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"IT LOOKS LIKE A LAMPLIT VICIOUS
FAIRY LAND BEHIND ME".

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AND SCOTLAND.

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"IT LOOKS LIKE A LAMPLIT VICIOUS FAIRY LAND BEHIND ME."

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AND SCOTLAND.

This thesis concerns a man and his home country, exploring the physical, the emotional and the imaginative bonding of the two. The man is Robert Louis Stevenson. A frail, consumptive novelist, poet and Scot, who transcended his infirmities to create romantic heroes of magnificent adventures, and transcended his self-imposed exile by setting them amidst the heather. The country is Scotland, a country which nurtured and debilitated, inspired and repelled Stevenson. It was also one in which he was ultimately unable to survive.

Stevenson was not solely a Scottish writer, just as he is not solely a children's writer. His work does reflect his peripatetic life, but the purpose of this thesis is to focus upon his Scottish fiction. It will argue that it was in these works that his imagination and his artistic skills fused best.

Scotland's influence upon Stevenson will be seen as twofold. Firstly, the geographical and historical impressions which were made upon him, and secondly, the traditions of superstion which so characterised its people.

A study of Stevenson's non-fictional portrait of Edinburgh will be made to elucidate his continued impulse to write about Scotland and what it meant to be Scottish.

Stevenson's Scottish fiction will be shown as far more than the laments of a homesick ex-pat. In recognising the viciousness of his fairy land, perceiving the skull beneath the skin, Stevenson gave to his fiction and his Scotland a richness and vitality which might not have been possible had he been a comfortable resident of a comfortable Edinburgh house.

"And here afar

Intent on my own race and place, I wrote."

"IT LOOKS LIKE A LAMPLIT VICIOUS FAIRY LAND BEHIND ME."

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AND SCOTLAND

ADRIAN STEWART McGLYNN

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Source Material:

Unless stated otherwise, all quotes and references from Stevenson's work are taken from the Tusitala Edition (London 1924).

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CHAPTER 1

"Thoughts of that land revisit him"

INTRODUCTION

> Thoughts of that land revisit him; he sees
> The eternal mountains beckon, and awakes
> Yearning for that far home that might have been. (1)

Robert Louis Stevenson endured a lifetime of yearning, principally for better health and for a suitable home. He strove to find the former by leading an almost nomadic existence, travelling across the world for the therapeutic benefits of mountain air, Mediterranean sun, sea air, and finally the idyllic climate of the South Seas. In his quest for health, he ironically opposed his quest for a home, and ultimately settled on the other side of the world from the country of his birth, Scotland. A prevalent tone in his poems, letters, short stories and even novels, was the desire and need for "that far home that might have been". (2) That distant home, which by 1893, he realised could never again be his physical home, was Scotland. S.R. Crockett received a letter from Stevenson in May 1893 which predicted the future with pitiful accuracy and left no doubt about Stevenson's vision of Scotland as his "far home":

> I shall never set my foot upon the heather. Here I am until I die [Vailima] and here will I be buried. The word is out, and the doom written. (3)

Stevenson's doom was to be beset with thoughts about a home to which his physical health prevented him from returning. Scotland was the "bright island" of his poem, 'A Visit from the Sea', "where he feared to touch". (4) It was much more than patriotic yearning which filled Stevenson's mind. When he lived in Scotland, he had railed against the place and looked

forward to leaving it. He had also sought to trace his ancestry, hoping to find that he was related to a Highland clan. The duality of his relationship with Scotland began in him before travel abroad became compulsory. For a man who led one of the most widely-travelled lives of the century, Stevenson's firm recognition of Scotland as his true home was a striking characteristic.

Robert Louis Stevenson did not write only about Scotland. The breadth and versatility of his work reflected his well-travelled life. Works such as Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes, The Silverado Squatters, The Ebb-Tide and The Beach of Falesa owed their existence to his various journeys and first-hand perceptions of different cultures. However, Stevenson deserves to be recognised primarily as a Scottish writer, despite his life of travel and his fiction of other places. His depiction of foreign 'fairy lands' was an inevitable response to his life. It would have been impossible for Stevenson's artistic temperament not to have responded to the 'new world' in which he travelled. The surprising aspect of his life was the persistent need he felt to write about Scotland, despite the gulf of time and place which separated him from his subject. His Scottish works, therefore, are part of Stevenson's mystery, which his Spanish, American or South Seas fiction did little to unravel. The mystery of Stevenson lay with his problematic yearning for Scotland, and the complexity of his relationship with a "home that might have been". (5).

Stevenson's perceptions of Scotland were not all made from a geographical distance. One of his first publications was Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes (1878) which presented Edinburgh in an ambivalent light of loyalty suffused with criticism. Stevenson's portraits of Scotland were consistent in their ambivalence. He avoided romanticising the country to the exclusion of reality. His descriptions of the country were similar to the style of his fiction, which Edmund Gosse found so appealing because of its "human" nature:

> It is certainly much more human and convincing... the persons have stomach aches and sore throats and have not cast-iron physiques that feel nothing. (6)

Edinburgh's streets may have seemed to be those of a distant fairy land to a home-sick Edinburgh emigrant, but Stevenson was always aware of the vicious aspect of the city which meant that he could never return. This understanding was as evident in his work written in Scotland, as that which was produced from elsewhere. This consistent attitude deserves analysis, for it leads to a better understanding of his Scottish fiction. The great gap between himself and his home did not soften his criticisms of Scotland,... but actually served to strengthen his awareness of the danger, the harshness and the suffering in that 'fairy land'.

Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850, the son of a well-known lighthouse designer and engineer. His father's success meant that the family lived in the comfortable and

fashionable area of Edinburgh's New Town. It also meant that Robert Louis Stevenson could be educated at the Edinburgh Academy and then at Edinburgh University. It was originally intended that Stevenson should pursue his father's profession, and when he was only a boy, he was made to suffer the hardships of touring Scottish lighthouses with his father. These tours cannot have been good for his health, but they did reveal a talent in him which had little to do with lighthouse building. In 1868, he was taken to Wick, where he made a report on storm damage which should have suggested to Thomas Stevenson that his son would choose a life of writing before a life of engineering:

> The roadway is torn away, cross-heads, broken planks tossed here and there, planks gnawn and mumbled as if a starved bear had been trying to eat them, planks with spales lifted from them as if they had been dressed with a rugged plane... I felt the ground beneath me quail. (7)

At university, Robert Louis Stevenson read law, but made it clear that he had little interest in the subject. He was known for his odd clothes and his 'bohemian' life of drinking, writing, smoking and idling. His lack of respect for authority was also evident, and a major argument with his father followed the discovery that he was a member of the society whose first rule was that the members should disregard everything that their parents had taught them! However, in July 1875 he passed his law finals and was called to the Scottish Bar. He celebrated this occasion in fine style, driving through the city in an open carriage shouting his success to everyone. This enthusiasm was not followed by a

distinguished legal career. Apart from a brass plate outside Heriot Row, and his habit of walking with the other barristers in Edinburgh's great hall, he made no effort to further his legal career. His rejoicing in the open carriage in 1875 was to celebrate the relief of completing a course which had bored him for so long. He had never intended to devote his life to the law.

In 1871, Stevenson had resolved to pursue a literary career and once he had satisfied his parents by being called to the Bar, he felt free to fulfil his personal ambitions. The rest of his life was to be one of travel and writing. In 1879, he went to America, where he married Fanny Osbourne. He spent some time in America, before returning to England. He left Britain forever in 1888, when he set out for the health-giving climate of the South Seas. He finally settled in Samoa, at the Vailima property, where his worsening state of health was temporarily arrested. In the South Seas, he pursued simultaneously an interest in the history and affairs of his new world and also involved himself further with Scotland. In December 1894, whilst working on possibly his greatest piece of Scottish fiction, Weir of Hermiston, he suffered a brain haemorrhage and died. He was buried at the top of a mountain which overlooked the Vailima estate.

By the time of his death, Stevenson was very famous, and the news of his death made the headlines of newspapers in Britain and America. A series of editions of his letters and

works appeared during the next thirty years. The titles of these editions indicated his nomadic existence: 'The Edinburgh Edition, The Thistle Edition, The Pentland Edition, The Vailima Edition, The Tusitala Edition, The Skerryvore Edition and The South Seas Edition.'

