

**Embracing Paradox: Division and Ambiguity in the
Scottish Works of Robert Louis Stevenson**

by

Marilyn Simon

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

**Department of English
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg**

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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Abstract

In his Scottish fiction, Robert Louis Stevenson shows that his protagonists must incorporate the irrational into their “modern” and “enlightened” self-identities. Through these characters, Stevenson explores the larger issue of Scotland’s divided, post-British Union national identity and illustrates the importance of accepting the traditions of the past into his contemporary nineteenth-century Scottish culture. Theories of Scotland’s national duality and Freud’s psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious and the uncanny help to explain the significance of Stevenson’s complex exploration of personal and national identity in these works. Ultimately, Stevenson establishes a paradox: even though the values of Scotland’s past and present may be at odds with each other, both have validity and must be accepted as parts of the same national whole.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Pam Perkins for supporting my studies, sharing in my love for Scottish fiction, and for working with me on this project, from the other side of the ocean, no less.

I would like to acknowledge the generous support of the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Foundation for the Senator Thomas Alexander Crerar Scholarship, the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Education for their support through the Mary E. Lamont Scholarship, the School of Graduate Studies for the graduate student travel award, which enabled me to attend and present a paper at the recent Robert Louis Stevenson Conference in Saranac Lake, New York; and I'd like to thank the Faculty of Arts and the University Alumni Association for their conference travel awards.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their generous support of my Master's studies through the Canada Graduate Scholarship.

Dedication

Dedicated to my parents, for all their encouragement and support;

to Myshkin, for reminding me to take time to relax;

to Anna, for reminding me to take time to have fun;

and, finally, to Ryan, for everything else.

Introduction: Scotland, Division, Dissociation, and Accepting Ambiguity

Although perhaps best known for his children's fiction and the spine-chilling tale of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in much of his fiction, Robert Louis Stevenson focuses on his Scottish homeland. Indeed, it has been argued that throughout his texts – even those set in the England, France, or the South Seas – Stevenson persistently explores his identity as a Scotsman¹. This theme is most frequently explored through characters who struggle with their duality and division. Stevenson, in particular, focuses on his characters' moral duplicity, on the contest between his protagonists' belief in rationality or the supernatural, and on the disparity that exists between the passions of one's heart and the veneer of respectability to which one must adhere in order to appease modern social codes. Through these themes Stevenson works out what it means to be Scottish within the British Empire and under the dominating influence of English rule. The Scottish "duality of consciousness" (Gifford, Introduction 4) is figured in Stevenson's Scottish works as a tension that exists between the irrational superstitions and traditions of Scotland's past and the logical, materialistic, and genteel values of Stevenson's contemporary and progressive Scotland. All of Stevenson's texts, but his Scottish works most explicitly, demonstrate the necessity for his characters to embrace ambiguity, to incorporate the irrational and inexplicable, as well as emotional and passionate experiences into their otherwise rational and "enlightened" identity. In essence, by illustrating that

¹ See, for example, Jenni Calder. "Stevenson in Perspective." *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1981. 2, Francis Hart. "Robert Louis Stevenson in Prose." *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol. 3 Nineteenth Century*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP. 295, and Barry Menikoff. "A Scots Historian." *Narrating Scotland: The Imagination of Robert Louis Stevenson*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005. 5-26

personality splits only lead to self-destruction, as with the famous case of Jekyll and Hyde, Stevenson shows that an acceptance of one's duality – even if this means holding beliefs and values that are at odds with each other – is the only way to achieve emotional, psychic, and national wholeness.

Every nation, in some way, has internal divisions; yet Scotland, it seems, has more than most. Indeed, Scotland is unusual in that though it is an ancient nation with a long history, since 1707 it no longer functioned as a sovereign country, but has been unified with England to form part of Great Britain. Being Scottish thus meant being British, which, especially for the affluent and upwardly mobile, could mean being English or, at the very least, linguistically and culturally Anglicised.² The century that saw the British union was also the era of the Enlightenment, which valued scientific, intellectual, and cultural progress and, above all, celebrated human reason and rationality. Thus, in addition to Scotland's own inherent linguistic, cultural, and religious divisions, the union with England formed what David Daiches terms the "Scottish paradox": the disparity between the Scots' "national pride in the native heritage accompanied by a nervous desire to the genteel thing" (*Paradox* 34). The "genteel thing" in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was, of course, the Anglicised thing; as William Calin discusses of his study of Minor Literature, the union with England

² For a discussion of this subject, see William Calin. *Minority Literatures and Modernism: Scots, Breton, and Occitan, 1920-1990*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. 13-1, David Craig. *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1961. 40-7, Robert Crawford. *Devolving English Literature*. Second Edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000, and David Daiches. "The Cultural Consequences of the Union" *The Paradox of Scottish Culture*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964.

contributed to the subjection of Scotland and the Scots to London, with the result that all that is not English is occulted, and the Scottish people are alienated from their own traditions. Most important from a literary perspective, the conquerors' speech – English – was imposed on the conquered peoples, who actually converse in Scots or Gaelic.

(Calin 14)

Stevenson himself was “always conscious of the ways in which a people maintained their cultural integrity through the retention of their own language, even (or especially) when that language was subject to the hegemony of a more powerful tongue or more powerful state” (Menikoff, *Narrating* 50).

However, as David Craig points out, it was the Scottish middle class and literati that worked hardest to become assimilated into English culture; “as a class they strove to cultivate ‘politeness’, ‘elegance’, depreciation of the ‘low’, to a peculiarly intensive degree, for they were themselves anxious to get clear of the backward life which pressed them so close” (40). In the progressive economic climate of the new British union, the dream of Scottish nationalism “inevitably became associated with antiquarianism” (Daiches, *Paradox* 27). Similarly, Scottish culture became both antiquated and romanticized: the educated middle and upper-class Scots saw their Scots language and the nation's traditional culture as low and backwards, yet simultaneously they indulged in the nostalgia of the past and viewed Scotland as an “Ossianic landscape of noble savages” (Gifford, Introduction 7). Robert Crawford argues that “small or vulnerable cultural groups”, specifically, Scots after the British union, need “a construction or reconstruction of a ‘usable past’, an

awareness of a cultural tradition which will allow them to preserve or develop a sense of their own distinctive identity” (5). The ‘usable past’, however, that Scottish cultural figures constructed was an imagined and fictional past. Indeed, Cairns Craig argues that Scotland’s real history was, in effect, murdered by Scottish literature: Scotland became

a ‘second-hand society’ precisely because of the confusion between the real world that Scots live in and the romantic glamour with which the Scottish past is invested and with which Scotland itself has come to be identified. The reality of Scotland, past and present, has been made invisible because of the dominance of novelistic ‘romance’, concealing the real history of the nation. Far from providing a fulfillment of the work of the historians, the nineteenth-century Scottish novelists are seen as infusing Scotland’s history with literary genres that substitute romantic or comic evasion for effective and realistic understanding.

(20)

Thus the imagined fictional history worked to negate the unromantic character of real life in the past, and, perhaps more importantly, this “usable past” effectively distanced contemporary Scots popular culture and language from the “enlightened” and “progressive” Scottish middle and upper classes. Crawford goes on to argue that eighteenth-century Scottish writing, directly influenced, as it was, by the ideas of the Enlightenment, “is filled with comparisons of cultures at various stages of development, and with speculations about how societies ‘improve’,” and that this “debate was particularly intense in, and pertinent to, Scottish culture, because, rightly

or wrongly, the small country of Scotland could be seen in various ways as strikingly divided between the barbarically primitive and the confidently sophisticated” (16). The progressive “North Britons” thus saw the Scots who continued to speak the Scots language and carry on the social and folkloric traditions of Scotland’s past as uncivilized – even barbaric. Yet paradoxically, when contextualized in the past, these same qualities were seen as quaint, if not mythic and romantic.

This sentimental romanticization of Scotland’s past “made possible a special kind of Scottish national feeling,” argues Daiches, one that “created conditions which restricted its effective working in Scottish culture” (*Paradox* 35). In other words, the Scottish middle and upper classes infantilized Scottish culture, thereby negating its influence in the economic, social, and political climate of post-union Britain. Douglas Gifford further explores this Scottish paradox described by Daiches, in which Scotland’s culture is celebrated only by relegating it to an imaginary, mythic past. He argues that there is a “‘dissociation of Scottish sensibility’” evident in Scottish fiction; the literature of Sir Walter Scott and his followers reveals “a sense of Scotland divided between its past and present, between perceptions of nationality swayed in opposite directions by nostalgic emotion and materialistic reason” that leads to a “‘duality of consciousness’ representing ‘a real emotional tension, a contradiction within the citizen that is never resolved’” (Introduction 4). By Stevenson’s time in the later nineteenth century, Gifford states, there existed a firmly established

Scottish psychological syndrome in which a basic separation of emotional indulgence in the mythology of the past somehow co-exists

with the calculating assessment of opportunity in the present and future. Every major cultural figure of the century betrays this dualism of values. (Introduction 9)

Indeed, this dualism was a consistent and central theme in Stevenson's work; even the city of Edinburgh is described by Stevenson as a divided and paradoxical city:

For fifty weeks together, it [Holyrood Palace] is no more than a show for tourists and a museum of old furniture; but on the fifty-first, behold the palace reawakened and mimicking its past. [...] Edinburgh has but partly abdicated, and still wears, in parody, her metropolitan trappings. Half a capital and half a country town, the whole city leads a double existence; it has long trances of the one and flashes of the other; like the king of the Black Isles, it is half alive and half a monumental marble. (*Edinburgh* 19)

Edinburgh still clings to its imagined, glamorous past, even though the romance of Holyrood Palace is only a part of the city's whole and complex history, and despite the fact that this royal glamour has long since faded, along with the palace's effective political and cultural significance. Stevenson's mocking tone here is clear: the "parody" of the city holding to its "metropolitan trappings" not only creates a picture of the absurd but is tragic too, for it prevents the real city from becoming vibrant and lively. Instead,

Edinburgh is only half alive. Thus although he expresses Edinburgh's dualism, Stevenson, in actuality, works against the city's division by showing how the "Scottish dissociation of sensibility" is ultimately civically destructive, as his allusion

to the “half alive and half monumental marble” king of the *Arabian Nights* makes clear; for as the enchantress grieves over her half-dead and half-alive slave, the king’s city is transformed into a sea and desert.

Along with its cultural and political transformations, eighteenth-century Scotland was subject to linguistic changes. A major component of traditional lowland Scottish culture is its language, and, as Crawford notes, “any culture separated from the language of its heritage faces enormous problems” (33). Though the Scots language functioned as a signifier of traditional Scottish culture, it was excluded from the legal, ecclesiastical, and educational institutions of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Scotland. Thus there existed “a general difficulty about how one might preserve a Scottish identity while (as was increasingly encouraged by the upper classes) adopting English linguistic mores” (Crawford 21). Indeed, perhaps no other aspect of Scottish culture is employed so frequently by writers to illustrate the struggle of lowland Scots to maintain their identity in the face of overwhelming English cultural dominance. Scottish writers frequently used the tension that existed between Scots and standard English to illustrate the dual values of the Scottish paradox: the division between past and present, between Scotland’s “barbaric” and sophisticated cultures, and the disparity between one’s emotions and “materialistic reason” are all expressed by various Scots writers through this linguistic tension. Daiches asserts that the Scottish “dissociation of sensibility” is manifested, in part, through writers’ use of language, for “if you talk and, as it were, feel in Scots and think and write in standard English, then your Scots is likely to be sentimental and

self-indulgent and your English is likely to be highly formal and in some degree de-natured” (*Paradox* 21).

Scots, then, could be used artificially to create a sentimental feeling of nostalgia about Scotland’s romantic past. Scots, for example, was an acceptable language in which to write “Kailyard” poetry, that is, poetry that described rural and rustic scenes yet was itself a sentimental reconstruction of an imaginary Scottish way of life. It was, as David Craig describes, poetry that was thought to express the “Scottish character” in the vernacular Scots language but in actuality is “sly farce or nostalgic escapism in which social life is brought exclusively inside the range of country ways and values, and these values [...] become more and more unreal as the main initiative of the nation sets in from the towns” (72). In the late nineteenth century there set in a “belittling sense of country life as dream-worldly or farcically uncouth and backward” (David Craig 72), and the Scots language, as a signifier for this way of life, was likewise considered vulgar and low:

language in this period was the site of a conflict between a polished metropolitan ascendancy, whose values were those of the educational system, and provincial lower-class barbarians, whose views could be discounted because they were expressed in terms considered stupid or corrupt. ‘The basic vocabulary of language study [...] conveyed the assumption that correct usage belonged to the upper classes and that a developed sensibility and an understanding of moral virtue accompanied it.’ (Crawford 11)

Crawford's analysis of Scots is emphasized again in Daiches's research; he shows how Scots was "reduced from a language to a vernacular, and its differences from southern English came to be seen even by patriotic Scotsmen as representing corruption" (*Paradox* 20). If spoken Scots was viewed as vulgar and as a signifier of a morally suspect individual, written Scots was outright rejected by Britain's literati. Indeed, when Walter Scott employed Scots for realistic effect his text was "judged 'unintelligible to four-fifths of the reading population of the country,'" and James Hogg "came in for some harsh words about his 'bad taste' and his 'bad Scotch'" (Letley, "Language" 324). Indeed, "the book market would tolerate vernacular Scots only in a dilute and standardized form and would entertain fictional treatments of Scottish life only in so far as they satisfied basically English prejudices and expectations" (Donaldson 211).

However, even though standard English was the language of the educated, upper classes, "spoken Scots continued to be the language of the overwhelming majority of the lowland nation" (Donaldson 206). And as the language of traditional Scotland, it was used by Scottish literary figures to distinguish Scotland's culture from England's, the dominant colonial power. Gifford notes that Scottish writers, while they used English as the main vehicle for narratives, often employed Scots for the dialogues of their texts, sometimes to express significant, even radical, thematic concerns. Gifford describes the "clear line of descent" that emerged in Scottish fiction in which "a symbolic figure of traditional and Scottish integrity" is opposed to Anglicised values, and often this integrity was represented "in linguistic terms, in so far as local and authentic Scots is held to by that figure, against cultural and political

threats couched in forms of intrusive English” (“Myth” 223). James Hogg, in particular,

makes strategic use of Scots language so that it emerges as part of a linguistic plot; in *Confessions*, for example, a split narrative, employing Scots to rich effect, insists on at least the possibility of a non-rational, alternative, non-standard interpretation of the events narrated as opposed to the safer, reasoned explanations offered by the editor. (Letley, “Language” 325)

For Stevenson, as with Hogg who played with his dual identity as the rustic “Ettrick Shepherd” for literary effect, the Scots language was a signifier of his complex and paradoxical self-identity. “Stevenson’s use of Scots was sometimes nostalgic (as frequently in his letters to Baxter), sometimes humorous, sometimes ironical, and sometimes a sign of deep personal emotion” (Daiches, “Stevenson and Scotland” 27). In addition to employing Scots in his personal correspondence, Stevenson uses Scots for thematic purposes in his fiction, and, again as with Hogg, it is often to oppose the values of “materialistic reason”. The non-rational nature of the minister Soulis’s experience with his apparently demon-possessed housekeeper in “Thrawn Janet” is a particularly strong example of this, and in *Weir of Hermiston* the contrasting advice of Frank Innes and Kirstie Elliott “sets English dissembling against Scots affection” (Letley, Introduction xxiii). Stevenson himself was well aware of the power of the Scots language in his texts; he described the interpolated “Tale of Tod Lapraik” as “a piece of living Scots” and saw it and “Thrawn Janet” as standing above his other works: “if I had never writ anything but that [“Tod Lapraik”] and ‘Thrawn Janet’, still

I'd have been a writer" (*Selected Letters* 530). Indeed, he was "particularly anxious to guard his Scots against editorial interference. [...] He resists, in particular, the suggestion that he should include notes on the Scots words" (Letley, *Catriona* Notes 486), as another of his letters shows: "I'd have to put a note to every word; and he who can't read Scots can *never* enjoy Tod Lapraik" (*Letters Vol. 8*, 37). Thus Stevenson not only uses Scots to present events that cannot be explained in rational terms, but is also deliberately subversive in that he uses the lowland language to force his Anglicised readers, at least temporarily, to conform to the Scottish language in order to appreciate the tales.

Stevenson's assertion that anyone who could not read Scots could "*never* enjoy 'Tod Lapraik'" testifies to his pride in his country's traditions. Stevenson "loved Scotland and deeply felt his roots as a Scot" (Daiches, "Stevenson and Scotland" 11). This love is evident in Stevenson's fiction; as Francis Hart notes, "the final phenomenon of Louis's imaginative history was the way such new fictions led him back to Scotland" (303). More important, though, is how Stevenson himself described his feelings for his homeland; for though he was glad to be an exile from the blustery north country, he loved his homeland and imaginatively longed to be back in Scotland: "Happy the passengers who shake off the dust of Edinburgh, and have heard for the last time the cry of the east wind among her chimney-tops!" he writes in *Edinburgh*. Yet, he continues, "the place establishes an interest in people's hearts; go where they will, they find no city of the same distinction; go where they will, they take a pride in their old home" (17). This "mixture of pride and mockery, of admiration and deprecation, is characteristic of Stevenson's attitude towards his

native country” (Daiches, “Stevenson and Scotland” 11). Moreover, his dual emotions express an aspect of the Scottish paradox. In “The Scot Abroad”, a short chapter in *The Silverado Squatters*, Stevenson again describes his seemingly inexplicable love for his native country:

There is no special loveliness in that grey country, with its rainy, sea-beat archipelago; its fields of dark mountains; its unsightly places, black with coal; its treeless, sour, unfriendly-looking corn-lands; its quaint, grey, castled city, where the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls, and the salt showers fly the beat. I do not even know if I desire to live there; but let me hear, in some far land, a kindred voice sing out, ‘O why left I my hame?’ and it seems at once as if no beauty under the kind heavens, and no society of the wise and good can repay me for my absence from my country. And though I think I would rather die elsewhere, yet in my heart of hearts I long to be buried among good Scots clods. (210-211)

Here, Stevenson not only expresses his mysterious love for a country that is, by his own admission, inhospitable and unattractive, but also illustrates the emotional connection he has with Scots. Significant, too, is the connection Stevenson makes with the land of his birth and his own death, for it speaks his desire to be bodily united – if only in death – to the place where his mind and imagination dwell, and thus give wholeness to his physical and psychic being. Further, his reference to his death and his longing to be buried “among good Scots clods” hints ever so slightly at

a major theme in his and other Scottish texts, specifically, mysterious deaths and uncanny gravesides.

Connected with uncanny burial mounds is an even more unusual and interesting aspect of Scottish fiction: the many occurrences of exhumations. Again, the descriptions of exhuming corpses certainly conveys a frightful sensation of the uncanny, but it is often also a metaphor for uncovering a dark and mysterious past and for bringing to light that which one would like to hide, secret sins, for example, or dark desires. James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is undoubtedly the most notable example of such a phenomenon, yet the theme is present in Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* and, at least according to the insane perceptions of Gordon Darnaway, in "The Merry Men". A major concern in Stevenson's fiction was to bring the past alive, to confront a contemporary audience with the values and codes of Scotland's history, even its unromantic and unappealing aspects, through his imaginative works of fiction. As Barry Menikoff states,

Veracity and error may lie both in actual history and in its reconstruction as printed text, but the past must still be recovered, if only because it is all we have to explain our present. To give it life for the armchair reader is not to rob it of its substance for the scholar but simply to make it accessible to everyone. (*Narrating T*)

Stevenson indeed was deeply interested in Scottish history, as his voracious readings of historical texts makes clear, and in representing the past to his late-Victorian audience; it is not at all surprising, then, that all of Stevenson's Scottish novels and short stories are set in Scotland's past, most notably in the years that surround the

Jacobite rebellion of 1745. And, as Menikoff's research into *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* demonstrates, Stevenson went to great lengths to include accurate historic details, actual Scottish topography, and realistic eighteenth-century Scots characters – both the good and the bad – in his texts:

Stevenson created a social and political chronicle without ever giving the impression of having done so. It was at bottom an anticolonialist document, both a proclamation and an elegy for a vanished culture, a statement on the power of art to reclaim the past and reconstitute its victims and villains, in the process giving them all a place in the endless stream of years that we call history. (*Narrating* 205-206)

Indeed, Stevenson is adept at showing that history is an “endless stream of years,” at showing how the values and social codes of the past are still relevant to the present, by exploring contemporary issues through his historical works. Menikoff, in fact, describes this as a “paradox of Stevenson’s historical novels” (*Narrating* 11). He goes on to argue that Stevenson lived in two ages, “his real time and his imaginative time,” and was “engaged in the recovery and reconstruction of history, both as documentarian and fictionist, as conduit of the past and creator for the future” (65). Thus not only does Stevenson take his “armchair reader” back into the Scottish past through his fiction, he simultaneously brings the past into the present. “For Stevenson,” notes Daiches, “history was a setting for the presentation of modern problems” (“Stevenson and Scotland” 26). The issues current in Victorian Scotland are thus explored through the characters and events of the past, most frequently those of the eighteenth century. This historical setting is paramount since, as we have

already discussed, the eighteenth century saw Scotland's union with Great Britain, and thus one can trace the historical roots of the Scottish paradox to this time. Stevenson, then, continues to focus on this era in order to contextualize the "Scottish duality of consciousness" in its historical setting and also to illustrate how his "modern" protagonists can unify Scotland's cultural and linguistic divisions through their acceptance of complexity and paradox. Moreover, Stevenson's eighteenth-century characters are confronted with the values and traditions of an even more ancient Scottish past. These protagonists, individuals who embody the rational, educated, and Anglicised ideals of the Union and the Enlightenment, are confronted with characters and experience events that cannot be understood through the Enlightenment's rationalist precepts. Through these characters, Stevenson speaks to Victorian Scotland about accepting – if not embracing – the non-rational and, at times, the "vulgar" traditions of Scotland's past.

