

**ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S SOUTH SEAS WRITING:
ITS PRODUCTION AND CONTEXT
WITHIN THE VICTORIAN STUDY OF CULTURE**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is split into two parts. The first part investigates the production, reception, and reconstruction of Robert Louis Stevenson's South Seas writing during his travels there in the years 1888-91, and its subsequent publication as *In the South Seas* in 1896. The second part concentrates on the findings that Stevenson makes during his Pacific travels in respect of the discourses of culture that shape the academic sciences of his day.

The writing that Stevenson produces for his 'Big Book' on the cultures of the Pacific Islands is among the least-examined of all his works. His book of travel, *In the South Seas*, is published posthumously and contains material that is presented in a way that is not intended by the author. In the present study the reasons for this situation are investigated, and the work that the author intends to produce is recovered on the basis of the plans, notes, and photographs which remain from the period of his travels. The reconstructed work is then compared with the published volume of *In the South Seas* to show the extent to which textual mutilation and re-editing has significantly altered the meaning of Stevenson's original writing. *In the South Seas* is a text that is re-shaped by his editor in order to satisfy what is seen as a Victorian readership's desire for sentimental voyaging.

Stevenson's writing is then read within the context of the Victorian study of culture as represented by Edward Burnett Tylor, to show his engagement with and criticism of some of Tylor's theories. Finally, the South Seas writing is framed within the perspective of Stevenson's reading of G W F Hegel, showing the extent to which his observations on Pacific landscapes and cultures are informed by Hegel's discussion of the antinomies of Immanuel Kant.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For providing help with obtaining the materials for this study I would like to thank Roger Swearingen, The University of London Central Research Fund, The Writers' Museum in Edinburgh, Yale University Library, The Huntington Library, and The State Library of New South Wales.

In helping with the revision of the text I would also like to thank the following people: Brigitte Resl, Sally Alexander, Vivienne Richmond, Richard Ambrosini, Howard Caygill, Paolo Cabrelli, Stuart Alley, and Anna Gust.

INTRODUCTION

Victorian Travel Writing

The intersection between travel writing and empire has been one of the most fruitful recent subjects of cultural history.¹ Partly, this has been on account of the vast amount of material – in the form of biographies, diaries, memoirs and serialisations – that is now available for study and interpretation; but also, the contemporary interest in cultural identity has informed attempts either to untangle or to situate meaning in the web of knowledge and desire that motivates travel writing. The historical credibility that is now granted to different forms of writing, not just traditional historical records, was gained through the work of historians ‘from below’ in the latter half of the twentieth century, such as Eric Hobsbawm and Carlo Ginzburg. By applying similar analytical approaches to the study of different kinds of written material from the past, they also helped to blur the distinction between historical testimony and literature.²

The trend towards the historical recognition of identities and national self-fashioning began in the wake of global decolonization and diasporic movements, from the middle to the latter half of the twentieth century. Partly inspired by these political movements, and also by the work of structuralist philosophers such as Michel Foucault, historians of literature such as Edward Said began to construct an alternative history of modernity to the story of unhindered progress which had come to be accepted as the ‘grand tradition’. In his influential book *Orientalism*, Said examined the European representations of the Orient during the centuries of exploration and colonization as a discourse of the Other, where the key unifying factor in all of these representations is the attempt to maintain a set of established differences between Europeans and non-Europeans.³ One of the consequences of his interpretation of works such as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of*

¹ An influential recent example is Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

² See for example the final chapter of Hobsbawm’s *Bandits* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1969) and also Ginzburg’s *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a sixteenth-century Miller* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

Darkness has been a renewed critical encounter with colonial fiction which is specifically concerned with identifying the links between texts and their social and cultural settings.

Besides fiction, other forms of expression have also been studied in their relationship to travel. The first attempt to write a history of the relationship between European artistic expression and exploration was made by Bernard Smith in his book *European Vision and the South Pacific*.⁴ In this work Smith argues that it was European exploration in the Pacific Islands, beginning in the time of James Cook, that brought artists into contact with the subjects of scientific study, through ethnology and zoology, which in turn helped to define the modern boundary between artistic and scientific depictions of the world. Several disciplines, including literature studies, history, and philosophy, have therefore contributed to the present understanding of how the experience of travel is figured in different ways in writing.

Travel writing is by its very nature provisional. Written, in theory, whilst the writer is in transit, and without the deep understanding of a place that is available to the indigenous inhabitant or the broader cultural perspective of the scholar, travel writers rarely have the opportunity to be accurate or to consider the ideological implications of their words. Nevertheless, across a broad span of time certain characteristics of European travel writing have been discovered. The Orientalist discourse of colonial-era travel writing involves the brutalising of a foreign landscape and its inhabitants. This is to ensure the point is made that, without the presence of Europeans, the land described would be the site of chaos and disorder. In contrast to the ordered and rational mind of the European, surveying all that is before them with calm and poise, the perceived Other is either in decline and barbaric regression, or it is an empty space that is waiting to be put to efficient (cultivated) use by civilisation. According to this interpretation, travel writing is subservient to colonialist claims and legitimates colonial interests. Depending on the time

⁴ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, 2nd edn (London: Yale University Press, 1985). This text is also interesting because the writer draws much of the theoretical basis of his interpretation of images of the South Pacific from the 'Warburg School', which is discussed in more detail later in this introduction as well as in chapter 5.

and the place in which it is written, the travel narrative either clears ideological ground for a European takeover or justifies the exploitative actions of Europeans in the struggle for power and control over the remainder of the world.⁵

One of the main aims of the present study is to challenge this received view of colonial-era travel writing. The notion that all travel writing is somehow expressive of control and subjugation, or at the very least guilt, is firstly unrealistic because it is too generalising. Nothing about the past is ever so one-sided, as the work of modern historians invariably demonstrates. Furthermore, this hegemonic cultural representation of travel writing is impossible to prove since not every line of every travel narrative can be accounted for in this way. The methodological problem that is attached to this practical one is that such a view achieves the reverse of its intentions by simplifying and trying to dominate the past. In doing so, it claims another hollow victory for the present. In response to this view, the present work aims to restore to travel writing its provisionality and to thereby enrich the possibilities of its history.

The introductory theoretical overview will hopefully help to explain why the historical approach of this thesis is largely textual: it provides a closer and more rigorous examination of change and hesitancy than the comparative approach to the interpretation of travel writing. Textual analysis also better expresses how the concept of innovation is maintained against the tendency to think of all documents of an era as working according to the same basic assumptions and prejudices. It provides space for an experimental literature that rubs against the grain of conventional travel writing, unsettling its established truths. By focusing on the history of a specific text, in this case Robert Louis Stevenson's *In the South Seas*, it is possible to reflect more clearly on the aims and effects of travel writing within a specified historical period. Despite the emphasis placed on innovation and historical specificity, however, the purpose of this study is not to celebrate a moment of resistance to colonial exploitation, nor to praise the author's glimpses into the hybridity of social and cultural life in contact zones, although these are both considered

⁵ This is largely the thesis of Mary Louis Pratt in her *Imperial Eyes*, which is discussed in greater detail towards the end of this introduction.

within this interpretation of his work.⁶ Instead, the main aim of the present study is to identify and to work through the moments of doubt and uncertainty contained within the text, and to try to represent these moments within the history of Stevenson and his time.

After almost a century of critical neglect, Robert Louis Stevenson has re-emerged in recent years as an important writer of modernist colonial fiction.⁷ The reasons for his re-emergence are related to the development of postcolonial studies in the wake of *Orientalism* and other texts, and this has also meant that the majority of modern interpretations of Stevenson have come from the field of literary criticism rather than cultural history.⁸ The present study, while recognising the burgeoning academic interest in Stevenson and acknowledging the significance of his work, seeks to provide a fresh perspective to what has gone before. The reason for this is that, with the overwhelmingly 'positive' critical interpretations of the author that are now appearing, Stevenson risks becoming canonized and made safe for future generations. Whereas, this thesis argues that his work in the South Seas, whilst important for the history of travel narratives, also offers a problematic view of culture during the Victorian era that does not settle easily into the established modes and conventions of his interpreters. On the one hand, this is because the absence of cultural historical studies of Stevenson's work has meant that little research has been done on the author's involvement in the important scientific and theoretical debates of his day.⁹ These issues will be explored in detail in the later chapters of the present work. On the other hand, the lack of research into Stevenson's writings on the cultures of the South Seas has meant that most of the literary interest in his work has stayed clear of these writings, and it is one of the aims of the present study to better understand this relatively obscure area of his work.

⁶ See in particular the discussions of chapters 4 and 6.

⁷ For example see the recent study by Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1996) and also the collection of essays edited by Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury, *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

⁸ One of the notable exceptions has been Anne C. Colley's *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), which is discussed later in this introduction.

⁹ The exception which proves the rule is a recent essay by Julia Reid, 'Stevenson, Romance, and Evolutionary Psychology', in *Writer of Boundaries*, pp. 215-225.

Samoa and Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson is born on 13 November 1850 in Edinburgh into a family of engineers.¹⁰ Lighthouse engineering is his father's desired profession for his son, and continues to be so until 1871, when Stevenson decides to give up his vocational studies at the University of Edinburgh for a degree in Law. Stevenson's 'official' studies at the University are overshadowed by his interest in walking the streets of the city and avoiding classes, although in March 1869 he is elected to the University's Speculative Society, where he meets James Walter Ferrier, the son of one of Scotland's most influential contemporary philosophers (see chapter 6). At this early stage of his life there is not much available knowledge about Stevenson's reading habits except for the mostly literary subjects of the essays that he writes for the *Edinburgh University Magazine*. There are already many presentiments of his itinerant lifestyle, however: besides his passion for walking, his first trip to the Continent is with his family, at the age of thirteen. Later, in July 1872, he visits Germany with his friend Walter Simpson. Although he passes his preliminary examinations for the Scottish Bar in the Autumn of that year, this is to be his last serious involvement with the profession. In July 1873, after meeting Sidney Colvin, one of the prominent figures in the London literary scene, Stevenson takes his first step into the publishing world with the essay 'Roads' for *Portfolio* magazine in November. In 1874-75 he continues to travel and to produce essays for *Portfolio*. While staying at the artists' colony at Grez-Sur Loing in France he meets his future wife, Frances ('Fanny') Van de Grift Osbourne. Osbourne is an American who at the time of their meeting is unhappily married with three children.

In Summer 1876 Stevenson takes a canoe trip with his friend Walter Simpson in northern France. He writes about his exploits in his first book, *An Inland Voyage*, which is published in April 1878. In the Autumn of that year,

¹⁰ The biographical information that follows is taken from Alanna Knight, *The Robert Louis Stevenson Treasury* (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1985). See also the biographies of the author by Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 2 vols (London: Methuen, 1901); J C Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1952); and Jenni Calder, *RLS: A Life Study* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980).

he takes a walking tour through the Cevennes, and again publishes the record of his journey as *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* in June 1879. At this point he is beginning to acquire a reputation in London literary circles for being a writer of some promise, although his work is mainly restricted to travel writing as well as essays on literary figures such as Victor Hugo, Robert Burns, and Walt Whitman. In 1879, after a period of separation, he travels to meet Fanny Osbourne in California, where they marry in May 1880. This journey is later narrated in the books *The Amateur Emigrant* and *Across the Plains*. Three months later the couple return to Britain, where she meets his parents for the first time. For much of the following year, Stevenson lives with his new family of Fanny and her son, Lloyd, at Davos in Alpine Switzerland, where Stevenson is told that he must rest after suffering a period of illness. He returns to Scotland in the Summer of 1881 and begins to write a story which he originally titles 'The Sea-Cook'. The story is serialised in the relatively obscure *Young Folks* magazine. The serialisation proves to be a great success, however, and in 1883 it is republished as Stevenson's first novel, *Treasure Island*.

Late in 1884, after living for a period in the south of France, Stevenson and his wife return to Britain to live in Bournemouth, where the author becomes good friends with Henry James. His stay on the south coast is extremely productive. In 1885 he publishes the popular book of poems, *A Child's Garden of Verses*, and in the following year his burgeoning reputation expands to global fame with the publication of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in January and *Kidnapped* in July. In May 1887 he returns to Scotland to attend the funeral of his father, and in August his now extended family comprising of his mother, his wife and his stepson set sail for New York, where they settle at Saranac Lake. Early in 1888 the plan to tour and write about the Pacific Islands is made with Samuel S. McClure (see chapter 1), and in June the family depart from San Francisco for the South Seas. Between 1888 and 1890 they visit the Marquesas Islands, the Paumotus, Tahiti, Hawaii, the Gilberts, and many other smaller Pacific Islands, as well as Australia and New Zealand. Stevenson writes much of his Scottish historical novel the *Master of Ballantrae* during these voyages. After realising that his need for a warm climate will restrict him to the Pacific Islands for the

remainder of his life, Stevenson eventually decides to settle on the island of Upolu in Samoa, in October 1890. Here he builds a large estate at Vailima, where he lives with his family. In 1892 he publishes *Across the Plains*, the narrative of his first journey by train across the USA to visit Fanny Osbourne. In the same year, he also publishes his politically-motivated history of Samoa, *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa*.

In the Victorian era some of the most fraught struggles for metropolitan hearts and minds occur in the Pacific region. It is a part of the world whose events encourage broad commentary and speculation in Europe. The history of the Samoan Islands during this period will explain some of the reasons for the interest of the metropolitan populations. The intensification of sealing and whaling in the early decades of the nineteenth century leads to the growth of supply ports, such as Papeete in Tahiti and Apia in Samoa. It is the influence of subsequent generations of white traders rather than their value to the indigenous populations that makes them important towns.¹¹ A general store selling coconut oil is established by John Chauner Williams, son of the English missionary John Williams, in Apia in 1844¹². Twelve years later the Hamburg trading firm Johann Godeffroy and Son set up a base in the town (as it begins to do across the Pacific) producing and selling copra oil, which is a vital commodity throughout the Pacific Islands.¹³ The money that is made available by the Godeffroy company's presence in Apia supports the growth of other businesses in the port and its hinterland, maintaining the commercial stability that it lacks prior to their arrival.

As the port grows in stature it becomes the regular stopping-point of a Pacific-wide steamship line. Samoan land is bought by non-islanders as the volume of trade grows. With the rise in commercial activity comes the anticipation that one of the imperial powers will try to take the islands for themselves. After its unification in 1881, Germany makes efforts to claim

¹¹ See the essay by Caroline Ralston, 'The Beach Communities', in *Pacific Islands Portraits*, ed. by J W Davidson and Derek Scarr (Wellington: A H & A W Reed, 1970), pp. 77-93.

¹² John Williams of the London Missionary Society had arrived in Samoa in 1830, taking advantage of an auspicious moment in its history to establish the first Christian mission there. See: R P Gilson, *Samoa 1830 to 1900: The Politics of a Multicultural Community* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 69-70.

¹³ Copra oil is made from dried, pressed coconut flesh. For more information, see Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 142-3.

many Pacific territories, a process which leads rival foreign powers to respond in kind. In 1886, a declaration signed in Berlin between Germany and Britain divides the south and east of the Pacific Ocean between the respective powers. Under the terms of this declaration, Samoa is to form a neutral region. During the latter years of the century, a Samoan civil war is maintained with the aid of German, British and American support for their preferred native candidates for power. Foreign interest is not limited to trade: from a Western point of view, Samoa's geographical centrality at the height of cross-Pacific sea travel enables it to thrive as a stopover point for a growing number of tourists. Centuries of volcanic activity also provide Upolu, the island on the north coast of which Apia lies, with extremely rich soil for plantation agriculture.¹⁴ By the 1890s a middle-class white settler community establishes itself on the islands, among whom number Stevenson and his family.

In 1893, the first book form of Stevenson's Pacific novella 'The Beach of Falesá' is published in the collection *Island Nights' Entertainments*. In August, civil war breaks out in Samoa and results in the defeat and banishment of Mataafa, the Samoan leader to whom Stevenson had given his support. Stevenson's literary production is not disrupted, however, and the following Autumn sees the publication of *Catriona*, the sequel to *Kidnapped*. In 1894, the novel *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and a Quartette*, Stevenson's collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne, is published as a book. It is to be one of his most influential works, and over a century later critical speculation continues over whether it is the inspiration behind Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In 1894 Stevenson begins to write his Scottish romance, *Weir of Hermiston*. He dies of a cerebral haemorrhage before he can complete it, on 3 December 1894. The first complete edition of Stevenson's collected works, now known as the Edinburgh Edition, is edited by Sidney Colvin and published from 1894-98.¹⁵

Writing the Pacific Islands

¹⁴ Some of Samoa's chief modern exports (cocoa, cotton, rubber, coffee) were introduced by Europeans. See Gilson, pp. 1-8.

¹⁵ *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, 28 vols (London: Longmans Green, Cassell and Seeley, 1894-98).

By the time that Stevenson arrives in Samoa, the indigenous community has lost much of its former authority over the islands. The area is undergoing a period of transition: most of the political administration is carried out by Europeans, with the US eventually claiming the territory for itself in 1900. Stevenson describes European leadership in Samoa during the years he lives there (1890-1894) as 'this dance of folly and injustice and unconscious rapacity'.¹⁶ He believes that commercial motives are indistinguishable from governance on the islands, and during political disputes, of which there are many during his time, he tends to side with the indigenous groups that have the fewest ties with foreign powers.

Stevenson has already seen enough prior to arriving in Samoa to confirm his suspicions that the imperial war is being waged ruthlessly throughout the Pacific. From the Summer of 1888 he travels through the region collecting information and stories for a series of literary 'Letters' that he has been contracted to produce by his American agent, Samuel McClure. During his travels he also formulates the idea of producing a large book of anthropology and travel, to be titled 'The South Seas'. The reason for his ambitious plans is not difficult to guess. To his editor he writes in early June 1889,

The Pacific is a strange place, the nineteenth century only exists there in spots; all round, it is a no man's land of the ages, a stir-about of epochs and races, barbarisms and civilisations, virtues and crimes.¹⁷

For Stevenson, the Pacific Islands and its many cultures are a fascinating and complex place. The tone of his early letters and writing about the Pacific Islands expresses a sense of wonder and desire to name things almost as if for the first time. The idea for a large book is to some extent an expression of this desire in material form. With this in mind it is significant that criticism of Victorian travel literature has discovered in the aspiring nature of such work

¹⁶ Robert Louis Stevenson, *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. xiii.

¹⁷ *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), vi, 312-3.

the tendency to romanticise life in a way that makes props or subservient examples of non-metropolitan cultures.¹⁸

An example from *In the South Seas* shows the romantic, in this case melancholy, character of such writing. The author is listening to a young Marquesan mother as she tells him about the decline of her people ('Kanaques'):

'Ici pas de Kanaques, said she; and taking the baby from her breast, she held it out to me with both her hands. 'Tenez – a little baby like this; then dead. All the Kanaques die. Then no more.' The smile, and this instancing by the girl-mother of her own tiny flesh and blood, affected me strangely; they spoke of so tranquil a despair.¹⁹

The Marquesas are the first group of Pacific Islands to which Stevenson travels, and the descriptions of subsequently-visited island groups is far less romantic. In this instance, however, his perspective shows no sign of being different to other Victorian writers who are keen to stress the unfortunate fate of native people.²⁰ Death, conceived from a helpless point of view ('Tenez – a little baby like this'), indicates a mood of pessimism and resignation. It is a mood that has sometimes passed over into modern anthropology and cultural studies, having reached a kind of apotheosis, according to some critics, with Claude Levi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*.²¹ Reports of indigenous population decline such as those produced by writers in the era of high imperialism are

¹⁸ ...the romantic savage expressed the ideal of life as a voyage, a continuous movement towards an ever-receding goal. When this romantic ideal was applied to the fields of history and sociology it tended to produce a theory of social undulation – man's genius being progressively expressed in societies which, like organisms, are born, flourish, and decay.' Smith, *European Vision*, p. 331.

¹⁹ Stevenson, *In the South Seas* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1900), p. 25.

²⁰ Anne Maxwell has explained the meaning of such narratives in the following, helpful way: 'The "doomed" races were identified as relics of an earlier stage of humanity. They were considered valuable as shedding light on the path by which the fitter races progressed to civilization, but they were also judged too fragile to survive the effects of competition. It was calculated that their rate of decline was greater than the time available to overcome the temporal distance between savagery and civilization.' Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), p. 49.

²¹ This is the conclusion of Marshall Sahlins: 'Everyone hates the destruction rained upon the peoples by the planetary conquests of capitalism. But to indulge in...the "sentimental pessimism" of collapsing their lives within a global vision of domination, in subtle intellectual and ideological ways makes the conquest complete.' Sahlins, 'Goodbye to *Tristes Tropes*: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History', *Journal of Modern History*, 65.1 (March 1993), 1-25.

also deeply subjective in that they clear the way psychologically for a European takeover of 'unused' space.²²

However, the argument of the present study is that Stevenson's writing on the Pacific Islands is poorly understood from this retrospective point of view. Far from being a doom-obsessed romantic, a sentimental pessimist, he is an active and involved part of the political and cultural life of the Pacific Islands who makes his presence felt whenever he thinks it is necessary to do so. He defends the activities of virtuous Christian missionaries, celebrates the lives of indigenous leaders and other individuals who resist the overtures of colonizers, and affirms the hybrid existence of Pacific Islands beachcombers. In this and in other aspects of the contemporary Pacific, he is a shrewd observer of change and adaptation. Stevenson believes that it does not suffice to bemoan the loss of native life and traditions; he also takes pains to point out where they transform themselves into something that is resilient enough to continue despite the breakdown of established traditions.²³ Furthermore, if Stevenson is by nature a conservative and a pessimist, nevertheless his pessimism is not sentimental or psychological but ontological. As will be explained more clearly in chapter 5, Stevenson's sometimes gloomy prospects for the Pacific world stem not from a superficial view of the decline of indigenous populations but from a deeper philosophical engagement with questions of death and survival.

The tendency of some critics to observe in Stevenson's South Seas writing aspects of a romantic and ultimately colonising view point is also informed by the belief that he has long been an exponent of these ideas. It is true that, in the spirit of *fin-de-siecle* aesthetes and decadents, many of his earliest texts are either works of travel or theoretical excursions into the meaning of travel, but this does not easily translate into the language of the western 'seeing-man'²⁴. In his first published essay, 'Roads' (1873), Stevenson explains that, 'a man must have thought much over scenery before he begins to enjoy it.'²⁵ It marks the beginning of a lifelong attempt to overturn the contemporary view of travel as a form of sight-seeing, and to imagine it

²² Mary Louis Pratt develops this idea in her book *Imperial Eyes*.

²³ See for example his discussion of modern Hawaiian culture examined in chapter 1.

²⁴ The term is used by Pratt in her *Imperial Eyes* (p. 220).

²⁵ Stevenson, *Essays of Travel* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1905), p. 213.

instead as a spur to reflection. Furthermore, in his record of the time he spends on the west coast of America, *The Silverado Squatters*, he contemplates 'this habit of much travel, and the engendering of scattered friendships', as preparation for 'the euthanasia of great nations.'²⁶ In this sense he regards travel almost as a way of killing the parochial ideologies that help to sustain 'great nations'. Nothing could be further from the idea of the traveller who, whether consciously or not, writes subserviently to colonial interests.

Travel can also be a way of understanding the past. Most of Stevenson's travel writing touches explicitly on historical subjects: in preparing for *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, for example, he reads French historical records of the wars in that region, adding this material to his text.²⁷ The fascination with the past extends to his experiments in fiction. Works such as *Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae* are filled with historical information, products of his intense reading and broad fascination with Scottish history. In this context his plan to write an anthropological work about the Pacific Islands becomes part of a long line of projects relating to different parts of the world and their histories.²⁸ The present study has been conceived in response to the way in which Stevenson has been misread by critics whose vision has not extended over the whole range of his work and interests.²⁹ Too often, criticism of Stevenson has concentrated on his fiction, leaving an important body of non-fiction unexamined and therefore also limiting the scope of criticism of the fiction.³⁰

²⁶ Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters* (London: Dent, 1984), p. 211.

²⁷ Barry Menikoff, "These Problematic Shores": Robert Louis Stevenson in the South Seas' in *English Literature and the Wider World: Volume 4, 1876-1914: The Ends of the Earth*, ed. by Simon Gatrell (London: Ashfield Press, 1992), pp. 141-156 (p. 142).

²⁸ See Barry Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland: The Imagination of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), in which he discusses the depth of Stevenson's research and engagement with Scottish history in preparation for his novel *Kidnapped*.

²⁹ For example, one of his biographers has insisted that: 'He probably would not have made a good historian. He was too attracted by the moments of vividness and intensity: it was with a novelist's eye that he looked at the drama of the past.' (Jenni Calder, *RLS*, p. 171.) Besides implying that history should be written in a certain way (that is, without vividness, without intensity), the author has also failed to acknowledge the place of a work such as *A Footnote to History*, Stevenson's lucid depiction of the then recent history of Samoa, or his plans to write a children's history of Scotland. See *Letters*, vi and vii.

³⁰ For more information, see the bibliographical overview at the end of the present introduction.

Outline of Contents of Present Study

The difference between most of Stevenson's other texts and his plan for a book entitled 'The South Seas' is that the latter is never published in the author's preferred form. In fact, it is published posthumously as *In the South Seas*, according to a model that is recommended by the author only for the purposes of filling up a volume of travel writing as a part of the Edinburgh Edition of his *Collected Works* (see chapter 3). However, as will be seen below, Stevenson's modern commentators continue to regard *In the South Seas*, albeit as a minor work, within the established canon of the author's texts. The conclusions of this study depend on research into this basic historical problem of misinterpretation.

The problems posed by the history of this planned text, 'The South Seas', provide a case study for a number of themes related to the production of knowledge: the methods and principles of the Victorian publishing industry; the formal limits of anthropological discourse in the 1890s; the history of literature relating to the Pacific region; the possibility of writing a text that combines travel narrative with scientific research. These themes will form the basis of the present study, which concentrates more specifically on the history of the text from its origin through to its revisions, into the twentieth century.

In the first chapter, 'A South Seas Model', the various precursors and models of *In the South Seas* are examined in the light of Stevenson's earliest plans for the book. The models include literary works such as Herman Melville's Pacific romances, *Omoo* and *Typee*, and nineteenth century nautical, anthropological and missionary writings relating to the Pacific region. Stevenson reads a great deal of Pacific-related literature prior to his departure, and he continues to educate himself in his new environment throughout his travels. His wife during their outward journey writes: 'it turned out that he really knew a great deal about the islands. On visiting them I got no further general knowledge than Louis had already given me.'³¹ After a year and a half of travel in the Pacific, Stevenson draws up a plan of his proposed

³¹ Quoted in Balfour, *Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, p. 39.

work, a slightly amended version of which he subsequently sends to his editor in London. This plan, a document of which survives in manuscript form, will be compared with *In the South Seas* to highlight the differences between the author's conception of the work and its eventual outcome. The reasons for these differences are then analyzed in the following chapters.

The second chapter, 'Reflective Travel', explores the large archive of photographs which are taken by the Stevenson family during their South Seas journeys, using them also to try to understand better the purpose and motivation behind the book. At an early stage, Stevenson plans to illustrate his book with some of the photographs taken. The argument that forms the basis of this chapter is that Stevenson's intentions for 'The South Seas' have been largely unexamined and require clarification. Gaining an accurate idea of the work that Stevenson intends to produce as 'The South Seas' will help to better understand the 1890s as a historical period. Stevenson's experimentation with different forms of presentation, such as photographs and exhibitions, is also valuable because new forms give new possibilities to the age in which they are discovered.

In the later Victorian era, the idea of 'rescuing' cultures and ways of life is very powerful, so much so that new academic disciplines and methods of study are then in development, using the new technologies of visual and sound recording that has become available, to document 'vanishing' cultures. However, their appearance has not always been celebrated by historians. On the one hand, there is an argument based within the theoretical development of anthropology that from the present point of view condemns such practices on the basis of their cultural chauvinism. The reasoning behind this argument is that vanishing cultures are simply being documented in order to classify them according to a Western hierarchy of human development, and that it is of little consequence to the documenters what happens to these vanishing cultures after the recording equipment had been put away. It could even be claimed that 'documenting' vanishing cultures for posterity, by imposing an arbitrary (and sometimes inauthentic) system of measure and classification, assists in the destruction, or distortion, of cultures. Opposing this is the point of view that emphasizes the strong Victorian tendency towards conservation, particularly of those cultural artifacts that could be preserved in miniaturised

form (e.g. photographs, slides, sound recordings). Stevenson's intention to produce an accompanying pictorial record to his South Seas book is examined in this chapter within the context of the emerging academic field of anthropology, particularly its attendant methods and technologies.³²

The third chapter, 'In the South Seas as Failure', examines the illusory development of *In the South Seas* as one of the works of R L Stevenson. It traces the breakdown of the author's production and enthusiasm for the text, by examining the correspondence between him and his editor, Sidney Colvin, and also his wife, during the early stages of his writing in 1889-91. There are many reasons for the author's failure to publish the work in its original form: at the outset, he is worried about the sheer weight of information that he has gathered during his travels in the South Seas and the 'architectural' problem of bringing it all under control, with a clear focus.³³ The structural component of the meaning of his work matters greatly to Stevenson.³⁴ It would not have been enough for him simply to list his new-found information in the most conventionally acceptable form, because of the predicament of knowledge that writing about the Pacific Islands specifically places on him. Rather, as will be shown, the singularity of the conditions of life there persuades him, initially at least, to work towards an innovative text, which cuts across many of the established conventions of travel literature.

The scene then shifts to 1894 and the plans for the Edinburgh Edition of Stevenson's Collected Works, where the idea of putting some of the South Seas writing into a volume of travel is raised by Colvin, and which Stevenson agrees to do, with minimal personal input. Finally, the history of later editions of *In the South Seas* will be examined for any changes that are made to the 'original' text.

In the fourth chapter, 'The Edinburgh Edition', the various changes that have been made to the original drafts of 'The South Seas' by both the author

³² The relevant manuscript source is Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS 6716.

³³ To his editor Stevenson writes on 3 November 1890: 'my problem is architectural-creative – to get this stuff jointed and moving.' *Letters*, vi, pp. 7, 21.

³⁴ Frank McLynn has noted that in Stevenson's theatrical collaborations with W E Henley, 'evil was not the simple matter it seemed to be to Henley; characteristically, he wished to portray *ambiguity* in his plays: not just the moral ambiguity of a Shaw play, but an ambiguity rooted in the very structure of the drama.' McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1994), p. 235.

and his editors are analysed. Since there is no 'core' text from which to make comparisons with the various later drafts, the method involves examining manuscript sources in the light of Stevenson's other correspondence during 1888-90 in order to discover how many of the revisions are self-enforced and how many are made through the influence of other parties.³⁵ Using the idea of the author's initial structure and plan for the book, this reconstructed text is compared with the changes that are made by Sidney Colvin for the 1896 Edinburgh Edition of Stevenson's *Collected Works*, which is the first time that *In the South Seas* is published as a single volume. Subsequent versions published as parts of collected editions which are known to differ from this original are also examined for changes.³⁶

Stevenson does not attempt to write many straightforward histories or scholarly works during his lifetime because he is concerned that he will not be read in these forms. For example, to his friend Charles Baxter he writes that his main doubt about the book on the South Seas is whether 'the public will rise to it.'³⁷ Commercial incentives matter to him for obvious reasons but also to the extent that he needs to be sure that his work will find an audience. 'The South Seas' presents an interesting case study insofar as it is one of the few major works by the author in which he attempts to soften his message by re-shaping the medium in which it is presented. According to the scant publishing information available, *In the South Seas* sells fairly poorly when it is published and continues to be one of the author's least-read works. However, this does not mean that the text should be ignored. Celebrating Stevenson for his literary successes while neglecting 'failures' such as *In the South Seas* only affords him a place among the victors. That is to say, by identifying Stevenson's achievements purely with an eye to abstract sales figures and

³⁵ The relevant manuscripts are: San Marino, USA, Huntington Library, HM 2412, 2417, 2421, 20534; Beinecke Library, MS Vault Film 567; Sydney, Australia, The State Library of New South Wales, the MS of 'In the South Seas'.

³⁶ Neil Rennie in his recent Penguin edition of *In the South Seas* has made a number of textual emendations from the Edinburgh version on the basis of Stevenson's journals of his cruises through the Pacific in 1888-89, which are available in manuscript form at the Huntington Library, and also the serialisations in *Black and White* and in *The Auckland Star*. He notes the change, for example, in a chapter on Marquesan cannibal customs, from 'to eat a man's flesh' after his death, to 'to cut a man's flesh'. The decision to make the change was probably Stevenson's editor Sidney Colvin's. The question is: why was it made? To take Victorian readers' minds away from the grizzly reality of cannibalism? Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, ed. by Neil Rennie (London: Penguin, 1998)

³⁷ *Letters*, vi, p. 211.

subsequent aesthetic movements, his work is made comprehensible only in terms of the liberal/progressive 'now' of the present. At best, such a reading can hope to illuminate one side of his work. This is also the problem with trying to discover the author as a modernist or modern aesthete, which in its reductiveness only draws attention to the desires of the critic who makes the claim.³⁸

In rejecting this approach it becomes necessary to find a perspective from which to view Stevenson's work that is almost less accessible, not just in terms of the epistemological formations of his time but also in the awkward way in which ambiguous phenomena are made to fit the language in which they are clothed.³⁹ In the first instance, it is important to avoid repeating the terms that are used by Stevenson's contemporaries in their criticism of him. They are the products of a specific cultural milieu that must also be investigated as part of the present study, and for which the best tools of analysis are the author's words themselves.⁴⁰ In attempting to write the largely 'un-written' cultures of the Pacific Islands, as Stevenson does, this point becomes even more relevant.

In contrast to excessive biographical speculation, the fact that the South Seas Letters are written as a substitute for Stevenson's book makes it necessary to work through the various texts and separate the residue of 'travel' writing from his scientific and theoretical writing about Pacific cultures. In the penultimate chapter, 'Cultural Survivals', *In the South Seas* is read within the background of the first four chapters of this study, as a text that requires other, unpublished texts to make sense of it and to do its author justice. Stevenson's Pacific Islands writing is then examined in the light of a

³⁸ This has been the case respectively with otherwise penetrating studies by Alan Sandison (*Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism*) and Liz Farr ('Stevenson's Picturesque Excursions: The Art of Youthful Vagrancy', *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, 29.2 (Fall 2002), 197-225.) Sandison's book has helped to clarify the new critical perspectives on Stevenson's work. The essay by Farr, on the aesthetics of travel, has been used as one of the contextualisations for chapter 6 of the present study.

³⁹ In the words of Peter Bürger: 'Critical science does not succumb to the illusion that it can establish a direct relationship to its objects. On the contrary, it is precisely the appearance that its objects are directly given to it that it attempts to destroy.' Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. liv-lv.

⁴⁰ As Richard Ambrosini has pointed out in relation to Joseph Conrad, 'the difference, rather than contiguity' between the author and 'the theoretical language of his contemporaries constitutes the frame of reference which gives cogency to the words he uses as critical terms'. Ambrosini, *Conrad's Fiction as Critical Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 11.

significant moment in European anthropology. At the time that Stevenson is preparing his text, European anthropology, which is for a long time the preserve of dedicated metropolitan amateurs and their correspondents in far-flung corners of the world, is being transformed into an academic science. Its institutionalization in Great Britain is marked by the ascendancy of Edward Burnett Taylor to the newly-created position of Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oxford in 1896. The relationship between Stevenson and the academic-cultural establishment, particularly within anthropology, is drawn in relation to his studies of Pacific societies, showing to what extent his 'field' research persuades him to think about the theoretical problems that trouble the Victorian concept of culture. Stevenson's entry into the late-Victorian discourse of 'survivals' is also compared with that of his near-contemporary, the German art historian Aby Warburg, in his formulation of the concept of *Nachleben*, or 'after-life', of pagan elements of culture. The purpose of this comparison is to tentatively suggest that Stevenson has made an important contribution to the 'Warburg school' of European cultural history.

In the final chapter, 'Writing Culture', the findings of the previous chapters are brought together to examine Stevenson's development as a theorist of culture. The South Seas writing is throughout defined by contradiction and complexity, where objects and things, according to Henry James, do not become 'visible'. There is evidence from his earlier travel writing that suggests that this may have been an ongoing subject of study for Stevenson. In his essay on San Francisco, which is first published in 1883, he attempts to explain the difficulty of writing about this 'new Pacific capital' that is still in the process of realization. Whereas it might have been expected that he would draw the outlines of the modern city that exists today, Stevenson only notes, 'Everywhere the same tumble-down decay and sloppy progress, new things yet unmade, old things tottering to their fall; everywhere the same out-at-elbows, many nationed loungers at dim, irregular grog-shops [...]'⁴¹ The description is very similar to his later portrayal of beachcomber locales in the South Seas, as will be seen in the following chapters. Places are not

⁴¹ Robert Louis Stevenson, *An Inland Voyage; Travels with a Donkey; The Amateur Emigrant; together with The Old and New Pacific Capitals and the Silverado Squatters* (London: Collins, 1956), p. 207.

described in terms of a form to come but only in terms of what is seen in the present, temporal state and the collective years and traditions whose weight they now uneasily bear.

The essay on San Francisco is a useful point of reference for the South Seas writing because it expresses change as something that is less pristine and more complicated than progress, where modernity is difficult to extricate from the past. The dizzying sensation of a mass of unstructured new information and old, rotting structures is nearly intoxicating for Stevenson, who towards the end of his essay is forced to admit that 'one brief impression follows and obliterates another, and the city leaves upon the mind no general and stable picture, but a profusion of airy and incongruous images, of the sea and shore, the east and west, the summer and the winter.'⁴² It does not seem possible for the author to extricate meaning from this tangle of images. Far from denying him access to cultural truths, however, such complexity is shown to be an affirmation of his broader philosophical understanding of culture, which is underpinned by his much earlier encounter with the philosophy of G W F Hegel.

Stevenson's ideas are an extension of his Hegelian outlook on aspects of culture – which for him include such things as landscape, belief, and architecture – and specifically on how the oppositions that are inherent in seeing and interpreting the world relate directly to the observer's mental process of understanding and trying to reconcile new information within their existing worldview. This also reflects his attempt to understand and narrate other people and cultures in a responsible way, rather than just making them directly 'visible' to the Western reader as a writer of the picturesque or sentimental travel narrative might attempt to do. In the South Seas writing, every first look becomes paradoxical, requiring further thought and elaboration. In this way, the argument of the concluding chapter returns to the discussion of the first part of the introduction: in observing a travel writer of the Victorian era who neither adopts the poses and conventions that are regarded as typical of that era, nor celebrates the hybridity and cultural diversity that is

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 205.

lauded in future societies, a productive tension is created in the perception of that writer, which raises the potential and scope of the times in which he lives.

Bibliographical Overview

Primary material

The text now known as *In the South Seas* begins as Stevenson's idea for the definitive book on the Pacific region to be titled 'The South Seas'. It is composed from notes that he makes on his travels through the Marquesas, the Paumotus, and the Gilbert Islands in 1888-9. Initially these writings, along with material on his visit to Hawaii, are published as a series of 'Letters' from the South Seas in journals based in New York (*The Sun*), London (*Black and White*), Sydney (*The Telegraph*) and Auckland (*The Star*). Stevenson also produces a draft manuscript of the text in 1890, which is published in a small quantity to gain copyright for syndication, and is then mostly distributed among his friends. However, the 1890 version follows a series of disagreements over the nature of the work with his wife and his editor, the outcome of which is its drastic shortening to include only the aforementioned island groupings. The notes that Stevenson has made while visiting other Pacific Islands have been omitted, as has the serialised section on Hawaii. This is the basic history of the text. What had not yet been clarified up until this point is how much of the notes that Stevenson writes for 'The South Seas' is used by his editor, Sidney Colvin, to produce the first commercially available edition of *In the South Seas* in 1896, two years after the author's death. One of the aims of the present study is to establish what, if any, these changes are.

In order to work with a 'standard' version of *In the South Seas* in the century since its production, the Chatto & Windus edition (London, 1900) has been used to compare manuscript and published versions. This text is a reprint of the 1896 Edinburgh edition and has become the basis of critical readings of *In the South Seas*. The 1998 Penguin edition of the text, which is critically emended by Neil Rennie, is structured in exactly the same way as the first Chatto & Windus edition, with the same chapter headings, and it

offers little further point of comparison for the present purposes, although the footnotes and explanatory remarks are useful. Changes have been made to the standard text in some of the later collected editions of Stevenson's works, specifically the Swanston edition of 1912, edited by Andrew Lang, the Vailima edition (1923), edited by Will D Howe and Lloyd Osbourne, and the Tusitala edition (1924), which is edited by Lloyd Osbourne and Fanny Stevenson. These will be compared with the Chatto and Windus version to analyse the editorial changes.

The relationship between Stevenson's conception of his project as 'The South Seas' and Sidney Colvin's reorganisation of the text to become *In the South Seas* is problematic to say the least. As Neil Rennie comments, 'There are many MSS and proofs with MS corrections of the South Sea material at various stages of composition and revision in four libraries on two continents and several different published versions which would have to be examined and collated before it will be possible to establish exactly what sources Colvin drew on.'⁴³ Besides the published texts there are also several sets of manuscripts, all written in Stevenson's hand, which need to be examined and compared with the published text. This is the only way in which it is possible accurately to measure the difference in aims of Stevenson on the one hand, and his editors, professional and personal, on the other. The major collections of manuscripts relating to Stevenson's South Seas writing are housed at the Beinecke Collection at Yale University Library (MS Vault film 567 and MS Vault Stevenson 525), the Huntington Library, California (HM 2412, 2417, 2421 and 20534), and the Mitchell Library in Sydney (CY 349). The National Library of Scotland holds the largest collection of photographs taken by Stevenson and his family during their tour of the Pacific.

In helping to decipher Stevenson's handwriting and to distinguish it from those of Colvin and others, a useful source has been Gertrude Hills' *Robert Louis Stevenson's Handwriting*.⁴⁴ Besides illustrating with examples the various styles in which Stevenson writes, there are also helpful hints on how to spot the work of a forger. Stevenson's handwriting varies widely, sometimes within the same manuscript. Furthermore, Sidney Colvin's writing

⁴³ *In the South Seas*, ed. by Rennie, p. xxxvi.

⁴⁴ Gertrude Hills, (New York: Edwin J. Beinecke Collection, 1940).

is 'frequently mistaken' for Stevenson's, according to Hills, particularly in his editing of the material that is to form *In the South Seas*.

Secondary sources

Critical writing on *In the South Seas* had been relatively scarce until the last 25 years. Before this time, commentary on Stevenson's work tends to be restricted to sections within his numerous biographies. Among these, the most useful accounts of Stevenson's Pacific travel writing are to be found in Graham Balfour's 'official' biography of the author (1901) and in J C Furnas' biography *Voyage to Windward* (1952). Balfour states in his book that he will quote from 'only one or two of the most striking passages [of *In the South Seas*], relying rather on his original rough journal at the time, which naturally strikes a more personal note and deals to a greater extent with individual experience'⁴⁵. His reasons for avoiding significant treatment of the published text are in line with the prevailing view of *In the South Seas* during the 1890s. It is criticised by Stevenson's family and his literary friends for being 'impersonal' and too scientific⁴⁶, and sells poorly in comparison with his better-known fictions. Half a century later, Furnas responds to these criticisms by claiming that Stevenson's wife, Fanny, had been projecting her own fears that her husband was becoming increasingly independent from her, and that this is the reason for her otherwise unwitting use of the word 'impersonal' to attack his work.⁴⁷ As the importance of *In the South Seas* as an anthropological text becomes more apparent during the twentieth century, readers have also found reason to criticise the book's original detractors for their literary and geographical parochialism.

Of Stevenson's recent biographers, Phillip Callow describes *In the South Seas* as 'a book about [Stevenson's] Pacific experiences' and claims, erroneously, as will be seen in chapter 3, that the author does not accept either Colvin or Fanny's criticism, and 'went on stubbornly with it with no

⁴⁵ Balfour, p. 42.

⁴⁶ See Fanny's letter to Colvin of May 1889, quoted by Robert Irwin Hillier, 'In the South Seas', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 23 (1988), 104-121.

⁴⁷ Furnas, pp. 306-8.

encouragement from anyone. He was revising it when he died.’⁴⁸ In fact, Stevenson is working on *Weir of Hermiston* on the day of his death, as his stepdaughter’s account confirms.⁴⁹ Callow later describes ‘The South Seas’ as Stevenson’s ‘projected volume of anthropology’, adding that the copy sent to his American publishers ‘was edited harshly’, although he does not explain how or why this occurred.⁵⁰ The mistakes and silences tend to add to the myth.

Frank McLynn devotes several pages of his massive biography of the author to *In the South Seas*, although he is more interested in contrasting the motives of Stevenson and his wife than in exploring the history of the text:

[Stevenson’s] ambition was to write a definitive, scholarly book about the Pacific, hanging historical and anthropological insights on a narrative line ostensibly about travel – a more comprehensive, polished and wide-ranging volume than the inchoate essays that made up the book published as *In the South Seas*. In Fanny’s eyes this academic ambition took RLS further away from the crock of gold she yearned for.⁵¹

McLynn’s dogged pursuit of the apparently delusional and ever-scheming Fanny Stevenson begs the question of why Stevenson had remained with her to the end of his life. Stevenson undoubtedly finds it difficult to complete ‘The South Seas’ with the criticism of his wife and Colvin ringing in his ears, but, as the discussion of chapter 3 will show, the decision to give up on the book is largely his own. For McLynn, as for many others, the way that this decision affects the outcome of the text is of secondary importance. His study of Stevenson is another example of a biographer giving up the opportunity to shed new light on the author’s work in exchange for a chance to dramatise his subject’s life.

There have been over a hundred biographies or biographical sketches of Stevenson published in the previous century alone.⁵² The number of biographies has continued to rise steadily since the author’s death and more

⁴⁸ Phillip Callow, *Louis: A Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Constable, 2001), p. 256. Callow may have been referring to certain revisions to the South Seas Letters that Stevenson had been making for the ‘Edinburgh Edition’, although he does not specify this point.

⁴⁹ See the excerpt from the journal of Belle Strong in *Letters*, VIII, p. 401.

⁵⁰ Callow, p. 273.

⁵¹ McLynn, p. 343.

⁵² The most complete list may be found at <http://dinamico.unibg.it/rls/biogs.htm>

are due in the near future.⁵³ In the process, they have become less and less real, more and more objective, with the details of Stevenson's life documented almost deliberately, as if it is only a story, an interesting fiction that has been constructed out of mythical elements of the author's life. Barry Menikoff has written about the tendency of Stevenson's biographers, beginning with the first 'postbiography' written by his cousin, Graham Balfour, to tell stories that fit their own interest in the author.⁵⁴ Such a trend points to an important weakness of the biographical method of examining writers' lives: the biographical approach loses sight of its subject by constructing a centre through the selective arrangement of the details of the life. In writing about Stevenson during the times when he is involved in intense activity, for example, during his first journey across America in 1879 to meet his future wife, Fanny van de Grift Osbourne, his biographers sometimes miss their subject amid the rush of details. For once, we catch a glimpse of the elaborate setup that has been created to make the historical Stevenson appear, for in these moments it is as if he were entirely nonexistent. Were the 'real' Stevenson to be found in such studies, they would cease to be biography: the writer would either have encountered a ghost, or themselves.

Biographies of Stevenson continue to be published at a steady rate, each one promising to be either definitive or groundbreaking, but seldom achieving more than the best efforts of previous writers on the subject, since the aim has always essentially been a kind of narrative retelling of a well-known tale. The more familiar the historical Stevenson becomes, the greater the significance of the details of his life that have been ignored or overlooked. This is particularly important in the light of the scant attention paid to Stevenson's Pacific-related writings as a whole. The relative obscurity of these works however provides an opportunity to understand them outside of the chronological limits of the biographical form. Under-examined histories have the practical advantage of not needing to match the expectations set by

⁵³ Claire Harman's *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Harpercollins) is the latest major biography, published in February 2005, but another is expected soon, from the RLS bibliographer Roger Swearingen.

⁵⁴ 'Writing the life seems to bring out the best and the worst in people, and this was the case from the beginning, with the first biography creating a paradigm for everything that followed.' Barry Menikoff, 'Grub Street in a Velvet Coat: *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, Vols. 1-6*', <http://www.ucpress.edu/scan/ncl-free/504/recent/amlit.rec504.html>

the more well-trodden narratives. Consequently there is more scope in them for the influence of the unforeseeable, which may enrich our understanding of the entire range of the author's work.

Biographical weaknesses have contributed to the poor knowledge of the history of *In the South Seas*. Criticism of the text has suffered because of the ignorance of its history. In an article about the production of *In the South Seas*, Robert Irwin Hillier tries to redeem it from the combination of critical hostility and authorial despair by arguing that it 'can best be appreciated when regarded as an informative fragment.'⁵⁵ Hillier aims for thoroughness in his study by including readings of Stevenson's 'Hawaii Letters' and his 'Footnote to History', which is a long essay on the history of Samoa up to the author's day. Despite the attempt to broaden the scope of his research to incorporate Stevenson's original design, Hillier summarises the limitations of his perspective in his concluding passage, where he states that, 'one can lament that *In the South Seas* never received final editing and revision.'⁵⁶ From the numerous textual reworkings that have been outlined above it is clear that there has in fact been too much 'editing and revision'. He adds that, 'read together with Stevenson's South Seas fiction *In the South Seas* becomes as valuable to the reader as a well-written guidebook is to a tourist travelling into unfamiliar territory.' This conclusion limits the scope of Stevenson's ambitions to such an extent as to become complicit with the uninformed criticism and textual mutilation that has been carried out by Colvin and others.

Two more recent essays dealing with Stevenson's Pacific writing draw attention to the intellectual and stylistic changes on the author wrought by South Seas living. In the essay entitled "'These Problematic Shores": Robert Louis Stevenson in the South Seas', Barry Menikoff, by way of a commentary on the opening chapter of the book, claims that Stevenson's travels in the South Pacific are voyages of personal discovery as opposed to being the elaboration of an ethnocentric point of view. Written in the early 1990s, the article attempts to rescue Stevenson from the charges of ethnocentrism that is then being levelled by postcolonial critics towards Victorian writers. In

⁵⁵ Hillier, p. 117.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 119.

contrast, Menikoff claims that Stevenson's concept of history explores a dimension that would have been unfamiliar to many of his contemporaries:

Stevenson disputes the European pretension that its past is one long, unbroken chain that includes Caesar as well as Rob Roy. In effect, he implies that the European past may be as different from the present as its present is from anything that can be found in Polynesia. What Stevenson is questioning is the belief that there is anything so stable or permanent as a great tradition.⁵⁷

Menikoff's approach brings Stevenson to light as a philosopher of history and a profound and exacting critic of his own times. This perspective on the author is explored further in chapter 5 of the present study, where it will be argued that in the Pacific Islands Stevenson builds on the historical perspective that is outlined by Menikoff, by way of his encounter with the anthropological concept of survivals.