The critical spotlight which has focussed upon Robert Louis Stevenson has been divided, an apt reflection of Stevenson's attitude towards Scotland. During his life, and immediately after his death, Stevenson was widely revered, to a point which made a backlash inevitable. Some of the praise was understandable. Critics immediately recognised the worth of Treasure Island, W.E. Henley's review set the tone for much of its acclaim:

> Like all Mr Stevenson's good work, it is touched with genius. It is written in that crisp, choice, nervous English of which he has the secret - with such a union of measure and force as to be in its way a masterpiece of narrative. (8)

The reviewer of the Pall Mall Gazette agreed, feeling that in Treasure Island, Stevenson had produced a rare piece of fiction. His review bubbled with affection and admiration for Stevenson, which may have been pleasant to read, but which must put pressure on the author to repeat his performance. This criticism, which was so typical of that received by Stevenson, was also of the kind that would provoke those who disagreed into an equally emphatic response:

> A book for boys which can keep hardened and elderly reviewers in a state of pleasing excitement and attention is evidently no common Christmas book. No

> one but Mr Stevenson could have written <u>Treasure Island</u>, for no one else has his vivid imagination combined with his power of drawing character, his charm of style... he has contributed more to the diversion of one critic than all the serious and laborious novelists of the year have done. (9)

A revolt against such uncritical eulogising was inevitable. The surprise was that it did not come until 1914, with the publication of Frank Swinnerton's <u>R.L. Stevenson: A Critical Study.</u> Swinnerton shocked the 'Stevensonians' by attacking the "extravagant nonsense written and thought about Stevenson since his death". (10) His study concluded with the judgement that Stevenson was a second-class writer. Swinnerton made his case forcefully but cogently, praising Stevenson for his versatility, his dedication and his charm, but finding that his work did not live up to the praise of his "apostles". Swinnerton felt that Stevenson had hoodwinked people into praising second-rate work. The device employed for this deception was his own natural charisma allied to excessive stories about his health. Swinnerton refused to permit pity for Stevenson to affect his judgement, as he believed the 'Stevensonians' had done, because "to love uncritically is to love ill". (11) Swinnerton's attempt at critical objectivity swung the tide against Stevenson for at least a generation. Swinnerton's words resounded with an authority which condemned Stevenson's work to the nursery:

> It is sufficient here to maintain that Stevenson's literary reputation, as distinct from the humanitarian aspect of his fortitude, is seriously impaired. It is no longer possible for a serious critic to place him among the great writers because in no department of letters - excepting the boy's book and the short story - has he written work of first-class importance. (12)

Stevenson's work will never again be held in the esteem which proliferated a hundred years ago, but neither will he belong solely to the nursery. Critics such as Daiches and J.C. Furnas, began, not long after the Second World War, to look again at Stevenson. Their freshness of approach reflected the length of time that his work had remained in the back-water of the nursery. They were followed by Edwin Eigner's studies, and those of James Pope Hennessy and Robert Kiely. In the last decade, attention has increased, culminating in 1980 with a 'symposium' at Edinburgh University on 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Victorian Scotland'. This brought together a number of individual critics which suggested that Stevenson was about to become very fashionable. The most notable figures there were David Daiches, who had published _Robert Louis Stevenson_ in 1947 and _Robert Louis Stevenson and His World_ in 1973, and J.C. Furnas who had published an excellent biography of Stevenson, _Voyage to Windward_, in 1951. They were joined by Jenni Calder, who in 1980 had also produced two works on Stevenson. One was a short guide to Stevenson's work _A Robert Louis Stevenson Companion_, and the other was the massive, _R.L.S. A Life Study_.

This growing interest in Stevenson does not amount to an outbreak of 'Stevensonia' and the symposium of 1980 was careful to steer a course between the adulation of the 1890s and the angry response of Swinnerton. The suggestion is emerging from recent criticism that had intelligent criticism prevailed after Stevenson's death, rather than the zealous

extremism which occurred, Stevenson's work would not have suffered the ignominy of being so forgotten in the twentieth century. From the interest aroused by critics in the last twenty years, and the promise of a new edition to mark the centenary of his death, Stevenson's resurrection from the nursery looks certain to continue.

This thesis does not intend to make a firm assessment of Stevenson's standing in the canon of English, or Scottish literature. Apart from the absurdity of dividing writers into 'classes', Stevenson was a writer whose versatility, inconsistency and shortness of career makes such classification pointless. Nor will this thesis assert that the middle line between the extreme responses to Stevenson is the correct one. The initial emotional responses to his work testify to the intensity of feeling which he could provoke. The aim of this study is to develop an understanding of Stevenson's attitude towards Scotland. The target is much wider than Victorian Scotland, as chapters on landscape, superstition, and Edinburgh, will make clear. The works under study will be those which best reflected Stevenson's attachment to his native country. This will not preclude analysis of his letters, poems and other works, but in searching for an understanding of Stevenson's perception of Scotland, it will be necessary to concentrate principally on those works which owed their existence to Stevenson's relationship with Scotland. The premise for this study is that Stevenson developed an understanding of his home country, which, allied to his

instinctive relationship, inspired and strengthened his most important fiction. The influence of Scotland upon Stevenson was complicated, reflecting the complex nature of the country. He did not write fiction about Scotland in order to honour, or beautify the nation, but in order to better understand it. Simple reasons of love or loyalty did not explain his constant desire to write about his home. He saw his home as "a lamplit, vicious fairy land", (13) where charm competed with danger. The apparent incongruity of this vision marks an appropriate starting point for a consideration of a man and a country both embodying inconsistency and incongruity.

CHAPTER 1

Reference Point

(1) 'A Visit from the Sea' from Underwoods.

(2) ibid.

(3) Letters II p.344.

(4) op. cit (1)

(5) ibid.

(6) Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse
ed. Charteris E. (1931) pp.187-8.

(7) Portrait of a Rebel. Aldington R. p.39.

(8) 'Saturday Review'. 8 December 1883 lvi, 737-8
Robert Louis Stevenson, The Critical Heritage. ed. Maixner P. (London, 1981) p.132.

(9) 'Pall Mall Gazette' 15 December 1883 xxxciii, 4 -5 op. cit. (8).

(10) R.L. Stevenson pp.202-3 (London 1914)
op. cit. (8) p.507-11.

(11) ibid.

(12) ibid.

(13) R.L.S. Stevenson's Letters to Charles Baxter,
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CHAPTER II

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCOTLAND'S GEOGRAPHY IN STEVENSON'S "SCOTTISH WORKS".

"... And here afar
Intent on my own race and
place I wrote... "

The weakness of his health meant that Robert Louis Stevenson was a willing exile from Scotland. His frail constitution could not withstand the buffetings of the Scottish weather, and escape to a warmer climate was the only known treatment for his respiratory condition. However, whilst his body was driven, and ultimately buried far away from the land of his birth, his imagination was constantly nourished by Scotland and its various geographical aspects. It was a "geography" that extended beyond landscape-painting, to include considerations upon the weather, the population, the sea, towns and villages, historical associations and cultural divisions. As a nation, Scotland interested and excited Stevenson, and it is therefore, no surprise that his most successful works involve a profoundly Scottish atmosphere and flavour. Kidnapped and Catriona are not adventure stories that Stevenson just happened to set in Scotland. Weir of Hermiston is not a romance that is set in Scotland by chance. These novels are as much about the nature of Scotland as their heroes and heroines, and could not exist without Scottish geography any more than the Picturesque Notes could exist without Edinburgh.

In 1892, Stevenson wrote to Barrie, acknowledging to his friend that:

> It is a singular thing that I should live here in the South seas, under conditions so new and so striking and yet my imagination so continually inhabit that cold, old huddle of grey hills from which we come. (1)

Despite his peripatetic life, Stevenson never forgot Scotland, his writing betraying the fact that the country constantly exerted an influence over him. His last major work, the

unfinished Weir of Hermiston, although written entirely at Vailima, is centred upon Scottish landscape, Scottish legends and Scottish people. The opening dedication sets the tone well as Stevenson recalls the sights, sounds and feel of his Scottish background:

> I saw rain falling and the rainbow drawn
> On Lammermuir. Hearkening, I hear again
> In my precipitous city, beaten bells
> Winnow the keen sea wind. And here afar
> Intent on my own race and place, I wrote.(2)

The key word here, as indicated by the rhythmical stress is "intent". It was much more than nostalgia or home-sickness which directed Stevenson's pen into creating such powerful evocations of Scotland. His attention was so consciously focussed upon his country that it was inevitable that his work must concern his own "race and place".

