Building Friendships:

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The Beach of Falesá and *The Ebb-Tide*

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Between alighting in Samoa in 1887-8 and dying of a brain haemorrhage in 1894, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote extensively about his experiences in the South Pacific. Described as one of the most moralistic writers of the late nineteenth century,[1] his Pacific fiction certainly lives up to the claim – earned from the stories he wrote while living in Scotland, England and America – that he was fascinated by the human propensity to behave according to the dictates of civility and savagery, as well as good and evil.[2]

Stevenson's use of the Pacific as a theatre for studying human behaviour stemmed from his recognition that for some Europeans, it represented a way to escape the more pernicious effects of the bourgeois lifestyle and the European class system, while for others it represented an opportunity to exploit a vulnerable race of people and the region's resources. Arguably it is in the two novellas composed right at the end of his life – *The Beach of Falesá* (1893) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1893-4) – that we see his ideas about civility and savagery being most vividly played out in fiction. Reading these stories it becomes clear that Stevenson believed many Europeans were not the civilized creatures they claimed to be; rather their violent and greedy behaviour, together with their lack of restraint and incapacity for feeling, rendered them more like the stereotypical ignoble savages who as a result of missionary and imperialist propaganda had become a mainstay of Victorian fiction.[3] Indeed, it was Stevenson's view that if anyone deserved the title 'civilized' it was not the Europeans who were in the Pacific to save souls or make money, but the large number of islanders whose lives and lifestyles they were inadvertently destroying in the process.

This was not the first time that Stevenson had challenged the values that many Victorians had come to attach to the concepts of civility and savagery. He had used this same idea for his novel *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), only here it was the equation between civility and adherence to middle class norms that he questioned, and not the automatic connection between civility and white skin.[4] When he was writing that novel Stevenson seems to have accepted the idea – prevalent in European scientific and aesthetic circles – that both a whole people as well as single individuals could revert to a state of savagery in a short time;[5] but he also seems to have held to the belief that the middle classes had never really ceased to be savage, remaining at heart remarkably 'brutish' and 'selfish' in their habits and attitudes. Moreover, the increasing emphasis that modern society placed on capitalism and the ideology of individualism encouraged these

traits. Similarly with the Pacific stories; it is the white races that emerge as the most heartless and uncaring, suggesting that ultimately for Stevenson true civility was not a trait commonly found in European society, but rather in those island societies that promoted communal values and sociability. Many of these same ideas appeared in the book that Stevenson wrote not long after he and his wife Fanny settled permanently in that part of Samoa known as Vailima and only two years before he wrote his last two pieces of short fiction.[6] Before I examine the stories where he gave vent to his ideas on the twin concepts of civility and savagery I want to refer to this book because I believe that it helps explain from where Stevenson obtained his idea that the capitalist-based form of imperialism being practised in the Pacific was not just costing lives and destroying whole cultures, it was also bringing moral disrepute to Europeans generally.

In 1888 Stevenson and Fanny undertook a voyage to the Marquesas, the Paumotus, the Gilbert Islands, and Honolulu, the result of which was the collection of letters and essays that Stevenson titled *In the South Seas* (1889).[7] Much criticism has focused on the damage done by this book to Stevenson's reputation as a writer of romance, but what interests me here is not the book's adoption of a more journalistic or anthropological style even though as critics have rightly observed these were new to him; it is rather what it reveals of how Stevenson was using the terms civility and savagery in this last, Pacific-based, phase of his writing career, and of his attempts to understand the nature of Polynesian society and the way it was coping under the impact of European imperialism and capitalism especially. Above all, I want to establish what to his mind constituted the relative virtues and shortcomings of the Polynesian lifestyle and how these stood when measured against the moral values of so-called modern, enlightened Europeans.

The very first essay of *In the South Seas* is titled 'Making Friends' and its main contention is that as a native-born Scots person Stevenson felt he had an advantage over most other Europeans when it came to appreciating and understanding Polynesian peoples, society and customs. This was because in his view the two cultures shared a number of important characteristics. The first is a linguistic feature – their common elision of medial consonants and 'that prevalent Polynesian sound, the so-called catch, written with an apostrophe, and often or always the gravestone of a perished consonant'.[8] Stevenson's explanation for this mutual feature is that both populations had become isolated at a vital stage in their past, in turn causing the mispronunciation to become the rule. Ironically it was this same phenomenon of isolation that Darwinian theorists were seizing upon to explain why it was that the Pacific cultures had not progressed.