In her essay, 'The Eyeball of the Dawn: Can We Trust Stevenson's Imagination?', Jenni Calder explains how in his later writing, Stevenson skillfully combines observation with invention to produce commentaries on contemporary culture, particularly the culture of the South Seas, in which he tries to interpret it in a new and different way, post-Darwin and Spencer. Again the critical emphasis lies in the changes that Stevenson undergoes and responds to while he is living in the Pacific:

In Scotland, Stevenson had found it difficult to confront the fragmentations of what he called 'the commercial age' in his writing. Except in *Jekyll and Hyde*, he looked to the past to enable him to deal with the confusions of the present. In the Pacific, he cannot do this, or only to a limited extent. The present forces itself upon him with an urgency that he cannot escape, indeed, that he welcomes.⁵⁸

An uncomfortable implicit statement is made here about the lack of history in the Pacific Islands, albeit one that is made real – in Western terms – by the scarcity of books on the subject during Stevenson's lifetime. Furthermore, the reading is again useful in that it brings the totality of his work into the same critical focus, rather than attempting to separate the South Seas writing as an

⁵⁷ Menikoff, 'Problematic Shores', p. 152.

⁵⁸ Jenni Calder, 'The Eyeball of the Dawn: Can We Trust Stevenson's Imagination?', in *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by William B Jones Jr., (London: McFarland & Company Inc., 2003), pp. 7-20 (p. 17).

interesting anomaly and not deserving of equal consideration to previous texts such as *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

The modern, or modernising, viewpoint that is to some extent shared by Menikoff and Calder is interrogated by Vanessa Smith in her book *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, in which she examines Pacific islanders' reception of Stevenson's work, arguing against the traditional view of native 'wonderment' at the powers of the storyteller to claim that this relationship is part of a complex, cross-cultural exchange of ideas and values.⁵⁹ By turning the tables on processes of observation and writing, she shows how Stevenson has had to adapt himself to write the Pacific, and not simply 'be influenced' by whatever messages that the Pacific Islands and their populations are meant to transmit to him. Smith complicates the transfer of knowledge and ideas available to Stevenson in thinking about the Pacific Islands, but as the argument of Chapter 6 will show, it is less the landscape of the Pacific Islands and more the provisionality of travel writing itself, particularly within Stevenson's broadly Hegelian view of culture, that is responsible for this view of the author's writing.

Smith also encounters a problem that she barely acknowledges in her treatment of *In the South Seas*. She describes the book as:

a text precisely about how it might be possible to write the Pacific islands. In his own account of his methodology, Stevenson embraces a performative, rather than writerly, attitude to communication. He shifts between the characters of the ethnographer and the wealthy traveller, or rehearses the hybrid languages of Polynesia, playing a role rather than asserting an identity, and embracing a mediated and partial access to the foreign.⁶⁰

The emphasis on Stevenson shifting between several identities within the same text hints at a postmodern reading of *In the South Seas*, but such a claim has been made possible only within the context of a work that had been fragmented beyond the author's intentions. It is not true to the history of the text to state simply that Stevenson embraces 'a mediated and partial access to the foreign': whilst this *could* have been envisioned by the author, we know

⁵⁹ Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth Century Textual Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 110.

from the numerous editorial changes that were made that too much significance cannot be attached to such a reading based purely on the published source. It is necessary to clarify Stevenson's purposes and method in the writing of 'The South Seas' before trying to interpret his text.

A similar criticism can be made of Ann C. Colley's *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination*, in which she discusses various subjects that lie at the intersection of Stevenson's Pacific writing and the contemporary missionary cultures of the region. Colley writes that in the face of mounting criticism from family and friends, 'Stevenson could eventually do little more than offer a partial, imperfect representation of his experiences. His *In the South Seas* is essentially a collage of illuminated spaces and images surrounded by areas of obscurity and dogged by shifting shadows of meaning and understanding.'⁶¹ Again the problem is not with the interpretation but the history that has been ignored in arriving at it. Whatever fragmentary meanings may be imparted to the structure of the text of *In the South Seas* must be informed by the equivocal processes of its production and not simply guessed from the pristine artifact that is at hand.

Liam Connell's article, 'More than a Library: The Ethnographic Potential of Stevenson's South Seas Writing'⁶², concentrates on the serialisation of the author's fictional works, in particular *The Beach of Falesá*. He also contextualises *In the South Seas* in relation to other ethnological studies of the time, noting that 'Stevenson's lack of linguistic expertise would have undermined the value of *In the South Seas* for late-Victorian anthropology' but that 'it also appears to anticipate modern fieldwork-anthropology's belief that the ethnographer could efficiently use native languages without mastering them.' This point of view has been disputed in chapter 4 of the present study, where recovered sections from the unused manuscript versions of 'The South Seas' show that Stevenson is quite well-informed on the subject of Polynesian languages.

⁶¹ Colley, p. 130.

⁶² Liam Connell, 'More than a Library: The Ethnographic Potential of Stevenson's South Seas Writing', *Journal of Stevenson Studies*, 1 (2004), 150-171.

In 'The Four Boundary-Crossings of R L Stevenson, Novelist and Anthropologist'⁶³, Richard Ambrosini puts forward an alternative reading of the author to those that have already been outlined. In his essay Ambrosini attempts to show how Stevenson's work is influenced by and to some extent belongs within the history of Victorian anthropology. He claims that the lessons that Stevenson learns during the ethnographic studies of people and places, including the South Seas, are subsequently used in his fiction and in his aesthetic theories. According to Ambrosini, Stevenson's aim 'was the creation of a modern version of the epics, which he conceived as a literary form both popular and artistic.'⁶⁴

The romantic conception of Stevenson as a popular author helps in understanding his own, often private, justifications for writing genre fiction. Epic novels could revitalise storytelling in the age of the mass market, and storytelling is seen as the ultimate expression of his long-held passion for reading and listening to stories being told. What interests Ambrosini about Stevenson's 'ethnographic studies' is their influence on fiction and theory. For a study of the production and meaning of *In the South Seas*, this perspective is valuable since it reconfigures Stevenson as a theorist of romance writing. The style and content that, upon first glance, appears so unlike Stevenson's earlier work in *In the South Seas* becomes understandable once we view this parallel strand of his development as a writer. Ambrosini claims that Stevenson's view of his society is therefore unique in that he is 'a master of stylistic prose whose artistic identity was not based on the dominant art form of his age, the novel.'⁶⁵

In the chapter on Stevenson's South Seas writing in his book, *Representing the South Pacific*, Rod Edmond claims that it is Charles Darwin who provides Stevenson with a model for cultural change.⁶⁶ To illustrate his point, Edmond refers to some examples from *In the South Seas*: 'Tembinok, King of Apemama in the Gilbert Islands, is described as "the last tyrant, the last erect vestige of a dead society", and coral atolls themselves impressed

⁶³ Unpublished. Used with author's permission.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Rod Edmond, 'Taking up with Kanakas: Robert Louis Stevenson and the Pacific', in Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 160-193 (p. 167).

Stevenson as examples of biological decadence, “not of honest rock, but organic, part alive, part putrescent”.’ He also separates this Darwinian form of scientific explanation from what he sees as Stevenson’s more complex and hybrid interpretation of political and social change. In the present study it is instead argued that the two forms of interpretation cannot be divided and that they must be examined together in a broader discussion, not of Darwinian evolutionary, but of a Tylorian development theory of culture.

Julia Reid’s essay on ‘Stevenson, Romance, and Evolutionary Psychology’ also allies Stevenson too closely with the theories of his time. In her assessment of the author’s essays written during the 1880s, she concludes that: ‘Stevenson’s essays – romance, children’s tales, dreams, and spoken narratives – celebrate the endurance of humankind’s primitive heritage into the apparently refined present. In doing so, they unsettled the boundaries between “savagery” and “civilization”, low and high culture, the senses and the intellect, and the unconscious and conscious mind.’⁶⁷ The argument of chapter 5 of the present essay is that, although, as Reid states, the continuing ‘endurance of humankind’s primitive heritage’ unsettles binary conceptions of cultural reality, Stevenson is always cautious about the potential of this ‘primitive heritage’. It was not something to be ‘celebrated’, and the disruptive element is not to be found safely within culture but in the unknowable residue of cultures, such as the interpretation of death, which troubles all human societies. In his South Seas writing, at least, Stevenson does not so much laud the stoicism of the ‘primitive heritage’ (a concept that is itself problematically related to the romantic idea of the noble savage) as draw attention to the implacable survival, which always arrives unexpectedly, and often to the detriment of humankind.

In just the same way as Reid underestimates the extent and depth of Stevenson’s critique of evolutionary theory, albeit through the study of different source texts than those of the present study, Georges Didi-Hubermann places too much weight on the untimeliness of Tylor’s concept of survivals. In his essay, ‘The Surviving Image: Aby Warburg and Tylorian Anthropology’, he makes the startling claim that ‘The strength of survivals,

⁶⁷ Reid, p. 225.

their 'power' even, as Tylor notes, is revealed in the tenuousness of minuscule, superfluous, derisory, or abnormal things. Survival, in itself, lies in the recurring symptom and in the game, in the pathology of language and in the unconsciousness of forms.⁶⁸ This reading of survivals may be true, it is certainly helpful to think with, but it could hardly have been the thought of E B Tylor. There is scant evidence of this use of the concept of survivals in Tylor's work, where, as will be shown in detail in chapter 5, survivals are too easily categorized and normalized. It is as if, having discovered the dangerous and threatening potential of cultural survivals in the interpretation of modernity, Tylor does everything he possibly can to hide or otherwise to suppress this potential within a mass of data about different aspects of human cultures. Didi-Hubermann further notes that 'survivals are only symptoms that carry temporal disorientation. They have nothing whatsoever to do with the premises of teleology in progress, or with any "evolutionary sense". They certainly bear the evidence of a more original and repressed state, but they say nothing about evolution itself.' This viewpoint is also rejected in chapter 5 of the present thesis, where it will be shown that the concept of survivals, as used by Tylor, most definitely serves a 'teleology in progress', albeit one that is not directly influenced by Darwinian evolution but more by a theory of the rational development of civilized culture.

Didi-Hubermann's essay is indebted, as is the present work, to Joan Leopold's study of the production of Tylor's *Primitive Culture*.⁶⁹ In this work, contrary to the prevailing view of the anthropologist as a Darwinian empiricist of the narrowest English variety, Leopold claims that 'in many ways Tylor's intellectual career sums up nineteenth-century thinking in cultural anthropology and its combination of many diverse currents.' These currents include, significantly for Tylor, the work of German historians of folklore: 'The writings of the Grimms and the German historical school were rife with the concept of survivals, particularly as applied to just those subjects to which Tylor first applied it at length – popular religion, rites, "superstitions" and etymologies of culture-historical interest. Much of the German and related

⁶⁸ Georges Didi-Hubermann, 'The Surviving Image: Aby Warburg and Tylorian Anthropology', *Oxford Art Journal* 25.1 (2002), 59-70.

⁶⁹ Joan Leopold, *Culture in Comparative and Evolutionary Perspective: E. B. Tylor and the Making of Primitive Culture* (Berlin: Reimer, 1980).

ethnology Tylor read in the 1860s incorporated the historical school's use of survivals.⁷⁰ Leopold's statement actually casts some doubt on Didi-Hubermann's claim that it is Tylor who provides Aby Warburg with a model for his idea of the *nachleben* of pagan antiquity, since Warburg could as easily have learned about the notion of cultural survivals from a German scholar of folklore such as Hermann Usener, under whom he had studied.⁷¹

In terms of the present thesis, what is relevant about Leopold's discoveries is that it suggests that Tylor's precision and accessibility allows, possibly for the first time in the English-speaking world in the nineteenth century, a singular and clearly-defined concept of 'the survival' to attain common currency in anthropological and cultural historical discourses. Furthermore, in detailing the diverse continental influences that shape Tylor's thought and major work, Leopold provides a fruitful reassessment of his received image as a conventional post-Darwinian thinker. However, his unquestioned position as a popularizer also compromises some of the complex theoretical narratives that Leopold attempts to establish. As Stevenson's work on Pacific island cultures demonstrates, Tylor is less well understood as a scholar of intellectual history than as a popular author. It is certainly in the latter form that Stevenson would have been acquainted with his work.

From a textual viewpoint, a significant secondary source is Barry Menikoff's *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Beach of Falesá*.⁷² In this work, Menikoff examines various early editorial changes that are made to Stevenson's Pacific novella, which he claims in its published form amounts to 'the most mutilated and corrupted... [of all his texts]'⁷³. He does not absolve the author of blame for the corruption of 'The Beach of Falesá', but Menikoff's main target is the publishing world that 'had it in their interests, or saw it as their role, to preempt the reviewers and decide in advance that the

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 9, 50.

⁷¹ See the discussion on Warburg's formative years in the early chapters of Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

⁷² Barry Menikoff, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Beach of Falesá: A Study in Victorian Publishing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984).

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 5.

bowdlerization of the text was a necessity in order to forestall adverse reaction.⁷⁴

Menikoff's fidelity to the manuscript over the published text has been criticised for succumbing to a romantic conception of authorship. The literary scholar Roslyn Jolly, in justifying the changes to the text effected by the publishers of *The Beach of Falesá*, Cassell's, has stated that,

To rate the authority of the manuscript above the authority of the final text corrected by the author is to assume that none of the changes introduced by the text's various editors has any authority, even though they were accepted by the author; this seems to me an untenable assumption, given that Stevenson had the opportunity to correct the text used by Cassell's [the publisher] and did, indeed, make many alterations which suggest a close and careful reading.⁷⁵

This legitimate criticism of the interpretation of textual history in the case of *The Beach of Falesá* points to a further reason why the history of *In the South Seas* needs to be examined: the author is not involved in the final editing of the latter work.⁷⁶ Furthermore, while it is historically sound to argue that the responsibility for the production of a late-Victorian text rests in many hands, the social interpretation of textual meaning that it inevitably leads to in literary studies must be informed by the purpose and direction of editorial changes. It is insufficient simply to interpret such changes on the basis of the text as an individual work of art if it is unaccompanied by the educational or commercial motivation behind the changes. Therein lies the necessity of retaining the romantic concept, if not all of the implications, of authorship. Only in this way can the process of cultural production be understood as a negotiation of conflicting claims to public responsibility.

The analysis of the relationship between author, editor and publisher is one of the main subjects of the early chapters of the present work. Menikoff's method is to compare the published text of *The Beach of Falesá* with Stevenson's manuscript versions and to pick out the points in which his editors alter the original language and punctuation, sometimes even whole passages of the work. He also explores the reasons why these changes are

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 97-8.

⁷⁵ Jolly, 'Note on the Texts', in *South Sea Tales*, p. xxxv.

⁷⁶ See chapter 3 of the present study. See also Stevenson's letter to Colvin of 4th November 1894, in which he indicates the same. *Letters*, viii, pp. 383-4.

made, which he finds to be largely due to concessions made to the taste and prejudices of Stevenson's Victorian readership, and the customs and syntactical presentation of a certain type of literature, as well as the inability of the author to protect his own work from being ruined in this way. Menikoff's study is therefore crucial in laying the analytical foundations for research that aims to rediscover the potential within Stevenson's published texts. As he puts it, 'the recovery of Stevenson's manuscripts is the first step toward the restoration of his art.'⁷⁷

Lastly in this discussion of the key bibliographical reference-points of the present study, the argument of chapter 6 of this study is framed in response to the thesis of Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Pratt's influential work aims to complicate the encounter between travel writers and the environments about which they write. She states in her introduction that 'to avoid simply reproducing the dynamics of possession and innocence whose workings [she] analyse[s] in texts', she adopts an ethnographical term known as 'transculturation'. This process describes how 'subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture': an indigenous form of *bricolage*. She adds that 'transculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone', a social space 'where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today.'⁷⁸ This is the methodological basis of her study of European travel narratives of the past two hundred years. Insofar as it takes into account the psychology of the people who are written about as well as that of the writers themselves, it is a helpful and constructive study whose implications point in several directions.

Pratt also selects and discusses a number of Victorian travel narratives, which lead her to make some generalizations. The three conventions of Victorian discovery rhetoric, as she concludes, are: 1. 'landscape is aestheticized'; 2. 'density of meaning'; 3. 'the relation of mastery

⁷⁷ Menikoff, *Beach of Falesá*, p. 32.

⁷⁸ Pratt, pp. 4-6.

between the seer and the seen.⁷⁹ The argument of chapter 6 of the present study is that Stevenson's travel writing in the Pacific, for reasons which will be discussed later in detail, hardly fits into this conventionalization and furthermore that, at the points in which it does appear to fit (the aestheticization of Hawaiian landscape, for example) it serves a stringently anti-colonial purpose. Despite providing many valuable insights and generating productive debate about travel narratives, the difficulty that Stevenson faces in writing Pacific landscapes, and the self-contradictory ways in which he expresses cultural life in the South Seas, evades the interpretation of travel narratives offered by Pratt in *Imperial Eyes*.

To summarise briefly, the main questions of this thesis, and the ways in which these questions will be approached, are, firstly, to examine the nature and the content of the changes that have been made from Robert Louis Stevenson's manuscript and other unpublished versions of 'The South Seas' to produce a volume for publication for the Edinburgh Edition of his collected works, which is then and subsequently known as *In the South Seas*. The method used will be textual analytical for the written work, which includes the author's plans and drafts, as well as photographic analysis for illustrations that are taken to be published with the book.

Secondly, to contextualise these changes both within the standards of the Victorian publishing trade as represented by Samuel S. McClure, Sidney Colvin and others, and within the professional relationship which Stevenson enjoys with his editor and proofreaders, in order to understand the reasons why certain alterations are made to his South Seas writing and why the work is not published in its original form. The method used will be literary historical, to track and analyse the development of the text through letters and notes, and cultural historical, to place these developments within the context of Victorian publishing and writing from the South Seas.

Thirdly, to interpret these findings in terms of their significance for Victorian travel writing, anthropological history, and Stevenson's work as a writer. This will be accomplished by way of a qualified reading of the South

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 204.

Seas writings and photographs, with the aid of published and unpublished work, and it will by nature be more speculative in conclusion.

1. A SOUTH SEAS MODEL

One or many Stevensons?

In recent studies of his Pacific writing, Robert Louis Stevenson's critics have uncovered such a range of interests and motivations that they appear almost irreconcilable. While for some commentators his work is susceptible to 'dominant late-Victorian discourses of empire'¹, others see in it the same moral ambiguity towards the British empire that has been lauded in the fiction of Joseph Conrad.² During the production of 'The South Seas' there are episodes in Stevenson's life that could lead people to think that he had a specific interest in or allegiance to an ideology. For example, his criticism of the conditions of fatal disease into which many native populations had fallen since the arrival of white traders and settlers has led commentators to describe him as fighting an anti-colonialist cause.³ Yet, others point to his easy friendships with royalty in the Pacific Islands as evidence of his being in fact 'Queen Victoria's son'. Some writers have also suggested that he is – like many Victorians – ambivalent about colonialism, and that he simply acts according to what he believes to be morally correct in a given situation. Critics who take this complexity as being itself indicative of the true nature of the writer have seen his ambivalence, far from being the representation of a set of principles, as the product of ascribing morals to everything that appears to work.⁴

Similarly, his writing in *In the South Seas* has led some critics to speculate that he is merely one in a long line of Victorians who like to think of themselves as amateur anthropologists or as contributing to the work of metropolitan anthropologists (see chapter 5). On the other hand, there are those who believe that his work denotes a significant departure from previous

¹ Connell, pp. 150-171.

² See, for example, Neil Rennie's discussion in the introduction to his edition of *In the South Seas*.

³ The loss of population in the Pacific during the Nineteenth Century is astounding. To give a rough idea: the population of Hawai'i in 1823 is 142,000; by 1896 it falls to 39,000. Samoa's population drops by half during the same period, and Tahiti in 1900 contains roughly a fifth of the number of people it has in 1750. See Fischer, p. 118.

⁴ See, for example Colley, *Colonial Imagination*, pp. 7-8.

models of culture, and deserves to be regarded as an innovative anthropological study.⁵ In his day, Stevenson receives great success and recognition for being a writer of fiction⁶, but only a handful of his contemporaries understand the seriousness with which he pursues the study of culture in the South Seas. The only way to reconcile this historical situation with today's divergences of opinion is by trying to represent the existing views within the changes that are experienced during Stevenson's lifetime. Therefore, the most appropriate way of understanding his identity as the author of 'The South Seas' is within the frame of the development of ideologies and disciplines of study in the late Victorian era. As has been outlined in the introduction, this is a method that none of Stevenson's commentators has previously attempted to do.

In order to attempt this it is important to bear in mind the full range of the author's interests. In the Pacific Islands, Stevenson is variously: a storyteller, poet, travel writer, anthropologist, political journalist, collector of curios, plantation farmer, musician, photographer, and possibly a sound-recordist. This reveals as much about life in the Pacific at the close of the nineteenth century as it does about the man. In the following chapters the traditions from which today's many Robert Louis Stevensons claim their heritage will be examined in the light of the production of 'The South Seas'. In the present chapter the significance of these various identities will be related to the original plan that Stevenson has in mind for 'The South Seas', to show the extent to which it is a project that aspires to reveal the whole man, just as he believes that he is writing the definitive book about the Pacific Islands.

An idea for a cruise

Robert Louis Stevenson in November 1887 tells his American literary agent, Samuel S. McClure, that he intends at some point to 'take a long ocean

⁵ See for example recent studies, referenced in the introduction, by Alan Sandison (*Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism*) and Vanessa Smith (*Literary Culture and the Pacific*).

⁶ This is confirmed by the superior sales figures of *Treasure Island*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Kidnapped* to any of his books of essays or travel. See the discussion which follows in this chapter for information on Stevenson's background as a popular author.

cruise.⁷ His reasons for so doing are to gain rest and to recover his health, which has been ailing for some time. McClure is a canny entrepreneur who wishes to promote Stevenson as a literary star and enthuses about the author's 'news value' after the cross-Atlantic success of *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). He is one of the pioneer brokers of publishing deals between celebrity authors and major newspapers. According to Stevenson's biographer, J C Furnas, McClure wants Stevenson, 'exactly as Sam Goldwyn later wanted Maeterlinck, because he was a "name", because the byline of the author of *Jekyll* would be a feather in the [New York] *World's* yellow cap.'⁸ He is not the kind of man who would let the opportunity to produce a literary event pass him by. When he hears of Stevenson's desire to sail through the Pacific, he immediately offers that 'if he would write a series of articles describing his travels, I would syndicate them for enough money to pay the expenses of his trip.'⁹

The next time McClure meets Stevenson, at Saranac Lake, New York, in January 1888, they discuss the scheme in detail.¹⁰ Stevenson's long-held ambition to teach, nurtured at least since his failed attempt to gain an academic post at the University of Edinburgh¹¹, appears about to be fulfilled at last, for McClure remembers that, 'we planned that when he came back he

⁷ S S McClure, *My Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1914), pp. 191-2.

⁸ Furnas, pp. 235-6.

⁹ McClure, pp. 191-2. According to George McKay, it is the financial viability of the trip that attracts Stevenson to the idea of a Pacific cruise: 'The £3,000 received from his [recently deceased] father's estate, the generous payments received from Scribners for his magazine articles, the amounts expected from books published in 1887 and to be published in 1888 and 1889, and McClure's assertion in December, 1887, and thereafter that he expected to obtain \$300 net per item for the letters Stevenson would send from the Pacific made the long adventures at sea seem feasible.' George L McKay, *Some Notes on Robert Louis Stevenson: His Finances and his Agents and Publishers* (New Haven: Yale University Lib., 1958), pp. 28-9.

¹⁰ 'On the 17th [January 1888] Mr. McClure comes from New York. He...hears the yacht mentioned and is most anxious to join in the scheme.' Margaret Isabella Stevenson, 'Notes about RLS from his Mother's Diary', *The Works Of Robert Louis Stevenson. Vailima Edition*, ed. by Will D Howe and Lloyd Osbourne, 26 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1922-23), xxvi, p. 355.

¹¹ Calder, in *RLS: A Life Study*, writes: 'The chair of History and Constitutional Law at Edinburgh was becoming vacant, and it seems to have been Thomas [Stevenson]'s idea that Louis should apply for it...Of course he had no chance of the post, but applied for it nonetheless, perhaps to please his father. He seems also to have thought rather cavalierly that he might do well at it.' (pp. 170-171) Barry Menikoff disagrees sharply with this view, however, claiming that 'within the context of that small, closed world of [the University of Edinburgh], Stevenson's candidacy was not only conceivable but plausible.' Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland*, p. 26.

was to make a lecture tour and talk on the South Seas.¹² Some intention of the author's scholarly motives emerges, albeit hazily, from the information McClure gives about the plans he makes with Stevenson prior to the latter's departure for the Pacific Islands:

He was to take a phonograph along and make records of the sound of the sea and wind, the songs and speech of the natives, and that these records were to embellish his lectures.¹³

The use of the phonograph to carry out ethnological recordings only just becomes fashionable by the 1890s. The first mass-marketed phonograph, the Edison New Phonograph, becomes available in 1888, as Stevenson is about to embark on his tour of the South Seas.¹⁴ The first confirmed use of the phonograph for ethnological purposes is by Frank Hamilton Cushing, when he records the sounds of Zuni, Apache and Navajo tribal dances in 1889. Stevenson's plan therefore puts him at the forefront of technological innovators in ethnological studies.¹⁵

The idea of a lecture tour is less original but it has firmer foundations. Herman Melville, one of Stevenson's literary precursors in the Pacific, after publishing two books on the region (*Typee* and *Omoo*) spends three seasons on the lecture circuit. From 1857-1860 he tours numerous towns and cities in the United States and Canada, speaking among other subjects on the South Seas.¹⁶ Stevenson will have had a similar idea for his own proposed lecture tour, primarily for the financial benefits that a famous author such as himself could expect to reap. With these possibilities racing through his mind a formal agreement is made on 20 March 1888 that McClure will sell the letters that the

¹² McClure, pp. 191-2.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Erika Brady writes: 'The type of machine placed on the market in 1888 was modest in size, no larger than the typewriters or sewing machines of the period. In its modern carrying case, it weighed between thirty and thirty-five pounds: not a negligible weight, but easy enough to carry by its handle with one hand.' Erika Brady, *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), p. 21.

¹⁵ Brady, pp. 54, 56-7. For more on the links between Stevenson and the history of anthropology see the following chapter of the present study, entitled 'Reflective Travel'.

¹⁶ Herman Melville, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. xlvii-l. Mark Twain also uses his Hawaiian/Sandwich Islands correspondence as the basis of a series of American lectures. *Exploration and Exchange: A South Seas Anthology, 1680-1900*, ed. by Jonathan Lamb, Vanessa Smith and Nicholas Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 275.

author writes from the South Seas 'to syndicates of newspapers, (or such other periodicals as we may agree upon), in all countries where such sales can be effected.'¹⁷ McClure will take a quarter of the proceeds of the sale from Stevenson.

Stevenson and his family, consisting of his mother Margaret, his wife Fanny, and his step-son Lloyd, set sail from San Francisco on the yacht *Casco* bound for the Marquesas Islands on 28 June 1888 (see map, fig. 1 below). By early 1889, McClure has arranged to syndicate the soon-to-follow South Sea Letters to the New York *Sun* in the United States, and later, to the London journal, *Black and White*. The Letters are also published at roughly the same time in the *Sydney Telegraph* and in the *Auckland Star*.

Meanwhile Stevenson writes to his friends that he is travelling to the Pacific in search of health and rest. The opening lines of *In the South Seas* confirm the same:

For nearly ten years my health had been declining; and for some while before I set forth upon my voyage, I believed I was come to the afterpiece of life, and had only the nurse and undertaker to expect. It was suggested that I should try the South Seas; and I was not unwilling to visit like a ghost, and be carried like a bale, among scenes that had attracted me in youth and health.¹⁸

After arriving in the Marquesas Islands on 20 July 1888, he proceeds to visit the Paumotus Islands (see list of place names in Appendix A) on 9 September 1888, Tahiti on 27 September, and Hawai'i on 24 January 1889. After staying there for six months, he travels on a schooner, the *Equator*, to the Gilbert Islands on 13 July 1889, and he later moves on to Samoa on 7 December 1889. He also keeps a journal and makes notes on all of these places.¹⁹

There is no doubt that Stevenson has been thinking about writing a book on the Pacific Islands for some time. When he was a young boy, he had begun writing a novel called 'Creek Island, or Adventures in the Pacific'. The

¹⁷ McClure, pp. 191-2.

¹⁸ *In the South Seas*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1900), p. 1. Hereafter this edition of the text will be referred to in the footnotes simply as *South Seas*.

¹⁹ See J R Hammond, *A Robert Louis Stevenson Chronology* (London: Macmillan, 1997). A visitor to Stevenson's library at Vailima, his home in Samoa, notes: 'In a corner I found a number of quarto volumes, well bound, containing apparently a continuous day-book of some of Stevenson's many voyages.' A W Mahaffy, 'A Visit to the Library of R. L. Stevenson, at Vailima, Samoa', *The Spectator* (Nov. 30, 1895), 762-3.

actual location of his novel *Treasure Island* has been the subject of speculation, many commentators wondering whether it lies somewhere in the Pacific, although Stevenson has himself denied it²⁰. During his travels in 1888-90 he reads widely on the area, his material ranging from discourses on folklore and evolutionary theory to studies of the different Pacific island languages, to literature that deals with seafaring and navigation. In both his letters and his other writing Stevenson refers to scholarly texts on the South Seas such as Clary Wilmot's *Notice sur l'archipel des iles Tuamotu*, R H Codrington's *The Melanesian Languages*, and Alexander Findlay's *A Directory for the Navigation of the South Pacific Ocean*.²¹

²⁰ 'Mr Stevenson smiled humorously. "Treasure Island", he said, "is not in the Pacific."' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February 1890) Quoted by Rennie in his Introduction to *In the South Seas*, ed. by Rennie, p. viii.

²¹ *South Seas*, pp. 6, 33, 173. See the following chapters of the present study for a discussion of the influence of these and other texts on Stevenson's formulation of 'The South Seas'.

Sam McClure probably sends Stevenson a copy of the *Directory* while he is staying at Saranac Lake.²² Alexander Findlay describes his own work as being synthetic, not exploratory, and that he aimed to produce 'a hydrographical memoir, in a comprehensive and accessible form, from the mire of materials contained in the volumes which have been written on the Pacific.'²³ The book is to become a constant companion during Stevenson's travels, to the extent that his perception of Pacific landscape – whether consciously or not – is sometimes shaped by it. For example, Findlay had written of the Marquesan island of Ua-pu: 'In its central part are some curious peaks, resembling a group of church spires at a distance.'²⁴ Stevenson, adding a lyrical gloss to his description of the same view in *In the South Seas*, writes: 'the first rays of the sun displayed the needles of Ua-pu. These pricked about the line of the horizon; like the pinnacles of some ornate and monstrous church, they stood there'.²⁵ As with his critical reading of Melville's Pacific romances, however, Stevenson does not always acquiesce in his predecessor's viewpoints. In a later section of *In the South Seas*, he writes of a path in one of the Gilbert Islands which leads toward the sea, and mounts abruptly 'to the main level of the island – twenty or even thirty feet, although Findlay gives five'.²⁶

Pacific travel quickly brings affirmations of knowledge that make Stevenson enthusiastic about writing a more expansive text. He writes to his friend, Charles Baxter, while he is at sea between the Marquesas Islands and Tahiti, claiming that 'I shall have a fine book of travels, I feel sure; and will tell you more of the South Seas after very few months than any other writer.'²⁷ His confidence is matched by his work rate. A year and a half after he sets foot on his first Pacific island he is writing to his editor in London, Sidney Colvin, to outline his plans for a book about the South Seas. On 2 December 1889 he

²² Peter Lyon, *Success Story: The Life and Times of S S McClure* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 91. Neil Rennie informs that Stevenson is in possession of the Fifth Edition of Findlay's book, which was published in 1884 (London: R H Laurie). *In the South Seas*, ed. by Rennie, p. 259.

²³ Findlay, 'Preface'.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 810.

²⁵ *South Seas*, p. 3.

²⁶ *South Seas*, pp. 289-90.

²⁷ *Letters*, vi, p. 207.

writes eagerly from the schooner *Equator*, at sea 190 miles off the coast of Samoa:

My book is now practically modelled: if I can execute what is designed, there are few better books now extant on this globe; bar the epics, and the big tragedies, and histories, and the choice lyric poetics, and a novel or so – none...nobody has had such stuff; such wild stories, such beautiful scenes, such singular intimacies, such manners and traditions, so incredible a mixture of the beautiful and the horrible, the savage and civilized. I will give you here some idea of the table of contents, which ought to make your mouth water. I propose to call the book – *The South Seas* – it is rather a large title, but not many people have seen more of them than I; perhaps no one: certainly no one capable of using the material.²⁸

At this stage, there is no mistaking the enthusiasm of the author for his proposed work. Indeed, he imagines it will make Colvin's 'mouth water' just to read the proposed contents. Eighteen months of travel in the Pacific have been inspiring and productive enough for him to push on beyond the deal for the South Sea letters that he has made with McClure and to imagine a single work that is comparable to 'the epics, and the big tragedies, and histories'. The attraction of writing a book on the Pacific Islands is the 'mixture of the beautiful and the horrible, the savage and civilized.' He is also confident about his ability to write such a book, claiming that 'no one capable of using the material' has 'seen more of [the South Seas] than I'.

Following from his idea to write a scholarly work about the Pacific, he writes to Baxter on 9 October 1888, telling him what he should expect in the way of materials that he would subsequently convert into book form:

You will receive a lot of mostly very bad proofs of photographs: the paper was so bad. Please keep them very private, as they are for the book... I hope the book will be a good one; nor do I really very much doubt that – the stuff is so curious; what I wonder is if the public will rise to it. A copy of my journal, or as much of it as is made, shall go to you also: it is, of course, quite imperfect, much being to be added and corrected.²⁹

Stevenson plans to illustrate his book with photos that he has taken, stating that the quality of the paper he has used is bad. The relationship between the uses of photography in Victorian ethnological studies and Stevenson's use of

²⁸ *Letters*, VI, p. 335.

²⁹ *Letters*, VI, p. 211.

photographs for 'The South Seas' is discussed in the following chapter. Stevenson and his family take several hundred photographs during their travels in the Pacific, such as the one below (Fig. 2) of the author and his wife sitting with a Gilbertese couple:



Fig. 2: Stevenson and his wife in Butaritari with Nantok' and Natakauti.

The couple are Nantok' and his wife Natakauti, who is one of the most powerful people on the island of Butaritari. Stevenson intends to use many of the photographs as illustrations for specific points made in his book.³⁰ He also writes to the French author Marcel Schwob in February 1890 informing that his stepson Lloyd will be in Paris soon 'to arrange about illustrations to my *South Seas*'.³¹ Furthermore, he intends to send Charles Baxter a copy of his journal, which he is writing as he travels on the *Casco*. Since he is still writing his notes and impressions about the place, as well as taking pictures, it is not likely that he has begun writing the *South Seas* book at this stage.

Stevenson is in no doubt that the book will be good but as he states in his letter to Baxter ('what I wonder is if the public will rise to it'), he is unsure whether it will be successful given the preferences of his regular readership. The question of success is important to him because of the heavy cost of the *South Seas* journey and the addition to his family entourage of his

³⁰ See Colley, *Colonial Imagination*, pp. 99-134, for a general discussion about Stevenson's intentions with the photographs.

³¹ *Letters*, vi, p. 400. On 10 May, 1891, in a letter to his American publisher, E L Burlingame, Stevenson marks 'The South Seas' at the top of a list of prospective works, adding the note: 'in 2 vols, illustrated'. *Letters*, vi, p. 119.

stepdaughter Belle Strong and her family in Hawai'i. In addition to these pressures there is also the sense that the long-awaited follow-up to *Kidnapped* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (both 1886) should live up to the high standards raised by these predecessors. In April 1889, he writes to Colvin about his plans for 'The South Seas', stating that 'if we can pull [the journey] off in safety, [it] gives me a fine book of travel...which should vastly better our finances.'³²

The conflict between scholarly and commercial incentives for producing the book is one that continues to trouble him, and to lead to him into a lot of trouble with his friends and family, throughout his years in the Pacific. Shortly before departing from San Francisco, in May 1888, Stevenson writes to inform his friend Lady Taylor about his trip: '...an early letter would probably catch us at the Sandwich Islands. Tahiti will probably be the second point; and (as I roughly guess) Quito the third. But the whole future is invested with heavenly clouds.'³³ From this outline it can be seen how 'The South Seas' is essentially formulated while in transit. The commercial ideas originate first – these are outlined in the plans made with McClure; then follow the scholarly ones, which are a product of Stevenson's own travel and research.

A cautious and methodical interest in the cultures of South Sea Islanders can be discerned in Stevenson from his activities during this period. For example, in the middle of 1889 he writes to comment on the Reverend Sereno E Bishop's paper given in November 1888 at the Honolulu Social Science Association under the title: 'Why are the Hawaiians Dying out? or, Elements of Disability for Survival Among the Hawaiian People.'³⁴ Bishop, who describes Hawaii as 'an Eden in salubrity', states his aim at the beginning of the paper:

We want to quit vagueness and generalities, and find the answer to the question, "In what respects, particularly and precisely, are the Hawaiian people weaker than their white, or their Mongoloid guests?" This will prepare us for the

³² *Letters*, vi, p. 275.

³³ *Letters*, vi, p. 185.

³⁴ *Letters*, vi, p. 308.

further enquiry, by what means can this weak race be so invigorated that it will again multiply?³⁵

He proceeds to explain the causes in the following order of importance: 1. Chastity – specifically its absence among the Hawaiians; 2. Drunkenness; 3. Oppression by the Chiefs; 4. Infections and Epidemic diseases; 5. Kahunas and Sorcery; 6. Idolatry; 7. Wifeless Chinese. He then lists some of the ‘many sanative and restorative agencies at work’ to counter these factors: 1. Government and medical aid; 2. Hygienic instruction; 3. School Education; 4. Christian Instruction.³⁶

Stevenson writes to Bishop in May or June 1889 with a number of thinly-veiled criticisms of his paper. Overturning Bishop's view that the practice of forcing them to dress in western clothes was of minimal importance in the transmission of diseases among indigenes, Stevenson writes that:

These people have been taught to wear clothes, they wear them of the worst kind, and they continue habits only consistent with practical nudity.³⁷

He then comments on Bishop's criticism of elements of the old native religion – idolatry and the practice of sorcery by native Kahunas – which had been formally abolished by King Liholiho during his reign over the islands in the years 1819-1824:

That the old religion was a pretty bad one I do not think I would dare to controvert; but if there is one thing stranger than another, it is the way in which our race gets along with (and sucks profit from) the worst religions. When all ancient sanctions are broken, no matter how imperfect they are, we must expect a *debacle*.³⁸

The moral basis of Stevenson's argument is formed by his clear perception of the destruction of Hawaiian life and traditions by the white presence on the islands. Far from defending a single group from an ideological standpoint, however, he attempts to give voice to the helplessness of native Hawaiians to

³⁵ Sereno Edwards Bishop, 'Why are the Hawaiians Dying Out?: Or, Elements of Disability for Survival Among the Hawaiian People', (Honolulu: [n. pub], 1888), pp. 2-3.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *Letters*, vi, pp. 308-9.

³⁸ *ibid.*

avert the tragedy that is befalling their culture. He observes of Bishop's views that 'In your interesting differentiation between the sexual irregularities of yore and of today, I scarce think you dwelt strongly enough on the fact that of yore they were *moral*, today they are *immoral*', reminding his correspondent of the violence that has been done not only to the people but also to the meaning of native traditions by the foreign powers.³⁹

Stevenson returns to challenge Bishop in Chapter V of *In the South Seas*, stating that although Bishop's paper 'contains real information', it 'would have been changed by an acquaintance with other groups.' By this time, he is feeling confident enough about his own knowledge of modern Hawaiian history to make the following extraordinary assertion:

Where there have been fewest changes, important or unimportant, salutary or hurtful, there the race survives. Where there have been most, important or unimportant, salutary or hurtful, there it perishes. Each change, however small, augments the sum of new conditions to which the race has to become inured.⁴⁰

Instead of offering a lament for the decline of the Hawaiian people, his response to the views of Bishop is tactful – Hawaiians are dying in large numbers due to changes in their society, but the numbers are relative to the extent of the changes, indicating that Stevenson now believes that they are not simply a helpless group who are completely at the mercy of the colonial powers. Furthermore, the definition of change is all-encompassing, meaning that Stevenson sees no difference between the 'civilising' activities of missionaries and the 'corrupting' influence of traders and beachcombers: all contribute to the 'new conditions to which the race has to become inured.' The subtle but decisive difference in Stevenson's attitude to the Western colonisation of the Pacific comes about through the preparation of months of travel and observation between his letter to Bishop and his composition of the draft of 'The South Seas'.

From the perspective of such a complex personal involvement in Hawaiian society, Stevenson's plans for 'The South Seas' appear to be

³⁹ It is interesting concerning the discussion that will follow in chapter 5 of the present study that Stevenson is also here defending survivals of the former Hawaiian religion.

⁴⁰ *South Seas*, p. 41. He adds: 'Experience begins to show us (at least in Polynesian Islands) that change of habit is bloodier than a bombardment.' (p. 42).

entirely altruistic, but despite this he never loses sight of the fact that his finances will be shaped by how well his current projects turn out.⁴¹ The large expenses of the South Seas trip were initially designed to be covered by the profits accrued from the Big Book.⁴² To Charles Baxter, around the same time as his letter to Bishop, he writes, 'I do hope my new books will sell, for this is a tight place to pass, and if I can pass it, and the lecture and panorama pays, I shall feel safer for the future.'⁴³ The reference to panoramas opens another perspective on Stevenson's aims with his South Seas work. Panoramas are large, painted circular tableaux, designed to be viewed from the centre of a round building or room. They are often the centrepiece of international exhibitions.⁴⁴ In Stevenson's day the fashion is to depict scenes of travel and faraway places. The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889 contains an exhibit titled 'Le Village Canaque', depicting Melanesians from New Caledonia. A 'South Sea Islands Village' inhabited by 25 natives from Samoa and other islands of the Pacific had been an attraction at the Chicago World's Columbian exposition of 1893.⁴⁵

A few months after his letter to Baxter, Stevenson writes to Colvin that besides his 'book of travel', he also hopes that his tour will result in 'a fine lecture and diorama' for Lloyd [Osbourne] and Joe Strong, his stepson and son-in-law respectively. Possibly in these months he changes his mind as to who would actually be presenting the lecture show.⁴⁶ Stevenson sends an article, 'A Samoan Sketchbook', with 11 illustrations and a drawing, to McClure on 10 March 1889, hoping to make \$1000 from the sale. In the letter

⁴¹ 'After the spring of 1888, RLS's income was derived entirely from his writings; the amounts he could spend were dependent on payments for magazine articles, serial rights and publishers' advances and royalties for books...His financial condition at various times in the late 1880s and the 1890s is noted in connection with the monetary success or failure of his literary output.' McKay, *Some Notes*, p. 7.

⁴² See Harman, p. 355 for more information on the situation of his finances prior to travel.

⁴³ *Letters*, vi, p. 318.

⁴⁴ The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889 attracts 32 million people. Four years later, the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago is attended by 28 million people. See Maxwell, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Burton Benedict, 'International Exhibitions and National Identity', *Anthropology Today*, 7.3 (June 1991), 5-9 (pp. 6, 8). Stevenson almost writes a piece on the Chicago Exhibition in May 1893 for E L Burlingame's magazine, *Scribners*. *Letters*, viii, 3n.

⁴⁶ *Letters*, vi, p. 275. On 5 October 1889, Lloyd Osbourne records in his diary: 'Discussed plans with Louis. Give up lecture scheme until return home.' (*Letters*, vi, p. 331.) See also Ann C. Colley's discussion of Stevenson's plans to build a diorama in *Colonial Imagination*, p. 115-6.

he tells McClure to forward the piece to the *Illustrated London News* if he does not like it.⁴⁷

Later, in August 1890, Stevenson writes to his friend Andrew Lang, commenting on a point of debate between Lang and another writer about Gilbertese burial customs.⁴⁸ One of the founding members of the British Folklore Society, Lang is given a photograph and the following commentary by Stevenson:

I observed with a great deal of surprise and interest that a controversy in which you have been taking sides at home, in yellow London, hinges in part at least on the Gilbert Islands and their customs in burial. Nearly six months of my life has been passed in the Group; I have revisited but the other day; and I make haste to tell you what I know. The upright stones – I enclose you a photograph of one on Apemama – are certainly connected with religion; I do not think they are adored. They stand usually on the windward shore of the islands, that is to say, apart from habitation. (On *inclosed islands*, where the people live on the sea side, I do not know how it is, never having lived on one.) I gathered from Tembinoka, Rex Apemamae, that these pillars were supposed to fortify the island from invasion: spiritual martellos. I think he indicated they were connected with the cult of Tenti – pronounced almost as chintz in English, the t being explosive; but you must take this with a grain of salt, for I know no word of Gilbert Island, and the King's English, although creditable, is rather vigorous than exact. Now here follows the point of interest to you: such pillars, or standing stones, have no connection with the graves. The most elaborate grave that I have ever seen in the Group – to be certain – is in the form of a *raised* border of gravel, usually strewn with broken glass. One, of which I cannot be sure that it was a grave, for I was told by one that it was and by another that it was not – consisted of a mound about breast high in an excavated taro swamp, on the top of which was a child's house or rather *moniapa* – that is to say, shed, or open house, such as is used in the group for social or political gatherings – so small that only a child could creep under its eaves. I have heard of another great tomb on Apemama, which I did not see; but here again, by all accounts, no sign of a standing stone. My report would be: no connection between standing stones and sepulture.⁴⁹

Stevenson confirms the basis of an argument that Lang subsequently makes in London against the theories of another writer, Grant Allen, that the sacredness of stones do not necessarily arise from their having functioned as

⁴⁷ *Letters*, vi, p. 267.

⁴⁸ *Letters*, vi, p. 416.

⁴⁹ *Letters*, vi, pp. 416-7.

gravestones.⁵⁰ Stevenson also contributes to Lang's argument in these years with the anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (see chapter 5) that ideas of divine belief are not completely explained with reference to their origins in animism.⁵¹ Lang uses the information that Stevenson gives him to support his own position in regard of *tapu* in his two-volume work, *Magic and Religion*⁵².

In the month following his letter to Lang about the Gilbertese stones, Stevenson gives a speech in Apia, Samoa, before the British missionary James Chalmers' lecture on New Guinea.⁵³ Chalmers had produced a study about the island following his time there, *Pioneering in New Guinea*. The preface to this text states that

The circumstances of the author's work gave him a unique position in the Great Papuan Island. He was well known to many of the tribes, and he was the personal friend of many of the chiefs. He travelled up and down in all of its accessible districts, so that both the villages and their inhabitants became more familiar to him than to any other white man.⁵⁴

Stevenson's method of collecting information for 'The South Seas' is similarly active, combining intense reading of texts such as Chalmers' with first-hand experience of the various societies described therein. After meeting him for the first time that month, Stevenson invites Chalmers to stay with him at his Vailima estate on the Samoan island of Upolu. He grows to idolize the missionary, describing him as a hero and claiming his influence on him to be similar to David Livingstone's on Henry Stanley.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ 'Professor Tylor had used "Animism", or the ghost theory, as the origin of religion, but Lang, after a careful study of Australian creeds and legends, ventured upon a new suggestion; that the earliest and most natural belief of primitive man was in a single God the Creator, the righteous Maker and Judge of men, and that degradation rather than evolution had followed in the wake of the earliest stages of civilization.' Roger Lancelyn Green, *Andrew Lang: A Critical Biography with a short-title Bibliography of the works of Andrew Lang* (Leicester: E Ward, 1846), p. 73.

⁵² Andrew Lang, *Magic and Religion* (London: Longmans & Co., 1901)

⁵³ *Letters*, VII, p. 11.

⁵⁴ James Chalmers, *Pioneering in New Guinea* (London: The Religious Tract Society, c.1887).

⁵⁵ Stevenson writes to Colvin on 24 December 1890: 'I want you to get *Pioneering in New Guinea* by J. Chalmers. It's a missionary book, and has less pretensions to be literature than Spurgeon's sermons. Yet I think even though that, you will see some of the traits of the hero that wrote it; a man that took me fairly by storm; for the most attractive, simple, brave, and interesting man in the whole Pacific. He is away now to go up the Fly River: a desperate venture, it is thought; he is quite a Livingstone card.' *Letters*, VII, p. 59.

From *Pioneering in New Guinea* it is also clear that Chalmers has a political affinity with Stevenson. In this book he states, 'It is open to hope that for once we may not exterminate a race in the process of ruling it...Christianity alone can protect and civilise these people.'⁵⁶ Chalmers fears that the British handover of power in New Guinea to the Australian territory of Queensland will harm the indigenous population due to the latter state's reputation for ruthless exploitation of Pacific island resources.⁵⁷ He aims to empower native people through Christianity. From a modern-day perspective this might appear naïve, but it stands as the only choice within the context of Chalmers' loyalty toward both the people of New Guinea and Christianity. Chalmers' liminal position – as a missionary who is representing the imperial power but defending the islanders against the excesses of colonialism – impresses Stevenson from a moral point of view.

Several of Stevenson's contemporaries have recorded that he had given lectures during his time in the South Seas. The Reverend Arthur E Claxton remembers a talk given by the author at the English Church in Apia, Samoa, which is attended by 'about eighty persons of many nationalities.'⁵⁸ Another English missionary in Samoa, W E Clarke, recalls 'two occasions on which he made a public appearance. One was a lecture on the Marquesas, which he gave on behalf of the church funds; the other was a reading at an entertainment for some charitable object, at which he read the chapter on the hurricane from 'A Footnote to History', not then published.'⁵⁹ Clarke also notes that Stevenson had taught a group of children at the Sunday School of the European Church at Apia.⁶⁰ In September 1893, during a return visit to Hawaii, Stevenson gives a lecture at the Thistle Club on 'that long drawn-out brawl entitled the History of Scotland'.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Chalmers, 'Preface'.

⁵⁷ See J W Davidson, 'The Pacific and its Peoples', in *Pacific Islands Portraits*, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁸ A E Claxton, 'Stevenson as I knew him in Samoa', in *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Rosaline Masson (London: W & R Chambers, 1925), pp. 247-254 (p. 251).

⁵⁹ W E Clarke, 'The Misspent Sunday', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. by R C Terry (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1996), pp. 164-169 (p. 167).

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 166.