Stevenson knew Scotland's geography well, having travelled extensively throughout it and lived for many years in Edinburgh. He regarded it as a country different from all others in terms of landscape, language, culture, history and population. He complained about feeling out of place in other countries, confirming that his spiritual home was always Scotland. When sojourning in Suffolk, he wrote about, "the hopeless gulf that there is between England and Scotland, and English and the Scotch. Nothing is the same, and I feel as strange and outlandish here as I do in France or Germany." There can be little doubt that Stevenson continually felt "strange and outlandish" in the South seas and perhaps through writing about the country in which he felt "at home" he somehow assuaged the intense but impossible yearning he felt

for returning to Scotland. Such yearnings are most poignantly expressed in a poem written at Vailima. It echoes a letter he wrote to Colvin, where he contemplated the possibility of being, "buried in the hills, under the heather, and a table tombstone, like the martyrs, where the whaups and plovers are crying."

Blows the wind today, and the sun and the rain are flying,
   Blows the wind on the moors today and now,
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying
   My heart remembers how!

Grey recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places
   Standing stones on the vacant wine-red moor,
Hills of sheep, and the houses of the silent vanished races,
   And winds austere and pure.

Be it granted to me to behold you again in dying,
   Hills of home! and to hear again the call,
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees crying
   And hear no more at all.(3)

The "singular" feature about Stevenson's imagination being "continually" involved with Scotland was not so much his ignoring the exotic locations in which he was compelled to live, as the ambivalence with which he remembered his home country. His writing does not present a distorted or glorified impression of Scotland. His intention was clearly not to create a utopian vision of his "hills of home". His imagination was nourished by a landscape which he remembers as bleak and inhospitable, by a climate which almost killed him and by a people with whom he found it difficult to live. In his essay entitled From Scotland to Silverado he wrote directly about his own relationship with Scotland. It summarizes concisely ideas and themes which emerge from his Scottish novels, stories and poems concerning the difficulty of explaining the country's influence upon its inhabitants.

> There is no special loveliness in that grey country with its rainy, sea-beat archipelago; its fields of dark mountains; its unsightly places; black with coal; treeless, sour, unfriendly-looking corn-lands; its quaint, grey, castled city where the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls, and the salt showers fly and beat.
>
> I do not even know if I desire to live there, but let me hear in some far land, a kindred voice sing out, "O why left I my hame?" and it seems at once as if no beauty under the kind heavens, and no society of the wise and good, can repay me for my absence from my country. (4)

It would appear that although life in the South of France and the South Pacific could offer Stevenson a degree of physical health, it would always remain Scotland's role to offer him imaginative vigour.

The conflicts, inconsistencies and incongruities which arose from his scrutiny of Scotland lie at the heart of Stevenson's Scottish writing. The non-fictional description of Edinburgh in the Picturesque Notes considers the city as simultaneously blessed with immense cultural importance to Europe, but also bedevilled with a piercing easterly wind and poor quality housing. Stories such as Thrawn Janet, The Merry Men and The Body-Snatcher concern the prevalence of peculiar superstitions and fears in the wilder, remote parts of the country. A dominant feature of Kidnapped and Catriona is the division between Scotland's Highlands and Lowlands. Scotland's geography, both physical and human, appeared to be compounded of contrasts and divisions and in order to present this effectively, Stevenson deliberately maintained a suitably ambivalent style. In both his fictional and non-fictional accounts of the Scottish landscape, he avoids presenting a romantic glorification. To Stevenson, interest lay in considering Scotland as a whole rather than in selecting a few

highlights. His way of understanding the country required accepting and portraying the good and the bad, the romantic and the sordid. This comprehensive approach is exemplified in the Picturesque Notes, where he begins with a gust of patriotic prose extolling the city's magnificence:

> No situation could be more commanding for the head city of a kingdom; none better chosen for noble prospects. From her tall precipice and terraced gardens, she looks far and wide on the sea and broad champaigns.(5)

However, before the reader is either swept along or distanced by this panegyric, Stevenson interrupts the patriotism with an inventive discourse concerning the city's climate.

> For all who love shelter and the blessings of the sun; who hate dark weather and perpetual tilting against squalls, there could scarcely be found a more unhomely and harassing place of residence.(6)

He even goes on to suggest that the lucky citizens of Edinburgh are those like him, who are able to "shake off the dust" of the city as they board Southward-bound trains and hear "for the last time, the cry of the east wind among her chimney pots." (7)

Stevenson's descriptions of Scotland's physical geography beyond Edinburgh are equally balanced and equally emphatic in their realism. The Highland mountains are simultaneously beautiful, symbolic of Scotland's durability and strength and also cold, mist-shrouded and inhospitable. Similarly, the sea is presented both as a majestic force of nature and as a cruel, murderous place. David Balfour is made to experience these contrasting aspects of the sea as he suffers the horror

of being ship-wrecked and yet is ultimately deposited safely by the currents on the island of Earraid.

> I now know it must have been the roost of tide-race, which had carried me away so fast and tumbled me about so cruelly and at last, as if tired of that play, had flung out me and the spare yard upon its landward margin.(8)

This dual nature ascribed to the sea is continued as David struggles for survival on Earraid. His only nourishment is raw seafood, but even this can affect him in two ways. Sometimes, the shell-fish revives him, at other times it poisons him.

> I never knew what to expect when I had eaten; sometimes, all was well, and sometimes I was thrown into a miserable sickness.(9)

The sea is an important feature of Scotland's geography and one with which Stevenson was particularly familiar, given his family's involvement with light-house construction. In the Picturesque Notes, he referred to how, "the sight of the sea, even from a city, will bring thoughts of storm and sea disaster." (10) Throughout The Merry Men, Stevenson emphasizes the eternal menace of the sea but in the person of Gordon Darnaway also emphasizes its eternal fascination. The apocalyptic storm described in this short story has a terrifying effect upon Darnaway. It is the raging sea rather than the liquor which so possesses the man and drives him into laughing at the destruction of the schooner on the rocks. As he was to do in Kidnapped, Stevenson presents two differing attitudes to the geography that he portrays. Darnaway's nephew, the narrator of the story is frightened and sickened by the power of the sea, in direct contrast to his uncle who is captivated and apparently hypnotised by it. This dichotomy

of outlook adds interest to the physical appearance of places and perpetuates Stevenson's concern with dualism of nature. The conclusion of The Merry Men is a suitable reminder of the dual nature of the sea. The storm has apparently been responsible for the appearance of a mysterious, diabolical black-man on the island. He harries Gordon Darnaway, ultimately chasing him to his death in the sea. The environment which had so fascinated the old man finally kills him; as if punishing him not only for the murder of a sailor but also for daring to ally himself with the waves, in pursuit of his own wicked purposes. Escape from such a powerfully-rendered adversary is plainly impossible and the story ends abruptly but appropriately.

> There was never a sharper ending on that steep beach they were beyond their depth at a bound; neither could swim, the black rose once for a moment with a throttling cry; but the current had them racing seaward; and if ever they came up again, which God alone can tell, it would be ten minutes after at the far end of Aros Roost where the sea birds hover fishing. (11)

Stevenson was much concerned with conceiving geography as a bonding agent between reality and fiction. This attitude is manifested most clearly in his Scottish stories. He wrote convincingly about the bond he perceived between "events and places", which he termed "fitness". Before writing Kidnapped he had discussed how he always intended a given locality to be invested with an appropriate invented action.

> The effects of nights, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the great ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen, we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it. Some places speak distinctly. Certain dark gardens cry aloud for murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted, certain coasts are set aside for ship-wreck. (12)

Stevenson's appropriate use of setting often does speak distinctly. The strange island of The Merry Men and the macabre location for the story of Thrawn Janet are stages which call aloud for suitably mysterious happenings. Just as the soft vale of Essendean would be unsuitable as a base for a tale of horror, the "uncanny neighbourhood" (13) of the parish of Balweary would be unsuitable for a love-story. Mrs. R.L. Stevenson even stated that the "very sound of the names, Murdoch Soulis, The Hanging Shaw in the beild of the Black Hill, Balweary in the vale of Dule - sent a 'cauld grue' along my bones." (14) The setting for the tale of Thrawn Janet effectively exudes on air of mystery and terror before the awful story has even begun.

