, editing the James - Stevenson correspondence, deplored the fashion whereby the person obscured the literary artist. She boldly (however injudiciously) lumped Stevenson and James in the same literary stratum, the intimacy shared not so much for Stevenson's charm and James's sympathies, as on the shared respect for, and grasp of, art.

But however Stevenson's exalted biography may obscure his literary merits, it cannot be disregarded. He was a person whose life, as we have seen, was one remove from the normal. Yet what experience he had found its way into his work, and the several themes that course through his novels, his morality as seen in his predilection with evil, or man selling his soul to the devil, his theme of the antagonism between father ~~and~~ son, and, of course, his attachment to the Scottish character and countryside, all emanate from his own experience. It may seem odd, considering the conventional morality in his later work, that, as a youth, Stevenson was something of a rebel. He was born in Edinburgh in 1850, to Margaret and Thomas Stevenson, middle class parents, at a time when middle class values were dominant. In Scotland this dominance was characterized by a narrow, rigid puritanism, which can be traced back to John Knox in the sixteenth century, and the gloomy fervour of the Covenanters in the seventeenth. It was against this puritanism that Stevenson rebelled, and yet the doctrine of predestination,

of the blessed and the damned, and the exorcism of evil was to inform much of his work.

He was a delicate, sickly, only child, adored by his parents, and by Cummy, Alison Cunningham, his devoted nurse. Thomas Stevenson had no rigid ideas about education; he was his son's playmate, content that Louis's attendance at school should be irregular and undistinguished. Sometimes his mother took him abroad for his health, or her own, for during Stevenson's childhood she was often ill; in fact Cummy meant more to him than anyone else at this stage of his life. A strongly religious woman, with a dramatic vein, she read to him, and told him stories of Scottish history, of the Covenanters, and of the Devil, in whose personal existence on earth she fervently believed, and it was from Cummy that the boy drew his passionate interest in these dour portions of his country's history.

After a succession of tutors and several years at an Edinburgh school for delicate children, he entered Edinburgh University at sixteen. Compared with the restraints and cosettings of his home life, this new freedom was particularly delightful to him, and as he roamed the streets of Edinburgh, the Scottish stories and legends of the past on which he had been nurtured came alive to him. This feeling for, indeed this passionate love of, Scotland was to permeate most of his novels. Even when he was away from Scotland, a greater part of the time, his heart was still in the Lowlands; indeed it is interesting that most of

his novels of Scotland were written away from home.

His father was an engineer and lighthouse builder, as two generations of his family had been, and at his request Louis enrolled in the faculty of engineering. But, although he won a medal for a paper he once read concerning lighthouses, his heart was never in engineering. It was, in fact, with his writing as it had been from youth; for even before he could put pen to paper he had dictated stories to Cummy. And these stories were not devoid of erudition, for the one advantage of his periods of illness was that he read widely, including Scott's novels, the voyages of Capt. Woodes Rogers, The Female Bluebeard, la Mare au Diable of George Sand, Harrison Ainsworth's The Tower of London, and four bound volumes of the early Punch, which contained some of Thackeray's works. He mentions (in 'Books Which Have Influenced Me') that he read The Thousand and One Nights before he was ten, and he was much impressed when his mother read him Macbeth. Montaigne influenced his essays, and he had read Robinson Crusoe when he was about twelve. In addition he had read Horace, Pepys, Hazlitt, Burns, Sterne, Heine, Keats and Fielding, all of them presumably studied closely.

But Thomas Stevenson regarded writing merely as an interesting hobby, and did all he could to encourage his son to follow the family profession. Attempting a compromise Louis became a law student. But from this point relations between father and son became strained: Thomas

Stevenson disapproved of both his son's bohemian behaviour and his ambitions; on the other hand Louis could no longer accept his parents' religious beliefs. There could be no real compromise, only peaceful coexistence; and the situation was not alleviated by Stevenson's financial dependence on his father, a condition which continued for years.

The tenuous bond received still another blow in 1876, when, staying at Fontainebleau, Stevenson met and fell in love with Fanny Vandegrift Osbourne, an American, separated from her husband, by whom she had had one son. Fanny was twelve years older than Louis and, of course his parents disapproved. In August 1879, on receiving a cable from Fanny, who had returned to California to her husband, Louis set sail, and, after travelling from New York by immigrant train, coming near death, and eking out a precarious living in Monterey and San Francisco, he eventually married the divorced Fanny in 1880. Opportunely, Thomas Stevenson relented, offered the much needed financial support, and accepted the couple into his household.

This, then, is the material that informs much of his work, especially the attempts at dramatic novels. It was only when he engaged in something like normal life that his work underwent a transformation. In 1889 he made the decision to settle in Samoa, where he had bought an estate, Vailima, and here he remained until his sudden death in 1894. At Vailima, his South Sea Abbotsford, he led a patriarchal

life, as Scott had before him, as head of a family that included his wife, her children, Lloyd Osbourne and Mrs. Joe Strong, his mother (his father had died), and a horde of native servants and labourers, who worshipped him. He was a pioneer farmer as well as a writer, clearing and cultivating his own ground. In addition he assumed a protective attitude to the natives of the island, beset by European encroachments. Here at last was a brush with real life, and the experience produced his greatest, although unfinished, novel, and one of the greatest in the language.

The development of Stevenson's novels from Treasure Island to Weir of Hermiston is one aspect of his fiction which will be traced in the following chapters. Basically this is a critical study of the major novels, with passing references to the minor novels and certain short stories where relevant. The difference between a novel and a short story is sometimes difficult to estimate. Usually the structure of both is quite similar, differing only in scope and length; while the novel aims at a more profound treatment, a deeper analysis of human life, the short story recalls some anecdote or vignette. Because of its length and scope, although there should not be any question as to its profundity, it may be questionable whether Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in particular is a novel or a short story. However, it is so important a work that it has been included in this study as a novel.

Of course to concentrate on his major novels is to

exclude the greater part of his work. An illustration of his range and versatility may be given by listing his works during the Bournemouth period: from September, 1884 to August, 1887 he worked on the following: The Black Arrow, Prince Otto, More New Arabian Nights, A Child's Garden of Verses, Kidnapped, Memories and Portraits, 'Underwoods', 'Markheim', 'Ollala', and a number of essays. This shows clearly his industry, fertility and versatility.

However, it is not with the minor poet or the major essayist that we are concerned, but with the novelist who is somewhere between these. The letters, poems, and essays are used frequently to throw light on his attitude to his life and work, but it is with the major novels that we are concerned primarily. Stevenson did not turn to the serious novel until he was well on in his career, and never really achieved success in the genre until the unfinished masterpiece he left at his death. He began in what is more properly called the 'romance', that is the novel not so much of character as of action, of exotic and exciting incident, which is more an 'entertainment' in the Graham Greene sense, than an imitation of life. This type of book, of course, especially as found in the boys' adventure story, had its own demands and standards, and Stevenson must be rightly judged in accordance with his success in meeting these.

As was pointed out earlier, a neatly integrated thesis is difficult, several strains being woven into the

novels from Treasure Island to Weir of Hermiston. The novels between these two extremes 'progress' from romances, or novels of incident and adventure, to what will be called 'dramatic' novels, or novels of living characters involved in the drama of human life. However throughout the complementary romantic interest in Scottish atmosphere and legend, the treatment of evil, and the father-son relationship continually assert themselves.

Of the former type Treasure Island and Kidnapped will be discussed in some detail, while The Black Arrow will receive minor consideration. Catriona, the sequel to Kidnapped, and St. Ives will not be treated independently, but referred to in passing where relevant, as will several short stories, such as 'Markheim', 'The Merry Men', 'The Wrecker', 'Ebb Tide', and 'The Beach of Falesa'. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and The Master of Ballantrae will be discussed as a unit, because they provide a certain transition from the novels of romance to the novels of drama or character. But another reason for the association of these two is that both provide material for an examination of Stevenson's treatment of evil, a dominant theme throughout his work. Finally, Weir of Hermiston, is Stevenson's only real success as a novel, and unfortunately this was unfinished. Nevertheless, as it stands, it is unquestionably a masterpiece, meeting fully the standards defined above. Yet even here there is a recurrence of the earlier romantic adventure, which is to be discussed in full in the following chapter.

Notes, Chapter 1.

1. Stevenson. 'A Gossip on Romance', Essays, p.353
2. Ibid., p.355.
3. Smith, J.A. 'Books in General', New Statesman, 18 November, 1950.
4. James, Henry. The Art of Fiction, New York: Oxford University Press, 1948, p.5.
5. Stevenson, 'A Humble Remonstrance', Essays, p.365
6. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. III, p.70
7. Quiller-Couch, A.T. Adventures in Criticism, New York: Scribners, 1896.
8. Hammerton, J.A. Stevensoniana: An Anecdotal Life and Appreciation, Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1907.
9. Benson, E.F. 'The Myth of Robert Louis Stevenson', London Mercury, July - August, 1925
10. Simpson, Eve. Robert Louis Stevenson's Edinburgh Days, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914, p.211.
11. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. 1, p.97.
12. Ibid., Vol. 11, p.75.
13. Ibid., Vol. 11, p.87.
14. Furnas, J.C. Voyage to Windward, p.316
15. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. 1, p.166.
16. Swinnerton, F. Robert Louis Stevenson, p.183.
17. Ibid., p.189.

Chapter II

THE ROMANCE OF DESTINY

Say not of me that weakly I declined
The labours of my sires, and fled the sea,
The towers we founded and the lamps we lit,
To play at home with paper like a child.
But rather say: In the afternoon of time
A strenuous family dusted from its hands
The sand of granite, and beholding far
Along the sounding coast its pyramids
And tall memorials catch the dying sun,
Smiled well content, and to this childish task
Around the fire addressed its evening hours.

- Stevenson,
'Underwoods', Bk. 1, XXXVIII

There are at least two classes of romantic artists: those who rebel against contemporary conditions and propose a new, cleansing, restorative philosophy or message, for example, Wordsworth or Carlyle; and those who despair of the possibilities of the contemporary world and turn to another, differing in time, space, or character, and write to spite reality, for example the Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris, or, in the novel, the Brontës, Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll. On the whole Stevenson is of the latter group. He wrote to Cosmo Monkhouse in 1884:

After all your boyhood's aspirations and youth's immortal daydreams you are condemned to sit down, grossly draw in your chair to the fat board, and be a beastly burgess till you die. Can it be? Is there not some escape, some furlough from the Moral Law, some holiday jaunt contrivable into a Better Land? Shall we never shed blood? This prospect is too grey. To confess plainly, I had intended to spend my life (or any leisure I might have from piracy upon the high seas) as a leader of a great horde of irregular cavalry, devastating whole valleys. 1.

He 'had intended' to spend his life thus; but in reality his life was quite the reverse. 'The romance of destiny', a phrase he used in Catiana, aptly suggests the aura that surrounded his forty-four years, and significantly

intimates the major influences on his life and work. Because he was destined to the life of a physical invalid, he was destined to the role of a romantic artist. The phrase suggests, too, the Scottish Calvinist environment, with its doctrine of predestination, of the blessed and the damned, in which his mind was formed and against which he revolted, but which, nevertheless, left an indelible imprint on his work.

Because Stevenson was always frail, an invalid supposedly suffering from tuberculosis, he spent much time at home, or travelling for his health on the continent, and this gave a sequestered, protective character to his development. To compensate for this hiatus from real life, he, like the Brontës before him, fabricated a world of his own. He spent many waking hours in a dream state, and much time writing or acting (he always dreamt of being a writer, and this has provided the impetus for those who accuse him of factitiousness) assisted by Cummy and his father. This preoccupation with a never-never land persisted into young manhood: in a letter to his mother, written when he was almost twenty-two, he declared:

An opera is far more real than life to me. It seems as if stage illusion and particularly this hardest to swallow and most conventional illusion of them all - an opera, would never stale upon me. I wish that life was an opera. I should like to live in one.

2.

He had early derived the style for his writing from the mysterious Mr. Skelt of the juvenile drama, or

the toy theatre: 'What is the world', he said, 'what is man and life, but what my Skelt has made them'. There seems to be little known about Skelt, but 'A Penny Plain, Twopence Coloured' is Stevenson's tribute to the joy of 'Skelt's Juvenile Drama': 'pages of gesticulating villains, epileptic combats, bosky forests, palaces and warships, frowning fortresses and prison vaults...' 3. on which his early imagination was nourished.

Because in childhood he had been wrapped comfortably in a domestic blanket, when he outgrew this and stepped on to the cobblestones of real life, the raw winds of Edinburgh puritanism, in their several manifestations were all the harder to bear. His parents still kept him too much on a halter, and treated him as if he were a bad, untrusted, yet dearly loved schoolboy, pestering him to study for a profession he disliked, to profess bigoted religious views he had recanted, and to acquiesce in a solemn philistinism against which all the best in him revolted. The local and domestic conventions lost their hold on him, and in the confusion of it all, nothing remained as real as the romances of the early years.

It is not surprising, then, that when Stevenson turned to the novel, he should incline to the novel of romance, or that this predilection should endure throughout his fiction. He acknowledged that this was escapism; in a letter to W.E. Henley from Bournemouth

he said: 'O my sighings after romance or even Skeltery, and O the weary age which will produce me neither.' So it was that he produced romance for the age. It is in the work of his first period, however, that the vein is most pure.

Stevenson distinguished between 'romantic' and 'dramatic': drama, he said, was the poetry of conduct; romance, the poetry of circumstance. In 1884 he debated with Henry James the difference between the novel of incident and the novel of character. In 'The Art of Fiction', James had refused to admit a difference between the novel of character and that of incident; for, in a story 'what is character but the determination of incident? what is incident but the illustration of character?' To make the point clear, he cited two instances:

I have just been reading at the same time the delightful story of Treasure Island and (in a manner less consecutive) Goncourt's Cherie. One of these works treats of murders, mysteries, islands of dreadful renown, hairbreadth escapes, miraculous coincidences, and buried doubloons. The other treats of a little French girl who lived in a fine house in Paris and died of wounded sensibility because no one would marry her. I call Treasure Island delightful because it appears to me to have succeeded wonderfully in what it attempts but Cherie strikes me as having failed deplorably in what it attempts, that is in tracing the development of the moral consciousness of a child... But one is as much a novel as the other and has a story quite as much.

4.

This drew from Stevenson 'A Humble Remonstrance', where he suggested that the subject under discussion was not

the art of fiction but the art of narrative, which

in fact is the same whether it is applied to the selection and illustration of a real series of events or of an imaginary series. It is in every history where events and men, rather than ideas, are presented - in Tacitus, in Carlyle, in Michelet, in Macaulay - that the novelist will find many of his own methods, most conspicuously and adroitly handled. 5.

Then he limited his definition to 'the art of fictitious narrative in prose' and proceeded to cope with Henry James, who had insisted on 'the sanctity of truth to the novelist'. But what does truth mean here, asked Stevenson? Can art 'compete with life'? And he described the artist:

... armed with a pen and a dictionary to depict the passions, armed with a tube of superior flake-white to paint the portrait of the insufferable sun... Man's one method, whether he reasons or creates, is to half-shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality... Literature, above all in the mood of narrative, imitates, not life but speech. The real art that dealt with life directly was that of the first men who told their stories round the savage camp fire. 6

He went on to say that in the novel of adventure, character may be admitted within certain limits (as, indeed, it is admitted in Treasure Island). 'But to add more traits, to start the hare of moral or intellectual interest', while the reader wants to know what happened next, 'is not to enrich but to stultify your tale'.

In his romantic novels, therefore, the interest lies in the relation between incidents and setting, rather than between character and setting, or between individuals. Stevenson was as occupied by the appropriately picturesque as by the thrilling or exciting. His eye was always on the locale; he had a keen eye for striking sights and sounds and suggestive names, and makes much in his essays of the fitness 'in events and places'.

... the effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it... Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. 7.

The chosen medium for these romantic novels was the boy's adventure story, a genre with its own form and style established by the serial magazines, and admirably suited to his view of romantic fiction as a bridge between experiences and desire.

But the boy should not be confused with the child; the child sees things freshly and fully, but as he grows older and is given to curiosity and analysis, he sees things less so; the boy represents the earliest stage of this condition. The child enjoys the plain picture of the world; the boy wants the secret, the end of the story. Stevenson was one of the first who treated seriously the

instincts of the boy. Many had written for children: Hans Anderson, Charles Kingsley, George Macdonald, Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway; but not for boys.

Stevenson's first romance was Treasure Island. In the spring of 1881, accompanied by his wife Fanny and his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, Stevenson left Davos, and travelled by way of Paris, Fontainebleau, St. Germain-en-Laye, to Pitlochry, where for his wife he began 'Thrawn Janet' and for Lloyd Treasure Island. He gives a first-hand account of the composition of the novel in 'My First Book', an article written in 1894 for Jerome's The Idler.

There was a schoolboy home for the holidays, and much in want of something craggy to break his mind upon. He had no thought of literature; it was the art of Raphael that received his fleeting suffrages; and with the aid of pen and ink and a shilling box of water colours, he had soon turned one of the rooms into a picture gallery. My more immediate duty towards the gallery was to be showman; but I would sometimes unbend a little, join the artist (so to speak) at the easel, and pass the afternoon with him in generous emulation, making coloured drawings. On one of these occasions, I made the map of an island; it was elaborately and I thought beautifully coloured; and the shape of it took my fancy beyond expression; it contained harbours that pleased me like sonnets, and with the unconsciousness of the predestined, I ticketed my performance Treasure Island... As I paused upon my map of 'Treasure Island', the future characters of the book began to appear there visibly among imaginary woods; and their brown faces and bright weapons peeped out upon me from unexpected quarters, as they passed to and fro, fighting and hunting treasure, on those few square inches of a flat projection...

On a chill September morning, by the cheek of a brisk fire, and the rain drumming on the window, I began the Sea Cook, for that was the original title... I had counted on one boy, I found I had two in my audience. My father caught fire at once with all the romance and childishness of his original nature, his own stories, that every night of his life he put himself to sleep with, dealt perpetually with ships, roadside inns, robbers, old sailors, and commercial travellers before the era of steam. He never finished one of these romances; the lucky man did not require to. But in Treasure Island he recognized something kindred to his own imagination, it was his kind of picturesque; and he not only heard with delight the daily chapter, but set himself acting to collaborate. When the time came for Billy Bones's chest to be ransacked, he must have passed the better part of a day preparing on the back of a legal envelope, an inventory of its contents, which I exactly followed; and the name of Flint's old ship, the Walrus, was given at his particular request. 8.

The final story has all the suspense and excitement an imaginative boy would desire. The thrill of adventure runs through the book from the appearance of the swashbuckling Billy Bones at the seaside inn to the eventual discovery of the pieces of eight. The cheerful but artless Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesey, the perspicacious and imperturbable, take Jim Hawkins along on their hunt for the buried treasure, indicated on Billy Bones's map. Jim is quite taken with Long John Silver, the crippled cook, until in the famous barrel episode he overhears Silver's plot to mutiny. Upon reaching Treasure Island, Jim, against orders, goes ashore with the mutineers, where he suddenly comes upon Ben Gunn, a ship-wrecked sailor. With Dr. Livesey and

party in charge of the stockade, Jim once more slips away to set adrift the Hispaniola and engage in a thrilling hand to hand combat with Israel Hands. Upon Jim's return to the stockade, Silver, the captor, protects Jim from his men, and when Dr. Livesey comes to claim him, in a tense scene, Jim, loyal to Silver, will not leave. Failing to find the treasure the pirates turn on Silver and Jim; but Jim's companions arrive just in time to save him. Silver escapes with his share of the treasure, which Ben Gunn had hidden in a cave, and the story is brought to a satisfying conclusion. The plot is well constructed; scene follows glowing scene in prompt succession, keeping the reader enthralled as the drama unfolds before his eyes.