⁶¹ Robert Catton, 'Memories of R L S', in *I Can Remember Stevenson*, pp. 239-40.

Stevenson is therefore connected to a number of scholarly individuals who have a historical or an anthropological interest in the South Seas.⁶² Yet, despite his enthusiasm to produce a scientific book about the Pacific Islands, it must be wondered whether a novelist and literary essayist who has no serious experience of scholarly writing could realistically carry through such plans. He realises from an early point that his project will be a struggle. It would be a serious challenge for a capable writer in full health and with time to spare to produce 'The South Seas' in the way Stevenson envisages it; in the meantime, he is also engaged in writing two large novels: *The Master of Ballantrae*, a historical drama set in Scotland; and *The Wrecker*, an adventure mystery partly set in the Pacific, which he is co-writing with his stepson. *The Master of Ballantrae* is completed in May 1889 or thereabouts, according to letters that Stevenson writes confirming the same.⁶³ He writes to Colvin about the progress of *The Wrecker* in September 1889.⁶⁴ Whatever time that remains between these two major literary projects would be devoted to exploring and recording his discoveries in the Pacific.

Although his workload as a writer never diminishes during his later years, his unpredictable health is likely to obstruct progress at any moment. An invalid all his life, even the restful air of the Pacific Islands cannot guarantee his well-being. In Papeete, Tahiti, in September 1888 he becomes too ill to write, and for several weeks thereafter he rests in a small house with his wife. The following month, in Tautira, a Tahitian village, he collapses and spends the remainder of that year resting and recovering his health.⁶⁵ It is presumably due to these illnesses that he does not write any 'Letters' on Tahiti, although he collects and attempts to translate Tahitian songs, poems and stories.

⁶² Two other missionaries known to Stevenson in Samoa, Samuel James Whitmee and J E Newell, write books on anthropology and related matters in the Pacific. Whitmee produces, among other works, *On Our Present Knowledge of the Languages of Polynesia* (1878) and *The Ethnology of the Pacific* (1879), and he also edits *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (1878). Newell produces *Chief's Language in Samoa* (1893). Whitmee, of the London Missionary Society, is also the first missionary to take Christianity to the Southern Gilbert Islands. Tony Whincup, *Nareau's Nation: A Portrait of the Gilbert Islands* (London: Stacey International, 1979), p. 15.

⁶³ *Letters*, vi, p. 301.

⁶⁴ *Letters*, vi, p. 330.

⁶⁵ Hammond, p. 58.

Tahiti is not the only place in the South Seas where his health breaks down. Writing from Honolulu, Hawai'i on 9 May 1889, he tells Baxter that he has just recovered from another serious illness:

...overwork brought on a very distressing attack of blood to the head, so that I could scarcely see, scarcely understand what was said to me, and presented by way of face a purple expanse only enlivened by a pair of white lips.⁶⁶

Despite the setback he continues to collect poetry, songs and stories in Hawaii, where he also makes an effort to learn the native language.⁶⁷ Stevenson becomes friends with Hawaii's King Kalakaua, who is 'a mine of information' on 'Polynesian lore and antiquities'. Together they discuss subjects of Hawaiian folklore as well as the work of western enthusiasts such as Max Müller and Herbert Spencer.⁶⁸

In the Gilbert Islands, which is the last major island group that he visits before arriving in Samoa, he spends several weeks living in the company of King Tembinok', who he describes in vivid detail in the final part of *In the South Seas*. He learns much about the customs and manners of these islands from the King and from his relationship with his subjects. Stevenson also understands from the Gilbertese ruler that there are ways of controlling the seemingly irresistible tide of western invasion and settlement. Tembinok' rules his people with modern weapons and a despotic grip, but in taking such barbaric steps he is also able to make crucial decisions with western traders that ensure that the balance of power in the flow of goods and ideas remains on the Gilbertese side at least until his death in November 1891.⁶⁹ It is as

⁶⁶ *Letters*, vi, p. 294.

⁶⁷ Writing to Colvin from Honolulu, Stevenson claims: 'I am studying Hawaiian with a native, a Mr. Joseph Poe Poe'. [*Letters* vi, p. 265 (c.8 March 1889).] Later, in the years that he lives on his Vailima estate, 1890-94, he takes lessons in Samoan from his friend, the missionary Samuel James Whitmee: 'I can read Samoan now, though not speak it', he writes to Colvin on 1 May 1892. *Letters*, vii, p. 275.

⁶⁸ Lloyd Osbourne, *An Intimate Portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 91.

⁶⁹ H E Maude, 'Baitete and Binoka of Abemama: Arbiters of change in the Gilbert Islands', in *Pacific Islands Portraits*, pp. 201-224.

Stevenson is leaving the Gilbert Islands, in October 1889, that he draws up his first plan for 'The South Seas'.⁷⁰

Planning 'The South Seas'

There are no published documents relating to Stevenson's complete plans for 'The South Seas'. The only manuscript source that provides any information about these plans is the Huntington Library manuscript, MS 2421, which consists of a draft of the original contents of 'The South Seas', written in Stevenson's own hand. It is written, according to the bibliographer Roger Swearingen, on 'yellow wove paper, 7 ¾ inches by 12 ¼ inches, ruled on the front only with horizontal blue lines and a left-hand side margin consisting of a double rule in red.'⁷¹ This is the day-to-day paper used by the author for writing notes with the intention of later revision. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Stevenson slightly amends the first draft of his plan for 'The South Seas' when he writes describing its details to Sidney Colvin a few weeks later (see below).

The first page of the Huntington manuscript is the title page, on which is written in Stevenson's hand: 'THE SOUTH SEAS: A RECORD OF TWO YEARS' TRAVEL/ with/ Sketches of scenery, manners, history, legend and song/ by/ Robert Louis Stevenson'. Above 'TWO YEARS' is written '3 cruises'. It is instructive to compare this title with the one that is eventually published in 1900 by Chatto & Windus (itself a re-print of the 1896 Edinburgh edition of Stevenson's collected works). The title-page of the latter reads: 'IN THE SOUTH SEAS/ BEING AN ACCOUNT OF EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS IN THE MARQUESAS, PAUMOTUS AND GILBERT ISLANDS IN THE COURSE OF TWO CRUISES, ON THE YACHT 'CASCO' (1888) AND THE SCHOONER 'EQUATOR' (1889) BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'. The latter is more limited in scope, and offers more direct information about the author, in terms of the vessels on which he travels, than

⁷⁰ This is speculated by Roger Swearingen on the basis of Stevenson's other writings of the period. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 135.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

the earlier draft. A shift in the conception of the work, from scholarly/scientific to popular/journalistic, has therefore already taken place in the re-naming of the book.

There follows in the draft a page that Swearingen describes as a 'false start' by the author. On the following three pages are recorded the bulk of Stevenson's earliest plans for 'The South Seas'.

Part I is to be titled, 'Of Schooners, Islands and Maroons', after the introductory poem he writes in *Treasure Island* – 'To the Hesitating Purchaser'.⁷² It is to be divided into four chapters: 'I. Seafaring. II. Contraband. III. Beachcombers. General case. and IV. Three beachcombers'. Each chapter is augmented with notes on its likely contents. In 'Seafaring', these are: 'The South Seas; Islands; Continual movement; windward movement; ancient era of navigation; diffusion of castaways; maroons; whalers; trade of today; schooners'. He adds after 'schooners' the words 'compared with English', presumably relating different approaches to trade and types of trading vessel in the South Seas. This is followed by a note that appears to read '9/12 of Tonnes' (?).⁷³ There follow plans for sub-sections on 'trade debts; passengers; light winds; squalls; currents; light trading; recklessness; (whale boats, flying prows); charts; cabined caves (?); navigation of martial [illegible]; meyas (?) voyage; [illegible] fuells; men of war calling'. This opening chapter appears to be devoted to nautical concerns and

⁷² 'If sailor tales to sailor tunes,
Storm and adventure, heat and cold,
If schooners, islands, and maroons,
And buccaneers, and buried gold,
And all the old romance, retold
Exactly in the ancient way,
Can please, as me they pleased of old,
The wiser youngsters of today:

--So be it, and fall on! If not,
If studious youth no longer crave,
His ancient appetites forgot,
Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave,
Or Cooper of the wood and wave:
So be it, also! And may I
And all my pirates share the grave
Where these and their creations lie!

From Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, ed. by Wendy Katz (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 7.

⁷³ Some of the words in the Huntington manuscript are unclear. Such instances will be denoted hereafter by a question mark within brackets (?).

much of the language used to head even the subsections is technical. On the one hand, it reflects Stevenson's reading of texts such as Alexander Findlay's *Directory for the Navigation of the South Pacific Ocean*.⁷⁴ However, it also points to his understanding of the historical significance of the introduction to Pacific life of Western techniques of navigation. It is only through the development of this discipline during the eighteenth century that scientific and commercial expeditions such as those of Cook and Darwin become feasible.⁷⁵

None of these passages is included in the first edition of *In the South Seas* (1896) edited by Colvin. Interestingly, however, another Pacific novel on which Stevenson collaborates with Lloyd Osbourne, *The Ebb-Tide*, includes as 'fiction' much of the information that is promised in this outline, and counts among its main characters three South Seas beachcombers.⁷⁶ Combined with the reference to *Treasure Island*, this suggests that Stevenson later decides to present the information of the opening chapter in a purely fictional form.

In the margins of the plan for 'The South Seas' are notes, also made by the author, presumably at a later date, either when he remembers some detail that he thinks should also be included, or when he begins to list the likely order of the 'Letters' from the South Seas for Sam McClure that he will 'quarry' from his notes for 'The South Seas'. In the left-hand margins of the section on 'Seafaring' he adds the words 'The Equator' (the name of the schooner that Stevenson and his family travelled in between Hawaii, the Gilberts, and Samoa in 1889), and 'wreck', the latter possibly referring to the

⁷⁴ Section 4 of Findlay's *Directory* is titled: 'The Phenomena of, and directions for, the South Pacific Ocean'. It lists the following information: 'The Winds of the South Pacific Ocean'; 'The Currents'; 'Tides, magnetism, ice'; 'Density, temperature, depth, & c.'; 'Passages'.

⁷⁵ 'The scientific examination of the Pacific, by its very nature, depended upon the level reached by the art of navigation.' Smith, *European Vision*, p. 2.

⁷⁶ 'Throughout the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease. Some prosper, some vegetate. Some have mounted the steps of thrones and owned islands and navies. Others again must marry for a livelihood; a strapping, merry, chocolate-coloured dame supports them in sheer idleness; and, dressed like natives, but still retaining some foreign element of gait or attitude, still perhaps with some relic (such as a single eye-glass) of the officer and gentleman, they sprawl in palm-leaf verandahs and entertain an island audience with memoirs of the music-hall. And there are still others, less pliable, less capable, less fortunate, perhaps less base, who continue, even in these isles of plenty, to lack bread.

At the far end of the town of Papeete, three such men were seated on the beach under a purao tree.' The above is the opening passage of *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and a Quartette* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

photograph of the wreck of a ship at Penryn taken by the Stevenson family (see chapter 2, figure 6).

Chapter II, 'Contraband' has beside it the marginal note 'Letters II', which Stevenson probably adds later, as he is dividing up his planned book for the installments that are to be published in serialised form. This chapter is nevertheless not published as a Letter as far as the records of the four journals in which 'The South Seas' is serialised have shown. Herman Melville has also written on the subject of contraband and Pacific smugglers in *Omoo*, which Stevenson has read⁷⁷: The question is not one of the originality – except in places – of the subjects of 'The South Seas' but the originality of the formulation in which these subjects are given shape. Whereas Melville decides to clothe his subjects in fiction, Stevenson only does so when he believes that it is no longer possible to proceed with a general study.

Accompanying the chapter title on Contraband are further notes on its contents. There are to be sections on: 'Insurance; lawmen; opium; Hayes and Pease⁷⁸; Stephens; The Skull Ship; The little cutter from Kualulu'. As with many of Stevenson's plans for the book, this chapter combines general studies of the subject at hand, including his customary interest in legal matters, with specific examples that are intended to support or provocatively contradict the major trends.

Stevenson sees and records many examples of the damage done to South Sea island cultures by the arrival of Europeans and Americans during the nineteenth century. His response to the destructiveness of the colonial enterprise is to draw attention to survivals and incongruities in island cultures.⁷⁹ One of his critics has pointed out that this form of observation denotes an aristocratic frame of mind, a comment that is supported by the

⁷⁷ See chapter 72: 'A Dealer in Contraband', in Herman Melville, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

⁷⁸ According to Stevenson's wife, 'Bully Hayes' and 'Bully Pease' are 'two somewhat picturesque desperadoes of the South Seas, now dead fortunately for the rest of the world.' [*The Cruise of the Janet Nichol among the South Sea Islands: a diary by Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (London, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004), p. 121.] In an essay by Stevenson that is unpublished in his own lifetime, 'Authors and Publishers', he writes of how 'The late lamented Bully Hayes, the pirate of the Pacific, used to visit islands (where he was sure that nobody could read), the bearer of a letter, which he would obligingly read out himself to the local trader; and that innocent was usually convinced and handed out his oil.' Stevenson, *The Lantern-Bearers and Other Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988), p. 260.

⁷⁹ See chapters 5 and 6 for further explorations of this theme.

fact that Stevenson seems most at home among kings, queens and figures of high authority in the South Seas.⁸⁰ However, this would be to ignore the full reach of his vision as it is outlined in his plans for 'The South Seas'. The following is a case in point: Chapter III, 'Beachcombers', lists the names of several individuals: 'Pukiki; McCallum; Cuthill; Benson; Captain Toms', and further down, 'Ben the Recluse; George Thugill'. A further line under the same general heading begins: 'Family; apparent time zones; chinamen; lags; negroes; Black Tom'. None of these sections are included in *In the South Seas*. Again there are marginal notes: 'Johnnie's house' and 'Tom's Bar'. Although the reasons for the absence of these chapters in the published form is not known, their coming to light suggests a different interpretation of Stevenson as a collector of cultural knowledge than the one that has been offered. The concentration of names of beachcombers implies a familiarity if not with the lives then at least with some of the stories of these men who occupy the lowest rungs of the (white) social ladder in the Pacific. In his original conception of 'The South Seas' it appears that Stevenson would have had as much to say about the poor and the dispossessed on these islands as about the wealthy and the powerful. This example also shows to what extent the critical image of Stevenson has been formed on the basis of unauthorized texts.

Chapter IV – 'Three Beachcombers', lists the following sub-sections: I. Cotton Song (?) and the murder of the Chinaman; II. The Death of Jim Byron⁸¹; III. Tom Intrem (?); IV. The apia blacksmith. To the left of these notes is written in the margin: 'Chinaman's House' and 'House of J. B.' and to the right of 'Tom Intrem' is written 'Letters V'. At this point, the proposed work has a distinctly romantic tone, concentrating on the dangers of the high seas, the criminal elements operating between land and sea, and the wastrels and jacks-of-all-trades who live on the beach. Numerous individual case studies are also planned. It must be remembered that these subjects are little known

⁸⁰ The point is made by Jeremy Treglown in his introduction to *In the South Seas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1987): 'For all the rebellious, bohemian aspect of Stevenson's emigration, though, his reaction against Victorian middle-class life was in many ways decidedly feudal and aristocratic. While there is no doubting the sincerity of his feelings for the people of Polynesia, those he got on best with and described most vividly were chiefs and kings.'

⁸¹ Jim Byron was an English trader who had been poisoned by a Swedish counterpart when they were drinking together at Manihiki in 1888. *Cruise of the Janet Nichol*, 202n.

to the audience that Stevenson is writing to in Europe and North America, and the question of the nature of the colonial Pacific is approached from a sharply critical angle.⁸² Furthermore, there is to be a lot of scientific and technical knowledge about seafaring and the logistics of trade in the South Pacific. Much of it is acquired second hand by the author, since we know that he uses Findlay's *Directory* as a guide⁸³; but it will have been new to the majority of his readers.

Part II of the planned work concentrates on the Marquesas Islands, and is divided into three chapters: 'Anaho', 'Taiohae', and 'Long Pig', which are to be descriptive accounts of places in these islands that Stevenson visits, interwoven with examinations of native practices. The chapter on Anaho is to include five sections. The first section, 'arrival', will include passages on 'making Nukuhiva [a Marquesan island]'; 'the first boat'; 'fifteen men on the cabin floor'; 'the gulph active at night'; 'farming the gulph'; and 'general considerations'. Presumably these latter are to be sections on the travelling conditions of Stevenson and his group. To the left of the notes is written the Marquesan place name, 'anaho', and to the right is another: 'Letters VI'. The second section is on 'Death', and the following passages are listed: 'Tari Coffin; Hatiheu by land; houses; statistics; games; suicide; funeral preparations; visiting the dead; superstitions; religion'. The following section is 'The Tapu', and contains: 'Kooamua [a Marquesan chief]; chiefs; the tapu; handprint; position of women; roads; bridges; bridge story'. To the left of these is a marginal note, 'Kooamua', and to the right is 'Letters VII'. Next is a section on 'morals', which includes 'their relaxation; adoption; kindness; idleness; cotton (?); norms of war; the cook; the tree watchers'. The final

⁸² In fact, an abandoned earlier draft of the first part alone (also in Huntington Library, HM 2421) is titled 'Whites in the Pacific', and examines this theme in terms of 'Seafaring', 'Crime at sea', and 'Beachcombers'. The list of sub-chapters for 'Crime at sea' would have made colonial officials' eyes water: Stevenson had planned to write about insurance, opium smugglers, the labour traffic, and barratry; subjects which, if more widely understood in the metropolis, will almost certainly have changed Victorian attitudes towards the imperial project in the Pacific region. This first draft is quickly abandoned by the author for the slightly less provocative second plan, but as with so much of the information he collects on his travels, he makes use of it in his fiction. In *The Wrecker* (London: Dover, 1982), for example, he writes: 'Smuggling is one of the meanest of crimes, for by that we rob a whole country *pro rata*, and are therefore certain to impoverish the poor: to smuggle opium is an offence particularly dark, since it stands related – not so much to murder, as to massacre.' (p. 173.)

⁸³ He describes 'the Directory (my only guide)' as being 'full of timid cautions'. *South Seas*, p. 6.

section of the chapter on Anaho is to be about 'Hoka'. It contains passages on 'the dance; Toma,' and 'our departure'. Interlinked with cultural description is the outline of a travel narrative. It is interesting that the chapter on death is in plan very similar to the version that appears in the published text, indicating that Stevenson has begun to think deeply about the subject from an early point in his travels. In chapter 5 the significance of this section within the overall scope of Stevenson's work in the South Seas is elaborated in greater detail.

The chapter on 'Taiohae' includes six sections, beginning with 'the voyage; first night' and 'church'. The next section is to be about the French presence on the island, including 'the residency; rynguard (?); prison hill; officials'. On the right is a note indicating that this is to comprise the subject of the eighth Letter of the proposed serialisation of 'The South Seas'. On the left is a note reading 'my sketch', which is unidentified. Following this is a section about the Royal Family, which includes 'Queen's place; the late king; the Queen' and 'Stanislao'. To the left is a note: 'the queen's leg', which is Stevenson's reminder to himself to write this passage about 'Queen' Vaekehu of Taiohae:

This was a queen of cannibals; she was tattooed from hand to foot, and perhaps the greatest masterpiece of that art now extant, so that a while ago, before she was grown prim, her leg was one of the sights of Tai-o-hae.⁸⁴

'Stanislao' refers to Stanislaio Moanatinini, the adopted son of Temoana, a Marquesan chief who the French had designated king of Taiohae.⁸⁵ The final three sections on Taiohae are to comprise of passages on 'opium; chiefless folk; the last of the Hapaa; the schools; the Bishop' and 'Hawaiian Missionary'. The last two sections are to form Letter IX, according to a marginal note. Stevenson also writes in the left-hand margin beside 'Hawaiian Missionary' the name of one such: 'Maka'.⁸⁶

The chapter on 'Long Pig' is to have seven sections, beginning with a general account of cannibalism in the South Seas, 'traces in islands;

⁸⁴ *South Seas*, p. 75.

⁸⁵ See Neil Rennie's note in his edition of *In the South Seas*, pp. 260-1.

⁸⁶ Stevenson's wife also mentions 'the Hawaiian missionary Maka and his wife Mary' in *Cruise of the Janet Nichol*, p. 57

overpopulation; infanticide; papey pits; the schoolboy; the matchboxes'. These are to form Letter X of the serialisation. Section two of 'Long Pig' is to form Letter XI, and will be a descriptive account of the bay of Hatiheu, comprising 'to Hatiheu by sea; the Virgin; the school; the high place'. Next there follows a section about 'the church; meeting with Michel', and 'the voyage'. On the left is a marginal note, 'the church'. Then there is a section that is to form Letter XII, beginning with 'Taahauku; the toad (?); Mapiao; the village; Poni; the gendarmes; the chief; the captain'. To the left are three marginal notes: 'village group', 'Pas' Kitchen' and 'fig: Poni's stick'. Since there are no illustrations in *In the South Seas* we must assume that this is at least not included by Colvin, if it appears at all. The next section is 'the vale of Atuona', and is to form Letter XIII. There follows 'Moipu' (Letter XIV), to which Stevenson appends on the left the words '2 chiefs'; 'moipu' and 'moipu's house'. The last section of the chapter is about 'Captain Hati', the South Seas pronunciation of Captain Hart, whom Stevenson meets on his travels in the Marquesas Islands. A marginal note indicates that it is to form Letter XV. Since much of the projected material on the Marquesas eventually finds its way into *In the South Seas*, we must assume that the critical and editorial apparatus surrounding Stevenson's texts is in general agreement with his writing on these islands. The main difference with the first part of the plan is that Part II is recognisably about a *place*, and can in outline at least be presented as a travel narrative, a form through which it is much easier to present the subject to a large audience that is accustomed to reading romantic fiction.

'Part III. The Dangerous Archipelago' is to be a study of the Paumotu Islands and a form of the same comprises the second part of the published *In the South Seas*. Here also, three chapters are slated for completion. Opening is 'the group', which is to be a general survey of island society, and includes 'Paumotuan characters; thrift; dishonesty; debts; industry; virtue; married affection; sects; the mormons; our voyage there; Fakarava'. On the left of these notes is an illegible mark, followed by 'The Grove', 'Fakarava', 'the lagoon', 'the catechist' and 'the house'. The next chapter is 'a house to let on a low island', which, according to the corresponding chapter of *In the South*

Seas, describes Stevenson's search for a house in the Paumotus.⁸⁷ It comprises of 'the catechist; the chapel; the house; the furniture; our life; gifts; Francis and his wife; his mother; the settlement'. There is a marginal note on the left, 'the house', and one on the right indicates that this will be Letter XVI. 'A Paumotuan funeral' is the closing chapter of this part, and this is published under the same title as Chapter 5 of the second part of *In the South Seas*. In his plan, Stevenson divides it into two sub-sections, to be written up also as Letters XVII and XVIII. The first part will include: 'a Paumotuan funeral; sickness; death; the widow's house; the funeral; the waking of the grave', and two notes in the left-hand margin are also added: 'the widow' and 'the churchyard'. The second part is to comprise of 'Tales of the Dead'.

'Part IV. Tahiti' is never written up by Stevenson, but the plans follow along the same lines as the earlier parts, with six chapters discussing a range of different aspects of the island.⁸⁸ The first chapter is about the capital, Papeete, and includes mention of 'Papeete, the voyage; Taianapu; the forest; the river; the village'. The second chapter is on 'village government in Tahiti', including 'the chief; the sub chief; the council; the elections; lawsuits; the cadastre (?); the newspaper; the school; the children; the churches'. Stevenson hopes to use this information to write Letter XIX from the South Seas. The next chapter is called 'A journey in quest of legends' (Letter XX), and the following one is 'Legends and songs'. Continuing the romantic trend of the author's vision of the work, he then includes a chapter to be called, simply, 'Life in Eden'. In several letters written from Tautira, Stevenson describes Tahiti as 'mere heaven' and as 'the most beautiful land on earth.'⁸⁹ This chapter is divided up as follows: 'Our first house; the priest; move on; the chief's house; the priest (included a second time with a Roman numeral '= III'); Cameron; the feast; making haithus (?); the scene; the Farehau.' These

⁸⁷ 'It was this solitude that put it in our minds to hire a house, and become, for the time being, indwellers of the isle – a practice I have ever since, when it was possible, adhered to.' Stevenson, *South Seas*, p. 160.

⁸⁸ He writes to Colvin on 6 September, 1891: 'One more thing about the *South Seas* in answer to a question I observe I have forgotten to answer. The Tahiti part has never turned up, because it has never been written.' *Letters*, vii, p. 137.

⁸⁹ *Letters*, vi, pp. 221, 223. Stevenson is not the first European to characterise Tahiti in this way. The French sailor Louis-Antoine De Bougainville has remarked of his stay on the island in 1768: 'Often I thought I was walking in the Garden of Eden.' Quoted by Herman Melville in *Omoo*, p. 66.

are also to form Letters XXI to XXIII of the serialised form of 'The South Seas'. On the left of these there are also two notes: 'the priest' and 'the feast'. Finally there is also to be a chapter about the French regiment stationed on the island.

'Part V. The Eight Islands' is to be about Hawaii. There are to be three chapters: on missions, on the Kona Coast, and on the island of Molokai. The first chapter will look at 'Protestant, Catholic, and native' missions as well as the 'Fate and story of Hawai'i'. The next chapter is to be a descriptive account of the Kona Coast of Hawaii, and includes five subsections: 'Hookena [Letter XXIV]; A Ride in the Forest [XXV]; Hale O Keawe (Hawaiian for 'The City of Refuge') [XXVI]; A Law Case. Judges, Lawyers, Trustees; The Lepers [XXVII]'. In his Pacific fable, 'The Bottle Imp', Stevenson puts into the mind of the hero, Keawe, the idea of using the powers granted by the imp to build himself 'a beautiful house and garden on the Kona Coast, where I was born'.⁹⁰

The final section on the Eight Islands is a description of the island of Molokai. Stevenson plans to devote the majority of this chapter to a description of the leper colony on this island. His letter to Dr N B Emerson, President of the Hawaiian Board of Health, asking for permission to visit Molokai is revealing of his intentions as a writer in the South Seas. He acknowledges to the doctor that 'in these days of newspaper correspondents' Emerson might be reluctant to grant him permission, but he assures him nonetheless: 'I scarcely belong to the same class'.⁹¹ Stevenson firmly believes in the seriousness and the interpretative depth of his work on the South Seas:

I should prefer the statement of an intelligent native like Stanislaio [Moanatinii] (even if it stood alone, which it is far from doing) to the report of the most honest traveller. A ship of war comes to a haven, anchors, lands a party, receives and returns a visit, and the captain writes a chapter on the manners of the island. It is not considered what class is mostly seen.⁹²

Stevenson does not intend to adopt the model of a traveller. He recognises that his task as a writer will be excavatory; a favourite epistemological

⁹⁰ *South Sea Tales*, pp. 73-102.

⁹¹ *Letters*, vi, p. 298.

⁹² *South Seas*, pp. 43-4.

metaphor of his during the time is that of the diver.⁹³ He believes that he is not merely describing and reporting on these islands but that he is also taking a sample of them for posterity. His conviction is based on his understanding that the Pacific is experiencing a moment of great social, political, and economic change during the end of the nineteenth century.

Nothing is more calculated to arouse the conflicting interests of the author than a leper colony. An indication of the strong personal reasons that he has for visiting Molokai emerges in a letter he writes to his wife after his first visit to the colony:

All horror was quite gone from me; to see these dread creatures smile and look happy was beautiful...I was happy, only ashamed of myself that I was here for no good.⁹⁴

Despite his useful work in documenting this important and little-known place, Stevenson feels guilty for not being able to help its inhabitants in some positive way. The formal outline of this chapter includes four parts: 'I. A week in the Precinct; II. History; III. The Mokolii; IV. The free island'. Part I will be used to form Letters XXVIII to XXX of the serialisation, and Part III will be used for Letter XXXI. A marginal note is written to the left of the section: 'Halawao'.

The sixth and final part listed in this outline is on the Kingsmills, which is another name for the Gilbert Islands. For some unexplained reason Stevenson crosses out an early sketch of its contents and re-writes it in greater detail. In fact, the accompanying notes to the Gilberts are by far the most detailed of the entire plan. It is to include four chapters, beginning with a study of the group considered as a whole: 'distribution; currents; castaways; passengers; food' and 'products' form the first section of this chapter. There follows a section titled 'Women', which Stevenson marks with a marginal note as the thirty-second of his South Seas Letters. This and all of the following numerical notes are written in Arabic numbers instead of Roman numerals as before, indicating that the division of the Gilberts material for the purposes of serialisation probably occur at a later date. Stevenson visits the Gilberts for a second time, on the schooner *Janet Nicoll* in 1890, before returning to Samoa

⁹³ *Letters*, vi, p. 337.

⁹⁴ *Letters*, vi, p. 306.

to settle in his newly-purchased estate of Vailima. It is possible that he adds to the Gilberts material the notes made from his discoveries in the later journey.

The section on 'Women' and the subsequent one on 'Missionaries' contain the most detailed notes of all the chapters of 'The South Seas'. Under the heading 'Women', Stevenson adds 'chastity; ridi⁹⁵; old laws; rape; love; suicide; love flights; polygamy; flirting; girls; Nei Tiballa; Nei Takauti; Tabooed sisters; history of whites; the whites who were killed; marriage laws demanded; the white who couldn't get married; after marriage; i kana kim; arrest warrants not given to whites; the german mate'. A lot of this material is not published in *In the South Seas*, although many of the subjects, particularly relating marriage 'laws' between white men and native girls will reappear, controversially, in Stevenson's novella *The Beach of Falesá*.⁹⁶

The section on 'Missionaries', which is to form Letter 33, includes: 'even (?) of missionaries thus displayed; no "paradise of naked women"; the beachcomber doesn't care for the dances; True cause of difference; What the missionaries have done; Unimity (?) of apians; Bingham; Doame at the Lowlines (?); Captain Pugh; Maka and Kanoa'. Missionaries are one of the great ambiguous subjects of Stevenson's Pacific Islands writing. Much of his information about the region comes from missionary friends and authors, and his respect for some of them is pronounced.⁹⁷ But on the whole he is as wary of their 'civilising' influence on native populations as he is of the colonists themselves. As a rule, he believes that people are more likely to accept a new faith the less work is put into its promotion.

The following section is titled 'Devil work', and it forms the penultimate chapter of *In the South Seas*. It is marked as Letter 34. It includes: 'the "king's

⁹⁵ A skirt worn by Gilbert Islands women, made from strips of pandanus leaf.

⁹⁶ In the opening chapter, 'A South Sea Bridal', a sham marriage contract is drawn up between the English trader Wiltshire and the native girl Uma, in order that he be allowed to spend a night with her: 'This is to certify that Uma, daughter of Fa'avao of Falesa, Island of —, is illegally married to Mr. John Wiltshire for one week, and Mr. John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell when he pleases.' (Menikoff, *Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Beach of Falesá'*, p. 124) In fact, Menikoff shows how the text is altered to 'one week' from Stevenson's original 'one night'. (pp. 83-88).

⁹⁷ See Colley, *Colonial Imagination*, for more information about Stevenson's lifelong connection to missionary culture. For a discussion of the complex and ambiguous relationship between European missionary endeavours in the Pacific Islands and imperial history see Neil Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

game" at Butaritari; the sorceress of apiang; medicines at Apemama'. There next follows a section called 'Republics', marked as Letter 35, which comprises 'Old men; Mariki; Lunduludis story; Rawaho; the council attempted theft; Tama'. Most of this material does not appear in *In the South Seas*. The following chapter, 'Rule and Misrule in Makkin'⁹⁸, is to be used to form Letters 36 to 40, and includes 'Butiritari, its king and court; A crime of history; the drink question; A Butiritarian festival'. Stevenson writes to various correspondents about the problem of selling alcohol to native populations who have no long-term experience of the drug, and who therefore tend to be abused by it.⁹⁹ The final chapter is 'The King of Apemama', and it is to include three sections: 'I. First impressions; II. Equator town & the palace; III. The three corselets. Beginning with our departure'. These are also to form Letters 41 to 42.

The South Seas Letters

At this point, in late 1889, the South Seas Letters are seen by the author to be separate from the book in scope, if not in narrative content. Many of the chapters that form the first and subsequent published editions of *In the South Seas* are lifted from the serialisations, which in turn correspond to the marginal notes written in the Huntington Library MS discussed above. The move constitutes a direct reversal of Stevenson's original intentions. The difference between the 'Letters' from the South Seas and the projected book, 'The South Seas', has caused much confusion about the authority of Stevenson's manuscripts, but he has always made his plans clear: the letters will be taken from notes that he has written, which are to be the basis of his book.¹⁰⁰ He writes to McClure specifying just this point on 19 July 1890:

⁹⁸ The name is spelled 'Makin' in the published text of *In the South Seas*: 'The kingdom of Tebureimoa includes two islands, Great and Little Makin'. *South Seas*, p. 211.

⁹⁹ 'I helped to draw up a petition to the United States, praying for a law against the liquor trade in the Gilberts...useless pains; since the whole reposes, probably unread and possibly unopened, in a pigeon-hole at Washington'. *South Seas*, pp. 250-1

¹⁰⁰ It is especially important to clarify this point in the light of the doubt that has been recently cast on the effectiveness of Stevenson's South Seas Letters as critiques of empire, within the context of the imperialistic patterns of presentation into which the letters were originally incorporated in Victorian magazines and literary journals. (Cf. Connell, 'More than a Library') Obviously this is also a question of publishing in that it applies to serializations but not

Now what you are to receive is not so much a certain number of letters, as a certain number of chapters in my book. The two things are identical but not coterminous. It is for you to choose out of the one what is most suitable for the other.¹⁰¹

Throughout the time that Stevenson is travelling in the Pacific he is under pressure from McClure to produce letters for syndication. During the periods of often frenzied writing, sometimes on land, sometimes at sea, there is not much time to sit, to plan, and to write a long book about the region. Realising that he will not presently have the time or the space to write the book, he tells his American publisher, Edward Burlingame, on 18 June 1889: 'I do not mean to write a word till I have all matter of comparison at hand; so that when I begin, I shall draw on a full knowledge.'¹⁰² His prospects for 'The South Seas' at the middle of 1889 are therefore long-term. Seven months later, in February 1890, he is telling Burlingame essentially the same thing about the book: 'The Big Travel Book, which includes the letters' is 'not begun, but all material ready.'¹⁰³

When Stevenson writes to Sidney Colvin in December 1889, he outlines in his letter a plan for 'The South Seas' that, except for some slight chapter amendments, follows the same essential course as the one documented in the Huntington Library MS. Part I will remain as a general introduction, with the small alteration of the title of the first chapter from 'seafaring' to 'marine'. Part II, about the Marquesas, will follow the same outline as stated above, although he does not mention the section on 'opium' and he replaces the section on schools for one titled 'The Catholics'. 'The Dangerous Archipelago' does not appear to have undergone any changes in the letter to Colvin, nor does Part IV, on Tahiti. In the part on the Eight Islands, Stevenson substitutes the section in the manuscript titled 'Hale O Keawe' for 'The City of Refuge'. The part on the Gilbert Islands is also replicated in the latter almost exactly as it is written in the plans, except for the additional details that Stevenson probably inserts into the plan for his own

necessarily books, and will justify looking at the photographs that Stevenson plans to use to illustrate 'The South Seas', which is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁰¹ *Letters*, vi, p. 394.

¹⁰² *Letters*, vi, p. 319.

¹⁰³ *Letters*, vi, p. 366.

guidance in writing up his notes. In addition, he tells Colvin that he will write a final section on Samoa, where he is about to embark for the first time. 'I think it will be all history, and I shall work in observations on Samoan manners under the similar heads in other Polynesian islands.'¹⁰⁴ He also suggests that there may be 'a passing visit to Fiji or Tonga, or even both', although he is never to make them. The projected section on Samoa never materialises either, but in *A Footnote to History*, published separately, he covers Samoan history in detail.

Although we now know that Stevenson is never to return to Britain after he settles in Samoa in 1890, his intention in December 1889 is to visit Colvin again, and he states that 'I do not want to be later than June of coming to England.' It is highly likely at this point that he plans to write 'The South Seas' while he is in Britain, and he can not have foreseen the health problems that will tie him to the Pacific for the remainder of his life.

As can be appreciated from the above, there are very few changes made by Stevenson between his two earliest plans for the full contents of 'The South Seas', suggesting that the outline for the book has already been clearly thought out. The impression that emerges from these plans is that by the end of 1889, Stevenson has firmly in mind the idea of writing a scholarly book of travel called 'The South Seas'. To his American publisher, Edward L Burlingame, he writes on 5 February 1889:

The cruise itself, you are to know, will make a big volume with appendices; some of it will first appear as (what they call) letters in some of McClure's papers...I believe the book when ready will have a fair measure of serious interest: I have had great fortune in finding old songs and ballads and stories, for instance; and have many singular instances of life in the last few years among these islands.¹⁰⁵

He adds to Colvin: 'you see it will be a large work, and as it will be copiously illustrated, the Lord knows what it will cost.'¹⁰⁶

The idea, or model, for a Big Book about the South Seas probably dates from before the chronology that is sketched in this chapter. From his

¹⁰⁴ *Letters*, vi, p. 337.

¹⁰⁵ *Letters*, vi, pp. 245-6.

¹⁰⁶ *Letters*, vi, p. 337.

earliest writings and recollections it is clear that Stevenson is interested in the Pacific region. At the age of twelve he had begun writing a work called 'Creek Island, or Adventures in the South Seas'.¹⁰⁷ During the years 1888-1890, this long-held enthusiasm for the region is deepened by his reading of specialist texts such as Findlay's *Directory*, his conversations with knowledgeable Pacific Islanders such as King Kalakaua, and by his travels and documentation of life in the Pacific.

What is also clear from the discussion in this chapter is the intertwining of scholarly and commercial motives in the early history of the production of 'The South Seas'. The scholarly motives are represented by Stevenson's active pursuit of Polynesian oral traditions, his critical encounter with Sereno E Bishop's theories of the degeneration of Hawaiian society, his correspondence with Andrew Lang about anthropological matters relating to the Gilbert Islands, and his lectures and talks on a range of cultural and historical subjects. The commercial motives, which are of course inseparable from the former, are revealed in his plans for a lecture tour on his return to the United States, his hope that 'The South Seas' will be a popular success, and his hurried production of 'A Samoan Scrapbook'. In Chapter 3, the tensions that are formed as a result of these conflicting motivations will be shown to result in the breakdown, or 'failure', of the South Seas writing. Intimations of this breakdown occur in the practical difficulties that Stevenson experiences, of unreliable health and of a pressing literary workload. In addition to the novels that are in progress, Stevenson must also continue to produce McClure's Letters for serialisation. At this stage, however, the Letters continue briskly and the enthusiasm for writing about their subjects has not diminished.

The detailed plans for the South Seas book reveal the extent of thought and study that the author has committed to the proposed work. Close reading of Stevenson's earliest plans has also helped to clarify his position on many hitherto unresolved questions. These include the nature of his proximity to Pacific Islands royalty, his commitment to reporting on the poorest and most downtrodden classes of island society, his acute awareness of the

¹⁰⁷ *In the South Seas*, ed. by Rennie, p. ix.

extent of the social transformations that the Pacific is then undergoing, and his criticism of the aims and methods of the imperial powers in the region.

A large body of photographs is also taken by the Stevenson family during their travels. His plans allude to some of these images, and as he informs Colvin, he intends that the book be 'copiously illustrated'. As with the written plans, a closer look at the photographs will help to clarify the author's ideas about the book. This will be the work of the following chapter.

2. REFLECTIVE TRAVEL

In the previous chapter it was shown how Robert Louis Stevenson plans a study of the South Seas that exceeds contemporary critical knowledge of his work and interests. In so doing, the work in its early stages at least is shown to reveal the author's intention to produce a detailed and comprehensive book about a contemporary Pacific that would have been little-known to his readers. This applies as much to his pictorial as his written project. In the present chapter it will be seen how the photographs taken during the South Seas journeys are closely linked to the anthropological discourse of the time. A selection of the photographs will be examined to show how they deny anthropological authority over human subjects, replacing this authority with a playful, even bizarre approach to composition, or otherwise a celebration of unconventional ways of living. This inference from the photographs looks forward to the later chapters of the present study, where Stevenson is presented as a writer of cultures who stresses paradox and incongruity above authoritative explanation and interpretative clarity. In the present chapter, such a view is drawn as a critical counterpoint to the norms of representation in the emerging science of anthropology. It will be shown how the very notion of a travel photography that is uncollected and largely unremarked by professional anthropologists during the late-Victorian era leaves the field open for disruptive presences such as Stevenson.¹

While the bulk of the written material on 'The South Seas' remains to be examined², the photographic record of the three cruises that Stevenson and his family take between 1888 and 1890 also remains under-investigated.³ The Writers' Museum in Edinburgh holds a collection of around 190 photographs taken by the author and his family during this period. Stevenson also makes a list of the photographs that he hopes to use in conjunction with

¹ See in this respect Elizabeth Edwards' 'Introduction' in *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*, ed. by Elizabeth Edwards (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 3-17. Edwards writes that 'travel photography, although described in the photographic journals as being of 'ethnological interest' was not, on the whole, collected by anthropologists, and it is barely represented in the major anthropological archives in Britain.' (15n.)

² This is the work of the following chapters of the present study.

³ Partial attempts at summarising the work have been made by Alanna Knight, *RLS in the South Seas: An Intimate Photographic Record* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1986) and Anne C. Colley, *Colonial Imagination*.

the written account of his travels.⁴ These will be analysed later in the chapter, but before doing so it will be helpful to outline further the wider historical context in which the photographs are taken.

The Victorian Origins of Photography

As important as photography is to become to Victorian culture is its unique appearance as a technical form of that era. The first photographic device appears in the same decade in which both the telegraph and the telephone are patented.⁵ It belongs to the same period as the discovery of these tools of electrical communication. The introduction of the Daguerrotype in 1839 is usually regarded as the origin of modern photography. This process involves the use of a light-sensitive silver plate on which images are developed in mercury vapour. The process is relatively long and its products – photographs – are objects of wonder to be handled with care. They are given pride of place in a glass cabinet or on a mantelpiece. Besides communicating new discoveries, they communicate affluence. Photographs tend to be produced and exchanged within a rarified commercial sphere. 'Both the Queen and Prince Albert had been early enthusiasts of photography. They bought daguerreotypes as early as 1840, attended the first exhibition of the London Photographic Society in 1854 and even set up their own dark-room at Windsor Castle.'⁶ The high aesthetic value of early photographs also attracts consumers of avant-garde art.⁷

Commercial exclusivity does not last, however. The next fifty years, up to the close of the nineteenth century, witnesses the reduction of photographic exposure times through advanced techniques perfected by mass-market oriented companies. This also helps to cheapen the process of making

⁴ Beinecke Library, Stevenson MS 6716.

⁵ Brady, pp. 13-14.

⁶ James R Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), p. 15.

⁷ 'Artistically, early photographs were superior to portrait miniatures. The technical reason lies in the long exposure time, which demanded utmost concentration by the subject being portrayed. The social reason lies in the circumstance that the first photographers belonged to the avant-garde and drew their clientele for the most part from it.' Walter Benjamin, *Reflections Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p. 150.

photographs. Following the introduction of the first Kodak camera in 1881, George Eastman produces a flexible celluloid alternative to heavy and expensive glass plates, which he releases with a box camera containing 100 exposures of film in 1885. The 'pocket Kodak', which lightens the process of taking pictures even further, is out by 1895. At the turn of the century faster lenses mean that the tone of the images that are now being produced are nearly unrecognizable from those of 1850, in which darkness tends to prevail over light.⁸

The effect of the appearance of photography is nowhere registered more strongly than in painting. In the colonial enterprise of exploration, artists had at least since the days of James Cook accompanied geographers and botanists on scientific expeditions to little-known areas of the world. The institutionalisation of scientific knowledge that begins in the early nineteenth century encourages the production of a more analytical comprehension of things, to which the painterly hand had already shown signs of becoming accustomed. In satisfying a growing need, photography helps bring to an end the relationship between painting and scientific documentation.⁹

Equally important is the de-aestheticising of the human image by the camera. The much higher level of analytical detail that is introduced by photography allows aspects of everyday life to be seen in hitherto unimaginable ways. 'It is through photography that we first discover the existence of [an] optical unconscious'¹⁰. The scope of the visual is altered, a change which has understandable effects on other art forms, in particular literature, in which the naturalist movement appears in France in the late years of the nineteenth century.

The collection of books and other objects of value during the Victorian era is matched by the collection of items whose value is indiscernible outside of the context of money. Photographs come to occupy a key place in these processes of acquisition.¹¹ The craze for photographs of famous people that obsesses Europe and North America in the 1860s is repeated in the following

⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', *Selected Writings: 1927-34, Volume 2* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 517.

⁹ Smith, *European Vision*, p. 337.

¹⁰ Benjamin, 'Little History', p. 512.

¹¹ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: on Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), p. 13.

decades by obsessions with other items as well as other subjects of the camera.¹²

Examples of the kinds of cultural objects that are in mass circulation have been recorded in the numerous exhibition catalogues of the time. Photographs, particularly of cultural 'curiosities' (from the point of view of metropolitan observers) feature prominently. During the era of high imperialism, in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, photographs of people from overseas colonies are used to create a 'parallel empire' of the imagination with which metropolitan culture is able to affirm its institutions, and metropolitan government is able to justify measures taken in the formation of its actual empire.¹³

The reading of colonial photography as a form of coded message of its original circumstances comes with a caveat, however: it encourages the retrospective interpretation of images which, although inescapable from the major discourses of the day, nevertheless possess the power to break through and undermine such interpretations by acting on developments in the intervening time.¹⁴ To put it another way, the morality of a photographic image can have no claim over its powers of representation.

Photography and Anthropology

It is the perceived otherness of the objects of photographic scrutiny which encourages Victorian ethnologists to enlist photography in their work. Particularly in the last decade of the nineteenth century, when the shift from ethnology to anthropology takes place in many institutions throughout Europe and North America, the major intellectual reference point of scholarly work on the subject is the amassing of 'details' with which to properly ground the study

¹² Maxwell, p. 194. See also Peter Ackroyd's *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000) for more about the craze for panoramas and dioramas in the mid-nineteenth century, for roller-skates in the 1870s, for tulips in the later nineteenth century, and for china cats in the 1910s.

¹³ Ryan, p. 26.

¹⁴ 'The important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time.' Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Cape, 1982), pp. 88-89.

of cultures.¹⁵ Photographs, despite the best intentions, remove people and objects from their proper contexts, thereby helping to create genres specific only to themselves. Anthropology makes use of this feature by objectifying people of other cultures to the extent of typifying them within racial categories.

Otherness is set up in photographic discourse by creating opposites to contrast with the white, male, European/North American 'norm'. It is not the purpose of photography to form oppositions between things, but this is what invariably happens during this period. Images of colonial people are used to highlight the separation, for example, between culture and nature, male and female, man and animal.¹⁶ The stereotypes, once established, tend to remain for a long time. Images which show processes of change and adaptation are either dismissed as anomalies or ignored completely.¹⁷

The general impact of such photographs is to assist in the submission of things that could appear threatening or, from an instinctive point of view, inviting.¹⁸ Even images depicting the beauty of colonial peoples and landscapes ('the native belle', 'the tropical rainforest') belong to this process of familiarization through formalistic techniques.¹⁹

The commercial or scientific value of a photograph directly influences its aesthetic presentation. The use of frontal, side and grid views of anthropomorphic representations of colonial people, developed as the Huxley-Lamprey method in the late 1860s, is valuable to scientists and much used in their research.²⁰ Such methods often require measuring equipment that is difficult to obtain in the places where the subjects of study are to be found,

¹⁵ The point is made by Barthes, p. 28. According to Anne Maxwell, 'When photography first appeared in Britain and France, anthropology (literally 'the study of man') was undergoing a transition from a discipline based on language and material culture to one centred on anatomy and physiology.' (Maxwell, p. 38.) For a contemporary example, see Edward Burnett Tylor's *Primitive Culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1871) and the accompanying discussion in chapter 5 of the present study.

¹⁶ Raymond Corbey, 'Alterity: The Colonial Nude', *Critique of Anthropology*, 8.3 (1988), 75-92.

¹⁷ Alison Devine Nordström, 'Photography of Samoa: Production, Dissemination, and Use', in ed. by Casey Blanton, *Picturing Paradise: Colonial Photography of Samoa, 1875-1925* (Daytona Beach, FL: Southeast Museum of Photography, 1995), pp. 11-40 (pp.13-14).

¹⁸ 'Psychoanalytically, what is forbidding from the point of view of conscience is inviting from the point of view of the impulse.' Corbey, 'Alterity', p. 85.

¹⁹ Maxwell, p. 11.

²⁰ Ryan, pp. 149-50.

and some photographers improvise, for example by using linear patterns in the thatching of local houses as portrait backgrounds.²¹

Cameras also become adopted into the Darwinian discourse of capture and survival. Photographic explorers supposedly shoulder a dual burden of discovering the unknown and recording disappearing cultures. In a paper given at a Special Meeting of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, which is chaired by Edward Burnett Tylor, in November 1892, the ethnologist Everard Ferdinand Im Thurn announces that:

Primitive phases of life are fast fading from the world in this age of restless travel and exploration, and it should be recognized as almost the duty of educated travelers in the less known parts of the world to put on permanent record, before it is too late, such of these phases as they may observe; but it is certainly not a sufficiently recognized fact that such records, usually made in writing, might be infinitely helped out by the camera.²²

In the islands of the Pacific, where native populations are in serious decline as a consequence of European and American colonization, such incentives are to guide the work of photographers and ethnologists.

Photography in Samoa

During the 1880s and 1890s, the Samoan, or Navigator Islands are the main stopover point for travellers on their way between California and Australia. Ships call at the Samoan port of Apia every week, bringing tourists, field scientists and various other professional people during their voyage across the Pacific Ocean. The picturesque location encourages photographers, both amateur and professional, and Samoa soon gains familiarity within the international circulation of prints, postcards, and half-tone illustrations in books of travel. Although changes in the presentation of these images show an awareness of global fashions of representation, the content

²¹ Virginia Lee-Webb, 'Illuminated Views: Photographs of Samoa by Rev. George Brown', in *Picturing Paradise*, pp. 59-68 (p. 65).