Stevenson is successful in making these transhistorical connections because of his emphasis on the psychological issues that surround self and national identity; for Stevenson, like other nineteenth-century Scottish writers, is "deeply preoccupied with the exploration of the Scottish *psyche*. This major tradition examines deeply embedded dualism and divided loyalties as inherent in the Scottish mind" (Gifford "Myth" 243). Significantly, Stevenson chooses to represent this psychological struggle most often in terms of an uncanny situation, specifically, through the use of seemingly supernatural events, spirits and ghosts, and doppelgangers. Stevenson himself, writes Jenni Calder, "was always sensitive to the presence of ghosts, of spirits out of the past, half-tangible links with other places, other times" (Calder 8).

The psychological significance of a preoccupation with ghosts and spirits from the past is explored by Freud in his essay "The Uncanny"; Freud argues that the uncanny is "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (340). The uncanny, Freud goes on to propose, "is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (364). One hides from oneself, then, the unseemly aspects of one's personal history: "the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious" ("Repression" 569). What Freud argues is that the nearly-forgotten past of the individual, memories that are unhealthily repressed, occasionally resurface into consciousness and thereby give the individual a sense of the uncanny. In his Scottish fiction, Stevenson uses this model of individual psychology to express the "Scottish psychological syndrome" of cultural divisions and repression. Freud shows that suppressing one's personal history is damaging to the individual's psyche; Stevenson shows that trying to suppress one's cultural past is damaging to one's sense of national identity and thus to the national psyche. Yet, of course, if something is repressed it does not mean that the memory or belief is absent in the individual, but that it is kept in the unconscious. As Freud argues in "The Uncanny," one is still connected to the "primitive" beliefs of one's psychological inheritance even if this is not consciously acknowledged. "The condition under which the feeling of uncanniness arises here is unmistakable," states Freud:

We – or our primitive forefathers – once believed that these possibilities [supernatural events] were realities, and were convinced

that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have *surmounted* these modes of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation. As soon as something *actually happens* in our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs, we get a feeling of the uncanny. [...] Conversely, anyone who has completely and finally rid himself of animistic beliefs will be insensible to this type of the uncanny. (“The Uncanny” 370-371)

Stevenson implies that while his protagonists have kept the beliefs of traditional Scotland at a distance from their rational, enlightened consciousnesses, since they experience uncanny fear they are still unconsciously connected to the superstitions of their ancestors. This is clearly the case with the characters of Stevenson’s short stories discussed in my first chapter, and certainly likewise with *The Master of Ballantrae*: the Durie brothers’ doubling, Henry’s descent into madness, and the final scene in the heart of the “new world’s” wilderness all express elements of the uncanny. Indeed, doubling in particular is an expression of the uncanny that occurs frequently in Scottish texts, for no other element of the uncanny so aptly expresses the divided and paradoxical nature of the country. In her analysis of “Doubling,” Marina Warner describes the double as a character who “embodies some inner truth” about oneself, who “unnervingly embodies a true self” (163). The doppelganger figure, then, “relates to your innermost, secret self, and acts epiphanically to unveil you to the world – and to yourself” (164). Of course this is the relationship of Hyde to Dr. Jekyll, Stevenson’s most famous pair of doubles; this

is the case, too, with Archie Weir and his coarse father, the “Hanging Judge,” and also with the socially responsible Henry and his charismatic, rebellious brother, James Durie. Yet it also represents respectable Scotland and its “barbaric past,” a “past” that, as the psychological nature of Stevenson’s work shows, is still psychically relevant in contemporary Scotland.

Dr. Jekyll created the monster of Mr. Hyde because he separated the dark side of his own being from his beneficent and honourable public persona. The problem, then, is not that Jekyll indulged his disreputable pleasures, but that he tried to divorce that part of his nature from his own identity. This is what Warner describes when she argues that it is the splitting of oneself that is at the root of the doppelganger:

the uncanny double has expressed, since the late eighteenth century, modern intimations of inner demons, of being multiple rather than integrated. The shadow of the doppelganger above all reveals that the threat to personhood comes from bodily manipulation and psychological multiplicity, the monstrous threat of the ‘many-in-the one’. (165)

Yet Stevenson shows that to have “‘many-in-the one’” is not monstrous if one accepts and accommodates one’s internal divisions. As Gifford notes, “When that which is whole is broken into parts, say these novels, then the parts are differently but equally malformed” (“Myth” 249). Francis Hart, in his study of morality in Stevenson’s prose, asserts that “an acceptance of moral duality need not be destructive” (295). Indeed, Stevenson shows it to be quite the opposite, in fact. Stevenson’s texts advocate for a profound ambiguity; his successful characters have qualities that are

seemingly at odds with each other – rational and irrational, emotional and logical, rebellious and socially respectable – but that are nonetheless essential aspects of these individuals and reflect the paradoxical world they inhabit. Gifford describes nineteenth-century Scottish fiction as representing a “creative ambivalence” that sums up

the tensions of the age between rationalism and supernaturalism, values of the heritage of the past and the new values of the developing future, and Scotland’s chronic uncertainty as to final choice of identity not so much in terms of political choices between Anglicised and materially advantageous membership of Empire, or Scottish nationalism, as an awareness of historical complexity. (Introduction 10-11)

In Stevenson’s last and unfinished work of fiction, *Weir of Hermiston*, Archie, the young, progressive, Anglicised, and genteel protagonist rebels against his father who embodies quintessentially Scottish yet grossly out of fashion lowland characteristics, and Archie, significantly, is not sure whether he had just defied “God or Satan” (106). Stevenson’s point, though, is that Weir, and thus Scotland’s mythic, traditional, and largely inexplicable past can be both – God *and* Satan – and that, more importantly, Archie, the “modern” man, must come to terms with the “God-Satan” dualities in himself.

The Inexplicable Self: Scottish Tradition in Stevenson's Short Stories

Stevenson is, without question, a master of the short story genre, a genre that allows an author to focus with particular intensity on a single theme. For Stevenson, this theme was most often an exploration of human and moral duality; stories such as "Markheim," "Olalla," "The Ebb Tide," and, of course, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* all explore this central theme from differing points of view. Three of Stevenson's short stories, "Thrawn Janet," "The Tale of Tod Lapraik" (an interpolated tale in the novel *Catriona*), and "The Merry Men" examine duality from a particularly Scottish perspective, and speak to the "Scottish psychological syndrome" of dividing the past from the present and future, superstition and mystery from logic and rationality. These Scottish short stories feature progressive and rational Scots individuals who are confronted by inexplicable events; that is, demonic forces or disturbing psychological conditions caused by overzealous religious fanaticism and superstition force the young protagonists to reconsider their "enlightened" understanding of reality. And all these characters, when confronted by these inexplicable events, experience a unique type of fear defined by Freud as a feeling of the uncanny. In his essay "The Uncanny," Freud explores the disturbing psychological sensation one experiences when encountering such strange, inexplicable phenomena. Freud argues that modern individuals no longer believe in the myths of "our primitive forefathers," that

we have *surmounted* these modes of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation. As soon as something *actually happens*

in our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs, we get a feeling of the uncanny. (370-371)

Freud's analysis of mystery thus sheds light on why Stevenson focuses on the uncanny in these Scottish works: the "primitive" mythology and traditions of Scotland's past still influence, if only unconsciously, the "modern" Scottish characters.

As these texts show, the consequences of encounters with the inexplicable can be either destructive or redemptive: if the reasonable protagonists are able to expand their self-concepts by allowing mystery into their heretofore rational worldview they become vital, dynamic individuals who successfully navigate their contemporary Scottish culture by maintaining a connection with Scotland's folkloric and religious past. Conversely, tales such as "Thrawn Janet" and "The Merry Men" illustrate the destruction that results when one attempts to maintain the separation of irrationality from rationality, when one excludes the superstitions and traditions of the past from the modern worldview, or, likewise, holds exclusively to the old traditions and ignores "enlightened" rationality. Thus Stevenson shows, as Barry Menikoff notes, that it "is not always a division in personality that is crucial but the recognition that there are differing strands in any single personality, and that those strands cannot easily be separated" (Introduction xxxix). Ultimately, then, Stevenson's texts centre on ambiguity: "This ambiguity, which discloses itself linguistically as well as structurally, is central to Stevenson's vision of the world [...] Stevenson refuses to falsify a central idea, that uncertainty and ambiguity are not only part of our language but conditions of our existence" (Menikoff, lii,liii). This is similar to what Gifford

terms “the dissociation of sensibility”, the “peculiarly Scottish” literary trait in which “the writer through creative ambiguity simply ‘floats’ the values being satirised, so that, from Hogg’s or Stevenson’s point of view, the final comment is ‘plague on both houses’” (“Myth” 245). While Gifford’s analysis of the Scottish “dissociation of sensibility” does much to explain Stevenson’s ambivalence, my study here illustrates that Stevenson’s texts culminate not in a “plague on both houses” but rather in a tempered celebration of both houses, of Scotland’s past lore and values and its future as a modern, material nation.

I

“Thrawn Janet” is a tale that focuses almost exclusively on division. Indeed, the story centres on the split manifested in Janet’s person: her body-soul separation that is disclosed in the tale’s climax. More important, however, is the division between the town of Balweary’s new minister and the people of his Scots congregation. The young Reverend Mr. Soulis comes to the town an educated and progressive representative of modern religion. The townspeople, on the other hand, hold to the beliefs of their tradition; that is, they hold to their superstitions about the supernatural in spite of the new minister’s admonishments against such irrational beliefs. These two opposing perspectives thus reflect two conflicting aspects of Scottish identity, and the minister’s encounter with Janet, or rather the “bogle” that used to be Janet, is analogous to the progressive nineteenth-century Scots’ struggle to incorporate the traditions of the nation’s folkloric past into their modern, British identity. Significantly, however, though one would expect this past-future division to be representative of a contest, in Jekyll-and-Hyde fashion, of good versus evil,

Stevenson forecloses this possibility by showing the profound ambiguity of both rationality and irrationality. The only way to maintain a unified notion of self, Stevenson's work shows, is through accepting ambiguity and paradox. In other words, it is only through suturing these two antagonistic beliefs into one that a healthy self can emerge.

Linguistically, the tale is also divided into two distinct narrative voices: the English-speaking narrator who frames the story's history and the old villager who relays the tale in the lowland Scots dialect. Not surprisingly, the tone of each narrator represents the different attitudes that were held by the educated and influential classes in Scotland from the eighteenth century and onwards into the nineteenth, which associated the use of standard English with "enlightened" progressiveness or, on the other hand, the "vulgar" use of Scots with "backwards" values and ideas. The English-speaking narrator does not adopt a tone that manifests this patronizing attitude toward the Scots "older folk" of the town in an obvious way, yet this condescension is certainly implicit in his voice; his allusion to Shakespeare, for example ("those hints that Hamlet deprecated" [410]), signify that his intended audience is an educated one and hence not the people he is describing. Interesting, too, is the ideological perspective of this narrator, for his purpose in recording this tale is, ostensibly, simply to establish the believability of the frightening behaviour of the minister in a rational and empirically verifiable manner. The locale of the minister Soulis's manse, the "Hanging Shaw," is described in careful detail, the date of his most frightening sermon is noted, as is the scripture verse he expounds on that day: "He had a sermon on 1st Peter, v. and 8th, 'The devil as a roaring lion,' on the

Sunday after every seventeenth of August” (410). In this way, this modern narrator is aligned with Soulis, or at least Soulis as he was before his uncanny experience, for both the tale’s protagonist and Anglicised narrator seek a logical explanation for the phenomena they encounter.

Yet the English speaking narrator betrays another aspect of his character in his preamble to the villager’s oration: though he may not believe the legend of “Thrawn Janet”, he is undoubtedly intrigued by the story and, moreover, is interested in the emotional effects of the minister on the townspeople. Indeed, the imaginative flourish with which he describes Soulis’s wild eye that, in his words, seemed as if it “pierced through the storms of time to the terrors of eternity” (410), and his vivid description of “the more daring schoolboys” who “ventured, with beating hearts, to ‘follow the leader’ across that [the manse’s] legendary spot” (411) reveal his attraction to the mystery of the Balweary parish. Even the details he provides to prove the story’s historicity are ambiguous. On the one hand, they ground the story in fact, but on the other, they hint at his attraction to the uncanny tale: the spooky atmosphere which surrounds the aptly named “Hanging Shaw” is described with relish, as is the fire-and-brimstone message of the minister’s terrifying sermon. The narrator, then, displays the ambivalent characteristics – indeed, in spite of himself, embodies the very paradox of Scottishness – that Stevenson shows to be of paramount importance to a successful modern Scot. Though he uses language and learning to elevate himself above what the “sophisticated” reader would consider the old fashioned and linguistically gauche villager, he is simultaneously intrigued – even enthusiastic – about the mythology of the past. The very fact that this irrational,

folkloric story is framed and recorded by a modern Anglicised voice testifies to this narrator's appreciation of the past. Interesting, too, is the apparent disappearance of the modern narrator, for the tale concludes, somewhat abruptly, with the "old-timer's" voice, not the master-narrator's. This absence of the "rational" voice precludes any definitive conclusion about the local legend's veracity. While on the one hand the old villager's version of events is left as the final explanation of the minister's behaviour, we are told that he only relays the tale after "his third tumbler" of spirits, which thus calls into question his reliability. Ambiguity, then, characterizes both voices and frames the mystery of the parish minister's transformation.

The minister himself, on the other hand, is not a character who embraces the past and superstition. He is instead, in the villager's words, a young man "fu' o' book learnin' and grand at the exposition, but, as was natural in sae young a man, wi' nae leevin' experience in religion" (411). Again, when describing the new minister's behaviour, the villager asserts that his books and formal education are an impediment to his effectiveness as church leader:

there were folk even then that said the Lord had left the college professors to their ain devices, an' the lads that went to study wi' them wad hae done mair and better sittin' in a peat-bog, like their forbears of the persecution, wi' a Bilbe under their oxter and a speerit o' prayer in their heart. There was nae doubt, onyway, but that Mr. Soulis had been ower lang at the college. He was careful and troubled for mony things beside the ae thing needful. He had a feck o' books with him – mair than had ever been seen before in a' that presbytery. (412)

From the outset of the old Lowlander's narration, the minister's character is shown to contrast with those of the old-fashioned villagers. It is clear, then, that here Stevenson is illustrating the familiar theme of the clash between the old and the new: the old ways of tradition, of gaining understanding through life's trials, is contrasted with the new system of "progressive" education and intellectual pursuits. Yet here this division is represented in a uniquely Scottish context, as the language and sympathies of the Scots narrator make clear. This split is further emphasized by the generational division of the villagers into "the younger sort" who were "greatly taken wi' his [the minister's] gifts and his gab" and the "auld, concerned, serious men and women" who were "moved even to prayer for the young man, whom they took to be a self-deceiver, and the parish that was like to be sae ill-supplied" (411). Particularly interesting about this passage is that the older folk suspect the minister of being a "self-deceiver". The villagers feel that the faith of their presbytery is in danger because of the young "callant's" inexperience, and moreover the old, serious folk believe him to be a threat to himself, deceived into believing that his "book learnin'" offers sufficient credentials to lead his congregation. Further, the minister's sole reliance on his formal education calls into question his ability to guide even himself in spiritual matters; he is, after all, a *self*-deceiver. His name, even, hints at the spiritual danger that he is in, for Soulis is linguistically close to soul-less. This is a telling similarity, for it implies that with sophistication and separation from "backwards" traditions, one runs the risk of losing his soul. The minister is thus implicitly linked with the power of evil; not only is his soul in danger, but deception itself is an inherently evil action: it is the devil who "deceives the whole world" (Rev.

12:9). We see, then, that even though the minister is described as an enlightened man of reason and learning, he too, perhaps, has a dark side and a moral ambiguity about his character that is hinted at by the villagers but is unacknowledged by himself.

Still, in the first part of the tale the minister is happily oblivious to his own dual nature and is even more unaware of the evil manifested in Janet M'Clour. Here again the young minister's understanding of reality is in direct opposition to the villagers', for Janet's spiritual status "was mair than suspeckit" by them: she was thought to be a "sib to the deil" (412). Though the villagers have reasons, however circumstantial, to suspect Janet of being a witch – she abandons her illegitimate child and wanders, "mumblin' to hersel' up on Key's Loan in the gloamin', whilk was an unco time an' place for a God-fearin' woman" (412) – the minister trivializes his parishioners' belief by calling it mere superstition: "it was a' superstition by his way of it; an' when they cast up the Bible to him an' the witch of Endor, he wad threep it doun their thrapples that thir days were a' gane by, and the deil was mercifully restrained" (412). Soulis, here, defends Janet because he feels the injustice of the villagers' accusations and thus, it would seem, he saves an innocent life. Indeed, Stevenson aligns the modern reader with the minister, for no rational individual would drown a woman accused of witchcraft simply because she mumbles to herself as she walks in the twilight, or had an illegitimate child whom she apparently abandoned. The minister's rationality here would thus be perceived as a virtue, and the villagers' belief in Janet's guilt, and their subsequent attack, as an example of the dangerous consequences of their superstitions. Janet is saved from the villagers by the compassion of the rational young new minister. As we see, though, Janet does not

escape punishment for being “sib to the deil”, for on the following day her neck was “thrown, and her heid on ae side like a body that has been hangit, and a grin on her face like an unstreakit corp” (413-414). Interestingly, even though the villagers know that the “Thing” that now inhabits Janet’s body is not the “auld Janet”, for she is known “by their way o’t” to be in “muckle hell”, “by an’ by they got usede wi’ it” (414). That is, Janet’s unnatural condition soon becomes a familiar phenomenon, which illustrates the villagers’ comfort with the supernatural world, even with its evil.

In contrast to the villagers, Soulis believes Janet’s change is due to a stroke, and this seemingly logical explanation for her transformation further sets the minister’s beliefs in opposition to those of his congregation:

But the minister was neither to haud nor to bind; he preached about naething but the folk’s cruelty that had gi’en her a stroke of the palsy; he skelpt the bairns that meddled her; and he had her up to the manse that same nicht, and dwwalled there a’ his lane wi’ her under the Hangin’ Shaw. (414)

Thus, just as the villagers’ superstitions prompt them to accuse Janet of witchcraft, the minister’s logic leads to him to condemn his congregation for being cruel. And here again Stevenson is aligning his readership with the minister: his humanity, kindness, and mercy are appealing to an audience that would value these same qualities in any leader. Stevenson here paints a flattering picture of the modern, rational mind, and thereby characterizes the villagers as, if not outright villains, dangerous and morally irresponsible individuals.

More interesting, though, is how Stevenson aligns the minister with both the reader and with Janet. For shortly after the minister defends her from his congregation, she comes to live with him as a servant at Hanging Shaw. And then it is that Stevenson begins to complicate the heretofore simple dichotomy between a rational and good individual in contest with those who hold to irrational and dangerous superstitions. Though Janet at this point is still protected by the authority of the minister, the unnatural and relentless heat hints at that there is some supernatural force at work in the parish. The minister is effected by the “uncanny weather” more than anybody else in his parish, and to escape his discomfort he admits that he “wad be stravaguin’ ower a’ the countryside like a man possessed” (414). Soulis’s “possession” here links him, as we will see, with Janet and the supernatural. Yet the minister’s alignment with the superstitions of the villagers is not emphasized until he comes face to face with the strange black man in the graveyard. Still comfortable with his rationality, Soulis has become accustomed, we are told, to spend time in a kirkyard that belongs to an even more distant era in Scottish history:

Abune hangin’ Shaw, in the bield o’ the Black Hill, there’s a bit enclosed grund wi’ an iron yet; and it seems, in the auld days, that was the kirkyard o’ Be’weary, and consecrated by the Papists before the blessed licht shone upon the kingdom. It was a great howff o’ Mr. Soulis’s, onyway. (414)

Soulis’s gravitation toward this Catholic cemetery reveals his connection to Scotland’s past, for Scotland’s Catholic history is linked even by the Scots narrator to

a “pre-enlightened” era. Thus, if only unconsciously, the minister reveals his spiritual complexity, for he is soothed body and soul by the ancient Catholic environment. It is no accident, then, that it is in this setting where the minister apparently comes face to face with the devil, and that it is here where he first suspects that, perhaps, there is something out of the ordinary in Balweary after all.