'I was thirty one', Stevenson says in 'My First Book'. 'I was head of a family; I had lost my health; I had never yet paid my way, never yet made two hundred pounds a year.' Treasure Island brought him, in the first instance, a 'hundred jingling, tingling, golden, minted quid,' the most he had ever received for anything he had ever written. It marked the beginning of the end of financial dependence on his father.

'My First Book' gives the ingredients of Treasure Island but says nothing of the story, 'Billy Bos'n', by Charles E. Pearce, published in Young Folks

at the time Stevenson was writing. This was a treasure-hunting story with a map and an island; indeed the whole plan and construction are similar, and Robert Leighton, the editor of Young Folks, thought this story might have been the model for Stevenson's book. Stevenson did acknowledge his indebtedness to his predecessors Defoe, Poe, and Marryat, and stated that he chiefly borrowed from Washington Irving's Tales of a Traveller.

J.R. Moore ⁹ has attempted to show his reliance on Defoe. He compares and contrasts Ben Gunn with Crusoe, and also quotes a number of Stevenson's references to Defoe's novel in his essays and letters, perhaps the most striking of which is 'A Gossip on Romance'. But Stevenson's chief debt to Defoe was, he contends, one of which he himself was unaware. Stevenson acknowledged that he owed much in Treasure Island to 'the great Capt. Johnson's History of Notorious Pirates'; Moore has claimed with convincing effect that Johnson is a pen name for Defoe, and he draws attention to the names Stevenson borrowed from the History: Long John Silver is called after Captain Silver, a master-gunner, and Long Ben Avery; Ben Gunn is the name of an ex-pirate mentioned in the History.

Treasure Island began in Young Folks on 1 October 1881; but the boy readers did not like the story, and as a serial it was a failure. Several reasons may be adduced to account for this: first of all, it did not plunge right into the story, but dealt with too much

preliminary material concerning the inn. It is a fundamental rule in boys' stories that they must attract the reader at the beginning; if they do not, they will never win him. The sinister visits of Black Dog and Pew, their dealings with Billy Bones, and indeed the rather intent study of this latter during his stay at the inn, chilled the enthusiasm of the young readers.

Oddly enough, adult reaction was the opposite. Robert Leighton, the editor of Young Folks, said: 'My impression is that Treasure Island is still appreciated less by boys than by grown up readers. I myself have read the book quite a score of times. I have never known a boy under sixteen to read it a second time.' 10. While there must be many boys under sixteen who volubly disagree, what Leighton says of its popularity with adults is true. Mr. Gladstone himself took up the book, and could not put it down until he had finished it. Published in book form by Cassells in 1881, it attracted such men as James Payn of Cornhill, Andrew Lang, and Henley. The Saturday Review, which had till now ignored Stevenson, was enthusiastic, and The Athenaeum was moved almost to enthusiasm. So the boys' book, rejected by boys, won the attention of the adult reading public, a significant tribute to the artistry with which the novel is executed.

Jim Hawkins is the narrator as well as the central figure (although it might be possible to make a case for John Silver as the outstanding, the dominant figure),

with whom the readers can identify themselves. Jim's adventure with Hands, and his final success in saving the Hispaniola gave him a certain heroic stature. But he is not removed so far into the heroic that he ceases to be a boy. His good fortune is due as much to luck as to skill: 'There is a kind of fate in this', Dr. Livesey says, when he hears the ship is safe. 'Every step, it's you that saves our lives.'¹¹ Captain Smollett tells him, 'You're a good boy in your own way Jim; but I don't think you and me'll go to sea again. You're too much the born favourite for me.'¹² Jim has resourcefulness and courage; but these qualities are not enough to enable him to save himself and his friends, he has beginner's luck also. And it is well that Jim should not be too heroic: he must not be too far above the reader's accomplishment and on the other hand he must not compete with Livesey in adult competence. Jim develops under the eye of the reader; in the encounter with Hands he achieves full stature as a man of action, and in his refusal to go back on his word and escape from Silver, he achieves full moral stature.

Yet he is not in the least a round character; he is not a real boy, but the eternal boy, reacting to each situation pregnant with adventure and excitement, as each avid reader would imagine himself reacting.

This is not how man acts, but how man would wish himself to act; Jim is not real but romantic.

The story as a whole is well developed. The opening paragraphs are masterly:

I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand barrow; a tall, strong, heavy, nut brown man; his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat; his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails; and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the cove and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often afterwards:-

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest -
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!!"

in the high, old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken at the capstan bars. Then he rapped on the door with a bit of stick like a hand-spike that he carried, and when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum. This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, like a connoisseur, lingering on the taste, and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our signboard.

13.

'I remember him as if it were yesterday', makes it quite clear that the hero and party survived. The expressions themselves are chosen carefully, moving to a climax from 'inn door', 'sea chest', 'nut brown', 'tarry pigtail', 'hands ragged and scarred', 'sabre cut across the cheek', to the sinister words of the old sea song, which are to ring through the book. This at once strikes a note of romance and adventure, and sets the story

moving.

The transition from the normal to the abnormal is accomplished skillfully. We are told little of life at the Admiral Benbow for two reasons: in an adventure story there is little time for reminiscence, but the story must move forward swiftly, gathering speed until the climax is reached; furthermore life at the Benbow, a romantic and adventurous place itself, could hardly be held up as a foil to the adventurous life. The contrast, then, in Jim's life is made implicitly, by the sudden intrusion of the seaman's arrival, and by the gradual fading of domestic scenes. Jim's father dies, granting Jim independence and responsibility, without which he could not take a central part in the narrative, while his mother is put away in a less drastic manner to take care of the inn until the hero returns.

In Chapter III the story moves away from the Benbow, and in Chapter IV the domestic scenes are all but finished. When they are used now it is to suggest contrast between Jim's situation and the normal situation of other people. For example:

It was already candle-light when we reached the hamlet, and I shall never forget how much I was cheered to see the yellow shine in doors and windows; but that, as it proved, was the best of the help we were likely to get in that quarter.

For - you would have thought men would have been ashamed of themselves - no soul would consent to return with us to the Admiral Benbow. The more we told of our troubles, the more man, woman, and child - they clung to the shelter of their houses. The name of Captain Flint, though it was strange to me, was well enough known to some there, and carried a great weight of terror. Some of the Admiral Benbow remembered, besides, to have seen several strangers on the road, and, taking them to be smugglers, to have bolted away; and one at least had seen a little lugger in what we called Kitt's Hole. 14.

In this skillful passage, Stevenson not only points out the contrast between the warmth inside and the terror out; he also links the feeling of terror with Captain Flint, while the vague report of the smugglers effectively suggests that forces of piracy and evil are closing in on Jim.

The groundwork of mystery and suspense, so vital to a boys' adventure story, has been laid already. This is accomplished mainly by a juxtaposition of knowledge and ignorance, or, to put it formally, dramatic irony. Stevenson makes extensive use of this device throughout the book: for example, in the scene at Bristol, he informs the reader of Silver's intention by making use of the Squire's unsuspecting, boyish, egotistical good nature, and Jim's youth and lack of knowledge. Writing to tell Livesey of the purchase of a ship, the Squire says:

I got her through my old friend, Blandly, who has proved himself throughout the most surprising trump. The admirable fellow literally slaved in my interest, and so, I may say, did every one in Bristol, as soon as they got wind of the port we sailed for - treasure, I mean. 15

Later, at Silver's inn, Jim glimpses Black Dog, one of the pirates who had visited Billy Bones. Pretending no acquaintance with the man, Silver stages a contrived drama of having the man captured. Aware of Jim's suspicions Silver craftily turns Jim's attention from Black Dog, and in great earnestness reports the matter to the Squire. In the game of balancing knowledge against ignorance Stevenson shows himself quite adroit: first the reader and Silver's mates know the truth, not Jim; then Jim learns the truth, but Silver remains unaware of this.

The texture and atmosphere of the story change once Treasure Island is reached. No longer is the sense of adventure conveyed by imposing the unfamiliar on the familiar; the story is told now in the rise and fall of the opposing fortunes. Here Stevenson used a favourite device of adventure writers, in setting the protagonists alone on an uninhabited island. The device required that a new character now be introduced who could be a deus ex machina if necessary: this is Ben Gunn, who plays a minor, but decisive role. His unknown history, and unforeseeable actions prevent the story from degenerating into a mere conflict between good and bad characters, of which the outcome can be calculated in advance.

It may be well here to dwell briefly, though

not too solemnly, on this struggle between good and evil, a recurring theme in almost all Stevenson novels. It is dominant in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and The Master of Ballantrae, and, will be fully discussed when these are examined. But while in these later novels the conflict is more profound, nevertheless a treatment of the question on a lower level of intensity is found as early as Treasure Island. Here, as in the later novels, the proposition is that the real romantic interest lies with the bad: the picturesque villain is more appealing. The problem is faced in this book by shading gradations of virtue and vice from a completely unsympathetic villain like Israel Hands, to a complete hero like Dr. Livesey, and keeping in the centre Silver, who, like the Master of Ballantrae, though villainous in intentions, is often admirable in action. It is important in this technique to detach the character from the side to which he belongs, and relate him to the other side. The non-committal end of Silver lays the final emphasis on this function of his in the plot.

However, it is important also that the pirates as a group not be considered altogether as villains; they provide the principal romantic interest in a boys' story, and are bound to be, up to a point, sympathetic characters. Stevenson solves this problem in part by the character of Silver, a combination of charm, strength, and villainy (W.E. Henley without Henley's virtue,

Stevenson said) and reinforces the solution by keeping Jim in closer contact with the pirates than with the 'good' party. What is at stake, and provides the suspense, is not only finding the treasure, but the fate and intentions of Silver.

A main source of disagreement about Treasure Island, and of injustice to Stevenson, is that people argue about it without considering what sort of novel it is, or ascertaining the author's intentions or standards. Stevenson himself made these quite clear in 'My First Book': Treasure Island is not an adult art-novel; neither is it the type of adult book which happens to please children, the type which can be appreciated at more than one level. It is unfair to compare Treasure Island with Gulliver's Travels, for example, because in the latter the adult reader is constantly aware of the moral, intellectual, political, and social satire. The older reader can derive nothing more from Treasure Island than the boy does. However, the adult must suspend his knowledge and ask no questions about probability, motive, and character; for the boy is not shocked by improbabilities and grows impatient with character. It is possible, as was suggested above, that the first youthful readers of the serial were put off by the study of Billy Bones. This may have lasted too long for their patience, and is certainly too expert for the genre. The boy is content with a few elementary motives, enjoys violence

for its own sake, and these scenes of fighting, which, as J.A.Symonds said, Stevenson does 'with a turn of the wrist and a large daub of blood'. Treasure Island belongs to a special genre - the boys' adventure story, but is more complex than the usual specimen of the kind.

Treasure Island is a children's classic. It is so not only because of Stevenson's gift of story-telling, but because he brought to the boys' story all the care, craftsmanship and conscientiousness that a novelist like Meredith brought to more serious fiction; this was what was really new in Treasure Island. The narrative moves along easily with a minimum, but never a deficiency, of description and detail, punctuated with suspense and hints of further excitement, so that the interest never wanes. Dialogue is inserted skillfully at the appropriate points to heighten and intensify the action. Indeed the style will defy criticism, showing a conscious craftsmanship that might not be expected in a boys' book, but which is apparent in a passage such as the following, where Jim and his mother return to open Bones's chest:

When we were about half-way through, I suddenly put my hand upon her arm; for I had heard in the silent, frosty air, a sound that brought my heart into my mouth - the tapping of the blind man's stick upon the frozen road. It drew nearer and nearer, while we sat holding our breath. Then it struck sharp on the inn door, and then we could hear the handle being turned, and the bolt rattling as the wretched being tried to enter; and then there was a long time of silence both within and without. At last the tapping recommenced, and, to our indescribable joy and gratitude, died slowly away again until it ceased to be heard.

"Mother," said I, "take the whole and let's be going;" for I was sure the bolted door must have seemed suspicious and would bring the whole hornet's nest about our ears; though how thankful I was that I had bolted it, none could tell who had never met that terrible blind man.

But my mother, frightened as she was, would not consent to take a fraction more than was due to her, and was obstinately unwilling to be content with less. It was not yet seven, she said, by a long way; she knew her rights and she would have them; and she was still arguing with me, when a little low whistle sounded a good way off upon the hill. That was enough, and more than enough, for both of us...

Next moment we were both groping downstairs, leaving the candle by the empty chest; and the next we had opened the door and were in full retreat. We had not started a moment too soon. The fog was rapidly dispersing; and already the moon shone quite clear on the high ground on either side; and it was only in the exact bottom of the dell and round the tavern door that a thin veil still hung unbroken to conceal the first steps of our escape. Far less than half-way to the hamlet, very little beyond the bottom of the hill, we must come forth into the moonlight. Nor was this all; for the sound of several footsteps running came already to our ears, and as we looked back in their direction a light tossing to and fro and still rapidly advancing, showed that one of the newcomers carried a lantern. 16.

The passage is tinged with the atmosphere of suspense from beginning to end. Throughout, the recurrence of the unseen blind man lends a sense of urgency to the occupied mother and anxious son. Jim's mood is enhanced by such striking phrases as the 'silent frosty air', 'the frozen road', 'the tap-tapping of the blind man's stick', 'the

bolt rattling'. The scene stands out in the bold relief of a frosty moonlit night; each phrase is driven home like an arrow thudding into the target. The scene is set and the mood cast by mere suggestion, and yet the reader feels Jim's anxiety and terror at his mother's stubbornness. The lean, spare prose shows a superb handling of detail; Stevenson extracts the maximum effect from each telling word, and the scene is made vivid with the minimum use of description.

A more usual specimen of its kind was The Black Arrow, usually regarded even by Stevenson himself, as 'tushery', a 'pot-boiler', exercising all the tricks of the trade which rob the book of all life. It is akin to the stories of A.R. Phillips, a popular writer of boys' stories, whose influence Stevenson acknowledged. But, oddly enough, when the book appeared in Young Folks in June, 1883, its fate was the reverse of Treasure Island's: adolescents were delighted with it; adults largely denounced it.

The theme is similar to that of Kidnapped: the struggle of a young boy to rise from insignificance to power. However, here there is an added romantic interest, although as was proper in a boys' story, there is an absence of sex interest, accomplished by clothing the heroine, Joanna Sedley, as a boy throughout. With several minor blemishes, the story ranks in construction with

Treasure Island. Dick Shelton, the hero, learns that Sir Daniel Brackley, his present guardian, was involved in the death of his father. When Dick's suspicions provoke his attempted murder, he flees to join the Black Arrow, an outlaw band modelled on that of Robin Hood. Promised the hand of Joanna Sedley, Dick attempts to free her from Sir Daniel's clutches, first in an attempted rescue by sea, and then by a visit to the castle accompanied by Will Lawless, both disguised as monks. Exposed and captured at Sir Daniel's unsuccessful attempt to marry Joanna, Dick manages to free himself. His subsequent pursuit of the abducted Joanna is checked when he meets the captain whose ship he had earlier stolen, and Richard Crookback (Richard III) whom he helps to win the Battle of Shoreby. However, he rescues Joanna finally and the story is brought to the usual happy conclusion by their marriage.

Once again it is partly through the hero's own efforts that he succeeds; moreover, his rise is accomplished in an honourable and worthy fashion. The love story is well knit to Dick's acquiring of his rightful heritage. At least the story has a certain unity, although some of the adventures, such as the attempted rescue by sea, the second meeting with Captain Arblaster, and the battle of Shoreby, may be unnecessary to the evolution of the main plot. But then, the object was to stimulate the imaginations of boys, which could have been effected just

as easily by a series of episodes, as Dumas had. The Black Arrow is no Middlemarch; but neither is it a Tom Jones.

The characters, after the fashion of the genre, never develop beyond the conventional; yet they are not nearly as striking as those of Treasure Island. Unlike Jim Hawkins, the character of Dick Shelton often rises too far beyond the bounds of possibility, especially in such scenes as the Battle of Shoreby; he is not nearly so well controlled. Moreover, there is no picturesque villain like Silver; even Lawless fails to measure up to the crippled cook. For a love story, the novel is noticeably deficient in real women, but then, women were not among the elements of the boys' adventure story, and Stevenson was quite wise to exclude them; in fact his popularity grew in direct proportion to his exclusion of women.

It may seem odd to associate 'inspiration' with a boys' story, and yet one has the feeling that the author's feelings were not engaged here as evidence has shown they were in Treasure Island; this book lacks the vigour and vitality of the earlier. It may be that, knowing this kind of thing would bring in 'the golden, minted quid', he dashed off the story in order to bring in the necessary money. The style especially is inferior to that of Treasure Island: although undoubtedly it was consciously constructed and taken seriously, it lacks the verve and

life of the previous book, is more perfunctory, as the following passage may indicate:

An arrow sang in the air like a huge hornet; it struck old Appleyard between the shoulder-blades, and pierced him clean through, and he fell forward on his face among the cabbages. Hatch, with a broken cry, leapt into the air then, stooping double, he ran for the cover of the house. And in the mean-while Dick Shelton had dropped behind a lilac, and had his cross bow bent and shouldered, covering the point of the forest.

Not a leaf stirred. The sheep were patiently browsing; the birds had settled, but there lay the old man, with a cloth-yard arrow standing in his back; and there were Hatch, holding to the gable, and Dick, crouching and ready behind the lilac bush.

"D'ye see aught?" cried Hatch.

"Not a twig stirs," said Dick.

"I think shame to leave him lying," said Bennet, coming forward once more with hesitating steps, and a very pale countenance. "Keep a good eye on the wood, Master Shelton, keep a clear eye on the wood. The saints assoil us! here was a good shot!"

Bennet raised the old archer on his knee. He was not yet dead; his face worked, and his eyes shut and opened like machinery, and he had a most horrible, ugly look of one in pain.

"Can ye hear, old Nick?" asked Hatch. "Have ye a last wish before ye wend, old brother?"

"Pluck out the shaft, and let me pass a' Mary's name!" gasped Appleyard. "I be done with Old England. Pluck it out!"

"Master Dick," gasped Bennet, "come hither, and pull me a good pull on the arrow. He would fain pass, the poor sinner."

Dick laid down his cross-bow, and pulling hard upon the arrow drew it forth. A gush of blood followed; the old archer scrambled half upon his feet, called once upon the name of God, and then fell dead. Hatch, upon his knees among the cabbages, prayed fervently for the

welfare of the passing spirit. But even as he prayed, it was plain that his mind was still divided, and he kept ever an eye upon the corner of the wood from which the shot had come. When he had done, he got to his feet again drew off one of his mailed gauntlets, and wiped his pale face, which was all wet with terror.

17 .

The scene does not live as does that quoted on page 51. Phrases such as 'broken cry' are empty shells which fall away at a second touch. 'The old archer scrambled half upon his feet, called upon the name of God, and then fell dead' smacks of melodrama; the whole thing is forced and contrived; Stevenson had not the feel of the scene as he did those of Treasure Island. Moreover his attempt at archaic English is clumsy and overdone. The difference between the style of Treasure Island, and that of The Black Arrow is the difference between art and pot boiling.

Kidnapped is something of a Janus figure among Stevenson's novels. While it is basically another adventure and a good one, developments in it anticipate the later dramatic novels. It was published in July, 1886, only six months after Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Stevenson gave an account of the origin of the book in a letter to his father from Davos in the autumn of 1881, while he was still working on Treasure Island.

It occurred to me last night... that I could write the murder of Red Colin,
A story of the Forfeited Estates.
This I have all that is necessary for, with the following exceptions;
Trials of the Sons of Rob Roy with Anecdotes
Edinburgh, 1818 and

The Second Volume of Blackwood's Magazine. You might also look in Arnot's Criminal Trials up in my room, and see what observations he has on the case (Trial of James Stewart); if he has none perhaps you could see - O yes; see if Burton has it in his two volumes of trial stories. I hope he hasn't but care not; do it over again anyway. 18.