²² E F Im Thurn, 'Anthropological Uses of the Camera', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 22 (1893), 184-203 (pp. 184-185).

of the pictures themselves is repetitious and usually ignorant of actual changes in Samoan culture.²³

The advent of the dry-plate process in photography enables the formation of photographic studios, since the equipment required now becomes cheaper and more portable. By the 1890s Samoa is the home of at least three resident photographers who produce images for private use – such as weddings – and novelty images that are designed for distribution overseas, where they will be sold in various forms.²⁴ Samoan photographers of a slightly earlier period, such as Alfred Henry Burton, do not insist on romanticising native subjects for their images. This is probably less the product of a decision to avoid stereotypes than of the absence of any marked stereotypes at this stage, a situation that is unsurprising given the relative novelty of the images to the metropolitan imagination.²⁵

John Davis owns a photographic studio in Apia during the period of Stevenson's residence in Samoa. His assistant Alfred John Tattersall takes over the business upon Davis' death in 1893, continuing until 1949. Davis, in the jack-of-all-trades way of much of the white population in the Pacific Islands, is also the postmaster at Apia. The proximity which this brings him to shipping routes is helpful in the sale and distribution of novelty photographs.²⁶ The work of Davis and Tattersall is of the commercial variety that depicts half-naked Samoan belles with dreamy expressions on their faces, resting among exotic fruit and vegetation or other luxuriant landscapes. Their fellow photographer of Samoa, Thomas Andrew, who in December 1894 takes pictures of Stevenson as he is lying in state, produces a more varied range of images.

Modern interpreters have acclaimed Andrew's photographs of political and military activity in Samoa during a decisive period in its history, and also his depictions of Samoan people that do not render them helpless before the

²³ For more information on colonial-era photography in Samoa, see Alison Devine Nordström, 'Early Photography in Samoa: Marketing Stereotypes of Paradise', *History of Photography*, 15.4 (Winter 1991), 272-286.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ 'In an initial period, Photography, in order to surprise, photographs the notable; but soon, by a familiar reversal, it decrees notable whatever it photographs.' Barthes, p. 34.

²⁶ Nordström, 'Early Photography in Samoa', p. 277.

eye of the camera.²⁷ 'Samoa Women with Fan' (1893, see fig. 3 below) is an example of the latter type of image, in which the photographer also shows his touch for a formal aesthetic arrangement. The gowns worn by the women are of the kind that will have been available in fashionable European boutiques of the time and in their features the women typify the classical Hellenic model of beauty. A decoded reading informs us that these are two Samoans for whom civilization at the hands of the imperial powers will hold no advantage.²⁸ Crucially, the differing expressions of the two women refuse to be sublimated into genre types; there is no indication of their submission to the authority of the photographer, and if anything there is the hint of a knowing smile on the face of the woman who is seated to our right.



Fig. 3: Thomas Andrew, 'Samoa Women with Fan'.
(From the collection of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne.)

²⁷ See, for example, Maxwell's chapter on Andrew in her *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions*.

²⁸ Maxwell, p. 172.

Thomas Andrew arrives in Samoa in 1891, after having produced a series of photographs to accompany a Pacific Islands travel book written by the New Zealand politician Frederick J Moss.²⁹ It is possible that Stevenson will have read this book during his own travels, among the many that he refers to in his letters of this period. The presentation of Stevenson's images of the Pacific Islands, as will shortly be seen, has many formal similarities with those of Andrew.

'The South Seas' in Pictures

Equipment and Practicalities

As one writer has noted, 'the period of Stevenson's voyages – 1888-1890 – covers the rapid development of portable photography.'³⁰ When the author and his family set out from San Francisco harbour in the Summer of 1888, they carry in their inventory cameras, photographic equipment and a magic lantern, but references in his mother's diary to field cameras, plate films and tripods indicate that they have not yet acquired a portable camera.³¹ This appears to have changed by the time that they reach Samoa, in the following year, where walking on the beach at Apia the LMS missionary W E Clarke sees

a tall, gaunt man in shirt sleeves, with a brown velvet coat flung over one shoulder, a white broad-peaked yachting cap, white flannel trousers, once clean, a cigarette in his mouth, and a camera dangling on its strap in one hand.³²

It is unclear exactly when and where Stevenson purchases the portable camera that is 'dangling on its strap in one hand', but from the kind of images that Stevenson's party are able to take in the Pacific, such as 'instant' exposures lasting just 1/15 or 1/50 of a second, it is clear that they update

²⁹ F J Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea* (London: Sampson Low & Co., 1889).

³⁰ Knight, *South Seas*, pp. 14-15.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 13.

³² Clarke, 'The Misspent Sunday', in *Interviews and Recollections*, p. 165. It is possible that they had replaced it with the help of a certain Mr. Keane (see discussion which follows).

their equipment at some point on their travels.³³ In the context of the history of anthropology, however, it is also important to note that portable cameras are not in fashion at this moment, being regarded as fit only for taking amateur photographs.³⁴

It is not all plain sailing for the Stevensons. On 20 July 1888, Stevenson's stepson Lloyd loses his camera when it falls overboard from the deck of the *Casco* into the sea. A Marquesan trader named Mr. Keane helps to find a new camera for him although Lloyd has to cut down his plates in order to fit the smaller camera, an improvisation that has left its mark on some of the ensuing photographs.³⁵ Worse is to take place on 20 April 1890, when 90 photographs, around half the number then taken by the Stevenson party, are lost during a shipboard fire on the *SS Janet Nicholl*. Stevenson writes that the lost photographs include

a portrait of Tembinoka, a view of the palace or of some of the 'matted men' at their singing, also T[embinoka]'s flag, which my wife designed for him, and a few photographs of the war, which will do for illustrations [for the projected travel book].³⁶

As has been shown in the previous chapter, it is Stevenson's intention from an early point in his Pacific travels to 'copiously illustrate' his book. It is an aim that receives a serious setback with this event, but photographs continue to be taken by Stevenson, Lloyd, and, for a period during their travels on the *Equator*, by Stevenson's stepson-in-law: an American artist named Joseph Strong.³⁷

Strong has a lot of experience in the presentation of subjects that are unusual, from a Western point of view. In 1880, in commemoration of an exhibition of famous authors held at San Francisco, an album of illustrative sketches with accompanying descriptions is produced in which Joe and his wife – Stevenson's stepdaughter – Belle, take the largest share of artistic

³³ Colley, p. 119.

³⁴ 'As to hand cameras, be they large or small, they are an abomination, and are really much more difficult to work with satisfactory results than are fixed cameras.' Im Thurn, p. 201.

³⁵ Colley, p. 113.

³⁶ Quoted in Knight, *South Seas*, p. 14.

³⁷ The first edition of Fanny Stevenson's travel diary, *The Cruise of the 'Janet Nichol' among the South Sea Islands* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1915), contains at least 15 photographs taken by the Stevenson party.

duties.³⁸ Seven years later, Strong is in Samoa as official artist and photographer on behalf of an expedition organized by the King of Hawai'i to bring together a united Pacific front against the encroaching imperial powers. Strong produces a number of photographs of scenes of Samoan life, including dances and religious ceremonies, which are never to be published, although in 1893 an exhibition is held of some of his Samoan work at the Bishop Museum Picture Gallery in Honolulu.³⁹

The plan

Manuscript 6716 of the Stevenson collection at the Beinecke Library at Harvard University comprises of a long list of photographs written in the author's own hand, which are to be used in conjunction with his book of travel.⁴⁰ The list is probably made around August 1890, after Stevenson visits New Caledonia, which is the last of the islands he sees that are referenced here. The list, rearranged from its titular alphabetical layout to one based on the numbers beside each photograph, is to be found below in Appendix B.

What is immediately apparent from the list is the different order of presentation from 'The South Seas'. The numbers probably refer to specific photographs, since there are many duplicates, but the 'A' group of photographs generally refer to the *Equator* voyage (June 1889-December 1889), the 'B' group to the *Casco* (June 1888-January 1889), and the 'C' group to the *Janet Nicholl* (April 1890-August 1890).⁴¹ The photograph titles also reveal a greater number of islands visited than is obvious from the contents of *In the South Seas*. They give a broader sense of Stevenson's travels, with mentions of Ellice Island, Manihiki, the Marshalls group, the

³⁸ Henry D. Woolfe, *Author's Carnival Album* (San Francisco: L Bancroft & Co., 1880).

³⁹ Alison Devine Nordström writes that Strong's images are chosen 'probably for their ethnographic rather than their aesthetic appeal, although the work is straightforward and well composed, with a classical treatment of the human figure that recalls the photographer's training as a painter.' Nordström, 'Early Photography in Samoa', p. 274.

⁴⁰ The formal title given to the manuscript: 'PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY LLOYD OSBOURNE DURING TRIP ON THE SCHOONER, EQUATOR, LIST OF...' is misleading, because it is generally agreed that the photographs were the product of a joint effort between Stevenson, Lloyd, and Joe. Furthermore, a significant number of the photographs listed therein specify places in island groups (such as the Marquesas and the Puamotus) which were not visited by the Stevensons during the *Equator* voyage.

⁴¹ Photographs A1 and A67 apparently depict the *Equator*. B1, B4, B13, and B16 all refer to the *Casco*. C43 mentions the *Janet Nicholl*.

Tokelau group, and others: places about which there are no substantive sections in *In the South Seas*. Offsetting any idea that this list of photographs is envisaged as the basis of a family album (which is to be the fate of all but a handful used in *The Cruise of the 'Janet Nichol'*) are the relatively few references to the Stevensons themselves. Only twenty-one out of nearly four hundred listed titles mention either Stevenson or a member of his family.⁴²

Looking more closely at the organisation of the photographs reveals other points of comparison with the plan for 'The South Seas'. The precision of the placement of the photos suggests that Stevenson has a specific plan in mind for them, even if they do not appear to correspond exactly to the plan of the text that is outlined in the previous chapter. It is possible that he either develops the former or moves on from this idea at some point during his travels. There is also the possibility that this plan describes the outline of a different book entirely, although no written evidence remains of his having planned something separate to 'The South Seas' that is on this scale.

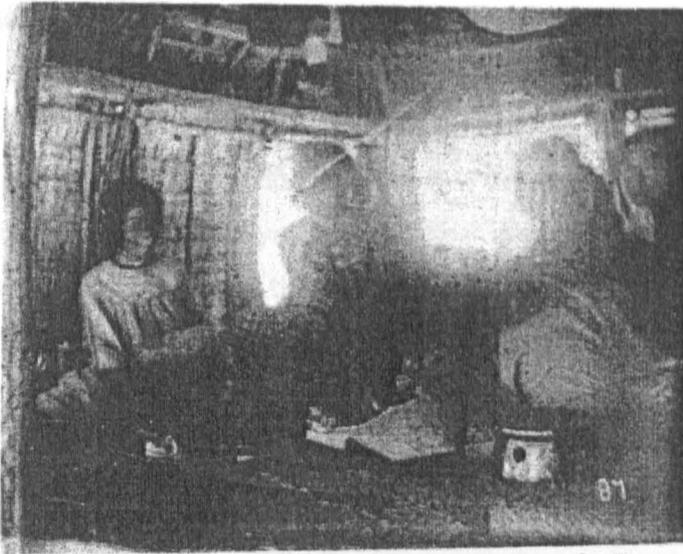
Equally interesting are the apparent juxtapositions of images that Stevenson plans. For example, under C35 is listed 'Kingsmill Islands, King Tembinoka & suite' as well as 'Marshall Islands, scene in', although we are left in the dark as to the subject of the latter. It is possible that Stevenson simply makes a mistake, although it is hard to imagine this considering that he could have cross-checked the enumerations as he is writing them. The juxtaposition of different places and diverse scenes suggests an aesthetic or analytical intention behind the production of the photographs.

Many of the comments which are written beneath the images are to be used to illustrate 'The South Seas'. Context and a precise knowledge of local history are essential, since the names of many people are mentioned who are not well-known within their region of the Pacific, let alone in Europe and the United States. Some of the photographs have generic-sounding titles such as 'Dancing girls', 'Stream in Tahiti', and 'Oceanside scene', which are typical in

⁴² They are: A8 Butaritari, RLS in interior; A22 Apiang Island, Mrs. S. being carried ashore; A25 Apemama, Slave girls presented to RLS; A25 Stevenson being mesmerized; A31 Stevenson's Camp, Apemama; A34 Apemama, King of diving with S's party; A35 Apemama, Slave girls presented to RLS; A39 Stevenson being mesmerized; B22 Stevenson and Lloyd; B36 Group with RLS and others; B37 Stevenson and Lloyd; B38 Present to Louis Stevenson; B43-48 Stevenson's house; B53 Lloyd Osbourne in Chief's dress; C7^a Stevenson, Mrs, and native lady.

the various romantic presentations of the subject produced by other travel writers of the same era. Interspersed with such trademarks of eternity, however, are titles which suggest a view of a different and more contemporary Pacific: 'Boys trading copra in Butaritari', 'Missionary College at Malua', 'German labour-brig'. Again there is a clearly discernible emphasis on juxtaposing familiar and unfamiliar elements, sometimes in an unsettling way.

As with the reading of the author's plan for 'The South Seas', close reading of the photographs reveals a complex motivation behind the production of the list. The examples that follow will demonstrate this in more detail. The selection has not been made on the grounds of completeness but rather to give a sense of the potential of the archive of images taken by Stevenson and his family. The photographs have also been selected to show how Stevenson's production of 'The South Seas' represents an encounter with a specific view of history. These images – non-uniform, lacking obvious signifiers of hierarchy in the tone of representation, and often uncategorizable according to contemporary standards – show a part of the world in which knowledge is widely circulated but only for practical reasons. It is perhaps unsurprising that so many of the images appear to contain the seed of a story, considering that a storyteller is responsible for their production; it is the same circumstance that makes 'The South Seas' so much a work of oral history. The photographs will certainly have enlivened the text if they were meant to act purely as *commercial-minded illustrations* – portraits of the author and his family – but many of them lack the necessary simplicity and the familiar tropes and subjects of their contemporary images from the South Seas. As with the writing, the pictures are not taken merely to confirm pre-existing ideas and traditions of representation.



King Tembinoka writing the "History of Apemama" in an account book.

Fig. 4: King Tembinoka writing the "History of Apemama" in an account book.

In a letter written to Colvin on 22 August 1889, Stevenson sheds some light on the origin of the image above (fig. 4):

The king is a great character; a thorough tyrant, very much of a gentleman, a poet, a musician, a historian or perhaps rather more a genealogist – it is strange to see him lying in his house among a lot of wives (nominal wives) writing the history of Apemama in an account book.⁴³

Keeping with the theme of this selection of photographs, the image plays subtly on Western values and preconceptions. Tembinok', the Gilbertese ruler, is seen writing the history of Apemama in an account book. Stevenson describes him as 'perhaps rather more a genealogist' than a historian. In *In the South Seas* he returns to this image, stating:

We came later, fell on a more private hour, and found Tembinok' retired in the house with the favourite, an earthenware spittoon, a leaden ink pot, and a commercial ledger. In the last, lying on his belly, he writes from day to day the uneventful history of his reign.⁴⁴

⁴³ Stevenson to Colvin, 22 Aug 1889, Apaiang, *Letters* VI, p. 329.

⁴⁴ *South Seas*, p. 300.

Tembinok' chooses a reflective moment to sit down with a few materials and to record the events of his reign. Uneventful or not, history is here shown to be not merely the preserve of European civilization but also available, should they choose to write it, to Pacific Islanders. Furthermore, the propriety of historical writing – even of a royal genealogy – is disturbed by the exacting stare of the account book. All of this takes place, notably, around a harem of laughing women.



Fig. 5: White trader and family – taken at Majuro, Marshall Islands.

Stevenson and his family visit the Marshall islands on the trading schooner *Janet Nicholl* in the second half of June 1890. According to Stevenson's wife, the woman depicted in the picture (fig. 5) is called 'Topsy' by her white husband:

She was a very small, very thin creature, greatly given to dress. She seemed to live with several other women in a sort of boat-builders' shed, where I would always find her, her thick hair shining with oil and carefully braided, a different head-dress for a different hour – her keys hanging below her rows of necklaces, busily employed at something or other; sometimes it was a necklace she was stringing on shreds of pandanus leaves, sometimes a new print gown she was cutting out with a most capable, business like air; or she might be feeding her monkey ('monkaia', she called it) or her gentle-eyed dog; or, most interesting task of all, sorting her possessions into

order...It seems that she was a castaway from another island, every other soul in the canoe being lost.⁴⁵

In the photograph the irregularity of a white-native relationship is superceded by the unique circumstances of domesticity that are maintained by the couple. Against a backdrop of overhanging trees, beached canoes, and the blissful calm reflected in the faces of both people, the dog and 'monkaia' rest serenely, and the trader holds his hat in the same hand as his pipe. In contrast to his criticism of sham marriages between traders and island girls in *Beach of Falesá* (see chapter 1), here is an image of contentment between two people who are both far from home.⁴⁶

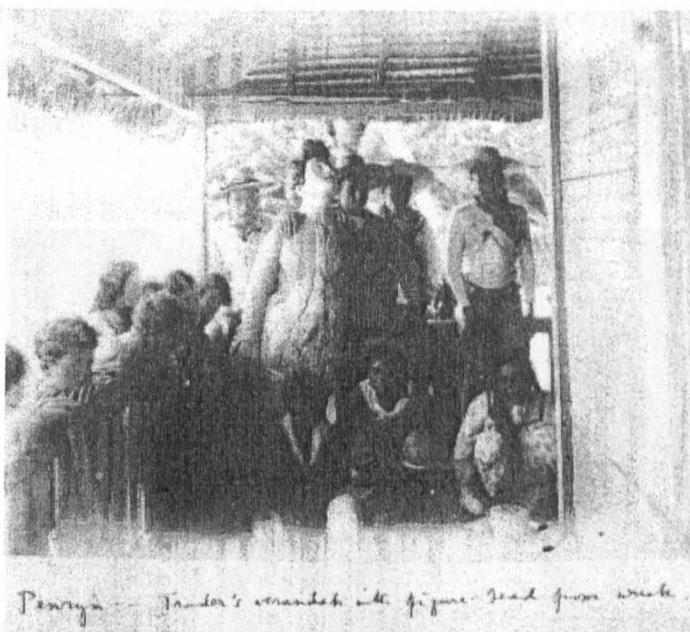


Fig. 6: Penryn: - trader's verandah with figure-head from wreck.

The photograph above (fig. 6) is probably taken at a trader's house on 9 or 10 May 1890, when the Stevensons visit the island of Penryn. The figure-head is taken from the wreck of a trading vessel which lies off the coast of the island. According to Fanny Stevenson's diary of the journey, 'All about the trader's house were great piles of timber, and in one of the rooms a piano

⁴⁵ Fanny van de Grift Stevenson, *The Cruise of the Janet Nichol*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly, p. 166. It is notable that Stevenson's wife finds 'most interesting' about Topsy her attempts to organise her possessions.

⁴⁶ In *In the South Seas*, Stevenson also states that, 'The trader must be credited with a virtue: he often makes a kind and loyal husband.' (p. 267).

woefully out of tune, and other signs of the wreck of a big ship. It was a timber vessel, they told us, this last one, that went to pieces just outside the reef.⁴⁷

The dress of the people who are photographed is not uniform. The variation of human expressions is also notable: some faces are fascinated by the camera while others look on uninterestedly. The man with his arm around the figure head rests his other hand on his waist. He is posing with some satisfaction. The playfulness of the placement of a figure head at the centre of the photograph does not mask its destructive nature: an object that has been redeemed from a wreck is used to transform the appearance of the scene and give it a striking character. Continuing the theme of incongruity and its disruptive influence on established ways of collecting and ordering knowledge, it is notable that in this image a kind of survival (see chapter 5) is used to draw the viewer's attention to the way in which the photograph has been put together.⁴⁸



Fig. 7: Girls' costume in Tokelau Islands

⁴⁷ *Cruise*, ed. by Jolly, pp. 95-96.

⁴⁸ In a similar fashion, Georges Didi-Huberman comments on how with his unfinished *Mnemosyne* project of juxtaposed images, Aby Warburg had aimed at 'creating a "living" reciprocity between the act of knowing and the object of knowledge.' Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Foreword', in Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (New York: Zone Books, 2004), pp. 16-17.

The Tokelau group is also visited in May 1890 on the *Janet Nicholl* voyage. Again, the expressions of the people in the photograph (fig. 7) are notable for their variety. The two women standing at the front, who are dressed in sharply contrasting costumes, look on with stoical expressions while behind them the children are laughing as they exchange amused glances. The strictly aesthetic use of the lines presented by the scaffolding of the house in the background also marks the photographer's intentions as being deliberately different to those of contemporary ethnologists. The latter may have been tempted to use them as framing devices for their human subjects.

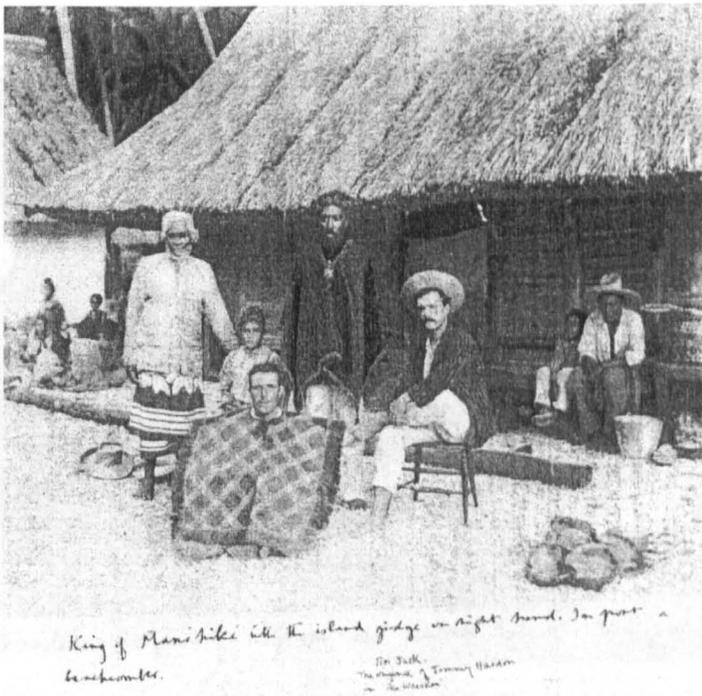


Fig. 8: King of Manihiki with the island judge in right hand. In front a beachcomber.

The figure seated to the left of the king in fig. 8 is 'Tin Jack', a fellow traveller with the Stevensons.⁴⁹ According to Fanny Stevenson's diary, the family visit Manihiki on 6 May 1890. She continues:

Lloyd [Osbourne] had photographed the king in his royal robes, a pair of white duck trousers and a black velveteen coat; over all was worn a sort of black cloth poncho bordered with gold fringe.

⁴⁹ The note that is written on the photograph beneath its title reads: 'Tin Jack – the original of Tommy Haddon in "The Wrecker".'

Suspended from the neck of royalty was a tinsel and on his head a crown of red and white pandanus leaves...In common with his subjects, the king is not of commanding stature.⁵⁰

Some of Stevenson's critics have pointed to his class-consciousness in associating himself closely with royalty in the South Seas.⁵¹ Photographs such as the present one show that it is the situation of 'royalty' in Pacific Islands life at the close of the nineteenth century that needs to be examined, not Stevenson's deference towards the institution. There is nothing regal about the portrayal of the king or of his judge. While respectful of his position as leader of the island, there is also a playful approach in placing a beachcomber wearing a huge poncho in front of the king.

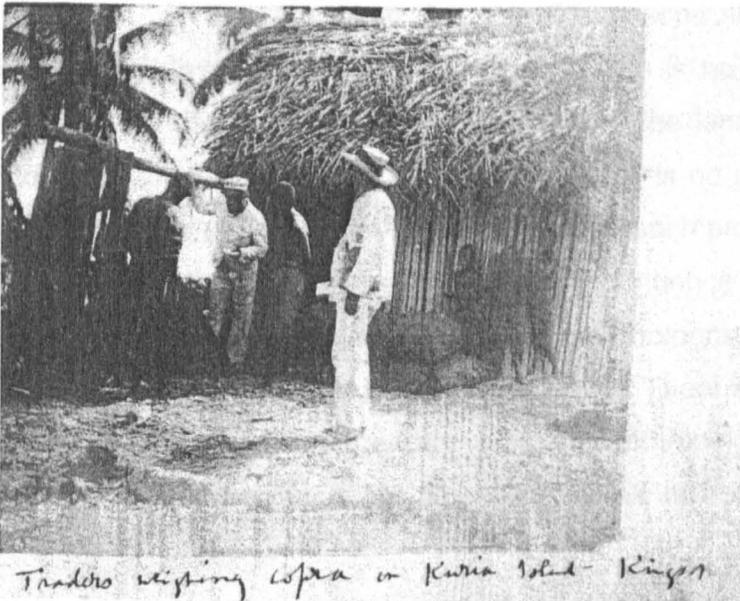


Fig. 9: Traders weighing copra in Kuria Island – Kingsmills.

The Stevensons visit Kuria, one of the islands ruled by King Tembinok', on 16 June 1890. Stevenson travels there on his second voyage to look for the king, who is visiting the island.⁵² The photograph (fig. 9) shows a

⁵⁰ *Cruise*, ed. by Jolly, pp. 81, 87-88.

⁵¹ See the comments of Jeremy Treglown quoted in chapter 1, note 79. Ann C. Colley also states: 'As might be expected, given the class-consciousness of foreign travellers in the nineteenth century, a significant number of the surviving photographs also reflect Stevenson's consistent regard for the political hierarchy of each island he visited. These images were less spontaneous and reveal a more self-conscious, hierarchical eye.' (Colley, p. 122.) The photograph of the King of Manihiki is hardly hierarchical, and more reflects the specificity of islander relationships with their king or leader.

⁵² *Cruise*, ed. by Jolly, p. 153.

contemporary South Seas, in which the copra⁵³ trade holds the attention even of some of the young boys of Kuria. The traders are dressed in white suits and hats as they weigh this universal currency of the Pacific Islands. Although they are depicted as being in control of the situation, as Stevenson states in *In the South Seas*, it is Tembinok' who has sole power over the manufacture and distribution of copra on his islands.⁵⁴ It is possible, therefore, that Stevenson could be seen to be creating a false identification of the copra trade with purely western economic exploitation.⁵⁵ This photograph also shows the extent to which the meaning of some of the images may be distorted without the accompanying sections of text, suggesting that some of the photographs, at least, are taken with the idea of illustrating the book in mind.

The selection of images taken by the Stevensons that is here presented highlights a living and changing Pacific. There is no recourse to fantasy or nostalgia in the subjects of the pictures and the landscapes are shown only to depict their human use and activity. There is no sense of the picturesque, although the placement of human figures in each picture is quite careful, and their aesthetic management suggests the influence of the artist Joseph Strong. The beauty of depiction of some of the photographs certainly suggests respect for the subjects and is not romanticizing. There also appears to be a resolute refusal to frame indigenous people in anthropological poses or according to the scientific styles of the time. Every smile or frown is clearly expressed.⁵⁶

⁵³ The dried kernel of the coconut. According to Whincup, in the Gilbert Islands, 'trade in coconut oil began about 1860 and in ten or twenty years gave way to the sale of copra.' Whincup, p. 15.

⁵⁴ "You got copra, king?' I have heard a trader ask. 'I got two, three outhches [houses],' his majesty replied: I think three.' Hence the commercial importance of Apemama, the trade of three islands being centred there in a single hand.' *South Seas*, p. 280.

⁵⁵ As Rod Edmond explains in his discussion of Stevenson's short story set in the Pacific Islands, 'The Isle of Voices', 'the making of dollars from sea-shells suggests western economic exploitation of the Pacific Islands'. Edmond, p. 189.

⁵⁶ If this reading is correct, then this would put Stevenson and family's South Seas photographs in a comparable position to the unconventional work of the anthropologist and their contemporary, Everard Im Thurn. For a brief and illuminating study of his photography of Guianan Indians, see Donald Taylor, "'Very loveable human beings": The Photography of Everard Im Thurn', in *Anthropology and Photography*, pp. 187-192. Taylor writes: 'Im Thurn was clearly moved by the natural aesthetic of Guianan Indians. It is apparent in his action pictures of games and in his physiological portraits. This suggests great respect for his subjects, an attitude confirmed in his writings.' (p. 191)

The photographs unmistakably show Stevenson's fascination with the incongruous, whether in the form of wrecks or facial expressions, the surprising details of domesticity and the unexpected intrusions of the strange and bizarre into otherwise conventional circumstances. The example of the figurehead from the wreck comes quickly to mind, as does the beachcomber seated wearing a poncho. It is as if every attempt is made by the photographer to prevent the observer from second-guessing the Pacific Islands and its people. In chapters 5 and 6 of the present study, the significance of such oddities is explored further in Stevenson's South Seas writings. In the following chapter, the story of the production of 'The South Seas' is revisited, where the plans that were outlined in chapter 1 and elaborated here are shown to unravel for a number of reasons, which have a significant bearing on the popular image of the author and his work.

3. IN THE SOUTH SEAS AS FAILURE

I say, have you ever read 'The Highland Widow'? I never had till yesterday. I am half inclined, bar a trip or two, to think it Scott's masterpiece; and it has the name of a failure! Strange things are readers.

R L Stevenson¹

In the previous two chapters Stevenson's plans for 'The South Seas' have been detailed in addition to the way in which many of these plans, for different reasons, do not come to fruition. In this chapter the breakdown of his idea of writing 'the definitive book' about the area is examined to identify whether Stevenson's South Seas writing can be regarded as a failure among the works of the author. The idea of *In the South Seas* as a failed text, as something that frustrates and disappoints the author until he is forced to give up on it, has been the critical consensus since its publication in the Edinburgh Edition of his collected works in 1896, in which Sidney Colvin claims that Stevenson had been unable to reconcile the 'personal and impersonal elements' of his travels and observations in the Pacific.²

There are broadly three stages in the production of the text. The earliest stage is the period from October 1889, when Stevenson writes the letter to Sidney Colvin outlining his plans for a book about the South Seas, to his letter to Colvin of September 1891, when he indicates that he has given up on writing the book. The second stage is from the final year of Stevenson's life, 1894, to the two years of the immediate aftermath, when *In the South Seas* in its most commonly recognised form is being prepared by Colvin as part of a volume of travel to be incorporated into the Edinburgh Edition. The third stage marks the later editions of *In the South Seas*, slightly amended by various editors for inclusion in other versions of the author's *Collected Works*. Of these by far the most significant changes are made by Andrew Lang for the Swanston Edition (1912), as will be seen below. Before looking at these,

¹ From a letter to E L Burlingame dated 7th October 1890. *Letters*, vii, p. 11.

² See 'Editor's Preface', *South Seas*. Colvin later comments on Stevenson's excessive writing schedule in the Pacific, asserting that it is 'a heavy strain for a disappointing result.' *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson to his Family and Friends*, ed. by Sidney Colvin, 9th edn, 2 vols (London: Methuen, 1910), II, p. 208. See also the introduction to the present study, in which is outlined the critical consensus that *In the South Seas* is a failed project.

however, it will be useful to revisit the reasons why *In the South Seas* has been regarded as a problematic text. This will help in understanding why so much of its production is shrouded in confusion and uncertainty.

The idea that 'The South Seas' is one of the author's failures begins to take shape almost as soon as Stevenson shows his wife and family the opening drafts of the first chapters of the planned book. His wife, Fanny, observing his work and listening to his observations about the cultural landscape of the South Seas, firmly believes that he is embarking on a project that could lead to no success. At Honolulu, on 21 May 1889, she writes a brisk letter to Colvin expressing her reservations about her husband's plans:

He has taken into his Scotch Stevenson head, that a stern duty lies before him, and that his book must be a sort of scientific and historical impersonal thing, comparing the different languages (of which he knows nothing, really) and the different peoples, the object being to settle the question as to whether they are of common Malay origin or not. Also to compare the Protestant and Catholic missions, etc. In fact to bring to the front all the prejudices, and all the mistakes and all the ignorance concerning the subject that he can get together; and the whole thing to be impersonal, leaving out all he knows of the people themselves...I am so sure that you will agree with me that I am going to ask you to throw the weight of your influence as heavily as possible in the scales with me. Please refer to the matter in the letters we shall receive at our first stopping place, otherwise Louis will spend a great deal of time in Sydney actually *reading up* other people's books on the islands.³

This earliest indication of the eventual fate of Stevenson's book also offers an insight into the probable outcome should he have produced it as he intends. The subjects that interest him include language, culture, the possible shared origins of the people, and the different impact of Protestant and Catholic missions. It is clear that Stevenson is reading and researching about the Pacific in a wide-ranging fashion. According to Fanny, he wants 'to bring to the front all the prejudices, and all the mistakes and all the ignorance concerning the subject that he can get together', suggesting that it is to be a critical, synthetic work in the same vein as Alexander Findlay's *A Directory for the Navigation of the South Pacific Ocean* (see chapter 1), and not just to be read for pleasure as with his fiction. It is also – contrary to what is taken for granted as being the norm in Stevenson – not seriously to be concerned with

³ *Letters*, vi, pp. 303-4.

characterising the population of the islands, or at least, according to Fanny, he is not interested in including information that will be extraneous to his 'scientific and historical' findings. In a plea that will prove to be decisive to the outcome of the text, she asks Colvin – who is the other major influence in Stevenson's writing – to support her in preventing these ideas from taking further shape in the developing text.

A month later, she writes again to Colvin, this time with happier news: 'Louis is coming round to my view of his book of travels, and I think that by the time we arrive in Sydney, he will have forgotten entirely that he ever held any other and will look as coldly upon the scientific aspect as ever I have done. It should be the most entrancing reading that man ever engaged in.'⁴ If it is true that the South Seas writing subsequently takes a warmer and more picturesque tone from the one indicated by Stevenson's earliest plans, then this may be owed to the persistence of his wife. Yet, by the time that they reach Sydney, in April 1890, she writes again to Colvin expressing her doubts about 'the historical and scientific question' raised by the work.⁵ She does not see it as being in her husband's favour if he should proceed to write an analytical text in a passive and 'scientific' style. She supports her view by pointing to her husband's ignorance of the subject, such as in her letter to Colvin of January 1891, where she describes how Stevenson puts himself at risk by going out to collect what he believes to be a unique species of coral on the Gilbert atoll of Arorae when the same thing may be found in school laboratories in San Francisco. In the letter she expresses her 'desperate engagements' with Stevenson 'over the South Sea book':

Many times I was almost in despair. He had got 'Darwin on the Coral Insect' – no, Darwin was coral reefs; somebody else on Melanesian languages, books on the origin of the South Sea peoples, and all sorts of scientific pamphlets and papers. He has always had a weakness for teaching and preaching, so here was his chance.⁶

The clarity of Stevenson's identification of contemporary scientific problems in the study of the South Seas is made evident by his wife's criticisms. The

⁴ *Letters*, vi, p. 322.

⁵ See the editors' note in *Letters*, vi, p. 79.

⁶ *Letters*, vii, p. 79.

reading matter is concerned with 'coral reefs', whose formation is still in question at the time. Stevenson refers to the matter in Chapter V of *In the South Seas*.⁷ There is also a considerable ethnological – even theological – debate taking place over the origin of the South Sea islanders.⁸ 'Melanesian languages' probably refers to his reading of Robert Henry Codrington's book on the subject⁹, to which he refers in *In the South Seas*, and shows to what extent Stevenson is aware of the significance of theories of language in shaping the dominant model of ethnological discourse of the day.¹⁰

Stevenson's wife is not the only member of his family to hold a critical opinion of his South Seas writing. His cousin, Graham Balfour, in the first 'official' biography of the author, states that, 'His chapters *In the South Seas* have now been collected and published, and from them I shall only quote one or two of the most striking passages, relying rather on his original rough journal at the time, which naturally strikes a more personal note and deals to a greater extent with his individual experience.'¹¹ The significance of the text taken as a whole and the observations that Stevenson makes about the different cultures of the South Seas is ignored, Balfour preferring to concentrate on 'one or two of the most striking passages' as well as the author's journal. Perhaps it seems harsh to criticise a biographer for doing what he can to make his subject appear more vivid to the reader, but if this is

⁷ *South Seas*, p. 35.

⁸ 'Modern linguistic and archaeological research has strengthened and specified the notion that the inhabitants of the various Polynesian islands are descended from a group speaking an Austronesian language in eastern Melanesia which moved into Fiji and western Polynesia before 3,000 years ago – although continuity rather than 'racial' difference with Melanesia would now be stressed.' Nicholas Thomas, *Out of Time: History and Evolution in Anthropological Discourse*, 2nd edn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 31.

⁹ Robert Henry Codrington, *The Melanesian Languages* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1885). George Stocking informs that: 'Although he was in direct contact with both [Edward Burnett] Tylor and [James] Frazer, Codrington's relationship to the development of anthropological theory was perhaps better exemplified by his earlier epistolary link to Max Müller. Like Müller's, his underlying anthropological orientation was that of the pre-evolutionary ethnological paradigm embodied in the work of James Cowles Prichard – a transformation, under the aegis of comparative philology, of the migrational paradigm implicit in the early books of the Bible. Like Müller, Codrington made a certain surface accommodation to evolutionism, but remained critical of some of its fundamental assumptions. By denying that his Melanesians exemplified it, he called into question the very category of "savagery" upon which so much of evolutionary reconstruction was founded.' [George Stocking, *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888-1951* (London: Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 45-6.] The influence of this critical perspective on Stevenson's own attitude towards contemporary anthropology will be explored further in chapter 5.

¹⁰ In this respect cf. the doubts of Connell in 'More than a Library'.

¹¹ Balfour, *Life*, p. 42.

the case then we cannot simply take the word of Stevenson's biographers as the most accurate indication of the interests of the writer.

Samuel McClure¹², the agent who brokers the deal to publish Stevenson's 'Letters' from the South Seas in the *New York Sun*, admits that these

revealed a side of Stevenson with which the public was as yet not much acquainted. There were two men in Stevenson – the romantic adventurer of the sixteenth century, and the Scotch Covenanter of the nineteenth century [sic]. Contrary to our expectation, it was the moralist and not the romancer which his observation in the South Seas awoke in him, and the public found the moralist less interesting than the romancer. And yet, in all his essays, the moralist was uppermost.¹³

A pattern begins to emerge in the criticism, namely, the differing ideas held by the author and by his critics of the audience that is expected to read 'the South Seas'. Fanny Stevenson worries that the latest work will be too 'impersonal' and Graham Balfour prefers to quote from the journal because of its more intimate qualities when compared with *In the South Seas*. McClure states unequivocally that, 'the public found the moralist less interesting than the romancer', and that 'it was the moralist', 'which [Stevenson's] observation in the South Seas awoke in him'. Considering that he acknowledges the presence of 'the moralist' in all of Stevenson's essays, the fact that this aspect of his literary personality dominates 'the South Seas', which is after all a form of essay-writing, should have come as little surprise. What McClure's comments reveal above all is the expectation of the likely audience of Stevenson's work for a sentimentalized projection of the Pacific Islands and their people. Detailed observation and conceptual ambiguity would only serve to blur the idea of the ease and simplicity of South Seas life which McClure and others believe is demanded by the late-Victorian metropolitan reader. What is preferred instead is a South Seas romance, written in a personal

¹² 'S. S. McClure revolutionized American journalism by introducing syndicated material to Metropolitan newspapers. He invented the Sunday supplement. He brought Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Joseph Conrad to the attention of American readers, and so helped to make their fortunes. He created a vast new readership for serious literature (and for bilge, as well). He published and edited the first and best of the cheap American magazines.' Lyon, p. vii.

¹³ McClure, p. 192.

style, that would directly communicate the author's perceptions and experiences.

Not just the readers but also the literati of turn-of-the-century London, particularly, tend toward a parochial form of criticism of anything that appears outside of their usual radar. Cultural life in the city is still a by-word for stuffiness and opportunities for male bonding. The potential for literary experiment and innovation, whether in form or subject matter, is limited by the ties of the literary power brokers to high positions in the social establishment. For example, Sidney Colvin, whom Stevenson first meets in 1873, works as a curator in the British Museum, the site of the largest collection of the rest of the world's treasures amassed by the British Empire.¹⁴ This is not to say that Colvin is incapable of understanding the 'historical and scientific' questions raised by Stevenson in 'The South Seas', but simply that he can not take seriously the cultural and political life of such a distant and little-known part of the world. Moreover, his ambivalence towards the writing of his erstwhile protege is intensified by the resentment that he and many others in London feel about Stevenson's decision to travel and eventually to live at a great distance from them.

Except for his novella, *The Beach of Falesá*, Colvin is uniformly critical of almost all of Stevenson's writing that is set in the Pacific. In his autobiographical *Memories and Notes of Persons and Places*, he states, 'I thought the series of papers afterwards arranged into the volume *In the South Seas* overloaded with information and the results of study, and disappointingly lacking in the thrill and romance one expected of him in relating experiences which had realised the dream of his youth.'¹⁵ His criticism of *In the South Seas* is particularly jarring since it is Colvin who arranges this volume for publication (see discussion below under the sub-title: 'The Composition of *In the South Seas*'). Colvin's main problem with the text is that it is heavy with facts and research and correspondingly light in thrills and romance. As with the comments made by Fanny Stevenson and Samuel McClure, what is apparent is the difficulty his readers face in accepting that Stevenson might want to

¹⁴ Calder, RLS, p. 87. See also Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 361-2.

¹⁵ Sidney Colvin, *Memories and Notes of Persons and Places 1852-1912* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1921), p. 149.

write a text about the Pacific Islands that excludes sentimentality.¹⁶ Colvin admits, however, that much of his criticism of the South Seas material stems from his own disappointment that Stevenson appears to have achieved a position in which his own assistance is no longer required: 'In spite of the fine work he had done during his voyages, I persuaded myself that from living permanently in that outlandish world and far from cultivated society both he and his writing must deteriorate, and wrote warning him in plain terms.'¹⁷ It is notable that even in apology Colvin describes the Pacific Islands, without a trace of irony, as 'this outlandish world and far from cultivated society'. There appears to have been no reconciliation made with the circumstances of his friend's life.

Since most of his regular correspondents are metropolitan literati, distant and uninterested, Stevenson's letters to them provide only a modest indication of the extent of his reading and knowledge of the South Seas. By contrast, examples such as the following letter to Henry James show just how much that Stevenson is prepared to involve himself in technical questions with people who are also well-informed about the Pacific Islands:

I heard a great deal about you from my mother and from Graham Balfour. The latter declares that you could take a First on any Samoan subject. If that be so, I should like to hear you on the Theory of the Constitution. Also to consult you on the force of the particles *o lo'o* and *ua* which are the subject of a dispute among local pundits. You might, if you ever discover this, give me your opinion on the origin of the Samoan race, just to complete the favour.¹⁸

This is from a letter dated 7th July 1894. Stevenson is still as interested as ever in the questions of language and origins that hold him on his arrival in the South Seas, and in Henry James he finds an equally interested observer.

Perhaps the most knowledgeable of all his friends on the subject of South Seas cultures, however, is Andrew Lang, who edits the *Swanston*

¹⁶ Modern criticism of *In the South Seas* as a romanticized representation of its subject seems groundless in this respect, since it does not acknowledge the failed expectations of Stevenson's readers in his own day. See for example the discussion of the chapters on the Marquesas Islands by Lawrence Phillips, 'The Canker of Empire: Colonialism, Autobiography and the Representation of Illness: Jack London and Robert Louis Stevenson in the Marquesas', in *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism*, ed. by L Chrisman and B Parry (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2000), pp. 115-132.

¹⁷ *Letters*, vi, 1n, p. 404.

¹⁸ *Letters*, viii, p. 312.

Edition of Stevenson's *Works* (1911-12). In the introduction to this series of volumes, Lang acknowledges the public dislike of *In the South Seas* by suggesting that, 'Perhaps no book of Stevenson's is less popular than his narrative of storm and calm, of beachcombers and brown Polynesian princes.'¹⁹ Lang writes many books on ethnological and historical subjects and can in some ways be seen as a literary alter-ego of Stevenson's own interest in these matters, so closely are their interests intertwined.²⁰ Consequently, he understands his friend's difficulty in transmitting to a wider audience the findings that he has worked hard to produce. Lang believes that Stevenson 'was always haunted, and in popularity retarded, by History.' It is simply not a commercially viable subject, at least on the terms expected of the author of *Jekyll and Hyde*, which is not by coincidence the most successful and most contemporary of Stevenson's fictions. According to Lang, it is the author's desire 'to know about details of savage custom and of superstitious belief, a taste very far from being universal even in the most highly cultivated circles, where Folklore is a name of fear.' Lang holds that these interests are still nurtured by only a small following in Britain and elsewhere.

Breakdown

From its proximity to the international dateline Samoa is almost exactly on the other side of the world to London. One of the reasons why Stevenson decides to settle in Samoa rather than on a different Pacific island is because of its appearance on the regular postal routes. In 1890, a letter posted from Samoa will take about one month to arrive in London.²¹ During the writing of 'The South Seas', from the middle of 1890, Stevenson corresponds with Colvin as frequently as it is possible for him to do considering the limitations of the postal system. His letters reveal the story of the breakdown of the writing in considerable detail. All the same, some of the letters between the two

¹⁹ *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson. Swanston Edition*, ed. by Andrew Lang, 25 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911-12), I, p. xl.

²⁰ See the discussion of Lang's relationship to contemporary anthropology in chapters 5 and 6.

²¹ See Booth and Mehew's discussion of postal routes and times in *Letters*, VI, pp. 243 and 326 and in *Letters*, VII, p. 3.

during this period are not mentioned here, having been lost during the long journey between the correspondents. What is important to note from the outset is that Stevenson constantly flits between talk of the series of 'Letters' that he is writing for McClure and the – in his eyes – more significant task of the Book (which Colvin will later edit from the letters) that will resemble but also exceed the scope of the Letters.

An early example of this random conflation of texts may be seen in Stevenson's letter to Colvin of August 1890, in the immediate aftermath of his recent cruise on the *Janet Nicoll*, during which he had spent a lot of time writing:

I have done well on that voyage; sixteen letters – at least, not that, but the draught [sic] of sixteen chapters of my book; from which thirteen or fourteen letters will be selected – go home to be set up; which Lloyd who goes soon after will get you to correct. Please remember, the printer five times out of ten prints my OR as AS, and bear in mind it does not enter into my view of English, any more than I believe it does into yours, to use AS for OR; although I know the thing is done by persons laying claim to human stature. Besides the letters finished I have some twelve or fourteen drafted in more or less distinct form.²²

The tone of the letter is busy and optimistic, Stevenson's plans being very much in full operation and the writing is progressing soundly. 'Sixteen letters' at this point clearly means 'sixteen chapters of my book', and not merely sixteen serialisations for McClure.²³ It is also significant that Stevenson thinks to remind Colvin to tell the printer not to print his OR as AS, since it clarifies one of the points on which technical reproduction from the author's handwritten manuscript is unclear (see the discussion of the Paumotuan material in chapter 4).

²² *Letters*, vi, p. 403.

²³ Stevenson regards serialisations as a necessary evil and can not accept them as finished works in themselves. A visitor to his home in Samoa reports on their encounter: 'He was then engaged on 'The Master of Ballantrae', which, although not quite completed, was running in *Scribner's*. I admitted that I was reading it as it appeared monthly in that magazine, an admission for which he strongly reprovved me! Somewhat taken aback, I pleaded that I could not restrain my impatience, but he would not accept the excuse. "What?" I asked, in rather feeble self-defence, "isn't one supposed to read it in *Scribner's*?" "Of course not!" he replied. Still more flabbergasted, I require why, in that case, was it published in the serial form? "Simply as an advertisement," was the answer.' Sir Edmund Radcliffe Pears, 'As Good a Listener as He was a Talker', in *Interviews and Recollections*, pp. 138-43.

On 3 November 1890 Stevenson writes: 'tis really immense what I have done: in the South Sea book I have fifty pages copied fair, some of which has been four times and all twice written: certainly 250 pp. of solid scrying inside a fortnight; but I was at it by 7 A. M. till lunch, and from two till four or five, every day'.²⁴ Much of his working day, in fact, is being spent in drafting his book, a lot of the work at present being in copying and correcting the notes which he makes during his travels on the *Janet Nicoll*. In this period Stevenson is writing long letters to Colvin detailing the activities of several days, separated by the dates of each account, so that when the mail steamer arrives at Apia he will have plenty of material ready to send to his friend. One of the consequences of this procedure is that in the same letter a different view of the progress of writing the Book is sometimes given by the author, on the basis of comments that have in the meantime been received by post from Colvin. This is evident from a later section of the same letter of 3 November, where Stevenson explains to Colvin the heavy undertaking that writing 'The South Seas' is proving to be:

The job is immense; I stagger under material... But I believe in time, I shall get the whole thing in focus. Now, up to date, that is all my design, and I beg to warn you till we have the whole (or much) of the stuff together, you can hardly judge – and I can hardly judge... Problems of style are (as yet) dirt under my feet: my problem is architectural-creative – to get this stuff jointed and moving. If I can do that, I will trouble you for style; anybody might write it, and it would be splendid: well-engineered, the masses right, the blooming thing travelling – twig?... This I want you to understand, for lots of the stuff sent home is, I imagine, rot – and slovenly rot – and some of it, pompous rot; and I want you to understand it's a *lay in*.²⁵

From the optimistic view of earlier in the letter there has been a significant knock back from either Colvin or Fanny or someone else for Stevenson to later describe 'lots of the stuff sent home' as 'slovenly rot'. Still, he indicates the provisional status of the work by emphasising the weight of the material he has collected and the structural problem that must be overcome before questions of style can be allowed to enter.

²⁴ *Letters*, VII, p. 21.

²⁵ *ibid.*

The comment has been made by some of Stevenson's biographers that in limiting the effect of style at this point he is merely seeking to defend his work from the criticisms that are arriving from Colvin and others. However, it is just as likely that he means exactly what he is saying, namely, that in a work of the nature that he is proposing, the author's style – even if the author happens to be one of the great literary stylists of his day – is secondary to the 'architectural' organisation of the information at hand. Here, too, there is a sense in the criticism of the work exceeding the contemporary image of the author.

Towards the end of December 1890, Stevenson writes to Henry James, telling him that 'work is now arrested' but that he has written 'about thirty chapters of the South Sea book'. This letter is particularly interesting because it is one of the rare occasions in which the dialectical process of writing and observation that guides the production of 'The South Seas' is revealed by the author:

The time it took me to design this volume, before I could dream of putting pen to paper was excessive. And then think of writing a book of travels on the spot; when I am continually extending my information, revising my opinions, and seeing the most finely finished portions of my work come part by part in pieces...no man can write without [a theory] – at least the way he would like to. And my theories melt, melt, melt, and as they melt the thaw-waters wash down my writing, and leave unidea'd tracts – wastes instead of cultivated farms.²⁶

The letter describes Stevenson's exasperation at the factual complexity of the work, rather than his discouragement by the criticism that it has been receiving. In writing 'The South Seas' he continuously has to re-examine his theoretical perspective because the experience of travel and observation causes his theories to 'melt, melt, melt' as a result of the constant intake of new experiences and information. In fact, the consequence of the processes of re-examination and revision appear to be far from beneficial according to the author. Rather than achieving a fresh synthesis of ideas ('cultivated farms') he sees only the breakdown of existing structures of comprehension ('unidea'd tracts – wastes'). In the final chapter the double meaning of this

²⁶ *Letters*, VII, p. 65 (29 December 1890).

statement will be examined with reference to the discoveries made in Stevenson's South Seas texts. It will be seen how in resolving the complexity of the landscape and culture of the South Seas, Stevenson turns to a notion of contradiction to support his 'vast accumulations of fact'.