The second is their common grounding in what Stevenson himself called 'savage' customs and superstitious beliefs. Stevenson says, 'When I desired any detail of savage custom, or of superstitious belief, I cast back in the story of my fathers, and fished for what I wanted with some trait of equal barbarism'.[9] According to Stevenson, the effect was immediate: 'the native was no longer ashamed; his sense of kinship grew warmer, and his lips were opened'.[10] Nor do the similarities end there, extending to the gloomy qualities of the landscape on a stormy night:

And then I turned shoreward, and high squalls were over head; the mountains loomed up black; and I could have fancied I had slipped ten thousand miles away and was anchored in a Highland loch; that when the day came, it would show pine, and heather, and green fern, and roots of turf sending up the smoke of peats; and the alien speech that should greet my ears must be Gaelic, not Kanaka.[11]

The effect of these parallels is to deny the idea of a natural hierarchy of races and cultures between Scots and Pacific Islanders; but it is also to show the importance of friendships to the long-term survival of the island cultures of the Pacific. I will return to this idea of friendships and their importance for saving the Polynesian lifestyle shortly. For the moment I want to look more closely at how Stevenson set about undermining the idea of a racial hierarchy and why this was important to his ideas about civility and savagery.

At the time Stevenson wrote *In the South Seas,* the mounting influence of Darwinian thinking strengthened and elaborated earlier belief in a natural hierarchy of races.[12] In *On The Origin of Species* (1859) Darwin had argued that all life forms were caught up in the struggle for existence and that only those species that could adapt to their changing environments would flourish. By 1871 he had extended this same theory to humans and introduced the further idea that the so-called 'civilized' races, by which he meant the Caucasian or white-skinned races, would prevail in the contest for survival because being more highly evolved they would 'almost certainly extermi-nate, and replace, the [weaker] savage races'.[13]

The essays in Stevenson's *In the South Seas* suggest that while he himself accepted the view that many Pacific Islands were undergoing a process of depopulation he did not accept the social-Darwinist explanation that the decline had an evolutionary cause or that it was inevitable. Instead, he pointed to the destabilizing impact of cultural loss, linking the growing despondency of many islanders to the disruption of pre-contact customs and beliefs. Stevenson noted that varying groups of islanders responded differently to radically altered circumstances, the chapter 'Depopulation' linking Samoan resilience, pleasure and strength of tradition:

> The Polynesian falls easily into despondency: bereavement, disappointment, the fear of novel visitations, the decay or proscription of ancient pleasures, easily incline him to be sad; and sadness detaches him from life. The melancholy of the Hawaiian and the emptiness of his new life are striking; and the remark is yet more apposite to the Marquesas. In Samoa, on the other hand, perpetual song and dance, perpetual games, journeys and pleasures, make an animated and smiling picture of the island life.[14]

For Stevenson it is the rapid loss of customs and traditions that explains why the Polynesian race was dwindling. 'Upon the whole, the problem seems to me to stand thus: – where there have been fewest changes, important or unimportant, salutary or hurtful, there the race survives'.[15]

The book reveals that Stevenson attributed at least some of the blame to those evangelical missionaries who had said to the islanders 'thou shall not dance, you shall not sing, you shall not smoke, under the possible penalty of eternal damnation in the next world'.[16] However, he also blamed the European desire to make money at any cost since this involved exploiting the islanders' weaknesses. Here Stevenson singles out some of the island traders for heavy criticism, especially those who dealt in hard liquor and useless consumer goods.[17] But he was also critical of those copra plantation owners who having imported Chinese labourers to work their trees then turned a blind eye to the large quantities of opium these men were peddling to Islanders.