It is in this graveyard that, one day, the minister encounters at first “twa, an syne fower, an’ syne seeven corbie craws fleein’ round an’ round abune the auld kirkyaird” (415). With the peculiar gathering of the “corbies”, themselves signifiers both of the demonic in Scottish lore and of traditional ballad culture, it becomes clear – finally – to the minister “that something had put them frae their ordinar” and that all is not right in Balweary (415). His subsequent encounter with the mysterious black man unsettles the minister even more than the gathering “corbies”:

what suld he find there but a man, or the appearance of a man, sittin’ in the inside upon a grave. He was of a great stature, an’ black as hell, and his e’en were singular to see. Mr. Soulis had heard tell o’ black men, mony’s the time; but there was something unco about this black man that daunted him. (415)

Here, Stevenson makes it clear through a footnote that “it was a common belief in Scotland that the devil appeared as a black man” and, moreover, that this superstition was documented and legitimated by Scotland’s historic legal system: “This appears in several witch trials and I think in Law’s *Memorials* [R.L.S]” (415, footnote).

Obviously, Stevenson intends this connection with Scotland’s “grisly” past to not go unnoticed by his audience, and his admission that he finds Law’s *Memorials* to be a

“delightful storehouse of the quaint and grisly” shows that although he is separated from the past and its beliefs – “it *was* a common belief” – he is still imaginatively connected to his Scottish heritage. The minister, however, has no time to think through this singular encounter nor to reflect on his relationship to the black stranger; when confronted with the black man, Soulis reverts to instinct and chases him, he hardly knows why, to his own manse. It is here that the minister’s rationality begins to break down, for Soulis takes an unnatural fear of the man, even though, as we are told, he knows that there are black men in the world. Indeed, in spite of his fear, the minister speaks kindly to the stranger. Yet the encounter, for no clear reason, terrifies the minister.

Though his chase leads him home, the only other creature he finds there is, of course, Janet. We have seen how Stevenson has complicated the character of the minister by subtly aligning him both with Janet and the supernatural while still maintaining his position as an educated man. It is not wholly unexpected, then, that the dialogue the minister ostensibly has with the “bogle”-Janet upon his return reads, in fact, more like an interior monologue, especially since, as our narrator’s interruption to the dialogue to makes clear, Janet’s speech is in actuality unintelligible, but here is represented as clear and reasonable:

“Janet,” says he, “have you seen a black man?”

“A black man?” quo she. “Save us a’! Ye’re no wise, minister.

There’s nae black man in a’ Ba’weary.”

But she didnae speak plain, ye maun understand; but yam-yammered,
like a powney wi’ the bit in its moo.

“Weel,” says he, “Janet, if there was nae black man, I have spoken with the Accuser of the Brethren.”

And he sat down like ane wi’ a fever, an’ his teeth chattered in his heid.

“Hoots,” says she, “think shame to yoursel’, minister”; an’ gied him a drap brandy that she kept aye by her. (415-416)

Here, it is Janet who assumes the role of the rational thinker: she argues that he could not have seen a black man since there are none in the parish. Further, she reminds him of his position as a minister and tells him it is shameful to be affected by such superstition. In fact, she treats treat him much as he had formerly treated the villagers. The minister’s language undergoes a subtle shift too; in all other quotations, Soulis speaks standard English, but here, when he is under emotional and psychic duress, he slips into the Scots tongue. Thus we see that his educated and progressive self-identity is beginning to unravel. For earlier in the tale he unwittingly aligns himself with Janet and the supernatural presence that possesses her; now he becomes aligned with the villagers through his speech.

As the minister tries to make sense of his experience in the graveyard, his faith in reason begins to weaken and his rationality is increasingly replaced by fear. Indeed, he tries to hold on to his reason by working on his book or saying a prayer, but he is unsuccessful in these pursuits and his mind dwells instead on the black man: “Aye the mair he thocht, the mair he thocht o’ the black man” (416). Here, as with the rest of the tale, the minister’s rational philosophy is compromised, though, of course, he does not admit this to himself. Of more significance, though, is that after

this encounter, the minister's thoughts focus on both his childhood and the fearful black figure:

Sae doun he sat, and thought of a' that had come an' gane since he was
in Ba'weary, an' his hame, an' the days when he was a bairn an' ran
daffin' on the braes; and that black man aye ran in his heid like the
owelcome of a sang. (416)

Soulis's past, the black man, and his experience of fear are evidently all interconnected, and it is this relationship that Freud explores in "The Uncanny". He argues that the "uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (363-364). The black man causes latent memories to resurface in the minister's consciousness, memories of his childhood, the Scottish countryside, and even songs – ballads, perhaps, of the Scottish peasantry. These memories from his childhood show the minister's regression back to a pre-rational stage; as the narrator says, "there was other whiles, when he cam to himsel' like a christened bairn and minded naething" (416). Thus the minister's childhood heritage, manifested in the memories of his boyhood and even the pre-cognitive state of his infancy, intersect with his frightening experience with the black man, create a feeling of the uncanny, and represent the conflict of Scotland's past and present.

In the next few passages we see the minister choosing to believe in the irrational and supernatural; for he begins to believe that Janet is possessed and that what he thought was old-fashioned superstition is, in fact, reality. This, Freud tells us, is a crucial element of the uncanny: "an uncanny effect is often and easily

produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality” (Freud 367). Indeed, the minister’s suspicion of the supernatural re-animation of Janet’s body is a signifier of “the uncanny in a particularly forcible and definite form”; that is, the sensation of the uncanny occurs most strongly when one “doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive” (Freud 347). More important, though, is how this uncanny experience informs the theme of the tale. The uncanny is intimately connected to what is canny, to ideas of home and family; the *heimlich* Freud tells us, “is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich* (347). We do not need to further explore that the “bogle”-Janet, living, as she does, in the house of the minister creates a sensation of the uncanny; what is significant is that Soulis’s reversion to childhood thoughts and memories as part of his experience of the uncanny shows that there has been something *unheimlich* about himself all along, and that this experience with the black man and Janet has simply brought it to light. As Freud states, the word *heimlich* means, on the one hand, “what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight” (345). Stevenson, then, is showing that Soulis has harbored these superstitions in his unconscious, and that now they have come to light. Further, since he has up until this point concealed these beliefs from himself, the result of their disclosure is “not that he is at last enlightened, but that he falls into a state of complete bewilderment” (“The Uncanny” 356). The villagers, as we have already seen, are comfortable with the “bogle”-Janet, for they have never concealed their irrational superstitions from their

conscious minds; the minister, though, is overwhelmed by his uncanny fear because he has never before acknowledged that these beliefs are familiar to him.

Soulis comes to believe, then, that the villagers' "superstitious" understanding of Janet's condition, something "hitherto regarded as imaginary," is in fact reality. Like many sea changes in Victorian fiction, this one too is precipitated by the protagonist undergoing a time of illness and is also accompanied by the sympathy of the natural world. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the description the old Scots narrator gives of this fateful night is as uncanny as the events of the tale itself: "The sun gaed down amang unco-lookin' clouds; it fell as mirk as the pit; no a star, no a breath o' wund; ye couldnae see your han' afore your face" (416-417). More significant still is the physical and mental torment the narrator imagines the minister to experience:

it was gey and unlikely Mr. Soulis wad get muckle sleep. He lay an' he tumbled; the gude, caller bed that he got into brunt his very banes; whiles he slept, and whiles he waukened; while he heard the time o' nicht, and whiles a tyke yowlin' up the muir, as if somebody was deid; whiles he thocht he heard bogles claverin' in his lug, an' whiles he saw spunkies in the room. He behoved, he judged, to be sick; an' sick he was – little he jaloosed the sickness. (417)

Here, the two sides of the minister's experience and identity are warring within his mind and body, and this is the sickness of which the narrator speaks. This is the beginning of the minister's identity split; it is the precursor for his permanent shift into the irrational. Significant, too, is the narrator's point of view, for he reveals that

he is merely speculating about the minister's state of mind: it was "gey and unlikely" that Soulis would get much sleep. The old villager, then, is now imaginatively identifying with the rational minister, which complicates the earlier alliance of the minister and Stevenson's rational, progressive audience. Further, the narrator here proves himself to be unreliable: he is simply imagining the minister's state of mind. The real facts of the event are unknowable; thus the reader is left in a position of ambivalence where he or she must decide whether the minister actually experienced the subsequent encounter with the reanimated corpse of Janet, or if it is merely the ramblings of the superstitious narrator. Thus the audience, too, goes through the same struggle between rationality and irrationality that is here manifested in the minister.

This internal struggle between the minister's superstitions and his rational thoughts ends suddenly, as the full knowledge of Janet's body's uncanny animation breaks in upon Soulis's understanding in an instant and in a mysterious fashion:

At the hinder end, he got a clearness in his mind, sat up in his sark on the bedside, and fell thinkin' ance mair o' the black man and Janet. He couldnae weel tell how – maybe it was the cauld to his feet – but is cam' in upon him wi' a spate that there was some connection between thir twa, an' that either or baith o' them were bogles. (417)

Yet even though at this moment the minister abandons his previously held rational ideology, his mind is not broken: quite the opposite, in fact, it is exceptionally clear. Moreover, the minister carefully – and bravely – examines Janet's room for any sign of trouble: "Mr. Soulis was feared for neither man nor deevil. . . no Janet could Mr.

Soulis see; nor ony sign of a contention. In he gaed (an' there's few that wad ha'e followed him) an' lookit' a' round, an' listened" (417). True, after Soulis discovers Janet's body "hingin' frae a single nail an' by a single wursted thread for darnin' hose" (418), his mind goes blank, his body goes into shock, and time for him stands still: "He couldnae pray, he couldnae think, he was dreepin' wi' caul' swat, an' naething could he hear but the dunt-dunt-duntin' o' his ain heart. He might maybe have stood there an hour, or maybe twa, he minded sae little" (418). The language here emphasizes Soulis's mind-body split, as the minister's mind is absent and only his body reacts to the sight; indeed, he is almost described as a mechanical body whose only movement is the regular "dunt-dunt-duntin'" of his heart. In this way, the minister is again linked with Janet, for in neither of them, it seems, is the mind and soul united with body. This mind-body divorce is also indicative of the minister's shift away from rationality and toward his faith in superstition. This "conversion" is so complete that he is now as strong in his belief in the supernatural as he was formerly in logic and learning. Thus, though the narrator remarks that it is a "strange thing that the saul of man should be thirled into his perishable body," the minister remains firm in his new beliefs and stands against the bogle: "but the minister saw that, an' his heart didnae break" (418).

The minister stands and faces the reanimated body of Janet, and he seemingly triumphs over the being who inhabits her body. It is interesting, then, that immediately after his face-to-face encounter with Janet in the pitch black night, and after, or so we are told, "the Lord's ain hand" struck her down, Soulis loses his reason, runs madly to the village, and is never the same again: "But it was a sair

dispensation for the minister; lang, lang he lay ravin' in his bad; and frae that hour to this, he was the man ye ken the day" (419). The minister's problem is that he is unable to accept and incorporate into his rational mind a situation that he reads as an unambiguously supernatural event. Whereas previously his trust was placed solely in progressive religion, education, and, above all, his rational worldview, now the minister's mind fails because he cannot incorporate the past into the present, because he attempts to maintain the division between the irrational and the rational.

Significant, too, is the fact that the tale ends in the voice of the Scots narrator, a narrator who grounds the story in empirical facts and is thereby aligned with the tale's original Anglicised narrator: the black man was seen by John Christie as he passed the "Muckle Cairn" at six, and "before eicht," he was seen again "by the change house at Knockdow; an' no lang after, Sandy M'Lellan say him gaun linkin' doun the braes frae Kilmackerlie" (419). Yet even though the narrator provides evidence of the black man's flight from Balweary, he in no way attempts to give a rational explanation for the presence of the figure, nor does he question the legend of "Thrawn Janet" itself. The tale's uncertain conclusion thus expresses Stevenson's own ambivalence toward the narrator's tale; though the final words belong to old lowlander, the fact that he, as we have already discussed, only tells the tale after his "third tumbler" of spirits further complicates the veracity of the local legend. Ultimately, then, Stevenson allows no final conclusion to be drawn for the reader. Unlike Soulis whose mind is broken because he can only see one explanation for the event, we are left in a position of uncertainty and ambivalence, a position that is suspended between rationality and irrationality. Yet this, as Stevenson's

complications of reader-protagonists alignments and narrative point of view show, is the only way to successfully receive the strange tale.

II

“Black Andie’s Tale of Tod Lapraik” is, in many ways, similar to “Thrawn Janet”. Both deal with the dark side of Scottish folklore, specifically, bodily and spiritual possession. Both are narrated in the lowland dialect; yet both have master-narrators who are English-speaking and rational. We know relatively little about “Thrawn Janet’s” Anglicised master-narrator, except that he exhibits the kind of tempered attraction to Scotland’s past that Stevenson himself expressed. David Balfour, however, is well known to Stevenson’s readers. The hero of *Kidnapped* and its sequel, *Catriona*, David Balfour is Stevenson’s picture of the young, affluent, and intelligent Lowlander, and although he has inherited land and title from his family estate, he is an orphan and, further, has disowned his only living relative. With the exception of his fiscal inheritance, David is wholly severed from his past – indeed, until he reaches late adolescence, he does not even know the story of his own family history – and is thus representative of a new, modern type of Scottish citizen. The two Balfour novels follow David throughout the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland, and when the “Tale of Tod Lapraik” is recited, three Highlanders are holding David and the story’s narrator, Black Andie, captive on an isolated island near the Scottish-English border. Although both David and Andie are outsiders in this setting, it is David who, in actuality, is the real social other; for despite their linguistic differences, Andie and the Highlanders share the same cultural values and traditions. They all relish in their tales of a “terrifying strain” (327), and indeed both

the lowlander and the Highlanders lay claim to Black Andie's tale, Andie asserting that Tod's witchcraft and death was observed by himself and his father, while Neil claims that it is "the story of Uistean More M'Gillie Phadrig and the Gavar Vore" (335). Their association with a more primitive past thus links the rural Highlanders and the lowlander. One would expect young David to be manifestly out of place with such "backwards" company; this, however, is not the case. Unlike the minister Soulis, David does not pass judgment on the superstitions of his countrymen, but neither does he embrace their traditions whole-heartedly. As Stevenson has shown through the ways in which David is able to straddle Scottish values and traditions in *Kidnapped*, most notably through his friendship with Alan Breck Stewart, the Jacobite rebel and fiery Highlander, David epitomizes the ambiguity that Stevenson values, and consequently is successful in navigating the complexities of Scottish society.

Both aspects of Scotland's past are represented through the characters of Andie and the Highlanders, so it is not surprising that they feel the uncanny nature of the Bass, the prison-island, in similar fashions:

Dwelling in that isolated place, in the old falling ruins of a prison, and among endless strange sounds of the sea and the sea-birds, I thought I perceived in them early the effects of superstitious fear. [...] I can find no word of it in the English, but Andie had an expression for it in the Scots from which he never varied.

"Ay," he would say, "*it's an unco place, the Bass.*" (326, 327)

Significantly, Davie does not disparage Andie's Scots expression; in fact, he incorporates it into his own speech: "It is so I always think of it. It was an unco place

by night, unco by day; and these were unco sounds, of the calling of the solans, and the plash of the sea and rock echoes, that hung continually in our ears" (327). Indeed, David's repetition of the word "unco" here is almost poetic; Scots is shown to have an imaginative and affective quality that David appreciates and artistically reworks to convey the atmosphere of the Bass rock. Neither is David surprised at the Highlanders' delight in sharing "terrifying tales" in such a lonely and "unco" setting; nor is he shocked at Andie's talk of "bogles" and "warlocks". When Neil, the leader of the Highlanders, asks David to stop whistling Alan Breck's air because it is "not 'canny musics'" (327), David's response to Andie's explanation is appropriately elusive:

"Not canny?" I asked. "How can that be?"

"Na," said he; "it will be made by a bogle and her wanting ta heid upon his body."

"Well," said I, "there can be no bogles here, Neil; for it's not likely they would fash themselves to frighten solan geese."

"Ay?" says Andie, "is that what ye think of it? But I'll can tell ye there's been waur nor bogles here."

"What's waur than bogles, Andie?" said I.

"Warlocks," said he. (327-328)

Like the minister Soullis, who slips into Scots when he encounters the mysterious black man, here David uses the lowland language to discuss the topic of bogles with Andie: "What's waur than bogles, Andie?". This signifies that David is not closed off to the traditions of the lowlanders; moreover, David treats both the subject of bogles

and the earnestness of Andie with respect, for he does not dismiss Andie's fear of bogles and warlocks. In fact, David seems just as genuinely interested in Andie's tale of the warlock as are the superstitious Highlanders; as Barry Menikoff notes, Andie is able to hold David "in thrall" through the imaginative power of his tale (*Narrating* 182).

Yet although David does not reject Andie's belief in bogles and warlocks outright, the subtle condescending edge in his tone shows that he treats the subject, in part, with humour and skepticism, and with a lightness that is mirrored in Stevenson's own footnote:

A learned folklorist of my acquaintance hereby identifies Alan's air. It has been printed (it seems) in Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands*, Vol. II., p. 91. Upon examination it would really seem as if Miss Grant's unrhymed doggerel (see Chapter V) would fit, with a little humouring, to the notes in question. -R.L.S. (327)

Stevenson's joke here is that Alan and his tune are creations of his fiction, so, obviously, no "learned folklorist" would be able to identify the melody, even though J. F. Campbell and his *Tales* is, as Menikoff points out, an actual book of collected Highland folklore. Yet the "absurd supposition" that Alan's air is found in the pages of Campbell's work places "the entire footnote in doubt, inclining readers to dismiss it as bogus and, in effect, consigning Campbell and his *Tales of the West Highlands* to a world of complete fancy" (*Narrating* 186). On the other hand, the reference to Campbell and his known collection of folklore "gives validity to the oral tale, and to folklore, as a form of history adhered to by people who transmit these tales from

generation to generation" (*Narrating* 186). Stevenson's playful conflation of fact and fiction thus illustrates the type of ambiguity that David's jocular yet sincere tone expresses.

As mentioned, the tale itself has much in common with "Thrawn Janet," not the least of which is the attitude toward the supernatural expressed by the lowlanders. First, we are introduced to the Prophet Peden, a character who embodies the union of conventional and traditional religion, and who was an actual covenanter imprisoned on the Bass. Peden's physical description is reminiscent of the Anglicised narrator's comment on Soulis's appearance: "He was wild 's a peat-hag, fearsome to look at, fearsome to hear, his face like the day of judgment. The voice of him was like a solan's and dinnled'd in folks' lugs, and the words of him like coals of fire" (329). Yet unlike Soulis who is at first opposed to the villagers' traditional beliefs and who later, obsessively and unhealthily, can think only of these beliefs, Peden is precisely the type of church leader the villagers would have respected; for they wish for a minister who would sit out "peat-bog," like the "forbears of the persecution, wi' a Bible under their oxter and a speerit o' prayer in their heart" ("Thrawn Janet" 412). Peden is someone who suffers for religion, as his startling appearance and imprisonment on the Bass during the days of Persecution make clear. Additionally, the reference to the "Days of the Persecution" (328) contextualizes the tale in Scotland's religiously intolerant past, an intolerance that precipitated civil violence and the deaths of many faithful Presbyterians. The realities of this historic conflict between authorized and popular religion illustrate dangers of a national division and thus speak to the necessity for a unified self. It also again shows that Soulis has lost

his discernment of justice rather than gained an understanding of traditional superstitions through his retreat from rationality into an attitude of intolerance and religious fanaticism that is associated with the past days of persecution. Peden differs from Soulis, however, by his ready belief in – indeed, his enthusiasm for – supernatural events; his ability to prophecy the death of the “silly lass” does not clash with his position as a faithful minister. Tam, Black Andie’s father and the protagonist of the tale, is likewise not surprised to encounter the supernatural. When he first visits Tod Lapraik, he recognizes at once that the “dwam” Tod is in is a manifestation of witchcraft: “‘Dwam!’ says he, ‘I think folk hae brunt for dwams like yon’” (331). And later, when Tam, Sandie, and Andie see Tod dancing on the Bass – he “lowped and flang and danced like a daft quean at a wadin” (333) – they neither question the possibility that Tod is a warlock nor are they unprepared for such an event: “‘De’il or warlock, I’ll try the gun at him.’ [...] My grandsire gied Sandie a siller tester to pit in his gun wi’ the lead draps, bein mair deadly again bogles” (333, 334).