The 1890 Copyright Edition

One of the most serious issues in the publishing world of the time is the overwhelming number of pirated versions of successful authors' works. This causes Stevenson to lose a lot of the revenue in the United States from the production of such texts as *Kidnapped* and *Jekyll & Hyde*. When it comes to publishing the serialised 'The South Seas', it is decided that a 'dummy' volume should be produced in a small quantity, in advance of the Letters, in order to secure copyright. Stevenson sends a manuscript of this volume – consisting of most of the chapters, or fifteen Letters – of what is to become the first part of *In the South Seas* – to McClure in New York. McClure then sells this to the *Sun*, who syndicate it according to the method that McClure lately perfects with other authors. Unfortunately, the *Sun* refuses to take the material in this form, arguing that it 'did not come as letters are supposed to come.' In order to push through with the syndication, McClure has to significantly lower his rates.²⁷ 'The South Seas' is duly published in the *Sun* from 1 February 1891 until it is discontinued the following December. A total of seventy Letters are published in all.²⁸

Copyright needed to be secured for serialisation, but Stevenson submits the chapter in a form that does not match the conditions expected by the *Sun* (and presumably the other journals in which it is meant to appear, including the London journal *Black and White*). His Letters do not look like literary letters but more like chapters. This gives an indication of how attached Stevenson becomes to the idea of writing a book about the South Seas. His misunderstanding, through which he copyrights the book form for serialisation, is the beginning of the trouble with producing the text in a way that will satisfy

²⁷ See the discussion in Swearingen, pp. 142-3.

²⁸ See *Letters*, vii, pp. 68-9. Frank McLynn writes that 'the disappointment over the *In the South Seas* letters had been egregious. He [Stevenson] had made just £1,000, about a third of the money McClure promised him, after the cancellation of the series.' McLynn, p. 406.

all of the parties involved. Stevenson continues to write the text in Samoa into the Summer of 1891 but he steadily backs away from all assertions that he is writing a book – hurt by criticism, no doubt – and claims simply to be writing Letters from which a book ‘may be drawn’. This is emphatically not his intention prior to the production of the 1890 copyright edition.

On 25 February 1891 Stevenson writes to Colvin in reply to the latter’s criticism of the Marquesan chapters that are collected in the Copyright Edition of the text.

My dear Colvin, The *Janet Nicoll* stuff was rather worse than I had looked for; you have picked out all that is fit to stand; bar two others (which I don’t dislike) ‘The Port of Entry’ and ‘The House of Temoana’; that is for a present opinion. I may condemn those also ere I have done. By this time you should have another Marquesan Letter, the worst of the lot, I think: and seven Paumotu Letters, which are not far out of the vein, as I wish it; I am at hopes the Hawaiian stuff is better yet, time will show, and time will make perfect...I thought (by the way) you were a little unjust to ‘The Story of a Plantation’, which I shall doubtless get much better, but which as it stands interests me.²⁹

The tone of hurt is by now clearly evident. Colvin’s letter, which has not survived, exceeds Stevenson’s expectations in severity to the extent of drawing the author into a confused despondency (‘the worst of the lot, I think’). The letter also shows to what extent Colvin is able to exert creative and editorial control over Stevenson, who is not obliged to accept criticism from someone living thousands of miles away and therefore without a concrete grasp on the reality of life in the South Seas.

The following March, Stevenson writes to Colvin again, more desperate still, and admonishing himself in the process: ‘The last two chapters have taken me considerably over a month, and they are still beneath pity.’³⁰ Surprisingly he is still determined to finish the book, but he expresses his resolve in an unconvincing way: ‘some day, when style revisits me, they will be excellent matter to rewrite...I have not the least anxiety about the book; unless I die, I shall find the time to make it good; but the Lord deliver me from the thought of the Letters.’ It is the continuation of the Letters that exerts an almost unmanageable strain on him, when he would much rather take his time

²⁹ *Letters*, VII, pp. 85-6.

³⁰ *Letters*, VII, p. 94 (20 March 1891).

and write the book. At this point in his life the tension between scholarly and commercial motives for writing probably stretches near to breaking point. On 21 March 1891 he writes from his plantation home at Vailima, Samoa: 'Today I have not weeded, I have written instead from six till eleven, from twelve till two... a damned letter is written for the third time; I dread to read it, for I dare not give it a fourth chance – unless it be very bad indeed.'³¹

By the next month he dissociates the production of the Letters entirely from the production of the book. On 18 April, he writes to Colvin that 'the stuff sent is never meant for other than a first state, I never meant it to appear as a book'. He probably is not contradicting himself, since he has maintained throughout that he intends to re-write his notes at some later date. But the juxtaposition of his enthusiasm for the book a year earlier with the dejection of the present moment tells its own story. He informs Colvin that 'Of the little volume' (meaning the 1890 Edition):

Chapter I, a page or two of II, III, IV, some of VIII, some of IX, X, XIII, XIV and XV, with some excision and writing are to stand. The rest I shall simply drop, and by similar drastic measures make up a book of shreds and patches; which will not be what I had still hoped to make, but must have the value it has and be d-d to it. I cannot fight any longer; I am sensible of having done worse than I had hoped, worse than I had feared...³²

He tells the publisher Edward Burlingame, of *Scribner's* magazine, on 10 May 1891 that he intends to send him the manuscript for the book at some point in the following year, which he hopes that he will publish. 'Some of it will be really good, I believe, and the rest not: like other books.'³³

The main concerns of Stevenson's life at Vailima in 1891 are therefore his great distance from most of his friends, which is countered by his continuing good health (a subject that he could never afford to take lightly – it is during this period of his life that he decides that he will not return to Britain)³⁴; his manual labour in the service of the plantation and the house;

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *Letters*, VII, pp. 98-102.

³³ *Letters*, VII, p. 119.

³⁴ The intensity of his schedule as a writer affects his health in the long term. According to George McKay, 'Until the end of his days...Stevenson felt the necessity for unflagging production, and this undoubtedly shortened his life. Dr. Fairfax Ross, who had examined

and the writing of and his growing disillusionment with *The South Seas Letters*, because of the relentless stream of criticism he receives from Colvin. He still has belief in his ability to write a great book about the Pacific Islands, but the notion now looms impenetrably before him, like the plant life he struggles with on his Vailima estate.³⁵

Stevenson's letter to Colvin of 20 June 1891 from Vailima contains valuable information about Colvin's eventual structuring of the final part of *In the South Seas*:

Your opinion as to the Letters as a whole is so damnatory that I put them by. But there is a 'hell of a want of' money this year. And these Gilbert Island papers, being the most interesting in matter and forming a compact whole and being well illustrated, I did think of as a possible resource.

It could be called

Six Months in Micronesia
 Two Island Kings
 Monarchies
 Gilbert Island Kings
 Monarchies

And I daresay I'll think of a better yet. And would divide thus:

- Butaritari
- I. A Town Asleep
 - II. The Three Brothers
 - III. Around our House
 - IV. A Tale of Tapu
 - V. The Five Days' Festival
 - VI. Domestic Life – which might be omitted, but not well, better be recast.

- The King of Apemama
- VII. The Royal Trader
 - VIII. Foundation of Equator Town
 - IX. The Palace of Many Women
 - X. Equator Town and the Palace
 - XI. King and Commons
 - XII. The Devil Work Box
 - XIII. The Three Corselets
 - XIV. Tail piece: The Court Upon a Journey

Stevenson in Sydney, reported that "exposure, malaria, worry and over-work" were doing him harm.' McKay, p. 41.

³⁵ In a letter of 17 May 1891 he writes to Colvin describing 'days and days of unprofitable stubbing and digging, and the result still poor as literature'. *Letters*, vii, p. 115.

I wish you to watch these closely, judging them as a whole, and treating them as I have asked you, and favour me with your damnatory advice.³⁶

As with his earlier plans for 'A Samoan Sketchbook' (see chapter 1), the financial pressure that the author experiences is revealed in his idea to publish the Gilberts material alone as a small volume. Colvin uses this plan for a separate volume – which is never to appear – as the outline for its appearance in *In the South Seas* (see chapter 4 for a discussion of the ordering of the Gilberts material)³⁷. It is interesting to note also that Stevenson still entertains the idea of illustrating his text, probably with the photographs he takes while on his travels.

Colvin also writes to Stevenson around the same time to ask why there have not been any Letters on Tahiti. He notes that 'the consequence is a grisly gap between the Marquesan and the Hawaiian chapters.'³⁸ Colvin expects to receive from Stevenson a consecutive narrative, a sort of diary, which is not at all Stevenson's intention, as he previously states in his plans for the book. He writes in reply on 8 September 1891:

The Tahiti part has never turned up, because it has never been written. As for telling you where I went or when, or anything about Honolulu, I would rather die; that is fair and plain. How can anybody care when or how I left Honolulu? This is (excuse me) childish. A man of upwards of forty cannot waste his time in communicating matter of that degree of indifference...O, Colvin! Suppose it had made a book, all such information is given to one glance of an eye by a map with a little dotted line upon it. But let us forget this unfortunate affair.³⁹

Stevenson reaffirms his intention to avoid the standard format of the travel narrative, where the dates and locations of travel are listed in the form of an expanded itinerary. He also indicates ('suppose it had made a book') that by this point the plan to write 'The South Seas' has been laid to rest. Rather than

³⁶ *Letters*, VII, p. 135.

³⁷ The minor changes are as follows: 'A Town Asleep' is altered to 'Butaritari', 'The Three Brothers' to 'The Four Brothers', an extra chapter is included as a continuation of 'A Tale of Tapu', 'Domestic Life' is renamed 'Husband and Wife', 'The Palace of Many Women' is altered to 'The Place of any Women', 'The Devil Work Box' becomes, simply, 'Devil-Work', and the two final chapters – 'The Three Corselets' and 'The Court Upon a Journey' are substituted for 'The King of Apemama'. See Contents, *South Seas*.

³⁸ See *Letters*, VII, pp. 152-159. In fact, Stevenson visits the Paumotus Islands after staying in the Marquesas.

³⁹ *Letters*, VII, p. 157.

ending on a note of self-pity, however, he shows some defiance, telling Colvin that his recommendation to feed the reader with personal information about the author and his movements are the opposite of the kind of advice that is required in this situation.

Writing in October or November 1891 to another correspondent, Stevenson reflects on the poor reception that his *South Sea Poems*, or *Ballads*, had been receiving: 'I am going on with a lot of island work, exulting in the knowledge of a new world – "a new created world" and new men; and I am sure my income will Decline and Fall Off. For the effort of comprehension is death to the intelligent public, and sickness to the dull.'⁴⁰ A descriptive book of travel does not in itself seem to be asking too much of a public that always expects exotic romance and the unexpected in Stevenson's work. Stevenson recognises, however, that his problem lies in trying to make the complexity and ambiguity of his South Seas writing palatable to an audience that prefers its own preconceived judgements to those of a novelist-turned-anthropologist.

The last words on the matter, for the time being, come in *The Wrecker*, the novel which Stevenson at the time co-writes with his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne. In it he makes the following cutting observation, obviously intended for his sophisticated literary friends in London and elsewhere:

Those who dwell in clubs and studios may paint excellent pictures or write enchanting novels. There is one thing that they should not do: they should pass no judgement on man's destiny, for it is a thing with which they are unacquainted. Their own life is an excrescence of the moment, doomed, in the vicissitude of history, to pass and disappear. The eternal life of man, spent under sun and rain and in rude physical effort, lies upon one side, scarce changed since the beginning.⁴¹

With this fictional description the author does not hide his feelings about recent events. Stevenson compares the personal criticism of his South Seas writing which he receives from the metropolis with 'the vicissitude of history'. The critics, who are 'an excrescence of the moment', he continues, are 'doomed' to 'pass and disappear'. His anger is consolidatory. He adds that those who have had no experience of everyday work and toil 'spent under sun

⁴⁰ Letter to H B Baildon, *Letters*, vii, pp. 187-8.

⁴¹ Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Wrecker* (New York: Dover Publications, 1982 [1892]), p. 232.

and rain', have no business commenting on such generalities as 'man's destiny'. His own qualifications to be the author of this under-appreciated eternal history is expressed in terms of the life he is then living in the Pacific Islands.

The Composition of *In the South Seas*

Reports of Stevenson's involvement in the production of *In the South Seas* tend to close in late 1891, but he also has a significant say in the arrangement of this posthumously published text. The first publicly available edition of *In the South Seas* is the Edinburgh Edition of 1896. However, the first single-volume edition, which will have been more affordable to the general reader, is the Chatto and Windus edition of 1900, a re-print of the earlier text. It is not known exactly what materials the editor Sidney Colvin uses to put it together. According to the Stevenson bibliographer Roger Swearingen, 'For the text he [Colvin] drew upon the 1890 copyright edition, proofs sent in 1891 by S S McClure, the detailed plan of the work which Stevenson had sent him, and possibly upon Stevenson's revised or unrevised manuscripts.'⁴²

It is Stevenson's old friend Charles Baxter who early in 1894 devises the idea of a collected edition (the Edinburgh Edition) of his friend's work.⁴³ However, it is agreed by both men that Sidney Colvin should be the editor of this collection.⁴⁴ Colvin has other ideas: in a letter to Stevenson dated 18 May 1894, in which he 'made various suggestions for the contents of the early volumes of the Edinburgh Edition', Colvin expresses to Stevenson that, 'There is however one point to which I demur, and that is the putting of my name on the false title as editor: - as if you were a dead man, which please goodness is far from being the case.'⁴⁵ Colvin's reluctance to officially assume the title of editor of the series, which to all extents and purposes is the role that he had anyway assumed, is regarded by Stevenson with suspicion. To Baxter on 18

⁴² Swearingen, p. 138.

⁴³ See *Letters*, VIII, for the unfolding of the relevant correspondence between the pair.

⁴⁴ *Letters*, VIII, p. 334.

⁴⁵ *Letters*, VIII, 309n.

June 1894 he comments that 'Colvin's letter to me makes me doubt his real motive. It may only be modesty, it may be the fear of ridicule. I shall put it to him that I would like it so when I write, and then, if he still refuses, what else can we do but leave it out?'⁴⁶ Stevenson claims that he is giving Baxter and especially Colvin full control over the handling of the collected edition 'not only from humility, which I sincerely feel, but from a sense of what is possible and what is not at so great an interval of posts.' If he had been writing from somewhere closer to Britain it would have been more likely that he would have taken an active role in the composition of the Edinburgh Edition. On the same day as his letter to Baxter, Stevenson writes to Colvin telling him that he would prefer the latter's name on the false title page of the Edition, but that he leaves the matter to Colvin's discretion.⁴⁷

On 11 or 12 August 1894, Stevenson writes again to Colvin, raising the idea of including some of the South Sea Letters in the collected edition: 'I am strong for making a volume out of selections from the South Sea Letters; I read over again the King of Apemama, and it is good in spite of your teeth, and a real curiosity, a thing that can never be seen again, now the group is annexed and Tembinoka dead.'⁴⁸ The inclusion of the section about the deceased former ruler (he dies in 1892) and his kingdom would, Stevenson believes, interest readers. It is remarkable considering everything that has gone before concerning the South Seas Letters that Stevenson still expresses hope in the ultimate success of this writing. He adds that he would like Colvin to send him 'the *first five* Butaritari Letters and the Low Archipelago ones (both of which I have lost or mislaid) and I can chop out a perfectly fair volume of what I wish to be preserved. It can keep for the last of the series.' Since *In the South Seas* is published in 1896, two years after Stevenson's death in December 1894, it is likely that most of the revisions of this text for the purposes of the Edinburgh Edition are made by Colvin.⁴⁹

Stevenson does survive long enough, however, to receive the first volume of the *Works*, which is published in November 1894. His response to

⁴⁶ *Letters* VIII, p. 307.

⁴⁷ *Letters*, VIII, 344n.

⁴⁸ *Letters* VIII, p. 344.

⁴⁹ The one possible exception is Part II, on the Paumotu Islands, an incomplete galley proof of which contains annotations allegedly made in Stevenson's hand. See the discussion in chapter 4 of the present study.

the slip inserted into this book, which acknowledges Colvin as the overall editor but maintains that 'additions, omissions, and corrections (other than those merely of press) have the sanction and approval of the author', is indicative of the moods and anticipations of both of these men. Writing to Colvin on 4 November he states that:

I take an extremely emphatic view against your proposed slip. Really, if you consider your letter of this month and the various corrections which you there indicate it must appear to the meanest capacity that you *are* the editor, and that I *did not* make all excisions, alterations and additions. I am afraid, my dear fellow, that you cannot thus play fast and loose.⁵⁰

Stevenson appears hardly to trust Colvin to make changes to the text that he will find acceptable. Throughout 1894 their correspondence about the Edinburgh Edition contains flashes of disagreement over grammatical and other alterations made by Colvin to Stevenson's text.

In the following chapter the specific changes made during the compilation of the Edinburgh Edition to the original and revised drafts of the chapters – or Letters – on the Marquesas, Paumotus, and Gilbert islands is examined in detail. At the outset, there appear to be several problems with entrusting Sidney Colvin with the job of editing *In the South Seas*. Firstly, there is the reluctance of this English gentleman of the cultivated classes to use perceived risqué or raw phrases, therefore limiting the realism and accuracy of the author's descriptions of South Seas customs and manners. Secondly, there is his lack of knowledge about the people of the South Seas, which sometimes spills over into undisguised contempt for them.⁵¹ In practical terms, prejudice weakens his understanding of the subjects about which Stevenson writes in 'The South Seas', and as is clear from the correspondence Colvin has no qualms about admitting his lack of interest in them. Such an attitude may be compared with Henry James' self-education in Samoan affairs, if only to show that it is not unreasonable to have expected a more sympathetic and informed editor to take on this specialist text. A third problem is that the huge geographical distance between the author and his editor ensures that even while he is alive there is an unprecedented time lag

⁵⁰ *Letters*, VIII, pp. 383-4.

⁵¹ See *Letters*, VIII, for Colvin's characterisation of the Samoans as 'chocolates'.

between production and evaluation. With Stevenson's fiction there is at least an established understanding with Colvin, developed over many years of successful publishing, about what is and is not possible to alter without the author's permission; with 'The South Seas', which is in many ways a unique text for the author, there are no obvious guidelines in criticism, so that a falling-out over matters of style as well as content can not have been unexpected. Colvin fails to appreciate that Stevenson's move to the Pacific Islands has broadened his readership and range, and that he writes short stories such as 'The Bottle Imp' specifically for Polynesian audiences. Lastly, there is Colvin's self-acknowledged envy at his erstwhile protégé's new found independence in the Pacific. The conclusion to be drawn from all of these things is that Colvin deeply misunderstands Stevenson's development as a writer in the 1890s. He is – they are – too far apart to communicate with any degree of confidence about the matter.

Later Editions of In the South Seas

As mentioned previously, several later editions of Stevenson's *Works* include alternate versions of *In the South Seas*. Both the Vailima and Tusitala editions contain slight changes and amendments, although they adhere to the model of the Edinburgh Edition.⁵² Andrew Lang's Swanston edition is the only one that tampers with the overall structure since, in addition to the material on the Marquesas, Paumotus, and Gilbert Islands it also includes material on Hawaii titled, as Stevenson had himself titled it in his plan, "The Eight Islands". Lang includes material that is not published in any of the serial versions of 1891.⁵³ He divides the material into chapters that are also different from serial and typescript versions. There are five chapters, all brief in comparison with the chapters carried over from the Edinburgh Edition: 'I. THE KONA COAST II. A RIDE IN THE FOREST III. THE CITY OF REFUGE IV. KAAHUMANU V. THE LEPERS OF KONA'.

Although this material is of considerable interest to the study of Stevenson's life and work in the Pacific Islands, the section on Hawaii will not

⁵² See the discussion in Swearingen, pp. 138-9.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 138. See also Lang's 'Editorial Note', *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Andrew Lang, xviii, p. x.

be covered in great detail in the following chapters, primarily because the focus of the analysis is on the production of the Edinburgh Edition, which ignores this material anyway, and also because the majority of the later editions, with the exception of the Hogarth text of 1987 (itself a reprint of Lang's Swanston Edition)⁵⁴, have maintained Colvin's original formulation, omitting the section on Hawaii.

The present chapter has attempted to fill a gap in the history of Stevenson's writing. Owing to the lack of a detailed study of the correspondence between Stevenson and Colvin during the author's years in the Pacific Islands, and specifically the years of travel in 1888-91, this chapter has attempted to restage this correspondence. It has done so by contextualising it within the writing of 'The South Seas' and its eventual breakdown, and not the other way around as is normally portrayed in biographies and critical studies of the author. There are several conclusions to be drawn from this approach. On the one hand, this has led to a confirmation of the existing impression that Stevenson is forced to abandon his initial plans for the book due to the build-up of commercial and critical pressures during these years. Qualifying such a conclusion, however, are his attempts to keep his idea afloat, firstly by his repeated claims that the Letters will be supplementary to his forthcoming Big Book, and then in 1894 by resurrecting the idea of a separate version of the book, based largely now on the Letters, as a volume of his soon-to-be-published collected works.

Alongside this mainly biographical narrative of breakdown is a critical one that is less clearly established. This is the story of Stevenson's discussions with the likes of Henry James, Andrew Lang, and (presumably) other interested scholars living nearer to him in the Pacific Islands about the technical aspects of his work. To James he reflects on the problem of synthesising the masses of material that he has collected, and early on to Colvin he remarks that his main concern is not stylistic but 'architectural-creative'. The limited nature of the remaining evidence leaves many

⁵⁴ Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas* (London: Hogarth, 1987).

unanswered questions, yet the glimpses of detail are stimulating and provide a fresh perspective on this period of his life.

The general conclusion that is to be drawn from the correspondence is the gradual distortion of Stevenson's aims with his *Big Book on the South Seas*. From its beginnings as a scientific study it develops into something of a personal narrative in which facts are embedded within the text, taking a form that still pleases few of his contemporaries. This is not to say that the entire project is jeopardised by criticism but simply that the resulting texts are compromised beyond the author's initial plans and motivation. In the following chapter the direct alterations that are made to the texts by Colvin and others are examined to try to establish the purpose and direction of such changes, and also to determine the influence that they have had on the version of 'The South Seas' that has been handed down to the present day.

4. THE EDINBURGH EDITION

In the previous chapter it was shown how the breakdown of Stevenson's writing on the South Seas eventually leads to a compromised version that is eventually published as a single volume in 1900 after editorial work carried out by Sidney Colvin. Therefore, to be clear about what Stevenson has written on the South Seas it is necessary to understand how Colvin and others have amended earlier drafts of the work in preparation for the published edition. Stevenson's intended audience, and the audience to whom the published text is addressed, are largely the same, only the motivation for publishing differs. The audience is the fiction-reading public that has developed a liking for the author's romantic novels, particularly *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. Normally Stevenson, a canny observer of literary tastes and fashions, would have had few doubts about his audience's reception of his work, but as has been clearly outlined in the previous chapters, 'The South Seas' in its planned form is to have been a different sort of literature than that to which his readers had become accustomed.

It is impossible to trace every word, document, and manuscript which relates to 'The South Seas'. Some of them are lost, others were published as letters but left out of the book, and still others were, as has been explained, planned by the author but never written. The present chapter is not therefore meant as a complete account of the fate of the writings on the Marquesas, Paumotus, and Gilbert Islands respectively (which form the three main sections of *In the South Seas*), but rather as a study of the break-up, or failure, of Stevenson's texts as a consequence of their appearance in the Edinburgh Edition of the collected works. The responsibility for the changes does not extend to pursuing any single party since, in addition to the editor, proofreaders, and typesetters who are involved in the production of the 1896 text, the author also has a say, particularly in the section on the Paumotus, which he asks to have sent to him for review.¹ Therefore, the aim of this

¹ See chapter 3. It is important to bear in mind that by this point (1894) Stevenson is not reworking 'The South Seas' according to his earliest conception of the book, but rather according to those South Sea Letters that have been published or were meant to be published as serialisations for Samuel McClure. Therefore, the language of many of the texts that follow is hardly scientific, even if, on occasion, the subject matter is. This is because of

chapter is to identify the changes and speculate on the underlying social and cultural motivations, concentrating specifically on instances that might reveal the ideologies operating within the Victorian publishing industry and the power of the author to assert his role as a producer within this industry.

The method of study, as outlined in the introduction, is by comparison of existing manuscripts or copy texts (MS), wherever available, with the published text of *In the South Seas* (in this chapter referred to simply as ISS) in its earliest and subsequently definitive form (i.e. the 1896 Edinburgh edition / the 1900 Chatto & Windus edition). In this regard, there are three manuscripts extant: 1. MS C233 from the Mitchell Library, Sydney, contains Stevenson's handwritten draft of the 1890 edition of 'The South Seas', which is published for copyright purposes but which Sidney Colvin later uses as the basis for the Marquesan chapters of *In the South Seas*; 2. MS Vault Stevenson 525 from the Beinecke Library, Yale University contains galley proofs used for the Paumotus section of *In the South Seas*, and is marked in places in Stevenson's own hand; 3. MS 6433 from the Beinecke Library contains the author's handwritten final draft of the last part of the text that is to become *In the South Seas*, which is about the kingdom of Apemama in the Gilbert Islands. No surviving manuscript has been discovered for the previous section on the Gilbertese island of Butaritari (see discussion below). The changes that are made to the Mitchell Library manuscript will be first examined.

The Marquesas

Of the three manuscripts that will be considered in detail, the one on the Marquesas Islands shows the least evidence of change prompted by the author and therefore, in all likelihood, the greatest evidence of deliberate suppression and misrepresentation by Colvin and others in the published form of the text. The MS consists of ninety-five pages of narrative split into sixteen

the gradual change from Stevenson's idea to write a historical and scientific study to the more emotive and subjective language that is favoured by Fanny Stevenson and Sidney Colvin. This chapter examines the alterations made by editors and proofreaders to this later, already compromised group of texts.

chapters plus two pages of contents, written entirely in Stevenson's hand. The contents are outlined in greater detail than in *In the South Seas* but are otherwise the same except for the following:

1. The chapter on 'Long-Pig' is listed as separate to the chapter that follows ('A Cannibal High Place'), whereas the two are joined together in ISS.
2. The chapter on 'The Two Chiefs of Atuona', which is listed among the contents, does not appear in the subsequent MS, although it forms the final chapter of the Marquesan part of ISS.
3. Two further chapters are also projected in the contents, but these do not appear anywhere else either in MS forms or in ISS. They are: 'XVII. Observations on Melville's "Typee"' and 'XVIII. Pages from the Casco's Log', which was to appear in a separate section on The Dangerous (Paumotus) Archipelago but does not do so.

The first part of ISS otherwise runs in the same order as the MS except for the instances that are discussed below.

What is immediately apparent from reading and comparing the MS with the published text is the number of random alterations of punctuation. Sometimes a comma is substituted for a semicolon, for example, and at other times the same practice is reversed. These can generally be put down to the individual preferences of proofreaders, since there seems to be no clear purpose or motivation behind the choices. However, there are several instances of changes in spelling and punctuation that go beyond individual preferences in the systematic way in which they are carried out and the similar effects to which they lead in the appearance of the text.² These will now be examined in turn.

² The present chapter is indebted to Barry Menikoff's *Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Beach of Falesá': a Study in Victorian Publishing* for providing the methodology for an investigation into the editing and proofreading of Stevenson's texts. According to Menikoff the manuscript form of *Falesá* was during the process of editing and typesetting altered to such an extent as to distort its original meaning. He arrives at this conclusion by comparing the manuscript form with the published form and looking for changes such as the substitution of commas and semicolons with full stops. Menikoff explains the significance of the changes in the following way: 'Where Stevenson prefers loose connections – for the sake of tempo, rhythm, verisimilitude, and psychological realism – the compositors and proofreaders prefer full stops

Explanations and Clarifications

Some of the most innocuous-looking additions that are made throughout the text are words of geographical and cultural explanation. For example, in the first page, where Stevenson writes of having 'spent four months among the atolls', the editor has added in brackets: '(low coral islands)' [MS: 1]. On page 27, where Stevenson has written 'from Anaho to Hatiheu' – two locations in the Marquesas Islands – an additional entry informs readers that Hatiheu is 'on the adjacent bay' [MS: 19]. On page 36, where Stevenson begins a sentence relating to the island of Vaitupu, a note explains that it is 'in the Ellices' [MS: 25]. There are numerous other instances of such minor additions, which in themselves reveal only guidance for the reader's orientation. Yet their overall purpose is clear: to give the narrative a sense of movement across space, familiarising the reader with the landscape (rather than making it problematic), and giving the text more of the appearance of a travelogue, which is, as has been previously explained, not the original intention of the author.

A further point is the subtle inclusion of words to generate a sense of familiarity with the author when the latter prefers not to identify himself too closely with his readers. The clearest example of this occurring within the text is on page 82, where in discussing the life of the late Bishop Dordillon of the Marquesas Islands, Stevenson has written: 'With the Europeans he could be strict, even to the extent of harshness.' [MS: 58] Whereas in ISS the definite article is removed from the sentence to read: 'With Europeans he could be strict...' The reference therefore loses its generality to assume complicity with the reader. It could be argued that this change is hardly considered significant at the time in which it is made, or that it makes more grammatical sense to

for the purposes of clarity and consistency. Clarity, however, means nothing more than regularity, or punctuation according to rule. There is absolutely no concern in these alterations for meaning or context.' (Menikoff, *Beach of Falesá*, p. 42) However, there is one important difference between the work that is here undertaken and the research of *Beach of Falesá*: for Menikoff, the style of the changes that have been altered is more important than the larger omissions of textual content – this is understandable given that *The Beach of Falesá* is a work of fiction; in a non-fictional work such as *In the South Seas*, however, factual information that is altered or suppressed without the permission of the author is of equal importance to alterations made to the style of the writing.

alter it in this way, but then such alterations must have been inherent in the mind of the editor, which is to say that the action follows from a culturally determined point of view.

Hyphenation

According to Barry Menikoff in his study of Stevenson's novella *The Beach of Falesá*, 'The practice of compounding through hyphenation was an ingrained one, and it represented a conservative printing stance.'³ If this is the case in that text, then it is equally true in ISS, where hyphenation by the editor reaches epidemic proportions. There are many examples: 'Sickroom' becomes 'sick-room' [MS: 1], 'tradewind' becomes 'trade-wind' [MS: 1], 'cocoa palm' becomes 'cocoa-palm' [MS: 3]. 'Fellow creatures' also receives a hyphen [MS: 4], as does 'picture book' [MS: 8]. With some of the spellings the motive is unclear except for the explanation given by Menikoff. However, the additional hyphen in the spelling of cocoa palm because of its novel structure adds a touch of exoticism to the appearance of the word that is not sought by the author. On page 73 of ISS, this tendency is exerted more strongly as Stevenson's spelling of 'cocoanut' [MS: 52] is altered to 'coco-palm'. The practice of hyphenation may therefore be seen as the expression of a conservative editorial stance that is able to signify exoticism through the needless coupling of words.

Misspelling and Re-spelling

Stevenson's spelling of the 'burao' tree, a variety of the hibiscus plant that is found along tropical shores, is altered to the spelling of 'purao'⁴ throughout ISS [MS: 14]. This reflects the difference between Stevenson's concentration on spelling according to native pronunciation and the editor's tendency to resort to convention wherever it is possible to do so. Moreover, native speech as it appears in the MS is also subtly altered in the published form. The Marquesan resident Tari Coffin's exclamation of 'I like give plesent all the same you' [MS: 17] is altered to read: 'I like give plesent all 'e same

³ Menikoff, *Beach of Falesá*, p. 50.

⁴ This is closer to its modern spelling, 'purau'.

you.' [ISS, p. 24] The meaning of this change only becomes apparent when it is read alongside the information – revealed previously in the text – that Tari

...was a native of Oahu, in the Sandwich Islands; and had gone to sea in his youth in the American whalers; a circumstance to which he owed his name, his English, his down-east twang, and the misfortune of his innocent life. [ISS: 22]

Tari had spent the early part of his life among English-speaking whalers and he knows the language well. The standard practice of apostrophizing Polynesian speech to receive the 'catch' in the pronunciation of some words is entirely inappropriate in this instance, since the speaker has a different experience of English to the average Pacific Islander. But convention and the signifying of otherness prevail. The same alteration is made on page 79 of ISS in relation to the subject of gift-giving among Polynesians [MS: 56].

Substitution of Words

Of the smaller changes, the substitution of words is the most revealing of differences in outlook between author and editor, since it is unlikely that a printer will deliberately alter words to change their meaning. Furthermore, in many cases the changes effected by Colvin are not based on differences of knowledge between himself and Stevenson. For example, where Stevenson writes of the Tahitian brotherhood of Oro's practice of forbidding members to 'leave seed', Colvin substitutes the latter word with the less salacious 'offspring' [MS: 27]. Later, the 'offer' of a dollar to a native man to perform a hazardous task is altered to the 'promise' of a dollar [ISS: 53], as if he is less responsible for his actions when money enters the equation.

The editor is also very touchy on the subject of people who eat other people. For example, where Stevenson begins his chapter on 'Long-Pig'⁵ with the sentence: 'Nothing more strongly arouses our disgust than human feeding', Colvin replaces the last two words with the more abstract 'cannibalism' [MS: 64], presumably safeguarding the innocence of his readers. In the same chapter, Stevenson considers that, 'rightly speaking, to eat a man's flesh after he is dead is far less hateful than to oppress him whilst

⁵ That is to say, the human victims of cannibalism.

he lives'⁶ – this proves to be too strong for Colvin, however, who alters 'eat' to 'cut', thereby changing the meaning of the sentence and losing the force of Stevenson's argument [MS: 65]. Such changes reveal that the text in the Edinburgh Edition is written with a particular readership in mind, one which Colvin at least assumes will be offended by realistic descriptions of Pacific Islands life.

Changes in tone

The text of the arrival of Stevenson's party at the Marquesan island of Nukahiva offers a number of examples of how editorial changes can act to release the tension and ambivalence of European encounters with non-Europeans. Stevenson writes in the MS version:

Before yet the anchor plunged, a canoe was already paddling from the hamlet. It carried two men: one white, one brown. [MS: 3]

This passage is altered in ISS to read:

Before yet the anchor plunged a canoe was already paddling from the hamlet. It contained two men: one white, one brown. [ISS: 6]

The removal of the first comma speeds up the narrative, diminishing the reflective quality of the narrator's description. Substituting 'carried' with 'contained' abstracts and spatializes the sight of the two men: it makes the situation less troublesomely human.

In the published text the author proceeds to describe the 'awful patterns' of the tattoos on the Marquesan men, further emphasising their foreign-ness without facing the problem of having to understand their similarity with the visitors. It is therefore shocking to discover that Stevenson in his manuscript has instead written 'artful patterns' [MS: 3]. Whereas the author tries to depict the Marquesan capacity for artistry and cleverness, his editor characterizes them as dumb and brutish. Stevenson proceeds to explain that from the Marquesans 'There was no word of welcome, no show of civility' [MS: 3], although in ISS the comma is replaced with a semicolon

⁶ According to Neil Rennie, Stevenson is here echoing Montaigne's essay on cannibals. *In the South Seas*, ed. by Rennie, pp. 265-6.

[ISS: 6]. Normally this is Stevenson's preferred form of punctuation, but in the MS version the 'show of civility' is integrated into the primary clause, whereas its replacement by a semicolon gives the impression that Stevenson has made a separate reflection on Marquesan civility on the basis of their lack of welcoming words. The sentence ends with Stevenson adding that there is 'no hand extended, save those of the chief and Mr. Regler'⁷. This is altered in ISS to read: 'no hand extended save that of the chief and Mr. Regler.' Besides the removal of the comma to dim this chiefly exception to the Marquesan norm, the substitution of 'those' with 'that' in describing the outstretched hand of the chief again adds to the procedure of distancing the author from the subject that is carried throughout the passage.

It is not the goodwill of the Marquesans but rather Stevenson's recounting of his own confused misapprehensions that are diminished as a result of the editorial changes. Stevenson is attempting to communicate an experience which has been little documented except in fantasy or idealized travel accounts such as those of Herman Melville and Pierre Loti. The element of realism and descriptive ambiguity that this requires has not survived intact from an editorial system that attempts to render the situation as transparently strange and fantastic as some of the author's fictions.

The paragraph which follows the one describing the first encounter with the Marquesans also has a significant line removed from it. In the MS, Stevenson writes that,

The eyes of all Polynesians are large, luminous and melting; they are like the eyes of animals and some Italians; the Romans knew that look, and had a word for it: *occuli putres*, they said, eyes rancid with expression. [MS: 4]

In the published text, a full stop follows the word 'Italians' and the remainder of the sentence is omitted. Its removal points to a couple of possible causes: the idea of 'eyes rancid with expression' may have been deemed too strong for the middle-class Victorian readership for whom Stevenson normally writes; also, the comparison of the Romans – the epitome of European notions of

⁷ Regler is a white trader operating in the Marquesas Islands.

culture and refinement – with brutish islanders, may have been seen as too dangerous and subversive.⁸

Sometimes the reflective voice is removed from the narrative, as in this passage of the MS, where Stevenson writes of the placid life of Vaekehu, the converted former 'cannibal queen' of the Marquesas:

It came in my mind with a clap, what she could think of it herself?
And whether at heart perhaps, she might not regret and aspire after
the barbarous and stirring past? [MS: 54]

This is subsequently published with the question marks removed and replaced in the first instance with a comma, and in the second with a full stop. The loss of the question marks flattens the tone of the passage and obstructs any suggestion of the continuity – at least in mind – of 'barbaric' traits within a supposedly civil and Christianized exterior. The two ideas are kept firmly apart from each other. Such an editorial move is also important considering the discussion of the next chapter, where Stevenson's reflections on barbarism and civility in the South Seas is examined in detail.

There are also passages such as the one below in which it is the emphatic voice of the narrator that is suppressed. Stevenson writes about the incarceration of a native inhabitant of Hiva-oa for the crime of sacrilege in 'levelling up a piece' of a Christian cemetery:

He had been forced at the point of the bayonet to destroy the sacred places of his own piety; when he had recoiled from the task, he had been jeered at for a superstitious fool. And now it is supposed he will respect our European superstitions as by second nature! [MS: 95]

In ISS, only the exclamation mark at the end of the passage is removed and replaced with a full stop, but the effect is obvious: Stevenson's exasperation at the hypocrisy of the French in their governance of the Marquesan Islanders is toned down and made reflective where it should have ended with vigorous

⁸ Another, albeit oblique, reference to the Romans is omitted from the MS page 94, where Stevenson writes of some children in Hiva-oa: 'On the benches several young folk sat clustered or apart; and Tadema might have painted that scene of tempered light, and beautiful, light-clothed and pensive youth, scattered among ruins.' In ISS (p. 128) the sentence is cut off after 'apart', where it ends with a full stop. Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912) is a Dutch-born artist who becomes famous for drawing paintings with ancient Roman subject matter.

emphasis on the injustice of the relationship between European-born and indigene.

Finally it is worth noting here the similarity of the subjects that have been selected for alteration or removal. Questions of the encounter between 'civilised' and 'barbaric' cultures, particularly clothed in Stevenson's ambiguous and complicating writing style, are not left in their unresolved state. Instead, they are changed so that their message becomes less equivocal through the creation of simple distinctions between the participants in these cultural encounters. In this way, the editorial process suppresses some of the more problematic conclusions drawn by the author about the relationship between civilization and barbarity.⁹

Changes in Content

In addition to alterations of punctuation and the removal and substitution of the odd word, larger omissions of content are also made during the editing process, and none larger than the loss of a long passage on Polynesian languages that is written by Stevenson directly after the first paragraph of Chapter II [MS: 5-7]. Considering the disagreements between Stevenson and his wife and Colvin which are related in the previous chapter, it is unsurprising that the editor finds no reason to publish a technical account of the development of languages in the Pacific Islands. However, since recent studies have called into question the credibility of Stevenson's South Seas writing as anthropological material due to his apparent lack of linguistic expertise¹⁰, the passage is here quoted in full:

The most odd and obvious variation is in the consonants. T and K, R and L, are interchanged in different dialects; so is the group F, H, V, W as WH; and the process by which difference arose is still observed to be in operation. The islands are subject to epidemic tricks of speech, such as we are accustomed to in Europe. It is not

⁹ The implications of such conclusions drawn by Stevenson are explored fully in chapter 5.

¹⁰ 'Indeed, despite an active interest in the structures of the languages he encountered, Stevenson's linguistic competence remained limited during the period that he wrote *In the South Seas*. This is significant, since Victorian anthropology's preference for amateur accounts such as Stevenson's depended to a large extent on the linguistic knowledge that these resident-informants possessed. Stevenson's lack of linguistic expertise would have undermined the value of *In the South Seas* for late-Victorian anthropology.' Connell, p. 152.

[long] since all fashionable France adopted the burr, all fashionable England lisped, or all unfashionable London sounded V for W. In Europe, these epidemics come and go, so that already, in the earlier novels of Bulwer and Lytton, their traces make us stare. In the islands, where all the world is "in society" and the whole population adopts at the same moment the same novelty, the consequence is more enduring. In this way, within the last half century, K has driven T out of Hawaii; and within the last few years, the same deformation has invaded the beautiful language of Samoa. T is now rarely sounded there except in set orations; and so much confusion reigns that I have heard a Samoan proctor say "Kupui" and "Atua" in the same clause of a prayer. The K is no new sound in the Samoan language; it was once common; fashion expelled, and now fashion reinstates it, like exiles after an amnesty. And once more like the exiles, it returns to find its old seat occupied by others and to fill new positions. The place of the old K, once so carefully extruded, is still marked by the apostrophe or so-called catch; while the new K, now so wantonly reimported, usurps the part of T. It should be borne in mind that the latter fashion started after the language was already written and printed out and assiduously read; and that it has been, and still is, steadily resisted by the mission, the central educating body. How much more swiftly must similar whims and mimicries have defaced and divided the dialects of a bookless antiquity. And accordingly, when we look to Melanesia, we find the speech of the same island infinitely broken up. In the small isle of Tana, Mr. F. A. Campbell counts no fewer than six languages; and on new Caledonia I was assured there were not less than fifty. The latter figure struck me with incredulity; M. Gallet (who gave it me for a sound number) immediately called into the office one of his native assistants, asked the lad what languages he could understand and which he could not, and as each was named, showed me its territory on the map. The boy spoke three; and he mentioned (I think) four of which he was quite ignorant; and they were all close neighbours in a narrow belt across the island. Mr. Campbell, after chronicling the fact quoted above, goes on to philosophize. "It is a well-known fact," he says, "that if there be no fixed standard" – he refers to the art of writing – "a language will quickly alter; and that if, under these circumstances, peoples originally speaking the same language be separated and kept apart, and opposed to each other in war and stratagem, their language will develop into different dialects and become so different as to entitle them to be called different languages." I quote the words because they appear so conclusive and because they are seemingly quite true for Melanesia. How then to explain the contrary experience of the Polynesians? These are spread over a great field of ocean, from N to S, and from W to E. Intercourse had long ceased between nearly all the groups. On the same island, in the Marquesas, every glen was in perpetual cannibal warfare with its neighbours. And yet today, from the extreme north to the extreme south, the language is probably not so different as Breton is from Welsh; and the Polynesian, landing on any isle within these broad bounds, will be readily understood in almost all essentials.

This recovered text is significant firstly because it clarifies Stevenson's claim in the following paragraph of the published text that Polynesian is 'easy to smatter' [ISS: 9]. It is now possible to see that this statement refers to the situation of pre-colonial times as well as to the flexible linguistic currency introduced with the arrival of white Europeans in the Pacific Islands. The general argument of the discussion is that the languages of the South Seas, particularly those of the Polynesian islands, have since the earliest memory been subject to the whims of fashion and that they are therefore relatively accessible to any individual who has knowledge of a single one of them.

Stevenson begins by pointing to the difference in class structures in European society as leading to a less stable basis for the survival of linguistic innovations, whereas in the Pacific Islands 'the whole population adopts at the same moment the same novelty' and so 'the consequence is more enduring.' He proceeds to discuss how the Samoan K had been expelled by fashion but has recently returned to reclaim its position in place of the usurping T. This passage supports the idea of Stevenson's likely reading of Robert Henry Codrington's *The Melanesian Languages*, since in that text the author also states that 'It is worth while to remark that some sounds do not seem to be constant in a language. In Samoa k has quite recently begun to take the place of t.'¹¹

According to Stevenson, the change from T back to K has been opposed by the Christian mission in Samoa, which is responsible for teaching Samoan children their language. He wonders then how such 'whims and mimicries' might have 'defaced and divided' Samoan dialects in the time before the stability of the written word is introduced. The situation is described differently for Melanesia. Here Stevenson offers no first-hand knowledge but quotes from a local source who suggests that the languages of Melanesia can be more easily distinguished, especially if the people who speak the same original language are kept apart through 'war and stratagem'. Despite this difference between the development of languages in Polynesia and Melanesia, the overriding similarity is clear: that language, far from being a stable cultural signifier, is subject to constant and often dramatic changes.

¹¹ Codrington, p. 202.

Furthermore, these changes do not imply a gradual sophistication of meaning or underlying progression, as the case of the 'exiled' and 'wantonly reimported' Samoan K demonstrates: change is fashionable and haphazard.¹²

The other large section of the MS that is omitted from ISS is from the final section of the chapter entitled 'Long-Pig' [MS: 68-69]. In this chapter, Stevenson discusses cannibalism, which as has previously been noted, is a subject that his editor finds difficult to digest. The omitted text is reproduced below:

Appetite and ostentation, fashion and vengeance, thus augmented the numbers of the slain, and it is not surprising if the oven has played a part in the depopulation of the archipelago. The isle of Motaue lies desolate, the last survivor "bathed and eaten as a pig is eaten". Beyond Hatiheu, toward the desert west of Nukahiva, a valley may be seen descending to the sea; in the memory of man it was still inhabited though by a dwindling people, oppressed, and continually privated by stronger neighbours; in the end, the remnant was taken at a rush and as a whole, and the ovens glowed and the victors feasted for days. Of this last inroad, a tale is told which I repeat with misgiving. The conquered chief (it is related) spying in the heat of battle the chief of his opponents, instantly "gave him his name" and escaped scatheless. If this be true, and if such a means of safety were indeed within the reach of all, it is a singular instance of the point of honour that the expedient was not resorted to more often.

In the Marquesas, it may be said that whites were never eaten. The priests of the mission were indeed in the habit of making brothers as soon as they landed to avert the danger; and it may be reasoned that the priests knew best. But from all that I could learn, the practice was doubly useless: since they were in no danger in the first place, and if the danger had existed, the ceremony would have been no protection; and I surmise it was encouraged by monseigneur for other reasons. I have talked with many old residents, and their testimony was explicit and coincident. Whites were not eaten. The case of Mr. Whalon stood alone, and that was a vendetta. And Chinamen enjoyed the same immunity as Europeans. So that the Marquesan may be said to be endophagus; and only their folk or kindred Polynesians went to the oven. It was not so in Melanesia, it was not so in New Zealand; even in the Dangerous Archipelago, whites seem to have been eaten readily. What makes it more curious, though it may very well be accidental,

¹² With respect to the difference in perspectives on culture that is drawn between Stevenson and E B Tylor in chapter 5, it is notable that in *Primitive Culture* Tylor writes of precisely the opposite effect of language to the one which Stevenson here proposes. According to Tylor, 'The study of language has, perhaps, done more than any other in removing from our view of human thought and action the ideas of chance and arbitrary invention, and in substituting for them a theory of development'. [Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 18.] As with change in other aspects of cultural life, Stevenson explicitly opposes Tylor's development theory with a theory of linguistic change that is not guided by progress and rationalisation.

we have here the same delimitation from tapu sickness; all Polynesians within, whites and Chinamen without.

According to Stevenson, there are many different causes of cannibalistic behaviour on the islands including 'fashion and vengeance' as well as 'appetite'. The loss of numbers in some islands has been due to this reason, although he relates an instance of a defeated Marquesan chief escaping with his life by 'giving his name' to his opponent. The following paragraph is particularly important, since Stevenson begins by stating categorically that 'In the Marquesas', 'whites were never eaten', and that 'Chinamen enjoyed the same immunity as Europeans'. By claiming that the situation is different in Melanesia, New Zealand and the Paumotus Islands, he rejects the tendency to generalise the cultures of the Pacific Islands as bloodthirsty cannibals that is then common in fiction and popular narratives of travel. In looking for reasons as to why this passage was omitted from ISS, it may be said that in addition to the squeamishness of the editor, the text does much to destroy the myth of the universal existence and causes of cannibalism and so-called savage practices within the islands of the Pacific.

Changes Made by the Author

Among the changes to the MS that have been here outlined, there are numerous instances of erasure and re-writing by the author himself. Since all of these appear in the MS, however, it is difficult to establish motive besides such innocuous reasons as carelessness and the insertion of newly-discovered information. It is clear that Stevenson re-reads and re-works his MS since there are many pages in which he has written notes in the margins of the text [MS: 15, 41, 45, 50, 52, 56, 57, 58, 60, 65, 80]. It is a manuscript that has been developed and shaped over time. He sometimes also inserts an extra page, labelling it with an additional letter to the numeral, so that a larger body of information may be included. For example, page 24 of the MS, which is under an initial pagination numbered as 21A, consists only of a short paragraph in which Stevenson discusses islanders' beliefs in ghosts and the supernatural, quoting also from Codrington's work on the subject.

allow the prose to flow more naturally. It is notable that he crosses out the first use of the word 'mind' to replace it with 'eye' only after realising that he must use it in the second part of the sentence to describe the 'menacing gloom' that strikes the mind 'at all hours of the day'. The changes are made to emphasise the fact that it is the eye and not the mind that receives the different shades and contours of the mountains according to variations in sunlight, whereas Stevenson is almost tempted to repeat the word 'melancholy' but chooses instead the phrase 'menacing gloom' to describe the unchanging effect of the mountains on the mind. The guiding idea in these changes is that the field of perception could, and does, contradict itself in the process of reasoning. The contradictions to which reason leads the mind as it perceives things, particularly unfamiliar objects and experiences, will be explored further in chapter 6.