The above letter makes it evident that Kidnapped promised to be a more complex work, consisting of a number of elements that could lift it out of the adventure class. Stevenson started the book as another Treasure Island, but his interest in his country's history led him off the track. Some have discredited the book because of its multiple nature and its consequent disjointedness, which is apparent even in a brief summary. David Balfour's Uncle Ebenezer, the administrator of the House of Shaws, is intent on forcing David, the rightful heir, to foresake the property. When bullying and an attempted murder fail to scare the boy, Ebenezer has him kidnapped. On board the Covenant David meets Alan Breck Stewart, a Scotch soldier of fortune, whom he aids in repressing thieving members of the Covenant's crew. But the brig is wrecked off the west coast of Scotland, and David is cast ashore on an island. Reaching the mainland he makes his way through the Highlands, then alive with the clan war of the Campbells and Stewarts. Just as David encounters Colin Campbell (The Red Fox), the representative of King George of England, the latter

is killed, and David and Alan, whom he has come upon while chasing the killer, are both mistakenly pursued by the English. After several harrowing experiences in eluding the English, the two arrive at the hiding place of Cluny Stewart, chief of the clan. During their subsequent flight through the heather, the companions quarrel, but are finally reunited. Later, in a chance meeting along the way, Alan has a bagpipe contest with Robin McGregor, supposedly the original Rob Roy. Then, crossing the Forth with the help of a barmaid, the two visit Rankeillor, David's lawyer, and plan to retrieve the rightful patrimony. Ebenezer is tricked into confessing to the kidnapping, Alan takes his leave, and David comes into the inheritance of the House of Shaws.

David Daiches has suggested that the book can be divided into four parts. The first part, he suggests, consists of the presentation of David Balfour; his adventure at the House of Shaws and Queensferry; his kidnapping and further adventures on The Covenant and on the island of Barraid. Daiches claims these are in a sense extrinsic to the story as it actually develops. There follows an interchapter, he goes on, connecting the time David quits the island, on which he thought himself cut off from the mainland, and the time he rejoins Alan after Colin Campbell's murder. Then comes the main

section of the book, the murder and the journey. The third section begins when the danger of being caught is diminished and narrative continuity threatens to lapse. Here Stevenson introduces the quarrel of Alan and David, which gives an emotional impetus to the story, and enables the heroes to advance farther through Scotland. The fourth and concluding part, brings David back to the Lowlands and his patrimony.

However, though the book is diverse, it is not that diverse, and a two-fold division seems more reasonable. It is obvious that Kidnapped begins as an adventure story, the motivation of which is David's patrimony. The obstacle in the way of his receiving this is his uncle, the antagonist, and the impediment in his progress towards success is, as the title suggests, the kidnapping. All the events up to the time of Colin Campbell's murder are germane to this kidnapping and it is only after David meets Alan for the second time, and they embark on a second series of adventures, that the plot veers away from the original motivation. The objective now is not to gain the patrimony but to flee from the British; the theme has changed from one of attack to one of retreat, from progression to regression. This section continues until the river is reached, a significant point marking the boundaries of the two sections. David's arrival at the lawyer's can be only the denouement of the original plot; certainly it can not be independent or detached.

But the two plots, while distinct, are not entirely disconnected. The insertion of the flight through the heather, of the inner story, is not implausible: it is certain that David, a Lowlander, would have had a more difficult time crossing the Highlands (and it was entirely necessary that he cross them) without the help of Alan, the Highlander. But that is not the main reason Stevenson sent David on this journey: Stevenson had an affection for Scotland and Scottish history; in particular the murder of Colin Campbell was fresh in his mind, and he wished somehow to insert this. That he did so in rather an awkward fashion must be acknowledged.

There is one further point to be made concerning the construction of the novel. In the chapter entitled 'The House of Fear' David describes the impact of Colin Campbell's murder on the family of James Stewart (who afterwards was hanged for a murder he did not commit). Structurally the function of this episode is to provide David with a motive for attempting to prove Stewart's innocence on his return to Edinburgh, an important element in the opening chapters of Catriona. But for the purpose of the plot, proving James's innocence is wholly irrelevant, for it is only hinted at at the end of the novel. Alan ends the story by tripping up Ebenezer; and yet for David this was a beginning. We are told that Stevenson intended to make the Highland wanderings

a mere episode in David's adventure; however, his interest in Scotland and Scottish affairs seduced him into writing a different sort of book. The only way out was to end the Highland story with the promise of a sequel.

Kidnapped, then, began as an adventure story like Treasure Island, but, Stevenson wrote to Watts-Dunton, the characters of David and Alan came alive in his hands, and sent the novel on a different road. Alan is an admirable character and certainly one of the most outstanding Stevenson had created so far. He is the faithful Highlander, vain, touchy to the point of impossibility when his code and beliefs are challenged or slighted in the smallest degree, at times absurd, in what in any man but a Highlander of his day would be affectation:

"Do you see me?" said Alan. "I am come of kings; I bear a king's name. My badge is the oak. Do ye see my sword? It has slashed the heads of mair Whigamores than you have toes upon your feet. Call up your vermin to your back, sir, and fall on! The sooner the clash begins, the sooner ye'll taste this steel through your vitals." 19.

But he is perfectly loyal and a tremendous fighter:

He had kept the door so long; but one of the seamen, while he was engaged with others, had run in under his guard and caught him about the body. Alan was dirking him with his left hand, but the fellow clung like a leech. Another had broken in and had his cutlass raised. The door was thronged with their faces. I thought we were lost, and catching up my cutlass, fell on them in flank.

But I had not time to be of help. The wrestler dropped at last; and Alan, leaping back to get his distance, ran upon the others like a bull, roaring as he went. They broke before him like water, turning, and running, and falling one against another in their haste. The sword in his hands flashed like quicksilver into the huddle of our fleeing enemies; and at every flash there came the scream of a man hurt. I was still thinking we were lost, when lo! they were all gone, and Alan was driving them along the deck as a sheep-dog chases sheep.

Yet he was no sooner out than he was back again, being as cautious as he was brave; and meanwhile the seamen continued running and crying out as if he was still behind them; and we heard them tumble one upon another into the forecastle, and clap to the hatch upon the top.

The round house was like a shambles; three were dead, inside another lay in his death agony across the threshold; and there were Alan and I victorious and unhurt. 20.

Alan, then, is one of Stevenson's best characters.

The author put part of himself into Alan and Long John Silver, the romantic part, the part that he would have liked to be, the picturesque, clever, brave, strong, swashbuckling, extrovert adventurer. So it is that Silver and Alan (and later the Master of Ballantrae) stand out as does Milton's Satan in Paradise Lost.

Some have questioned whether Alan is true to the typical Highland character of the time. We know that Stevenson did a certain amount of research for the novel; but this was factual research. Stevenson's childhood and youth were secluded; so that he did not have the chance that his predecessor Scott had to mingle with and thus

fathom his fellow Scots. It may be, then, that Stevenson was ignorant of Gaelic speech and of the psychology which underlies it, and this may explain why Alan is not ultimately a completely satisfactory creation. The device of focussing Gaelic, or Highland Scotland through the eyes of a Lowlander may compensate in part for the alleged ignorance of Highland psychology and culture. Whether this theory is a valid one or not cannot here be determined. But whether Stevenson was exactly true to Highland ways or not is beside the point, for art is not a copy but a recreation of reality, and Stevenson was perfectly free to adapt Highland customs and events to his artistic purposes just as Scott had done before him. Many of the historical facts in Ivanhoe, for example, are not presented exactly as they occurred. The historical novel seeks to recreate the mood, tone or atmosphere of history. Historical romance was, for Sir Walter, a very free translation of the past into the present. It was not only that his stated formula was 'ancient manners in modern language'; its application in his books was in large broad strokes. 'I neither can nor do pretend' he says, 'to the observation of complete accuracy, even in matters of outward costume, much less in the more important points of language and manners.'

21

So it is with Stevenson.

Alan Breck Stewart is a personification of one of

the themes running through most of Stevenson's work: the Scottish national character. It was in Kidnapped that he first tapped this, what some have called his true vein, at a point in time near enough to be thoroughly understood, and yet offering opportunities for the heroic impossible in the nineteenth century. Kidnapped is a portrait, or rather a snapshot, of the spirit of Scotland at the time of the Jacobites. Devotion to the exiled Stuarts produced a sense of dedication, a commitment to a way of living characterized above all by honour as the guiding principle, with which Stevenson was bound to sympathize.

David is a more satisfactory creation. The development of his character occurs, significantly enough, when the story changes from that of a simple adventure story including topographical and historical emotions. Up to the point where he and Alan start their second adventure, the character of David Balfour has been much like that of Jim Hawkins: superficial, conventional; he has been simply caught up by events. Now several new elements emerge, and David is no longer a normal boy in a pattern of action calculated to arouse interest and suspense in the reader. The reflective part of his character, which was seen when he was alone on the island, now appears as an essential part of his make-up, so that action, in the light of David's reaction to it, takes on a moral significance.

It is relevant to note that this novel came after Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, in which a moral question had been treated; possibly Stevenson could not return to the static, shallow, stereotyped hero. While the adventures after the murder of Colin Campbell, like the visit to Cluny Stewart, are purely episodic and self-contained and do not advance the original plot, they do throw light on David's character. This is especially so of the quarrel scene, where a note of self-pity sounds:

At this the last of my anger oozed all out of me; and I found myself only sick, and sorry, and blank, and wondering at myself. I would have given the world to take back what I had said; but a word once spoken, who can re-capture it? I minded me of all Alan's kindness and courage in the past, how he had helped and cheered and borne with me in our evil days; and then recalled my own insults, and saw that I had lost forever that doughty friend. At the same time, the sickness that hung upon me seemed to redouble, and the pain in my side was like a sword for sharpness. I thought I must have swooned where I stood.

This it was that gave me thought. No apology could blot out what I had said; it was needless to think of one, none could cover the offence; but where an apology was vain a mere cry for help might bring Alan back to my side. I put my pride away from me. "Alan," I said, "if you canna help me, I must just die here." 22.

Of course the development of David's character is limited: he is not particularly round, certainly not as round, certainly not as magnificent, certainly not as

convincing a character as the Lord Justice Weir in the later novel. But compared to Jim Hawkins, David is at least oval; and compared to the other characters in his own novel, he is plainly dilated. David is not man as he would like to be but man as he is. In the early chapters and up to the fight in the roundhouse he is another Jim Hawkins; but after this another dimension is added to his character, and he becomes a person with human weakness caught up in the drama of life. This note is the prelude to the change in character of Stevenson's novels; from here on the leading characters take on a more profound humanity.

The speed and grace of the opening chapters of Kidnapped are in Stevenson's best narrative style, but the style of a simple adventure story, not that of a richer novel like Weir of Hermiston. The early paragraphs with their apparent artlessness are reminiscent of Treasure Island.

Out I went into the night. The wind was still moaning in the distance, though never a breath of it came near the house of Shaws. It had fallen blacker than ever; and I was glad to feel along the wall, till I came the length of the stair tower down at the far end of the unfinished wing. I had got the key into the keyhole and had just turned it, when all of a sudden without sound of wind or thunder, the whole sky lighted up with fire and went black again. I had to put my hand over my eyes to get back to the colour of the darkness; and indeed I was already half blinded when I stepped into the tower.

It was so dark inside, it seemed a body could scarce breathe; but I pushed out with foot and hand, and presently struck the wall with the one, and the lower most round of the stair with the other. The wall, by the touch, was of fine hewn stone, the steps too, though somewhat steep and narrow, were of polished masonwork, and regular and solid under foot. Minding my uncle's word about the banisters, I kept close to the tower side, and felt my way in the pitch darkness with a beating heart. 23.

This is the true style of the adventure story, picturesque incident and appropriate setting reinforcing each other's effectiveness.

This prevails until the end of Chapter XIII. But when David is cast ashore on the island the pace slackens and the sentences move more slowly, as though trying to take in more than the actual narrative as they proceed:

I had good reasons for my choice. There was in this part of the isle a little hut of a house like a pig's hut, where fishers used to sleep when they came there upon their business; but the turf roof of it had fallen entirely in; so that the hut was of no use to me, and gave me less shelter than my rocks. What was more important the shell fish on which I lived grew there in plenty; when the tide was out I could gather a peck at a time: and this was doubtless a convenience. But the other reason went deeper. I had become in no way used to the horrid solitude of the isle, but still looked round me on all sides (like a man that was hunted), between hope and fear that I might see some human creature coming; now, from a little up the hillside over the bay, I could catch a sight of the great, ancient church and the roofs of the people's houses in Iona. And on the other hand, over the low country of the Ross, I saw smoke go up, morning and evening, as if from a homestead in a hollow of the land. 24.

From here on there is a richness in the book, a richness of incident and a complementary richness of language and

style. There are many such scenes: the flight through the heather under the burning sun; the visit to Cluny Stewart, with its spirited card game, where Alan is in full character; the quarrel scene, set against the sombre backdrop of the Highland hills; the pipe duel of Alan and Robin McGregor, with its formality, and in the end, the struggle within Alan between jealousy, hurt dignity, and the generosity which at last prevails.

"Ay, ye have music," said Alan, gloomily.

"And now be the judge yourself, Mr. Stewart," said Robin; and taking up the variations from the beginning he worked them throughout to so new a purpose, with such ingenuity and sentiment and with so odd a fancy and so quick a knack in the grace-notes, that I was amazed to hear him.

As for Alan, his face grew dark and hot, and he sat and gnawed his fingers, like a man under some deep affront. "Enough!" he cried. "Ye can blow the pipes - make the most of that." And he made as if to rise.

But Robin only held out his hand as if to ask for silence, and struck into the slow measure of a pibroch. It was a fine piece of music in itself, and nobly played; but it seemed, besides, it was a piece peculiar to the Appin Stewarts and a chief favourite with Alan. The first notes were scarce out, before there came a change in his face; when the time quickened, he seemed to grow restless in his seat; and long before that piece was at an end, the last signs of his anger died from him, and he had no thought but for the music.

"Robin Oig," he said, when it was done, "ye are a great piper. I am not fit to blow in the same kingdom with ye. Body of me! Ye have mair music in your sporran than I have in my head! And though it still sticks in my mind that I could maybe show ye another of it with the cold steel, I warn ye beforehand - it'll no be fair! It would go against my heart to haggle a man that can blow the pipes as you can!"

In scenes such as this Stevenson shows himself the successor of Scott: his theme here is man shaped by a specific national background and history. Like Scott's his novels are studies, not only of character - in some cases not so much of character - as of the national character.

There is, then, a development of Stevenson's art within the genre of the adventure story. Treasure Island was written purposely as a book for boys, and is an excellent specimen of that type. But, although Kidnapped began in the same manner, it is richer and deeper than the earlier book. It is more than a simple story of quest, and a recounting of the exciting risks run by the hero: the book had its origins in Stevenson's studies in Scottish history and topography; in his pondering over the murder of Colin Campbell of Glenure, and the whole atmosphere of post-1745 Scottish affairs; in certain memories of his childhood and youth. Here, too, is the beginning of a theme which was to run through the later novels, and which we shall encounter in The Master of Ballantree and Weir of Hermiston. These aspects point to the later novels, and, although the element of adventure is omnipresent, from here on it is modified, as Stevenson's work began to develop from the romantic to the dramatic.

Notes, Chapter 2

1. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. II, p.298.
2. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 51.
3. Stevenson. 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured', Essays, p. 336.
4. James, Henry. The Art of Fiction, p. 19.
5. Stevenson. 'A Humble Remonstrance', Essays, p. 367
6. Ibid., p. 368.
7. Stevenson. 'A Gossip on Romance', Essays, p. 353.
8. Stevenson. 'My First Book', Essays, p. 452
9. Moore, J.R. Defoe, Stevenson, and the Pirates,
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10. Steuart, J.A. Robert Louis Stevenson: Man and Writer,
11. Stevenson. Treasure Island, p. 194.
12. Ibid., p. 214.
13. Ibid., p. 3.
14. Ibid., p.23.
15. Ibid., p. 44.
16. Ibid., p. 26.
17. Stevenson, The Black Arrow, p. 8.
18. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. II, p. 173.
19. Stevenson. Kidnapped, p. 63.
20. Ibid, p. 66.
21. Scott, Walter. Ivanhoe, London: J.M.Dent, 1906, p.vii.
22. Stevenson. Kidnapped, p. 177.
23. Ibid., p. 27.
24. Ibid., p. 93.
25. Ibid., p. 185.

Chapter III

THE DEVIL AS ANGEL

Had not an angel got the pride of man,
No evil thought, no hardened heart would have been seen,
No hell to go to, but a heaven so pure;
That angel was the Devil.
Had not that angel got the pride, there would have been
no need
For Jesus Christ to die upon the Cross.

There is something extraordinary in the fact that as Stevenson, a child of six, lay between waking and sleeping, he should be heard crooning the above-quoted lines; no wonder he suffered from deliriums. These bad dreams were brought on partly through ill health, but partly also by his Scottish Covenanting heritage, as impressed upon him by the tales of Cummy. 'I had an extreme terror of Hell,' he says in 'Nuits Blanches', 'implanted in me, I suppose, by my good nurse, which used to haunt me terribly on stormy nights'. The fact that he dreamt, and the fact that he dreamt of evil are both relevant here; for one of the two novels to be discussed is the direct result of a dream experience, and both include as an integral part the treatment of evil.

The theme of evil is a dominant one throughout Stevenson's novels, and it is both possible and important to trace its course in his work. But the treatment is possibly most distinct and vivid in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and The Master of Ballantrae. In these the theme of evil becomes predominant and they must be examined in some detail. Moreover, they complete the transition, begun in Kidnapped, from the novels of romance to the novels of drama.

One explanation of the origin of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is that it may have been indirectly the result of a critical article on Stevenson by William Archer, both directly and ironically questioning the sincerity of his optimism and adventure-worship, which, Archer claimed, attained popular applause by evading the facts of his own life in particular and the universe in general. To write that we should all be as 'happy as kings' when lying in bed after a haemorrhage probably sounded to Archer like a pose. Stevenson realized this, as he shows in his letter to Archer, 1 November, 1885:

The fact is, consciously or not, you doubt my honesty; you think I am making faces, and at heart disbelieve my utterances... Is it quite fair... to keep your face so steadily on my most lighthearted works, and then say I recognize no evil? Yet in the paper on Burns, for instance, I show myself alive to some sorts of evil. But then, perhaps, they are not your sorts. 1.

Whether Archer's challenge was responsible for it or not, the existence of evil was not only recognized in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, but given one of the most memorable expressions in literature. If Archer's article did have an influence it must have been subconscious, for the story came to him in a dream:

All I dreamed of Dr. Jekyll was that one man was being pressed into a cabinet when he swallowed a drug (Stevenson himself had been taking drugs before and after the composition of the book) and being changed into another being. 2.

It has been observed that the cabinet was a carry over from his studies of Deacon Brodie, the pious burglar of Edinburgh.

In fact, when Stevenson was a child he had a cabinet, the work of The Deacon, in his bedroom.

According to Lloyd Osbourne, the first draft of the story (25,000 words) was written in three days. Fanny made some derogatory criticism of the draft in which (we are told) Jekyll was from the beginning an evil man, like Deacon Brodie, and the change into Hyde taken merely as a disguise. She suggested it should not be merely another crime story like 'Markheim' (1884) but an allegory of the good and evil in human nature.