We do not expect, then, any self-destructive tragedy to befall the character Peden or the men Sandie, Tam, and the young Andie, for they, like the villagers of “Thrawn Janet,” have accepted all along the supernatural nature of Tod’s possession. As Menikoff notes, the atmosphere on the Bass rock and Black Andie’s tale show that “the supernatural plays an essential role in the ordinary life of Scotland” (*Narrating* 187). But more importantly, after he finishes narrating the tale, Andie admits to feeling an attraction to Tod’s evil delights:

It was joy was in the creature’s heart; the joy o’ hell, I daursay: joy whatever. Mony a time I have askit mysel’, why witches and warlocks

should sell their sauls (whilk are their maist dear possessions) and be auld, duddy, wrunkl't wives or auld, feckless, doddered men; and then I mind upon Tod Lapraik dancing a' they hours by his lane in the black glory of his heart. Nae doubt they burn for it in muckle hell, but they have a grand time here of it, whatever! – and the Lord forgie us! (334-335)

Andie, here, imaginatively embraces his dark side, and thus unlike Soulis who tries to maintain a split between his dual nature, Black Andie freely admits to feeling an attraction to Tod's hell-joy.

David, however, does not embrace the irrational and supernatural in the same way as do Andie, his tale's characters, or the Highlanders. Yet he does not foreclose this possibility; indeed, his understanding of the "unco" atmosphere of the Bass testifies to his open-minded attitude. But for David the uncanny quality of the Bass and Black Andie's tale is more of an aesthetic appreciation of the superstitions than it is an acceptance of the tale itself, which thus culturally distances David from his companions. Stevenson, clearly, does not idealize Andie's superstition, but through David's reaction to it he shows that a certain amount of suspension of one's belief allows one to straddle the values and traditions of the past and the rational ideals of one's "modern" era, and thus be able to appreciate both the present and the past in an affective, imaginative way. Interestingly, David makes no comment about Andie's tale; he does, however, immediately after Black Andie's narration, prove himself to be a decisive man of action, strength, and integrity. When the heated dispute about the pedigree of Andie's tale is called into question by Neil and the inevitable fight

occurs, Davie intervenes to save Andie from Neil's knife. Significantly, David acts on impulse here – “There was no time to think; and I caught the Highlander by the leg, and had him down, and his armed hand pinned out before I knew what I was doing” (336) – and thus we see that even though David functions effectively in his circumstances by remaining cool-headed and rational, he simultaneously trusts his immediate instincts. Through the character of David, then, Stevenson shows that the most effective Scottish citizen – both personally and culturally – is an individual who intentionally remains open to irrational experiences; that is, by not questioning the tale, David is able to incorporate the past and the present, traditional lore and progressive thinking, into his self identity.

III

Like the “Tale of Tod Lapraik,” “The Merry Men” is a maritime tale that focuses on the “unco” nature of the sea. And here again, the story of the uncanny sea and the superstitions that surround it is narrated through the voice of a young, educated, and rational individual. The protagonist, Charlie, comes back to his uncle's home after studying at Edinburgh College to find that, due to the terrible destructive powers of the “Merry Men,” the rocks and waves on this part of the coast, his uncle has undergone a disturbing psychological transformation. Charlie's reaction to his uncle's change is complicated, though, by his own attraction to this same coastal inlet: Charlie seeks the *Espirito Santo*, a Spanish wreck rumored to contain great wealth. In this way, Charlie and his uncle are linked, for they are both attracted to the ships wrecked by the Merry Men. The attitude each adopts, however, toward the allure of the Merry Men is diametrically opposed, but that is not to say that Charlie,

like the minister Soullis, ignores his superstitions and instinct. Rather, Stevenson shows that the educated, English-speaking, and progressive Charlie and his hyper-religious and superstitious uncle actually share many of the same characteristics. Indeed, even Charlie, at times, recognizes his own potential to become the tormented, mad, person that his uncle Gordon Darnaway has become. In this way, Charlie's reaction to the mysterious nature of the Merry Men is similar to David's response to Black Andie's tale: neither Charlie nor David question the veracity or allure of the uncanny, and for both the events – real or narrated – link them to a past they accept which, in turn, directs them towards success in the future.

Like David Balfour whose adventures begin after the deaths of his parents, Charlie too is an orphan and, as such, is free to become a wholly modern and self-made man. Further, Charlie is an educated man, and, evidently, his time at the College has had its effects on both his intellect and his language, for he consistently speaks standard English, even though he is of “unmixed lowland stock” (325) and in spite of the fact that both his uncle and cousin speak Scots. In these ways Charlie stands in contrast to his uncle, Gordon Darnaway, whose beliefs are a combination of fire-and-brimstone Cameronian Christianity and traditional maritime superstitions. Darnaway, in fact, has the same attitude toward Charlie's education as the villagers of Balweary have toward the minister's university training: “‘And ye come frae the College!’ sneered Uncle Gordon. ‘God kens what they learn folk there; it's no muckle service onyway’” (335). Charlie's mindset is certainly the opposite of the country peoples', whose beliefs about Aros, the tidal island on which the tale takes place, are all about “sea-kelpies,” mermaids, seals that “speak to man in his own

tongue”, and about the ancient saints and monks who came from Ireland to convert the native islanders (329). Among these mingled accounts of myth, lore, and perhaps real history is the story of the *Espirito Santo*, a ship of the Spanish Armada, rumored to have sunk off the island’s coast. With this story we have the first hint that Charlie’s education and the traditions of the country folk are not as diametrically opposed as they may seem; for, ironically, it is Charlie’s university training that causes him to guess that the tale of the lost Spanish ship is, in fact, actually true:

Among these old wives’ stories there was one which I was inclined to hear with more credulity. As I was told, in that tempest which scattered the ships of the Invincible Armada over all the north and west of Scotland, one great vessel came ashore on Aros, and before the eyes of some solitary people on a hilltop, went down in a moment with all hands, her colours flying even as she sank. [...] And now I must tell you, as I walked from Grisapol that day, the *Espirito Santo* was very much in my reflections. I had been favourably remarked by our then Principal in Edinburgh College, that famous writer, Dr. Robertson, and by him had been set to work on some papers of an ancient date to rearrange and sift of what was worthless; and in one of these, to my great wonder, I found a note of this very ship, the *Espirito Santo*.

(329)

Complexity, then, begins to characterize Charlie's intellect and experience, for as his training¹ and the old traditions merge, so too does he begin to feel the superstitions of the country people. Thus we see here the potential for him to share the same uncanny attraction to the sea that his uncle manifests.

The sea, indeed, is, as we have also seen in "Black Andie's Tale," characterized by Stevenson's traditional Scots characters as a mysterious and spiritually dark space. As Darnaway notes, "why the Lord should hae made yon unco water is mair than ever I could win to understand. [...] if it wasnae prentit in the Bible, I wad whiles be temp't to think it wasnae the Lord, but the muckle, black deil that made the sea" (334). Of course, given Darnaway's disdain for formal education, his religious fanaticism, and the fact that he speaks the Scots dialect, a signifier in these short stories of Scottish tradition, we expect him to view the sea in this dark, superstitious manner. From Charlie, however, we expect a much more tempered view of the sea; after all, he is the rational student who lauds the implementation of nautical technologies: "The thought of all these dangers [shipwrecks], in the place I knew so long, makes me particularly welcome the works new going forward to set lights upon the headlands and buoys along the channels of our ironbound, inhospitable islands" (328).² Yet Charlie, too, recognizes the eerie nature of the breakers ironically termed the Merry Men:

¹ The Dr. Robertson referred to here is the William Robertson (1721-1793) of the Scottish Enlightenment; this detail further emphasizes the progressive and rationalist nature of Charlie's education.

² Stevenson, here, is also giving a nod of recognition to his own family, for he descended from a family of lighthouse engineers.

I have often been out there in a dead calm, at the slack of the tide; and a strange place it is, with the sea swirling and combing up a boiling like the cauldrons of a linn, and now and again a little dancing mutter of sound as though the Roost were talking to itself. (328).

The language here evokes the supernatural: “dead”, “strange”, “boiling like the cauldrons” all allude to the supernatural, almost demonic, qualities of the Merry Men. Moreover, Charlie admits to attributing a sort of supernatural foresight to the Merry Men:

the sea seemed to lie uneasily; a sound of it, like a long sigh, mounted to me where I stood; and, quiet as it was, the Roost itself appeared to be revolving mischief. For I ought to say that all *we* dwellers in these parts attributed, if not prescience, at least a quality of warning, to that strange and dangerous creature of the tides. (341, my italics)

Charlie’s change of signifiers, from “the country people” earlier in the text to “we” here, exposes his slippery identity; for as his relationship with the Merry Men becomes more acute, so too is his identity as a rational young man challenged by the overwhelming maritime force of the Roost.

In addition to this dark allure of the Merry Men that links Charlie to the “country people”, both Charlie and his uncle are attracted to the shipwrecks of the Roost. Charlie, as we know, comes to Aros with the hopes of salvaging the wealth of the *Espirito Santo* in order to marry, but because the wreck is ancient and his motive is pure, he is able to justify this unhallowed endeavor to himself.

It behoved me, then, to be up and doing for my wife; and I thought with a laugh how long it was since that great sea-castle, the *Espirito Santo*, had left her bones in Sandag Bay, and how weak it would be to consider rights so long extinguished and misfortunes so long forgotten in the process of time. (343)

This, despite the fact that Darnaway and Charlie consider shipwrecks are God's judgments, "judgments" Darnaway states, "in the mirk nicht among the draygons o' the deep" (335). Indeed, even though Charlie persists in his treasure hunt, he knows there is "something sacrilegious in its nature" (343). This feeling is intensified by the realization that his uncle not only revels in recalling the destruction of the *Christ-Anna*, but in fact contributed to the tragedy by murdering the ship's only survivor. Moreover, his mistaken pronunciation of the ship's name – it was really either the *Christiania* or *Christiana*

(343) – places emphasis the name of Christ. Indeed, Darnaway himself understands the spiritual significance of what he thinks is the ship's real name: "'Ay,' he repeated, dwelling upon the first part of the word, 'the *Christ-Anna*. It's an awfu' name'" (333). It is through his uncle's dark deed that Charlie connects both his search for the lost Armada ship and his own identity to the victim of Darnaway's insane murder: "Shipwrecked, at least, he must have been; perhaps, like the old Armada mariners, from some far and rich land oversea; or perhaps one of my own race, perishing within eyesight of the smoke of home" (342). These shifting identifications, again, problematize Charlie's own quest for the *Espirito* by emphasizing his superstitious fear that this victim's soul may not be as far away as one might think:

I knew, although his bones lay there, a part of Aros, till the trumpet sounded, his imperishable soul was forth and far away, among the raptures of the everlasting Sabbath or the pangs of hell; and yet my mind misgave me even with a fear, that perhaps he was near me where I stood, guarding his sepulcher, and lingering on the scene of his unhappy fate. (342)

This uncanny sensation challenges Charlie's rational mindset and sets the stage for his exploration of the depths of the Roost where he suspects the Armada ship is at rest. For if he feels that the spirit of his uncle's victim is near at hand, so too perhaps are the souls who perished on the *Espirito*. Charlie, then, both sympathizes and identifies with the shipwrecked victims, yet he fears their presence too, which shows his complexity; for his fear of their souls reveals his belief in the supernatural, in spite what he "knows" to be true. In this way, both Charlie and his uncle share an uncanny intimacy with the victims of the Merry Men, and these thoughts in Charlie, in particular, belie his self-construct as a rational, "enlightened" young college man.

Stevenson, then, gives us many clues about the dual and seemingly contradictory nature of Charlie's identity; this is illustrated most forcefully in the scene in which Charlie dives into the sea in his quest for the *Espirito Santo*. Perhaps more significant than the actual sea exploration is the moment before Charlie's plunge, the moment during which he wrestles between succumbing to superstitions or following his own rational plan:

I stripped to the skin, and stood on the extreme margin with my hands clasped, irresolute. The bay at that time was utterly quiet, there was no

sound but from a school of porpoises somewhere out of sight behind the point; yet a certain fear withheld me on the threshold of my venture. Sad sea-feelings, scraps of my uncle's superstitions, thoughts of the dead, of the grave, of the old broken ships, drifted through my mind. But the strong sun upon my shoulders warmed me to the heart, and I stooped forward and plunged into the sea. (344)

The sea is complex symbol: throughout the tale, of course, it is associated with the old traditions, and the Merry Men, in particular, with madness and psychic destruction. Here, the sea carries these connotations, but it is also a symbol for Charlie's unconscious; for it is underneath the calm surface where Charlie's innermost thoughts and fears are revealed to himself. And thus his plunge, although he at first thinks of it as a triumph over the superstitions, in fact brings him closer to – indeed, immerses him in – the old maritime superstitions. It is not insignificant either that at this moment Charlie stands naked on the threshold of the sea; “stripped to the skin,” he is on the “extreme margin” between the traditions of his past and the modern, rational mindset to which he precariously clings throughout the tale.

Ultimately, Charlie does take the plunge into the Merry Men; yet ironically, at the moment Charlie conquers his “uncle's superstitions” and dives into the bay, his immersion in the sea simultaneously moves him towards his own irrational fears. Thus it is that Charlie continues to wrestle with superstitious thoughts as he swims within the sea, even while holding to his rational outlook: “However it was, I was assailed with dreary thoughts; my uncle's words ‘the dead are down there,’ echoed in my ears; and though I determined to dive once more, it was with a strong repugnance

that I stepped forward to the margins of the rocks” (345). There is a paradox, then, in Charlie’s experience with the sea: his plunge is a manifestation of the complex and seemingly contradictory nature of his own identity. The physical description of the sea, too, reflects this ambiguity: “In this complexity of forms, all swaying together in the current, things were hard to be distinguished” (345). As a symbol, then, of Charlie’s innermost self, the sea mirrors the psychic complexity and turmoil that Charlie experiences:

A great change passed at that moment over the appearance of the bay. It was no more that clear, visible interior, like a house roofed with glass, where the green, submarine sunshine slept so stilly. A breeze, I suppose, had flawed the surface, and a sort of trouble and blackness filled its bosom, where flashes of light and clouds of shadow tossed confusedly together. (345-346)

Charlie feels this “trouble and blackness” indeed when his grasping hand finds the “the bone of a man’s leg” among the tangled weeds of the Merry Men:

it was not until I touched that actual piece of mankind that the full horror of the charnel ocean burst upon my spirit. I laid the bone beside the buckle, picked up my clothes, and ran as I was along the rocks towards the human shore. (346)

Again, the language Charlie uses here to describe his experience in the depths of the sea speaks to the significance of both his unconscious fears and his connection to his past. Charlie describes the sea as a “charnel ocean” which links it, of course, with a charnel house, a tomb. Thus just as the ocean houses bones, an aspect of Charlie’s

unconscious is a house of the dead, which connects him both to the ancient past and his darker nature. His encounter with this aspect of his own self is horrible to his conscious mind, however, and he retreats back to the “human shore.”

Although Charlie’s flight to the “human shore” calms his spirit and reassures his rational sensibilities, the knowledge of the depths that “burst upon” his spirit while submerged in the Merry Men remains present in his consciousness and compels him to abandon his search for the Armada wreck. Moreover, during that evening’s terrible storm that causes the wreck of yet another ship, Charlie, in a flash, comes to comprehend the full power of the Merry Men:

At that hour, there flashed into my mind the reason of the name that they were called. For the noise of them seemed almost mirthful, as it outtopped the other noises of the night; or if not mirthful, yet instinct with a portentous joviality. Nay, and it seemed even human. [...] And yet the spectacle was rather maddening in its levity than impressive by its force. Thought was beaten down by the confounding uproar; a gleeful vacancy possessed the brains of men, a state akin to madness; and I found myself at times following the dance of the Merry men as it were a tune upon a jiggling instrument. (355)

This passage is reminiscent of Black Andie’s fascination with Tod Lapraik’s demonic dance, as Charlie recognizes that the waves of the Merry Men dance with a kind of demonic, gleeful abandon. In this way, Charlie is kindred to his uncle who has wholly succumbed to the Roost’s spell, whose eyes shine “in the night with an unholy glimmer” (356), and, indeed, whose identity has merged fully with the Merry Men:

“weel, it comes ower me like a glamour. I’m a deil, I ken’t. But I think naething o’ the puir sailor lads; I’m wi’ the sea, I’m just like ane o’ her ain Merry Men” (359). It is significant, too, that this insight comes to Charlie is a flash, without the usual reasoning and thought process, which shows that Charlie here has gained a different type of knowledge.

Yet Charlie, although temporarily entranced by the maddening riot of the waves, does not lose his reason to them, but in fact remains, if not entirely collected, at least cognizant of the night’s natural wonders and of their psychological effects on himself and, more importantly, on his uncle. And perhaps this is why his encounter with the black man at the tale’s end does not have the same uncanny effect – at least on him – as does Soulis’s experience in “Thrawn Janet.” Although Charlie admits that at first he is afraid of the strange figure of the black man, he recognizes that the survivor is clearly human. Even though he momentarily feels the same irrational fear that his uncle experiences, we see the different character of each man through his reaction to the survivor. Charlie is equipped to recognize his own superstitious fears and think through their effects on him. Moreover, unlike Soulis, who is broken because he cannot accept that there is complexity in the world and, more importantly, in himself, Charlie understands that there is an inexplicable force in the Merry Men:

the Merry Men were roaring in the windless quiet of the night. Never, not even in the height of the tempest, had I heard their song with greater awe. [...] the voice of these tide-breakers was still raised for havoc. They seemed, indeed, to be a part of the world’s evil and the tragic side of life. [...] I went

back again into the darkness of the house as into a place of shelter, and lay long upon my bed, pondering these mysteries. (366)

Significantly, though, as Charlie uses his reason to think through mystery, he determines that the only rational response to the psychological power of the Merry Men is to accept their irrational power. In contrast, the moment Darnaway sees the black man, superstition and fear overwhelm him, and this encounter precipitates his transformation from man to beast: he “fled up the hillside towards the top of Aros like a deer. [...] he scoured like the wind along the hilltops; he doubled and twisted like a hare before the dogs; [...] He fled, and he was silent, like a beast” (362, 364-365). Like Soulis, who is destroyed because he cannot incorporate the traditions of the villagers into his rational mindset, Darnaway’s madness and subsequent death result from the fact that he abandons himself to superstition in the face of the eerie and the unsettling.

Douglas Gifford argues that with “The Merry Men,” “Stevenson portrayed an islanded version of a peculiarly Scottish struggle between a negative and ultimately God-defying theology and an intuitive common-sense based morality which honours the dead and desires reconciliation with the past” (“Myth” 230). This is indeed the case, for Stevenson shows that this “intuitive common-sensed based morality” has its foundations both in the traditions of Scotland’s past and in the rational sensibilities of the “enlightened” generations. Thus it is that Charlie’s seemingly fatalistic assertion that his uncle’s death was preordained – “for it was written otherwise [...] the thing was now beyond the hands of men, and these were the decrees of God that came to pass before our eyes” (368) – is reminiscent of his uncle’s paranoid worldview, it is,

in fact, a reasonable way to respond to the inexplicable events occasioned by the wild Merry Men. It is rational in that, paradoxically, this response acknowledges the irrational nature of his uncle's demise

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, arguably Stevenson's most famous work, explores the destruction that results when Jekyll attempts to divorce himself from aspects of his own nature. The three short stories discussed in this chapter explore a similar theme but look at the issue of division in a uniquely Scottish way. In these works, Stevenson shows that it is not one's dual nature that causes self-destruction, but that it is in attempting to divorce aspects of one's nature from oneself that is psychically dangerous: to embrace duality is, paradoxically, the only way to be whole.

Doubled Brothers, Divided Self: Duality and Destruction in *The Master of Ballantrae*

It may seem strange that a novel that has for its setting the Scottish lowlands, a pirate ship, an Indian house and its exotic garden, and the wilderness of New York, is, for all this, a text about the Scottish psyche. Yet this is precisely the case with Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*, a novel that, regardless of setting, explores the repercussions for a "culture obsessed with the myth of separation, with diabolism, with secret sins" (Hart 300). Douglas Gifford argues that nineteenth-century Scottish fiction in general is "deeply preoccupied with the exploration of Scottish *psyche*. This major tradition examines deeply embedded dualism and divided loyalties as inherent in the Scottish mind" ("Myth" 243); Francis Hart, too, asserts that the idea of the double that Stevenson explores in *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Master of Ballantrae* has "been adopted as the myth of Scottish consciousness" (300). Of course, *Jekyll and Hyde* is Stevenson's most famous "doubling" novel, yet *Ballantrae* is, in many ways, Stevenson's most complex exploration of national and psychic duality. In *Ballantrae* this split is represented not as two sides of the same individual, as it is in *Jekyll and Hyde*, but is instead set up as a split between the two Durie brothers. Yet although the brothers are at first defined as opposites – one a "Jekyll", the other a "Hyde" – we soon come to realize that there is no simple division between the fraternal pair; each brother shares characteristics with the other that cannot be defined in terms of a good-evil split. Still, the division between brothers expresses, in Jekyll-and-Hyde fashion, the dual nature of humans, and the result of this division is, again as with *Jekyll and Hyde*, mutual destruction. Stevenson shows that the brothers are more than simply opposed to each other: they are divided against themselves, for

human nature is not split between good and evil but is both these things, and the refusal of each brother to accept his ambiguity leads to his downfall. Moreover, Stevenson explores the implications of Scotland's national split since "the Durrisindeer family and estate represents the estate of Scotland" (Gifford, "Stevenson and Scottish Fiction" 84). This split is manifested in the novel as the civil division caused by the Jacobite rebellion, but also through the characters of brothers: "Henry and Mackellar are of course those forces of sober and arid Head; account-watching, love-repelling, feeling-repressing. James and Burke are their polar twins: romantic and self-indulgent, adept in the manipulation of feeling to the point of irresponsibility" (Gifford, "Stevenson and Scottish Fiction" 85). James's seeming disdain for middle-class respectability and his emotionally compelling and aesthetically rich romantic qualities align him with the myth of Scotland's pre-union past, and is contrasted by Mackellar, the Durrisindeer steward and narrator of the tale, to Henry's social conservatism, his economic prudence, and materialistic reason of "progressive" North Britain. However, while each brother may possess some of the qualities attributed to him by the other, and by the narrator Mackellar, neither one embodies *only* those qualities. In the end, then, we see the destruction that results when Scots attributes are figured in terms of opposites rather than paradoxical qualities of the same nation.