> the manse itself, where it stood by the water of Dule, among some thick trees, with the Shaw overhanging it on the one side, and on the other, many cold moorish hill tops rising toward the sky....the trees are unco thick and the water lies deep and black under the manse.(15)

In The Merry Men, it is the appearance of the island and the rocks which is so terrifying, rather than the melodramatic madness of Gordon Darnaway. The rocks on Aros are depicted as if possessing a living force: "great granite rocks which go down together in troops into the sea." (16) Even the objective, cynical narrator confesses to being frightened by the noise of the waves beating against the rocks, as he finally understands the aptness of the name "Merry Men" for the reefs and rocks.

> And loud, above all this hurly-burly I could hear the changeful voices of the Roost and the intermittent roaring of the Merry Men. At that hour, there flashed into my mind the reason of the name that they were called. For the noise of then seemed almost mirthful as

> it out-topped the other noises of the night...Nay and it seemed even human. As when savage men have drunk away their reason, and, discarding speech, bawl together in their madness by the hour. So to my ears, these deadly breakers shouted by Aros in the night.(17)

In reference to The Merry Men, Stevenson admitted to being over-powered by the scene which he created. Authors frequently speak of their fictional characters "taking over" the fiction, but rarely of the landscape doing so:

> I began with the feeling of one of those islands on the west coast of Scotland, and I gradually developed the story to express the sentiment with which that coast affected me. (18)

Even Stevenson's wife, in a note of preface suggested that The Merry Men was a tale "overshadowed by its surroundings" and which "never quite satisfied its author, who believed that he had succeeded in giving the terror of the sea but had failed to get a real grip on his story." (19) Such statements underline the importance which Stevenson attached to the genius of the place. It is more difficult to understand why he should have been so certain that it would be apt some day for a boat to "put off from the Queen's Ferry fraught with a dear cargo." (20) These words were written some years before Kidnapped and although puzzling, serve to further confirm how a sense of place could act as the trigger for a plot. One constant in Stevenson's Scottish works is the way in which a sense of place is inextricably bound with the actions and developments of character and plot.

The fact that Stevenson was Scottish and had travelled extensively throughout the country with his father enabled him

to evoke a sense of Scottish place with great clarity. His understanding of the significance of place in Scotland can be compared with Thomas Hardy's in Wessex. Both authors wrote clearly about the geographical world which they knew. However, Stevenson moved a shade closer to reality by not disguising the locations in which his fictional characters lived. Hardy felt the need to find pseudonyms for the real places which he employed in his fiction. In Kidnapped and Catriona Stevenson uses no disguise, but directs his attention towards a presentation of adventure within a realistic and geographically accurate setting. In terms of physical geography, Kidnapped and Catriona are non-fictional accounts of actual places. For instance, the opening chapters of Catriona offer further "Picturesque Notes of Edinburgh", although this time, as perceived through the eyes of the fictional David Balfour:

> The narrow paved way descended swiftly. Prodigious tall houses sprang upon each side and bulged out one storey beyond another as they rose. At the top, only a ribbon of sky showed in. By what I could spy in the windows and by the respectable persons that passed out and in, I saw the houses to be very well occupied; and the whole appearance of the place interested me like a tale.(21)

Much has been written about Hardy's relationship with Wessex and how it is peculiar that a novelist should have "tied himself by so many strings to a particular tract of territory." (22) In an introduction to Hardy's Wessex, Martin Seymour Smith could almost be speaking of Stevenson and Scotland as he refers to "almost every step taken by his characters is taken along real roads or over real heaths; the towns and villages, the hills, even many of the houses are identifiable." (23) He concludes with the suggestion that this

realism gives the novels a special quality, "with half-real figures moving over a real world." (24) Perhaps this is even more true of Stevenson as he presents fictional characters mixing with historical figures, thereby blurring the division between reality and imagination even further.

The scenery in Stevenson's Scottish novels and stories is never an incidental background. It is as fundamental to the nature and development of the fiction as the characters and the plot. The emphasis on "fitness" of place and event, the accuracy with which places are rendered, and the broadness with which places are considered shows Stevenson deftly uniting the science of geography with the art of fiction. The blurring of distinctions between geographical reality and fictional invention imbues works such as Kidnapped, Catriona, Thrawn Janet and Weir of Hermiston with a flavour that is inevitably and distinctly Scottish.

In connection with his concern for "fitness" of place, Stevenson perceived a very powerful bond between history and place, and in his Scottish works, geographical history plays an important part. Even as a boy, Stevenson could sense the force of tangible images form the past and could also sense the exciting possibilities of historical narrative. When he was only thirteen, his father took him on a trip to Fife lighthouse and Stevenson recalls the highlight of this trip being the thrill of driving across Magus Moor, the scene of Archbishop Sharp's murder in 1679. In an essay entitled The Coast of Fife, written in 1892, Stevenson recalled this

incident in terms which clearly demonstrate the impact that historical events could make upon his imagination.

> I still see Magus Muir two-hundred years ago. A desert place, quite unenclosed. In the midst, the primate's carriage fleeing at the gallop, the assassins loose-reined in pursuit. No scene in history has ever written itself so deeply on my mind.(25)

It is certain that a mind so sensitive to history should have explored the connections between geography and history further.

Stevenson's frequent descriptions of the Scottish landscape are much more than static backdrops. Drawn with clarity and entirety, they capture the essential feel of the country through a range of sensory perceptions. However, this "feel " would be incomplete if the landscape was not instilled with historical presence. David Balfour, for example, treads the very heather over which the Jacobites had fought, Alan Breck Stewart even dragging him aside to the field of Gladsmuir, "where he exerted himself a great deal more than needful to describe the stages of the battle." (26) Archie and Kirstie in Weir of Hermiston develop their courtship on an apparently cursed hill that has witnessed the tragedy of the Praying Weaver of Balweary.

> Public and domestic history have thus marked with a bloody finger this hollow among the hills; and since the Cameronian gave his life there, two-hundred years ago, in a glorious folly and without comprehension or regret, the silence of the moss has been broken once again by the report of firearms and the cry of the dying.(27)

Stevenson himself meditates directly upon the historical scenes witnessed by the Edinburgh landscape in the Picturesque

Notes, as he reflects upon how the "story of the town is as eccentric as its appearance." (28) As he looks upon Scotland's geography, Stevenson consciously awakens shadows and implications of past events. Whether he does this directly or through a fictional character, a strong bond is secured between landscape and history.

The two novels concerning the adventures of David Balfour, *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*, are established in a firm geographical and historical setting. Unlike *Weir of Hermiston* which in the words of Sir Sidney Colvin, editor of the Edinburgh edition of Stevenson's works, "is distilled from a number of different haunts and associations among the moorlands of Southern Scotland"(29), David's journeys can be followed precisely. Stevenson's imaginative vigour in these novels is constantly matched by meticulous attention to accurate detail. David evolves a succession of exciting adventures, but the historical and geographical realism with which they are surrounded prevent the stories from becoming mere ephemeral tales of adventure. The islands, mountains, glens and moors over which David Balfour travels are actual places, as precisely realised as the streets and buildings of eighteenth-century Edinburgh. Such realism of place is combined with equal historical authenticity to form a strong platform for the adventure-filled plots.

David starts his account with a very precise statement of time and place, beginning the story of his adventures "with a certain morning early in the month of June, the year of grace 1751." (30) He walks away form his parental home and is soon

upon the brink of leaving the vale in which he has spent all of his life. His opening statement immediately places him in an historical context. It is six years after the last major Jacobite uprising in Scotland and although the quiet vale of Essendean is without tensions, the positioning of David's life suggests that he will come into contact with the residual tensions and hatreds that were prevalent in parts of Scotland at that time. The people with whom David comes into contact in the Highlands are an odd mixture of historical and fictional figures but are, like the evocations of the landscape, always typical and realistic.

Alan Breck Stewart serves as David's guide through Scotland and, as exemplified by his lecture at the field of Gladsmuir, is concerned with David's understanding of the bond between landscape and history. To Alan, the sights of the Scottish countryside are significant largely through their historical associations. At one point, David records Alan's words which once more show how important he perceived the link to be between the Scottish landscape and history.