It would be irrelevant to dwell on the influence of Stevenson's wife on his work. She helped him with some of the writing when he was sick, and he submitted most things for her approval. But then, Stevenson was a man who sought and needed everyone's approval, and it would seem that her assistance was more in the way of moral support than of critical appreciation. And yet her reaction to the first draft of Jekyll and Hyde seems to give this the lie. Of course, the flaw was fairly obvious, and it is surprising that Stevenson did not perceive it himself; Fanny merely happened to be in the right place at the right time. At any rate, Stevenson recognized the flaw and rewrote the tale in three days, according to Fanny's criticism, so that the final draft presented the classic in its familiar form. The trampling of a little girl leads Utterson, Henry Jekyll's lawyer, to enquire about a Mr. Hyde, the offender. Although Hyde is found to be the beneficiary of Jekyll's will, Jekyll will not discuss his friend, but

Utterson does learn that Hyde has ready access to the house. Hyde's murder of Sir Danvers Carew provokes a search for him, but Jekyll swears Hyde will never return again. For some time Jekyll returns to his former sanguine self, but gradually changes and eventually retires to utter seclusion, frequently sending for more and more chemicals. Suspecting a second party in Jekyll's laboratory, Utterson breaks in to find Hyde has committed suicide, but no trace of Jekyll. A written account by Dr. Lanyon reveals that he once saw Hyde change into Jekyll by the use of a potion. Jekyll's own account reveals how, pondering on the good and evil parts of his personality, he eventually discovered a chemical compound that would allow him to change to his evil self, and change back. But soon an evil thought brought the change to Hyde without use of the drug. Later changes became more frequent, and the change back to Jekyll more difficult. Finally Hyde, the conquering personality, killed himself.

It has been suggested that 8000 words a day for a chronic invalid is hardly credible. The mere writing down would take from eight to ten hours, and that for a man whose average working day was from three to five; moreover Stevenson at the time had had a haemorrhage and was forbidden all discussion and excitement.

It was ready for publication in 1885, but for trade reasons was not released until January, 1886, when it was published as a 'shilling shocker' by Longmans, Green. Its immediate reception was not encouraging, but when The Times

drew attention to it, it began to move. The moral was not missed: a canon made it the text of a sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral, and indeed scores of pulpits took it up. From the pulpit it went to the drawing room as the subject of small talk. The book, having the advantage of cheapness, sold 50,000 copies in a few months, and financially this marked the turning point of Stevenson's career; at last he was a celebrity.

The characters in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are almost as flat as those of the earlier adventure stories. Dr. Jekyll is not shown as taking the fateful decision to experiment as a result of any characteristic weakness, unless curiosity be a weakness; his motives are indicated with the utmost brevity. The interest still seems to be in action and not in its relation to character. Yet Jekyll is not simply a man who happens to be thrown into a situation as is Jim Hawkins. His motives may be covert, but he does have to make a moral choice; he does have to shape his own destiny; he does have to suffer the consequences of his choice. And the structure of the story does not break down, as some have claimed, when Jekyll finds that the chemical compound was partly accidental and therefore unrecoverable. The moment when Jekyll finds his formula fails him through an accident he had never foreseen is simply the supreme moment in every story of man buying power from hell. Such a moment comes to Macbeth and Faustus; the point is that nothing is secure, least of all Satanic security.

Of course the potion is not chemically possible at all. But many symbols are impossible; they are employed because the ideas they represent cannot be presented effectively in any other way. The potion stands for the mental and moral breakdown in the mind of man, and as a symbol it is quite effective. It has been observed that the ultimate failure of the potion may suggest the ultimate failure of science either to resolve man's destiny or to alleviate his suffering.

Hyde also is two-dimensional: we learn little of his evil doings and are told only in general terms that he is the incarnation of fiendish malevolence. This is related not only by his trampling the child and the murder of Sir Danvers Carew, but by more subtle suggestions. Hyde is referred to as 'carrying it off, sir, really like Satan'; or again:

The other (Hyde) snarled aloud into a savage laugh; and the next moment, with extraordinary quickness, he had unlocked the door and disappeared into the house.

The lawyer stood awhile when Mr. Hyde had left him, the picture of disquietude. Then he began slowly to mount the street, pausing every step or two, and putting his hand to his brow like a man in mental perplexity. The problem he was thus debating as he walked was one of a class that is rarely solved. Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish; he gave an impression of deformity without any namable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice - all these were points against him; but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him.

"There must be something else," said the perplexed gentleman. "There is something more, if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell? or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures its clay continent? The last, I think; for, O my poor Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend!" 3.

Yet Hyde's acts are individual and limited in scope; no catastrophic crime is committed. But how does one describe adequately and convincingly the devil incarnate? Hyde is symbolic of the evil in human nature, and his wickedness is merely suggested by these acts, because there is no real way of adequately describing evil, at least Stevenson must have thought so. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a fable, one of the best-known in English literature. As such, then, its characters cannot be too complex, but a subordinate aspect of the brisk narrative. Although on the surface the novel may appear to be a Conan Doyle melodrama, underneath it is a grim commentary on human life in company with Wilde's Picture of Dorian Grey, Balzac's Peau de Chagrin, and Poe's Oval Portrait, and is better known than any of these as the treatment of the theme of man's duality.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is an English classic. The story is unravelled in a masterly fashion that would have done Conan Doyle credit: a forewarning of the outcome is hinted at in the very first paragraph:

Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of rugged countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary, and yet somehow lovable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beamed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life. He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre, had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years. But he had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove. "I incline to Cain's heresy," he used to say quaintly; "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way." In this character it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men. And to such as these, so long as they came about his chambers, he never marked a shade of change in his demeanour.

4.

As well as being the confidant of down-going men such as Henry Jekyll, Utterson is himself a morbid, gloomy, tragic figure, and it is largely through his eyes that the story is seen. This morbid mood is accented in the slight, but effective atmosphere with which the book is tinted, as in the description of Jekyll's house:

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door which was equipped with neither bell

nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages. 5.

This is the house of hell and the devil is within. The story is led on hint by hint, step by step, quite adroitly, until the secret is discovered. Utterson says:

"...Your master, Poole, is plainly seized with one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer:" 6.

"Ay, ay," said the lawyer. "My fears incline to the same point. Evil, I fear, founded - evil was sure to come - of that connection. Ay, truly, I believe you; I believe poor Harry is killed; and I believe his murderer (for what purpose God alone can tell) is still lurking in his victim's room." 7.

Told by Lanyon the climax is much more dramatic and effective than if Jekyll had told it himself; then Jekyll's denouement follows to tie up all the loose ends.

As in most of Stevenson's novels, in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, there is a minimum of scene painting; but here, unlike some of the others, this is creditable. This is a thriller, a melodrama, and the plot moves forward swiftly step by step with only a slight suggestion of atmosphere. Yet what there is is done with the Stevenson concern for finish and excellence, as scenes are conveyed in vague indefinite impressions that are still quite effective:

...The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles; and through the muffle and

smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. But the room was gay with firelight. In the bottle the acids were long ago resolved; the imperial dye had softened with time, as the colour grows richer in stained windows; and the glow of hot autumn afternoons on hillside vineyards was ready to be set free and to disperse the fogs of London. 8.

Here is the London of Conan Doyle portrayed more vividly than that which ever Sherlock Holmes softly trod. What a totally fitting and sufficient mood is created by 'the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds'; here again one glimpses the covert artist engaged by his theme, and one wonders, if Stevenson had allowed himself to pursue this vein of poetic creation, what excellent reading would have remained for posterity, what masterpieces might have been. But Byles the Butcher was knocking at the door with more of 'the golden, minted quid' for the shilling shocker.

Many have missed the real moral of the tale. Whenever allusions to Jekyll and Hyde are encountered, these allusions suppose the two personalities to be equal, neither caring for the other; or they think that man can be divided into two creatures, good and evil. The point is that man cannot be so divided. Hyde could only be created when Henry Jekyll willed it: while evil does not care for good, good must care for evil; man cannot escape from God, for God is the good in man.

The Master of Ballantrae, another treatment of the Jekyll and Hyde theme, was begun at Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks in 1887-8, continued on board the Casco, and finished at Honolulu. In a letter to Sidney Colvin, written from Saranac, December, 1887, Stevenson gives an account of the plan.

I have fallen head over heels into a new tale, the Master of Ballantrae ... It is to me a most seizing tale: there are some fantastic elements; the most is a dead genuine human problem-human tragedy, I should say rather. It will be about as long I imagine, as Kidnapped ... I have done most of the big work, the quarrel, the duel between the two brothers, and the announcement of the death to Clementina (she became Alison) - Clementina, Henry, and Mackellar ... are really very fine fellows; the Master is all I know of a devil. I have known hints of him in the world but always cowards; he is as bold as a lion but with the same deadly, causeless duplicity I have watched with so much surprise in my two cowards. 'Tis true, I saw a hint of the same nature in another man who was not a coward; but he had other things to attend to; the Master has nothing else but his devilry. 9.

Even at this stage Stevenson was aware of the two conflicting elements: the 'fantastic element' and the 'genuine human problem'. Some months later in March, 1888 he wrote to Henry James:

... five parts of it are sound human tragedy; the last one or two I regret to say, not so soundly designed; I almost hesitate to write them, they are very picturesque but they are fantastic; they shame, perhaps degrade, the beginning. I wish I knew; that was how the tale came to me, however. 10.

And the end does discredit the beginning. The story which begins with all the promise of a profound human

drama is twisted into a melodrama, and the tragedy of Durrisdeer is ended in America by an Indian fakir. With the news of Prince Charlie's landing in 1745, James the clever and cruel, joins King James, while Henry's lot is to stay at home for King George, a compromise that many Scottish families effected. Learning of James's supposed death at Culloden, old Lord Durie proposes to marry Alison Graeme to Henry; she, who is, in fact, in love with the Master, sympathizing with Henry's falsely debased reputation, reluctantly consents. At this point Francis Burke arrives with the news that the Master is alive in Paris, and the narrative is now taken out of the hands of Mackellar, a family servant very attached to Henry, and given to Burke's account of their pirating in the North Atlantic, after which the Master buried his treasure in America. Arriving home James is greeted by the old Lord and Alison, with whom he proceeds to ingratiate himself, although there is no suggestion of physical seduction. However, the Master resumes his habitual persecution of Henry, and relations between the brothers grow continuously more strained, until they erupt in a fratricidal duel, in which James is slain, attempting a treacherous act. But the body mysteriously disappears.

From this point there is a marked change for the worse in Henry. A further account by Burke of the Master's travels in India relates how he met an Indian, Secundra Dass, who accompanies him upon his return to Durrisdeer. Henry now leaves for America; but the Master follows, only to be once more rejected by his brother. However, Henry

now openly and actively taunts the Master, and when James sets out to hunt for his buried treasure, Henry contracts with a Captain Harris to kill his brother. A third narrator, Mountain, now reveals how the Master pretended death and burial to evade his murderers. Arriving at the grave Henry and Mackellar find the Indian unearthing the body which has been buried for a week. Noticing the eyelids of the dead man flutter is too much for Henry and he dies. But the Master never recovers, and once more Hyde has conquered Jekyll in a suicidal end.

Stevenson early suspected that the later sections, planned in Saranac, would be inferior, so the break between periods of composition cannot be blamed for its unevenness. Yet the book is too strong and darkly impressive to be rejected for its technical sins. Sureness ably masks the extravagance of the melodrama, and the morality was the bleakest yet. A father and two sons allow political considerations to align them in positions false to all three. Exploiting the falseness with exquisite skill and malice, the elder and stronger brother destroys all three. Here is no pseudo-Greek tinkering with Destiny; the original decision is responsibly made, bitterly italicized at the time by Henry: 'If we were playing a manly part, there might be sense in such talk. But what are we doing? Cheating at cards!' The Master is evil will incarnate; had it been he who married Alison, and Henry who went out in the '45, Durrisdeer might have seen stormy times anyway.

But as the weaker characters band themselves together against him, they come so close to saving themselves, that one sees the scale tipped toward ruin solely by the basic irreclaimable error at the beginning.

It is not difficult to see Stevenson's strained relations with his father mirrored in those of Henry Durie and the old Lord. The Master had always been the favourite, and nothing Henry did pleased the old man. From Stevenson's youth onwards his relations with his father were strained, as the two saw eye to eye on hardly anything; their life was a series of struggles in which the father usually relented. Yet the Stevensons were always close, as the Duries never were: indeed, the story of a buried and resuscitated fakir which appeared in an amended form in this novel had come from Thomas Stevenson. The theme is minor in this novel, but in Weir of Hermiston it was to provide the basis. Loudon Dodd's relations with his father in 'The Wrecker' was another treatment of the theme.

Reaction to the publication of the book was favourable, and the sales gratifying. However Henley disliked the book and said so. Leslie Stephen agreed, and laid severe judgement on Stevenson's whole work as a novelist. He found the characters lacking in reality and charm; he was repelled especially by the 'utterly reprobate' Master, while he felt that Henry's character was cramped, because a man of any real strength would have broken the hold the Master held on him. This is refreshing, because other of

Stephen's criticism is tainted by his part in the R.L.S. apotheosis. But what he says here is not, in fact, quite realistic. It is true that the characters lack reality; but he missed the point when he suggested that a man of any real strength would have broken away. Henry could no more overcome the forces against him than Jekyll could overcome Hyde; in both cases the victor is picturesque evil. And the Master is picturesque, and does have charm, although not to the same degree as Silver or Alan Breck; they are all three fascinating evil, as we are all fascinated by evil. But certainly the characters never come alive, as do Maggie Tulliver or Adam Bede. The Master is static; like Hyde he is pure evil, but unlike Hyde, who was attractive only to Jekyll, he is seductively fascinating evil. Throughout he has courage combined with confidence.

J.A.Symonds suggested that no adequate explanation was given for the Master's power over the family he hurt so cruelly. However it has been retorted that Symonds was a dutiful only son, without Stevenson's experience of the repeated forgiveness that awaited the prodigal. The Master was the eldest son; he had forfeited the estate and the promised wife, who married the rival brother, because he had been 'out for the lawful king' in the '45. He had claims which he could exploit until he exasperated his brother to a fratricidal duel, and finally hounded him to madness and death. Stevenson may or may not have been right about the prejudices and beliefs of eighteenth century Highland gentry;

in any case the success or failure of the psychological analysis depends partly on whether or not Stevenson's characters are historically true.

Henry's character is the only one which undergoes changes. At the beginning he is honest, sincere, and entirely charitable to those who would wrong him; but he deteriorates under constant battering by the Master, until all the charity is drained out of him. After the duel he is on the downward road; he becomes withdrawn, selfish, and then pernicious until eventually he brings about his own end by planning the death of the Master. Nevertheless Henry never really lives; he is a shadowy figure, not as symbolic as Jekyll and yet not as human as, for example, Lord Jim, but somewhere between.

Stevenson had used the first person method of narration before, but had never made the narrator an unheroic and subservient character. However, like David Balfour, Mackellar is probably the best drawn and the most real character in the book, devoted to his master, perceptive to the personalities of others, honest and forthright, yet often weak in time of danger, such as the ocean voyage to America. In contrast to Mackellar, the characters of Henry and the Master emerge more clearly. Mackellar's selfless but dour devotion is itself almost a tragic phenomenon, for he is a man without a personal life; having education but without professional ambition; loyal, but without a family of his own to benefit by his loyalty. He

sinks his identity in Henry's service, and by so doing secures a character neither heroic nor pathetic, but a little of both and with something of the tragic. By concentration on his master he is able to serve as an effective guide and narrator, telling the story with a sad earnestness that sets the tone of the novel. His stolid Lowland integrity makes him a perfect foil for the Master, whose relations with Mackellar provide an illuminating commentary on the Master's relations with his brother - a commentary without which the story would lose much.

Of course the style of Mackellar is the style of Stevenson, and if the style is effective at all it is when the narrative is in Mackellar's hands. This is the method of narration Conrad used in Lord Jim and Under Western Eyes. Like Stevenson, Conrad is not basically a psychologist (although he certainly penetrates his characters and scrutinises the inner man) but a moralist. To point out the moral without abandoning the objectivity he was committed to as an artist, he adopted the narrator, Marlowe. But this was not the only reason for using Marlowe, for, as with Nellie Dean in Wuthering Heights, his presence helps to dramatize the action and compels us to see it through his eyes; it provides an intense focus. Then again Marlowe is a substitute for Conrad himself, though there are times when he is a character in his own right and involved in the action as is Mackellar. As a

device Marlowe is more effective in the short stories, for his presence throughout a novel is a strain on the credulity. But as a projection of Conrad himself his value was immense, for he allowed the author to comment or point a moral as he could not do had he used the third person method. So it is with Mackellar. However, the narratives of Burke and Mountain, especially the latter, seem rather unnecessary, and there are other ways in which their information might have been presented.

The affinities between Conrad and Stevenson may be worth exploring further. While Conrad was familiar with French literature as was Stevenson, it was English that attracted both. Like Stevenson, Conrad shared Flaubert's fastidious regard for the exact word and would spend hours balancing Saxon words against Latin and French derivatives. But while his style, like Stevenson's, is careful, with a poetic conciseness, his prose has a richness and sonority that Stevenson only draws near in Weir of Hermiston. It is only here, too, that Stevenson can claim anything like the masterly creation of character, for which Conrad is noted.

The influence of Flaubert, Maupassant, the Russian novelists and James are revealed in the work of both writers. Their art allies the novel of adventure with the objective spirit of French naturalism: the object of both is to transmit impressions of reality, be they good, bad or indifferent. But Conrad is concerned with the inner self as well as the externals, and here he differs from Stevenson. His psycho-

logical curiosity finds scope in the analysis of simple humble souls, in spite of noble impulses and the desire to do right, perplexed by the cruelty of fate. We have seen the same theme in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and The Master of Ballantrae. To both Conrad and Stevenson the object was to portray the inevitability of life itself, man's wretchedness and helplessness.

Unlike Stevenson, Conrad had observed man and life closely; he had observed mental and moral decay, and watched attempts at regeneration (Lord Jim attempts regeneration as does Dr. Jekyll) foiled by inner weakness and betrayed by self-delusion. Conrad's world was life in the East; Stevenson's world was Calvinist Scotland where many were predestined to a tragic end and regeneration was largely impossible. Atmosphere is as important to both as Egdon Heath was to Hardy: all three use their settings as symbols of moral evil, although Scotland is more to Stevenson than this. But simply by suggestion Stevenson, like Conrad, conveys the sickening sense of evil that permeated the Scotland of the Covenanters.

The style of The Master of Ballantrae is still the easy, smoothly flowing narrative manner that was applied in the previous books, with a minimum of delineation and elaboration. Although this story does not have the excitement and continuously intense action of Treasure Island, and therefore does not lend itself to such a style, one feels the vitality of that book was never regained, at least never sustained.

Yet there are some excellent scenes in the book, scenes of action where Stevenson was at his best, such as the fratricidal duel by candlelight:

I took up the candlesticks and went before them, steps that I would give my hand to recall; but a coward is a slave at the best; and even as I went, my teeth smote each other in my mouth. It was as he had said; there was no breath stirring; a windless stricture of frost had bound the air; and as we went forth in the shine of the candles, the blackness was like a roof over our heads. Never a word was said; there was never a sound but the creaking of our steps along the frozen path. The cold of the night fell about me like a bucket of water; I shook as I went with more than terror; but my companions, bareheaded like myself, and fresh from the warm hall, appeared not even conscious of the change.

'Here is the place', said the Master.
'Set down the candles.'

I did as he bid me, and presently the flames went up, as steadily as in a chamber, in the midst of the frosted trees, and I beheld these two brothers take their places. ll.

It must be admitted that phrases such as 'my teeth smote each other' and 'the cold of night fell about me like a bucket of water' are forced, and a blot on Stevenson's work. However, in a phrase like 'a windless stricture of frost had bound the air' the Stevenson of Treasure Island and Weir of Hermiston breaks through. And this commingling of consummate art and vulgarity raises a moot point: was Stevenson a nineteenth century Somerset Maugham, or was he, like so many artists, devoid of self-criticism?