The Master of Ballantrae is, ostensibly, a found document that "Johnstone Thomson" – a.k.a. Charles Baxter – and "the editor" – a.k.a. Stevenson – read together for their mutual enjoyment and also so that Stevenson can edit, develop and publish the curious account. The brief Preface here is particularly significant because in it Stevenson establishes the doubling theme of the novel; for Baxter and Stevenson

assumed the roles of "Johnstone" and "Thomson", "small-town hypocrites who employed a racy Scots speech", when the mood took them (Daiches, "Stevenson and Scotland" 14-15). Further, though their play with these alter egos is light-hearted, it sets up a duality between their middle-class Anglicised respectability and their ironic "nostalgia for Scotland" (Daiches, "Stevenson" 16), a Scotland of coarse and low rustics which is affectionately satirized by them, but is "treated with sentimental affection in the literature of the Kailyard" (Daiches, "Stevenson" 15). This mixture of nostalgia and ironic commentary, the humorous acceptance by these two educated and Anglicised friends of their broad-Scots heritage, reveals the paradoxical dualities of late nineteenth-century Scotsmen; for in a sense, their broad Scots doubles allow the friends to separate their respectable selves from the "vulgar".

Just as Stevenson embraces his own duality by adopting, at times, a broad-Scots character as his own, here the Editor accepts the ambiguities of the found document. Though Johnstone would like to see the text changed by his friend, suggesting that he "work up the scenery, develop the characters, and improve the style", the Editor declares that the text is "noble" in its "baldness" and refuses, except for a few footnotes, to interfere with the tale's first-person narrations (6). Thus it is that we have "the full truth of this odd matter" (7) described to us primarily by the first-person accounts of Ephraim Mackellar, the dour steward of the Durrisdeer estate; Mackellar also inserts some excerpts from the memoirs of the romantic though morally suspect adventurer, the Chevalier de Burke. Thomson's concerns, however, about the narration's "bald" nature raises concerns about the admittedly subjective voice of the narrators, primarily of Mackellar, for we are warned from the outset that

the “full truth” of the matter cannot be deduced from the “bald” text as it stands. Yet the Editor chooses to leave Burke and Mackellar’s accounts as they stand; in essence, he chooses to remain ambivalent regarding the real events. “What makes this novel superior to others that have employed the same symbolic opposition,” asserts Gifford, “is the way it rises above taking sides” (Stevenson and Scottish Fiction” 85). If Johnstone mistrusts the document’s baldness, the Editor shows that it is this very baldness that makes the text extraordinary.

The story documents the mutual hatred of the two Durie brothers, their obsessive and irrational desire to see the other ruined, and the subsequent fall of the Durrisdeer House. Though Mackellar and Burke announce their affection and respect for Henry and James respectively, and indeed, side with the brother whose cause they feel is just, both narrators come to form complex and often contradictory views of each brother: Mackellar begins to sympathize with both Henry and the Master, and Burke becomes disenchanted with James’s charisma, charm and generosity. While Henry and Mackellar both accept from the beginning that there is evil in people, they cannot admit to its presence within themselves. Yet, through his experience with the divided family, Ephraim Mackellar comes to understand his own dual nature as he becomes complicit in the destructive schemes of each brother and, further, comes face-to-face with the good-evil complexity within himself. We have, in essence, a story that Mackellar first sets up as a tale of good versus evil, but is in actuality a tale about good *and* evil; for though these two qualities are opposites, they both exist in the brothers and in Mackellar himself. And since this novel follows the nineteenth-century Scottish theme of exploring the “divided self; the divided family which

contains the broken self; the divided nation behind the fragmented family” (Gifford, “Stevenson and Scottish Fiction” 69), we are warned that Scotland will self-destruct if the paradoxes of Scottish nationhood are divided from each other instead of unified into a complex whole.

The story begins in the year 1745, the year that witnessed Britain’s last civil war, in which the exiled Prince Charlie rode against the forces of King George, only to be defeated the following year at the battle of Culloden. This setting is, of course, significant since it was this national conflict that divided many families within Scotland; “Stevenson created a fictional family caught in the situation of some actual families, who split their loyalties between the warring factions as a kind of insurance” (Barrett xx, Introduction). Moreover, the Jacobite Rebellion, argues Cairns Craig, was redundant at the moment of its inception, for it was linked with the fiction of Scotland’s romantic past and Scottish nationalism in the post-union era. The Jacobite Rebellion, then, was

already wiped out and made irrelevant to the present. Jacobitism is not a politics to be rejected on principle or to be seen as a serious influence on Scottish culture: it is dismissed as without significance to a present that has established a new agenda and a new set of values. Already redundant in the moment of its occurrence it has nothing to link it to the future. (23)

The Rebellion, then, not only expresses the differences between Scotland’s romantic and mythic past and the material realities of eighteenth-century Britain, it also

provides the context for showing the two stereotypical but opposite Scots figures: the wild, fiery, and adventurous figure and the frugal, assiduous land-holder.

Thus, when the tale begins and we see the Durie family debating which brother should side with the deposed prince, and which should fight for the established monarch, we first see Mackellar establish the characteristics of each brother: Henry is characterized as the industrious, rational, and socially conservative brother, and James, as a wild, impetuous, energetic, and rebellious elder sibling. Because the Rebellion is a belated manifestation of Scotland's mythic past, it has a romantic allure that suits the Master's love of danger and risk, and through this Mackellar attempts to distinguish James from Henry, the responsible, practical brother who "took a chief hand, almost from a boy, in the management of the estates" (9). Yet Henry wants desperately to fight with the rebels, as he makes clear:

"And see, James," said Mr. Henry, "if I go, and the Prince has the upper hand, it will be easy to make your peace with King James. But if you go, and the expedition fails, we divide the right and the title. And what shall I be then?"

"You will be Lord Durrisdeer," said the Master. "I put all I have upon the table."

"I play at no such game," cries Mr. Henry. "I shall be left in such a situation as no man of sense and honour could endure. I shall be neither fish nor flesh!" he cried. (10)

Henry, at this point, seems to understand that if he is forced into the role of Master and responsible landholder, he will occupy a role incompatible with his position as

the younger brother, and though here James promises to forfeit his claim to the Durrisindeer title, we know that he will do no such thing, for, as the older brother he has the rightful claim to the title. Henry's assertion, then, that he will be "neither fish nor flesh" is equally true for James, for if James has his way, both brothers will be forced into roles that are at odds with their "natural" positions. Given James's propensity for playing at cards, we are not surprised when he suggests that he and Henry settle their dispute by the "toss of a coin" (11). Now, Mackellar has already tried to establish Henry as a reasonable, "honest, solid sort of lad" (9), yet this assessment of his character is undercut by Henry's acquiescence to James's "arbitrament of chance", a course of action that even the Master admits is his way to express his "scorn of human reason" (63).

The brothers, then, become opposed to the role the other adopts because it is the position each covets, but at the same time each brother hardens into the position that he has, through chance, been thrust into. Thus the brothers are not so different from each other as one might at first expect. They are, in fact, intimately connected to one another; they are each other's double, set up by Mackellar as having opposite natures, good and evil, but in actuality they are both morally complex. The brothers are much like Dr. Jekyll and his alter ego (or, more precisely, his alter-id), Hyde, who is the incarnation of his own dark desires. As Jekyll admits, "I learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either it was only because I was radically both" (*Jekyll* 61). The brothers, too, share this same duality: James, we are told, embraces only his devilish nature, while Henry,

after he is forced into a role which he initially rejected, represses his comfort with desire for rebellion.

As the tale develops, Stevenson connects the two brothers in increasingly more profound ways. For most of the text we are privy only to Henry's thoughts and feelings, and since we get this information through Mackellar, who is admittedly biased in favour of the younger brother, it comes as no surprise that Henry is most frequently shown as the "good" brother and thus is in direct opposition to James. Mackellar, who aligns himself with Henry, attempts to sustain this division, and indeed it is difficult to know how much of the Henry we see is real and how much is the creation of Mackellar, a moral ideal he needs to establish in order to maintain his own simple self-construct. There are hints, however, that Henry shares more with his brother than he and Mackellar are willing to admit; Henry betrays his rebellious nature and dark desires which undercut Mackellar's simple good-evil fraternal division. Henry, for example, fantasizes about joining the band of freetraders that are scouring the beach near the Durrisdeer house: "I was thinking I would be a happier man if I could ride and run the dangers of my life, with these lawless companions" (20). What Henry does not realize is that at this very moment James, who is presumed dead, is in actuality running with a band of pirates. In this situation, then, Henry's secret desire is fulfilled through James's actions, in the same way as Hyde is the person through whom Dr. Jekyll can revel in his dark and bestial pleasures without arousing any sense of guilt in himself:

This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his

every act and thought centered on self; [...] the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty. Jekyll was no worse. (65-66)

Of course, Henry does not savor his brother's villainy in the same way that Jekyll does Hyde's since he does not share the same consciousness, but the doubling of the two brothers is established nonetheless. For James, here, acts out Henry's desire, and enables the younger brother to maintain his simple self-construct as the good, responsible landholder.

The lawlessness of pirating forms a connection between the brothers; a more profound but no less subtle link is Mackellar's perception of the brothers' physical similarities. Henry, when he is at his most cunning, wears a "grim smile upon his face" that resembles the Master's (95). Alone, this similarity has little significance; of course the two look alike, they are brothers. However, later in the text Mackellar describes James's appearance as something ghastly, as unnatural and not quite human:

it [the Master's nature] seemed of a piece with that impudent grossness which I knew to underlie the veneer of his fine manners; and sometimes my gorge rose against him as though he were deformed – and sometimes I would draw away as though from something partly spectral. I had moments when I thought of him as of a man of pasteboard – as though, if one should strike smartly through the buckram of his countenance, there would be found a mere vacuity

within. This horror (not merely fanciful, I think) vastly increased my detestation of his neighbourhood. (172)

Here, Mackellar's revulsion at the Master reveals more about the deformity of his too simple characterization of James than it does of the Master himself. It is through his refusal to see any moral complexity in James that this "spectral," "pasteboard" character becomes so horrific to the steward. Thus when Mackellar sees Henry's "grim smile" as similar to the Master's, the spiritual deformity that Mackellar perceives in the Master is linked with Henry and undermines his perception of Henry as all-good, for it implies that there is darkness within Henry too. In this way, James, and by association Henry, James's double, is aligned again with Hyde, with all that is dark and twisted in the human soul; for Hyde is somehow physically deformed and is, undoubtedly, repulsive to others. The language, in fact, that Stevenson uses to describe the Master is similar to how he characterizes Hyde:

He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. (*Jekyll* 12)

The relationship between the brothers and their intimacy with evil – with their respective "Hyde" natures – becomes more pronounced as their relationship becomes more symbiotic, for near the end of the text and as Mackellar's understanding of moral complexity becomes clear, Henry too is described as a spectral and deformed figure:

My lord, I should say, had listened to Mountain's narrative, regarding him throughout with a painful intensity of gaze; and since the tale concluded, had sat as in a dream. There was something very daunting in his look; something to my eyes not rightly human; the face, lean, and dark, and aged, the mouth painful, the teeth disclosed in a perpetual rictus; the eyeball swimming clear of the lids upon a field of blood-shot white. (229)

Again, this passage is reminiscent of the lawyer Utterson's description of Hyde, "God bless me, the man seems hardly human!" (19). Significantly, both Jekyll and Henry attempt to divide the dark aspects of their own souls from their consciences, but we know that the evil they try to divorce is rooted in their own natures. Yet it is Mackellar's recognition, here, that Henry has come to embody the grotesque spectral figure he previously saw in James that is paramount. It not only shows the self-destruction that Henry has brought upon himself by trying to distinguish himself from the evil he sees in his brother, as Jekyll does with Hyde, it also reveals Mackellar's growing self-awareness; for the steward continues to follow Henry, even though he now sees that his lord embodies the same deformity he previously acknowledged only in James.

Of course, the preceding passage also shows how the Master's fate – his corpse's final expression – is inscribed on the body of Henry, for the language used to describe James's death-face is much like the description of Henry's horrifying visage: "I have heard from others that he visibly strove to speak, that his teeth showed in his beard, and that his brow was contorted as with an agony of pain and effort" (241).

This further expresses the doppelganger essence of the brothers' relationship, their unity and integration, in spite of their insistence on their fundamental difference and their mutual hatred. Even the Master's appearance emphasizes this duality: despite Mackellar's revulsion at the elder brother, when James is struck by Henry, he, as Mackellar describes, "sprang to his feet like one transfigured; I had never seen the man so beautiful" (103). James, then, has the same moral complexities that his brother has, and as Mackellar, after being charmed by the Master, comes to see: "I do not think you could be so bad a man [...] if you had not all the machinery to be a good one" (169). Just as we see this same good-evil duality in Henry, James too is divided. The difference is that the Master himself recognizes his own duality and claims to have once had a better nature, "I was not always, as I am today" (183), "I was born for a good tyrant!" (184). James here admits to having a dual nature, as the phrase "good tyrant" suggests, and this again points to the significance of the brothers' initial split and the consequent role each is forced to adopt. Indeed, it is because of his socially powerless position that James chooses to embrace only evil; as he tells Mackellar, his malady is that he does not *want* to be good (169).

More important, though, is the fact that both brothers embrace their simple good or evil self-constructs in order to destroy the other. This becomes their whole purpose in life, even though they cannot live without each other. For, as doubles, they fulfill the desires of the other: Henry unconsciously reveals the darkness that James embodies, and James covets Henry's position as husband to his one-time betrothed and lord of the estates he forfeited. Henry, with dismay, recognizes his connection to his brother: "nothing can kill that man. He is not mortal. He is bound

upon my back to all eternity – to all God’s eternity! [...] Wherever I am, there will he be” (130). And James, too, knows that this singular connection is somehow beyond reason and is out of his control: “The battle is now committed, the hour of reflection quite past, the hour for mercy not yet come. It began between us when we span a coin in the hall of Durrisdeer, now twenty years ago; we have had our ups and downs, but never either of us dreamed of giving in” (183). Indeed, neither brother does give in, and their obsession with destroying the other further ties the two together, even to the point, as we have seen, of uniting their bodies through their final grotesque expressions and, ultimately, through death and their common grave. As they are drawn together in America, Henry begins to delight in his brother’s presence and feeds off his humiliation in vampire-like fashion, just as James has financially bled the family estate dry:

here I found my lord seated, nursing his cane and looking pleasantly forth upon the bay. Not three feet from him sate the Master, stitching. Neither spoke; nor (in this new situation) did my lord so much as cast a glance upon his enemy. He tasted his neighbourhood, I must suppose, less indirectly in the bare proximity of person; and, without doubt, drank deep of hateful pleasures.

He had no sooner come away than I openly joined him.

“My lord, my lord,” said I, “this is no manner of behaviour.”

“I grow fat upon it,” he replied; and not merely the words, which were strange enough, but the whole character of his expression, shocked me.

(193-195)

More shocking still is the manner in which Henry – one could argue James, too – dies: “at the first disclosure of the dead man’s eyes, my Lord Durrdeer fell to the ground, and when I raised him up, he was a corpse” (241). Thus it is that each brother succeeds in destroying the other, which also means destroying the self.

Stevenson set the brothers’ deaths in the New York wilderness, as strange choice, perhaps, for a novel about Scotland. And yet, this is a fitting choice, firstly because the wilderness itself reflects at once the “midsummer madness” of Henry and the frozen, suspended animation of the buried Master: “Now that the sun and the wind were both gone down it appeared almost warm, like a night of July: a singular illusion of the sense, when earth, air, and water were strained to bursting with the extremity of frost” (235). Yet more importantly, the journey into the wilderness functions as a descent into the unconscious, and, for Henry in particular, as an immersion into his heart of darkness. Stripped of all civilizing influences, the brothers’ true selves are exposed in the wild. We see this first with the Master while he is lost in the wilderness with the Chevalier de Burke. Throughout the text, the Master represents himself as an elegant and charismatic individual; he is able to inspire an attraction to his character, his wit and his charm, to which even Mackellar succumbs. But despite his characteristic grace, in the wilds of America we see the Master’s most uncouth and unattractive behaviour. True, Burke and James’s situation is desperate, and we may not be able to trust entirely Burke’s point of view for, after all, the Master disowns him in his hour of need, but nonetheless, it is in the wild where James is shown at his worst:

A little before sundown, in an open place with a stream, and set about with barbarous mountains, Ballantrae threw down his pack. "I will go no further," said he, and bade me light the fire, damning my blood in terms not proper for a chairman.

I told him to try to forget he had ever been a pirate, and to remember he had been a gentleman.

"Are you mad?" he cried. "Don't cross me here!" [...] This he said ranting like an actor; and then sat biting his fingers and staring on the ground, a most unchristian object.

I took a certain horror of the man, for I thought a soldier and a gentleman should confront his end with more philosophy. (62)

This trek through the wild gives us an insight into James' psyche, and what we see is his unrefined, even banal and childish nature.

The wild shows us Henry's innermost thoughts, too, though for Henry the experience is much more intense – all his thoughts after his arrival in America are located in the wild. Of course, we can see traces of Henry's wild, "devilish" nature from the opening passages of the novel, yet it is after the midnight duel, and after Henry believes he has killed his brother, as Gifford points out, that guilt poisons Henry's psyche and moves him toward the moral deformity we later see clearly manifested in the wild ("Stevenson and Scottish Fiction" 77). Edwin Eigner too locates Henry's shift from an apparently good individual to one who is frighteningly evil in the moment of the duel:

His hatred for James continues, but paradoxically he begins now to resemble his brother. [...] now he begins to assume James' character. He becomes more lively, he refuses to dwell on painful matters, and he turns slack in business affairs. Although he still believes that he has murdered his brother, he feels no guilt. The civilized paralysis has entirely passed [...] We have already seen Henry move to one extreme of his character; what we witness now is his progress to the other pole.

(185)

Undoubtedly, Henry's journey into his heart of darkness begins long before he arrives in America, let alone travels into the "barbarous country" (159). Yet it is in the wild where Henry's evil force is most apparent and frightening; as Gifford notes, "By the end, in his employment of the dregs of Albany cut-throats to do away with James, he has paralleled if not outdone James's most suspect deeds" ("Stevenson and Scotland" 77). Mackellar, too, recognizes that Henry's character has been poisoned by this hatred and that he now dwells solely on his dark desires: "My lord's mind throughout this interval dwelled almost wholly in the wilderness" (211).

The wilderness, then, functions symbolically and shows how Henry's repressed unconscious desires, those parts of his nature that are wild and evil, take over his better self, in the way that Hyde, in time, comes to dominant the "good" Dr. Jekyll, even without the aid of the transformative elixir. Freud argues that an unconscious desire "develops with less interference and more profusely if it is withdrawn by repression from conscious influence. It proliferates in the dark, as it were, and takes on extreme forms of expression" ("Repression" 570). Further, he

explains that repressed desires are satisfied in the unconscious through fantasy and dreams: “The unconscious processes pay little regard to *reality*. They are subject to the pleasure principle; their fate depends only on how strong they are and on whether they fulfill the demands of the pleasure-unpleasure regulation” (“The Unconscious” 582). Thus when Henry narrates his deepest secret and darkest desire, his “murder” of his brother, he speaks as though his attack was successful, and thereby reveals the wish-fulfillment fantasy that he has long cherished in his unconscious:

“I have struck my sword throughout his vitals,” he cried; “I have felt the hilt dirl on his breastbone, and the hot blood spirt in my very face, time and again, time and again! [...] he [Mackellar] kens all, and has seen him buried before now. This is a very good servant to me, Sir William, this man Mackellar; he buried him with his own hands – he and my father – by the light of two siller candlesticks.” (231)

The delight with which he describes this imagined scene shows that this long-repressed wish has indeed proliferated “in the dark,” which is why it now manifests itself in an “extreme form of expression”. The wilderness, thus, is symbolic of Henry’s unconscious, and brings to his consciousness his darkest nature.