Given that the missionaries and mercantile capitalism were profoundly different from anything that had gone before, it was hard to see how a people with communal values and little experience of money could survive. Certainly the motivating forces of money and material wealth that seemed to drive Europeans were not something that islanders were familiar with; nor was seeking religious converts or the individual wielding power for the sake of it something that they had been taught to admire. Rather their view of power was that it was inherited and therefore not the right of anyone, and when it was exercised it was usually for the good of the whole society, seldom for the individual.[18] The cultural explanation for population decline that Stevenson proffered had important implications for European claims to civility because it meant that such decline could no longer be put down to the inexorable forces of nature, but to the fecklessness of many of the Europeans who had decided to make the Pacific their stomping ground. If Stevenson had a main purpose in writing this book it was precisely to demonstrate this. On the other hand, Stevenson was also at pains to show that not every aspect of traditional Polynesian society answered to civility either. While in the Gilbert Islands he had chanced to see two women rolling around on the grass, the uppermost one with her teeth locked in her adversary's face, and the other one impotently fighting and scratching.[19] Stevenson was later to learn that it was 'correct manners for a jealous man to hang himself, but a jealous woman has a different remedy – she bites her rival'.[20] Having had time to reflect upon the incident, Stevenson wrote:

> The harm done was probably not much, yet I could have looked on death and massacre with less revolt. The return of these primeval weapons, the vision of man's beastliness, of his ferality, shocked in me a deeper sense than that with which we count the cost of battles [...] Crime, pestilence, and death are the day's work; the imagination readily accepts them. It instinctively rejects, on the contrary, whatever shall call up the image of our race on its lowest terms, as the partner of beasts, beastly itself, dwelling pell-mell and hugger-mugger, hairy man with hairy woman, in the caves of old.[21]

What Stevenson is lamenting is the momentary loss of those human traits that have enabled humans to rise above their brute passions and instincts. In a civil society those instincts are discouraged and replaced with ones that facilitate social cooperation, whereas in a savage society they are allowed to reign unchallenged, with the result that conflicts can only be resolved through

brute force.

As with personal disputes so with the larger cultural struggle taking place across the Pacific: it was Stevenson's view that unless Europeans developed a better understanding and knowledge of Pacific cultures, they would rip the people and their cultures apart. According to him, such an understanding could best be achieved through friendship. The whole point about friendship and why it seemed so important to Stevenson in the context of the Pacific is that it protected against annihilation by highlighting people's similarities and downplaying their differences; indeed, it is precisely because friendship is based on liking and respect that it tolerates and even values differences. However, for Stevenson both friendship and civility rely on the cultivation of those higher instincts that bind people together. Highest of all, because it impels people to momentarily put themselves in the place of the other, is the trait of sympathy.

Here we touch upon the ideas of that towering figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, David Hume. Even though Stevenson may not have been thinking of Hume directly when he penned his book, the connection is a useful one to make since both men belonged to a tradition of thinking that stressed the importance of sentiment to the highest forms of human behaviour.[22] In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), Hume described sympathy as the ability to feel with others while still recognising that the feelings are those of the other person. Thus he says, 'Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathize with the passions and sentiments of others, these movements . . . are conceiv'd to belong to another person'.[23] He also writes about sympathy as though it was a disease that one could catch from others, as when he says, 'A cheerful countenance infuses sensible complacency and serenity into my mind; as an angry or sorrowful one throws a sudden damp upon me'.[24] He adds that the fact of visible physical resemblance 'must very much contribute to make us enter into the sentiments of others; and embrace them with facility and pleasure'.[25]

According to Hume the closer we are to a person both in terms of space, kinship or affection the more likely we are to empathise with them. But this doesn't preclude the idea of there being a common human bond between people that renders it possible to feel empathy for strangers or even enemies, as when he says, 'Now 'tis obvious, that nature has preserv'd a great resemblance among all human creatures, and that we never remark any passion or principle in others, of which, in some degree or other, we may not find a parallel in ourselves'.[26] It is this ability to rise above our own interests and to feel sorrow, compassion and pity for people who are entirely different that we see repeatedly exercised by Stevenson in his account of the people of the Pacific, and never more so than when he refers to the feelings of sorrow and pity he felt for the lepers of Kona, the solitary and penniless islanders like the man Tari who was shunned by his community because he was injured, and the poor simple folk of the Marquesas for 'whom death was coming in like a tide'.[27]