> "What were they about?" says I
> "O, about the deer and the heather"
> says he, "and about the ancient
> old chiefs that are all by with
> it long syne." (31)

The association of the natural landscape with the men who once lived upon it suggests a unity between the two which Stevenson himself echoed in his yearnings to be buried amongst his "hills of home." (32)

It is perhaps the nature of the Scottish landscape which breeds such powerful historical associations. Throughout his Scottish novels, Stevenson constantly presents a contrast between the human world of flux and the enduring nature of the landscape upon which it takes place. In Kidnapped and Catriona, political and domestic machinations dominate the events of the plots. Weir of Hermiston concerns the problems surrounding an unlikely love affair. The world of men, is therefore, presented as one of constant movement and change. This is effectively contrasted with the permanence of the Scottish landscape in which it is situated. The mountains are solid reminders and keepers of the past. They are literally rooted to the earth, incapable of change or movement. David comments in Kidnapped that in Appin he could see "the sea in all this part running deep into the mountains and winding about their roots." (33) This image of durability presents the mountains as keys to the past. They are not only awesome in their grandeur, but also in their representation of timelessness. Through always overlooking the activities of men, they have assumed an historical significance, and in Stevenson's words, a "famous heritage." (34)

The plots of Kidnapped and Catriona revolve around the tensions in Scotland following the official crushing of the Jacobites. However, these novels are much more than simple historical fictions, largely because of the frequent and detailed descriptions of Scotland's geography which they include. Stevenson's belief in the incorporation of a very definite sense of place in his fiction is central to these works. Without it, they would lack not only beauty and visual

interest, but also historical completeness. The history of the periods from which David Balfour's story is distilled, is enmeshed with the country's geography. Alan Breck Stewart behaves as he does not so much from political motivation as from a more fundamental love of his country. This love is rooted in the landscape as he perceives it, fully imbued with a multiplicity of historical associations. David's inability to love the country of the Highlands offers an insight into how important it is to view a landscape through the perspective of history. David can only see the mountains of the Highlands as bleak and gloomy, and as he looks out across Alan's home territory of Appin he concludes that, "it seemed a hard country, this of Appin for people to care about as much as Alan did." (35) It is a hard country for anyone to love, and perhaps even Alan would acknowledge that stripped of all their historical associations, the sodden moors and mist-shrouded mountains do offer little intrinsic beauty. However, Stevenson does not vandalise the landscape by thus stripping it, and even permits David the chance to find beauty in a crag, thereby complimenting rather than mocking Alan's devotion to his "hard country".

David is twice a prisoner on an island. On the first occasion, he is his own gaoler as he spends four terrible days on Earraid unaware of the fact that it is merely a tidal islet. The second occasion is his enforced captivity upon the Bass Rock. His experience on Earraid was dismal and on several occasions he refers to it as being the nadir of his adventures. It is perhaps strange that he should say of his imprisonment upon the isolated Bass Rock that he was held

"busy and amused", and that, "I should trifle with my conscience if I pretended my stay upon the Bass was wholly disagreeable." (36) The difference between these two experiences is explained largely by David's changing perceptions. On Earraid, he can see only a terrible landscape of "dead rocks, and fowls, and the rain and the cold sea." (37) The Bass is a similarly inhospitable "crag of rock"(38) and he is in a similarly helpless position. However, here his imagination responds to the place and he perceives a unity between the landscape and its history. He falls into "many meditations" (39) during his explorations of the Bass as he discovers it to be a crag strewn with reminders of the past:

> A little lower stood a chapel, or a hermit's cell. Who built or dwelt in it none may know...the prison too where I now bivouacked with Highland cattle thieves was a place full of history. (40)

His reflections upon the history of the Bass Rock lead to his resurrecting ghosts of the past. This reveals an unexpected understanding in David of how a "sense of place" is imbued with a definite sense of history.

> There were times when I thought I could have heard the pious sound of psalms out of the martyrs' dungeons, and seen the soldiers tramp the ramparts with their glinting pipes, and the dawn rising behind them out of the North Sea.(41)

Without these historical associations the Bass Rock would be nothing more than an inhospitable crag, serving as an effective and frustrating prison for all who were placed upon it. David's tuning in to the history of the place allows him almost to enjoy his captivity in a way which he failed to do during his time on Earraid.

Stevenson's interest in the historical significance of geography extends, like Alan Breck Stewart's, beyond the Jacobite years. In an unfinished tale entitled Heathercat, he begins by regarding Scotland through a massive time-perspective. Regressing through time, from the covenanting years to thelegendary time of Merlin, the landscape remains the point of reference and interest, as he balances its innate features against the marks made upon it by man. History speaks from and through both aspects of the geography.

> The scene laid for the most part in solitary hills and morasses, haunted only by the so-called Mountain Wanderers, the dragoons that came in chase of them, the women that wept on their dead bodies and the wild birds of the moorland that have cried there since the beginning. It is a land of many rain clouds; a land of much mute history, written there in prehistoric symbols. Strange green raths are to be seen commonly in the country, above all by the kirkyards; barrows of the dead, standing stones. Besides these, the faint, durable footprints and herdmarks of the Roman; and an antiquity older perhaps than any... These rugged and grey hills were included in the boundaries of the Caledonian Forest. Merlin sat here below his apple tree.(42)

Just as the field of Gladsmuir inspires Alan's memory of the battle of Prestonpans, or the desolate valley of Glencoe reminds David of the terrible massacre, so Stevenson's imagination is transported into history by a landscape. His recognition and depiction of "mute history" (43) in Scotland's geography is an assertion that a landscape can never be completely empty or imaginatively barren. David Balfour may only seldom see more than "dead rocks" and "dismal deserts"(44), but Stevenson, as exemplified by Alan Breck Stewart and the Heathercat fragment constantly looked into the landscape, beyond the physical appearance, and thereby into history.

Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes also demonstrates how landscapes not only trigger historical memories but actually exist in an inseparable union. Stevenson looked out upon Greenside, and instantly recalled how, "down that precipitous bank, Bothwell landed his horse, and, so first they say, attracted the bright eyes of Mary." (45) Even though the Greenside that Stevenson saw was "tessellated with sheets and blankets out to dry" (46), the Bothwell association will always remain. Stevenson looked out further and again could see the landscape acting as a preserver of the past:

> Yonder is Auldhame, where the London smack went ashore, and wreckers cut the rings from ladies' fingers; and a few miles round Fife Ness is the fatal Inchcape, now a star of guidance. (47)

The fact that Inchcape has been modified by the construction of a lighthouse does not neutralize its grisly past. The rocks and wrecks there remain as permanent witnesses of the past.

It would be wrong to suggest that Stevenson believed that it was impossible for man to wreak significant change upon his environment. He expresses concern about the changes which men can impose upon a landscape, particularly in the creation of a city. None of his Scottish fiction concerns the major changes that occurred in Scotland during the nineteenth century. Never does he write about the impact of the Industrial Revolution, the rapid expansion of cities, particularly Glasgow, or the Highland clearances. However, he did lament that, "in a great measure we may and shall eradicate the haunting flavour of the country." (48) Although none of his fiction concerns this problem, he found comfort in the fact that even in Edinburgh,

man's transforming hand is still too small to destroy the fundamental spirit or "flavour" of the place:

> We have some possessions that not even the infuriate zeal of builders can utterly abolish and destroy. Nothing can abolish the hills unless it be a cataclysm of nature which shall subvert Edinburgh castle itself and lay all her florid structures in the dust. And as long as we have the hills and the Firth, we have a famous heritage to leave our children.(49)

His philosophy that the "hills and the Firth" are an invaluable heritage in themselves is one that would have accorded well with Alan Breck Stewart's. To both figures, the landscape existed as the only remaining witness of history, a witness which to their receptive minds could speak more eloquently than any historian.

Weir of Hermiston begins in a similar way to Heathercat. Opening with a portrait of a landscape and the troubled history that has occurred there, ("public and domestic history have thus marked with a bloody finger this hollow among the hills")(50), an atmosphere of foreboding is instantly asserted. The novel is unfinished, but in a note made by his amanuensis at Vailima, it is clear that Stevenson intended further bloodshed at the Praying Weaver's Stone. A landscape which has witnessed murder before is portrayed as forever tainted and atmospherically appropriate for further terrible events. From the opening paragraph, it is evident that there is something unclear about the Praying Weaver's Stone. It is broodingly ominous of some future disaster. It is the presence of historical information in the introductory description of the landscape which gives the novel's setting such a powerful atmosphere. The hill on which the lovers meet is more than a

midway point between their homes or a convenient no-man's-land. It is a place, which through its physical appearance and its historical and literary associations will always exude an undertone of menace.