The Paumotus

The alterations and amendments made to the material that appears in *In the South Seas* on the Paumotus Islands will be discussed in a slightly different way to the explication of the Marquesan material because of the differences in the available manuscripts. As has been noted in chapter 3, Stevenson writes to Colvin in August 1894 asking for 'the *first five* Butaritari Letters and the Low Archipelago¹³ ones (both of which I have lost or mislaid)' so that he can 'chop out a perfectly fair volume' for the forthcoming Edinburgh Edition of his collected works. Consequently, a manuscript remains (MS Vault 525 from the Beinecke Library at Yale University), consisting of almost complete galley proofs of the Paumotuan part of *In the South Seas*. The full title of this MS is: "IN THE SOUTH SEAS" / BY / ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON / GALLEY PROOFS USED FOR THE / "EDINBURGH EDITION" / OF / "IN THE SOUTH SEAS," / 1896 / CORRECTIONS IN VARIOUS HANDS'. Unlike the Marquesan MS that is examined earlier in the chapter, these proofs are in type, with changes and deletions made either in

¹³ The Low or Dangerous Archipelago were alternative names for the Paumotus Islands, and so called because of their status as low-lying atolls which are notoriously difficult to navigate on account of the mixture of tradewinds that circulate through them. (See Appendix A).

Stevenson's or in Colvin's hand.¹⁴ It is probable that Stevenson makes some of the alterations shortly before his death in December 1894, with the proofs then being sent to Colvin, who makes his own alterations to the same document prior to sending them for printing. The difficulty in identifying who is responsible for which changes (the author and his editor have very similar handwriting) makes it impossible to neatly divide changes into types as before. Instead, the changes will be examined in sequence to discover their meaning and to speculate on their motivations. Sometimes it is possible to determine the person responsible for a particular alteration according to the context in which it is made, as will shortly be seen.

The earliest time that these proofs could have been seen by Stevenson, taking into account postal journey times in the Pacific Islands, is early in Autumn 1894. It is reasonable then to assume that the sections of the MS that have been crossed out and/or omitted from the published text have at least been acceptable to him during the earlier phase of his work (c. 1888-91) on 'The South Seas'. Changes in style are hard to ascertain from this MS, where small alterations of punctuation and content are likely to have been the work of the author. The analysis will therefore concentrate on changes in substantial content. One final preparatory note: the galley proofs are not paginated, and amendments will be referenced only with respect to the number of the page(s) on which they appear, or should have appeared, in the Edinburgh Edition (Chatto & Windus re-print) of *In the South Seas*.

Unfortunately, the MS is incomplete. The opening two paragraphs of the section on the Paumotus are missing and there is every indication from the way in which the MS begins that several other passages have also been deleted during the editing process. This is clear from the fact that the MS begins part of the way through a passage which apparently describes a stream of atolls from the 'extreme Southeast' to the northwest of the Pacific Islands. The discussion of a scattered topographical zone is reminiscent of the 'hydrographical memoir' offered by Alexander Findlay's *Directory for the*

¹⁴ According to Gertrude Hills, erstwhile librarian of the Stevenson Collection at the Beinecke Library, 'Some of the corrections in the margins of the galley are apparently by Sidney Colvin.' (Beinecke Library, MS Vault 525). Later in the MS, however, Ernest Mehew, the compiler and co-editor of Stevenson's *Letters*, has inserted a note which reads: 'In my opinion some of these corrections written here on this page are in Stevenson's hand.'

Navigation of the South Seas (see chapter 1). The excluded fragment in its entirety reads:

...less there is plenty coral, doubtless many atolls, outside of this main stream. The marvel is that this main stream should include all the main groups: that it should be so truly continuous, striking the eye even of the cursory glancers at the chart and that it should steer so near to, and yet still avoid, the situation of the loftier volcanic isles. At Mangareva, in the extreme southeast, the zones are mingled, thence the stream of coral passes northwestward between the Marquesas and the Societys; clears Samoa on the north; turns sharply on its heel, as though to avoid the long line of Santa Cruz and the Solomons; and at last, in the Carolines, runs once more on board of, and is mingled with its rivals in a second doubtful tone, where again the islands may be at once high and low, at once coraline and vulcanite, at once islands and atolls. [ISS 140-41]

If Stevenson is responsible for the deletion of this passage then he must have changed his mind about it very quickly, since there are markings on the MS where smaller changes are also made: the 's' is removed from 'glancers', and a semicolon is added after 'chart'. It is more likely that someone else, most likely Colvin, has re-read the passage and in spite of Stevenson's minor alterations decided to remove it entirely from the print draft. Numerous other examples of this procedure are to be found throughout the MS and they provide the clearest indication of the differences between the outlook of the author and that of his editor concerning the Edinburgh Edition.

Looking specifically at the above example, the effect of the deletion appears to be to cut the narrative straight to the Paumotus Islands, where Stevenson and company land after their brief stay in the Marquesas. As with the editorial work carried out in the Marquesan MS, the aim seems to be to preserve narrative continuity as far as possible, at the expense of geographical or other scientific information about the area. The paragraph that follows is slightly altered to take into account this removal. Originally it begins: 'In no quarter of the main stream are the atolls so thickly congregated'; but since there will no longer be any discussion about this main stream the sentence is trimmed to read: 'In no quarter are the atolls so thickly congregated'. This is how it appears in *In the South Seas* [ISS: 141].

Two passages are then deleted which relate conversations and disagreements between the captain and the mate of the *Equator*, in the first

instance, and the *Casco*, in the second [ISS: 143]. Again the motive that seems most likely is to avoid interrupting the flow of the narrative, which at this point concentrates on the frustrated search for a Paumotuan island amid the unpredictable winds and fragile appearances of that archipelago.

When the party finally reach their destination on the island of Fakarava, it is night and there is hardly anybody around. The sentence, 'We landed and walked long' is crossed out in the MS, an alteration which helps to maintain the intensity of description of this atoll about which Stevenson whispers, 'There was something thrilling in the unexpected silence, something yet more so in the unexpected sound.' [ISS: 152] The opening passage of description is full of such sensory impressions: Stevenson reports that 'Crickets sang; some shrill thing whistled in a tuft of weeds; and the mosquito hummed and stung.' He adds that 'The moon, now three days old and still but a silver crescent on a still visible sphere, shone through the palm canopy with vigorous and scattered lights.' [ISS: 152] The passage ends in the MS version with the following sentence:

And the thought of this depopulated capital, this protracted thread of annular island with its crest of cocoa palms and fringe of breakers, and that tranquil inland sea that stretched before me till it touched the stars ran in my head for hours even with delight.

Besides the by now predictable alteration of 'cocoa palms' to 'coco-palms' [ISS: 153], there is another slight change in the published version: the word 'even' is removed from the end of the sentence. The result is that the text loses slightly the sense of being a meditation on the landscape that is punctuated by something akin to delight, but which Stevenson holds back from declaring completely.

The first substantial omission of content from the MS occurs at the end of the chapter in which the previous passage appears. Stevenson describes how the people of Fakarava explain the changes in the content of the fish in the lagoon, which is situated at the centre of the atoll, according to phases of the planet Venus. 'With Venus in one phase, as we had her, certain fish were poisonous in the lagoon; with Venus in another, the same fish was harmless and a valued article of diet.' After this sentence, in ISS the paragraph is brought to a close with the following statement, which is handwritten in the

left-hand margin of the corresponding page of the galley proofs: 'White men explain these changes by the phases of the coral.' [ISS: 158] It is almost certain that this line is inserted by Colvin to substitute a paragraph and a sentence written by Stevenson, in which the author discusses the French writer Clary Wilmot's theory of the phases of poisoning, which is reproduced here with the smaller amendments, presumably made by Stevenson himself during his re-reading of the text in 1894¹⁵:

Venus, being the Paumotuan star of Hades and timekeeper of the dead, was perhaps not unnaturally saddled with this responsibility: the light that chases spectres might well be thought to sicken fish. By all accounts besides, the periodicity is, for each island, regular. The difficulty is that it should vary and be even reversed from isle to isle. Touched with a sense of this, M. Wilmot, *Conseiller-Général*, the author of an able pamphlet on the archipelago – made a number of well-considered experiments. Catching wholesome fish on the outside, he had them sunk in vivaria to different depths and over different bottoms in the lagoon. Over pearl shell it appears they remained innocuous; but the proximity of certain sorts of coral, above all in the season of its flowering, poisoned them in an exposure of twelve days. M. Wilmot found, moreover, that the time of flowering varied in the different kinds of coral, and that all appeared to follow the phases of the moon. Here, then, are the elements of a theory agreeing well with native observation. But the author must have been dampened to find an exception in his own archipelago – the lagoon of Takaroa, where the fish is at all seasons equally wholesome. I will give him another. At the isle of Funafuti, the most singular and to me the most odious of atolls, the fish in the lagoon is always good, the fish in the sea always poisonous.

A crafty theorist may yet find the means to harmonize these contradictions: and without doubt there is some truth in this hypothesis of the poisonous coral.

Wilmot's experiments reveal that the Paumotuan belief regarding the influence of Venus may not be so far from the truth. The flowering of certain poison-inducing species of coral is influenced by the phases of the moon, if not Venus. However, Stevenson also points to an exception in Takaroa, which Wilmot apparently can not explain, and another in the atoll of Funafuti. He adds that 'A crafty theorist may yet find the means to harmonize these contradictions', although he does not try his hand except to agree with the general theory that the poisoning of the fish is related to the flowering of

¹⁵ The assumption is made on the belief that it is Stevenson, not Colvin, who is most likely to have made such changes based on factual knowledge as the replacement of 'n' with 'a' in the mis-spelling of the lagoon of 'Takaron', which appears towards the end of the first omitted paragraph.

poisonous coral. The broader conclusion that is to be drawn from the omission of this passage is that it is probably regarded as being too scientific and therefore of little interest to Stevenson's readers. In this respect it is surprising that it has survived this far into the editing process considering the troubles and frustrations that the author experiences in 1888-91.

The small passage which follows this in the MS is the one that closes the chapter in *In the South Seas*, in which Stevenson notes 'a last touch of horror' at the organic existence of the landscape of the atoll, 'part alive, part putrescent' [ISS: 159]. What is then omitted from the published text is firstly a sentence in which he claims that 'the blowing sand of atolls played a part in the history of those obstinate sores which made the torture of low island life.' A final deleted paragraph then follows in the galley version:

And here a caution comes in my mind. A naturalist might land upon some atoll, and seek to repeat my collections of shells; the chances are he would be disappointed. I have landed since on many atolls, and I have never been reminded of that trenchancy of opposition observed in Fakarava. And again, he might come to Fakarava itself, and even there it is possible he might be disappointed. During my visit many of the fish were bad: the coral of the lagoon must have been passing through a deadly period, and perhaps the shells of the lagoon had suffered. Suppose, then, my naturalist to come when the conditions were reversed, and he might look almost in vain for an opposition that stared me in the face. One thing at least he might be able to explain. On the outer reef, where all life seems bound to imitation, two creatures stand out without concealment: ink-black sea urchins, and horrible ink-black sea slugs. The latter, it is true, will sometimes bedust themselves with sand till scarce distinguishable: the first, with their coronet of table spikes, are always crudely conspicuous.

Stevenson explains how seasonal changes can work to confound expectations of the natural world in atolls, giving as an example the case of coral shells. The 'trenchancy of opposition' he observes in the colours of shells in Fakarava might not be observable in another isle, or in the same isle in a different season. The Pacific Islands are not the place to look for an unbroken continuity of natural landscape. Although he crosses it out in the manuscript, most likely in an attempt to maintain the smooth running of the text, it is notable that he thinks to explain and in some way rationalize such vicissitudes by claiming that 'each of these lawless islands' is 'a law unto itself'. He does point to two sources of constancy, however: 'ink-black sea

urchins, and horrible ink-black sea slugs.' The point is made here that even on the outer reef, 'where all life seems bound to imitation', there are life-forms that confound the idea of uniformity. In chapter 6 the wider philosophical implications of this commentary and others like it in Stevenson's South Seas writing will be considered further.

A long paragraph from the galley proofs, which includes correction marks in Stevenson's hand, is crossed out and subsequently omitted from the text. It follows a passage in which Stevenson relates the story of the discovery of the remains of a European ship's crew on one of the islands, the victims evidently used by the people of the island 'with some design of wizardry' [ISS: 171]. The omitted paragraph is here reproduced:

It is on this rude stock that less than a century of mission work, pearl fishery, and the copra trade has grafted puritanic faults and virtues. A while ago, and each isle was held, according to Mr. Wilmot, *pro indiviso* among all inhabitants. To-day, he says, "the lessons of the missionaries," the gains of divers varying as they do with the proficiency of each, and the recent industry of planting cocoa palms, have blotted out all trace of communism, except in the ownership of the lagoons; individualism is carried even within the household, even betwixt the children; trees, pigs, and poultry are set apart as a *peculium* for each particular child; and Mr. Wilmot has seen urchins of eight and ten hold consultations on the market price. (*Notice Sur l'Archipel des Tuamotu par C. Wilmot: Papeeti: 1888*). I would generally follow Mr. Wilmot with confidence; but here I wonder if he does not go too far to either hand. And first, in his statement of the pristine communism. If he be right, the Paumotuan has learned with singular ease the principles of property in land. Even if he were right, the case would stand alone in Polynesia. And his exception of the lagoon sets me thinking. In the atolls of the Gilberts the land was parcelled from of old in heritable patches; the lagoon is common, or sometimes (case of Nomuti) held for public purposes by the council of old men. Might not this have been the case also in the atolls of the Dangerous Archipelago? And again, Mr. Wilmot tests my credulity in his picture of the individualism of to-day. I do not question what he saw and heard; I only wonder if there were not more behind. The case of my house rent smacks of lingering exceptions. But, although we cavil at details, we may accept the big picture. Without doubt there is evolution in the archipelago upon these lines. Without doubt a society is rising on the European pattern, with bourgeois faults and bourgeois virtues, a society of rich and poor, of self-help, self-denial, hard work, and sly dishonesty.

In this paragraph that is meant to follow the grisly recollection of native 'wizardry', Stevenson again compares the work of Clary Wilmot with his own researches. Wilmot finds that the arrival of European missionaries and

methods of trade has made Paumotuan society more individualistic and less inclined to communal ownership of land and goods. According to Stevenson, however, Wilmot's research would have been better served by comparison with the rest of Polynesia, where he suggests that the 'principles of property' have not been 'learned with singular ease'.¹⁶ Furthermore, he claims that Wilmot's assertion of a surviving trace of communal living in the shared ownership of the lagoon might be mistaken, since he offers an alternative example in the Gilbert Islands in which land is 'held for public purposes by the council of old men'. Yet Stevenson is inclined to accept the general perspective given by Wilmot that 'a society is rising on the European pattern, with bourgeois faults and bourgeois virtues.' He believes that in examining Paumotuan culture using European terms of analysis, Wilmot is not doing the Paumotuans an injustice, but that his interpretation may be flawed because it rests on a partial knowledge and understanding of the islands.

Another passage from the galleys is later crossed out and omitted from *In the South Seas*. It consists of Stevenson's reflections on the Paumotuan custom of excluding sufferers of elephantiasis from villages and forcing them to travel by water only, since footprints are held to be infectious. The omitted passage reads:

This harsh and (as it happens) useless practice is strangely out of tune with Polynesian manners. The Tahitian views the approach of the affected person with distaste; I have seen him wince and draw back; have received his earnest warnings to be careful. And yet he will do nothing to protect himself or to protect his family; inbred courtliness forbidding. With the harsher and more practical Paumotuan the vigorous law described by Mr. Wilmot is conceivable. I did not hear of it myself; but heard a tale which strongly confirms and is in part explained by Mr. Wilmot's evidence.

The reason why this passage has been omitted from ISS is unclear, since it flows quite logically from the preceding discussion on Polynesian attitudes towards infectious disease. Possibly the only reason is the reference once more to Wilmot, a scholarly source, and therefore deemed irrelevant to the readers of Stevenson's work.

¹⁶ The comment resembles Stevenson's criticism of Sereno Edward Bishop's views on Hawaiian culture (see chapter 1). It is another indication of the scholarly confidence that he has gained by this point through his extensive research into different aspects of life in the Pacific Islands.

A passage is later deleted describing how a Paumotuan Mormon worshipper 'converted on his deathbed to the Church of Rome': an event which 'no one could understand.' A little further down a passage is deleted which describes how Paumotuans claiming to be Mormon believers in every other way follow Protestant practice. 'The thing appeared scarcely possible.' It is likely that Stevenson makes these alterations himself because the same point of the free circulation of European beliefs is made throughout the chapter on 'Traits and Sects in the Paumotus', where these lines should have appeared. A few examples are probably removed in order to make the text more concise. Stevenson adds a note in the margin of the galley version, by way of explanation of the 'Protestant' Mormons, that Mormons they are, 'but of the earlier sowing: the so-called Josephites, the followers of Joseph Smith, the opponents of Brigham Young.'¹⁷

In a similar way to the Marquesan MS, Stevenson adds a marginal note here and there whenever he finds a new piece of information that he believes to be relevant to the text. One such is scribbled in explanation of the mysterious identity of the recently-originated Paumotuan sect of 'Kaniu': 'I have found it since as the name of a god in New Guinea; it must be a bolder man than I who should hint at a connection [with the Paumotus Islanders]' [175] The added reference to New Guinea suggests that Stevenson incorporates information that he has learned either in person from or through the work of James Chalmers, who he meets only after he has written the Paumotuan 'Letters' from the South Seas.

Stevenson also makes small alterations in order to emphasise certain passages of his text more clearly. For example, a Paumotuan woman, recently widowed and frightened by the prospect – according to her beliefs – of the impending appearance of the spirit of her dead husband, chooses a half-caste man named Donat to utter her terrified curses to. In the MS Stevenson explains this occurrence in the following way:

Doubtless she partly chose Donat because he was a man of great good nature, but partly, too, because he was a man of the half-caste: for I believe all natives regard the white blood as a kind of

¹⁷ *South Seas*, p. 174.

talisman against the powers of hell. In no other way can they explain the unpunished recklessness of Europeans.

To this passage Stevenson removes the colon after 'half-caste' and replaces it with a full stop and 'for' with a capital f. He also removes 'the' from 'the white blood'. The sentence is therefore altered to lend it a greater sense of decision: Pacific islanders are perplexed by, and therefore in awe of, the 'unpunished recklessness of Europeans.'

The very last paragraph from the Paumotuan galleys is also omitted from the published text:

Even white sailors who ply in the archipelago become infected with superstitions or what seem to be so. It is possible enough that an atoll may be visible to great distances, by the green radiance of the lagoon projected on the atmosphere. That a cloud always indicates the position of a navigable passage I think we may deny.

Possibly the reason why the editor decides to omit this passage is because of its implication of white sailors also succumbing to some of the ghostly superstitions that abound across the archipelago. The apparition of clouds on the horizon signals to some sailors 'the green radiance of the lagoon projected on the atmosphere.'

The Gilberts – Apemama

The only manuscript relating to the Gilbert Islands that it has been possible to trace is MS 6433 from the Beinecke Library.¹⁸ This consists of 44 pages in Stevenson's hand, numbered at the top from 32 to 76 inclusive. The continuous page numbers, which correspond also in chapter sequence to Part IV of *In the South Seas*: 'The Gilberts – Apemama', suggest that Stevenson has written the material earlier with the idea of the South Seas book in mind. He probably sends the MS to McClure or Colvin so that they could 'quarry' whatever they wish from it for the serialisations.

¹⁸ Unfortunately no MS appears to have survived for the preceding part of *In the South Seas*, on the Gilbertese island of Butaritari. It should also be noted that in *In the South Seas* the removal of a (serialised) section on Hawaii is obvious from the opening line of the Butaritari section: 'At Honolulu we had said farewell to the *Casco* and to Captain Otis, and our next adventure was made in changed conditions.' *South Seas*, p. 204.

Apemama during the time that Stevenson visits it is one of the three Gilbert Islands that is ruled by the despotic King Tembinok'. Stevenson, who greatly admires this 'last erect vestige of a dead society', considers him to be the 'one great personage in the Gilberts'.¹⁹ The pair become quite close during Stevenson's stay at Apemema from late-August to October 1889 and then again in June and July of 1890.²⁰ The author's description of the culture and landscape of the island is coloured by his study of the effect of Tembinok's rule on its recent history and population.

In terms of the changes that are made to Stevenson's manuscript of the Gilbert Islands material, these will be discussed in a similar way to those made to the Marquesan material. Like that text, there are many instances of word alteration by the editor, cases of unnecessary hyphenation, familiarization through geographical orientation, sentence omissions and editorial tampering.²¹

Word alteration and hyphenation

There are several possible reasons that may be offered for the editorial alteration of words, ranging from the relatively innocuous to the highly dubious. Examples from the former include the alteration of 'hand' to 'side' [MS: 32, ISS: 275] and 'after' to 'later' [MS: 33, ISS: 277]: changes which appear to have been made purely for grammatical or syntactical purposes, and which do not affect the meaning of the sentence in which they are altered. To such examples may be added simple spelling corrections such as 'entrust' to 'intrust' [MS: 33, ISS: 278], 'wierd' to 'weird' [MS: 34, ISS: 279], and 'cypher' to 'cipher' [MS: 38, ISS: 286]. There are also cases where the alteration of a word involves a change of meaning that is so inexplicable that it is unlikely that it could be anything other than a printing error: 'surf' to 'work'

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 205.

²⁰ Hammond, pp. 61, 63.

²¹ Another omission, which has been much commented on by Stevenson's biographers, is the mention of Stevenson's stepson-in-law, Joseph Strong, from any part of the text. His name appears on pages 41, 42, and 74 of the manuscript, but is either removed or replaced with the name of the author's stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, in the published version. Biographers have speculated that it is the consequence of a falling-out between Stevenson and Strong during the voyage of the *Equator* and also subsequently at Stevenson's home in Samoa, although the cause of the split remains uncertain. See for example Frank McLynn's discussion in his *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography*.

[MS: 42, ISS: 292] is an obvious example, where the alteration makes the sentence read confusingly:

We made our first meal that night in the improvised city, where we were to stay two months, and which – so soon as we had done with it – was to vanish in a day as it appeared, its elements returning whence they came, the tapu raised, the traffic on the path resumed, the sun and the moon peering in vain between the palm trees for the bygone *work* [my italics], the wind blowing over an empty site.

Another example is 'invaders' to 'inroads', in which, referring to the pillars built along the beach at Apemama, Stevenson is made to say: 'I was told they were to protect the isle against *inroads* [my italics] from the sea – divine or diabolical martellos, probably sacred to Taburik, God of Thunder.' [MS: 62, ISS: 322]. Certain words are altered in a manner that suggests that the editor is merely updating or adjusting the spelling, without intending to change the meaning in any significant way. For example, Stevenson's use of 'detonating powder' in the taking of photographs is quietly modified to 'flash-powder' [MS: 42, ISS: 293].

A couple of examples show that there is also a subtle level of editorial restraint being applied to the text, however. In one case, Stevenson describes in the manuscript how Tembinok's desire to control the level of public discussion on his island has a while ago led to his having to make a decision about the presence of missionaries there. 'The service, and in particular the sermon, were thus sure to become offences', he reports in *In the South Seas* [286]. In the manuscript, however, he describes how the service and sermon are 'sure to become eyesores' [MS: 286]. The stronger word is deliberately removed and replaced with a softer and less expressive alternative. Another case occurs on page 297 of the published text, in which Stevenson describes the King's household, 'The Palace of Many Women', populated besides by 'a bevy of women of all ages, ranks and relationships' including 'the mother, the sister, the cousin, the legitimate wife, the concubine, the eldest born, and she of yesterday'. In the midst of all this, Tembinok' is 'the only master, the only male...the sole mark of multitudinous ambitions and desires.' The image is striking, but it would have been more still if the editor had not substituted 'master' for 'lover', as Stevenson originally writes in the manuscript version

[MS: 45]. Consequently, the libidinous and faintly incestuous nature of King Tembinok's relationship with the women is tempered, not broached.

The instances of hyphenation are again numerous and seemingly innocuous except, as has been noted previously, for the generally conservative stance that they imply. Over a few pages of the MS [32-34], the following words are hyphenated and sometimes separated as well: 'war songs', 'trade room', 'holystoned', 'better starred', 'seabird's', 'well planted', 'cocoa palm'. The latter's spelling is again altered in the process, to 'coco-palm'. [ISS: 279]

Sentence alterations and textual omissions

As with the other changes, these divide into fairly straightforward and understandable alterations made with a view to grammatical flow, and others which have been made to tone down the intensity of the writing and the reality that it attempts to describe. In the former category are such alterations as 'premier' to 'would-be premier' [MS: 39, ISS: 287] in the story of the deportation by Tembinok of an agent from a firm of merchants who had planned 'to worm his way into the king's good graces'. There is also the rare addition of information to explain, for example, that the island of Peru is 'In the Gilbert group', and therefore not to be confused with the country of the same name. [MS: 32, ISS: 276].

The more significant changes are made in instances such as on pages 301-2 of *In the South Seas*, where Stevenson's description of Tembinok's personal guard as 'that monstrous regiment of women' [MS: 48] is softened to 'that prodigious company of women.' On page 306 of ISS, Stevenson then relates his encounter with Tembinok's cook, who the author had humiliated before the king and made the laughing-stock of the village for revealing his slovenliness and personal vanity. On confronting the cook face to face after the latter had been chased out of the village by Tembinok's gun, Stevenson confesses of his own actions that 'St. John might have borne malice; and the face with which he stared upon us in the wood, was not in the least that of the beloved apostle.' [MS: 51] Perhaps it was this inclusion of a Christian saint's name in an adventure among barbarous heathen that prevented this sentence

from being published along with the rest of the story. In a similar way, Stevenson describes in the manuscript how his desire to purchase one of the 'devilboxes' used by Apemaman wizards had led to a crisis in the community, since this is an object of great secrecy that is jealously guarded by the wizard. He laments that 'I had played the millionaire and made a beast of myself' [MS: 70]. In the published version this is altered to read: 'I had played the millionaire, had behaved abominably' [ISS: 336].

One of the other examples of verbal reordering that takes place in the editing process is the sentence in which Stevenson writes: 'By terror you may drive men far, not long.' [MS: 56] In the published text, this is altered to: 'By terror, you may drive men long, but not far.' [ISS: 313] The context of this sentence is Stevenson's allusion to the Apemamans', and particularly male Apemamans', idleness and lack of interest in doing work. Within this context, the amended sentence appears to be a criticism of Tembinok's rule, since Stevenson writes of how his servants are 'coquetted with the fear of punishment', the inhabitants working 'at the constant and the instant peril of their lives' being consequently 'plunged in a kind of lethargy of laziness.' But the passage ends with the author explaining how these apparent traits are overturned during the time of the Apemaman dance, with their 'choruses in the great Speak House²²—solemn andantes and adagios, led by the clapped hand, and delivered with an energy that shook the roof.' [ISS: 314] For Stevenson, the dance carries its performers and the watching audience a very great distance, in aesthetic terms; so much so that the alteration of the earlier sentence seems dubious. He admires the Gilbertese dance above all others in the South Seas, and it is unlikely that he would choose to mention it in a passage that aims to sum up his criticism of Apemaman society. The earlier formulation ('by terror you may drive men far, not long') makes greater sense, however, in tying up the lethargy of work and its relative inconspicuousness among the men with the drive and the passion of the chorus. The author appears to be saying that in these conditions of despotic rule, a great communal form of art is flourishing.

²² A meeting place.

In this chapter the manuscript versions of Stevenson's South Seas texts have been compared with the published edition of *In the South Seas* to examine the differences. The causes and the effects of these differences have also been considered. The number of manuscripts that have been consulted is limited by their present availability, and as has previously been stated, the similarity of the handwriting of Stevenson and Colvin mean that not all of the readings can be granted the same interpretative clarity.

In the course of this discussion several types of changes to the manuscript versions have been highlighted. Changes that are made by the author are the least difficult to explain and therefore also the least illuminating in some respects. These are usually minor, serving only to clarify or emphasise points previously made, sometimes with the addition of later research and information. The changes that are made by Sidney Colvin and by the proofreaders of the published edition are more significant in a number of ways. Firstly, stylistic alterations such as changes of punctuation and substitutions of words have resulted in a published text that reads more as a travel narrative than before, familiarising its author with the reader while simultaneously exoticising the landscape and local population. The removal of some (perceived) shocking details of cultural life suggests that the editor, at least, is working with the idea of a specific reading audience in mind. Subjects such as sex and cannibalism are treated with an excessive delicacy that would not have been necessary or justified according to Stevenson's earlier conception of a scientific study of South Seas cultures.

The changes made to substantial content, specifically the removal of entire passages from the manuscript version, are designed to maintain the flow and readability of the narrative. This has resulted in the removal of theoretical passages and sections that refer to scientific and botanical studies such as those of Clary Wilmot. The restoration of these sections brings new light to Stevenson's research, which recent critics of his Pacific writings have missed. Particularly relevant in the context of the chapter which follows is the omission of the passage relating to Polynesian languages.

The likelihood of Stevenson's reading of Codrington's *The Melanesian Languages* has already been touched upon. In that work, Codrington enters on a theme that interests Stevenson a great deal: the survival of primitive

cultural traits into modernity. Codrington approaches the subject through the study of the differing pronunciations of certain words in the Hawaiian language. He writes:

It is important also to consider the question of the indistinctness and uncertainty of sounds, whether this means that distinct articulation of separate sounds has not been yet attained, or whether it is that people now pronounce sounds indistinctly which formerly were separate in their language. In the language of the Sandwich Islands there was so much indistinctness between t and k that one set of Missionaries used t and another k.²³

As has been shown from the recovered texts, Stevenson writes at length on the relationship between t and k in Polynesian languages. But what surely impresses him most about Codrington's work is how he is able to move from this specific technical problem to a more important general one in a very simple way. Codrington follows his discussion of the pronunciation of t and k in the Sandwich Islands with the articulation of a broader theoretical point: 'The question is whether this double indistinctness and uncertainty are a primitive condition of articulation not yet settled into distinctions, or a degradation of articulation which has lost exactness.'²⁴ As will be shown in the following chapter of the present study, both the historical problem that is here introduced and the style in which Codrington expresses this problem influence Stevenson in his South Seas writing, in a way in which his contemporaries as well as modern interpreters of his work have largely failed to appreciate.

²³ Codrington, p. 200.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 201.

5. CULTURAL SURVIVALS

The changes that are made to Stevenson's three 'core' texts of the Edinburgh Edition of *In the South Seas* and their ensuing effect on the meaning of his work have been closely examined in the previous chapter. Taken in sum, knowledge of the editorial alterations to the Marquesas, Paumotu, and Gilberts sections reveal a markedly different work to that which has been popularly received during the past century. Rather than unquestioningly following the conventions of sentimental travel narratives established by precursors such as Herman Melville and Pierre Loti, Stevenson's project offers a problematic understanding of the cultures of the South Seas, which the editors and the proofreaders of his texts have where possible attempted to smooth over and suppress in the hope of pleasing what they have perceived to be an expectant and easily offended readership. In order to preserve his popular image, they have obscured his interest in less popular subjects. Consequently, the writing on the Pacific Islands that is today known as *In the South Seas* does not entirely reflect its author's plans for his Big Book on the region.

However, the conclusions of the previous chapter do not necessarily make the published work obsolete: instead, they call for a qualified reading of *In the South Seas* that is based on knowledge of all of the alterations made to the texts, the editorial gaps and omissions that compromise the author's researches and distort his relationship with Pacific Islands cultures. This approach will provide a more accurate idea of the work that Stevenson had been doing and for which he early on expresses so much interest and enthusiasm. It will show, for example, the relevance of the omitted section on the Hawaiian Islands which are later restored by Andrew Lang for the Swanston Edition of Stevenson's collected works. It will also show how Stevenson is preoccupied during his travels with questions of the interpretation of contemporary cultures that appear distant in time as well as in space, and the significance of his asking such questions during a period in which the art historian Aby Warburg is undertaking a similar project in another part of the world. Finally it will hope to add balance to the received image and

reveal Stevenson as far more of a thinker than a romancer of South Seas cultures.

To a greater extent than with Robert Henry Codrington's study of Pacific languages, which were discussed in the previous chapter, Stevenson clothes his theoretical questions in the form of an un-scholarly narrative, because according to the chronology of production that has been described in chapters 1 and 3, his notes are written up as 'Letters' from the South Seas. This means that for the present purposes it will be more productive to read the published *In the South Seas* laterally, as a series of fragments, or as ideas in progress, rather than as a finished work in which every subject that is studied has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In the present chapter, this approach to the interpretation of the text is used to show how Stevenson's concern is not to reveal things as they are but rather to question what it is that he is witnessing. What is striking about the South Seas writing is how it is almost at every step marked by a theoretical understanding of the complexity of cultural narration. Stevenson approaches cultural phenomena from a standpoint of contradiction and doubt, where it is the appearance of these phenomena that is seen as paradoxical, and presents a problem for the observer to take in. He reaches this position through a critical encounter with the work of two European writers of the nineteenth century whose influence is evident but hardly acknowledged in his own writing. In the final chapter, the second of these influences, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, is discussed. In the present chapter the focus will be on Edward Burnett Tylor and his concept of cultural survivals.

E B Tylor and Cultural Survivals

Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) is regarded as the foremost British anthropologist¹ of his day. A self-taught scholar for much of his life, he is nevertheless able to produce numerous books and articles across a range of

¹ This particular term only achieves wide currency during the latter years of the nineteenth century, although in English 'anthropology' is used interchangeably with 'ethnology' and 'ethnography' throughout the century. See Peter Burke, 'Anthropology and History in 1900', in ed. by Benedetta Cestelli Guidi and Nicholas Mann, *Photographs at the Frontier: Aby Warburg in America 1895-1896* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1998), pp. 20-27.

subjects, many of which are widely discussed beyond the relatively small cultural milieu of Victorian folklore and ethnology. Tylor is made Reader in anthropology at the University of Oxford in 1884, and his appointment in 1896 as the first Professor of anthropology at Oxford is regarded now as a significant moment in the professionalization of the discipline in Britain. Tylor is also noted for the way in which he organizes his material, which is seen as the embodiment of the collaborative approach to ethnological studies during the colonial era. His method of research is synthetic, bringing together masses of information about different human cultures from correspondents – mainly European and American missionaries and colonial officials – who are stationed around the world, and ordering this information according to an evolutionary framework.²

Tylor's most important work is *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* (1871), which is revised and reprinted several times during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite the revisions, however, the organisation of the book does not vary. Tylor begins by writing about the science of culture and his view of its development, which leads on to his exposition on the concept of cultural survivals (see below). The definition Tylor gives of culture in the first edition of his book also remains the same throughout the later editions:

Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.³

As his definition shows, Tylor is interested in what he regards as being the totality of human activity within a multilayered society. Culture is this totality expressed as a 'complex whole', and consists of things such as 'knowledge,

² Tylor's only significant excursion to the object of one of his anthropological studies is Mexico, a journey which he subsequently narrates in his study *Anahuac; or Mexico and the Mexicans: Ancient and Modern* (London: Longman, 1861). Tylor's pupil and biographer, R R Marett, also suggests that he might have visited the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico, although the details given are sketchy. [Marett, *Tylor* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1936), pp. 14-15.] For more information about the history of anthropology relating to this period see George Stocking's *Victorian Anthropology* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1987) and also his *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology* (London: Athlone Press, 1996); and Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Finn Sivert Nielsen, *A History of Anthropology* (London: Pluto Press, 2001).

³ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 1.

belief, art' and so on. Furthermore, the broadly evolutionary paradigm which his work follows is evident in the interchangeability of the terms *culture* and *civilization*. Without reference to civilization, the term *culture* could mean any group of 'capabilities and habits' that are abstracted from the observable materials of a given society. However, granting such an abstraction the title of *civilization* places it in moral juxtaposition with things which it is not. Culture as civilization, therefore, implies a hierarchical relationship between human societies, which may be measured and compared by anthropologists in practical ways according to their particular field of research. After this theoretical exposition on culture he devotes the remainder of his study to explaining the inner coherence of his idea through categorical examples in the following fields: emotional and imitative language; the art of counting; mythology; animism; rites and ceremonies.⁴

Tylor never strays from the belief that anthropology, or 'the science of culture', 'is essentially a reformer's science.'⁵ The aim of human society is gradual enlightenment through scientific discovery and greater knowledge of the world, and this increase in knowledge and understanding will at the same time improve human society. Within this view, he adopts a controversial measure to explain the appearance in 'civilized' societies such as those of Western Europe and North America of supposedly outdated beliefs and irrational or barbaric practices. Such modern-day occurrences as children's sports, popular sayings, and 'absurd customs', all of which he acknowledges are 'not philosophically insignificant'⁶, are described as *survivals*. These are, in his words

Processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as

⁴ Tylor believes that a theory is only validated as a category by the volume of factual examples given in its favour. In his preface, he claims that: 'The statement of the facts must form the staple of the argument, and the limit of needful detail is only reached when each group so displays its general law, that fresh cases come to range themselves in their proper niches as new instances of an already established rule.' Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 5th edn, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1929), I, p. vi. Hereafter, this is the edition of the book that will be referred to in the present chapter.

⁵ *Primitive Culture*, II, p. 453.

⁶ *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 111.

proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved.⁷

The function of cultural survivals, according to Tylor, is strictly academic, since their modern-day existence in advanced societies has been brought about by 'force of habit' rather than by necessity. Tylor emphasises this point by stating that 'for the ethnographer's purpose, at any rate, it is desirable to introduce such a term as "survival", simply to denote the historical fact which the word "superstition" is now spoiled for expressing.'⁸ Wherever he identifies a superstition or something which does not fit his idea of modernity, he terms it a survival, rendering it archaic and the site of irrational activity. In this way, the concept of survivals is used to maintain his developmental model of cultural change, from 'savagery' through 'barbarism' to 'civilization'. The rare instances of savagery within civilization which he discovers are defined as exceptional cases – survivals, traces of human prehistory, which deserve a rational explanation, in his words, as 'proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved.'

The smoothness of the application of the theory of survivals in Western society makes Tylor a significant figure in both anthropological science and in the wider circulation of ideas in the human sciences during the later nineteenth century.⁹ As many other writers have noted, cultural evolution is an

⁷ *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 16.

⁸ *Primitive Culture*, I, p. 72. Tylor also introduces the supplementary concept of the 'revival' to explain the modern manifestations of former superstitions. For example, the 'group of beliefs and practices which have their roots deep in the very stratum of early philosophy where witchcraft makes its first appearance...constitutes what is now more commonly known as Spiritualism.' (p. 141.)

⁹ Joan Leopold writes: 'from about 1863-1865 on, Tylor began to relate the idea of survivals to more evolutionary archaeological and technological examples and to see it as a technique for reconstruction of cultural history. The noun "survival", as distinct from the forms of the verb "survive", he used with increasing frequency from about 1866 as a synchronic technical term.' (Leopold, p. 118.) The technical change in the use of the term 'survival' is to bring it with greater ease and clarity into his concept of culture, making it more accessible to the work of cultural historians. For example, Tylor's work in *Primitive Culture* influences the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga, who discusses it in his autobiography. [Johan Huizinga, 'My Path to History', in Huizinga, *Dutch Civilization in the Seventeenth Century and other Essays*, trans. by Arnold J Pomerans (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 250.] For a brief discussion of this subject see Peter Burke, 'Aby Warburg as Historical Anthropologist', in *Aby Warburg: Akten des Internationalen Symposions Hamburg 1990*, ed. by Horst Bredekamp, Michael Diers and Charlotte Schoall-Glass (Weinheim: VCH, 1991), pp. 39-44. The influence of the theory of survivals has also been traced in the work of the early twentieth century art historian Aby Warburg, who writes on the historical 'afterlife', or *Nachleben*, of works of art.

idea that is used to buttress opportunistic foreign policies during the Victorian era.¹⁰ The march of civilization and refinement is deemed to bring light to the dark corners of the earth. This is a widespread contemporary notion that Tylor's theory generally affirms, but the theory of survivals is not seen as being uniformly applicable to all human cultures, according to such contemporary critics as the Scottish folklorist Andrew Lang (1844–1912). Lang, as has been previously noted, is in correspondence with Stevenson about anthropological matters relating to the South Seas. Along with Tylor, Lang is one of the founding members of the Folklore Society, who elect Tylor as their vice-president in 1878. He is also a keen follower of Tylor's work at least from the time of the publication of *Primitive Culture*, and owes his adoption of the anthropological – rather than the dominant philological – method of comparative analysis in folklore and mythological studies to Tylor's pioneering studies.¹¹ Lang defines folklore as 'the study of survivals',¹² and he begins his research as a student of Tylor's work.

Lang's reading of Tylor becomes steadily critical as, in his opinion, the empirical evidence begins to weigh against the anthropologist's theories. He observes in a dedication to Tylor written in 1907:

The doctrine of survivals, though incontestable in general, has its difficulties. We meet phenomena in savage culture which one set of students recognizes as 'survivals'; while, in the same facts, other inquirers see novelties, freaks, or 'sports'. An example is familiar; several of the customs and beliefs of the tribes of Central Australia are, on one side, explained as survivals of *primitive*, on the other as recent modifications of *decadent* totemism.¹³

(Georges Didi-Huberman, 'The Surviving Image'). See also the discussion about Warburg and Stevenson towards the end of the present chapter.

¹⁰ For example, according to Bernard Smith: 'In the Pacific it was not only trade and commerce that followed the flag but also "scientific" theory. In this regard it is worth noting that whereas in Europe evolutionary theory was strongly opposed by organised religion, in the Pacific it combined with social Darwinism, in the business of destroying traditional Pacific societies.' Smith, *European Vision*, p. x.

¹¹ According to his biographer, Lang takes *Primitive Culture* out of the library at Merton College, Oxford in March 1872. (Green, pp. 69-70.) Lang dedicates *Custom and Myth*, 'his first book on folklore', to Tylor. See Richard M Dorson, *The British Folklorists: A History* (London: Routledge, 1999 [1968]), p. 187.

¹² Marett, p. 26.

¹³ Andrew Lang, 'Edward Burnett Tylor', in *Anthropological Essays Presented to Edward Burnett Tylor in Honour of his 75th Birthday*, ed. by H Balfour and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 7.

Lang contests Tylor's theory, at least in its universal application across the cultures of the world. According to Lang, 'the doctrine of survivals' faces difficulty in trying to explain certain tendencies of 'savage' culture. The doctrine is shown to have geographical limitations. Using the example of the beliefs and customs of the tribes of central Australia, which he researches in pursuance of his own theory about the origin of religion, Lang points to the confusion of interpreting these either as relics of a more 'primitive' stage, or as the contortions of 'decadent totemism'. In its application to non-Western societies the concept of survivals is therefore in a precarious position, unable to mediate between differing interpretations of cultural change. It is here, in circumstances that resemble those outlined by Codrington's work on the Hawaiian pronunciation of t and k, that Stevenson situates his own discussion of Tylor's theory.¹⁴

Cultural Survivals in the South Seas

Although Stevenson nowhere states that he has read Tylor's work it is difficult to imagine from his wide reading of anthropological literature, not to mention his correspondence with Andrew Lang, that he has not come into contact at least with Tylor's ideas. He also writes in a letter to his mother with some familiarity of the work of the South Seas missionary-researcher George Turner, whose book *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before* (1884) contains a preface written by Tylor.¹⁵ Perhaps most indicative of Stevenson's knowledge of Tylor's work is his use of the word 'survival' in its Tylorian,

¹⁴ Another point of disagreement between Tylor and Lang, which is probably regarded as a more important problem at the time, is the diffusion theory. 'Lang acknowledged a divergence between the views of his master and of himself on the perplexing enigma of the countless coincidences in the oral and material culture of races. Lang favoured coincident and multiple invention, while Tylor leaned more to the borrowing of myths and *Märchen* between peoples.' Dorson, pp. 207-8.

¹⁵ 'Belle [Strong, Stevenson's stepdaughter-in-law] is deep in work on Samoa; she reads Turner, and sniffs at his superficiality, and talks comparative mythology with extraordinary boldness.' (Stevenson, in a letter to his mother, [15?] August 1893, *Letters*, VIII, p. 149 and n.) In a footnote to this letter, Booth and Mehew confirm that Stevenson is here referring to George Turner. See Turner, *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before; together with Notes on the Cults and Customs of Twenty-Three Other Islands in the Pacific* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1884).

anthropological sense at several points in his South Seas writing. For example, in his discussion of cannibalism he writes:

Cannibalism is traced from end to end of the Pacific, from the Marquesas to New Guinea, from New Zealand to Hawaii, here in the lively haunt of its exercise, there by scanty but significant survivals.¹⁶

The statement is typical of many of the author's anthropological musings in *In the South Seas*, and does not attempt to overturn the conventional beliefs of the time. Stevenson notes that the nature and practice of cannibalism varies across the Pacific Islands, flourishing in some places, in others existing as 'scanty but significant survivals.'¹⁷ An example of the latter is Tahiti, where 'in historic times, when human oblation was made [on] the marae¹⁸, the eyes of the victim were formally offered to the chief: a delicacy to the leading guest.' However, he believes that this 'single circumstance' 'appears conclusive,'¹⁹ adding that 'the higher Polynesian races' of which he includes Tahitians, 'had one and all outgrown, and some of them had in part forgot, the practice [of cannibalism].'²⁰ The historical example of 'human oblation' in Tahiti is therefore presented as a survival. This reading closely corresponds to Tylor's theory that the more advanced societies shed their barbaric traditions in the course of their cultural progress up the ladder of civilization. The progression of the Tahitians from barbarism to civility rests on the removal of their cannibalistic tendencies, which are mere relics, survivals of the older condition of culture.

¹⁶ *South Seas*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁷ It could be that Stevenson is here directly inspired by Tylor's example from Samoa, which the latter describes in his Preface to Turner's book: 'if one is looking for illustrations of survival of past reality in present ceremony, none could be better than customs in which the Samoans, though not cannibals, kept up the tradition of days when their fathers were. Our author describes how, to avert a war between two tribes, the weaker would make abject submission by bringing firewood and oven-stones in their hands, and bamboos (a split bamboo being the usual knife, saying, by this expressive pantomime, "Here are your pigs to be cooked if you please, and here are the knives to cut us up with." They would even carry a culprit slung on a pole like a pig, wrap him in leaves, and put him into the pit in the ground which is the native oven; but it was only a cold oven, and the ceremony stopped short at humiliation.' (Turner, p. xi.) The fact that this fragment of an old practice still helps to avert war brings it into line with other 'scanty but significant survivals'.

¹⁸ A sacred meeting-place.

¹⁹ *South Seas*, p. 93.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 94.

In the writing on Hawaii Stevenson mentions another survival but in a different formulation:

One residual trait of savage incompetence I have already referred to; they cannot administer a trust – I was told there had never yet been a case known. Even a judge, skilled in the administration, was found insusceptible of those duties and distinctions which appear so natural and come so easy to the European. But the disability stands alone, a single survival in the midst of change; and the faults of the modern Hawaiian incline to the other side.²¹

In this example, Stevenson shows how closely he reads culture in the South Seas according to the prevailing European anthropological theories of the time. Using ethnocentric and highly objectifying terminology, he describes as a 'residual trait of savage incompetence' the Hawaiian inability to 'administer a trust'. Furthermore, he claims that even a Hawaiian judge 'was found insusceptible of those duties and distinctions which appear so natural and come so easy to the European.'²² Tylor would approve of this reading of 'a single survival in the midst of change', where the Hawaiians' inherent savagery is cannily exposed in the midst of widespread, West-influenced, progress. However, the final line of the narrative turns the thought on its head: 'the faults of the modern Hawaiian incline to the other side.' Stevenson claims that despite the 'savage incompetence' manifested by this cultural survival, the majority of the problems that face Hawaiian society have been a product of modernity, that is to say, with European colonization of the islands. The idea is consistent with his statements in respect of the decline in the native population of Hawaii (see chapter 1), where he states that each change, no matter how small, that is imposed on the culture of the islands disadvantages the Hawaiian people, and that the smallest changes can often produce the most adverse results.²³

A more emphatic criticism of the concept of survivals is made by Stevenson in his discussion of the ascendancy to power of the Gilbertese

²¹ Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, ed. by Andrew Lang, p. 194.

²² He adds in *In the South Seas*: 'honest and upright Hawaiians – one in particular, who was admired even by the whites as an inflexible magistrate – have stumbled in the narrow path of the trustee.' (*South Seas*, p. 161.)

²³ In the chapter of *In the South Seas* entitled 'Depopulation', Stevenson states that: 'Experience begins to show us (at least in Polynesian islands) that change of habit is bloodier than a bombardment.' (*South Seas*, p. 42.)

King Tembinok'. In the opening passage of the final part of *In the South Seas*, Stevenson describes this individual as 'the last tyrant, the last erect vestige of a dead society.'²⁴ Tembinok' is the reigning monarch of three Gilbertese Islands, and his method of governance does not involve advisors. The vigilant ruler who keeps his Kingdom of Apemama in terrified and perpetual silence is also known for his military forays into neighbouring islands – acts for which Stevenson claims that he 'figures in the patriotic war-songs of the Gilberts like Napoleon in those of our grandfathers.'²⁵ Here is a figure who appears to readers as an authentic South Seas survival: a despot, intense and unpredictable, capable of the most terrifying assertions of his power and authority – nothing is more remote to the thought of the relatively placid constitutional monarchy of Great Britain, which would represent modern values in this instance. Yet, towards the end of the section on Apemama, Stevenson produces an extraordinary reversal:

It would be natural to suppose this monarchy intact through generations. And so far from that, it is a thing of yesterday. I was already a boy at school when Apemama was yet republican, ruled by a noisy council of Old Men, and torn with incurable feuds. And Tembinok' is no Bourbon; rather the son of a Napoleon.²⁶

He proceeds to describe the convoluted recent history of Apemama that leads Tembinok's family, and eventually the present ruler, to gain control over the island. From its recent republican form it has gradually been transformed into despotism. But Tembinok', the despot, is not a battered remnant or a mere survival: instead, he is thoroughly the product of modern conditions, as demonstrated by his stringent restrictions on European and American trade in the port of Apemama.²⁷ In the recounting of the history of the King of Apemama, the concept of the cultural survival is therefore treated with irony. Tylor's comforting description of the same as 'proofs and examples of an older condition out of which a newer has been evolved' is made problematic

²⁴ *South Seas*, p. 275.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 276.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 337.

²⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 283–4. Such restrictions are designed to protect his people from what he perceives to be the harmful effects of European and American trade, such as the unfair exploitation of island resources. It is the perception of his forbidding his subjects from legitimate trade with foreigners that contributes to the notion of the ruler as a tyrant.

by this 'last erect vestige of a dead society' who owes his existence to modern political transformations.