Stevenson gave the end of the story a twist because he was unable from the beginning to integrate the whole

imaginative conception and its implication. He had the feel of the story, but had no way of projecting the plot to an adequate conclusion without introducing anomalous properties belonging to romantic adventure. If he had not sent the Master to India and involved him with Secundra Dass; if he had allowed the novel to move swiftly and firmly to its necessary tragic conclusion, instead of complicating the issue by impossible trick devices, it might have been his first and only success as a tragic novel. As it is the ending is less the consummation of tragedy than the culmination of an adventure.

Yet the ending of the book is effective. Evil will not die until it has corrupted good to its own image, and brought it to a common grave; for The Master of Ballantrae is the story of a dual personality less obviously confined in one body than Jekyll and Hyde. The two brothers stand for good and evil, love and hate; and hate triumphs. Henry, gentle and kind, is justified in hating James, the incarnation of fascinating evil. But James grows no less wicked, while Henry, a slave to his obsession, is drained of all good; in the end Henry and James are the same, and once again Jekyll has been conquered by Hyde. Quiller-Couch later developed the same idea in Foe Farrell, which may have been inspired by The Master of Ballantrae, for Quiller-Couch was one of Stevenson's ardent disciples.

The book has been called a novel of pursuit and compared to Godwin's Caleb Williams and Graham Greene's

Brighton Rock and The Power and the Glory. Caleb Williams stumbled on the knowledge that his employer, Falkland, was a murderer. When Williams attempted to escape from Falkland he was pursued by Falkland's agents until he became an outcast in society, 'completely cut off from the whole human species'. When Falkland was finally arraigned and confessed his guilt, Williams realized that 'I have been his murderer'. There is a surprising similarity between the two stories.

The Master of Ballantrae certainly marks an advance in Stevenson's progress as a novelist. Treasure Island and Kidnapped are really boys' adventure stories, although the latter is more profound; Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, although a nineteenth century morality, does have dramatic motivation, complication, and denouement, but the movement and characters are sketchy and superficial. In The Master of Ballantrae there is, as Stevenson said, human tragedy: the absence of the supernatural, the attempt at slight character drawing, the thesis of the plot, make the book, with all its blemishes of construction, superior to the others as a dramatic novel. Nevertheless the novel falls between two stools: it sets out as a more sombre and subtle interpretation of human events, and ends a conventional adventure story. As we saw, Stevenson admitted the reluctant use of inappropriate inspiration, and every critic has recognized its broken back. It may be said that if this is the best novel so far, he is grossly

overrated as an artist. But in all fairness we cannot compare Treasure Island and Kidnapped, or even Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with The Master of Ballantrae, because the object in each was different and dissimilar criteria were followed. The note of brooding tragedy, effectively related to the topographical and historical atmosphere, is a more striking achievement than in Kidnapped: it is more subtle, closer woven. Though the point of view keeps shifting, adult insight, however shallow, is represented in an adult manner. History here is used not simply as a source of romantic incident, as in Kidnapped, or a method of making topography interesting, but as a background for a psychological situation; Stevenson is here facing the problem with a man's mind rather than a boy's.

The preoccupation with sin and evil, treated most vividly in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and The Master of Ballantrae is a powerful force in Stevenson's work, and gives it a certain unity. While Frank Swinnerton found a unifying idea only in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the theme of this book can be shown to give coherence to a group: Treasure Island, The Master of Ballantrae, Kidnapped, and Weir of Hermiston. The books make a series of variations on the theme of the beauty of evil. The rogue makes a debut as Silver in Treasure Island: he is vain, cruel, but courageous, and without self doubt, able to compel respect, obedience and even love; Captain Smollett, unattractive virtue is set against him. In 'A Fable' Stevenson sets Smollett

and Silver debating: Silver claims the creator loves him best, and keeps him in the centre while the Captain is in the hold. In Kidnapped the flirtation of boy and scoundrel becomes a pre-sex passion; David comes to love Alan, the rogue of whom he must disapprove. Here good and evil are more subtly defined, more ambiguous: pious Presbyterian and irreverent Catholic; solid defender of the status quo, and fantastic dreamer of restoration, Highlander and Lowlander. Unlike the other villains, Hyde is only attractive to Jekyll, but it is here that the theme is treated most vividly. In The Master of Ballantrae Stevenson separated unlovely good and lovely evil; furthermore the good protagonist is divided into actor and narrator (Henry and Mackellar) as in Treasure Island. While the villain is an adult like Silver and Alan Breck, he is these in an absolute sense: he is the maturity of evil, a pirate in his adventures with Burke; a rebel when he joins the army of the pretender to the throne; and a seducer - in fact the Master comes face to face with Alan and the pirate (Teach) and outwits them both. One of the most significant strokes of invention is the presentation of elemental good and evil as brothers. The theme receives its final treatment in the great novel to which we turn next, Weir of Hermiston.

Notes, Chapter III.

1. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. III, p.60.
2. Steuart, J.A. Robert Louis Stevenson:
Man and Writer, Vol.II, p.65.
3. Stevenson. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, p.13.
4. Ibid., p.1.
5. Ibid., p.2.
6. Ibid., p.41.
7. Ibid., p.42.
8. Ibid., p.28.
9. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. III, p.170.
10. Ibid., p.183.
11. Stevenson. The Master of Ballantrae, p.95.
12. Stevenson. Treasure Island, p.223.

Chapter IV

SOME ACHIEVE GREATNESS

Here all is sunny, and when the truant gull
Skims the green level of the lawn, his wing
Dispetals roses; here the house is framed
Of kneaded brick and the plumed mountain pine,
Such clay as artists fashion and such wood
As the tree-climbing urchin breaks. But there
Eternal granite hewn from the living isle
And dowelled with brute iron, rears a tower
That from its wet foundation to its crown
Of glittering glass, stands, in the sweep of winds,
Immovable, immortal, eminent.

Stevenson,
'Underwoods', XXXV

Stevenson's whole existence changed when he went to Samoa. He emerged from the 'Land of Counterpane', from the life of an invalid; he lived outdoors, knew physical exercise and weariness as he weeded and cleared the jungle on an estate of his own. He became a keeper of livestock, an employer of labour; he crossed the country on horseback, and, for a different excitement, became keenly concerned in the island's politics, the champion of a weak native race against European encroachments. But still, even in action he was something of a spectator. He had been sent out from a sick room to play his part on a stage, small indeed, but strangely picturesque, and he welcomed this release from the literary life.

When I was filling baskets all Saturday in my dull, mulish way, perhaps the slowest worker there, surely the most particular, and the only one that never looked up or knocked off, I could not but think I should have been sent on exhibition as an example of young literary men. Here is how to learn to write, might be the motto. 1.

It would be strange if under these conditions there was not a transformation. Stevenson was conscious of it himself, and even in the heavy depression that settled on him before the end, he writes in the last of all the letters from Samoa:

I look forward confidently to an aftermath; I do not think my health can be hugely improved without some subsequent improvement in my brains. Though of course there is a possibility that literature is a morbid secretion and abhors health.2.

Three months after he wrote this he died while writing Weir of Hermiston, having reverted to the scenes of his boyhood, but with a manner entirely altered. In November, 1892, he had written to J.M. Barrie:

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 continually inhabits that cold old huddle of grey hills from which we come. 3.

The same mood is evident in a letter to S.R.Crockett, 17 May, 1893:

I shall never take that walk by the Fisher's Tryst and Glencorse. I shall never see Auld Reekie. I shall never set foot again upon the heather. Here I am until I die, and here will I be buried. The word is out and the doom is written. 4.

The change in style during this period was gradual. He tried to utilize the new world in a book of descriptive letters, which was a failure and a disappointment. But as he worked on them a story one day 'shot through me like a bullet in one of my moments of awe alone in the jungle'. This was the 'Beach of Falesa', which marks the new development; at any rate Stevenson thought so:

On a re-reading I fell in love with my first chapter, and for good or evil I must finish it. It is really good, well fed with facts, true to the manners, and (for once in my works) rendered pleasing by the presence of a heroine who is pretty. Miss

Una is pretty - a fact. All my other women have been as ugly as sin, and, like Falconet's Horse (I have just been reading the anecdote in Lockhart) mortes forbye.

What ails you, miserable man, to talk of saving material. I have a whole world in my head, a whole society to work, but I am in no hurry. I have just interrupted my letter, and read through the chapter of the 'High Woods' (The Beach of Falesa) that is written, a chapter and a bit some sixteen pages, really very fetching, but what do you wish? The story is so wilful, so steep, so silly; it's a hallucination I have outlived, and yet I never did a better piece of work - horrid and pleasing and extraordinarily true; it's sixteen pages of the South Seas; their essence. Golly, it's good. I am not shining by modesty; but I do just love the colour and movement of that piece, so far as it goes. 5.

But the change was not complete. In Catriona he resorted to the old style and subject, while 'The Wrecker' was a compromise between the two; but finally in 'Ebbtide' the new material found the new manner. 'Ebbtide' is an attempt to move from the purely picturesque adventure story to a more profound interpretation of human actions and motives without abandoning the incidents proper to the adventure story. It has something of the quiet intensity of the 'Beach of Falesa'; nevertheless it falls somewhere between Treasure Island and Weir of Hermiston. The style is neutral and at times dull; Stevenson had given up the speed and colour of the earlier narrative style, but had not yet discovered the rich, sensitive prose of his last novel. He was doubtful at first of the 'forced, violent,

alembicated style', and the story was finished in bitterness of heart. 'There it is, and about as grim a tale as was ever written, and as grimy and as hateful'. But when the proofs came back he was of another mind: 'I did not dream it was near as good; I am afraid I think it excellent. It gives me great hope, as I see I can work with that constipated mosaic manner, which is what I have to do just now with Weir of Hermiston.'

In a letter to Barrie in 1892, he disclosed the origin of Weir of Hermiston:

I have just finished David Balfour; I have another book on the stocks, 'the Young Chevalier', which is to be part in France and part in Scotland, and to deal with Prince Charlie about the year 1749. And now what have I done but begun a third which is to be all moorland together, and is to have for a centrepiece a figure that I think you will appreciate - that of the immortal Braxfield - Braxfield himself is my grand premier, or since you are so much engaged in the British drama, let me say my heavy lead. 6.

The title of the book at first was The Justice Clerk. Lord Braxfield had long haunted Stevenson, who had been familiar from youth with Braxfield's reputation and the traditions associated with his name; in the essay 'Some Portraits by Raeburn' in Virginibus Puerisque, he had written of Raeburn's portrait of the Justice Clerk. To Charles Baxter he wrote a month later:

I have a novel on the stocks to be called the Justice Clerk. It is pretty Scotch; the grand premier is taken from Braxfield (O, by the by, send me Cockburn's Memorials) and some of the story is, well, queer.

The heroine is seduced by one man, and finally disappears with the other man who shot him... Mind you, I expect the Justice Clerk to be my masterpiece. My Braxfield is already a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, and so far as he has gone my best character. . 7.

In August, 1893, he says he has been casting the beginning; but a year later still only the first four or five chapters had been drafted. Then, in the last weeks of his life, he attacked the task again, in a sudden heat of inspiration, and worked at it ardently and without interruption until his death.

Weir of Hermiston consists of a number of elements: the interest in the historical personality of Lord Braxfield; the **problems** and emotions arising from a violent conflict between duty and nature in a judge; the incompatibility and misunderstanding between father and son; and, of course, the love story. Behind all is the background of Scottish history and landscape providing the befitting atmosphere of brooding tragedy. Adam Weir, the Lord Justice Clerk, was a stern man, who believed in and stuck to his principles, having little sympathy for those who through weakness did not. His wife, Jean, meek and dutiful, was the last of the hard-riding and hard-fighting Rutherfords of Hermiston. Unable to please her husband she became devoted to her son, Archie, and to him she passed her tenderness and piety, so that he was drawn to her, and turned from his father. Adam Weir saw little of his son while he was at school and university; however, Archie's mind had been opened, and some of the opinions he

had formed in the Speculative Society and elsewhere, were contradictory to those held by his father. At the hanging of Duncan Jopp, on whom his father had pronounced sentence, Archie stood up and, repelled by the sight as the contradiction of all his mother had taught him, shouted 'I denounce this God-defying murder'. Later at the Speculative Society, to the horror of the members, he upheld the affirmative in a debate on the abolition of capital punishment. But the feeling of revulsion at his father's actions cooled when, told by an older friend that his father had once been greatly concerned when Archie lay sick, he realized that there was a human heart beneath the dour exterior. However, in the subsequent interview, the Justice showed no sympathy, chastised Archie and sent him off to Hermiston, his mother's land, where Archie became known as the Recluse.

Here Archie fell in love with the beautiful young Christina, sister of Dandie, one of the older Kirstie's nephews, the Four Black Brothers, and the two saw each other secretly. Meanwhile, Frank Innes, a college friend, who was in financial trouble, arrived unexpectedly; but Archie offended him by spending too little time with him, and in retaliation Innes spread insidiously malicious and false rumours to debase Archie. Finally he discovered the secret love, and Archie, angered but fearful of exposure, told the young Kirstie they must see less of each other, but the girl was offended and hurt. Here the book was ended abruptly by Stevenson's death.

Mrs. Joe Strong, Stevenson's step-daughter, to whom he dictated the plot when he was too sick to write, has supplied the rest of the plot that Stevenson intended. Archie persists in his good resolution of avoiding further meetings with Christina that might besmirch her name. Taking advantage of the girl's unhappiness and wounded vanity, Frank Innes pursues his purpose of seduction, and Kirstie though still caring for Archie in her heart, allows herself to become Frank's victim. Old Kirstie is the first to perceive her condition, and believing Archie to be the culprit, accuses him, thus making him aware of the deed. He does not at once deny the charge, but seeks out and questions the young Kirstie who confesses the truth to him; and he, still loving her, promises to protect and defend her in trouble. Archie quarrels with Innes and kills him by the Weaver's Stone, where he and Christina had first met. Meanwhile the Four Black Brothers, aware of their sister's seduction want vengeance on Archie; but Archie is arrested for Innes's murder, tried before his father, found guilty, and sentenced to death. Meanwhile the elder Kirstie discovers from the girl how matters really stand and informs the four brothers, who gather a following, and, after a great fight, break Archie out of prison, whence he and Christina escape to America. The ordeal of his own son's trial is too much for the Judge, and he dies. 'I do not know what becomes of old Kirstie,' adds the amanuensis, 'but that character grew and strengthened

so in the writing that I am sure he had some dramatic destiny for her.'

The development of the extant story is skillfully handled. The courtship of Adam is treated briefly in chapter one, but with sufficient detail to establish the relationship between the two unequal partners. The result of this marriage is a son who is unintentionally turned against his father by the Calvinistic piety of his mother. This antipathy is adequately treated to provide for Archie's reaction to his father's behaviour during the trial of Duncan Jopp, and its ramifications. During all this the character of Adam Weir is strongly drawn. Archie yields to the strength of his father, and is sent to Hermiston.

Then comes the love story set against a grim and terrible background, Hermiston behind his son, behind Kirstie the Four Black Brothers; just as the lovers themselves, are shown against a cold, grey scene, among stony hills; there is tragedy in the air. Upon their idyll, the elder Kirstie's tales cast Hermiston's shadow.

It is important that Stevenson emphasize the kinship of Kirstie and Archie, for the account of the family tales loses much point if they are not referred to the family tradition, including both Rutherfords and Elliotts, which both share, and the mixture of violence and melancholy which lay behind Archie's maternal ancestry. But picturesque as is the history, or pseudo-historical material, in

Kirstie's tales, they are not introduced simply as a picturesque background for its own sake; they represent Archie's environment and heredity; the mood of tragedy is prepared.

The climax comes when Archie admits to Christina that one of the persons who had been talking to him was Frank Innes. The climax is genuine, marking the breakdown of Archie's attempt to define his own relations with destiny, while the prior introduction of Innes makes clear the direction the story will take. The resolution of the plot is foreshadowed.

But some, including Stevenson himself, have been dissatisfied with the plot ending. He wrote to Barrie on 1 November, 1892:

If you are going to make a book end badly, it must end badly from the beginning. Now, your book (The Little Minister) began to end well. You let yourself fall in love with, and fondle and smile at your puppets. Once you had done that, your honour was committed - at the cost of truth to life you were bound to save them. It is the blot on Richard Feverel, for instance, that it begins to end well; and then tricks you and ends ill. But in this case, there is worse behind, for the ill ending does not inherently issue from the plot; - the story had, in fact, ended well after the great last interview between Richard and Lucy - and the blind illogical bullet which smashes all has no more to do between the boards than a fly has to do with a room into whose open window it comes buzzing. It might have so happened; it needed not; and unless needs must, we have no right to pain our readers. I have had a heavy case of conscience of the same kind about my Braxfield story. Braxfield - only his

name is Hermiston - has a son who is condemned to death; plainly there is a fine tempting fitness about this - and I meant he was to hang. But on considering my minor characters, I saw there were five people who would - in a sense, who must - break prison and attempt his rescue. They are capable hardy too, who might very well succeed. Why should they not then? Why should not young Hermiston escape clear out of the country? and be happy, if he could with - but soft. I will not betray my secret nor my heroine. 8.

Mrs. Strong's account of how the book ends, cannot be accepted as authoritative on two counts; first, it is clear from Stevenson's letters that he perceived the impossibility of Archie's being tried before his father; secondly he told Sydney Lysaght that the culminating emotion was to be reached in a scene in the jail, when Kirstie gains access to Archie and informs him of her condition. What are the lines on which he would work out this central idea of a father condemning his own son? Some indication is given:

The Lord Justice Clerk tries some people capitally on circuit. Certain evidence cropping up, the charge is transferred to the Justice Clerk's own son. Of course, in the next trial the Justice Clerk is excluded, and the case is called before the Lord Justice General. Where would this trial have to be? I fear in Edinburgh, which would not suit my view. Could it be again in the circuit town? 9.

Stephen Gwynn suggests the plot might end this way:

Now consider the facts. A girl is seduced. The blame for killing the seducer would naturally fall on the brothers who were notorious for that. They could be tried before Hermiston at a neighbouring circuit town. But,

under these circumstances Archie (given his character) would be with difficulty restrained from giving himself up. He would at least be present in court. Hermiston would probably draw information out of Kirstie which would infer that Archie was the killer. Hermiston would not shrink from ordering his son into custody; thus virtually, though not actually, sentencing him to death. It is clear, also, that so good an artist as Stevenson would never attempt a second trial which would violate all principles of diversifying incident. 10.

Stevenson was much surer of the psychology of the principal characters than of the later details of the plot. The throwbacks into border history, the character of the Lord and his son, and the relation between the two, show a sureness of touch hitherto rare in his work. Even in the incomplete story the characters and their relations are fully delineated, culminating in Chapter III, set forth with a brilliance of style and subtlety of psychology that Stevenson displayed nowhere else.

The Lord Justice Clerk is presented as a coarse, ferocious, incorruptible judge, revelling in his office, and in his contempt for the prisoners brought before him; he compels our credence. 'Our dislike is beside the point;' writes Walter Allen, 'he strikes the imagination like some great statue of antiquity; his virtues are the Roman virtues.' 'If he failed to gain his son's friendship, or even his son's toleration,' Stevenson writes, 'on he went up the great bare staircase of duty, uncheered and undepressed.' He is a magisterial figure, and terrifying in action, as Stevenson shows, and as we see him in such a passage as this:

... My Lord Hermiston occupied the bench in the red robes of criminal jurisdiction, his face framed in the white wig. Honest all through, he did not affect the virtue of impartiality; this was no case for refinement; there was a man to be hanged, he would have said, and he was hanging him. Nor was it possible to see his lordship, and acquit him of gusto in the task. It was plain he gloried in the exercise of his trained faculties, in the clear sight which pierced at once into the joint of a fact, in the rude, unvarnished gibes with which he demolished every figment of defence. He took his ease and jested unbending in that solemn place with some of the freedom of the tavern; and the rag of man with the flannel round his neck was hunted gallowsward with jeers. 11.