The uniting of past events with present situations through the medium of landscape is a recurring theme in Weir of Hermiston. It is considered initially in the first chapter where Stevenson carefully positions his tale as a further link in the endless chain of events which have occurred at "The Deil's Hags". The chapter concludes with him stating how his story has also sunk into the folk-lore of the area in the way that other tales have done before:

> To this day, of winter nights. when the sleet is on the window and the cattle are quiet in the byre, there will be told again, amid the silence of the young and the additions and corrections of the old, the tale of the Justice-Clerk and of his son, young Hermiston, that vanished from men's knowledge; of the two Kirsties, and the Four Black Brothers of the Cauldstaneslap; and of Frank Innes, the "young fool advocate", that came into these moorland parts to find his destiny.(51)

The only constant has been the landscape, the "moorland parts" (52), which appear to absorb the dire events and offer permanent reminders of them to future generations. The continuous flux of human existence is set starkly against the enduring permanence of the landscape. This is a contrast which Archie recognizes himself as he looks upon Christina sitting upon the Praying Weaver's Stone. In that moment, he senses how time stretches out into vastness and how minute must appear the activities of men to a landscape which embodies history and timelessness.

> Christina, perched on the same tomb, in the grey colours of the evening, gracious, dainty, perfect as a flower, and she also singing, "of old, unhappy, far-off, things, and battles long ago." Of their common ancestors, now dead; Of their rude war composed, their weapons buried with them, and of these strange changelings, their descendants, who lingered a little in their places and would soon be gone also, and perhaps sung of by others there at the gloaming hour.(53)

Archie's meditations outside the kirk offer the most clearly expressed statements about the minuteness of human life in relationship to the landscape. He sees a "tuft of primroses" (54) next to an old tombstone and falls into considerations about the transiency of human life. The flowers present a vivid contrast which goes beyond the visual. Tiny and delicate as they are, the yellow flowers symbolise the eternal beauty and timelessness of the "old earth".(55) They are representatives of the enduring nature of the landscape, unlike the weathered tombstone against which they grow. The flowers are a natural part of the hills which have witnessed the whole history of Hermiston. They will remain, even when the preacher who is now speaking lies "in the sun and the rain with all his rheumatisms" (56), and a new minister takes his place in the pulpit. It is no surprise that such a pessimistic realization about the world in which he lives should upset the sensitive Archie, and understandably, "the pity of it, and something of the chill of the grave shook him for a moment."(57)

The division which Archie despondently sees between landscape and history contrasts with ideas which emerge form Kidnapped and Catriona. These novels present landscape and history as bonded in permanence. Alan and David, in differing degrees are inspired and strengthened through their contact

with the Scottish landscape. Neither suffers the pessimistic pangs which assail Archie in Weir of Hermiston. In this later work, Stevenson questions whether the landscape does achieve a constructive bond with history, or whether the durability of the earth offers nothing more than a depressing contrast to the instability and brevity of man's existence. The result is a bleak, nihilistic philosophy. Archie feels this strongly, and interestingly Stevenson had hinted at it in his dedication of Catriona, thereby emphasizing the ambiguity which surrounded the relationship between geography and history.

> Some long-legged youth must repeat today our dreams and wandering of so many years ago; he will relish the pleasure, which should have been ours, to follow among named streets and numbered houses the country walks of David Balfour, to identify Dean and Silversmiths, and Broughton, and Hope Park, and Pilrig, and poor old Lochend if it still be standing, and the Figgate whins - if there be any of them left; or to push (on a long holiday) so far afield as Gillane or the Bass. So, perhaps, his eye shall be opened to behold the series of the generations and he shall weigh with surprise his momentous and nugatory gift of life.(58)

Running alongside commentaries on the divisions between landscape and history, and Scotland and the rest of the world, Stevenson also wrote extensively about the sharp divisions within Scotland itself. The principal division, which he discusses and develops in Kidnapped and Catriona, is that between the Highlands and the Lowlands. The language which he uses to discuss this disjunction is very similar to that used to discuss the differences between Scotland and England, and emphasizes the gulf that had existed in Scottish society.

> The Highlander wore a different costume, spoke a different language, worshipped in another church, held different morals and obeyed a different social constitution from his fellow countrymen. Even the

> English, it is recorded, did not loathe the Highlander and the Highland costume as they were loathed by the remainder of the Scots. (59)

It is the apparent conflict between presenting Scotland as one nation and yet identifying a multiplicity of "geographical" divisions which is a central feature of Stevenson's Scottish works. Through it he tries to impart the "flavour" of his country to his fiction.

Stevenson does not try to cover up the internal divisions of Scotland. Indeed, in looking back to the period immediately after the last Jacobite rebellion, he was focussing upon a time when the differences between the Highlands and Lowlands were heightened. By the late nineteenth century, a division of far greater prominence was that between the urban and the rural as the Industrial Revolution rapidly transformed Scotland's geography. Stevenson noticeably avoids considering the issue of contemporary internal differences. He does not write in the manner of Charles Dickens or Mrs. Gaskell, by using contemporary situations and conflicts as the basis for his fiction. David Balfour does not embark on a tour of late Victorian Scotland, but is distanced from Stevenson's time by more than a century, when Scottish geography was in many respects so different. Stevenson's avoidance of such matters as the rapid growth of towns, especially Glasgow in the nineteenth century, and the problems surrounding the Highland Clearances may appear surprising. However, in looking back to a period of conflict, distrust and prejudice, he showed himself not to be afraid of confronting the difficult nature of Scotland's identity.

In his essay entitled, <u>The Foreigner at Home</u>, Stevenson reflected upon the differences between fellow Scots, which in 1750 was most clearly demonstrated by the Highland-Lowland relationship. His words, however, have a more general application as he asks:

> Is it common education, common morals, a common language or a common faith that join men into nations? (60)

In 1750, he claims that the Highlanders and Lowlanders shared none of these things, perhaps just as in 1870 the urban poor of Glasgow and Edinburgh shared few affinities with the dwindling rural population. Although such dissimilarities are evident, Stevenson concludes his essay with a statement which is echoed strongly in his Scottish fiction.

> The fact remains, in spite of the differences of blood and language, the Lowlander feels himself the sentimental countryman of the Highlander. (61)

<u>Kidnapped</u> and <u>Catriona</u> are novels which explore not only the divisions in Scotland, but also the possibilities of these divisions being transcended.

David Balfour and Alan Breck Stewart are extreme expressions of the differences between the Highlands and the Lowlands. David is a most sheltered, innocent Lowlander, who at the beginning of <u>Kidnapped</u> admits to never having ventured beyond Essendean. He is an apt product of the gentle valley, perfectly in harmony with the blackbirds that "were whistling in the garden lilacs." (62) The innocence, softness and friendliness of the landscape is harmonized with the people who exist within it. The good-natured minister, Mr. Campbell with his recipe for "Lilly of the Valley water" is, like

David, a typical rural Lowlander living in isolation and simplicity. However, unlike the rest of Essendean's population, David is destined to meet a wide range of people and to travel throughout Scotland. He is also destined to come into contact with Alan Breck Stewart, an adventurer, a bold, active, aggressive man who belies his ostentatious French fineries. He is a warrior and as typical a product of the Highland country, as David is of the Lowlands. Stevenson's bringing together of David and Alan simultaneously highlights the differences which existed within Scotland, and also suggests that they might be overcome. The geographical divisions in Scotland are enhanced by the presentation of these characters, but through them, Stevenson successfully searches for a solution to the dilemma of Scotland's nationality.

David and Alan are not arid symbols of opposing factions and ways of life. However, the fact that they are portrayed as being so completely different suggests that Stevenson deliberately chose opposites to try to form an understanding of what it meant to be Scottish. The ways in which the two characters are placed on board the brig "Covenant" is the first, and perhaps most striking example of Stevenson's contrasting them. David, in his innocence is duped into going onto the ship, even failing to see that the duplicitous Captain Hoseason is anything but a useful ally against Ebenezer:

> I did not dream of hanging back; I thought (poor fool) that I had found a good friend and helper and I was rejoiced to see the ship.(63)

With his eyes wide open, David walks straight into the trap, seemingly unaware of the extent of his uncle's malice towards him.

Alan's arrival on the ship is similarly expressive of his nature. Sitting in the stern of a small boat which was run down by the "Covenant" he had been thrown into the air. Somehow, he had managed to catch hold of the brig's bowsprit and as David acknowledges in his narrative, "it showed he had luck, and much agility and unusual strength." (64) Just as David's innocence is emphasized in later events, so Alan's qualities of luck, agility and unusual strength are further developed. However, within hours of Alan's arrival on board, he and David form an unusual but strong alliance against Hoseason and the other sailors. It is an alliance founded on mutual respect derived from an appreciation of courage and reliability in a difficult situation. It is an alliance which cuts through the Highland-Lowland divisions and which will strengthen into firm friendship by the end of Kidnapped.