Significantly, Hume argued for the role of emotion or sentiment in the development of the moral capacity; after all it is only by imagining ourselves in the place of the people whom we are hurting or harming that we can glimpse the pain we are causing others and hence feel bad about it.[28] At the other extreme, Kant argued that it was reason that formed the basis of the moral capacity. Reason, in freeing the self from the control of the passions, allows for order and peace to reign in a person's consciousness. However, according to Hume, the problem with allowing only reason to shape moral thought is that emotions like sympathy get left out, with the result that not only are people unable to imagine what others are feeling, but their sense of being accountable for the pain and suffering caused to others, is also undermined.[29]

For Stevenson it is the adherence to sentiment rather than reason that helped make Polynesians behave in a more civilized fashion than Europeans. The privileging of community values over individual values only added to this. By the same token, the European lack of sentiment and western society's turning away from the cultivation of sympathy helps explain why so many Europeans could occupy other people's lands and destroy their cultures without a semblance of regret. Its emphasis on personal relations meant that what *In the South Seas* had to offer by way of political analysis was limited. Indeed, most critics are of the view that Stevenson saved his political analysis of what was taking place in the Pacific for the small book he wrote next. His *A Footnote to History* (1892), is not so much about the destructive effects of capitalism as a description of the unscrupulous way the three imperial powers, Britain Germany and the USA, set about gaining an economic foothold in Samoa (and in the case of Germany imperial control) by manipulating the temporary squabble that was taking place between the two hereditary chiefs, Maleitoa Laupepa and Mataafa, who were at that time vying for the throne of Samoa. Perhaps realising that sympathy and friendship would have little impact in this scenario Stevenson for once became politically involved, throwing his weight behind firstly Mataafa and then eventually both chiefs in the belief that only through a political union could they stave off the imperial powers.[30] As he notes in the book's closing pages:

> There is one way to peace and unity; that Laupepa and Mataafa should be again conjoined on the best terms procurable.[31]

The Beach of Falesá and *The Ebb-Tide* followed in the wake of *In the South Seas* and *A Footnote to History* and indeed some of the characters were based on real people who feature in these works. [32] Unlike Stevenson's earlier romances, neither story has a happy ending; moreover the main protagonists exhibit significant moral flaws, making it hard for the reader to feel sympathy for them. On the other hand, the cultural relativist idea that the islanders are far from inveterate savages, and indeed manifest many of the traits traditionally associated with civility, is central to these works, as is the idea that Europeans' failed (or sham) civility is behind the islanders' misfortunes and decline. As with *In the South Seas,* it is primarily the capitalism practised by small-time, avaricious traders that forms Stevenson's main target. Nothing illustrates this better than the white characters themselves and how they treat the various island people with whom they come

into contact.

In *The Beach of Falesá* it is Case the white trader whom the reader judges as savage and the islanders who represent the most striking instances of civility. Case not only exploits the island-ers' superstitious propensities in order that they might believe him to be invested with magical powers, but he masquerades as a friend to the new trader Wiltshire all the while robbing him of customers. Wiltshire, the brash working-class narrator of the story, eventually discovers the extent of his so-called friend's treachery, but not before he also discovers that Case has instigated the murders of several other rival traders. Furthermore, all Case's machinations are done for a single purpose – monetary gain, something he hopes to achieve by completely dominating the local trade in copra. But Wiltshire himself is hardly portrayed as the acme of civility: his capac-ity for brute behaviour surfaces most obviously when he finally succeeds in avenging himself on Case. In the section of *The Treatise* where he discusses morals, Hume describes the civilizing process that allows us to live peacefully with one another in spite of our natural greed, saying a civilized person 'adheres to justice from reason; that is, from a calm regard to public good, or to a character with himself and others'.[33] Wiltshire, far from seeking justice through calm, peaceable means and the holding of his passions in check, resorts to rank physical violence. Not only does he launch an unprovoked bodily attack on Case when he meets him on the beach, but when he finally murders him by stabbing him in the stomach, he is not content to plunge the knife in once.