It is significant, too, that when Henry narrates this dark and fantastic wish he uses the Scots dialect, something he does only two other times in the text: first upon his return from the duel with his brother when he falls into a fever and begins reminiscing about his and James’s childhood:

what have I done? And we used to be bairns together! [...] O my lass
[...] you knew me when I was a lad; there was no harm in Henry Durie

then; he meant aye to be a friend to you. It's him – it's the old bairn
that played with you. (117)

And later, when he is drunk, Henry again uses Scots as he recalls his happy days as a
lad:

Do you call to mind a place, Mackellar – it's a little below Engles –
where the burn runs very deep under a wood of rowans. I mind being
there when I was a lad – dear, it comes over me like an old song! – I
was after the fishing, and I made a bonny cast. Eh, but I was happy. I
wonder, Mackellar, why am I never happy now? (208)

In this way, Henry is similar to “Thrawn Janet’s” Soulis who, when he is
psychologically and emotionally beleaguered by the inexplicable events that surround
Janet’s possession, begins to use the Scots language to recall songs and events from
his childhood. For Soulis the slip into the Scots dialect and the return to childhood
memories signifies his unconscious connection to the irrational. This is true likewise
for Henry, but it additionally reveals that he feels his relationship with James was not
always so destructive: they once existed in a past in which they had a happy and
healthy relationship: ““Oh! Father,’ he cried, ‘you know I loved him; you know I
loved him in the beginning I could have died for him – you know that! I would have
given my life for him and you.’” (117). Thus the split that occurs because of the
Rebellion is again shown to be paramount for Henry, since it was at this moment that
he was set in opposition to his brother. Further, it was at this moment that the
brothers were separated and when that which was unified, the Durie family, was
broken apart. However, only Henry remembers this idyllic past, and the memory

occurs only after he begins to be destroyed by the guilt caused by “murdering” his brother. What we see, then, is Henry’s obsessive need to define the world and his experience in terms of clear divides: he sees only a golden past and a horrible present, himself as good and James as evil. The problem, of course, is that all of these dichotomies that Henry sees are in fact complex components of the same ambiguous whole. The dissociation from himself of all that he consciously reviles but which comprises part of his character is at the root of his psychic illness and eventual self-destruction. Henry’s retreat, then, to this romantic, mythic, and imagined past points to the danger to the Scottish psyche of a similar simplistic characterization of the complex Scottish past, and, as Gifford argues, “When that which is whole is broken into parts, say these novels, then the parts are differently but equally malformed” (“Myth” 249). And, as Stevenson shows, these psychic deformities lead only to destruction.

Given the novel’s focus on the evil within mankind and on the self-destruction that occurs when one attempts to ignore his own darkness, *Ballantrae* can be seen as one of Stevenson’s most pessimistic works. Yet in the narrator Mackellar we see that one is able to recover from the “Scottish disease” (Gifford, “Myth” 221) of duality and division. Mackellar, of course, is instrumental in trying to establish the good-evil split between brothers, as he says to the Master, “Your brother is a good man, and you are a bad one – neither more nor less” (184). This clear-cut attitude of Mackellar’s should not surprise us since he comes to Durrisdeer a rational-minded – he is an accountant, and a recent graduate of Edinburgh College (19) – and a seemingly morally astute man. Yet the events he witnesses challenge his rational

understanding of the world. We see this first during the night of the brothers' duel, a night described by Mackellar as "most unseasonable, fit for strange events" (102), and one that inspires superstitious fears in the steward:

My heart thumped upon my ribs, the hair stirred upon my scalp, as I stood there staring – so strange was the sight, so dire the fears it wakened. [...] I went back to the house of Durrisdeer, with my chin upon my shoulder, startling, as I went, with craven superstitions. (115)

Later, Mackellar again recalls similar superstitions upon hearing the unfamiliar voice and language of the Master's Indian companion, Secundra Dass. But here, significantly, Mackellar no longer describes the superstitions as "craven", for they actually awaken his interest in the strange voice: "An old tale started up in my mind of a fairy wife (or perhaps only a wandering stranger), that came to the place of my fathers some generations back, [...] A little fear I had, but more curiosity" (147). And finally in the American wilderness Mackellar admits that his belief in the irrational nature of the brothers' relationship determines his actions: "I will say so much, that my lord is not so crazy as he seems. This is a strange matter [...] We have a natural curiosity to learn the plain truth of this affair; I have some of it myself" (232-233). Mackellar, like Charlie in "The Merry Men," has learned that in order to understand the nature of the events he witnesses, he must allow for the possibility that they are inexplicable. He has, in other words, allowed this paradox to inform his perception of the world, and thereby joined two seemingly incompatible qualities – mystery and rationality – into his single and complex worldview.

Of course, we know that Mackellar not only observes the strange tragedy of the Durie brothers, he actually plays a significant role in it. On the dark and unnatural night of the duel, Mackellar himself, to his shame, becomes involved in the brothers' struggle for dominance. Though he condemns the act, he admits he is too cowardly to stop it and thus accompanies the brothers – indeed, he lights their way – into the forest where they fight. Mackellar, here, is party to a “murder,” and his own sense of moral astuteness is thus compromised. Moreover, even when the Durie family begins to suspect that Henry is no murderer and that the Master still lives, Mackellar admits his wish that things had gone otherwise: “nor could any news have reached Durrisdeer more generally welcome than tiding of the Master's death” (131). And years later Mackellar is forced to concede that he is unable to forgive the Master, despite the fact that it is God's commandment to do so:

“Ay, but if you were in my shoes, would you forgive him?” asks my lord.

The suddenness of the attack a little gravelled me. “It is a duty laid upon us strictly,” said I.

“Hut!” said he. “These are expressions! Do you forgive the man yourself?”

“Well – no!” said I. “God forgive me, I do not.”

“Shake hand upon that!” cries my lord, with a kind of joviality.

“It is an ill sentiment to shake hands upon,” said I, “for Christian people. I think I will give you mine on some more evangelical occasion.”

This I said, smiling a little; but as for my lord, he went from the room laughing aloud. (136)

Like the brother he serves, then, Mackellar is morally ambiguous, yet he initially refuses to recognize this ambiguity in himself. Indeed, in order to maintain his perception of his lord – and thus of himself, the loving and loyal servant – as righteous, Mackellar labels James as the “devil” and thereby divorces himself from evil by setting up a morally simplistic split between brothers. Mackellar’s identification with Henry is, in fact, so strong that upon the Master’s return he has incorporated Henry’s hatred of his brother into this own psyche, and thus he sees James as his personal enemy, not just the nemesis of his lord:

the Master addressed himself to Secundra Dass in Hindustantee, from which I gathered (I freely confess, with a high degree of pleasure) that my remarks annoyed him. All this while, you may be sure, my mind had been busy upon other matters, even while I rallied *my enemy*.

(148, my italics)

Although Mackellar, here, does not express the same unrestrained joy that Henry gives voice to when Mackellar admits that he cannot forgive the Master, the “high degree of pleasure” he does take in unsettling James reveals the darkness within his own soul. Though, significantly, he is still blind to the fact that here he resembles his “enemy”, for part of James’s “devilish” nature is that he delights in the torment he causes both Henry and Mackellar.

Mackellar, however, cannot maintain his simple good-evil division of the brothers, for, in spite of his declared aversion to the Master, Mackellar actually begins

to feel genuine affection for him. This first begins when he, the Master, and Secundra Dass are left alone together in the Durrisdeer house:

Indeed, mealtime at Durrisdeer must have been a delight to any one, by reason of the brilliancy of the discourse. He would often express wonder at his former indifference to my society. "But, you see," he would add, "we were upon opposite sides. And so we are to-day; but let us never speak of that. I would think much less of you if you were not staunch to your employer." You are to consider he seemed to me quite impotent for any evil; and how it is a most engaging form of flattery when (after many years) tardy justice is done to a man's character and parts. (165)

Of course, Mackellar admits that much of his affection was aroused because of the James's ability to charm and flatter, but nonetheless, he does show himself to be comfortable with – even sympathetic towards – his "enemy". Indeed, it is not long after their arrival in America that Mackellar offers James five hundred pounds, of his own money no less, in order to see him away from his poverty in New York:

I cannot see you in this poor place without compunction. It is not my single thought, nor my first; and yet it's there! I would gladly see you delivered. I do not offer it in love, and far from that; but, as God judges me – and I wonder at it too! – quite without enmity. (199)

Thus it is that Mackellar shows his ambiguity, his affection for both brothers and his implicit and explicit sympathies for their respective positions. Mackellar admittedly,

struggles to accept that right and wrong were not so clearly aligned with each brother as he, at first, wanted to admit:

In so far as regarded myself, I believed him [James] to mean well; I am, perhaps, the more a dupe of his dissimulation, but I believed (and I still believe) that he regarded me with a genuine kindness. Singular and sad fact! so soon as this change began, my animosity abated, and these haunting visions of my master passed utterly away. (185)

It is significant, too, that through Mackellar's narration the reader begins to sympathize with James, who, in point of fact, is innocent of the crime for which he is now under suspicion. In this way, Stevenson complicates the moral ambiguity for the reader, for "the sympathy we begin to feel for the Master in the last chapters does not stem from any improvement in his character – he still hopes to destroy his brother if he can –" (Eigner 187). By eliciting the reader's sympathy for James, Stevenson thus demonstrates the subtleties of moral ambiguity.

Of course, Mackellar's shifting sympathies are not given so freely until he comes face-to-face with his own complex nature. Yes, this is done to a degree when he continues to align himself with Henry after the younger brother has shown himself to be morally corrupted; as Gifford notes, "in the closing sequences we see Mackellar condemning the fratricidal plans of Henry, but destroying his own moral validity by refusing to separate himself from Henry's cause" ("Stevenson and Scottish Fiction" 82). But a more subtle and profound moral compromise occurs during the Master's enigmatic tale of the count and the baron. The tale is about the count's secret hatred for his "friend" the baron; in order to revenge himself, the count psychologically

manipulates the baron and orchestrates the unsuspecting baron's death. This story, masterfully told by James, could be easily be read as a tale of wish-fulfillment in which James destroys his brother; obviously, like the count in the tale, James hates his brother whole-heartedly and is determined to see him utterly ruined. In many ways, this tale is also analogous to the Master's attitude towards himself; although James does not hate himself, he hates his position in the world. Moreover, one cannot help but feel that James knows his obsession with destroying his brother is as much a self-destructive act as it is a fratricide, as he says, "The battle is now committed, the hour of reflection quite past. [...] when my glove is cast, *life* and honour go with it" (183, my italics). Thus the well into which the baron falls, the pit that is the cause of his death, also forces the count, and thus James as well, to face his own mortality as he gazes into the vacant darkness. So complex, subtle, and ambiguous is the tale that it can support both these readings. It is my argument, however, that this tale is primarily directed towards Mackellar and connects him to his own dark "pit." Undoubtedly, the setting of the tale – the vacuous, black well in the "very secret" woods – hints at one's relationship to his unconscious, and the count's confrontation with death at the well's edge certainly speaks to the "profound" nature of the pit. Yet it is the count's realization that his encounter with death prepares him to orchestrate the baron's demise that parallels Mackellar's struggle with his own mortality during the early days of the ship's voyage: "I passed these hours in unbroken solitude. At first I was terrified beyond motion, and almost beyond thought, my mind appearing to be frozen" (173). Like the baron, Mackellar begins to see that his encounter with death provides a solution for how to kill his enemy: "Presently there stole in on me a

ray of comfort. If the *Nonesuch* foundered, she would carry down with her into the deeps of that unsounded sea the creature whom we all so feared and hated; there would be no more Master of Ballantrae” (173). The similarities with the count’s realization in the cave is striking: ““Was I sent here to my death?’ says he, and shook from head to foot. And then a thought flashed into his mind. [...] The count set it [the well’s railing] back again as he had found it, so that the place meant death to the first comer” (177). Even the feelings that the count has for the baron and that Mackellar has for the Master are the same: “my gorge rose against him” (-Mackellar, 172), “his [the count’s] belly moved when the man came near him” (179). This tale, then, connects Mackellar to his dark desire to see the Master dead and inspires him, however unconsciously, to act upon this wish.

Indeed, Mackellar admits that “this particular tale, I say, took hold upon me in a degree quite singular” (176). This is seen most strongly, of course, in what Mackellar does immediately after the tale’s completion: Mackellar finds deep within himself the energy to kill James: “The words of my own prayer – *I were a liker a man if I struck this creature down* – shot at the same time into my memory. I called my energies together, and (the ship then heeling downward toward my enemy) thrust at him swiftly with my foot” (181). His actual attempt at murder is, however, only the outward expression of his inner desires. Mackellar’s profound darkness is revealed more fully by his description of his inner thoughts: “The thought of the man’s death, of his deletion from this world, which he embittered for so many, took possession of my mind. I hugged it, I found it sweet in my belly” (173). The relish with which Mackellar fantasizes about the Master’s death carries him far beyond the realm of

moral ambiguity and into the darker recesses of his soul. Indeed, his appetite for this destruction is, like the brothers' evil sides of their natures, similar to Hyde's appetite for cruelty, which delights him "like wine" (*Jekyll* 63) and causes Jekyll to lick "the chops of memory" (*Jekyll* 71) as he muses about his secret sins. The Master, as we know, dodges death and leaves Mackellar to ruminate on his guilt: "I do not know how long a time passed by: I lying where I was upon the deck, overcome with terror and remorse and shame" (181). Lying on the ship's deck, Mackellar is faced with his own murderous action and desire; thus we see him in the same position that Henry was in after the duel, with the exception, of course, that Henry thought he had in fact killed James. Henry, however, cannot accept his own moral complexity; he tries to maintain the distinction between himself and his brother as one of good versus evil. But, as we well know, this simple moral division does not reflect Henry's real nature, and so Henry's refusal to recognize his own dark side causes his self-destruction. Mackellar, however, does recognize that there is a part of him that is "devilish"; as James says, "not every man is so great a coward as he thinks he is – nor yet so good a Christian" (174). And indeed Mackellar acknowledges that James's assessment of him here is correct:

He did not guess how true he spoke! For the fact is, the thoughts which had come to me in the violence of the storm retained their hold upon my spirit and the words that rose to my lips unbidden in the instancy of prayer continued to sound in my ears: with what shameful consequences, it is fitting I should honestly relate; for I could not

support a part of such disloyalty as to describe the sins of others and
conceal my own. (175)

Thus Mackellar admits to his own sins, and so it is not entirely surprising that after this point the steward is more sympathetic to the Master; for his awareness of his own nature has linked him with the brother he previously described as the “devil”.

This is why, perhaps, the Master’s final “living” act is to look Mackellar in the eyes: “I beheld the eyes flutter; the next they rose entirely, and the week-old corpse looked me for a moment in the face” (241). Mackellar’s connection to James is a link with his own darkness and exposes his moral ambiguity, but here it is also a link with death. Thus, like Charlie in “The Merry Men” who has to submerge himself in the “charnel” sea in order to understand his connection to the irrational, Mackellar’s confrontation with death forces him to come to terms with his own paradoxical nature. We see in Henry where this failure to accept ambiguity leads to: “for at that first disclosure of the dead man’s eyes, my Lord Durrisdeer fell to the ground and when I raised him up, he was a corpse” (241). Stevenson, argues Gifford, shows that “if the results of history upon Scottish psyche were not just polarization, but repression within each polarized part of its opposite, then the parts destroy each other with an unrealized and sterile longing for each other” (“Stevenson and Scottish Fiction” 85-86). Thus the two brothers, longing for each other and for the repressed part of the other in the self, are finally united in death and in their “‘common’ grave; ‘common’ too, in the sense that Stevenson intends the re-unification in death to signify that what has been dissociated by warping Scottish experience is now once again whole – if, ironically, only in death” (Gifford, “Myth” 249). Gifford calls

Ballantrae “thoroughly tragic”; yet Mackellar, significantly, survives this encounter with James’s corpse. Moreover, he is enriched by it, for he now recognizes the good and evil within himself and in turn comes to have sympathy and affection for both brothers, as Francis Hart notes: “At the end, he [Mackellar] is deeply caring, honestly troubled, loyal but balanced” (302). Indeed, the tombstone he erects for the brothers in the wilderness, with a balanced inscription for each, is a testament to his acceptance of both the brothers’ and his own moral complexity. Important, too, is the link Mackellar effectively forms with the future, specifically, with “the Editor” and “Johnstone” who read the manuscript one hundred years after the events took place. Though one could argue that the “Johnstone”/“Editor” doubles of Baxter and Stevenson show that the future generation has not learned of the danger of splitting oneself into public and private personas, the fact that Stevenson publishes their “secret” identities and advertises that together they correspond in “the broadest of broad Scots” (footnote, 6) testifies to his acceptance of – indeed, his joy in – his dual nature as an educated and affluent global traveler and a humble Scots Lowlander. Thus while Gifford is correct in labeling the tale a tragedy, Stevenson shows that it is perhaps not as “thoroughly tragic” as one might first assume, for Mackellar, in his serious way, and “the Editor”, in his serio-comic way, accept their own moral and Scottish complexities.

A Chip Off the Old Block?: The Past and Progress in *Weir of Hermiston*

As his final and unfinished work, Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* has been described as his "last word" on "the problem of duality" (Eigner 228), and no doubt the fraught relationship between the young, sensitive Archie and his coarse Scots father is emblematic of the type of binary that doubled characters display. For though they see themselves as opposites, the two Hermistons share many of the same qualities, and so Archie's struggle to reconcile his father's nature to his ideal construction of a father figure reveals Archie's own internal tension as he wrestles with his identity. Characteristic of a modern, early nineteenth-century and genteel Scottish protagonist, Archie himself has a dual nature: his enlightened beliefs and refined manners contrast with his impulsive behavior and stern demeanor, and the sentimentality he inherits from his mother contrasts with the emotional aloofness that links him with his father. In addition to being a text about duality, *Weir* is Stevenson's most thorough exploration of the "Scottish national character" in all its ambiguity (Letley, Introduction xxv). As Archie struggles to reconcile his convictions and sensibilities with those of his father, the young, Anglicised and rational Hermiston attempts to negate his father's unrefined qualities by imposing on him a sensitive emotional interiority. Similarly, Archie imaginatively recreates Scotland's history, viewing it as beautiful and romantic, and thus places himself in an imagined past, one that disconnects him from an important aspect of Scotland's national character. Interestingly, however, this simple view of Scotland's past begins to change as Archie sees the complexity of Scotland's character through his perception of the rural countryside, which inspires Archie to begin seeing the

complexities of his own emotions and social identity. Yet it is through the influence of the elder Kirstie, the housekeeper of the Hermiston estates, that we see the most powerful example of Archie's acceptance of his own Scots heritage, its paradoxes and emotional power. In many ways Kirstie is the most significant character in the novel because she accepts her own paradoxical emotions. She thereby contributes to Archie's identity transformation from a genteel and romantic self-construct into one that is more ambiguous, complex, and ultimately paradoxical. As his most autobiographical novel,¹ *Weir*, though set in the early nineteenth-century, illustrates how Stevenson himself, and thus by implication his Scottish contemporaries, must engage with the values and attitudes of Scotland's past. More than a simple representation of a father-son relationship, then, *Weir* shows that if one attempts to maintain an exclusively refined, modern, and rational self-identity, the result is always self-destructive. In a parallel way, Stevenson implies that a Scots citizen must embrace ambiguity – he or she must “unfasten the bonds of respectability, sentimentality and success” that hold the national character down (Letley, Introduction xxiv) – in order to maintain a whole and healthy self-identity.

Weir begins with an introduction by the narrator that establishes the setting of the tale by contextualizing it in Scotland's past, a past that is rife with bloody events, national oppositions and paradoxical values. No safe and domestic Scottish tale is this, for even though the scene opens in the quiet rural Lowland countryside, the land

¹ Linda Dryden, in “Stevenson and Travel Writing in Reverse,” a conference paper given at *RLS2006: Transatlantic Stevenson*, July 18, 2006, argued that the volatile relationship Stevenson had with his strict Presbyterian father is worked out, in part, in *Weir*. See also: Emma Letley, Introduction. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Weir of Hermiston*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. xiv.

is marked “with a bloody finger” and is a place where “the silence of the moss has been broken once again by the report of firearms and the cry of the dying” (83). What we have from the novel’s outset, then, is a version of Scotland’s real past, not the popular Kailyard representation of it that was popularized by authors contemporaneous to Stevenson. For Kailyard books, argues Letley, “offered only an attenuated version of reality”; they were “sentimental, indulgent and backward looking” (“Language” 330). And Gillian Shepherd, in her defense of the cultural importance of Kailyard fiction, admits that in Kailyard novels “there is neither delineation nor development of character; the dimensions of time and location are left flat, featureless, and vague; the social mores that are portrayed are isolated from cause and effect” (311). Stevenson, then, by contextualizing this novel in history and showing the cause-effect relationship between historical events and social mores is deliberately distinguishing this novel from the popular Kailyard tales, even though it is still a rural love-story.²

The first paragraph of the brief “Introductory” describes the monument to the Praying Weaver of Balweary, the Covenanter who lost his life on that spot during Scotland’s “Killing Time”. By referencing this period of Scottish history, Stevenson highlights the inherent division of the nation; for Viscount Claverhouse, who shot the Praying Weaver, is known both as “Bloody Clavers” and “Bonnie Dundee”

² David Craig defines Kailyard writing as “sly farce of nostalgic escapism in which social life is brought exclusively inside the range of country ways and values” (72). *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1961. Gillian Shepherd notes the essential elements of Kailyard writing: “domesticity, rusticity, humour, humility, modesty, decency, piety, and poverty” (309). “The Kailyard.” *The History of Scottish Literature. Vol. 3, Nineteenth Century*. ed. Douglas Gifford. Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1988.

depending on which side of the Covenanting issue that one sympathizes with. But even on this issue there is no clear-cut division, as the narrator makes clear, for the Covenanter's belief is itself described, paradoxically, as a "glorious folly".