Archie Weir is the child of one of these marriages where there can be no fusion of character, and where the child is bound to grow up partisan; Archie stands with his mother. Mrs. Weir indoctrinates the child with hazy but strongly held notions of tenderness and piety, but brings deep suspicion on the father. Archie's protest, then, is the result of the pent up forces of years. Only one who had felt this could be so convincing, and indeed Archie is somewhat autobiographical, many of his characteristics and actions can be found in Stevenson's own biography: the debate at the Speculative Society meeting after the trial on the subject of capital punishment, or his sense of humour, for example. There is adequate record of Stevenson's becoming inflamed about matters of public interest: fired by moral indignation, for instance, he wished to write pamphlets on the death of General Gordon, about which he knew nothing except what he had read. Again a letter to Dr. Hyde

in defence of Father Damien was libellous, and it was lucky for him that Hyde contented himself with the remark that his assailant was a 'bohemian crank' whose opinion meant nothing. Finally some have claimed that the younger Kirstie is a final expression of the 'Claire' of his youth, with whom Stevenson had had a rather shadowy affair during his college days in Edinburgh. Up to now there had been an absence of sex in Stevenson's women.

The explanation of this aspect of his work may be that he did know how to reconcile the necessity of selling books with truth of presentation. He had solved the problem of sex before by evading it: The Master of Ballantrae, which is really a tale of jealousy, contains no suggestion of the sex attraction; the love stories in Catriona and St. Ives were stillborn. But in Weir of Hermiston he departed from his former reserve:

I have celebrated my holiday from 'Samoa' (The 'Footnote to History') by a plunge at the beginning of the 'Young Chevalier'. I am afraid my touch is a little broad in a love story; I can't mean one thing and write another. As for women, I am no more in fear of them. I can do a sort all right; age makes one a little less afraid of a petticoat, a live yarn which swells at all on love is the swelling on one string; it is manifold I grant, but the root fact is there unchanged, and the sentiment being very intense, and very much handled in letters, positively calls for a little pawing and gracing. With a writer of my prosaic literalness and pertinency of points of view, this all shoves towards grossness, positively even towards the far more damnable closeness: this has kept me off the sentiment hitherto, and now I am to try.

Lord. Of course Meredith can do it, and so could Shakespeare; but with all my romance, I am a realist and a prosaist, and the most fanatical lover of plain physical sensations plainly and expressly rendered; hence my perils. To do love in the same spirit as I did (for instance) David Balfour's fatigue in the heather, my dear sir, there were grossness ready made. And hence how to sugar?

12.

The older Kirstie is a superb character. Not only does she represent Archie's ancestry, and inculcate this into the texture of the book by her tales of the Four Black Brothers, thereby preparing the mood of adventure and tragedy; but she is a great character in her own right, immersed and rooted in the welfare of, and fiercely loyal to her clan, and especially to Archie. Now a woman who had never known love as a lass, her capacity for self-sacrificing devotion had been thwarted and repressed:

Kirstie was now over fifty, and might have sat for a sculptor. Long of limb, and still light of foot, deep-breasted, robust-loined, her golden hair not yet mingled with any trace of silver, the years had but caressed and embellished her. By the lines of a rich and vigorous maternity, she seemed destined to be the bride of heroes and the mother of their children; and behold, by the iniquity of fate, she had passed through her youth alone, and drew near to the confines of age, a childless woman. The tender ambitions that she had received at birth had been, by time and disappointment, diverted into a certain barren zeal of industry and fury of interference. She carried her thwarted ardours into housework, she washed floors with her empty heart. If she could not win the love of one with love, she must dominate all by her temper. Hasty, wordy, and wrathful, she had a drawn quarrel with most of her neighbours, and with the others not much more than armed neutrality.

13.

in the household of Adam Weir she dominated the meek wife, and even the Justice Clerk himself had due respect for her iron will and her acid tongue.

But when Archie settled at Hermiston the dormant passion in Kirstie awoke and offered itself to the taciturn 'laird'.

To Kirstie, thus situate and in the Indian summer of her heart, which was slow to submit to age, the gods sent this unequivocal good thing of Archie's presence. She had known him in the cradle and paddled him when he misbehaved; and yet, as she had not so much as set eyes on him since he was eleven and had had his last serious illness, the tall, slender, refined, and rather melancholy young gentleman of twenty came upon her with the shock of a new acquaintance. He was 'Young Hermiston', 'the laird himsel', he had an air of distinctive superiority, a cold straight glance of his black eyes, that abashed the woman's tantrums in the beginning, and therefore the possibility of any quarrel was excluded. He was new, and therefore immediately aroused her curiosity; he was reticent, and kept it awake. And lastly he was dark and she was fair, and he was male and she female, the everlasting fountains of interest. 14.

Kirstie's love is consummate and complete: it is the love of mother for son; it is the love of serving for authority; it is the love of woman for man. And as such it is deeper, richer, fuller than that of any maiden, possibly even that of the younger Kirstie. To handle such a love requires of the artist sensitivity and care above the ordinary; it requires the sensible fingers of a virtuoso to maintain the full vibrato of its strings and prevent its sinking to a vulgar twang. It is Kirstie who warns Archie of his love, who accuses him of the seduction, and who eventually dis-

covers the truth. Her magnificence entirely suits the role she plays. She stands with Adam Weir as one of Stevenson's few great characters; indeed, she is one of the great women of English literature, for she is womanhood in all its tenderness, devotion, selflessness, loyalty, passion and love.

The love scene, too, is memorable. It has a lyrical intensity; yet it is controlled and not sentimental or gushing. Stevenson is careful to motivate the introduction of the song by drawing attention to Archie's heightened mood, and Christina's adroit skill in playing up to it, as she watched for her chance to shine.

He was sounding her, semi-consciously, to see if she could understand him; to learn if she were only an animal the colour of flowers, or had a soul in her to keep her sweet. She, on her part, her means well in hand, watched, womanlike, for any opportunity to shine, to abound in his humour, whatever that might be. The dramatic artist, that lies dormant or only half awake in most human beings, had in her sprung to his feet in a divine fury, and chance had served her well. She looked upon him with a subdued twilight look that became the hour of the day and the train of thought; earnestness shone through her like stars in the purple west; and from the great but controlled upheaval of her whole nature there passed into her voice, and rang in her lightest words, a thrill of emotion.

'Have you mind of Dand's song?' she answered. 'I think he'll have been trying to say what you have been thinking.'

'No, I never heard it,' he said. 'Repeat it to me, can you?'

'It's nothing wanting the tune,' said Kirstie.

'Then sing it to me,' said he.^{15.}

By the song Stevenson relates the love story to the plaintive sense of history which is an important emotion in the book, and at the same time carries the love story a step farther. But he himself is never carried away by the emotions of his characters, which distinguishes the sentimentalist from the unsentimentalist; when the scene is over he remains a clear-eyed observer.

The key to the understanding of Kidnapped lies in his interest in Scotland and his own boyhood. This interest grew until the final problem was to find the kind of writing that could combine his sense of romance, his passionate feeling for the Scottish countryside, and his strong sense of Scottish history into a unified novel. Weir of Hermiston represents not only the discovery of a form of fiction that did most justice to his talents; it represents also the solution to the series of problems posed, indirectly, by the structure of Kidnapped. 'The ascendant hand is what I feel most strongly,' he said; 'I am bound in and in with my forbears... We are all nobly born; fortunate those who know it; blessed those who remember.'^{16.} Stevenson's Lord Justice Clerk, then, is the consummate expression of the national myth, of one aspect of Scotland's consciousness of itself; the novel is rooted in its country's history and feeling. It is not only about Weir of Hermiston, indeed some of the best chapters of the book are concerned with the most sensitive and passionate shades of Scottish

temperament; these are richer shades of passion than he had ever attempted to touch.

It has been remarked that the actual date of the story is somewhat of an anachronism. Sir Sidney Colvin points out that the story is set in 1814, fourteen years after Braxfield's death; by which time the manners of Scottish judges and Scots folk in general had altered considerably. Colvin quotes Lockhart writing about 1817: 'Since the death of Lord Justice Clerk Macqueen of Braxfield, the whole exterior of judicial department has been quite altered.' 17. A similar criticism, says Colvin, may hold true of the picture of border life contained in the chapter concerning the Four Black Brothers of Cauldstaneslap, namely that it rather suggests the ways of an earlier generation. A like criticism was made of Kidnapped and one can only respond in like manner: the historical novel, or the novel with historical overtones, represents the mood or tone of history and it is not necessarily dedicated to an accurate presentation of historical events. In Weir of Hermiston and in Kidnapped Stevenson had his precedent in Scott. His desire was to find a context in space and time which linked the Scotland familiar to him as a boy with the romantic Border associations that led back to an earlier period of history. It was important, therefore, that certain aspects derive from his own experience in Swanston, Glencorse and elsewhere in the Pentlands and the Lammermuirs; also that there should lie behind these the whole tragic sense of Scottish

border life that found expression in the Ballads. By altering the chronology he was able to put the sense of Scottish history at the service of the sense of biography, and the welding of these into a rich and tragic texture makes Weir of Hermiston impressive.

In publishing three successive drafts of Weir of Hermiston, Balfour preserved a study of Stevenson as a zealous reviser. Some of the versions are a year apart, but the manner is consistent: rich, muscular, easy. The best account of Stevenson's methods of composition at this time is in the following letter to Mr. W. Craibe Angus of Glasgow:

I am still a slow study, and sit for a long while silent on my eggs. Unconscious thought, there is the only method: macerate your subject, let it boil slow, then take the lid off and look in - and there your stuff is - good or bad. 18.

Weir of Hermiston is a magnificently sustained piece of writing. The choice of words and their arrangement are always at the level of the tragic conception of the novel; every word is decisive and chosen for euphony as well as force and precision. There is no trace of the occasional affectation that marred Stevenson's style in his early novels; only great strength and dignity, a writing that is crystal clear in its rendering of character and scene, with an eloquence that rises naturally from the author's contemplation of the pity and terror implicit in his theme. In the opening chapters he shows a sureness of touch and economy of expression which makes it clear he had

fully mastered the early development of his sense of style.

Thus, at least, when the family were at Hermiston, not only my Lord, but Mrs. Weir too enjoyed a holiday. Free from the dreadful looking-for of the miscarried dinner, she would mind her seam, read her piety books, and take her walk (which was my lord's orders), sometimes by herself, sometimes with Archie, the only child of that scarce natural union. The child was her next bond to life. Her frosted sentiment bloomed again, she breathed deep of life, she let loose her heart, in that society. The miracle of her motherhood was ever new to her. The sight of the little man at her skirt intoxicated her with the sense of power, and froze her with the consciousness of her responsibility. She looked forward, and, seeing him in fancy grow up and play his diverse part on the world's theatre, caught in her breath and lifted up her courage with a lively effort. It was only with the child that she had conceived and managed to pursue a scheme of conduct. Archie was to be a great man and good; a minister if possible, a saint for certain. 19.

In Weir of Hermiston there is a profounder and more subtle handling of incident and phrase than in Treasure Island. Stevenson resists the temptation to over-elaborate on anecdotes about Braxfield and Edinburgh, of which there were many; details are subordinated to the tragic pattern. One of the greatest scenes in the book is that of the morning church service at Hermiston where Archie and Christina first see each other, and carry on a conversation with their eyes. Here is the start of the love which is an integral part of the book. The scene lives and breathes, and yet is controlled and never overdone:

Archie was attracted by the bright thing like a child. He looked at her again and yet again, and their looks crossed. The lip was

lifted from her little teeth. He saw the red blood work vividly under her tawny skin. Her eye, which was great as a stag's struck and held his gaze. He knew who she must be - Kirstie, she of the harsh diminutive, his housekeeper's niece, the sister of the rustic prophet - Gib - and he found in her the answer to his wishes.

Christina felt the shock of their encountering glances and seemed to rise, clothed in smiles, into a region of the vague and bright. But the gratification was not more exquisite than it was brief. She looked away abruptly, and immediately began to blame herself for that abruptness. She knew what she should have done, too late - turned slowly with her nose in the air. And meantime his look was not removed, but continued to play upon her like a battery of cannon constantly aimed, and now seemed to isolate her alone with him, and now seemed to uplift her, as on a pillory, before the congregation. For Archie continued to drink her in with his eyes, even as a wayfarer comes to a well-head on a mountain, and stoops his face, and drinks with thirst unassuageable. In the cleft of her little breasts the fiery eye of the topaz and the pale florets of primrose fascinated him. He saw the breasts heave, and the flowers shake with the heaving, and marvelled what should do so much to discompose the girl. And Christina was conscious of his gaze - saw it, perhaps with the dainty plaything of an ear that peeped among her ringlets; she was conscious of changing colour, conscious of her unsteady breath. Like a creature tracked, run down, surrounded, she sought in a dozen ways to give herself a countenance. She used her handkerchief - it was a really fine one - then she desisted in a panic: 'He would only think I was too warm.' She took to reading in the metrical psalms, and then remembered it was sermon-time. Last she put a 'sugar-bool' in her mouth, and the next moment repented the step. It was such a homely-like thing! Mr. Archie would never be eating sweeties in kirk; and, her colour flamed high. At this signal of distress Archie awoke to a sense of his ill-behaviour. What had he been doing? He had been exquisitely rude in church to the niece of his housekeeper; he had stared like a lackey and a libertine at a beautiful and modest girl.

The dialogue, in which Stevenson uses Scots idiom throughout, is equally adequate in psychological truth, aesthetic probability, and dramatic expression. 'Puir bitch', says the Lord Justice as he learns that his wife is dead; the phrase which, in the context, sums up both the tragedy and the pathos of Hermiston's relations with his wife without sentimentality, indicates complete mastery of theme, materials, and method. Again, the interview between Archie and his father is one of the finest pieces of Stevenson's dialogue. As the dialogue proceeds Hermiston's speech becomes more and more Scotch while Archie's remains standard English, as the difference in character and attitude and the impassable gulf between them is subtly elaborated. In answer to Archie's account of his actions, Hermiston breaks out with a long ironical speech in which Scots words seem to hiss with scorn, making Archie's elegant English seem artificial and effeminate by comparison:

'You're a young gentleman that doesna approve of Caapital Punishment,' said Hermiston. 'Weel, I'm an auld man that does. I was glad to get Jopp hangit, and what for would I pretend I wasna? You're all for honesty it seems; you couldn't even steik your mouth on the puhblic street. What for should I steik mines upon the bench, the King's officer, bearing the sword, a dreid to evil-doers, as I was from the beginning, and as I will be to the end. Mair than enough of it. Heedious. I never gave two thoughts to heediousness, I have no ca to be bonny. I'm a man that gets through with my day's business, and let that suffice.'

The ring of sarcasm had died out of his voice as he went on; the plain words became invested with some of the Justice seat.

'It would be telling you if you could say as much,' the speaker resumed. 'But ye cannot. Ye've been reading some of my cases ye say. But it was not for the law in them, it was to spy out your faither's nakedness, a fine employment in a son. You're splairging, you're running at lairge in life like a wild nowt. It's impossible you should think any longer of coming to the Bar. You're not fit for it; no splairger is. And another thing; son of mines or no son of mines, you have flung filement in public on one of the Senators of the Coallage of Justice, and I would make it my business to see that ye were never admitted there yourself. There is a kind of decency to be observit. Then comes the next of it - what am I to do with ye next? Ye'll have to find some kind of trade, for I'll never support ye in idleset. What do ye fancy ye'll be fit for? The pulpit? Na, they could never get diveenity into that blockhead. Hem that the law of man shamles is not likely to do muckle better by the law of God. What would ye make of hell? Wouldna your gorge rise at that? Na, there's no room for splairgers under the fower quarters of John Calvin. What else is there? Speak up. Have ye got nothing of your own? 21.

In Weir of Hermiston it is possible to trace once more the theme treated in chapter three of the devil as angel. The rogue here is Frank Innes, who ingratiates himself with the people by his savoir faire, and who thwarts Archie the good. The Master as the seducer of Alison and Jessie Brown had already foreshadowed Innes. Here the ending is the same as before: Innes is killed by Archie who is slated to hang; and good almost destroys itself once more in destroying evil. But the ending was to be changed.

Stevenson's career moved from the romantic to the dramatic; yet he never left the romantic phase behind. Dramatic writing can include many qualities of the romantic and become not worse but better: Wuthering Heights, for example, is romantic and yet is essentially a dramatic novel. The love of Heathcliff, like that of Archie Weir and Adam Bede, is doomed to tragedy not only because of his original

nature, but also because of external forces which have proscribed his downfall. Weir of Hermiston marks the final transition from the romantic to the dramatic. Nevertheless it retains the qualities of appropriate picturesqueness which constituted the *raison d'etre* of the earlier novels; only here the qualities are enriching, giving background and depth to what is essentially a study of character.

There are two schools of thought about Weir of Hermiston. The more sanguine agree with Edwin Muir, who is almost reverent:

... He began when he was over forty to speak in the unaffected voice of the great writer ... we see in a flash all that he might have become... a noble greatness and flexibility. The figures exist in a clear dawn and have the freshness of a morning race, where every one without effort or distortion is a little above the human scale... they differ from Hardy's characters in a lesser fashion, by their integral and active powers... Judging him by it, one can almost say that no other writer of his time showed evidence of equal powers. 22.

Henry James agreed that Weir of Hermiston showed signs of greatness:

The beauty of the thing has the effect of rendering doubly heart-breaking, as one reads, the extinction of a talent that could still give one such a sense of freshness and life, of not yet having played, as it were, its highest card. I get from it a sense of new resources altogether; of his striking a new chord. 23.

The other school says that as Weir of Hermiston stands it is good, but that Stevenson would have botched it. There is little to be gained by such speculation. The more

valid conclusions will come from an examination of the novel as it stands; and as it stands it is a profound human drama, executed in a style admirably suited to its tragic content, a masterpiece of English literature.

Notes, Chapter IV

1. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. IV, p.123.
2. Gwynn, Stephen. 'Posthumous works of Robert Louis Stevenson', p.807.
3. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. IV, p.257.
4. Ibid., Vol. V, p.28.
5. Ibid., Vol. IV, p.94.
6. Ibid., Vol. IV, p.257.
7. Ibid., Vol. IV, p.270.
8. Ibid., Vol. IV, p.258.
9. Ibid., Vol. IV, p.270.
10. Gwynn, Stephen. 'Posthumous works of Robert Louis Stevenson', p.815.
11. Stevenson. Weir of Hermiston, p.23.
12. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. IV, p.184.
13. Stevenson. Weir of Hermiston, p.50.
14. Ibid., p.51.
15. Ibid., p.89.
16. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. III, p.269.
17. Stevenson. Weir of Hermiston, p.135.
18. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. IV, p.115.
19. Stevenson. Weir of Hermiston, p.7.
20. Ibid., p.75.
21. Ibid., p.34.
22. Muir, Edwin. 'Robert Louis Stevenson', p.201.
23. 'Literary Notes', Harpers, p.3.

Chapter V

PRETTY, BUT IS IT ART

Our father Adam sat under the Tree and scratched
with a stick in the mould:
And the first rude sketch that the world had seen
was joy to his mighty heart.
Till the Devil whispered behind the leaves, 'It's
pretty, but is it Art?'

Kipling,
'The Conundrum of the Workshops.'

Stevenson progressed from novels of romance to novels of drama and character. But his progress was not necessarily toward better novels (for Treasure Island is a better novel of its kind than The Master of Ballantrae) nor was it always in a straight line. He never lost his love of the picturesque adventure story, and under the influence of his collaborating stepson he ventured more than once into this form in the last phase of his career. At the time he was working on Weir of Hermiston, for example, he had just laid aside St. Ives, a picaresque adventure story that at first sight belongs in the early phase.