> With that, I gave him the cold steel for all I was worth. His body kicked under me like a spring sofa; he gave a dreadful kind of long moan, and lay still […] When I came to myself […] the first thing I attended was to give him the knife again a half dozen times up to the handle. I believe he was dead already; but it did him no harm and did me good.[34]

Though Wiltshire is portrayed as a man of uncommonly devilish passion with coarse man-ners and a fiery temperament, it would seem he is not beyond all hope. His sobriety and the fact he has a conscience are his saving graces, as is his marriage to the ever gracious and ever gener-ous Uma. It is Uma who shows him the evil of his ways by always treating him with the utmost civility. When he insists upon marrying Uma properly (after an initial sham wedding arranged by Case) it is because her own excellent treatment of him shames him into doing so, and because deep at heart he respects her right as a human being to be treated with dignity and respect. Wilt-shire also has sufficient moral integrity to recognise the intrinsic civility of most of the other natives. For example, it does not take him long to notice the gentlemanly traits of the big chief Mea with whom he finally manages to transact some business. Nor is it just Mea's natural taste for good quality cigars that Wiltshire admires, it is also the liberal manner in which he spends his money, his largesse towards his people generally and his readiness to share jokes with a white man – all signs of courtesy as far as Wiltshire is concerned. The contrast with Case is clear:

> There is no doubt when an island Chief wants to be civil he can do it. I saw the way things were from the word go. There was no call for Uma to say to me: 'He no

'fraid Ese now; come bring copra'. I tell you I shook hands with that Kanaka like as
if he was the best white man in Europe. (*BOF* 58)

Roslyn Jolly has noted that the civilising of Wiltshire is largely achieved through the process
of domestication.[35] It is Uma's inability to cook edible food and to make drinkable tea that insti-
gates this transformation. As he becomes increasingly wedded to domestic and family life Wilt-
shire learns the art of caring for others, the very traits that Uma had shown him from the very
beginning. As Jolly rightly intimates, the domestic sphere is not just a place of the feminine, it is
also the place where traditionally the sympathetic passions are leavened and honed. When we
leave Wiltshire he is still in the process of learning how to be civil, but he still retains some of the
savage, and not the least of this is his desire to be free of the pledge to deal fairly with the natives
that Tarleton forced from him on the day he departed for England.

In *The Ebb-Tide*, Stevenson returned to romance after his one and only attempt at domestic
fiction. But as with *The Beach of Falesá* the romance elements – which include three mismatched
vagabonds who steal a schooner and land on a remote, seemingly deserted island somewhere
near Tahiti – are a superficial wrapping for the moral kernel. The four white men at the centre of
the narrative together represent the extremes of civility and savagery, but they also demonstrate
how easily the one can be mistaken for the other, especially when people are judged only on ap-
pearances.

Attwater, the man who prevails over the pearl industry on the island, demonstrates that
civility or lack of it has little or nothing to do with clothes, manners or class. Attwater is from
the aristocratic classes and like Tarleton, the missionary from *The Beach of Falesá,* he dresses
immaculately in the white uniform of the tropics, yet he is the quintessential brute masquerading
behind the outward face of civility. The phrase 'silken brutality' captures perfectly the disjuncture
between what the three newcomers Herrick, Davis and Huish along with the natives see when
they meet Attwater, and what they get. Critics have remarked on Attwater's similarity to the
character Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1896);[36] both men claim to be civilising the
natives, and yet both turn out to be cruel and greedy tyrants whose underlying motivation is the
riches they can extort from the natives in the form of ivory (Kurtz) and pearls (Attwater). I would
agree that the parallels are sufficiently striking to suggest that Conrad used Attwater as a model
for Kurtz in addition to King Leopold of Belgium; however, I would also argue that there are
important differences, the most fundamental of which is Attwater's lack of feeling or affect. The
fact that Kurtz lives among the natives and takes an African mistress suggests that he at least has
feelings for the natives he enslaves; moreover, his frightful utterance as he expires suggests he dies
haunted by inner demons. Attwater by contrast forms no personal connections with his charges;
nor does he experience any guilt. Rather, he rids himself of all emotion in a bid to become the
supreme master of the island. His essential lack of interest in the natives and their culture is born
out by his cold indifference to their sufferings as one by one they fall ill to the fatal illness that he
himself brought to the island. Timothy Hayes points to the total lack of feeling at his core:

Attwater's [...] identity never seems to have been threatened by his new life in the South Seas. Driven by his own ego and desire for more wealth, Attwater views his island workers as pieces on a chess board that he can manipulate with ease.[37]

Attwater's comments concerning missionary work also reveal much about the man's indelible coldness. When asked by Herrick what brought him to the Pacific he replies,