The complicating and paradoxical representation of culture is everywhere in the writing of the South Seas. The historical phenomenon of the Tahitian brotherhood of Oro, a secretive and hedonistic group noted for its members' conditional sacrifice of their own children, is explained in the light of famine in those islands. According to Stevenson, the problem had been so menacing to the future of the people, and 'the needful remedy repulsive, it was recommended to the native mind by these trappings of mystery, pleasure, and parade.'²⁸ Stevenson refuses to describe these measures as progressive, but notes that the Tahitians survive the famine by doing so. For Tylor, the progress of culture also often comes at a cost, and advancement can not be measured uniformly along all its lines. But he claims that, 'To have learnt to give poison secretly and effectually, to have raised a corrupt literature to pestilent perfection, to have organised a successful scheme to arrest free enquiry and proscribe free expression, are works of knowledge and skill whose progress toward their goal has hardly conduced to the general good.'²⁹ Certain types of action, while being individually 'progressive', cannot be deemed to advance the culture as a whole.

Stevenson shifts the emphasis on the consequences of immoral actions from the general to the specific. He argues in terms of the violence that is done to South Seas cultures even by the creation of what from a Tylorian perspective would be regarded as a more constructive situation. For example, writing about how the arrival of European politics, ethics and bureaucracy has led to the absence of war on many Pacific Islands, Stevenson explains how this modern development has not been conducive to the general good:

We have been so long used to the dreary business of war on the great scale, trailing epidemics and leaving pestilential corpses in its train, that we have almost forgotten its original, the most healthful, if not the most humane, of all field sports – hedge-warfare. From this, the islander, upon a hundred islands, has been recently cut off.³⁰

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p. 27-28.

³⁰ *South Seas*, p. 41.

The European separation of civilian and military life has removed the practicalities, even the benefits, of war at an individual level. What some Western observers might regard as barbarous behaviour among Pacific Islanders is for Stevenson essential to the well-being of such cultures, enshrined in practices such as hedge-warfare, a forgotten form of battle, which is 'the most healthful, if not the most humane, of all field sports.'

In this anti-humanist view of cultural change, Stevenson uses irony time and again to highlight the productive uses of 'barbarity' in the South Seas. In so doing, he also questions the moral foundations on which contemporary colonial activity is based. In the Marquesas Islands, for example, the French government depends on the criminality of some of the indigenous population for labour: 'With a people incurably idle, dispirited by what can only be called endemic pestilence, and inflamed with ill-feeling against their new masters, crime and convict labour are a godsend to the government.'³¹ The civilised colonial government of the Marquesas Islands looks to crimes committed by its disaffected subjects to continue to supply it with an indigenous workforce. In the context of such compromises, the entire project of European colonialism begins to look like a barbaric enterprise.

Death and the Marquesans

A further ironic use of the term 'survival' occurs in the section on the Marquesas Islands in which Stevenson describes the appearance of deserted native houses along the roadside in Hatiheu. The local population has either fled or died of European-born disease. 'Only the stones of the terrace endure', he writes, 'nor can any ruin, cairn or standing stone, or vitrified fort present a more stern appearance of antiquity', and 'the forest on either hand must be equally filled with these survivals: the gravestones of whole families.'³² In this poignant example, the ruins of the extinction of an entire culture are collectively described as a survival. The counter-historical reading of Western progress is unmistakable: according to Stevenson, Tylor's proof of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved is to be

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 68.

³² *ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

found, here in the Marquesas Islands, in the mortuary symbols of the former. In discussing death and depopulation in the context of Western colonial activity, Stevenson takes on a subject which many Victorian anthropologists avoid. In *In the South Seas*, the chapter on 'Death' follows a similar order to the one that is projected in Stevenson's earliest plans for 'The South Seas' (see Chapter 1). Therefore it is reasonable to assume that his idea to write this chapter has been germinating for some time. It offers the most intense and critical examination of Marquesan culture of all the chapters that are devoted to those islands.

The literary context for the production of this chapter is Tylor, but also and more generally the 'reformer's science' that is Victorian cultural studies. Tylor's definition of culture is concerned with the broad totality of human 'capabilities and habits'. Taken in its bare outlines it represents a list of achievements that are made in the name of cultural advancement. This can be usefully compared with the definition of culture that is given by Stevenson in his earlier travel narrative, *The Amateur Emigrant*, in which he writes that, 'Culture is not measured by the greatness of the field which is covered by our knowledge, but by the nicety with which we can perceive relations in that field, whether great or small.'³³ The contrast with Tylor's views is striking. Stevenson is concerned with 'relations' in the field of knowledge and the 'nicety' with which these relations can be perceived, as the proper study of culture. He does not believe that wide knowledge in itself can guarantee a true understanding of culture, and in this sense Tylor's sweeping evocation of a 'complex whole' would seem to be completely at odds with Stevenson's perspective. This microcosmic and problematising view of culture is supported by his meditation on death and the Marquesans.

Throughout the chapter on death, Stevenson displays his awareness of the belief of many of his contemporary Victorian travel writers as well as anthropologists (see chapter 2), that a melancholy disposition is an indigenous trait or a survival. As numerous modern examples will show, this perspective is adopted by those documenters of non-Western cultures who do not wish to confront the problem of contextualising native population

³³ Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Amateur Emigrant* (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), pp. 70-71.

decline within the colonial activity of which they form an essential part.³⁴ Conversely, Stevenson begins his discussion by pointing to the statistical fall in the Marquesan population since the first half of the nineteenth century. He claims that the population of the bay of Tai-o-hae has dropped from 'many thousands' to 'eight residual natives.'³⁵ Such a drastic fall can not have been the outcome of random fluctuation, since it is simply too great. In the district of Hatiheu, the population has 'declined in forty years from six thousand to less than four hundred.'³⁶ Stevenson mentions various causes of population decline: smallpox, tuberculosis, phthisis, lower birth rates. Traces of depopulation are everywhere in Hatiheu, as can be seen from the example of the ruins of former habitations that dot the roadside.

The author proceeds to show how the deadly transformation brought with the arrival of the Europeans has paradoxically led the Marquesans to respond in kind. Faced with 'the approaching extinction of his race', Stevenson reports that 'hanging is now the fashion.'³⁷ In the Marquesas Islands, the death of a man is a thing to be greeted with envy, and 'the coffin, though of late introduction, strangely engages their attention. It is to the mature Marquesan what a watch is to the European schoolboy.'³⁸ An even more striking example is later given:

In the time of the small-pox in Hapaa [a Marquesan valley], an old man was seized with the disease; he had no thought of recovery; had his grave dug by a wayside, and lived in it for near a fortnight, eating, drinking, and smoking with the passers-by, talking mostly of his end, and equally unconcerned for himself and careless of the friends whom he infected.³⁹

³⁴ For more on the history of European travel writing see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* and Neil Rennie, *Far-Fetched Facts: the Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

³⁵ *South Seas*, p. 26. According to Nicholas Thomas, around 20,200 Marquesans die between 1840 and 1880, for various reasons including internal fighting and famine as well as disease. By the 1880s the population falls to 5,000 and it is to fall even lower, to less than 2,000, in the 1920s. Thomas, *Marquesan Societies: Inequality and Political Transformation in Eastern Polynesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 4-5.

³⁶ *South Seas*, p. 27.

³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 29-30. Although Stevenson adds, in a rather macabre way, that hanging is less 'suitable to the Marquesan sentiment' than 'the old form of poisoning with the fruit of the *eva*, which offers to the native suicide a cruel but deliberate death, and gives time for those decencies of the last hour, to which he attaches such remarkable importance.'

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 31.

Whether this story is true or not, Stevenson believes that 'this proneness to suicide, and loose seat in life, is not peculiar to the Marquesan', but that what makes them unique among the Polynesian people 'is the widespread depression and acceptance of the national end.'⁴⁰ Marquesan self-destruction precedes the arrival of the Europeans and is a long-established feature of life on many islands which does not, however, achieve status as a historical problem until the Marquesans become objects of Western history. Thereafter, Stevenson's examination of the contemporary population decline reveals how the culture that is represented by the Marquesan people makes no attempt to survive. Although he admits that some Marquesan songs and dances have been forbidden by the French government on the islands, 'many remain, if there were spirit to support or to revive them.'⁴¹ Instead, he laments, 'the whole body of Marquesan poetry and music was being suffered to die out with a single dispirited generation.'⁴² No interest remains in cultural preservation against the rapid fall in numbers, since no collective future is anticipated. The response of the Marquesans to their own destruction is to take a stance that is antithetical to the one that is inflicted by changed circumstances: they improvise by seeking, and finding, a space of their own – in death.

Histories of Progress

Stevenson's meditation on the decline of the Marquesan people complicates E B Tylor's concept of culture without offering any consolatory truths. Tylor's assertion that 'the tendency of modern enquiry is more and

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 31. Greg Dening has written of the Marquesan (or Enata, as they called themselves) preoccupation with death: 'In the last years of their cultural existence, Enata became preoccupied not with rebellion or resistance, but with themselves. They cannot be said to have had a nativistic revival or to have sought some return to a golden age. They did not indulge, as many other Pacific island groups did, in any millenarian religious movement. They did not extract one element of the culture that came to them across the beach and enlarge it and embellish it. Instead they embarked on a course of suicidal violence. They extracted from their own past its quality of division and hatred. In conditions in which the savagery of their violence was unsoftened by any limitations of *tapu* or religious and secular morality, they killed one another. Uprooted by the violence done to them by disease, by invasion, by cultural destruction, they raged at one another.' Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774-1880* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1980), p. 240.

⁴¹ *South Seas*, p. 30.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 31.

more towards the conclusion that if law is anywhere, it is everywhere'⁴³ is damaged by Stevenson's findings in the South Seas, where 'each island appears to be a law unto itself' (see chapter 4). Tylor's evolutionary perspective on cultural development is disturbed by Stevenson's description of the creative methods of self-annihilation of the Marquesans. The image of mankind that is retained by Tylor in *Primitive Culture* is one of the beneficiaries of cultural tradition, so that, according to one writer, his concept of cultural evolution is 'for human, not cosmic ends'.⁴⁴ Stevenson's interpretation of cultural survivals reaches at the heart of this conflict between the inheritance of cultural and biological forms of evolution, offering instead a third, unknowable inheritor, for whom both the natural and the human sciences of his day have made no provision. Without putting forward a sustained thesis, for reasons which probably include the causes of the breakdown of the text outlined in chapter 3, Stevenson offers enough examples to make his readers reconsider the theoretical investments of Victorian anthropological science.

It is in this context that Stevenson's discussion of Tylorian survivals also relates to the work of the German art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929). Warburg poses the question of survivals in terms of his *Nachleben der Antike*, or revival of pagan antiquity. Several writers have noted the similarity of his *Nachleben* concept to Tylor's survivals, as the reappearance of certain formal aspects of art and symbolic culture into later historical periods.⁴⁵ By the use of the term 'pagan', Warburg is indicating the collective elements of survivals. The significance of pagan or primitive impulses within modern societies is their disruptive or disordering potential.⁴⁶ However, this disruptive potential is also the same force that can liberate and provide fresh impetus to the artistic productions of the age. The creative and intensifying interpretation of the concept of survivals that is offered by Warburg is mirrored in Stevenson's ironic and paradoxical reading of the same. Both writers provide

⁴³ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p. 24.

⁴⁴ Leopold, p. 37.

⁴⁵ See for example Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, p. 16. See also the essay detailing the influence of Tylor on Warburg by Georges Didi-Huberman, 'The Surviving Image'.

⁴⁶ Ernst Gombrich, 'The Nineteenth Century Notion of a Pagan Revival', in *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg's Projects*, ed. by Richard Woodfield (Amsterdam: G + B Arts International, 2001), pp. 55-63 (p. 59).

a sustained and fruitful engagement with Tylor's ideas in their respective work. In his essay, 'Pagan-Antique Prophecy in Words and Images in the Age of Luther' (1920), Warburg expresses some hope for the future of critical readings of the concept of survivals by stating that its use (within the particular historical context of the essay) provides 'the historian of civilization' with 'new grounds for a more profoundly positive critique of a historiography that rests on a purely chronological theory of development.'⁴⁷

Stevenson and Warburg also share an interest in examining historical concepts through contemporary cultural situations. Stevenson's fascination with Pacific Islands survivals is complemented by his interest in Scottish survivals. These different interests are brought together directly with his South Seas writings and subtly with his continuing researches into eighteenth century Scottish history. For example, much of the writing of his key Scottish historical novels *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Weir of Hermiston* takes place while he is living and travelling in the Pacific Islands. The drawing of similarities between Highland Scottish cultures and Pacific island cultures might seem misplaced from an anthropological point of view, but it should be seen as part of Stevenson's broader attempt to understand cultural history from the perspective of survivals.

Warburg also learns a great deal about his specialist field of research – the Florentine Renaissance – from his travels to a different part of the world: New Mexico. He makes his journey to the north American Pueblo Indians who live there in 1895, a year after Stevenson's death. As with Stevenson, Warburg makes notes and takes photographs of various aspects of the culture of the indigenous people, but instead of then producing a larger work on the subject, he returns to his home in Hamburg and deposits the objects he collects at the Ethnological Museum, giving a single lecture and slideshow at the local photographic society. It is not until 1923, after spending several years rehabilitating from mental illness at Dr. Ludwig Binswanger's Kreuzlingen Sanatorium, that he finally delivers a sustained presentation of his thoughts and ideas on the New Mexico trip in the form of a lecture on the

⁴⁷ Warburg, 'Pagan-Antique Prophecy in Words and Images in the Age of Luther', in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. by David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Centre for Education in the Arts and Humanities, 1999), pp. 597-697.

Pueblo Indians' 'Serpent Ritual'.⁴⁸ In the notes to this lecture Warburg frames one of the guiding problems of his New Mexican research in a way that is strikingly reminiscent of the formulations of Codrington and Lang about the authenticity of their own respective linguistic and folkloric survivals:

And now the question arises: in the works of these brown-skinned dancers, painters, ornamental potters, and figurine carvers, should we see autochthonous creations, the thoughts of primitive peoples, or do we stand before hybrid products assembled from thoughts of South American origin combined with a European supplement?⁴⁹

Primitive or decadent? – this is also the question to which Stevenson attaches great importance in his studies of survivals, whether of the Scottish or South Seas variety, and which proves to have such a stimulating effect on his interpretation of cultural difference.

Warburg's historical project can be described in terms of a cautious restoration of the influence of irrational forces in culture. For example, he dedicates to the games and art of the Pueblo Indians an exalted status as 'a symptom and proof of the desperate attempt at order over and against chaos, not a smiling and pleasant surrender to the flux of things.'⁵⁰ Implicit in this bestowal of a unique, even therapeutic, power to culture is a critique of the rationalising tendencies of Western society. The meaning of cultural activity is a hard-won victory over the unknowable elements of life; human progress is marked every step of the way by this dangerous conflict between order and chaos.

In a similar way to Warburg, in his South Seas writings Stevenson expresses doubts about the prevailing idea of reason that is linked with the advancement of Victorian metropolitan society. Although he cannot be

⁴⁸ For material relating to all of this see Benedetta Cestelli Guidi, 'Retracing Warburg's American Journey through his Photographs' in *Photographs at the Frontier*, pp. 28-47. See also the essay by Warburg's colleague Fritz Saxl, 'Warburg's Visit to New Mexico', in his *Lectures*, 2 vols (London: The Warburg Institute, 1957), I, pp. 325-330. Interestingly, according to Guidi, 'A few days before witnessing the symbolic metamorphosis of men into *kachinas*, Warburg had read R L Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and had written in his diary: "Everybody has his Mr. Hyde." (p. 28).

⁴⁹ 'Appendix 3: "Memories of a Journey Through the Pueblo Region" by Aby Warburg – *Unpublished Notes for the Kreuzlingen Lecture on the Serpent Ritual (1923)*' in Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, pp. 293-330.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 305. Ernst Gombrich believes that Warburg sees in the Renaissance figure of the *Nympha* a revival of a powerful classical form of beauty that represents 'the eruption of primitive emotion through the crust of Christian self-control and bourgeois decorum.' Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, p. 125.

considered as a spokesperson for this society, Tylor's work serves as an embodiment of its progressive ideals. As has been shown earlier in the discussion, he believes in the steady acquisition of reason through the historical advancement of human civilization. At the vanguard of this advancement lies his own science, a 'rational ethnography', which would dedicate itself to 'the investigation of the causes which have produced the phenomena of culture, and of the laws to which they are subordinate', by working out 'as systematically as possible a scheme of evolution of this culture along its many lines.'⁵¹ Different phenomena would be classified by the same rational ethnography in order to connect them to a longer chain of understanding that is continuously in the process of self-development. In *Primitive Culture* he summarises this idea in the following way: 'It is only when men fail to see the line of connection in events, that they are prone to fall upon the notions of arbitrary impulses, causeless freaks, chance and nonsense and indefinite accountability.'⁵² No explanatory force is therefore attributed in the study of culture to irrational agencies. According to Tylor, 'arbitrary impulse', 'causeless freaks' and 'chance' are vulgar explanations of phenomena which only have their identity within the field of reason and should therefore be explained according to this rational paradigm alone.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given his literary background, Stevenson takes a more imaginative leaning in his interpretation of cultural phenomena. Throughout his South Seas writing he questions the usefulness of reason in helping to negotiate problems of perception and understanding in this 'other' landscape. Consequently, his method of observation often does not admit rational explanations at all. For example, in one of the last texts he writes as part of the South Seas Letters – his journal of the circumnavigation of the Samoan island of Tutuila in April 1891 – he describes a sunset over the coast of the island:

The sun went down at last, an alleviation anxiously expected. It sank with much pomp of colour. Strange arrows of blue radiated from the place of setting like the spokes of some vast, tireless wheel. At first there were many; one by one they faded and disappeared; but the last lingered long behind its fellows, and grew

⁵¹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, pp. 20-21.

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

more darkly blue upon a sky of richer crimson. The sea heaved multicoloured, flecked with fire and azure. The outline of the isle was extraordinary sharp and slender on the fading sky: like a scroll punched from sheet iron. Behind it there rose at intervals, incredible, tall isolated clouds: cardboard characters, Punch and Judy, rampant heraldic monsters, perforated minarets: shapes absurd and awful, a puppet show for gods, displayed in that solemn and bright theatre of the end of day. No sensible wind accompanied these changes; but the new and huge shapes of cloud swelled silently into being without apparent cause, and seemed to come and go with the colours of the sunset.⁵³

The scene is transfixing. As the sun sets, Stevenson notices 'strange arrows of blue' radiating from the place of setting, which one by one 'faded and disappeared'. A single remaining ray then grows 'darkly blue upon a sky of richer crimson'. Meanwhile the sea, 'flecked with fire and azure', glistens with its own set of colours. The passage contrasts directly with Tylor in its celebration of the wonder of change, outside of reason and 'the line of connection in events'. For Stevenson, the play of shapes 'without apparent cause' is analogous to a succession of objects without intrinsic connection. The colours of the sunset and the shapes of the clouds are represented in surprising and unexpected ways, but 'no sensible wind accompanied these changes', no element of progress can be stamped on their appearance. The mind, wide-eyed and speechless, takes in every warp and detail of the pattern, but a rational explanation for these occurrences is not provided by the author. Stevenson's aesthetic refutation of the history of rational progress, which is after all the meaning of the study of culture during the late Victorian era, can be seen throughout his 'South Seas' writing.

The focus of the present chapter has been the Victorian anthropological concept of cultural survivals, as read through the work of Edward Burnett Tylor. A qualified reading of *In the South Seas*, using the text as a series of fragmented reflections on Pacific Islands cultures, has made it possible to see how Stevenson is also engaged with the problem of cultural survivals. Although it is not possible to prove that he has read Tylor's work, it is highly likely and significant to the argument of this chapter that Stevenson has some knowledge of his ideas. This is clear from his links with people in

⁵³ Beinecke Library, MS 6443.

Tylor's circle, such as Andrew Lang and George Turner, as well as from his knowledge of the work of Robert Henry Codrington, whose discussion of Polynesian pronunciations is framed within the Tylorian discourse of survivals.

Throughout the South Seas writings, Stevenson uses concrete examples to discuss the concept of cultural survivals, a feature that the reception of *In the South Seas* as a sentimental travel narrative has tended to obscure. By examining such survivals as the Hawaiian inability to maintain a trust, the Tahitian brotherhood of Oro, the tyrannical Gilbertese King Tembinok', and Marquesan attitudes toward death, he complicates and disrupts the development theory of cultures that is implied in Tylor's definition of cultural survivals. This is in accordance with Stevenson's attitude towards the study of culture, which, unlike Tylor's, is concerned with identifying and attempting to understand problems and peculiarities rather than integrating these problems within academically constructed totalities.

In the effort to study culture through historical problems, Stevenson's South Seas work bears certain resemblances to the cultural historical project of his near-contemporary, Aby Warburg.⁵⁴ Both writers, albeit in different geographical and scholarly contexts, provide positive critiques of cultural survivals and their adoption within a rational paradigm in the human sciences. It is important to note however that neither writer will have been able to do so without the intensifying presence and influence of Tylor. It is only in relation to the Tylorian discourse of cultural survivals that their difficult conclusions achieve signification. In the next chapter the presentation of Stevenson as a theorist of cultures in the South Seas is continued with a discussion of his encounter with the work of the German philosopher Hegel.

⁵⁴ Stevenson and Warburg also have a mutual acquaintance in Sidney Colvin, who meets Warburg in London in August 1897. (Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, p. 95.) In the following year, Warburg writes a favourable review of Colvin's edition of *A Florentine Picture Chronicle*. Aby Warburg, 'The Picture Chronicle of a Florentine Goldsmith', in *Renewal*, pp. 165-168.

6. WRITING CULTURE

The fragmented textual reading of Stevenson's *In the South Seas* has enabled a broader discussion of the significance of his ideas within the frame of late-Victorian theories of culture to take place, especially with respect to the survival of elements of a primitive or pagan past into modernity. What this discussion has shown is that, contrary to the received image of the author based on the biographical narrative of the breakdown of 'The South Seas', Stevenson is in fact quite deeply engaged in theoretical questions relating to contemporary anthropology, especially at the points on which they touch on issues of relevance to the development of cultural history.

In the present chapter, the critical emphasis is turned to the more descriptive passages of *In the South Seas*, specifically to descriptions of human and natural landscape. Stevenson's idea of writing culture is bound up with his reflections on landscape. According to the writer, the attempt to understand culture must undergo the same process of contemplation as the attempt to find meaning in landscape. For example, in his earliest published essay, 'Roads' (1873), Stevenson writes that 'A man must have thought much over scenery before he begins fully to enjoy it.'¹ This aestheticising view of writing culture, which is borrowed from the Romanticism of his early influences in literature², is however troubled by his reading of Hegel during a slightly later period of his intellectual development, which will be discussed in the present chapter. The Hegelian view, which aims for a spiritual reconciliation of opposites, stresses disharmony and tension in culture, in opposition to the enjoyment and pleasure that is promised by the Romantic idea of travel. The results of this conflict of interpretations within Stevenson's writing are played out at several moments of the South Seas writing, which will be examined in this chapter. Here it will also be argued that the Hegelian modification of Kant's antinomies in his 'lesser' *Logic*, which is a key influence on the younger Stevenson, provides the basis for a theoretical review of all of Stevenson's work, beginning with the South Seas writing.

¹ Stevenson, *Essays of Travel*, p. 213.

² See for example the essay by Liz Farr, 'Stevenson's Picturesque Excursions'.

The consequences of the reinterpretation of the latter within this context are also more wide-ranging in that it contributes to the recent discourse on the social and cultural meaning of Victorian travel narratives. Towards the end of this chapter, it will be argued that in Stevenson's working through of physical and cultural contradictions and in his general hesitancy in observing and writing about the Pacific Islands at the close of the nineteenth century, an important claim is made for the integrity of the Victorian travel narrative as something that is capable of showing greater responsibility towards the colonial or indigenous Other than has been given credit by modern literary critics and cultural historians.

The Limits of the Visible

On January 12, 1891, Henry James writes to Stevenson commenting on the privately printed 1890 edition of 'The South Seas' (see chapter 3):

I read with unrestrictive relish the first chapters of your prose volume (kindly vouchsafed me in the little copyright-catching red volume,) and I loved 'em and blessed them quite. But I *did* make one restriction – I missed the *visible* in them – I mean as regards people, things, objects, faces, bodies, costumes, features, gestures, manners, the introductory, the *personal* painter-touch. It struck me that you either didn't feel – through some accident – your responsibility on this article quite enough; or, on some theory of your own, had declined it.³

James claims to have enjoyed the Marquesan letters here collected in book form, although he has one problem with them, namely, the lack of what he describes as 'the visible', which he goes on to explain as amounting to the material and physical aspects of culture. His letter helps to outline the main terms of the present chapter: that 'The South Seas' in one of its earliest incarnations lacks this visible element in Stevenson's writing, and that its absence suggests to James that Stevenson has declined 'the *personal* painter-touch' for 'some theory of your own'. In the present chapter this idea is explored further by examining Stevenson's writing about culture in the Pacific

³ Janet Adam Smith, *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), pp. 196-202.

Islands. In the process it will be shown that in highlighting the absence of what he describes as 'visible' elements, James effectively summarises the descriptive style of the South Seas writing as a whole. Far from suppressing the appearance of phenomena in his writing, however, Stevenson's motive is to question what is given to the vision of the traveller in comprehending things for the first time.

One of the strongest themes of 'The South Seas' is that appearances can be deceptive, but it is a deceptiveness that is not to be found in any part of the world, and it does not eventually give way to perfect clarity. Instead, this deceptiveness refers to the provisionality of any claim to knowledge about a newly-observed culture. During his years of Pacific travel, Stevenson discovers how the lack of a sustained Western tradition of writing about this geographical region provides a context within which to test the existing systems of cultural knowledge that are supported by the West, and more specifically in Britain. In the following examples from his South Seas texts it will be seen how this is exemplified in Stevenson's descriptions of Pacific Islanders' dress and manners, the natural landscape, housing, and belief. In each case, traditional certainties are disrupted and left unresolved in the process of cultural narration. Finally it will be shown how it is the 'visible' which is questioned and made a problem of cultural encounter.⁴

Appearance and Encounter

The stability of the writer's grounds for believing what he is seeing is one of the basic assumptions that is questioned in the South Seas writing.

⁴ A contemporary critical focus of this chapter will be the postcolonial approach that makes no distinction in the motives between different Western documents of culture that relate to the colonial Other. For example, Mary Louise Pratt contrasts the 'ugliness, incongruity, disorder, and triviality' in metropolitan writers' disappointed representations of the 'Third World' with the 'beauty, order, and grandeur' of the precolonial vision of Victorian writers describing the same parts of the world. With the advent of 'newly assertive, de-exoticising places and peoples' in the twentieth century, the Western 'seeing-man', who is naturally dismissive of non-Europeans' ability to live an independent existence outside of his control, describes only 'repugnant conglomerations of incongruities, asymmetries, perversions, absence, and emptiness.' (Pratt, pp. 217, 220.) The argument of the present chapter is that texts such as Stevenson's South Seas writing turn this degenerative view into a problem. The incongruity that Stevenson points to in Pacific cultures is not a sign of failed expectations, but the irreconcilability of what is seen with traditional forms of expression. As such, the writing becomes an ontological coming-to-terms with Pacific cultures, a sign of cautious responsibility in the face of the Other.

The first point of doubt in Stevenson's narrations always refers to the limits of his own knowledge in comprehending Pacific cultures.⁵ Early in the Marquesan Letters, Stevenson notes an episode which exemplifies the betrayal of human understanding by appearances. He describes how he was 'ashore in a cove with Mrs. Stevenson and the ship's [Casco's] cook':

Except for the Casco lying outside, and a crane or two, and the ever-busy wind and sea, the face of the world was of a prehistoric emptiness; life appeared to stand stock-still, and the sense of isolation was profound and refreshing. On a sudden, the trade-wind, coming in a gust over the isthmus, struck and scattered the fans of the palm over the den; and behold, in two of the tops there sat a native, motionless as an idol and watching us, you would have said, without a wink. The next moment the tree closed, and the glimpse was gone.⁶

Stevenson and his companions are not only surprised by the image of the silent native onlookers: he claims moreover that, 'the thought that perhaps at all hours we were similarly supervised, struck us with a chill.'⁷ This seems a straightforward example of the provisionality of tourist knowledge – in the midst of apparent emptiness and silence there is a glimpse of quiet, chilling watchfulness – but the description refers throughout to the limits of the author's understanding. Casual stereotypes of 'prehistoric emptiness' where 'life appeared to stand stock-still' are negated by the image of the natives watching 'motionless as an idol' from the tree-tops.

Everything that is here described is at the level of appearances. It is the information which then follows that properly explains the scene: Stevenson writes that 'it was more than a year later', while he was staying in the Gilbert Islands, that he realizes the explanation behind the unmoving Marquesans in the trees: 'The natives were drawing palm-tree wine, a thing forbidden by law; and when the wind thus suddenly revealed them, they were doubtless more troubled than ourselves.'⁸ From his initial fear and trepidation ('struck us with a chill') at the unexpected sight of the onlookers, he now reasons that the fear of punishment had meant that the natives were

⁵ Consider, for example, the confusion of Stevenson's reporting of his initial encounter with the Marquesan people, which was reconstructed in chapter 4.

⁶ *South Seas*, p.21. (Amendment made to the published text on the basis of Mitchell Library, MS C233, p. 15.)

⁷ *South Seas*, p. 21.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 22.

'doubtless more troubled than ourselves'. The earlier description is complicated by this realization and an element of contradiction is introduced by the mutual and unfounded fears of both sets of observers.

The same element of contradiction that exposes the provisional nature of perception also helps to explain the reveries of time that Stevenson experiences during his travels in the Pacific Islands. For example, early one morning, while walking through the Gilbertese town of Butaritari, Stevenson meditates on the almost mythical setting of this atoll:

In such a scene, and at such an hour, the impression received was not so much of foreign travel – rather of past ages; it seemed not so much degrees of latitude we had crossed, as centuries of time that we had re-ascended; leaving, by the same steps, home and to-day.⁹

Although postcolonial criticism will note the ethnocentric implication of Europe / the West as 'home and to-day' against the Gilbert islands / the South Seas as 'past ages', the description in the passage belongs to the broader context of Stevenson's writing that has here been outlined. The continuity of the life of the past within the present is another expression of the contradiction (or possibility) of perception, which the author recognises in many different settings.¹⁰ Far from claiming temporal mastery over his South Seas environment, Stevenson is attempting to put across the confusing effect of this environment on his own sense of understanding. A similar experience occurs when Stevenson describes a trip that he takes around the Samoan Islands. While resting on the bay of Oa, he claims that he 'read Livy, and confused today with two thousand years ago, and wondered in which of these epochs I was flourishing at that moment.'¹¹ Stevenson's statement that he is 'confused' by the two ages suggests that the simultaneity of the two eras is the outcome of a tension in his understanding, which he believes to be beyond his control.

Earlier in his travels, while walking through the ruins of the Hawaiian 'City of Refuge', where condemned people had in the past received a free

⁹ *ibid.* p. 231.

¹⁰ The example of the section of the Marquesan MS on the mountains surrounding the bay of Atuona, reproduced in chapter 4, comes to mind.

¹¹ Balfour, *Life*, p. 101.

stay of execution, Stevenson meditates that 'there are times and places where the past becomes more vivid than the present, and the memory dominates the ear and eye.'¹² According to Stevenson, the City of Refuge, like the 'vestiges of Rome', is one such place. The way that he describes the altered situation of perception ('the memory dominates the ear and eye') suggests that ordinary consciousness is suppressed by memory as 'the past becomes more vivid than the present'. Memory – or the action of the past – describes an experience that exceeds the rationalising effect of the mind's understanding. In looking back at the times that this has happened to him, whilst walking in Rome and in the Hawaiian City of Refuge, Stevenson realizes that his understanding is subject to opposing sensations, which he only later is able to clarify and comprehend.

Dress and colour

In his first encounter with South Sea islanders – the Marquesans who approach the *Casco* in their canoes – Stevenson hints at the descriptive variety that is to follow in subsequent meetings on his travels. He writes of how 'Canoe followed canoe till the ship swarmed with stalwart, six-foot men in every stage of undress; some in a shirt, some in a loin-cloth, one in a handkerchief imperfectly adjusted'.¹³ The diversity of Polynesian clothing is remarked upon in later chapters; here Stevenson comments on the diversity of forms of nakedness. As with nearly all of his descriptions of Pacific Islands cultures, the uniqueness of individual expression is always highlighted ('one in a handkerchief imperfectly adjusted') to show the differences that can result from the effort of cultural assimilation.

In the Gilbert Islands, Stevenson spends most of the evening hours looking at the dress and fashions of the indigenous people as they walk past his house on their way home from work. 'The men broke out in all the colours of the rainbow...and both men and women began to be adorned and scented with new flowers'.¹⁴ There is a kaleidoscopic mingling of colours in the dusk, which Stevenson takes great pleasure in describing. He adds of the flowers

¹² *South Seas*, ed. by Andrew Lang, p. 188.

¹³ *South Seas*, p. 6.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 223.

worn by the Gilbertines, 'A small white blossom is the favourite, sometimes sown singly in a woman's hair like little stars, now composed in a thick wreath.' He looks for patterns and new assortments of shapes to draw out the 'nuances' (see chapter 5) that help in the understanding of cultures.

The aesthetic alertness shown towards cultural forms and patterns is an aspect of Stevenson's general awareness of the play of light and colour. In Fakarava, in the Paumotus Islands, he notes one night how 'The moon, now three days old, and as yet but a silver crescent on a still visible sphere, shone through the palm canopy with vigorous and scattered lights.'¹⁵ He takes great delight in relating the break-up of colour, not in terms of the contrast between light and darkness but as a form or pattern with its own dynamic vigour. The light of the moon is 'vigorous' as it shines 'through the palm canopy': the quality that is here alluded to is the light's frangibility as it breaks through the canopy to become scattered into fragments. This fragmentation of light again alludes to the irreconcilability of knowledge in the South Seas, as clear perception becomes arrested by kaleidoscopic colour.

Natural landscape

One of the most surprising descriptive reversals takes place on the Paumotuan atoll of Fakarava, in the second part of *In the South Seas*. The description of this atoll is at first wonderful:

We were scarce well headed for the pass before all heads were craned over the rail. For the water, shoaling under our board, became changed in a moment to surprising hues of blue and grey; and in its transparency the coral branched and blossomed, and the fish of the inland sea cruised visibly below us, stained and striped, and even beaked like parrots.¹⁶

The first impression of the atoll is of shimmering colour and transparency, the coral fresh as a tree in spring, branching and blossoming, the patterned fish visible beneath and 'beaked like parrots'. The landscape is tranquil and

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 152-3.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 150.

serene. This rapturous sentiment is however completely overturned at the end of the same chapter. Stevenson now notes of the beach of the lagoon:

...even what there is of it is not of honest rock, but organic, part alive, part putrescent; even the clean sea and the bright fish about it poisoned, the most stubborn boulder burrowed in by worms, the lightest dust venomous as an apothecary's drugs.¹⁷

Against the transparent splendour of the opening passages about Fakarava, this last description seems entirely contradictory, nature now being identified with secrecy and concealment. However, a closer look reveals that it is not a direct reversal but a qualified one: the fish are still as bright as before, but poisoned. The inconclusive nature of perception is stressed once more. The coral is both alive and dead, the most stubborn boulder is porous with the activity of worms, the lightest dust is 'venomous as an apothecary's drugs'. These examples refer again to the provisionality, not of surface, but of appearance. The alluring simplicity of nature that is remarked at the outset is shown to have belied intense activity and the possibility of dreadful revelations.¹⁸

In this way in the landscape of atolls the natural world has the ability to catch newcomers unaware:

On the sea-side and in certain atolls this profusion of vitality is even shocking: the rock under foot is mined with it. I have broken off – notably in Funafuti and Arorai – great lumps of ancient weathered rock that rang under my blows like iron, and the fracture has been full of pendant worms as long as my hand, as thick as a child's finger, of a slightly pinkish white, and set as close as three or even four to the square inch.¹⁹

Taking a closer look at the hard floor of the atoll, Stevenson finds that the ancient and seemingly ferrous rock that 'rang under my blows' is filled with worms: a 'profusion of vitality' that is 'even shocking'. The intertwining of life and death in the South Seas is a persistent feature of this writing. In the section on Hawaii he notes the appearance of creeping vines high above in

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 159.

¹⁸ It is notable also how much the description of the landscape of the atoll is mirrored by Stevenson's description of the traditional Paumotuans in their modern existence as civil governors on behalf of the European powers. As with the atoll, the culture of the native government is also 'part alive, part putrescent.' *South Seas*, pp. 149-159.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 157-58.

the canopy of the forest through which he is walking: 'the wood dies under them to skeletons; and they swing there, like things hung out from washing, over the death they have provoked.'²⁰ He adds later: 'Ferns joined their fronds above a horseman's head. High over these, the dead and the living rose and were hung with tattered parasites.'²¹ Even dead wood and plant matter is subject to putrefaction and parasitical activity, which in this sense keeps it among the living. In the bay of Anaho, in the Marquesas Islands, the forest can be found in 'every crevice' of a range of 'shattered mountains', 'roosting and nesting there like birds about a ruin'.²² Where organic and inorganic matter are endlessly locked in competition for space, uninterrupted surfaces become extremely rare. Instead, living forms exist in crevices and other small gaps and breaks in the land. It is this sudden and unexpected appearance of life in the midst of inactivity and ruin that Stevenson finds 'shocking'.

In the Paumotus Islands, Stevenson notes of a particular reef that it 'has no passage of colour but is imitated by some shell.' These living shells of 'purple and red and white, and green and yellow, pied and striped and clouded', 'wear in every combination the livery of the dead reef – if the reef be dead – so that the eye is continually baffled and the collector continually deceived.'²³ In such an environment of mimicry and playful vitality the eye cannot be trusted to tell objective facts. Stevenson is not sure even if the reef is dead or alive. The equivocal reading of natural phenomena can be traced at least as far back as his essay, 'Pan's Pipes' (1878). According to Stevenson, 'The Greeks figured Pan, the god of Nature, now terribly stamping his foot, so that armies were dispersed; now by the woodside on a summer noon trolling on his pipe until he charmed the hearts of upland ploughmen. And the Greeks, in so figuring, uttered the last word of human experience.'²⁴ Pan represents the contradictions of experience, which Stevenson regards as incontrovertible. He adds, deepening his encounter with this strange figure, that

²⁰ *South Seas*, ed. by Andrew Lang, p. 199.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁴ Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1921), p.182.

What experience supplies is of a mingled tissue, and the choosing mind has much to reject before it can get together the materials of a theory. Dew and thunder, destroying Atilla and the Spring lambkins, belong to an order of contrasts which no repetition can assimilate. There is an uncouth, outlandish strain through the web of the world, as from a vexatious planet in the house of life. Things are not congruous and wear strange disguises: the consummate flower is fostered out of dung, and after nourishing itself awhile with heaven's delicate distillations, decays again into indistinguishable soil.²⁵

The passage anticipates many of Stevenson's discoveries in the Pacific Islands. He is firm in his belief that the 'order of contrasts' that motivates life on Earth can not be assimilated into a 'theory'. Things are in themselves incongruous, they do not 'wear strange disguises'. The visible, therefore, holds little clue to the meaning of things.

In the South Seas, Stevenson's eye is attracted not only to colour and form but also to tonal variation and topological diversity. In the 'problematic shores' of the Marquesas Islands the land is 'heaved up in peaks and rising vales; it fell in cliffs and buttresses; its colour ran through fifty modulations in a scale of pearl and rose and olive; and it was crowned above by opalescent clouds.'²⁶ It is as if to say that nothing will prepare the observer for the variety that imposes itself in the Marquesan landscape. In the bay of Anaho 'The mountains abruptly overhang the port with every variety of surface and of inclination, lawn, and cliff, and forest.'²⁷ There is no indication of unbroken vistas and horizons stretching away to the sunset. Instead, everything in the landscape is abrupt and uneven. During the passage of the *Casco* along what he terms 'the windward shore of that indescribable island of Ua-Pu' – another Marquesan island – Stevenson notes 'with dizzy eyes the coves, the capes, the breakers, the climbing forests, and the inaccessible stone needles that surmount the mountains.'²⁸ The outlines of the island are not stable or harmonious; everywhere there are protrusions, enclosures, and unpredictable abrasions of the land. The eye becomes 'dizzy' with these incongruities.

It is useful to compare this reading of the Marquesan landscape with Stevenson's ideas from his essay on 'Roads'. In that study, he writes about

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 181.

²⁶ *South Seas*, p. 3.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 62.

the observation of nuances in landscape as being the key to the build-up of understanding about place. 'The constant recurrence of similar combinations of colour and outline gradually forces upon us a sense of how the harmony has been built up, and we become familiar with something of nature's mannerism.'²⁹ Appearance, even in a gently alternating form, helps to define essence. Moreover, the repetition of certain colours and forms leads to a generally harmonious picture of nature. This conclusion is almost completely overturned in the writing on the Pacific. Here the broken and unharmonious landscape does not allow such an unhindered reading of nature. The interpretation of the land becomes less accessible and requires greater caution.

Later in his South Seas travels Stevenson describes in a similarly broken way the diversified countryside behind his residence on the Gilbertese island of Apemama:

Here open, sandy, uneven, and dotted with dwarfish palms; here cut up with taro trenches and, deep and shallow, and, according to the growth of the plants, presenting now the appearance of a sandy tannery, now of an alleyed and green garden.³⁰

In these examples he emphasises the natural variety of the landscape and the provisionality of descriptions of this landscape. Ua-Pu is even regarded as 'indescribable', Stevenson adding that 'the place persists, in a dark corner of our memories, like a piece of the scenery of nightmares.'³¹ The Apemaman countryside is yet more difficult to describe since its appearance depends on the status of growth of the plants which populate it. In a nearby village 'The surface of the isle is diversified with palm groves, thickets, and romantic dingles four feet deep, relics of old taro plantation'. In such a sharply deviating landscape it is 'possible to stumble unawares on folk resting or hiding from their work.'³² The diversity of landscape is referred back to the variety of forms of living.

Architecture

²⁹ Stevenson, *Essays of Travel*, pp. 213-220.

³⁰ *South Seas*, p. 289.

³¹ *ibid.* p. 62.

³² *ibid.* p. 311-12.

The human landscape is as perplexing and multidimensional as its natural counterpart. In the writing on Hawaii two descriptive passages by Stevenson exemplify this similarity. Firstly, as he walks through the countryside surrounding a volcano, he writes that 'the land was still a crust of lava, here and there ramparted with cliffs, and which here and there breaks down and shows the mouths of branching galleries, mines and tombs of nature's making, endlessly vaulted, and ramified below our passage.'³³ The shapes of natural features are informal and non-uniform, subject to constant change and leading at points to recognisable structures such as 'galleries, mines and tombs'. This may be compared with an earlier passage in which Stevenson describes the environment of a Hawaiian coastline: 'The mouths of caves are everywhere; the lava is tunnelled with corridors and halls; under houses high on the mountain, the sea can be heard throbbing in the bowels of the land; and there is one gallery of miles, which has been used by armies as a pass.'³⁴ The utility of this otherwise barren and lava-filled environment is surprising. Tunnels of corridors and halls below the surface of the land, as well as a gallery that 'has been used by armies as a pass', testify to the productive way in which the Hawaiian people have used the environment. Furthermore, in underground recesses 'the sea can be heard throbbing in the bowels of the land'. The porosity of structures also describes an instinct towards improvisation, since it keeps open the possibility for change.³⁵

In the island of Fakarava, 'the houses of the natives stand irregularly scattered, now close on the lagoon for the sake of the breeze, now back under the palms for love of shadow.'³⁶ This describes the utility that guides the location of settlements in the village of Rotoava. Later in his travels these ideas become condensed into meditative fragments of writing. The chapters on the Gilbert Islands, which follow most of the other writing on the South

³³ *ibid.* p. 203.

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 188.

³⁵ As Walter Benjamin explains using the example of the structures of some Neapolitan buildings: 'In such corners one can scarcely discern where building is still in progress and where dilapidation has already set in. For nothing is concluded. Porosity results not only from the indolence of the Southern artisan, but also, above all, from the passion for improvisation, which demands that opportunity be at any price preserved.' Walter Benjamin, 'Naples', in *Reflections*, pp. 166-7.

³⁶ *South Seas*, p. 151.

Seas, are the scene in which Stevenson's reflections on material culture reach their most decisive form. His description of the diversity of housing on the island of Butaritari is exemplary. He writes of these dwellings:

The houses were of all dimensions, from those of toys to those of churches. Some might hold a battalion, some were so minute they could scarce receive a pair of lovers; only in the playroom, when the toys are mingled, do we meet such incongruities of scale. Many were open sheds; some took the form of roofed stages; others were walled and the walls pierced with little windows. A few were perched on piles in the lagoon; the rest at random on a green, through which the roadway made a ribbon of sand, or along embankments of a sheet of water like a shallow dock. One and all were the creatures of a single tree; palm-tree wood and palm-tree leaf were their materials; no nail had been driven, no hammer sounded, in their building, and they were held together by lashings of palm-tree sinnet.³⁷

The houses of Butaritari are joyfully irregular. Like toys in a playroom, they are of various shapes and they are situated everywhere in the landscape. Many of the structures also contain a natural opening; even the houses that are walled on all sides are 'pierced with little windows'. It is a feature that reflects the accessibility and the potential for adaptation of the people of the island. Stevenson appears to be saying that, whatever difficulties the transition to a colonial dominion might place on the Gilbert Islands (the territory is converted to a British protectorate in 1892), the resourceful population will be able to cope with them.³⁸ The different locations of the houses – beside the lagoon, spaced out on a green, along embankments – also express Gilbertese freedom through adaption and ingenuity.³⁹ Their creativity is further emphasised by the fact that all of the buildings are made from the same species of tree and are even held together using materials from this tree. By contrast, the palace of the King of Butaritari 'is built of

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 207.

³⁸ According to John Hockings, the Gilbertese capacity for adaptation is many centuries old. See Hockings, *Traditional Architecture in the Gilbert Islands: A Cultural Perspective* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1989).

³⁹ This idea is supported by an entry in one of Stevenson's notebooks, in which he writes that 'absolute uniformity of tastes in a large number of human beings is precisely the worst possible condition for peaceable coexistence' – because it removes the capacity for continual readaptation and improvement. Stevenson, 'Selections from his Notebook', *The Collected Works of Robert Louis Stevenson. Tusitala Edition*, ed. by Lloyd Osbourne and Fanny van de Grift Stevenson, 35 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1924), xxix, pp. 171-194.

imported wood upon a European plan; the roof of corrugated iron, the yard enclosed with walls, the gate surmounted by a sort of lych-house.⁴⁰

Belief

Belief is represented as apparently free-spirited and perplexing as the landscape of some Pacific Islands. In the second part of *In the South Seas*, Stevenson writes at length about the play of religious belief in the Paumotus Islands.⁴¹ During a Catholic church mass, he notes that

The plain service, the vernacular Bible, the hymn-tunes mostly on an English pattern – ‘God save the Queen,’ I was informed, a special favourite – all, save some paper flowers upon the altar, seemed not merely but austerely Protestant.⁴²

The Catholic ritual has more than a symbolic similarity with its Protestant counterpart in the Paumotus Islands. As with the natural world of the atoll, poised between life and death, so it is the same with beliefs, which are partial and in constant change. Stevenson proceeds to describe how the Paumotuan archipelago ‘is divided between two main religions, Catholic and Mormon. They front each other proudly with a false air of permanence; yet are but shapes, their membership in perpetual flux.’⁴³ Religious observance alternates in Paumotuan culture on a day-to-day basis, belief seemingly as porous a phenomenon as the rocks of the nearby beach. Nothing is decided, yet rules continue to be observed.

Stevenson also tells an anecdote about a village that he visits, in which ‘the chief and his sister were persons perfectly intelligent: gentlefolk, apt of speech. The sister was very religious, a great church-goer, one that used to reprove me if I stayed away; I found afterwards that she privately worshipped a shark.’ As if to counter the possible accusation that he is exoticising the Paumotuans, he compares this with the syncretism of recent European

⁴⁰ *South Seas*, p. 208. It is also interesting how much this and other descriptions of the landscape of the South Seas given by Stevenson, in their concentration on irregularity, disorder, and provisional appearances, resemble the look of Edinburgh’s Old Town, which is the childhood home of the author.

⁴¹ Ironically given the description that is about to follow, the Paumotus Islands are atolls and therefore the most uniform in terms of landscape.

⁴² *South Seas*, p. 164.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 174.

counterparts: 'so to-day, the theological Highlander sneaks from under the eye of the Free Church divine to lay an offering by a sacred well.'⁴⁴

From the above examples it can be seen how Stevenson reads contradiction, diversity, and descriptive ambiguity as the basis of his *South Seas* writing: Marquesans who stare inert from tree-tops are unmoving because they are in mortal fear that they have been caught in a criminal act; bright and colourful fish in the shores of a Paumotuan atoll are adept at concealing their poisonous secret; the natural and the man-made structures of the Pacific Islands landscape share improvisatory patterns of survival and growth. Things that Stevenson begins by stating as fact are later revealed as being merely one of the possibilities of his own, partial, knowledge about that subject. He is able to do this because he never considers that his descriptions could relate directly to the objects that they try to narrate. Nothing becomes visible in this narration, nothing is absolutely discovered; instead, everything is described as being in constant change and dispersal.

In 'Equator Town', the ramshackle settlement that King Tembinok' builds for Stevenson's family during their residence in Apemama, Stevenson writes that after the lamps are lighted at night

...our dinner-table (lent, like all our furniture, by the king) must be enclosed in a tent of netting, our citadel and refuge; and this became all luminous, and bulged and beaconed under the eaves, like the globe of some monstrous lamp under the margin of its shade. Our cabins, the sides being propped up at a variety of inclinations, spelled out strange, angular patterns of brightness.⁴⁵

The settlement at Equator Town is entirely incongruous. The 'tent of netting', their protection against mosquitoes, 'bulged and beaconed under the eaves'. The light of the lamps does not throw uniform shapes into relief. The awkward propping of their tents against the lamplight 'spelled out strange, angular patterns of brightness.'

There is hardly ever a reference to pure, 'enlightening' light in the *South Seas* writing. Stevenson delights in describing things that distort and disrupt clear vision. Landscapes are composed of broken and uneven surfaces that obscure important details; man-made structures are non-

⁴⁴ *South Seas*, p. 188-9.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 293.

uniform and scattered everywhere according to individual necessity; nature that enraptures can also confound and even shock the observer; island dress and beliefs are diverse and kaleidoscopic in colour and arrangement. The notion of duality that is regarded as being essential to understanding Stevenson's writing is rejected in this problematic cultural setting that resists black and white interpretations.⁴⁶ Understanding Pacific Islands cultures calls for a different idea of culture to support all of the contradictions, or make productive use of the tensions and uncertainties.⁴⁷ What is clear from the foregoing examples from 'The South Seas' is that, rather than observing culture as the surface on which things are inscribed, as the darkness out of which light appears, Stevenson imagines it instead as the continually shifting movement of shapes, tones, and forms.