St. Ives is the story of one of Napoleon's soldiers imprisoned in Edinburgh castle, his escape from the castle and his experiences afterwards, including a love affair and various political and personal intrigues. The plot, bearing the marks of being hastily written, is a succession of coincidences and crises, many of which strain the willing suspension of disbelief. Actually the book was dictated to an amanuensis by deaf and dumb alphabet, while the author lay sick in bed.

Stevenson himself thought little of it:

It is a mere tissue of adventure; the central figure is not very well or very sharply drawn; there is no philosophy, no destiny to it; some of the happenings are very good in themselves, I believe, but none of them bildende, none of them constructive, except in so far perhaps as they make up a kind of sham picture of the time, all in italics, and all out of drawing. Here and there, I think, it is well written; and here and there it's not... If it has a merit to it, I should say it was a sort of deliberation and swing to the style, which seems to me to suit the mail-coaches and post-chaise with which it sounds all through. 'Tis my most prosaic book. 1.

The book lacks the psychological richness of The Master of Ballantrae and has not the greatness of Weir of Hermiston, but it is more than an adventure story. A great deal of material is worked in that earlier found expression in descriptive essays. Stevenson started his career with several kinds of writing: the moral essay, the descriptive essay, the short story, the picaresque novel, which he intended to take up in turn. As he grew older he found ways of combining these several kinds in fiction. Thus in The Master of Ballantrae, the story of adventure and intrigue is enriched by a new psychological interest, and in Weir of Hermiston the early elements of historical romance are introduced indirectly in the retrospective chapter describing the adventures of the brothers Elliot. If we except Treasure Island and The Black Arrow, in his longer works the pure vein of romantic adventure is never to be found alone; other intentions are intermingled; the claims of psychology, history, topography and autobiography assert themselves and the adventure story changes as it

proceeds to become something more complicated but not always adequately integrated.

What can be the final judgement on Stevenson the artist in prose narrative? Was he an escapist? Did he write simply for amusement or diversion? Was he a charlatan? Was his primary purpose money? Did he turn to literature because he was unfit for anything else, or was it because of the inner compulsion of the born artist?

One factor that must be taken into consideration is the ill-health that plagued his career, and his fortitude in dealing with it. Although this has been accented unnecessarily, so that his courage in not giving way to his consumption has been emphasized to the obfuscation of his literary merits, this courage cannot be denied. He never knew when the crippling disease would leave him bed-ridden and helpless. One such attack, for example, occurred while he was in France in 1884: his sight was affected, his lungs were constantly threatened with a haemorrhage, and on the recommendation of a new doctor his wife persuaded him to move to Royat in the Auvergne. From here he wrote in July, 1884:

My life dwindles into a kind of valley-of the shadow picnic. I cannot read; so much of the time (as to-day) I must not speak above my breath that to play patience, or to see my wife playing it, is become the be-all and end-all of my dim career. Do not think me unhappy; I have not been so for years; but I am blurred, inhabit the debatable frontier of sleep, and have but dim designs upon activity. All is at a standstill: books

closed, paper put aside, the voice, the eternal voice of R.L.S. well silenced. Hence this plaint reached you with no very great meaning, no very great purpose, and written part in slumber by a heavy, dull, somnolent, superannuated son of a bedpost.

2.

In spite of this, when he could Stevenson wrote, although an attempt at continuous narrative might be interrupted at any moment. A man in this condition would find it difficult to concentrate on a work of art; and yet Stevenson did concentrate and labour, at least on his style. Then, too, a man whose constitution was susceptible to such attacks would, even at the best of times, be of a nervous, restless, excitable temperament. And this was the case with Stevenson: his method was to have two or more pieces in hand at the same time, a condition which may not be conducive to the best art. This ill health cannot be ignored: how many other writers in English literature worked under such physical disabilities?

But however frail his physical health might be, there was nothing emaciated about his devotion to art. Although he resorted sometimes to pot-boiling, one catches a glimpse of the perceptive critic hovering in the background, a displeased Jeremiah. In a letter to Henley, written while 'tushery' was in full swing, but health improving and with it confidence, he says:

I beg to inform you that I, Robert Louis Stevenson, author of Brashiana and other works, am merely beginning to commence to prepare to make a first start at trying to understand my profession. 0

the height and depth of novelty and worth in any art! and O that I am privileged to swim and shoulder through such oceans! Could one get out of sight of land - all in the blue! Alas not, being anchored here in flesh, and the bonds of logic still about us.

But what a great space and a great air there is in these small shallows where alone we venture! and how new each sight, squall, calm, or sunrise! An art is a fine fortune, a palace in a park, a band of music, health, and physical beauty; all but love - to any worthy practiser. I sleep upon my art for a pillow; I awaken in my art; I am unready for death because I have to leave it. I love my wife, I do not know how much, nor can, nor shall, unless I lost her; but while I can conceive my being widowed, I refuse the offering of life without my art. I am not but in my art; it is me; I am the body of it merely.

And yet I produce nothing, am the author of Brashiana and other works; tiddy-iddity - as if the works one wrote were anything but "prentice's experiments". Dear reader, I deceive you with husks, the real works and all the pleasure are still mine and incommunicable. After this break in my work, beginning to return to it, as from light sleep, I wax exclamator as you see.

Sursum Corda:
Heave ahead:
Here's luck.
Art and Blue Heaven,
April and God's Larks.
Green reeds and the sky-scattering river.
A stately music.
Enter God.

Ay, but you know until a man can write that "Enter God", he has made no art! None!
Come, let us take counsel together and
make some! 3.

One of Stevenson's difficulties was that he could not walk out of his father's house and make himself solvent. He was too frail physically for the rough and tumble of

commercial life; on the other hand, his passion for letters was too strong. He once said:

Had I been an engineer and literature my amusement, it would have been better perhaps. I pulled it off, of course, I won the wager, and it is pleasant while it lasts; but how long will it last. 4.

In order to win the much needed bread, he resorted to artful contrivance. Here, in a letter to Edmund Gosse, September, 1884, is the aspiring artist justifying himself with the voice of the solicitous Scot:

This year, for the first time, I shall pass 300; I may even get halfway to the next milestone. This seems but a faint remuneration; and the devil of it is, that I manage, with sickness, and moves, and education, and the like, to keep steadily in front of my income. However, I console myself with this, that if I were anything else under God's heaven, and had the same crank health, I should make an even zero. If I had, with my present knowledge, twelve months of my old health, I would, could and should do something neat. As it is, I have to tinker at my things in little sittings; and rent, or the butcher, or something, is always calling me off to rattle up a pot-boiler. And then comes a back-set of my health, and I have to twiddle my fingers and play patience. 5.

In fact, when New Year's Day came he reported:

a total receipt of £465:0:6 for the last twelve months; £250 due next month, £50 in the bank, and owing no man nothing... When I think of how last year began, after four months of sickness and idleness, all my plans gone to water, myself starting alone, a kind of spectre, for Nice - should I not be grateful? Come, let us sing unto the Lord. 6.

The cases of Somerset Maugham and J.B. Priestley provide interesting modern parallels to that of Stevenson.

All have been largely ignored by historians of the modern novel, though they are writers of international fame, whose books sell in tens of thousands. Maugham and Priestley claim that the reason they receive so little attention from serious critics is that what they are really interested in is story-telling. They claim that their intentions are always dramatic, rather than political or sociological.

Priestley's characters come out of a stock-drawer. His books are those of a man whose feelings have not been seriously engaged by his themes. They lack on the one hand the romanticism that gives colour to John Buchan's best books, and on the other hand the compulsive obsession that marks Hugh Walpole's best work. Stevenson's case is something the same: but, while in the early adventure stories his characters may have been taken from the same stock-drawer that Priestley used, in the later books, until we reach Weir of Hermiston, they are not so much characters as caricatures. They are creatures drawn in black and white; they never gleam in purple and gold. Moreover, it is not true that Stevenson was not seriously engaged by his theme. His themes, the triumph of evil, the conflict between father and son, Scottish history, grew out of his own life, from early childhood and youth, and far from being uninterested in them, he was obsessed by them and could write of little else. However, either Stevenson purposely forsook the art he was capable of, or he was badly lacking in the capacity

for self criticism, for in much of the pot-boiling and tushery, one has the distinct awareness of unrealised potential.

Like Stevenson's, Maugham's life seems to have been spent at one remove from ordinary living. When events in childhood involve changes as deep and painful as those suffered by Maugham and Stevenson, they affect one all his life. Of Human Bondage, The Moon and Sixpence, and Cakes and Ale, show that Maugham, like Stevenson, worked most successfully when his themes came from real life. Yet Cakes and Ale, in dealing with human relationships, shows those touches of vulgarity that are so damaging to Maugham's stature as an artist.

Maugham and Priestley, like Stevenson, are the artistic victims of the society that has helped to elevate them to fame. As the space between the strata of the novel, which began after the Education Acts of 1870, has widened, writers have taken their places on one level or the other. Problems of audience and communication have arisen which had no meaning for Trollope, Wilkie Collins, Dickens, or George Eliot; and Maugham and Priestley and Stevenson all established themselves, not exactly on one level or the other, but somewhere in the region between. In the sense in which Maugham and Priestley are story-tellers Flaubert could hardly be considered a story-teller at all, and War and Peace is full of irrelevant philosophical speculation, which does nothing to help along the action. The

truth is that most artists in modern society have been in one way or another extraordinary, and that the kind of story telling which imposes very little strain on the reader's mind or interests is generally a product of commercial rather than literary value. There has been ample evidence earlier in this chapter that Stevenson yielded to the same pressures that diminish Maugham and Priestley. Their era has seen an immense proliferation of efficiently constructed works of fiction of every kind, of technical competence in plot construction and narrative by novelists who really have nothing to say. While by feeling and intention, Maugham, Priestley and Stevenson may not belong to this company, in practice they have sometimes kept it.

Another parallel here, and one where several further parallels may be drawn, is that of Sir Walter Scott. The Laird of Abbotsford and the Chief of Vailima resemble each other in their efforts to perpetuate the Scottish tales and legends which have been passed down from antiquity, and in their realization that the contemporary world was inhospitable to such reconstructions of feudal society, and that to take them seriously would be reactionary and futile. Both too, were interested in making money: it is certain that money held a prominent place in Stevenson's mind, as it is certain that Scott, at least the later Scott, had no other. However, while we can claim that Stevenson deliberately sacrificed his art for this, the same cannot be said for Scott, who was a born story teller, intent primarily on perpetuating

the stories and traditions of his country, and not on constructing a regular plot, 'where every step brings us a point nearer to the final catastrophe'. Scott resembled the Brontës in being attracted to the remote, the mysterious, the picturesque. Like Stevenson, he was from birth a story teller, a money-making story-teller.

But Stevenson paid at least lip service to art. On certain aspects of art Stevenson's views were similar to those of Henry James, while James and Scott might well be regarded as extremes in any distinction of writers of prose fiction. James said of Scott's romances: 'They have always had a charm for me - but I was amazed at the badness of R:l'enfant de l'art'. Stevenson agreed. Here he condemns the carelessness with which parts of Guy Mannering were executed:

Here we have a man of the finest creative instinct touching with perfect certainty and charm the romantic junctures of his story; and we find him utterly careless, almost, it would seem, incapable, in the technical matter of style, and not only frequently weak, but frequently wrong in points of drama. In character parts, indeed, and particularly in the Scotch, he was delicate, strong and truthful; but the trite, obliterated features of too many of his heroes have already wearied two generations of readers. At times his characters will speak with something far beyond propriety with a true heroic note; but on the next page they will be wading wearily forward with an ungrammatical and undramatic rigmarole of words. The man who could conceive and write the character of Elspeth of the Craighburnfoot, as Scott has conceived and written it, had not only splendid romantic,

but splendid tragic gifts. How comes it, then, that he could so often fob us off with languid, inarticulate twaddle?

It seems to me that the explanation is to be found in the very quality of his surprising merits. As his books are play to the reader, so were they play to him. He conjured up the romantic with delight, but he had hardly patience to describe it. He was a great day-dreamer, a seer of fit and beautiful and humorous visions, but hardly a great artist; hardly, in the manifold sense, an artist at all. He pleased himself, and so he pleases us. Of the pleasures of his art he tasted fully; but of its toils and vigils and distresses never man knew less. A great romantic - an idle child. 7.

If one were intent on maligning Stevenson here might be the material for nice irony.

But speculations concerning Stevenson's integrity as a literary artist are futile unless based on some solid foundation of evidence; in the final analysis Stevenson must be judged on the work he produced. What conclusions, then, can be drawn from the foregoing study of his novels?

While it is hoped that some less jaundiced and more equitable view may be taken finally, Frank Swinnerton's energetic castigation of 1914 cannot be ignored. Swinnerton contested Stevenson's right to be called an artist at all. Art he defined as 'the disinterested rendering to perfection of a theme intensely felt through, and in accord with the artist's philosophic conception of life'. This does not suggest a consistent philosophy, he says, but a writer must have had considerable aesthetic and emotional experience which directly informs his work with a wisdom greater than conventional morality. Stevenson, of course, was at a dis-

advantage: for the greater part of his career he was cut off from 'life' as the Brontës were, and depended heavily on the tales he had heard, read, or 'dreamed'. However, when he went to Samoa and engaged in 'life' his work underwent a change, a change reflected in the work of this period.

Swinnerton claimed that Stevenson's work did not have this philosophic conception. But what exactly is meant by this term? R.A.Scott-James has possibly made it clearer:

The poet or novelist is not content to "hold the mirror up to nature", for the simple reason that the mirror is not truthful enough; it reflects no more than the accidents of life, whilst the artist is interested in characteristics. His business, as Arnold said, is a criticism of life. Life crowds in upon his consciousness, and he sees it in this curious way and that, vividly, ironically, tragically, tenderly, comically - according to his genre d'emotion - and it is thus he will refashion it for others to look at, in the medium of his choice. But it is only his personal view, someone will say. Of course. It is a panorama of the world - or, perhaps, no more than a scene in a dell of the hillside - viewed from one point, the point where his personality stands. If he has faithfully given us the view from that point, it will contain as much truth as we can expect in a relative world. To give us the whole truth he would have to present to us all the views from all the points, the totality of possible experience that could enter into an infinite consciousness. We are content if his consciousness pierces, exposes, or enlarges experience ever so little - experience in this case as looked at, be it remembered, not suffered. 8.

The study of Stevenson's novels has certainly shown life viewed from the tragic point of view. This is evident in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The Master of Ballantrae, Weir of Hermiston

and many of the short stories. His preoccupation here is the triumph of evil, as it is in the works of Wilde and Conrad. The moral Stevenson points is: your adversary, the Devil, walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist! But often regeneration is impossible, for Calvinist Scotland influences the destiny of the characters as does Egdon Heath in The Return of the Native.

It would seem, then, that we might more appropriately call Stevenson's conception of life moral rather than philosophic. As David Daiches has said:

All of Stevenson's novels have a highly sensitive moral pattern. By this I do not mean that they are didactic, or edifying, or orthodox in point of view; I mean simply that the design of the narrative, and the interplay of character which carries on the narrative, is keyed to some profound moral problem, or it might be better to say moral dilemma - for Stevenson shares with the great writers of tragedy this knowledge that there are no permanent solutions to the real human problems... 9.

Stevenson for all his quarrels with Scotch Presbyterian morality was essentially a moralist at heart, and optimistic morality underlies most of his writing. His quarrel with Edinburgh morality was not that it was moral, but that it was pessimistic and narrow. He makes this clear in the essay 'A Gossip on a Novel of Dumas', where he praises Le Vicomte de Bragelonne for 'unstrained and wholesome morality', and remarks 'there is no quite good book without a good morality': he proceeds to distinguish between 'puritan morality' and the broader morality with which fiction should concern itself. 10.

In The Master of Ballantrae the moral aspects of the action do not represent a thesis independently conceived,

but an integral part of the meaning of the novel.

Character is the aspect of the novel which has become more and more dominant in latter years. The survival of a novelist's reputation rests, more than anything else, on his ability to portray convincing characters. Swinnerton maintained that to Stevenson character was incidental, and action, picturesque, exciting, and the employment of an atmosphere or appropriate style, most important. No abiding emotion is left with the reader, he said, only ephemeral emotions and excitements aroused by a succession of events. A Stevenson novel does not appear as a whole because Stevenson lacked imagination, said Swinnerton, that is, the power of sympathy which enables a man to understand an invented character or a scene described.

It is true that to Stevenson character creation, as it is found in Thackeray or George Eliot, was incidental. Of course in the earlier romances this was a standard requirement; as we have seen, one reason why Treasure Island made no better impression on its readers was the preliminary study of Billy Bones. The adventure story moves swiftly from scene to scene with the least possible characterisation and motivation. In the light of this the degree to which the character of David Balfour develops in the second half of Kidnapped is a weakness. Again, in Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde character development is unnecessary: it is a morality in the form of a thriller, and as such it is allegorical and its characters prototypes. However, while in The Master of Ballantrae the same theme is obvious, this book was not

meant as a morality but a 'human drama', and therefore its characters deserve better development than they receive; they have a lean and hungry look. Had Stevenson drawn more characters like Archie and Adam Weir, and the two Kirsties, he too would have merited a place beside Conrad. These characters breathe deeply the breath of life, think deeply, and feel passionately, unlike any he had created before.

The real defect of Stevenson's characters for the modern reader is that he simplified too much; they are unnaturally slight and shallow. Dickens, Thackeray and Trollope were glad to see their characters and introduced them over and over again. The reader knows all there is to know about Becky Sharp; he knows very little about Stevenson's characters. Compare the presentation of The Master of Ballantrae with that of Lord Steyne in Vanity Fair. The appearance of the latter is scattered throughout the book: his red whiskers are in one chapter, his bandy legs in another, his bald head in a third: this is how we really get to know people. Mackellar's method is the opposite:

I was now near enough to see him, a very handsome figure and countenance, swarthy, lean, long with a quick, alert, black look, as of one who was a fighter and accustomed to command; upon one cheek he had a mole, not unbecoming; a large diamond sparkled on his hand; his clothes, although of the one hue, were of a French and foppish design; his ruffles, which he wore longer than common...

11.

Here is how Conrad describes Nostromo:

... He is a man with the weight of countless generations behind him and with no parentage to boast of... Like the People.

In his firm grip of the earth he inherits, in his improvidence and generosity, in his lavishness with his gifts, in his manly vanity, in the obscure sense of his greatness and in his faithful devotion with something despairing as well as desperate in its impulses, he is a Man of the People, their very own unenvious force, disdainful to lead but ruling from within. Years afterwards grown older as the famous Captain Fidanza, with a stake in the country, going about his many affairs followed by respectful glances in the modernised streets of Sulaco, calling on the widow of Cargador, attending the Lodge, listening in unmoved silence to anarchist speeches at the meeting, the enigmatical patron of the new revolutionary agitation, the trusted the wealthy comrade Fidanza with the knowledge of his moral ruin locked up in his breast, he remains essentially a man of the People. In his mingled love and scorn of life, and in the bewildered conviction of having been betrayed, of dying betrayed, he hardly knows by what or by whom, he is still of the People, their undoubted Great Man - with a private history of his own. 12.

The Master is not such a man. His look never changes; he never takes off his diamond or changes his clothes ; he has no private history of his own.

We know Stevenson's women least of all. It is curious that three of the women Stevenson fell in love with, Mrs . Sitwell, Fanny, and Mme. Garshine, were all older than he, and all 'grass widows' with a child or children through whom Stevenson made his first appeal to the mothers' hearts. This may bear on the fact that, on the whole, his women are not arresting or compelling. Stevenson avoided women characters when possible, and was hardly ever successful with the

ones he did attempt: there were none in Treasure Island by Lloyd Osbourne's request, and only the servants in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; in The Master of Ballantrae, Alison Durie and her feelings are never properly worked out; Barbara Grant in Catriona sparkles and scintillates but the underlying complexities of thought and emotions, and the motives which actuate her behaviour are unrevealed. Perhaps Stevenson shared the Anglo-Saxon view of females, which wavers between sentimentality and mistrust. Thomas Hardy has recorded that he read a newspaper interview in which Stevenson stated that he disapproved of the morals of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, which, Hardy thought, might account for the fact that Stevenson never thereafter communicated with him. He could be rapturous about females as little girls, contented with or even submissive to them as mothers, but not as women in full bloom. However, this absence of women and ignoring of the sex element was considered masculine and meritorious and was a solid factor in his popularity.