Stevenson, moreover, does more than show Scotland's history to be populated by enigmatic figures and bloody events; he shows the continuity of history by illustrating how it is open to change. Yet even as things change, the underlying violence continues: the old name of the "hollow among the hills", for example, was "The Deil's Hags", "but the place is now called Francie's Cairn" named after the novel's Frank Innes, "'the young fool advocate,' that came into these moorland parts to find his destiny" (83). Paradoxically, Stevenson here shows that continuity is change, and, more importantly, that the Hermiston's neighbours accept this paradox as part of their local culture.

Indeed, the continuity of Scottish history can be seen not only in the underlying pattern of violent death, it is also evident in the traditions and attitudes of the local lowlanders who infuse the tale of Archie and Frank with elements of the supernatural – elements, that is, of traditional Scottish lore:

For a while it was told that Francie walked. Aggie Hogg met him in the gloaming by the cairnside, and he spoke to her, with chattering teeth, so that his words were lost. He pursued Rob Todd (if any one could have believed Robbie) for the space of half a mile. (83)

Of course, we have here, in addition to the great Scottish tradition of telling ghost stories, a subtle reference to two of its greatest literary figures: James Hogg and "Robbie" Burns. Significantly, both of these authors cultivated dual identities: Burns

the “professional Don Juan” and, perhaps more importantly, Hogg as the rustic and raw Ettrick Shepherd. Indeed, Hogg’s broad Scots, both in actual literary society and in his texts, was criticized for being coarse, vulgar and gross – all the things Archie despises about his father’s language – yet Hogg uses Scots as a crucial element of his plots, and gives Scots “a resounding imaginative victory” over Standard English (Letley, “Some Literary Uses” 47). Further, by invoking these two giants of Scottish literature, Stevenson shows that the stories of the past still have currency in the present, and that it is through storytelling that the present generation can gain an understanding of the attitudes and events that comprise their culture. Years earlier, in fact, in his work *Edinburgh*, Stevenson describes the cultural importance of storytelling:

So in the low dens and high-flying garrets of Edinburgh, people may go back upon dark passages in the town’s adventures, and chill their marrow with winter’s tales about the fire: tales that are singularly apposite and characteristic, not only of the old life, but of the very constitution of built nature in that part. (62)

A “body of tradition,” he writes, “becomes a work of art” through the inter-generational culture of storytelling.

Yet the narrator of *Weir* makes it clear that many of the traditions which were popular during the time of the novel’s setting no longer have currency in his modern world. This introduction is directed toward the narrator’s contemporary audience, an audience that lives in an “age of incredulity”, a rational era in which the “superstitious decorations” that characterize the tales of Scotland’s past are irrelevant:

these superstitions, he says, “speedily fell off” (83). Thus even Archie’s “modernity” has slid into the past for the narrator’s audience. Yet even though the supernatural embellishments of the Hermiston story have faded away, “the facts of the story itself, like the bones of a giant buried there and half dug up, survived, naked and imperfect, in the memory of the scattered neighbours” (83). The narrator’s culture still keeps the tale of Archie and Frank, of the Justice-Clerk and the two Kirsties alive, even if it is only “half” of the local legend. The tale as we have it, then, is not a story about supernatural events, but is instead a story that explores the audience’s relationship to the “unrefined” attitudes and emotions of Scottish culture.

Just as the narrator in the “Introductory” gives a brief history of the “Deil’s Hags”, the first proper chapter of the novel describes Archie’s family history, particularly his mother’s, and, in keeping with the bloody tale of the Praying Weaver, the unseemly aspects of Jean Rutherford’s heritage are emphasized. Yet perhaps more interesting is the fact that out of this ancient and, according to local opinions, “ill” and unscrupulous family comes Archie’s mother, who is “pious, anxious, tender, tearful, and incompetent” (85) and whose “philosophy of life was summed in one expression – tenderness” (90). Jean’s gentle religious zeal seems incongruous with her family’s history even though her identification with the Covenanting martyrs grounds her identity in Scotland’s troubled past. Jean, however, ignores the complex nature of the Covenanting era. Her interpretation of history is of a simple struggle of good versus evil: “Her view of history was wholly artless, a design in snow and ink; upon the one side, tender innocents with psalms upon their lips; upon the other, the persecutors, booted, bloody-minded, flushed with wine: a suffering Christ, a raging

Beelzebub” (89). It is this limited view of history that causes Jean to be so emotionally weak, and, more importantly, it is her over-sentimental attitude toward the Covenanting martyrs that prejudices Archie against aspects of his own heritage. For Jean – in spite of her absurdly sensitive nature – marries Judge Weir, the antithesis of all she holds dear: “Nor could she blind herself to this, that had they lived in those days, Hermiston himself would have been numbered alongside of Bloody Mackenzie and the politic Lauderdale and Rothes, in the band of God’s immediate enemies” (89). Indeed, the two are total opposites, “ice and iron cannot be welded; and the points of view of the Justice-Clerk and Mrs. Weir were not less unassimilable” (91). In addition to being a “faithful minister” of the law, which would have pitted him against the Jean’s beloved Covenanters, Weir is, worse, an administer of judgments, a persecutor, a word synonymous with Jean’s “highest thought of wickedness” (89). In effect, Justice Weir’s whole personality – his mocking sense of humour, his low and at times obscene language, and his brutish manners – is wholly incompatible with his wife’s over-delicate sensibilities.

Out of this seemingly impossible union comes Archie, the inheritor of the paradoxical qualities of his mother and father. Though he is a complex character, Archie is trained from a child to value only his mother’s tender teachings; the world is “schematized for Archie by his mother” (91). Archie then is pitted against his father, but even his opposition to his father is founded on different reasons than his mother’s pious objections to her husband’s near blasphemous language and his legal vocation. Archie’s complaint is an aesthetic one, as we see when Archie confronts his father about the Duncan Jopp trial:

I was present while Jopp was tried. It was a hideous business. Father, it was a hideous thing! Grant he was vile, why should you hunt him with the same vileness equal to his own? It was done with glee – that is the word – you did it with glee; and I looked on, God help me! with horror. (113)

Archie's aesthetic objection to his father's "glee" translates into a moral judgment; Weir must be "vile" indeed for, according to Archie, his vileness equals that of the pathetic criminal Jopp. Yet Archie's aesthetic and moral objection to his father's "hideous" demeanor does not carry moral weight with the judge, and Archie is silenced by Weir's retort, "Heedious! I never gave twa thoughts to heediousness, I have no call to be bonny" (113). Stevenson, here, is quite sympathetic to the "Hanging Judge," as the force of Weir's retort makes clear; for though the judge's aesthetic values are not those of his son, Stevenson shows that are they not morally invalid because of this difference. Stevenson gives Weir both coarse and low broad Scots attributes and all the dignity that accompanies the Justice-seat.³ Moreover, the

³ Weir was modeled on the historic Lord Braxfield, a legend of eighteenth-century Scottish courts. Braxfield was a judge who was proud of his "exaggerated Scotch" and held a "contemptuous disdain for all natures less coarse than his own"; he despised "the growing improvement of manners, he shocked the feelings even of an age" (Henry Cockburn quoted in Letley, Introduction xix). David Daiches, too, in his study of Scotland's national institutions, comments on Lord Braxfield's public persona: he was

a man of high principle with a stern sense of duty and a strong dislike of all the rhetorical frills with which advocates were in the habit of dressing up the plain logic of a legal situation. He was a hard worker, a shrewd and honest lawyer, and a man of uncompromising directness of manner. Like Auchinleck, he made no attempt to modify his native Scots speech on the bench, and sometimes seems to have gone further and deliberately exaggerated it. (*Paradox* 64)

judge's uncompromising adherence to his own values infuses his character with strength and nobility. Undoubtedly, Weir holds in disdain the aesthetic delicacy of his son, yet to an even greater degree Archie holds in contempt his father's broad Scots behaviour. In particular, Archie is angered and ashamed by his father's "low, gross accent, the low, foul mirth" (98):

I do not love my father; I wonder sometimes if I do not hate him. [...] You [Glenalmond] know the way he talks? You do not talk so, yet you can sit and hear him without shuddering, and I cannot. My soul is sick when he begins with it; I could smite him in the mouth. (119)

Here again, Archie conflates his aesthetic values and his moral code; for he claims that his *soul* is sickened by the way his father talks.

Archie's aesthetic rejection of his father's Scots differs from that of his mother's religious objections to her husband's language, which, at times, "echoed in her tender ears like blasphemy" (87). For Archie's personality, despite his outward delicacy, is inherently different from his mother's: "The woman's quietism and piety passed on to his different nature undiminished; but whereas in her it was a native sentiment, in him it was only an implanted dogma. Nature and the child's pugnacity at times revolted" (90). Archie, then, is a paradoxical character, for though he has inherited his mother's "shivering delicacy" (98), he is also naturally much like his father, pugnacious and strong-willed. Of course, this similarity is something Archie unreservedly refuses to recognize; his "pugnacity" is strictly genteel; that is, only "in

Exaggerated indeed, for, as Daiches goes on to note, Braxfield's "liveliness" and "lack of dignity" on the bench was deliberate: "his coarseness was part of his refusal to come to terms with the genteel Establishment of the *literati*" (65).

the playing fields, and amongst his own companions” does he repay “a coarse expression with a blow” (98). Yet in spite of his contempt for his father and his desire to distance himself from the judge, “among his contemporaries Hermiston’s son was thought to be a chip of the old block” (100). As Archie presides over the Speculative Society meeting, for example, he angrily hands out fines to his peers, in much the same way as the “Hanging Judge” doles out his sentences from the bench, and “he little thought, as he did so, how he resembled his father, but his friends remarked upon it, chuckling” (107). Further, when Archie announces his condemnation against the hanging of Duncan Jopp, the voice through which he speaks is exactly like his father’s: “‘I denounce this as a God-defying murder,’ he shouted; and his father, if he must have disclaimed the sentiment, might have owned the stentorian voice with which it was uttered” (106). Archie, then, shares his father’s demeanor and voice, two of the very things he most despises. This is a paradox Edwin Eigner explores in his discussion of the novel:

If this is a contradiction, it is at least a familiar one. His outcry at the execution is Archie’s formal rejection of his father, and as we have noted, such dissociations are always accompanied by a movement of character in the very direction of the thing rejected. It is fitting that Archie should most resemble his father when he is in the act of disclaiming him. (225)

Thus we see that the young and the old Hermiston are not as different as Archie would like to believe; his nature is divided, but he refuses to recognize his father’s unrefined characteristics in himself.

Emotionally, the father and son are also similar, for neither one allows himself to become emotionally vulnerable. Weir, especially, as the harsh judge, permits no emotional sentiments to enter into his language, even when his feelings are, in fact, quite strong: "As time went on, the tough and rough old sinner felt himself drawn to the son of his loins and sole continuator of his new family, with softness of sentiment that he could hardly credit and was wholly impotent to express" (101). Archie, likewise, remains emotionally aloof from his peers throughout the text, as Frank Innes's joke illustrates: "I know Weir, but I never met Archie" (100). Paradoxically, each Hermiston's real emotion is hidden behind his language. Weir uses "rough japes" and low Scots expressions of contempt – "Hout!" for example – to express himself; even as he looks upon his dead wife the most sensitive words he can manage, uttered, nevertheless, in a "most unusual gentleness of tone", are, "Puir bitch" (95). Archie, on the other hand, uses refined English to escape from the vulnerability that accompanies deep emotions, and thus illustrates the Scots "tendency to extreme and opposed reactions, the battle between the Head and the Heart" (Gifford, "Myth" 221). As Letley points out, Archie's use of English is indicative of the emotional aridity of the Scottish "heart-head" duality: "English is associated with a carefully-contrived safety, a fear of and retreat from deep emotion, an emphasis on the aesthetic and a veneer of conventional politeness" (Letley, Introduction xxi).

Yet Stevenson does not present English solely as an emotionally arid language that is used maintain a social varnish, and neither is Scots exclusively represented as the "language of one's heart". Stevenson shows Scots to be an ambiguous language,

for Weir uses its broadest expressions to mask his soft sentiments, his “puir bitch”, for example. In fact, Weir’s deepest emotion is expressed, we are told, nonverbally:

“When you had the measles, Mr Archibald, you had them gey and ill; and I thought you were going to slip between my fingers. [...] Well, your father was anxious. [...] One day I came to him: ‘Hermiston,’ said I, ‘there’s a change. He never said a word, just glowered at me (if ye’ll pardon the phrase) like a wild beast. ‘A change for the better,’ said I. And I distinctly heard him take his breath.” The doctor left no opportunity for anticlimax; [...] “Distinctly.” (110)

On the other hand, the adult Archie, at rare times, lapses into his mother’s gentle use of Scots to express his most profound emotions, as we see through his subtle linguistic shift while with the Lord Glenalmond: “‘Let and old man say it, for once, and not need to blush: I love you like a son.’ There came a sudden sharp sound in Archie’s throat. ‘Ay,’ he cried, ‘and there it is! Love! Like a son!’” (119). Thus since both languages are used to express different emotional registers, the linguistic tension Stevenson explores in this novel relates to the thematic focus of the text: the importance of accepting complexity and ambiguity.

The oppositional aspects of Scotland’s turbulent past that define the identities of Archie’s parents resurface again as Archie wrestles with his own convictions, duties, and self-identity. After Archie visits his father’s courtroom where he witnesses the “glee” with which his father condemns the hapless Jopp to the gallows, he wanders through the Edinburgh streets as if in a dream, ruminating on the city’s

romantic past and lamenting that his vision of his world can no longer be sustained in light of his horror at his father's cruel judgment:

Archie passed by his friends in the High Street with incoherent words and gestures. He saw Holyrood in a dream, remembrance of its romance awoke in him and faded; he had a vision of the old radiant stories of Queen Mary and Prince Charlie, of the hooded stag, of the splendour of crime, the velvet and bright iron of the past; and dismissed them with a cry of pain. He lay and moaned in the Hunter's Bog, and the heavens were dark above him and the grass of the field an offence. (105)

The fact that Archie dismisses his cherished "old radiant stories" testifies to his hitherto romantic interpretation of Scotland's history, which underlies his distaste for his father's grossness. For Archie has never accepted his inheritance of the less romantic episodes in Scottish history, and the realization that they are part of his identity and culture is horrifying to the young Hermiston: "'This is my father, [...] I draw my life from him' [...] He thought of flight, and where was he to flee to? Of other lives, but was there any life worth living in this den of savage and jeering animals?" (105).

Archie's revelation, however, that Scotland is not the beautiful, chivalric place he dreamt of, nor the simple good-evil construction of his mother's imagination, does not yet spur him to accept his father's broad Scots aesthetics as part of his own heritage. Indeed, he becomes even more opposed to the Judge's values and embraces outright rebellion:

It seemed to him, from the top of his nineteen years' experience, as if he were marked at birth to be the perpetrator of some signal action, to set back fallen Mercury, to overthrow the usurping devil that sat, horned and hoofed, on her throne. Seductive Jacobin figments, which he had often refuted at the Speculative, swam up in his mind and startled him as with voices: and he seemed to himself to walk accompanied by an almost tangible presence of new beliefs and duties.

(105)

Archie's new identification with French revolutionary thought sets him at even greater odds with his father; for Weir, if the law allowed, would be "all day in Court haanging Raadicals" (86). Weir interprets, and perhaps rightfully so, Archie's disapproval of capital punishment as both an affront to him as a judge and an act of disloyalty to Scotland. Further, Archie believes himself to be ordained for some "signal action": to "overthrow the usurping devil". Just who or what the "devil" is here the text does not explicitly make clear; we can infer, though, from his disgust with the "den of savage and jeering animals" in which he believes himself to live that both the judge and the legal system he represents – the whole of Scottish values, in other words – is what Archie finds so offensive. In effect, then, Archie rejection of his father's manner and values is indicative of the inter-generational differences of early nineteenth-century Scotland, and thus Archie's filial rebellion is shown to be also political and cultural.

Archie identifies with bourgeois values and romantic ideals; it is perhaps not surprising, then, that his desire to belong to a culture that shares his sensibilities

begins to colour even his perception of the judge. He thus imagines his coarse father as a romantic figure. True, Weir does have an emotional interiority that remains hidden throughout the much of the text, and we can infer that he will ultimately realize that his strict adherence to the law is emotionally and psychically destructive. For, as Sidney Colvin's note on the continuation of the novel explains, Archie would have been tried for the murder of Frank Innes before his father, and as a strict servant of the law, Weir would have found his son guilty and condemned him to death. This conflict, however, between the judge's heart and head, "would have been too much for the Lord Justice-Clerk," and thus he would subsequently die "of the shock" (196). Even so, the gentle characteristics Archie comes to imagine his father to have is wishful thinking at best and an affront to the elder Weir's real nature at worst:

He had never dreamed this sire of his, this aboriginal antique, this adamantine Adam, had even so much of a heart as to be moved in the least degree for another – and that other himself, who had insulted him! With the generosity of youth, Archie was instantly under arms upon the other side: had instantly created a new image of Lord Hermiston, that of a man who was all iron without and all sensibility within. The mind of the vile jester, the tongue that had pursued Duncan Jopp with unmanly insults, the unbeloved countenance that he had known and feared for so long, were all forgotten; and he hastened home, impatient to confess his misdeeds, impatient to throw himself on the mercy of this imaginary character. (110-111)

Imaginary indeed, for if the Hanging Judge has any hint of the attributes Archie here imagines, they are far less a factor in Weir's nature than the gruff, no-nonsense Scots qualities he exhibits throughout the text. The narrator even comments on the fact that love is a foreign concept to the conscious mind of the judge: "He did not try to be loved, he did not care to be; it is probable the very thought of it was a stranger to his mind" (97). This, of course, is a fact that Archie always realizes on some level and one that Stevenson emphasizes, as the first line of the paragraph that follows this fantasy of Archie's shows: "He was not to be long without a rude awakening" (111).

Yet although Archie experiences a "sudden revulsion of hope" the moment he encounters his father, Weir's actual reaction to his rebellion causes Archie to, albeit grudgingly, recognize the judge's nobility: "Lord Hermiston was coarse and cruel; and yet the son was aware of a bloomless nobility, an ungracious abnegation of the man's self in the man's office. At every word, this sense of the greatness of Lord Hermiston's spirit struck home" (115). Moreover, although at this point Archie still tries to separate himself from his own heritage, his initial conviction that he had the duty to dethrone the "usurping devil" who had stolen the Scotland's chivalry and honour from some imagined, mythic past is tempered with the recognition that he has no right to judge the actions of his father, and thus of established Scottish codes: "Who had called him to judge his father in these precarious and high questions? The office was usurped" (109). We can see here, then, the early stages of Archie's acceptance of his father as he is, and his recognition of nobility in Scotland's rough broad Scots values. The use of the word "usurp" in these passages is interesting, too, for it speaks to the internal struggle for dominance between Archie's respect for this

father and his contempt of him. Further, if both the values Weir represents, those of Scotland's past, and Archie's modern politics are "usurpers," neither one has legitimacy. Archie's paradoxical perceptions of Scotland's rightful legal and political codes thus express the tension between past and present; we see through Archie's language that neither one has the authority to rule on its own. Archie's flaw is that he continues to separate these inter-generational value systems and fails to recognize that both have a legitimate, though complex, authority. In other words, these seemingly warring value structures have not usurped each other, but are both inheritors of the same throne.

Archie, though, remains unconscious of this ambiguity. Stevenson shows that Archie must realize that he and his father are not as different as he imagines, and moreover, that his father is not just the barbaric judge that Archie believes him to be but also the "industrious, dispassionate student" (108). Interestingly, it is Archie's beloved Lord Glenalmond, the antithesis of Weir, who first encourages Archie to respect the idiosyncrasies of his father. Glenalmond, the father Archie wants, suits Archie's aesthetic ideal: "His exquisite disparity with any of his fellow-guests, his appearance as of an artist and an aristocrat stranded in rude company, riveted the boy's attention" (99). Indeed, Glenalmond represents all that, in Archie's view, is sensible and refined in Scotland's past.⁴ Thus even though Glenalmond shares none of the Scots qualities that

⁴ In the text he is "compared with the statue of Forbes of Culloden in the Parliament House" (99) which links him, like Weir with the Lord Braxfield, with a legend of the Scottish judicial system: the tolerant and fair Lord Advocate who "transformed the courts of law into the courts of justice" (Letley, Notes 218).