Many things [...] Youth, curiosity, romance, the love of the sea, and (it will surprise you to hear) an interest in missions. That has a good deal declined [...] They go the wrong way to work; they are too parsonish, too much of the old wife, and even the old apple-wife [...] They think a parsonage with roses, and church bells, and nice old women bobbing in the lanes, are part and parcel of religion. But religion is a savage thing, like the universe it illuminates; savage, cold, and bare, but infinitely strong.[38]

Once again it is the feminine aspects of culture and people, indeed precisely the features traditionally associated with civility that are being rejected here; but not only that – anything remotely sentimental, social or even human. Oliver Buckton observes that Attwater is more interested in exerting control over other people than in making money. Hayes agrees, saying he sees himself as God's representative and uses religion to obtain acolytes – servants or slaves who will worship at his feet. By story's end he has cajoled Davis, the schooner's captain, into staying on the island and becoming a devotee, but once he realises he has failed to similarly seduce Herrick he does not bother to hide his cynicism.

The rapture was all gone from Attwater's countenance; the dark apostle had disappeared; and in his place there stood an easy, sneering gentleman, who took off his hat and bowed. It was pertly done, and the blood burned in Herrick's face. 'What did you mean by that?' he cried. (*ET* 207)

What Attwater meant of course is that his religious fervour was an act designed to trick Herrick into believing he had a special compact with God. As Buckton has pointed out, his preaching is all about power – the building of an empire over which he can reign in uncompromising fashion.[39]

In the story only the natives (and possibly Herrick) qualify as civil. Herrick doesn't drink and he abhors violence. However, unlike Wiltshire, this well-brought up 'gentleman', whose only failing is that he is completely 'incompetent', does not trade with or marry into the native community, but continues all the while to dream of his fiancée in England, and consequently he never comes close to being 'Kanakaised' like Wiltshire. On the other hand, unlike the other Europeans in the story, he is not indifferent to the natives and their plight. On board the schooner, as his companions become increasingly drunk, he spends long nights in sympathetic conversation with Uncle Ned the native cook, who tells him 'his simple and hard story of exile, suffering and injustice among cruel whites' and who in return pronounces him a 'gootch man!' (*ET* 167).

That the story ends on an even more pessimistic note than *The Beach of Falesá* suggests that Stevenson was increasingly of the view that the Pacific was becoming like the atoll – a beautiful but lifeless graveyard, its peoples and cultures stripped bare and pummelled to sand by the essentially indifferent winds coming from Europe. When Herrick finally quits the island, nothing much has changed. Huish is dead, shot by Attwater, who unlike Case is still alive and still exerting a tyrannous influence over the few remaining natives, plus Davis. Herrick's lucky escape might have instilled in him a new-found sense of hope, enough at least to start him dreaming once more about returning to Europe and marrying his fiancée, but we don't know how long this mood will last nor even how realistic is his dream, given that Herrick has never been a man of action. Furthermore, if he did manage to return to Europe, we are left with the realisation that the people of the Pacific would be bereft of one more 'gootch man'.

Unlike the whites the natives are unambiguously civil throughout. It is they who assume the control of the schooner in the drunken Davis' absence and who loyally remain on board even when the stores run out. As Herrick himself remarks, 'They were kindly, cheery, childish souls' (*ET* 168). They are also remarkably religious; indeed, as he remembers the way each brought forth his Bible on a Sunday and read or made to believe to read a chapter, Herrick himself reflects that it was a cutting reproof to compare the islanders and the whites aboard the *Farallone*. This raises the question of Stevenson's much vaunted romanticism. By placing savagery more on the side of Europeans and civility more on the side of Pacific Islanders in these stories, was he being excessively romantic about them at the expense of stressing the Europeans' better traits? Perhaps he was; but he was also suggesting that the Europeans' flaws were the more serious because they were cause large-scale suffering and death. This brings us back to the problem of what Stevenson saw as Europeans' general decline into savagery and the problem this posed not just for Pacific peoples, but also for Europeans themselves.