Stevenson and Hegel

Writing about a part of the world that is – despite the work of Cook, Bougainville, Darwin, and others – little understood by Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century requires a different approach to the study of culture than has been the norm in Stevenson's day. Despite, or because of, the commercial and technical constraints that Stevenson is operating under, he senses from the beginning that his task is two-fold. In the opening passages of *In the South Seas* he declares that he must 'communicate to fireside travellers some sense of its seduction' and at the same time 'describe the life, at sea and ashore, of many hundred thousand persons, some of our own

⁴⁶ For dualistic interpretations of Stevenson's work, see for example Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). More recently, in relation to the contrast that the author draws between lightness and darkness, see Colley, *Colonial Imagination*.

⁴⁷ That the possibility of productive insight, rather than resolution, emerges from understanding the contradictions that sustain life is made clear in Stevenson's most famous story about 'doubles', *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Henry Jekyll's description on seeing the reflection of his transformed self for the first time is almost blissful: 'And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine.' [Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde and Other Tales of Terror*, ed. by Robert Mighall (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 58.] Jekyll also makes clear that he describes man as two rather than one with provisional emphasis, and that future scientific research might reveal multitudinous existences within the same individual.

blood and language, all our contemporaries, and yet as remote in thought and habit as Rob Roy or Barbarossa, the Apostles or the Caesars.⁴⁸ He understands the dialectic, in writing about the South Seas, between recapitulating sentimental romances for a European audience, on the one hand, and on the other, the difficulty of writing anything meaningful about a part of the world that does not have a significant share in the traditions that have come to form modern Europe.

The reference to the Caesars is carefully chosen. Stevenson later in the same chapter writes:

I was now escaped out of the shadow of the Roman Empire, under whose toppling monuments we were all cradled, whose Laws and Letters are on every hand of us, constraining and preventing. I was now to see what men might be whose fathers had never studied Virgil, had never been conquered by Caesar, and never been ruled by the wisdom of Gaius or Papinian.⁴⁹

These references to classical and epic history stress their limiting influence: 'conquered by Caesar'; 'ruled by the wisdom of Gaius'; 'Laws and Letters...constraining and preventing': in the Pacific Islands it is precisely what is denied him by his classical learning that Stevenson regards as being exemplary of his situation as a writer of culture. He expects that when he returns home 'I should have but dipped into a picture book without a text'⁵⁰, although he learns in time that 'the impediment of tongues was one that I particularly over-estimated.'⁵¹ Although he believes that he is able to overcome the problem of communication with Pacific Islanders, these instances of self-questioning and doubt litter and enrich the South Seas texts, making it a work that tries to achieve a complexity of discourse equal to the cultures that it depicts.

Hegel and Scotland in the nineteenth century

The uncertainty that is exemplified by Stevenson's writing belongs to a hardly noticed British philosophical tradition of this period, which has not

⁴⁸ *South Seas*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Mitchell Library, MS C233, fol.

⁵¹ *South Seas*, p. 8.

claimed the author for itself. It stems from the British – first, Scottish – discovery of the German philosopher George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), whose works begin to be translated into English in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. During the period of Stevenson's maturity as a writer, in the 1870s-early 1880s – a period which is characterized as being one of religious 'doubt' among many educated Victorians – the Scottish philosopher James Hutchinson Stirling (1820-1909) writes an influential book called *The Secret of Hegel* (1865), which has the double purpose of trying to explain Hegel to a still-perplexed British reading public and of allaying their worries as to the nature and existence of God. *The Secret of Hegel* is a part-translation of Hegel's 'greater' *Logic*⁵², with a commentary by the translator. Previous to its publication the only other English translation of Hegel's work is another, smaller selection from the *Logic*, made by H Sloman and J Wallon and entitled *The Subjective Logic of Hegel* (1855).

Stirling, who some Hegelians have criticised for having a tendency to conflate Hegel with Kant⁵³, is nevertheless an important figure in the history of the reception of Hegel in Britain. He occupies an enviable commercial position as a popularizer of this difficult continental philosopher who is also able to reassure people about the spiritual benefits of his work.⁵⁴ Stirling declares in *The Secret of Hegel* that Kant and Hegel 'have no object but to restore Faith – Faith in God – Faith in the Immortality of the Soul and the Freedom of the Will – nay, Faith in Christianity as the Revealed Religion – and that, too, in perfect harmony with the Right of Private Judgement, and the Rights, or Lights, or Might of Intelligence in general.'⁵⁵ During a difficult time for Victorian

⁵² This is the series of books originally published in 1812, 1813 and 1816 and subsequently known as *The Science of Logic*. The 'lesser' *Logic*, as it is sometimes called, refers to the first volume of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, which is an abbreviated version of the former work, first published in 1817 and then republished on several occasions later in his life.

⁵³ Peter Robbins, *The British Hegelians, 1875-1925* (London: Garland, 1982). According to Robbins, Stirling had 'exhibited a certain tendency to run Kant and Hegel together'. (p. 38)

⁵⁴ A measure of the unpopularity of Hegel in the philosophical establishment of the day is given by John Stuart Mill's refusal to support Stirling's candidature for the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University in 1868 on the grounds that he 'did not think that the study of Hegel would have a salutary effect on the immature minds of university students.' Hiralal Haldar, *Neo-Hegelianism* (London: Garland, 1984 [1927]), p. 4.

⁵⁵ James Hutchinson Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel: Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principle, Form, and Matter*, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1865), I, p. xii.

Christianity, Stirling's work is therefore able to offer considerable moral support to educated laymen.⁵⁶

One of the latter who remains unconvinced by Hegel, however, is Stevenson's father, Thomas, a deeply religious Scottish Presbyterian. The exchange of letters between father and son in late 1883-84, when Robert Louis is living in Hyères in southern France and his father is in Edinburgh, is written while Thomas is experiencing a period of depressive anxiety, for which his son attempts consolation with a reading from Hegel:

Hegel, the German, got the best word of all philosophy with his antinomies: the contrary of everything is its postulate. That is, of course, grossly expressed, but gives a hint of the idea, which contains a great deal of the mysteries of religion, and a vast amount of the practical wisdom of life. For your part there is no doubt as to your duty: to take things easy and be as happy as you can, for your sake, and my mother's, and that of many besides.⁵⁷

The passage reveals the extent to which Stevenson is an admirer of the philosopher ('the best word of all philosophy'), whom he uses to explain to his father that doubt and hesitation are to be found everywhere in life, and that worrying about things will therefore have a negative effect on all around him, including his wife.⁵⁸ His father's response to this advice is dismissive:

As to Hegel and his "secret" I really know nothing but the only prescription which I know for black views of life is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and when that doesn't light up the scene I fear Hegel is not likely to do so.⁵⁹

The reference to Stirling's *Secret of Hegel* is tacit, the implication being that his son will immediately recognise his reference to such a well-known text.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ On Victorian religious doubt see Lance St. John Butler, *Victorian Doubt: Literary and Cultural Discourses* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp. 86-105.

⁵⁷ *Letters*, iv, p. 221 (20 Dec. 1883).

⁵⁸ In Stevenson's unfinished essay from this period, 'Lay Morals', he attempts to articulate his own personal view of Christianity. After testing each of the commandments and finding them all to be subject to contradiction by the day-to-day circumstances of living, he proceeds to describe how the teachings of Jesus Christ should be read as a tendency of thinking and not observed in their strictest terms: 'What he taught (and in this like all other teachers worthy of the name) was not a code of rules, but a ruling spirit; not truth, but a spirit of truth; not views, but a view.' *Lay Morals and Other Papers* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911), p. 4.

⁵⁹ *Letters*, i, 221n (23 December 1883).

⁶⁰ Stevenson then writes a postscript to this reply in a letter addressed to both his parents dated 1 Jan 1884: 'My father refused to understand my little reference to Hegel. Let me give him a brief and homely illustration of the doctrine: A gentleman said to his servant - - - - -'

Brief as it is, the exchange reveals two important facts: firstly, that Stevenson has read Hegel, or at least knows about Hegel's discussion of the antinomies of philosophy (discussed below), and secondly, that both father and son are aware of J H Stirling's *Secret of Hegel*.

In an earlier period of his life, Stevenson is less impressed by the German philosopher. To his cousin R A M Stevenson he writes from Wick on 6 September 1868:

Hegel must either be frightfully clever, or a most egregious ass: I incline to the latter opinion. The great old question of the Almighty, which has found an echo in every age and in every heart, ever since it rang to Job [Job 38:2] upon his dungheap, would seem to apply full well: 'who is it that darkeneth counsel with words without knowledge?'⁶¹

Stevenson writes this letter while he is visiting the harbour works as part of his training at the University of Edinburgh to become an engineer. In fact, between his engineering degree, which he fails to complete, and his subsequent degree in law at the same university, Stevenson spends a total of eight years studying there, 1867-1875. When Stevenson joins the university the incumbent Professor of Moral Philosophy is Henry Calderwood, who writes his principal work, *Philosophy of the Infinite* (1854), in refutation of the argument of another philosopher, Sir William Hamilton, that it is impossible to have knowledge of the infinite.⁶² Significantly, much of his criticism is also directed against Kant, whose rationalism is regarded as being responsible for removing the concept of divine sanction from the activities of the human mind, which he attempts to restore.⁶³ Hamilton's presence at the head of the philosophy department at Edinburgh, and his contribution to the intellectual climate of the university during Stevenson's period of study, added to the

----- Kidston, by Jovel' (*Letters*, I, p. 230). Booth and Mehew, editors of Stevenson's letters, believe it is probably a family joke.

⁶¹ *Letters*, I, pp. 142-3.

⁶² Henry Calderwood, *The Philosophy of the Infinite; with Special Reference to the theories of Sir William Hamilton and M. Cousin* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable & Co., 1854).

⁶³ Calderwood writes of Kant's theory of the unconditioned/absolute/God that it 'is not an object of knowledge; but its notion, as a regulative principle of the mind itself, is more than a mere negation of the conditioned.' He adds in relation to the antinomies that 'To admit that reason is contradictory, and, therefore, deceitful, is to assert that God has given us a power which deceives us, and consequently, is to shake the confidence of that faith in God, which is the foundation of true religion. We, therefore, set aside the doctrine of Kant as inconsistent with itself, and consequently untenable.' Calderwood, pp. 6-7.

inability of Stirling to gain this post in 1868, perhaps helps in understanding Stevenson's youthful opinion of Hegel, who in the early days of his reception in Britain is often run together with Kant.

In Scotland, however, there are several other figures besides Stirling who are influential as the earliest supporters of Hegel's theories in Britain.⁶⁴ The most prominent of these is James Frederick Ferrier (1808-1864), the father of Stevenson's friends James Walter Ferrier and Coggie Ferrier. Ferrier senior teaches Civil History at Edinburgh University but in 1852, as later happens to James Hutchinson Stirling, he fails to win a position as Chair of Moral Philosophy. In 1856 he also fails to win the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at the University. Although he claims never to have understood Hegel, he writes throughout his life on the history of philosophical idealism and his philosophy is often compared with Hegel's.⁶⁵ Ferrier also teaches Stevenson's friend Andrew Lang Moral Philosophy and Economics at St. Andrews University in 1861.⁶⁶

However, more than Lang, on whom Ferrier is claimed to have exerted an almost 'magical' influence⁶⁷, the former student of Ferrier who does the most to improve the understanding of Hegel in Britain is William Wallace (1844-97). Wallace also studies under Ferrier at St. Andrews, and goes on to become Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford in 1882. The publication of Wallace's translation of Hegel's 'lesser' *Logic* as the first part of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* in 1874 is regarded as the beginning of Hegelianism in Britain.⁶⁸ This is also the first English translation

⁶⁴ In some ways the early Scottish interest in Hegel may be seen as a reciprocation of the philosopher's interest in the Scottish Enlightenment. According to Norbert Waszek, 'Hegel, through his study and assimilation of the advanced economic theories of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, was able to raise their understanding of the modern market economy to the level of a comprehensive political philosophy.' Waszek, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of 'Civil Society'* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 230.

⁶⁵ In his major work, *Institutes of Metaphysic*, Ferrier limits the extent of Hegel's influence on him, even though he studies philosophy in Germany and has many Hegelian elements in his own work. 'I have read most of Hegel's works again and again, but I cannot say that I am acquainted with his philosophy. I am able to understand only a few short passages here and there in his writings; and these I greatly admire for the depth of their insight, the breadth of their wisdom, and the loftiness of their tone.' Ferrier, *Philosophical Works of James Frederick Ferrier, Volume 1: Institutes of Metaphysic*, 3rd edn (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001 [1875]), p. 553.

⁶⁶ George Davie, *Ferrier and the Blackout of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Review, 2003), p. 54.

⁶⁷ Davie, p. ii-iii.

⁶⁸ Robbins, p. 47.

in which Hegel properly discusses the antinomies, to which Stevenson refers in his letter to his father in 1883.⁶⁹

The Antinomies

Hegel's discussion of the antinomies, as with much of his philosophy of logic, is drawn from a critical encounter with the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). In Wallace's translation of the 'lesser' *Logic*, Hegel explains Kant's idea in the following way:

In the attempt which reason makes to comprehend the unconditioned nature of the World, it falls into what are called Antinomies. In other words it maintains two opposite propositions about the same object, and in such a way that each of them has to be maintained with equal necessity.⁷⁰

The four antinomies drawn from classical philosophy, which Kant uses to explain this idea, are: (i) Is the world limited in space and time, or is it not? (ii) Is matter endlessly divisible or does it consist of atoms? (iii) Is there freedom or is everything determined by necessity? (iv) Is the world as a whole caused or uncaused? By taking up each of these questions from either side of the argument, Kant shows how it is possible within the terms set by the question to disprove the other. According to Hegel,

From this it follows that the body of cosmical fact, the specific statements descriptive of which run into contradiction, cannot be a self-subsistent reality, but only an appearance. The explanation offered by Kant alleges that the contradiction does not affect the object in its own proper essence, but attaches only to the Reason which seeks to comprehend it.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Sloman and Wallon's translation of the *Subjective Logic* does not contain the sections in which Hegel discusses the antinomies, although in Sloman's own discussion which follows the translation he states: 'Hegel, seeing that the law of identity (which had ruled in logic from the days of Aristotle down to his own) was baffled by the antinomies which it had to admit, substituted for it a new law, able, in his opinion, to reconcile these apparent contradictions. Thus, to the ancient, well-known logic, which we might call the logic of identity, and which has for its axiom, "A thing can never be the contrary of that which it is", Hegel opposes his own Logic, according to which "everything is at once that which it is, and the contrary of that which it is." By means of this he advances a *priori*; he proposes a *thesis*, from which he draws a new *synthesis*, not directly (which might be impossible), but indirectly, by means of an antithesis.' (pp. 92-93). In *The Secret of Hegel*, Stirling discloses Hegel's 'greater' and 'lesser' Logics, although he concentrates only on one of the Kantian antinomies: 'the antinomy of the Indivisibility and of the Infinite Divisibility of Time, of Space, of Matter.' (Stirling, II, pp. 268-9).

⁷⁰ *Logic of Hegel*, pp. 76-77.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

For Hegel, this is the point at which Kant's discovery fails to realise its full implications. By alleging that contradiction does not impinge on external objects, Kant is merely expressing 'an excess of tenderness for the things of the world.' For Kant, direct experience with things that are not physically connected to the mind is illusory. In opposing this idea, Hegel notes that, 'The blemish of contradiction, it seems, could not be allowed to mar the essence of the world; but there could be no objection to attach it to the thinking Reason, to the essence of mind.'⁷²

Hegel acknowledges that Kant's discovery of contradiction in the operation of the understanding is a significant moment in Western thought, but he believes that Kant 'never got beyond the negative result that the thing-in-itself is unknowable, and never penetrated to the discovery of what the antinomies really and positively mean.' Taking up where he believes that Kant leaves off due to his 'excess of tenderness', Hegel states:

That true and positive meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements. Consequently to know, or, in other words, to comprehend an object is equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations.⁷³

Hegel contends that the categories of thought are those of reality, since reflection on the contradictions of human reason in the world leads to the conclusion that the truth about the self is to be found in the world that is created by the mind. In this way, the discussion of the antinomies could prove helpful to a writer of romance, who is concerned with realistically expressing inner states of thought through the depiction of external objects. In this sense it is little surprise that Stevenson found much to commend to his father about Hegel's discussion of the antinomies.

Writing culture in the South Seas

Returning to the contradictions noted by Stevenson in his South Seas writing, the necessity of examining every object from a standpoint of doubt

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 78.

and uncertainty begins to appear as the methodology of a more wide-ranging project. The porosity of rocks, the fluidity of religious belief, the glittering poisonous fish: all become material expressions of his underlying belief in the antinomies of reason. Whereas Stevenson is deeply critical of the positivist teleology of the human sciences as represented by Edward Burnett Tylor and others, he remains loyal to the Hegel he discovers by following the self-contradictory working of reason as it is manifested in external objects. As a Hegelian thinker, this may be seen as the process of self-conscious reason that allows the mind to externalise itself and therefore come to a true understanding of the world.

Stevenson's descriptions of the landscapes and cultures of the Pacific Islands are therefore not philosophically innocent. Indeed, what is truly novel about Stevenson's South Seas writing is the way in which its ethics of observation follow from certain currents of nineteenth century Scottish thought that originate with Hegel's reading of Kant's critical philosophy. In this way, his writing on the South Seas represents neither 'science' nor 'art', but the problematic separation of the two that begins during the Enlightenment and the second great era of European exploration. During the period of his youthful religious doubt, Stevenson takes the side of Hegel against Christianity in the construction of identity ('the contrary of everything is its postulate'). He understands by it an irreducible split in the human personality, which disrupts the notion of a pure and continuous experience of the absolute, of an all-seeing and all-knowing God. Examples of this split are everywhere in Stevenson's writing, from the multiplicity of lives that Dr. Jekyll speculates as existing within every human being, to the fragmentation of light that Stevenson reflects on in the Paumotus Islands. Knowledge of this self-contradictory split also equips him with a theoretical perspective from which to try and understand the Other as it is represented by the natural and cultural life of the Pacific Islands.

All the time that Stevenson is seeing and recording what he sees in the Pacific, he is also reconsidering his impressions and testing his authority as a witness, so that in the descriptions of people, places and things the working of

the writer's mind is quite meticulously revealed.⁷⁴ The Reason that is borrowed from Western anthropological tradition that equips him to write about the Other of poorly-understood cultures is constantly subject to hesitancy and revision. Such is the complex legacy of his reading of Hegel. It is only by grasping the contrary logic of the antinomies that Stevenson is able to draw away from the false objectivity of a pure science of culture and instead to put himself at risk as a participant in a world of appearances. In his progression from aestheticizing to reflective travel, the contemporary image of the Victorian travel narrative as a site of colonial control and authority is also complicated and, hopefully, enriched.

The argument of this chapter has been divided into two parts. In the first part, Stevenson's South Seas writing is re-examined in the light of the authorial and editorial amendments that were outlined in the previous chapters, and which have been shown to have a significant bearing on the overall meaning of the work. Moving from this point, the descriptions of landscape and culture – which are never easy to separate in this author's work – given in the South Seas writing are used to show how Stevenson continually reconsiders his traveller's perception of the Pacific Islands. Despite his interest in reading and learning more about the area, he understands that the first look is always provisional and therefore subject to change as further knowledge and experience is gained. The provisionality of appearances can be dangerous if it is ignored in the attempt to write authoritatively about poorly-known cultures, as Stevenson initially intends to do (see chapter 1). He therefore develops a style of contradiction, which stresses flux and fragmentation in every aspect of life in the Pacific Islands that he witnesses, from natural and human landscape, to belief and forms of dress.

The second part of this chapter then makes the claim that the style of contradictions that the author brings to his South Seas writing is less a result of the unwritability of the local landscape than the product of a long-held engagement with Hegelian philosophy. While not diminishing the reciprocity of

⁷⁴ Claire Harman's description is useful: '[Stevenson] was fascinated by the uneven surface of "the self", the endless ability to surprise the conscious man.' Harman, p. xviii.

learning and the potential for cultural exchange in the Pacific Islands, the argument that is made here is intended to contribute positively to this existing interpretation of Stevenson's travel writing, by suggesting that he is in effect putting the claims of a major European philosopher to the test in attempting to understand culture through the contradictions of appearance. In this way, Stevenson's work also becomes more difficult to subsume within contemporary discourses of travel writing.

CONCLUSION

'Not the nature but the congruity of men's deeds and circumstances damn and save them.'

R L Stevenson, *In the South Seas*

The sentence quoted above, which is taken from the 'Butaritari' section that comprises the third part of *In the South Seas*, raises the stakes in the spatial references to culture that have been explored in the previous chapter. Rather than identifying specifically with architecture, natural landscape, beliefs or dress, or with any other local manifestation of culture, Stevenson now appears to be identifying human morality with a spatial interpretation of culture. 'Congruity', or congruency, as it is nowadays spelled, refers to things that are in harmony, agreement and alignment. In geometry, to extend the spatial metaphor a little further, congruity defines figures that are identical in form. By using this word in the context of a problem in the cultural history of Butaritari, as will be seen, Stevenson is bringing his interpretation of shape and form discussed in the previous chapter into conjunction with his fascination with historical morality. In the first part of this conclusion the context of his statement is explored to try to better understand what the idea of congruity means to Stevenson in terms of the study of culture. The second part of the conclusion will then summarise the results of the present study and its relevance within the study of Stevenson and cultural history.

The writing on Butaritari is littered with references to shape and congruity. As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, Stevenson pays close attention to the shape, design, and arrangement of houses in Butaritari. He believes that 'such incongruities of scale' as are to be found among the houses of the town can only be compared to 'the playroom, when the toys are mingled.'¹ As the architectural context makes clear, houses of extraordinarily diverse shapes and sizes, when assembled together, are bound to appear incongruous to the visitor who approaches this settlement for the first time. Furthermore, a more general statement about the intertwining of morality and

¹ *South Seas*, p. 207.

culture in Butaritari is here expressed in terms of shape. Cultural freedom, in this example, is expressed in terms of the playful conditions of domesticity.

For Stevenson, Butaritari is also 'that incongruous isle' in which the walls of a ramshackle bar, when decorated with advertisement posters, can render an effect of 'unbridled luxury and inestimable expense.'² It is a place without measure except in the relation between things, bringing to mind the definition of culture that he gives in the *Amateur Emigrant* (see chapter 5). For example, Stevenson describes the actions of an unnamed English trader on the island, 'one black sheep indeed': when Stevenson's family bars this unwanted person from their household on pain of death, 'he avenged himself by shouting a recondite island insult, to us quite inoffensive, on his English lips incredibly incongruous.'³ As is repeatedly made clear throughout the present study, Stevenson's interest in his writing on culture is always directed towards the appearance, and not the nature, of a thing. This includes the 'recondite island insult' that issues from the mouth of the Englishman, which is seen and heard, but scarcely believed, by the writer and his family.

The reference to congruity that is quoted at the beginning of this discussion is taken from Stevenson's chapter entitled 'The Four Brothers'. In this chapter, he relates the history of Butaritari, a kingdom that is ruled by a king named Tebureimoa, and which comprises of the Gilbertese islands of Great and Little Makin. The chapter is an example of cultural history as written by Stevenson during the period of his maturity as a writer.⁴ Furthermore, it lacks the confrontational stance resulting from direct involvement in island political affairs that clouds his understanding of Samoan history in *A Footnote to History* (1892).

'The Four Brothers' briefly chronicles the reigns of the sons of the former King, Tetimararoa. It begins with the reign of Nakaeia; then, on his death, Nanteitei; and following him, Nabakatokia; then finally to the present ruler, Tebureimoa. As such, Stevenson's subject matter is here restricted to royalty and 'high politics', told in a lyrical and sometimes epigrammatic language, as will be discussed below. Stevenson makes no restrictions in

² *ibid.*, p. 225.

³ *ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴ Stevenson's earliest 'published' work – it was published for him by his father – is a 16-page pamphlet on Scottish history called 'The Pentland Rising' (1866). Knight, *Treasury*, p. 151.

revealing instances of violence and cruelty in the actions of these men, just as he makes no restrictions in describing the instances of public joy and revelry that sometimes greets their actions. Importantly, his sources for most of the information in this chapter are the two Hawaiian missionaries who are stationed at Butaritari: Maka and Kanoa. 'The Four Brothers' is therefore also largely a work of oral history.

The succession of Tetimararoa's eldest son, Nakaeia, on the death of his father leads to a period of dictatorial rule in Butaritari. For most of his reign, Nakaeia's subjects are 'slaves' and 'teetotallers', absolutely fearful of and subservient to the authority of their king. In conducting themselves in this way their behaviour is wise rather than cautious, since Nakaeia's judgements on offence can be brutally sharp. Any man who catches sight of one of his wives, for instance, is condemned to death, or otherwise life-long exile in order to escape the retributive action of the king. Indeed, according to Stevenson 'the fear of Nakaeia filled the land. No regularity of justice was affected; there was no trial, there were no officers of the law; it seemed there was but one penalty, the capital; and daylight assault and midnight murder were the forms of process.'⁵ Who is responsible for carrying out Nakaeia's orders of execution? His younger brother, Nantemat', who later succeeds him as Tebureimoa, the king during Stevenson's visit to Butaritari. Nantemat' is translated as *Mr. Corpse*, 'an appalling nickname' which Stevenson claims he had earned well by surrounding homes at night and butchering the families living inside, all on the command of his elder brother. For this reason, Nantemat' 'was the hand of iron; here was Nakaeia *redux*.'⁶

Strangely, Nakaeia, although feared for his methods, is not hated. 'Deeds that smell to us of murder wore to his subjects the reverend face of justice.'⁷ Upon his death, he is succeeded by Nanteitei, under whose rule the authority of the king begins to wane, his harem of wives being sold off to the highest bidders, his powers thus relinquished. The pre-eminence of the king over the affairs of his lands is overtaken by the growing conflict between the Hawaiian missionaries and the Old Men, the high chiefs and notables whose

⁵ *South Seas*, p. 212.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 217.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 213.

rule traditionally underpins that of the monarch in Gilbertese society. On the death of Nanteitei, Nabakatokia succeeds to the throne. His rule sees the gradual disintegration of royal authority as his high-handed attempts to regain power from the Old Men backfires in the form of a coup. The king survives the rebellion and later dies peacefully, although he is stripped of power in the lands, over which he now retains only nominal control.

When Tebureimoa succeeds to the throne, some months prior to Stevenson's arrival in Butaritari in 1889, there is hope on the islands that the monarchy will regain its lost, rightful place in the political life of Gilbertese society. Tebureimoa 'was by repute the hero of the family.'⁸ Nakaeia redux would surely cut the Old Men down to size and restore the order and justice to Butaritari that had been lacking ever since the perennially squabbling worthies had united to gain control. Yet Tebureimoa 'proved a puppet and a trembler, the unwieldy shuttlecock of orators', and he spends his days reading the Bible amid a haze of opium smoke. This might be regarded as surprising considering the early history of the man, but Stevenson is untroubled by the contradiction. To him there appears to be 'no change at all' in Tebureimoa's character from the days of Mr. Corpse, but 'rather an extreme consistency'. His fear of his brother has merely been replaced by his fear of the Old Men. 'The same cowardice that put into his hand the knife of the assassin deprives him of the sceptre of a king.' The two forms of living are irreconcilable, and the faultless assassin Nantemat' can only succeed as the absent King Tebureimoa. Indeed, it is during Tebureimoa's reign that the Gilbert Islands are established as a British protectorate, the king himself being the first native magistrate appointed by the British resident commissioner.⁹

Meditating on the recent history of Butaritari's monarchy, Stevenson remarks: 'The justice of facts is strange, and strangely just: Nakaeia, the author of these deeds, died at peace discoursing on the craft of kings; his tool suffers daily death for his enforced complicity. Not the nature, but the congruity of men's deeds and circumstances damn and save them; and

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 216.

⁹ For an indigenous perspective on this history see Arthur Francis Grimble, *Tungaru Traditions: Writings on the Atoll Culture of the Gilbert Islands* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1989), p. 90. For more information about Gilbertese history in general see *Kiribati: Aspects of History* (Tarawa: University of South Pacific and Ministry of Education, Training and Culture, Kiribati Government, 1979).

Tebureimoa from the first has been incongruously placed.¹⁰ Tebureimoa, he proceeds to explain, is a shrewd businessman and a good carpenter. He 'greatly reduced his brother's legacy of debt' from lands and wives lost to the Old Men and others, and at Butaritari he 'cobbled occasionally on the wood work of the palace.'¹¹

An argument for moral relativism in the reading of this history is clear: any action may be moral given its circumstances. Even the despotic rule of Nakaeia is feared and not hated by his people. But this does not help in understanding the fate of his younger brother. Perhaps here is an argument for the aesthetic interpretation of the facts as they are given by Stevenson: morality in history depends on the perfect fit of deeds and circumstances. The same murders that are ordered by Nakaeia have less moral force when they are carried out under the terrified authority of Nantemat'. Consequently, while Nakaeia reposes, 'saved' in his grave, Tebureimoa is 'damned' to an after-life of opium and Christianity.

The nuanced interpretation of a historical problem such as the subdued reign of King Tebureimoa of Butaritari is typical of Stevenson's South Seas writing. As has been described in the previous chapters of the present study, it is the complexity as much as the range of subjects that inspires Stevenson to write a 'Big Book' about the region. In this complexity, he recognises a point of reference for the development of his own understanding about culture, nature, and the interaction between the two, but one of the main conclusions of the present study is that this is not clearly evident from examining only the published work, as critical approaches to his Pacific Islands writing have tended to do in recent years.

This is the first study to take the entirety of Stevenson's 'South Seas' writings seriously and on their own merits, as opposed to consigning them within the huge body of Victorian travel writing. Considered as a generality, they have been regarded as being either too compromised by the conventionality and prejudice of their time or as offering only the cultural reconciliations and glimpses into the future that have been largely accepted today. In opposition to these undemanding and present-oriented

¹⁰ *South Seas*, p. 219.

¹¹ *ibid.*

interpretations of Stevenson's work, this study tries to show at what points, in what ways, and for what reasons the author engages with the anthropological and cultural historical ideas of his contemporaries and his predecessors, and it begins to do so by turning to the enormous textual problems that the South Seas writings present within the body of Stevenson's work.

In chapter 1, accordingly, the manuscript form of Stevenson's original plans for his Big Book is discussed in detail for the first time. The value of the fine-grain textual analysis that is attempted in this chapter is that it presents a minutely historical view of the changes in content made by the author during the early months of travel and writing in the Pacific Islands. In doing so, it helps to clarify the differences between the South Seas book and the Letters for serialisation, and also the commercial and scholarly motivations that interact in the unfolding of Stevenson's plans for writing about the Pacific Islands in general. The differences between the plans and the published text, especially when placed within the context of the scholarly interests and associations that Stevenson maintains during his years in the South Seas, suggest that a significant change has taken place in the tone and the meaning of the work between the original conception and publication. *In the South Seas* cannot, therefore, be regarded as a summary of Stevenson's plans for the Big Book: there is no symmetry between the idea and its realization. While some of the implications of this discovery are explored in the following chapters of the study, one of the immediate conclusions that may be drawn at this point is that Stevenson's plans exceed the accepted critical image of the author. The extent of his knowledge of scientific and cultural life relating to the South Seas has hardly been considered by commentators, and the absence of modern historical interpretations of Stevenson's work only supports this argument.

The second chapter continues the work of the first by further examining Stevenson's nascent plans, this time in the area of photography. Initially, the method of analysis used is descriptive in order to present a thorough historical context in which to examine Stevenson's and his family's interest in photography. Amateur photographers, and photographs in general, are not favoured by anthropologists during the time of Stevenson's Pacific travels. However, colonial and exploratory photography is shown to be an expressive

form that quickly develops traits that are borrowed from scientific theory. The collection of South Seas photographs taken by the Stevenson family during their travels has been hardly examined except, as with the present study, through the use of a few examples.¹² What is different about the present study, however, is the additional use of the manuscript of the detailed plan for the presentation of the photographs which is drawn up by Stevenson. With reference to this manuscript, it has become possible to think in a broader way about the nature and purpose of the images, on the basis of the titles given to them and their organisation in a form that is not chronological. In summary, the photographs do not constitute a family album, and, if not directly corresponding to the planned chapters of 'The South Seas', there are nevertheless certain similarities in the tone and content of the images that suggests that they might have developed from the idea for the book. The conclusion of the analysis of a selection of the photographs, furthermore, supports the argument of later chapters of the study. Stevenson, here with the assistance of his family, is not interested in reaffirming anthropological stereotypes, but in questioning them by bringing them into creative juxtaposition with things that are unexpected and surprising. In this respect the remains of the wreck observed at the centre of the image of the trader's house at Penrhyn is just one in a series of survivals that is used by the author to trouble and disrupt the ethnocentric European vision of an untouched or a savage Pacific Islands.

Chapter 3 attempts to fill a gap in the biographical knowledge of Stevenson. By adopting a literary historical approach based largely on close analysis of Stevenson's correspondence in 1888-91, the history of the breakdown of the idea to write 'The South Seas' is examined in detail. In the process it is shown how, contrary to the established biographical narrative, Stevenson never really gives up on the idea for his book, and in 1894 he is largely responsible for resurrecting the Letters as a separate volume of travel for the collected edition of his works. This chapter also explores how Stevenson is, with his wife and Sidney Colvin, to some extent complicit in the breakdown of the text, but it states that the story is complex and relates both

¹² For a different interpretation of the photographs see Colley, *Colonial Imagination*.

to financial and scholarly pressures. To some correspondents, such as Henry James for example, he also reveals how closely he is concerned with the structure and organization of his book. These rare glimpses show a different narrative of the breakdown of the text, which relates purely to Stevenson's acknowledgement of the difficulty of reconciling all of the information that he has collected during his travels into a single volume of work.

In the fourth chapter, extant manuscript versions of the texts that form the main sections of the first and definitive published volume of *In the South Seas*, the Edinburgh Edition, are compared with this edition to examine changes of style and content. The literary techniques that are used to identify and analyse the discrepancy between authorial and editorial versions have been borrowed from Barry Menikoff's earlier study *Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Beach of Falesá': a Study in Victorian Publishing*. As with that work, one of the conclusions of the present study is that stylistic alterations have flattened and simplified the ambiguous narrative tone that Stevenson uses, especially to describe such events as his initial encounter with the Marquesan people at Nukahiva. Combined with several instances of the deliberate suppression of apparently shocking information from the manuscript text, such as passages on cannibalism, and with the removal of large sections discussing scientific and anthropological matters, it is suggested that the editor of the texts has intended to shape it for re-presentation to a specific audience. The changes made to the texts make it an interesting historical document that reveals as much about Victorian publishing as it does about life in the Pacific Islands at the close of the nineteenth century. Far from invalidating the text as a scholarly work, however, the changes call for closer attention to what has been written and a qualified reading of the same based on knowledge of what has been removed.

The significance of the textual and literary historical study of chapters 1-4 is borne out in the interpretation of the South Seas writing that is offered in chapters 5 and 6. Without knowledge of the ways in which Stevenson's image as a writer on Pacific Islands cultures is altered and maintained in this altered form for over a century by the changes made to the South Seas writing, it would not have been possible to show the relevance and depth of his study of the contemporary anthropological concept of cultural survivals. In modern

interpretations, Stevenson's interest in anthropology has been presented, if at all, as typical of the many late-Victorian writers who have been influenced by the work of Edward Burnett Tylor.¹³ In chapter 5 of the present study, Stevenson's own ideas on survivals in culture are discussed and examined alongside Tylor's to highlight the extent of his engagement with the major British theorist of cultural development of his time. The results of this approach have hopefully made the case for Stevenson's inclusion in the history of Victorian anthropological thought. His complex and problematic approach to the question of survivals is also related in this chapter to Aby Warburg's 1895 New Mexico studies into the related question of the reappearance or renewal of pagan aspects of culture into modernity. The links that are drawn between the two writers are used to explore their productive criticism of the concept of survivals. Rather than generalising about the involvement of the author in various established traditions and political discourses, therefore, the aim of this chapter has been to point out new directions for the interpretation of his work.

In chapter 6 the full range of Stevenson's South Seas travel writing is explored to highlight the rich possibilities inherent in the text for a view of culture and of writing about the Other – whether of landscape, custom, belief or any other aspect that is within the author's view. As with the discussion of Stevenson's links to Tylor, Stevenson's work is again examined within the context of the work of a writer whose ideas have an enduring influence on him. The interpretative focus this time is George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and the phenomenological approach to the study of culture. In this chapter, a literary critical approach is first used to show how, by revealing the latent contradictions in describing a subject that is poorly understood by the observer, Stevenson makes an important point about cultural responsibility in writing about the Other. Hardly any interpretation of life in the South Seas that is given by the author is final, and at several points in the writing he questions his own claims to objectivity by pointing to additional information that contradicts his own findings and conclusions. A historical revisiting of the author's troubled encounter with his father about Christian belief is then used

¹³ See for example the discussion in Robert Crawford's, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

to show the important role that Hegel's theory of the antinomies of reason, mediated through a number of nineteenth century Scottish philosophers, has had on Stevenson's conception of the self. It is argued that, far from positing a dual notion of the self, as has been popularly brought to attention in the discourse of the 'double' in Victorian culture, Stevenson considers fragmentation and multiplicity as the defining characteristics of human and cultural identity. Finally, this new cultural perspective is returned to the South Seas writing to bring the significance of the Hegelian influence to bear on Stevenson's interpretation of Pacific Islands cultures. In so doing, it is hoped that Stevenson's writing can now be seen as putting forward a less possessive relationship with the Other, which modern interpreters of travel writing have often failed to acknowledge.

In respecting but turning away from the postcolonial approach of recent years, the Robert Louis Stevenson that is presented in this study of his South Seas travel writing is as much a thinker of cultures as their untroubled narrator. In his work on the Pacific Islands he recognises both the provisionality of writing about foreign cultures and the debt that travel writers must always pay to books of travel and their authors. The position of doubt and questioning which knowledge of this tension produces in the writer is, as has been shown, productive of new meanings and perspectives on the interpretation of culture. Although there is a powerful progressive discourse of culture in Europe during the later nineteenth century, there are also writers who are prepared to question the intellectual and moral foundations of this discourse, and it is among their valuable work that Stevenson's writing on the South Seas belongs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: OLD AND MODERN NAMES OF PACIFIC ISLANDS

c. 1900	Present day
Gilbert Islands / Kingsmill Group Line Islands	Kiribati
Hervey / Cook Group Manahiki Group	Cook Islands
New Caledonia Society Islands	New Caledonia
Samoa / Navigator Group	Western Samoa American Samoa
Sandwich Islands / Eight Islands	Hawaii
Savage Island	Niue
Society Group Marquesas Group Paumotu / Low Archipelago	French Polynesia

**APPENDIX B: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY
THE STEVENSON FAMILY DURING THEIR SOUTH SEAS TRAVELS**

- A1 "Equator", the Schooner
- A2 Butaritari, first sight of
Butaritari, street scene in
Butaritari, little crown prince
Butaritari, Mr. Rick's wharf
Butaritari, boys trading copra
Butaritari, House in
- A3 Butaritari, scenes in
Manihiki Island, street scene
Manihiki Island, shelling copra
- A4 Butaritari, King, wife + guards
Butaritari, returning from dance house
Butaritari, starting dance in open air
- A5 Butaritari, Interior of native house
- A6 Butaritari, the church
Butaritari, Hawaiian missionaries
- A7 Butaritari, King, Queen, army + artillery
Butaritari, view of great dance house
Prison Island
- A8 Butaritari, mysterious tomb in interior
Butaritari, RLS in interior
- A9 Butaritari, general view
Butaritari, two friends in
Nantokei and Natakauti
- A10 Butaritari, general view
Butaritari, two friends in
Nantokei and Natakauti
- A11 Butaritari, general view
- A12 Butaritari, men climbing coca nut tree
Butaritari, canoe with sail set
Gilbert Island canoe, a
Prison Island
- A14 Butaritari, interior of "Sans Souci", at
Butaritari, Gilbert Island girl
Gilbert Island girl
"Sans Souci", interior of bar room
- A15 Butaritari, native dance
Dancing girls
- A16 Butaritari, native dance
- A17 Butaritari, native dance
Little Makin Island, chief of
- A18 Apiang Island, Island
Apiang Island, 1. a negroe's trading house
- A19 Manihiki Island, break in
Manihiki Island, wreck of "Jenny Walker"
- A20 Manihiki Island, scene

- Manihiki Island, speak-house
- A21 Apiang Island, looking across lagoon
Manihiki Island, wicker work church
- A22 Apiang Island, Street in
Apiang Island, Mrs. S. being carried ashore
Apiang Island, interior of Chinese trader's house
- A23 Apiang Island, yard with ex-Queen of Butaritari
Butaritari, ex-Queen of
- A24 Apemama, writing history
Apemama, Too (?) Bay
Apemama, King's Carriage
- A25 Apemama, Slave girls presented to RLS
Devil work tree etc.
Mesmerists
Slave girls presented to RLS
Stevenson being mesmerized
- A26 Apemama, King saying goodbye
Apemama, King of
Tembinoka, king
- A27 Apemama, King of
Tembinoka, king and adopted son
- A28 Apemama, House of King's brother
Apemama, Group of King's wives
- A29 Apemama, King of
Apemama, Group of King's wives
Tembinoka, king and adopted son
- A30 Apemama, King of
Tembinoka, king and adopted son
- A30 Apemama, King of
Apemama, Council of war
Apemama, Army of
Council of war; apemama
- A31 Apemama, Army of
Apemama, Stevenson's Camp
Stevenson's Camp, Apemama
- A32 Apemama, Equator Town
Equator Town
- A33 Apemama, Equator Town
Equator Town
- A34 Apemama, King of
Apemama, Stevenson's Camp
Apemama, King of diving with S's party
- A35 Apemama, Slave girls presented to RLS
Slave girls presented to RLS
- A37 Apemama, interior of
Apemama, a trade gale
Trade gale, a
- A38 Apemama, mesmerists + medicine men
Apemama, Devil-work tree etc.
Devil work tree etc.

- Mesmerists
 A39 Apemama, Devil-work tree etc.
 Devil work tree etc.
 Apemama, Ocean beach
 Mesmerists
 Stevenson being mesmerized
 A40 Apemama, great dance in
 A41 Apemama, great dance in
 A42 Apemama, great dance in
 A43 Apemama, great dance in
 Apia, king's house in
 Samoa, king's house in Apia
 A44 Samoa, houses in
 Samoa, carrying canoe
 A45 Matautu (?)
 Samoa, houses in
 Samoa, carrying canoe
 Matautu (?)
 Samoa, scene in
 A46 Samoa, scene in
 Samoa, native girls
 Samoa, Chief's daughter with hunchback
 Samoa, girl's making kava
 A47 Samoa, native girls
 Samoa, girls making kava
 Samoa, dancing girls
 Samoa, playing cricket
 A48 Samoa, native girls
 A49 Apia, peculiar dress in
 Samoa, peculiar dress in Apia
 A50 Samoa, native
 Samoa, woman
 Samoans
 A51 Samoa, houses in
 Samoa, native
 Samoans
 A52 Samoa, scene in
 A53 Fagaloa
 Samoa, Fagaloa
 A54 Apia, native house near
 A55 Samoa, native girls
 Samoans
 A56 Samoa, native girls
 Samoans
 A57 Samoa, dancing girls
 A58 Malua, missionary college at
 Missionary college at Malua
 Samoa, dancing girls
 A59 Lufi-lufi, scene near
 Samoa, scene in

- A60 Samoa, mission college at Malaua
Fagaloa
- A61 Samoa, Fagaloa
Lufi-lufi, Tamasese's house in
Tamasese, his house
Tamesese, portrait
- A62 Saliofata, native clergyman's house in
Samoa, native clergyman's house
Tamasese, surrounded by chiefs
- A63 Fagaloa
Samoa, missionary whale boat
- A64 Fagaloa, natives welcoming party
Saliofata, evening meal at
Saliofata, street in
- A64^a Fagaloa
- A64^b Fagaloa
- A65 Fagaloa, waterside path near
Lufi-lufi, scenes
- A66 Fagaloa, bridge near
- A67 "Equator", the Schooner
"Equator", the Schooner
Kingsmill Islands, Cruising amongst
- A68 Kingsmill Islands, Cruising amongst
- A69 Tahiti, Tautira in
Tautira, view of
- A70 Tahiti, girl drinking
Tahiti, street in
- A71 Marquesan chief in costume
- A72 Tahiti, lake in
Tahiti, stream in
- A73 Tahiti, native house in
- A74 Tahiti, Tarava's harbour
Taravas, the harbour
- A75 Morea, Society Islands
Society Islands, Morea
Tahiti, mountain peaks of
Tahiti, general view
- Book B. 1
- B1 Anaho Bay
"Casco" boat
Coming aboard
Kooamua
Pain of tatooing
Tatooing, pain of etc.
- B2 Kana nui
Marquesas Islands
Marquesan dance
Reglei's baby
- B3 ? Reeve + family
Paaena, wife + adopted son

- B4 Casco at her moorings
? Reeve house
Paaena, kitchen
Tattooed Marquesan
Tattooing, pain of etc.
- B5 Hakailai Moipu
Moipu retainers
- B6 Moipu, house and retainers
Paaena, house + family
- B7 Moipu and Paaena
Moipu, the captain + Lloyd
- B8 Nuns and their school
Orens, Pere, before church + group of Catholics
Women in tapa
- B9 Church, Pere Orens before
Lagoonside weighing copra
Oceanside scene
Orens, Pere, before church
- B11 Anema (?) on High St, Fakarava
Donat, interior governor + population
Donat on steps of government house
Fakarava, high street in
- B12 Cocoa nuts, climbing
Fakarava, the Pool
Port, the, Fakarava
- B13 Captain Tom Smith's Cutter the Casco
Captain Tom Smith's house
- B14 Calaboose, Fakarava
Fakarava, the graveyard
Graveyard Fakarava
Pastoral visit
- B15 Diplomatic relations
House of the widow, corpse within
Taviera Mahinni
Widow and her friend
- B16 Behind the village Tautira
Casco at her moorings
Inside the Bar Tautira
River mouth, Tautira
Tautira, River mouth
Tautira, Inside the Bar
Tautira, Behind village
- B17 Behind the village Tautira
House in Tautira
Inside the Bar Tautira
Tautira, inside the Bar
Tautira, Behind village
Tautira, House in
Tautira, view of
- B18 Behind the village Tautira

- Chief's open dining room Tautira
Tautira, Behind village
Tautira, Chief's dining room
- B19 Ori's daughter's birdcage house
- B20 Leaf sail of a canoe
Protestant Church
- B22 Chief on Ori's front step
Ori and wife
Stevenson and Lloyd
Tehea, Chief's sister, Princess Mōe etc.
- B23 Princess Mōe
- B24 Behind the village Tautira
Protestant Church
Tautira, Behind village
- B27 Tahiti, house + breadfruit trees
- B28 Group of Tahitians
Tahitians, group of
- B29 Papeete – the seaport of Tahiti
Tahiti, seaport of
- B30 Tahitian scene
- B31 Leg of Vaikehu with tatooin
Marquesan woman dancing
Moipu dancing
Tatooin, pain of etc.
Vaikehu, leg of, with tatooin
- B32 Marquesas Islands, scene in
- B33 Marquesas Islands, native house
Native house, Marquesas Islands
- B34 Borabora
Island of Borabora
Paumotu Islands, scene in
- B35 Borabora
Island of Borabora
Michel, Frere
- B36 Group with RLS and others
- B37 Fakarava, the graveyard
Graveyard Fakarava
Stevenson and Lloyd
- B38 Marquesan God
Michel, Frere
Present to Louis Stevenson
- B39 Group with RLS and others
- B40 Feast given by King
- B43 Stevenson's house
- B44 Stevenson's house
- B45 Stevenson's house
- B46 Stevenson's house
- B47 Stevenson's house
- B48 Stevenson's house
- B49 Tautira, view of

B50	Leper settlement
B53	Lloyd Osbourne in Chief's dress
B54	Lloyd Osbourne in Chief's dress
B (unclear)	Triopae (possibly 'tiaporo' – 'devil')
C1	Union on Tokelau Islands
C2	Union on Tokelau Islands
C3	Girl in Sulphur fuming box Sulphur fuming box, girl in
C4	Girl in Sulphur fuming box Sulphur fuming box, girl in
C4 ^a	Girl in Tokelau Islands Tokelau Islands, girl in
C5	Union on Tokelau Islands
C5 ^a	Girl in Tokelau Islands Girl's costume Tokelau Islands, girl in
C6	King of Manihiki
C7	Manihiki natives Manihiki dances
C7 ^a	Stevenson, Mrs, and native lady
C8	Penryn Island
C9	Penryn Island
C10	Penryn Island
C11	Penryn Island
C12	Penryn Island Trader's house
C13	Penryn Island Trader's house
C14	Penryn Island
C15	Little girls singing Little Boys stowing pearl shell Penryn Island
C16	Suwarrow Island
C17	Suwarrow Island
C18	Avenai Suwarrow island Suwarrow Island
C19	Old armoury
C20	Fort, Suwarrow Fort
C21	Fort, Suwarrow Fort
C22	Gente Hermosa Island
C23	Gente Hermosa Island
C24	Black boys setting sail Boat getting alongside vessel
C25	Canoe in Ellice Island Daily scenes of island loading Ellice Island, canoe in Pretty girl in Ellice Island
C26	Ellice Island Ellice Island, pretty girl in

- C27 Pretty girl in Ellice Island
 C28 New Caledonia, scene in
 Nassau Island, settlement of
 New Caledonia, scene in
 C29 Majuro
 Marshall Islands, Majuro
 C30 Majuro
 Marshall Islands, Majuro
 C31 Majuro, one of the kings of
 C32 Majuro, one of the kings of
 C34 Kingsmill Islands, King Tembinoka & suite
 C35 Kingsmill Islands, King Tembinoka & suite
 Marshall Islands, scene in
 Majuro
 C36 Tembinoka, king, a few wives of
 Kingsmill Islands, King Tembinoka & suite
 Kuria Island, weighing copra
 C37 Nukanau Island, a trader on
 Tom Day, a trader on Nukanau Is.
 C38 Nukanau Island, a trader on
 Tom Day, a trader on Nukanau Is.
 Trader, white and family
 C39 Savage Island, boy from
 C43 "Janet Nicholl", officers review of
 C44 Apemama girl
 Devil box, Tembinoka's wives with
 Ellice Island native village
 German labour-brig
 Natabetea, Apemama girl
 Peru Island, Vallers + wife
 Tahiti, general view
 Tembinoka, king, a few wives of

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