Although he is concerned with presenting the unlikely friendship between Alan and David, Stevenson never shirks from emphasizing the differences between them and the frictions which arise during their time together. The journey across Scotland provides a suitable environment for such considerations. David is quickly fatigued on the moors, in contrast with Alan, who skips along like an animal in its most favoured territory. In preparing David for the flight through the heather, Alan uses animal imagery to convey to him the difficulty and discomfort which crossing the Highlands in the

face of the soldiers will entail. It is a passage which typifies Alan's life and which stridently contrasts with David's comfortable past in Essendean.

> Your bed shall be the moor-cock's and your life shall be like the hunted deer's and ye shall sleep with your hand upon your weapons. Ay man, ye shall taigle many a weary foot or we get clear! I tell ye this at the start, for its a life that I ken well. (65)

David is completely ignorant of such a life, just as he was undertaking a completely new experience when he went on board the brig. David's lack of familiarity with Alan's landscape and way of life offers Stevenson the opportunity to present an interesting contrast between Highland and Lowland attitudes. As a Lowlander, David finds it difficult to understand how Alan should be able to "come and go without arrest". (66) Having never been in the Highlands, he believes that the troops held a very strong guard over the territory. Alan, representing the native population of the Highlands knows that it is an impossible area to guard effectively, particularly against people who have an understanding, almost an empathy, with the landscape.

> A bare hillside (ye see) is like all one road; if there's a sentry at one place, ye just go by another. And then the heather's a great help...a soldier covers nae mair of it than his bootsoles. I have fished a water with a sentry on the other side of the brae and killed a fine trout; and I have sat in a heather bush within six feet of another.(67)

Alan's confidence and sureness of what to do during the flight through the Highlands to Edinburgh suggests that he is a much stronger character than David who is usually puffing along in his wake complaining about his pains. However, it is not really a question of strength, rather a question of

suitability. Alan is suited to the Highlands whereas David is not. In Edinburgh, it is David who takes command, whilst Alan skulks in a wood awaiting David's advice.

David's unsuitability to the country that is in such contrast to the "soft vale of Essendean" (68), is particularly well evoked on the tidal islet of Earraid, when he is temporarily separated from Alan. He is confronted with a situation which Alan would have had little difficulty in resolving, and indeed, almost anyone but a sheltered Lowland youth would soon have got away: "a sea-bred boy would not have stayed a day on Earraid." (69) David is not a dim-witted youth, but his background, and the geography with which he is familiar could not have prepared him for tidal islets. His first encounter with the sea had, after all, been only a few days earlier. He is as understandably ignorant of such phenomena as he is ignorant of the Gaelic tongue.

In the Highlands David Balfour, the Lowlander, is very much a foreigner. Alan emphasizes this when he introduces him to James of the Glens. The language with which James is most comfortable is Gaelic, but as David barely understands a word of this language Alan asks a favour of James:

I will ask ye to speak Scotch for here is a young gentleman with me that has none of the other.(70)

The prevalence of Gaelic in the Highlands is a powerful symbol of the division between Highland and Lowland. David can at least understand the language of the foreign redcoat soldiers, even if their accent sounds somewhat "clipped" to his ear. Paradoxically, David's fellow country-men, such as James and

Alan speak a language of their own, of which he has no understanding. In referring to the language of the fishermen who laugh at him on Earraid, David emphasizes their acutely foreign nature:

> All the rest was Gaelic and might have been Greek and Hebrew for me.(71)

There are many occasions during his time in the Highlands, that David is made aware of being in a country that is starkly different from Lowland Scotland. The physical landscape and the use of Gaelic are just two aspects of the strangeness of the Highlands with which he has to contend. More significantly, he has no understanding of the Highlander's ways, and becomes a target for Alan's mockery when he treats the Highlands as part of a unified nation.

"It's all Scotland", exclaims David as Alan refers to his being unjustly tried in "a country of Campbells." (72) David may have "no fear of the justice of [his] country" (73), but, as Alan points out, he is really no longer in his country. At this point, David has no clear conception of the gulf between the Highlands and Lowlands. Fortunately, he follows Alan's advice about survival in the Highlands, rather than trying to follow his Lowland inclinations. Although there are disputes between the two characters, David does follow Alan acknowledging that in the wild countryside, the wild Highlander will be the best guide, and that his own principles no longer apply in this foreign country.

> We're in the Hielands David; and when I tell ye to run, take my word and run. Nae doubt it's a hard thing to

> skulk and starve in the heather but it's harder yet to lie shackled in a red-coat prison. (74)

Stevenson counterbalances the emphasis placed upon the Highland-Lowland division with the fact that Alan and David do remain together, grow to trust each other, and clearly develop a mutual respect. Alan continues to look after David's interests even when they arrive in the Lowlands, by confronting uncle Ebenezer and assisting David to come into his rightful inheritance. David openly acknowledges the bond which has grown between Alan and himself when he states, "I had come to port, but I had still Alan, to whom I was much beholden, on my hands." (75) The parting of the two friends at the conclusion of <u>Kidnapped</u> confirms this bond which has overcome all the differences of background, religion, language and politics. In a moving scene Stevenson depicts the parting at a suitably-named location, "Rest-and-be-Thankful", overlooking Edinburgh. All the quarrels and divisions which had materialised through their adventures have been forgotten and an enduring friendship has been established. Alan and David have both clearly been enriched through contact with the other. During the flight through the heather, David had once snapped at Alan:

> O man, if you would only take one point of the compass and let me take the other it would be the best for both of us! (76)

However, when this event must happen, at the end of the novel, it is clearly no longer "the best" for them.

> Neither one of us looked the other in the face, nor so long as he was in my view did I take one back glance at the friend I was leaving. But as I went on my way to the city, I felt so lost and lonesome, that I could have

> found it in my heart to sit down by the dyke and cry and weep like any baby. (77)

David's reaction here is perhaps one of adolescence, but the underlying emotions speak of a growing maturity. The boy who left Essendean's sheltered vale in quest of new experiences has returned to Edinburgh with a new perception of his country and his fellow countrymen. The contrasting of the Lowlander with the Highlander suggests a contrast between two possibilities about man, which might ideally be realised in a single individual. Alan does not become a Lowlander, David does not become a Highlander. The geographical dividing line between the mountains and the Lowlands does not dissolve, but in the friendship between David and Alan, Stevenson perceives a unity in Scotland which can transcend all divisions.

Stevenson does not glorify anyone, or any particular place, and in the person of David Balfour he creates a figure who will not allow the reader to be swept into enchantment with Alan Breck Stewart, the cause he espouses and the landscape which he loves. David undercuts Alan's pride and certainly does not tremble before his elder, especially as he is almost a foot taller! In one of their arguments, Alan trumpets the boast that he is a Stewart. David replies wryly:

> I ken you bear a king's name. But you are to remember, since I have been in the Highlands, I have seen a good many of those that bear it and the best I can say of them is this; that they would be none the worse for washing.(78)

It is not only with Alan, nor only with people that David fails to be enchanted. To the widely-revered, but gambling-obsessed clan chief Cluny Macpherson he states

sharply that, "gambling is very poor employ for gentlefolk."(79) Cluny is a memorable example of a rotten Highlander, being mean, petty, avaricious and pathetic. David had no admiration for this man, just as he had had no admiration for his uncle, the sailors or the sodden mountains and islands of the North.

> ...we had a strange host. In his long hiding, Cluny had grown to have all manner of precise habits like those of an old maid.(80)

Cluny can be seen as a complement to Ebenezer, the "rotten" Lowlander, existing as proof that neither side of the Highland Line is the better place. The presentation of the Highlands and Lowlands is deliberately even-handed to suggest that the obvious divisions between the two sides are bridgeable, because of the similarities shared by both.

David's cynicism in the Highlands is a useful way of questioning Alan's unquestioning love for his country. Alan, for instance, is never a critic of the Scottish weather and the landscape. His only criticisms of the country are social and political. Never does he complain about the streaming rain or the cold Edinburgh wind. Scotland is a glorious ideal in his mind, commanding his love and respect. It is the land perhaps more than the people which dictates his patriotic sacrifices. David can never understand this and even in Appin, when he is presented with the beautiful sights of streams shining like silver-lacing on the black mountains, his only comment is that, "it seemed a hard country, this of Appin, for people to care about as much as Alan did." (81) With respected Highlanders. David is equally unimpressed. After elaborately

complimenting Rob Roy's son, David explains his words with a sly aside:

> In case he was proud of having an outlaw for a father. (82)

David also sees the division between Highland and Lowland politics as being not quite so clearly cut as the Highland chiefs might like to assume. Alan Breck Stewart, the apparent champion of the Jacobite cause, has clearly fought on both sides during the rebellion. David uses this outstanding example of dubious loyalty to suggest that not only are the various clans split by their own rivalries, but that they also do not possess a uniform loyalty to "the King across the water."