The two tales together suggest that Stevenson thought the decline of civilized behaviour among Europeans was caused by their constant emphasis on the individual and their equally powerful fetish for money, a development which had lead in turn to the banishing of the sympathetic passions to that corner of the mind associated with feminine weakness and lack of virility. The stories also imply that he thought the desire to dominate other people and cultures that was implicit to imperialism was eating away at Europeans' capacity for moral behaviour; and that unless they could put a stop to this predilection for domination by beginning to value and even learn from the cultures they were doing their best to destroy, this downward moral spiral would continue.

This returns us to the point about Stevenson being one of the most moral writers of his age. Like his friend and contemporary Henry James, he did not write simply to entertain: Stevenson's stories were also aimed at getting readers to ask what constitutes good and bad behaviour

in humans. This is perhaps another way of saying that his move to the Pacific far from bringing a whole new direction to his writing, enabled him to continue studying what was arguably his life long subject – the moral failings as well as strengths of humanity as a whole: only here in the south Pacific he could study it by watching the interactions of two strikingly different and unevenly matched cultures.

NOTES

1   Barry Menikoff, for example, has remarked that 'from the beginning critics have commented, and not always favourably, on an abiding moral element as one of the salient characteristics of Stevenson's fiction'. See his 'Introduction' to *The Complete Stories of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), p. xvii. Jenni Calder writes 'all Stevenson's fiction reveals a preeminent concern with the moral dimensions of man'. See 'Introduction' to Robert Louis Stevenson, *Island Landfalls: Reflections from the South Seas* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1987), p. xvii.

2   Among the scholars who have made this claim is Julia Reid. See her book *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science and the Fin de Siècle* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 6.

3   See for example Michelle McKeown, *Pacific Islands Writing: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa /New Zealand and Oceania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 20.

4   Stephen Arata, 'The Sedulous Ape: Atavism, Professionalism and Stevenson's "Jekyll and Hyde"', *Criticism,* 72.2 (1995), 235-36.

5   Some critics, including Stephen Arata, have linked this concept of savagery to the discourses of atavism and criminality that were circulating at the time. According to Arata, for example, this is how John Addington Symonds described the story in his March 1886 letter to Stevenson, reprinted in Paul Maixner, *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 210-11. See also Donald Lawler, 'Refraining Jekyll and Hyde: Robert Louis Stevenson and the Strange Case of Gothic Science Fiction,' in William Veeder and Gordon Hirsch, eds., *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde After One Hundred Years* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 247-61; Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 65-67; and Marie-Christine Lepps, *Apprehending the Criminal: The Production of Deviance in Nineteenth-Century Discourse* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 205-20.

6   Before he wrote it Stevenson informed his editor of his hopes for the book, saying '[N]obody 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 the civilized'. As Treglown has observed, this implies that he planned to 'incorporate and transcend romance without substituting fiction for fact'. See Jeremy Treglown, 'Introduction', *In the South Seas* by Robert Louis Stevenson (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), p. iv.

7   Treglown explains that the book began as a series of letters but ended up as a book partly about travel and partly of research into island history, custom, belief and tradition. See Treglown, 'Introduction', p. iv, and Michelle Keown's article in this issue of *IJSL*.

8   Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* pp. 14-15.

9   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 15.

10   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 16.

11   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 21.

12   As Julia Reid points out, prior to the late 1880s Darwinism was by no means ubiquitous due to there being 'too many conflicting interpretations' and the continuing influence of Jean-Baptiste's Lamarck's model of evolution 'which hypothesised the importance of environmental stimulus'. *Stevenson, Science and the Fin de Siècle*, p. 7.

13   Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection Relation to Sex* (New York: The Modern Library, 1871), p. 521.

14   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 40.

15   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 41.

16   George Herbert Pembroke, 'The Earl and the Doctor' in *South Sea Bubbles* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1872), p. 160. Quoted in Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 21.

17   One of the most striking (and haunting) examples of the harm that untrammelled capitalism was having on the people of the Pacific that Stevenson describes in his book was the debauched figure of King Tebureimoa of Butaritari in the Gilbert Islands. Both he and his people had rapidly fallen to prey to the cargoes of alcohol white traders were illegally selling to him. Stevenson describes how whenever his addiction took hold (which was frequently), Tebureimoa would lead his subjects on the longest and grossest of drinking sprees, all of which ended in complete dissipation and violence. Not only did Stevenson voice his despair over the harm being done to the Islanders' health by these drinking bouts, but he also remarked that that as more and more islanders joined in so there was a corresponding neglect of family life and the people's traditional customs. See Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, Part Three, Chapter IV 'A Tale of Tapu'.