Stevenson is so thrifty that his characters are thin. As Chesterton says:

The real defect of Stevenson as a writer, so far from being a sort of silken trifling and superficial or superfluous embroidery, was that he simplified so much that he lost some of the complexity of real life. He treated everything with an economy of detail and a suppression of irrelevance which has something about it stark and unnatural. He is to be commended among authors for sticking to the point; but real people do not stick quite so stubbornly to the point as that... Though he may seem to describe his subject in detail, he describes it to be done with it; and he does not return to the subject. He never says anything needlessly; above all, he never says anything twice. 13.

The word 'thin' signifies the limit of Skelt. Just as Stevenson gained from the toy theatre his sense of symbolic attitude and action, his joy in gay colour and gallant carriage, so he betrayed the limitation of such a style. These flat figures are aspects or attitudes rather than men; Balfour and Ballantrae only do what they are meant to do, and we have the feeling that we do not know them.

Structurally Stevenson's work is often weak. The romantic novelist usually depends on a particular form of incident to provide a prop for his narrative; he is usually concerned more with the picturesque than the profound. Stevenson had an eye, ear, nose for effects, and these effects enhance his books. Yet who is to say that Treasure Island, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Weir of Hermiston are not well-constructed books? There are blemishes of plot in The Master of Ballantrae and Kidnapped; but there are also blemishes in plot construction in much greater novelists such as Hardy and Meredith. Stevenson relied much on the picturesque, but he might have relied more on this element than he did. In any case can he be condemned because of his choice of genre? To condemn a novel as picturesque would be to condemn Scott, Dumas, Hugo, Melville, Kipling and others. A more balanced judgement would be that these are novelists of a particular type of novel, who see life from a particular aspect - the romantic.

The continuity of the narrator holds Stevenson's books together. Although this has been a recognized method

throughout the history of the novel, there are several pitfalls which may trap its pursuer: the narrator cannot know all, and he can never be in danger that deprives him of speech; he risks being a prig or a braggart; moreover in a long novel the device may become a strain on the credulity. However, the reader of any work of fiction is required, as Coleridge pointed out in another context, to suspend his disbelief. Many of the situations in any work of art will be improbable; the only stipulation is that, given human nature, they be possible. But certainly this does not absolve the author from responsibility, and often Stevenson shirked this.

The same method was used by Conrad in Lord Jim and Under Western Eyes: Marlowe, like Mackellar, can comment on the action as it proceeds. But the method must have given Stevenson pleasure, also, as it did Conrad, and while he may have written for the sake of art, and for the sake of money, undoubtedly he wrote also for his own enjoyment. But there is a further reason for the use of Marlowe and Mackellar: like Nellie Dean in Wuthering Heights, like Lewis Eliot in C.P.Snow's sequence, they help to dramatize the action. The method has been used from the time of Defoe, through the time of Dickens to the present for the sake of realism. J.W. Beach in The Twentieth Century Novel says:

... the restricted point of view is listed among the elements that make for the realization of the dramatic ideal... The fundamental

impulsion to dramatic concentration in general is the desire to secure in the novel something equivalent to the dramatic present in the play. The limitation of time tends to produce the effect of the dramatic Now; the limitation of place, the dramatic Here; the "centre of interest" concentrates the attention, as in the drama, upon these particular people or this particular person now present here. And, finally, the restriction of the point of view carries to its full logical outcome the aesthetic idea of the limited centre of interest.

In many cases the one idea implies the other and the two elements of technique cannot be distinguished. Thus in novels like "Henry Esmond", "Kidnapped", "Green Mansions", "The Arrow of Gold" the narrative, purporting to be composed by the central character of the story generally in the first person, must necessarily be restricted to the point of view of this central character. He writes as an eye-witness and participant in the action, he is the voucher for its truth and the interpreter of its meaning. If he relates anything that took place when he was not present, he lets us know just how it came to his knowledge, and this very process of coming to know things which he did not witness is incorporated as a part of the whole personal experience which he is engaged in setting forth.

Even when the narrative is given in the third person, if any one character holds the centre of the stage for an appreciable length of time we have a strong tendency to identify ourselves with him, as children identify themselves with the hero of a fairy story. We see things through his eyes, we share his point of view, and it is his point of view to which the story is more or less for the moment restricted. What happens he sees; and most of it in some sense happens to him; at any rate, he is interested in it by hope and fear, by curiosity and suspense; he approves or disapproves; he interprets for us.

14.

But Stevenson has been less known for his characters and his construction than for his style. Stevenson was a conscious, a self-conscious artist, who worked over his style until he had achieved excellence. From youth he practised writing by copying and imitation, so that often he has been discredited by the term he used himself: 'the sedulous ape'. Max Beerbohm once said that this must be permanently kept in type, it was used so often against him. In Memories and Portraits (1887) under the title 'A College Magazine', Stevenson described his own preparation for literature. Having recounted his outdoor sketchings in the penny note-books, and his indoor efforts to reproduce effects that had pleased him in his favourite authors, he lays down the law

That, like it or not is the way to learn to write; whether I have profited or not, that is the way. Before he can tell what cadences he truly prefers, the student should have tried all that are possible; before he can choose and preserve a fitting key of words, he should long have practised the literary scales; and it is only after years of such gymnastic that he can sit down at last, legions of words swarming to his call, dozens of turns of phrase simultaneously bidding for his choice, and he himself knowing what to do, and (within the narrow limit of a man's ability) able to do it.

15.

In April, 1885, he published a paper in The Contemporary Review called 'On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature' where he said:

... Each phrase in literature is built of sounds, as each phrase in music consists of notes; one sound suggest, echoes, demands, and harmonises another; and the art of rightly using these concordances is

the first art in literature. It used to be a piece of good advice to all young readers to avoid alliteration; and the advice was sound, in so far as it prevented daubing. None the less for that, it was abominable nonsense, and the mere raving of the blindest of the blind who will not see. The beauty of the contents of a phrase, or of a sentence depends implicitly upon alliteration and upon assonance. The vowel demands to be repeated; the consonant demands to be repeated; and both cry aloud to be perpetually varied.

* * * * *

The true business of the literary artist is to plait or weave his meaning, involving it around itself so that each sentence by successive phrases, shall first come into a kind of knot, and then after a moment of suspended meaning, solve and clear itself. In every properly constructed sentence there should be observed this knot or hitch; so that (however delicately) we are led to foresee, to expect and then to welcome the successive phrases ... Each phrase, besides, is to be comely in itself; and between the implication and the evolution of the sentence there should be a satisfying equipoise of sound. 16.

Stevenson's practice exercised the methods he prescribed. Conan Doyle has listed five reasons why Stevenson's style is outstanding: the use of novel and piquant forms of speech: 'his eye came coasting round to me'; 'the pith went out of my legs'; his faculty for the use of nice similes: 'his voice sounded hoarse and awkward, like a rusty lock'; 'I saw her sway like something stricken by the wind'; 'His laugh rang false, like a cracked bell'; his reiteration of a word or a phrase: ' "O God," I screamed, and "O God," again and again; ' "never one good hour have I gotten of you since you were born - no never one good hour",

and repeated it again the third time'; his repetition in a speech of 'he said' or 'he continued', giving intensity to the whole, and rivetting the reader's attention on the speaker; his characteristic instinct for saying in the briefest space those words which stamp the impression on the readers mind: 'Not far off Macconochie was standing with his tongue out of his mouth ... and I could see the challenge on his lips.' 17.

Of course this precision, this weighing and measuring, this artful manufacture of phrases, invites factitiousness, and there is an element of this in Stevenson's work. In the above analysis by Conan Doyle, for example, the final illustration emits a false ring. You may try again and again to put your tongue out of your mouth, and then write a challenge on your lips, and never succeed. You may set your lips in a thin, firm line, or draw them back over your teeth, but you will never convey the expression with your tongue out. Like Conrad, Stevenson was of the same school as Flaubert, and a comparison of the two styles may be useful here. The axioms Conrad adhered to in his literary method are as follows: the business of style is to make work interesting; a style interests when it carries the reader along, an author must learn humility, that is, to suppress himself. With these Stevenson would have agreed. But although both were students of Flaubert, they had different backgrounds and intentions. Conrad's most famous account of his intentions as a novelist is given in the preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus:

... My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel - it is, before all, to make you see. That - and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm - all you demand - and perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.

To snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing phase of life, is only the beginning of the task. The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes in the light of a sincere mood. It is to show its vibration, its colour, its form; and through its movement, its form, and its colour, reveal the substance of its truth - disclose its inspiring secret; the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment. 18.

Here is the climax of Conrad's Chance (1913):

"He became suspicious, with no one and nothing definite in his mind. He was suspicious of the curtain itself and observed it. It looked very innocent. Then just as he was ready to put it down to a trick of imagination he saw trembling movements where the two curtains joined. Yes! Somebody else besides himself had been watching Captain Anthony. He owns artlessly that this aroused his indignation. It was really too much of a good thing. In this state of intense antagonism he was startled to observe tips of fingers fumbling with the dark stuff. Then they grasped the edge of the further curtain and hung on there, just fingers and knuckles and nothing else. It made an abominable sight. He was looking at it, with unaccountable repulsion when a hand came into view, a short, puffy, old freckled hand projecting into the lamplight, followed by a white wrist, an arm in a grey coatsleeve, up to the elbow, beyond the elbow, extended tremblingly towards the tray. Its appearance was weird and nauseous, fantastic and silly. But instead of grabbing the bottle as Powell expected, this hand, tremulous with senile eagerness, swerved to the glass, rested on its

edge for a moment (or so it looked from above) and went back with a jerk. The gripping fingers of the other hand vanished at the same time and young Powell, staring at the motionless curtains, could indulge for a moment the notion that he had been dreaming. 19.

Compare the climax of The Master of Ballantrae:

Never a word said Mr. Henry, but saluted too, and the swords rang together.

I am no judge of the play; my head, besides, was gone with cold and fear and horror; but it seems that Mr. Henry took and kept the upper hand from the engagement, crowding in upon his foe with a contained and glowing fury. Nearer and nearer crept upon the man, till of a sudden the Master leaped back with a little sobbing oath; and I believe the movement brought the light once more against his eyes. To it they went again, on the fresh ground; but now methought closer, Mr. Henry pressing more outrageously, the Master beyond doubt with shaken confidence. For it is beyond doubt he now recognised himself for lost, and had some taste of the cold agony of fear; or he had never attempted the foul stroke. I cannot say I followed it, my untrained eye was never quick enough to seize details, but it appears he caught his brother's blade with his left hand, a practice not permitted. Certainly Mr. Henry only saved himself by leaping on one side; as certainly the Master, lunging in the air, stumbled on his knee, and before he could move the sword was through his body. 20.

One passage makes a scene live, creates life; the other leaves a vague impression, leaves the reader asking What really happened? How did it look? How did Mr. Henry crowd in upon his foe? What look was on his face? What light was on his rapier? No more truthful words were uttered on Stevenson's behalf, it seems, than when Mackellar says 'I cannot say I followed it, my untrained eye was never quick enough to seize details...'; herein lies the precise differ-

ence between the two styles. But the latter was the one which advanced the story quickly; the latter was the one that was sure to sell. It was only in Weir of Hermiston that he began to express himself in the radiant style that he was capable of. In the following passage the elder Kirstie, warmly and ardently feminine, with a fervent love for Archie that belies her years, on hearing of the secret love, goes to warn Archie against any rash action.

Suddenly she heard feet on the stairs - his feet, and soon after the sound of a window-sash being flung open. She sat up with her heart beating. He had gone to his room alone, and he had not gone to bed. She might again have one of her night cracks; and at the entrancing prospect, a change came over her mind; with the approach of this hope of pleasure, all the baser metal became immediately obliterated from her thoughts. She rose, all woman, and all the best of woman, tender, pitiful, hating the wrong, loyal to her own sex - and all the weakest of that dear miscellany, nourishing, cherishing next her soft heart, voicelessly, flattering, hopes that she would have died sooner than have acknowledged. She tore off her nightcap, and her hair fell about her shoulders in profusion. Undying coquetry awoke. By the faint light of her nocturnal rush, she stood before the looking glass, carried her shapely arms above her head, and gathered up the treasures of her tresses. She was never backward to admire herself; that kind of modesty was a stranger to her nature; and she paused, struck with a pleased wonder at the sight. 'Ye daft auld wife!' she said, answering a thought that was not, and she blushed with the innocent consciousness of a child. 21.

This scene lives. It is not that there might be such a woman: there is no doubt that there must be such a woman; we are convinced.

Again:

On this particular Sunday, there was no doubt but that the spring had come at last. It was warm, with a latent shiver in the air that made the warmth only the more welcome. The shallows of the stream glittered and tinkled among bunches of primrose. Vagrant scents of the earth arrested Archie by the way with moments of ethereal intoxication. The grey, Quakerish dale was still only awakened in places and patches from the sobriety of its winter colouring; and he wondered at its beauty; an essential beauty of the old earth it seemed to him, not resident in particulars but breathing to him from the whole. He surprised himself by a sudden impulse to write poetry - he did so sometimes, loose, galloping, octosyllabics in the vein of Scott, - and when he had taken his place on a boulder, near some fairy falls and shaded by a whip of a tree that was already radiant with new leaves, it still more surprised him that he should find nothing to write. His heart perhaps beat in time to some vast inswelling rhythm of the universe. By the time he came to a corner of the valley and could see the kirk, he had so lingered by the way that the first psalms were finishing. The nasal psalmody, full of turns and trills and graceless graces, seemed the essential voice of the kirk itself upraised in thanksgiving. 'Everything's alive,' he said; and again cries it aloud, 'thank God, everything's alive!' 22.

And so it is alive; alive with a sensitivity for the nuances of words and phrases that is found nowhere else in his work.

'The shallows of the stream glittered and tinkled among bunches of primroses' ranks with the style of Meredith and Hardy. And yet this is not overdone but tempered with a more even-handed expression that, even so, never descends to the prosaic. The style moves from phrase to phrase capturing the essence of thought and feeling in a poetic conciseness, that is yet never as spare as the earlier prose; and the whole piece moves to the climax of the final joyous outburst.

Some attempt has been made earlier to place Stevenson in a Decadent setting. Although he has certain similarities, one aspect of his style would seem to contradict this. In the work of many of the authors of the period the atmosphere is morbid. The feeling we get from Poe, for example, is that everything is decaying: 'Purple cushions that the lamplight gloated over' is in the spirit of Baudelaire. Stevenson's atmosphere was the opposite; all his characters and scenes stand out in a clear outline. This quality is especially observed where he dealt with the Highlands, which some of his contemporaries made shadowy or mysterious. At that time, for example, the school of Fiona MacLeod was treating the Scots as the Children of the Mist. But there is little mist in Stevenson; none of it veils Alan's bright blue French coat; and there is hardly a cloud in the sky on the day the Red Fox dropped dead in the sunshine. Again, the night Stevenson describes is not the night of Poe: in the duel scene of The Master of Ballantrae, for example, the emphasis is not on the darkness of night, but the barrenness of winter, the 'windless stricture of frost.'

It is difficult to form a definite, objective opinion of Stevenson the artist. His biography must be taken into consideration; his chronic illness for one thing cannot be discounted. The question is to what extent did the illness detract from his artistic power: there is no doubt that it deprived him of the experience with life,

which was such a useful resource to one like Defoe. Stevenson relied heavily on what experience he had, anomalous though it may have been, and it is only when this experience changed to something like the normal that he began to write with the touch of a master.

As Edwin Muir said:

... there is little doubt that, had he lived, he would have been the first Scottish writer in the full humanistic tradition. 23.

In order to enhance Stevenson's value one is tempted to be drawn more and more to one great but unfinished novel. In the others, while there are such well constructed pieces as Treasure Island and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, there are also distortions of plot, lapses in unity, and forced invention. His characters are often thin; but one is bound to keep in mind that he began in the adventure story and that here subordination of character was a merit and not a defect. However, in the dramatic novel it can only be a defect, and that is why upon reading Weir of Hermiston some of the short stories, and some of the critical essays, one suspects forced invention in the other works. To some extent his work was conditioned by his desire to live independently and to provide adequately for his family.

Stevenson is popularly remembered today only as the writer of Treasure Island and Kidnapped. And the reason these stories are still read when Ballantyne and Henty have passed away is the style, for Stevenson brought

the same concern to the adventure story that Meredith brought to more serious fiction. The stories of Ballantyne and Henty were serviceable, but they cannot compare with Stevenson's, as the rough-hewn camp table cannot compare with the Chippendale.

Stevenson must finally be relegated to the second rank of novelists; he is the novelist as story teller. Of course, the novel began as a story and a story has always been at the basis of a good novel; in fact at its best the novel of action can be as good a means of expressing its author's criticism of life as the comic novel, or the novel that seeks to depict everyday reality, or the novel that seeks to explore the relations between man and his neighbours and society.

Leslie Fiedler sees something more profound in the action novels of Stevenson. He says modern prose fiction has moved toward the myth in two quite different ways:

One way, that of James Joyce, for instance, leads from the inward novel of character, through psychological naturalism to symbolism, to the truly mythic (that is to say from Dubliners, to Ulysses to Finnegan's Wake); the other begins with the outward romance of incident, the boys' story or fairy tale, and moves through allegory, often elusive to myth. To the latter group belong such different writers as Herman Melville, Charles Williams, Graham Greene and Stevenson. It is typical of the latter group that they preserve the story and its appeal intact; in them the picturesque never yields completely to the metaphysical, and they can always be read on one level as boys' stories or circulating library thrillers.

To understand and examine Stevenson as a writer of this kind is at once to take him seriously and to preserve the integrity of his romance as romance. 24.

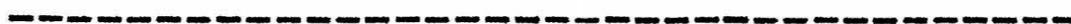
But Stevenson will always remain on the fringe of any discussion of the novel as art. He is more of the order of Scott and Dumas; and yet in his devotion to and study of art and often in his execution of it, he is far ahead of them.

He cannot be ignored. His achievement is remarkable in quantity, considering the few years allotted to him, and the amount even of this brief time spent ill and helpless in bed; but it is more remarkable when one considers its diversity and seriousness. Here is not only a novelist, but a journalist, a writer of travel books, a critic, a faithful correspondent, a writer of short stories, a playwright, a minor poet, a major essayist, and a loquacious talker. Few writers in the English language were more passionately concerned with the art of fiction; he thought about it, argued about it, and produced it. Here is no man to be pitied or patronised; here is a notable practitioner of the art of prose narrative, who produced some of the most memorable fiction of his day. For later generations there remains the wonder of a life of pain borne gaily and gallantly, an imperishable boys' story, the classic fable in English of man's divided nature, and a magnificent unfinished novel, which, in conception and execution is among the great novels in the language.

Notes, Chapter V

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2. Stevenson. Letters, Vol. II, p.316.
3. Ibid., p.248.
4. Ibid., Vol. V, p.114.
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6. Ibid., p.290.
7. Stevenson. 'A Gossip in Romance', Essays, p.363.
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9. Daiches, David. Stevenson and the Art of Fiction, p.22.
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11. Stevenson. The Master of Ballantrae, p.70.
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13. Chesterton, G.K. Robert Louis Stevenson, 1927, p.186.
14. Beach, J.W. The Twentieth Century Novel, p.193.
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22. Stevenson. Weir of Hermiston, p.71.
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