Weir proudly advertises – his language, even, is classic: Latin and elegant English, so opposite the broad Scots of Weir – he is connected to the past in a way that Archie, at this point, is not. Glenalmond is himself, in many ways, a paradoxical figure:

“emaciated,” but with a remnant of the “fire of youth” in his eyes (99), a “pale, kingly figure” (123). He is an advocate for tolerance, if not sincere acceptance, of Weir’s language and manners and, further, is able to appreciate Weir’s and even the criminals’ points of view:

“I sometimes wonder whether you and I – who are a pair of sentimentalists – are quite good judges of plain men. [...] *Fair* judges, I mean,” replied Glenalmond. “Can we be just to them? [...] Is it any less difficult to judge of a good man or of a half-good man, than of the worst criminal at the bar? And may not each have relevant excuses?”
(121)

Glenalmond is indeed a significant and exemplary figure. For though he is emblematic of all that is refined, progressive, and noble, he has tremendous respect for, and is even a “little afraid” of, Justice Weir, and he is the first person to encourage Archie to feel the same: “I would like it very ill if my young friend were to misjudge his father. He has all the Roman virtues: Cato and Brutus were such; I think a son’s heart might well be proud of such an ancestry of one” (100). Indeed, in spite of his “aristocratic” air, Glenalmond actually comes close to celebrating Weir’s manner by acknowledging its lively nature:

You seem to have been very much offended because your father talks a little sculdudery after dinner, which it is perfectly licit for him to

do, and which (although I am not very fond of it myself) appears to be entirely an affair of taste. [...] And, do you know, I wonder if he might not have as good an answer against you and me? We say we sometimes find him *coarse*, but I suspect he might retort that he finds us always dull. (120)

Thus Archie's aesthetic snobbery is exposed and chastised by one who shares his aesthetic values, no less. In fact, Archie's bourgeois sensibilities are labeled "dull" when compared to the rather more colourful tastes of his father.

Interestingly, Stevenson moves from Glenalmond's parlor to a description of the lands that surround the Hermiston estate without any other mention of Weir or of Archie's inner thoughts about his relationship with his father. This may seem strange, for up until this time the narrative has been dominated by the father-son tension. Yet through this shift in focus from the urban familial narrative to the lowland countryside and a country romance, Stevenson is able to explore aspects of the "Scottish dissociation of sensibility" in greater depth. Archie's perception of the Scottish land shows that he is, if only unconsciously and intuitively, beginning to understand and embrace the complexity of his Scottish identity. Archie, suddenly and instinctively, recognizes the duality in nature, and more importantly, finds this duality beautiful:

A tuft of primroses was blooming hard by the leg of an old, black table tombstone, and he stopped to contemplate the random apologue. They stood forth on the cold earth with a trenchancy of contrast; and he was struck with a sense of incompleteness in the day, the season, and the

beauty that surrounded him – the chill there was in the warmth, the gross black clods about the opening primroses, the damp earthy smell that was everywhere intermingled with the scents. (148)

Here, Archie sees the double character of the land: it is simultaneously both warm and cold, both beautiful and unsightly, both dead and alive. Yet this contrast, this “incompleteness,” adds to the imaginative force of the scene; for indeed it is this very contrast that Archie finds so beautiful. Moreover, the beauty Archie sees here is analogous to the aesthetic tensions that characterize his relationship with his father: the hardness of the stone, the “grossness” of the clods, the chill in the air and the earthy smell is set against the blossoming primroses, the warmth of the sun, and the gentle spring scents. The paradox, of course, is that when these oppositional elements are brought together, there exists an incompleteness, yet it is this incomplete quality which makes the scene so full and rich: “everything’s alive!” cries Archie as he lingers in field outside the church (147).

This moment in the kirk-yard connects Archie to the land in some mysterious, even mystical, way. Indeed, as he reflects on the kirk-yard scene he experiences a feeling of spiritual and imaginative transcendence, a transcendence that is rooted, however, in the physical world, in the Scottish soil and his own body:

Brightness of azure, clouds of fragrance, a tinkle of falling water and singing birds, rose like exhalations from some deeper, aboriginal memory, that was not his, but belonged to the flesh on his bones. His body remembered; and it seemed to him that his body was in no way gross, but ethereal and perishable like a strain of music; and he felt for

it an exquisite tenderness as for a child, an innocent, full of beautiful instincts and destined to an early death. (148)

Archie's body remembers the Scots past, and through this physical-imaginative remembering, he is connected to Scotland in a way that transcends the heart-head dichotomy: this is something much deeper, a primal and intuitive belonging. There is a rich paradox here too, for at the moment Archie's physicality – the "flesh on his bones" – is connected to his memory, he feels his body is ethereal, fleeting and perishable, "like a strain of music". Further, as Archie falls in love with the young Christina, and thereby comes to understand the depth and power of his emotions, his understanding of the beauty in the fleetingness of his own life is expanded to include the transient nature of his ancestor's lives:

everything appears so brief, and fragile and exquisite, that I am afraid to touch life. We are here so short a time; and all the old people before us – Rutherfords of Hermiston, Elliotts of the Cauldstaneslap – that were here but a while since riding about keeping up a great noise in this quiet corner – making love too, and marrying – why, where are they now? It's deadly commonplace, but, after all, the commonplaces are the great poetic truths. (164)

We can see here Archie's changing attitudes towards his place in Scottish history: whereas earlier in Edinburgh he lamented the fact that his glamorous vision of Scotland's past had been destroyed by his revelation of his father's "vileness" and his witness of the "murder" of Jopp, he now accepts that the commonplace nature of the shortness of human life is a "great poetic truth." Indeed, he feels that all

“commonplaces” are the “great poetic truths”. This, of course, is a paradox, and one that Archie at once understands and embraces. Moreover, as Archie accepts of the commonplace nature of the fleetingness of time, he places himself within the context of his family heritage and thus becomes connected to his past in an affective and emotional way.

Archie’s spiritual and imaginative connection to the Scottish land undoubtedly contributes to his maturation into a successful character. Yet perhaps a more important factor in Archie’s acceptance of his own complexity is his relationship with the Hermiston housekeeper, Kirstie. Earlier we saw the emotional influence that the surrogate-father Glenalmond had on Archie. Glenalmond’s friendship with Archie, however powerful, is not as complex nor as emotionally significant as Archie’s relationship with the elder Kirstie. And Kirstie, even more than Glenalmond, is a paradoxical and ambiguous character. She is outwardly similar to judge Hermiston and shares the traits he most admires, for they are both “hard, handy, healthy, broad Scots folk, without a hair of nonsense to the pair of them” (88). Yet in spite of his interpretation of their kindred demeanors, Weir is misled in believing that Kirstie shares this same feeling of kinship and affection. In fact, he “would have been quite unprepared to learn that Kirstie hated him” (88). There is a seeming disparity, then, between Kirstie’s outward demeanor and her emotional interiority. Yet Stevenson does not portray Kirstie as an unhealthily divided character: she is complex, but whole. Kirstie’s paradoxical nature is further emphasized by the incongruity between her physical appearance and her life experience. As a hale, hardy Scots woman, Kirstie, one might assume, was “destined to be the bride of heroes and the mother of

their children” but “behold, by the iniquity of fate, she had passed through her youth alone, and drew near to the confines of age, a childless woman” (128).

More significant than these incongruities, though, is Kirstie’s apparently timeless and ageless nature: though she is “now over fifty”, she is still “long of limb, and still straight of foot, deep-breasted, robust-loined, her golden hair not yet mingled with any trace of silver” (128). This youth in an older woman is a sign of Kirstie’s ambiguity, for she at once has the mind of a “daft auld wife” and yet blushes “with the innocent consciousness of a child” (185). She has the heart of girl but, as she struggles with her divided loyalties toward Archie and her niece, feels as though she is poised on her death-bed:

And again she had a vision of herself, the day over for her old-world tales and local gossip, bidding farewell to her last link with life and brightness and love; and behind and beyond, she saw but the blank butt-end where she must crawl to die. Had she come to the lees? she, so great, so beautiful, with a heart as fresh as a girl’s and strong as womanhood? It could not be, and yet it was so; and for a moment her bed was horrible to her as the sides of the grave. (184)

Of course, Kirstie is nothing more than a mortal woman, but the language she uses to describe herself imaginatively links her with ages long past. Moreover, there is an eternal quality to her character, as if she somehow imaginatively transcends the temporal limits of her actual life; for as she tells Archie about her romantic love, of many years ago, the imagery she uses connects her to ancient history:

Deary me, but it's lang syne! Folk have dee'd sinsyne and been buried, and are forgotten, and bairns been born and got merit and got bairns o' their ain. Sinsyne woods have been plantit, and have grawn up and are bonny trees, and the joes sit in their shadow, and sinsyne auld estates have changed hands, and there have been wars and rumours of wars on the face of the earth. (187)

Kirstie emphasizes her "eternal" nature and "ancient" experiences while talking with Archie in order to infuse her advice to him with authority. Her moral power is grounded in her long experience – it is embedded in the past. Indeed, Kirstie sees herself as a part of an ancient Scottish tradition, for she carries on the feudal attitudes and behaviour of a loving and loyal clanswoman. Yet Archie, here, is compelled by her advice. For even though Kirstie's language and old-fashioned ways may link her with Weir, her admonishments toward Archie are spoken with love. Kirstie's role, then, as loving clanswoman has value for Archie because it speaks to his emotional sensitivity and, moreover, it connects him to an aspect of Scotland's past that resonates with his romantic ideals.

It is thus Kirstie's feudal and familial love that is central to her relationship with Archie and which, in time, cause him to let down his linguistic and emotional safeguards. Although Archie grows close to the housekeeper, Kirstie, like Weir, is emotionally isolated from others: she was "practically excluded (like a lightkeeper on his tower) from the comforts of human association" (128-129). Also similar to Weir is Kirstie's quarrelsome demeanor: "Hasty, wordy, and wrathful, she had a drawn quarrel with most of her neighbours, and with the others not much more than armed

neutrality” (128). Yet even though Kirstie keeps others at an emotional distance, her emotional isolation does not reflect any lack in her character. Kirstie is self-contained and is represented as a whole rounded character; for we see through her relationship with Archie that she is, unlike Hermiston, both aware of her deep emotions and is able to share them, in her way, with Archie. Indeed, Kirstie is open to the experience of deep emotion, for when Archie comes to live with her, Kirstie’s emotions awake into a most powerful force:

Her passion, for it was nothing less, entirely filled her. [...] I have said her heart leaped – it is the accepted phrase. But rather, when she was alone in any chamber of the house, and heard his foot passing on the corridors, something in her bosom rose slowly until her breath was suspended, and as slowly fell again with a deep sigh, when the steps had passed and she was disappointed of her eyes’ desire. This perpetual hunger and thirst of his presence kept her always on the alert. (129, 130)

We have already seen the disparity between Kirstie’s maternal spirit and her childless reality, between her perpetual youth and her “ancient” experiences, but more important is the duality between her emotions and her outward actions. Though Kirstie loves Archie with a fierce love – with “the loyalty of a clanswoman, the hero-worship of a maiden aunt, and the idolatry due to a god” (129) – she does not let Archie see her emotional depth until the end of the text, and even then her deepest emotions are translated from those of a lover into a feudal servant’s affection for her lord. For the nature of Kirstie’s feelings are shown to be more powerful than the

mere "loyalty of a clanswoman": Kirstie "hungers" for Archie's presence, her breathing is suspended when he walks by, and she idolizes him like a god. This is the language of passionate, romantic love. Of course, Kirstie realizes that any romance with Archie would be absurd, and so expresses herself only through the language appropriate for an affectionate, elderly servant. Yet the division between Kirstie's inner emotions and outward expression of them is not psychically destructive, as this same bind is with so many other Stevenson characters, for Kirstie is both aware and accepting of this paradox. This is not to say that Kirstie's acceptance of emotional complexity comes easily; it is, in fact, represented as a battle: "She lay tossing in bed that night, besieged with feverish thoughts. There were dangerous matters pending, a battle was toward, over the fate of which she hung in jealousy, sympathy, fear, and alternate loyalty and disloyalty to either side" (184). Yet when the moment comes for her to confront Archie, in an instant, and almost with an ironic shrug of her shoulders as she looks at her reflection in the mirror, Kirstie embraces her paradoxical loyalties and emotions and rises from her night of "battle" "all woman" (185).

Thus we see through Kirstie the paradox of being whole only by being divided. Moreover, we see the power of such a complex character. For Archie responds to his broad Scots housekeeper with uncharacteristic emotional depth, as evidenced in his lapse into the Scots language that is a signifier of his deep emotions. Although we know that Archie associates Scots with his father's vulgarities, and that this was the genteel attitude towards Scots after Scotland's union with England, it was also the language of Archie's childhood since Scots was equally his gentle mother's language. Letley, in her study of the Scots language in fiction, notes that by

Stevenson's time, there was a movement in fiction from associating "Scots and defect, to Scots and integrity" ("Language" 332). Letley further argues that in *Weir*, Scots has an emotional and imaginative force that English does not (Introduction xxiii). We see this force expressed through the voice of the narrator as his language is overwhelmed by the emotional, dramatic, and linguistic power of Kirstie's tale of her "four black brothers". In this passage, even the Anglicised narrator begins to use Scots words and expressions to describe the tale: "That was a race with death that the laird rode! In the mirk night, with his broken bridle and his head swimming" (134), "the four brothers rode it as if Auld Hornie were behind and Heaven in front" (135). Here, Stevenson's use of what he termed "'intermittent' Scots," shows that Scots, in tension with English, has the "greatest artistic effect" ("Language" 333). Thus when Kirstie pleads with Archie to leave off seeing Christina for fear of the social repercussions that their covert meetings might bring, Archie responds in Scots since only it has the force to express his profound emotions:

"Excuse a daft wife that loves ye, and that kenned your mither. And
for
his name's sake keep yersel' frae inordinate desires [...]"

"Ay, but Kirstie, my woman, you're asking me ower much at last,"
said Archie, profoundly moved, and lapsing into the broad Scots.
"Ye're asking what nae man can grant ye, what only the Lord of
heaven can grant ye if He see fit. Ay! And can even He? I can
promise ye what I shall do, and you can depend on that. But how I
shall feel – my woman, that is long past thinking of!" (188-189)

This paragraph sees Archie speaking in the “language of his heart,” yet paradoxically he is using Scots to promise that he will act on duty rather than on his true feelings for Christina. Further, even though Kirstie’s emotional outburst is provoked by her fear that Archie will wear the “flinty countenance of Hermiston” (188) if he acts against his true feelings, she still asks him to do precisely this and follow his duty. And as a final paradox, Archie’s promise leave off seeing Christina is spoken in broad Scots; thus the language at once shows Archie’s emotions yet simultaneously, both through Kirstie’s thoughts of Weir and Archie’s vow to follow duty, it links him with his Scots-speaking father.

In this novel, then, Stevenson is illustrating not only the ambiguity of an admirable Scottish character, but is also showing the essential complexity of the Scots language. It is not simply the language of “the heart,” for, as we have seen, Weir uses it to mask his deep emotions, and Archie, albeit with emotion, uses it to express his duty. Indeed, Stevenson, as Letley points out, understood the stereotype, due largely to the sentimental Kailyard novels, which saw Scots as an unambiguously sentimental language. Stevenson works with this simple categorization of Scots in other texts and for thematic purposes; in *The Master of Ballantrae*, for example, James knowingly uses Scots, an emotive language, as an effective strategy to manipulate the Durrisdeer family (Letley, “Language” 333): “He had laid aside even his cutting English accent, and spoke with the kindly Scots tongue, that set a value on affectionate words” (83). Thus the tension Stevenson creates in this text, not just between Scots and English, but also between Archie’s emotional use of Scots and the coarse, emotionally aloof Scots of Weir illustrates the paradoxical nature of the Scots language. Yet as we have

seen through Archie's perception of the Scottish landscape, it is in paradox where beauty and history are most profoundly felt and understood. Likewise, this linguistic paradox expresses the complexity and depth of the Scottish heart and mind.

In *The Silverado Squatters* Stevenson describes a Scots' relationship to his enigmatic country:

Scotland is indefinable; it has no unity except upon the map. [...] And yet somewhere, deep down in the heart of each one of us, something yearns for the old land and the old kindly people. Of all mysteries of the human heart this is perhaps the most inscrutable. (210)

Archie too experiences this mystery as he begins to understand his fleeting role in Scotland's complex history and culture. And through his relationship with Kirstie, Archie begins to see the beauty in and power of the older Scottish values and language, as evidenced by his emotional response to his complex and loving housekeeper. Stevenson shows through Archie's experience that

the sophisticated, the genteel, the bourgeois and respectable, and perhaps the Anglicised voice of Victorian Scotland is constantly undercut by an older, rougher, and often vernacular assertion that the professed new and improved identity is not the real essence of the country. (Gifford, Introduction 8)

Eigner argues that it is fitting that "*Weir of Hermiston* was left unfinished, without a solution, for Stevenson had no solution to the problem of duality to impose on his fiction" (227). Indeed, in another paradox, perhaps this lack of a solution to the problem of duality is the only solution. Stevenson shows that it is in the tension of

searching for meaning that true understanding and beauty is located, and that this ambivalent position speaks to the national character more than any clear-cut answer to the problem of modern Scottishness could ever suggest.

Conclusion: Towards the New Cosmopolitan Future

Although Stevenson was a popular and important writer in his day, the modern academic community has largely ignored Stevenson's fiction, with the notable exception, of course, of the much analyzed *Jekyll and Hyde*. Recently, however, his writing has begun to gain critical attention, for it is not only well crafted and thematically rich, but is also remarkably modern in its concerns. Stevenson was a global traveler: he spent time on the European continent, in America, and finally settled on the island of Samoa in the South Seas. And through his experiences with different cultures and as a witness to the effects of colonization on indigenous peoples, Stevenson not only recognized the value of maintaining a connection with one's cultural heritage, he insisted on its necessity. In this way, Stevenson was not only a progressive thinker of the late-Victorian era, his ideals also reflect the values of our contemporary society. Further, Stevenson's insistence on the importance of accepting moral ambiguity and even incorporating paradox into one's self-identity in order to be a psychically healthy and unified individual speaks to values of our modern, pluralistic society. For today questions of national identity and allegiances and constructions of self remain at the forefront of critical thought, as the work of critics such as, for example, Homi K. Bhabha, Slavoj Zizek and Julia Kristeva testify. In her essay "Might Not Universality Be... Our Own Foreignness?", Kristeva's vision of a new cosmopolitanism is based on the argument that "we are all foreigners, we are divided" since our unconscious is always a stranger to our conscious selves (181). Yet "by recognizing *our* uncanny strangeness," Kristeva goes on to state, "we shall neither suffer from it nor enjoy it from the outside. The foreigner is within me, hence

we are all foreigners. If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners” (192). The paradoxical nature of Kristeva’s argument here has much in common with what Stevenson shows in his texts: that if one recognizes the strangeness and irrational in him or herself, others – and most notably in Stevenson the others of one’s cultural heritage – cease to be foreign, since aspects of the strange past are still present in the individual and national unconscious. Kristeva and Stevenson, then, show that accepting that foreignness as familiar is the only way to achieve personal, national, and even global wholeness; for as Kristeva notes, the “ethics of psychoanalysis,” the awareness of the strangeness in oneself, “implies a politics: it would involve a cosmopolitanism of a new sort that, cutting across governments, economies, and markets, might work for a mankind whose solidarity is founded on the consciousness of its unconscious” (192).

Stevenson’s works have specific relevance to contemporary Scotland as well; for the Scottish nation is still wrestling with the affects of the British Union. True, in 1999 the Scottish Parliament reconvened for the first time since 1707, and Scotland now has limited legislative power. Yet the cultural insecurities created by the domination of Anglicised values and language are still prevalent today. Indeed, in the fiction Alasdair Gray, for example, duality remains a major thematic concern. This is seen in his complex treatment of self-identity in the epic novel *Lanark*, itself a divided novel which sees one character struggle with his own identity and weaknesses in two completely different yet parallel worlds, and also in Gray’s realist short story “You,” which explores the contemporary dynamic between the wealth of England and the relative shabbiness of Scotland through the tale of a short-lived love affair:

“Tension. The groom’s family are English, new here, trying not to show they are richer, feel superior to the bride’s people, the Scots, the natives” (60). Gray’s fiction shows that Scotland is still wrestling with its own national identity. Gray’s answer to questions of self and nation is, in Stevenson-like fashion, to embrace ambiguity and one’s own unconscious strangeness in order to successfully navigate one’s experience; as the conclusion to his short story collection states, “I awoke, and saw it was a dream, though not entirely” (“Mister Meikle” 167).

Ultimately, Stevenson’s solution to the “problems” of Scotland’s duality and the Scottish paradox is to see these very “problems” as the solution; in other words, just as one can only achieve psychic unity by embracing one’s complexity, Scotland can only be nationally whole by accepting its divisions.

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