18   Stevenson found this to be true even of Tembinok the tyrannical king of Apemama in the Gilbert Islands. Tembinok may have used a large Winchester rifle to keep his subjects in order and he may have constantly boasted, 'I got power', but once Stevenson realised that almost everything Tembinok did was aimed at keeping his people safe from the corrupting influences of capitalism, he soon modified his opinion of the man. 'Orderly, sober, and innocent, life flows in the isle from day to day as in a model plantation under a model planter. It is impossible to doubt the beneficence of that stern rule'. Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 324.

19   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 253.

20   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 253.

21   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 254.

22   Stephanie Saint has also made this link, only she explores the extent to which the Scottish Enlightenment's theories of progressive civilization influenced Stevenson's active participation in the on-going racial discourse of his day. See her 'Progress in the Pacific: The "Science of Man" in Stevenson's South Sea Writings', delivered at the 'Locating Stevenson Conference', University of Stirling, 8 July 2010.

23   David Hume, *A Treatise on Hume Nature 1739-40*, eds. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Bk 2 pt 1, sect 11.8, p. 208.

24   Hume, *Treatise,* 2.1.11.2, p. 206.

25   Hume, *Treatise,* 2.1.11.5, p. 207.

26   Hume, *Treatise,* 2.1.11.5, p. 207.

27   Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 41.

28   Hume advocated a higher class of emotions to those associated with brute instinct – what he called the 'strong calm passions'. According to Hume 'strong calm passions' have not just lost their original emotional intensity due to customary habit, and strength of mind, but in being infused with benevolence they allow us to live peacefully with one

another despite our original natural greed. See John P. Wright, *Hume's Treatise on Human Nature: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 227, 231.

29   Hume makes the point that feelings like pity, which we associate with sympathy, are based on the imagination and not reason. See Wright, p. 210. He further writes that reason is concerned with establishing what is real or truthful and 'it is not pretended, that a judgment of this kind, either in its truth or falsehood, is attended with virtue or vice' (*Treatise* 3.1.1.8, p. 298).

30   For a much more thorough analysis of Stevenson's book and the political arguments he mounted therein, see Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination*, pp. 136-153.

31   Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1996), p. 155.

32   Buckton has also noted the way Stevenson recycled the events and characters of *In the South Seas* for these stories. He notes for example that the 'frail and pretty' island that Herrick and his companions stumble across while making away with the stolen schooner has a predecessor in the Fakarava atoll – one of the eight islands of the Paumotus which Stevenson visited and which he thought was strangely delicate and empty. See Oliver S. Buckton, *Cruising with R. L. Stevenson: Travel, Narrative and the Colonial Body* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), pp. 157-59.

33   Hume, 'A Dissertation on the Passions', in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, eds. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans Green and Co, 1898), vol 2, section 5, para 3-4, p. 162.

34   Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Beach of Falesá* in *South Sea Tales*, ed. Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1996), p. 228. This text is hereafter cited as *BOF*.

35   Roslyn Jolly, 'Stevenson's Sterling Domestic Fiction, "The Beach of Falesá"', *The Review of English Studies,* 50.200 (1999), 463-82 (p. 475).

36   See Jolly, 'Introduction', p. xviii, and Timothy Hayes, 'Colonialism in R.L. Stevenson's South Seas Fiction: "Child's Play" in the Pacific', *English Literature in Transition* 52.2 (2009): 160-181 (p. 173).

37   Hayes, p. 177.

38   Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Ebb-Tide* in *South Sea Tales*, ed. Roslyn Jolly, p. 204. This text is hereafter cited as *ET*.

39   Buckton speculates that the figure of Attwater was modelled on Tembinok, the authoritarian and tyrannical king of Apemama. See Buckton, pp.164 and 170-171. I agree that these two men are similar in many regards, but I would also argue that this overlooks the fact that the latter was a man of strong sentiment, as indicated by his words on the evening before the Stevensons' departure. '"Last night I no can peak; too much here", laying his hand upon his bosom'. Stevenson, *In the South Seas,* p. 346.