> And it came upon my mind that Alan, on the day of that battle [Prestonpans] had been engaged upon the Royal side.
> "Why do ye take that air Mr. Stewart" said I.
> "Is that to remind me you have been beaten on both sides?"(83)

Paradoxically, David's failure to be enchanted by his adventures, the new landscapes, settlements and people, presents a vision of Scottish unity better than if he had been employed as a foil to the shine of the Highlands. He identifies differences and divisions between fellow Scots but also highlights ambiguities and affinities which suggest that Scotland is definitely one nation rather than two. His relationship with Alan is the embodiment of a very strong bond which transcends all differences. It is a bond which Stevenson perhaps saw for the whole of Scotland. Through Alan and David he envisaged a way in which the "Highland Line" could be

transcended. If the apparent chasm between fellow Scots could be bridged in 1750, Stevenson's Scottish novels seem to suggest that geographical differences can never divide Scotland into two nations.

The root of the "Scottishness" of works such as Kidnapped, Catriona and Weir of Hermiston lies beneath the surface evocations of Scottish landscape, weather, towns and population. Stevenson regarded Scotland as a nation of contrasts and ambiguities which he never saw anywhere else. Throughout his portrayals of Scotland he presents contrasts and divisions. In Edinburgh, he drew attention to how the "brute mass" of the ancient castle was "rooted in a garden", and how it was possible for the "unwashed" to "look down upon the open squares and garden of the wealthy". (84) It was possibly from his knowledge of Edinburgh that he developed an understanding and a feel for the way in which a clash of contrasts could still be resolved into unity. It is a city with a split personality. The Old Town contrasted physically and socially with the New Town. The Castle is the city's most spectacular feature and yet is also the place in which many grim aspects of Scotland's history are concentrated. Glimpses of the Firth and the hills can be discerned form even the most wretched quarters. Some of Edinburgh's best remembered sons exhibited similarly conflicting natures. Stevenson was fascinated by the story of Deacon Brodie, a respected cabinet-maker and churchman by day, but a notorious burglar by night. Stevenson himself existed as a perpetual testimony to such contrasts. He felt a profound love for his country, but

was compelled to desert it because the climate would have killed him.

Stevenson saw a harmony paradoxically arising from the clash of opposites within his country. It is a vision of harmony that ultimately breathes from his fiction, just as the beauty of the vale had appeared to Archie in Weir of Hermiston; "not resident in particulars, but breathing to him from the whole." (85) The opposing of Highlanders and Lowlanders, the contrasted descriptions of deserted Hebridean islands and busy Edinburgh streets and the confrontation between the past and the present assimilate into a geographical unity. Highlander and Lowlander develop a mutual bond and an enduring friendship. The deserted tracts of the Scottish landscape are linked with the towns and the seas. The past influences and forms an unbreakable bond with the present and the future. Looking down towards Edinburgh, but also out towards the sea, the Lowlands and the distant Highlands, Stevenson considered the different aspects which somehow resolve themselves into a wholeness. It is only from his "Olympian" position on the Pentlands that he glimpses this notion, as if distance is needed from Scotland before unity can be perceived. As one of the most distantly travelled Scots in history, Stevenson perhaps had the best opportunity to so regard his country.

> Trains crawl slowly abroad upon the railway lines; little ships are tacking in the Firth; the shadow of a mountainous cloud, as large as a parish, travels before the wind; the wind itself ruffles the wood and standing corn, and sends pulses of varying colour across the landscape. The city is as silent as a city of the dead; from all its humming thoroughfares, not a voice, not a foot-fall reaches you upon the hill. The sea-surf, the

cries of ploughmen, the streams and the mill-wheels, the birds and the wind, keep up an animated concert through the plain. From farm to farm, dogs and crowing cocks contend together in defiance and yet, from this Olympian station, except for the whispering rumour of a train, the world has fallen into a dead silence and the business of town and country grows voiceless in your ears....to the spiritual ear the whole scene makes a music at once human and rural and discourses pleasant reflections on the destiny of man. (86)

CHAPTER II

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(81) ibid, p.178.

(82) ibid, p.181.

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CHAPTER III

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPERSTITION AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN STEVENSON'S SCOTTISH FICTION

"..the most certain, though most
impalpable phenomena of human nature.."

The presentation of authentic impressions of Scotland necessitated Stevenson considering elements of the supernatural as closely as the natural. He wrote in the Gossip on Romance that "certain old houses demand to be haunted".(1) Stevenson's Scottish fiction suggests that he found the country as a whole demanding "to be haunted". (2) Through his fiction, a distinct bond emerged, between Scotland's physical geography and a prevalence amongst the population for ancient superstition and belief in the supernatural. The wild, rugged landscapes, the isolated settlements, and the dark foreboding nature of Edinburgh's Old Town suggested an aptness, or in Stevenson's words, "fitness", for dark and mysterious beliefs. The cure which Stevenson invested into his portrayals of Scotland's physical appearance actively encouraged the presence of superstitions and supernatural elements. The various considerations and references pertaining to 'bogles', witches, monsters, demons and the devil necessarily emerged from Stevenson's study of Scotland. They were as an intrinsic a part of the native culture as the mountains, the clans and the history of the country. This is not to say that Stevenson was an unquestioning believer in the various elements of superstition which he found and depicted in Scotland. His attitude transpires as one of interest and scepticism. However, as a writer, he could recognise the scope which considerations upon these matters could give to his fiction, and as a Scot, he could readily understand the importance which they had upon the Scottish character.

Stevenson was writing at a time of great social change and upheaval for Scotland. Edinburgh had rapidly expanded into a large and cosmopolitan city. Other towns were also experiencing unprecedented growth under the influence of the Industrial Revolution. Away from the towns, life in the countryside was also changing. As with other parts of Britain during the nineteenth century, rural life came under threat from both agricultural changes and the apparent attractions of the big towns. The result in Scotland, as in England, was a severe decline in the rural population, exacerbated by the policy of Highland Clearances. The result of such changes in Scotland's physical and human geography was a corresponding change in attitudes towards superstition and belief in the supernatural. A "modern", industrialised society had far less room for belief in witches, ghosts and devils than an "old", predominantly rural society where such superstitions were an integral part of life. It would always be easier to believe that the devil could visit a remote moorland parish such as "Balweary", rather than Prince's Street or the slums of Glasgow. The sense of "fitness" with which Stevenson was so concerned in his fiction correlates well with the reality about changing attitudes to the supernatural in Scotland during the nineteenth century. The steady erosion and undermining of traditional attitudes towards the supernatural matched Scotland's growing industrialization and "modernization".

Stevenson was not the first to identify this situation. James Hogg, 'the Ettrick Shepherd', had written in

the early part of the nineteenth century about the growth of the "modern philosophic mind", which was so damaging to the "breathings of superstition",(3) Hogg, unlike Stevenson, held an unshakeable belief in the reality and authenticity of ancient superstitions. This was certainly on account of his much closer contact with Scottish rusticity. In several of his short stories, he asserts very firmly the error of those who seek to belittle, question or ignore the importance and reality of superstitions and supernatural elements in human life. The story of The Mysterious Bride begins with the following assault upon such sceptics:

> A great number of people now a days are beginning broadly to insinuate that there are no such things as ghosts or spiritual beings visible to mortal sight. Even Sir Walter Scott is turned renegade, and with his stories made up of half-an-half, like Nathaniel Gow's toddy, is trying to throw cold water on the most certain, though most impalpable phenomena of human nature. The bodies are daft! L - mend their wits! (4)

Hogg's attitude to these matters is uncompromising, expressed not only through direct statements to the reader, but also from the nature of his fiction. His tales abound with ghosts and "bogles" and references to the devil. Never does he seek to undermine belief in these aspects of what he regarded as "nature". Stevenson had read both Hogg and Scott, and his own fiction betrays him hovering somewhere between them with regard to the supernatural. He emerges as equally adept at writing "half-an-half" tales in the manner of Scott, as at writing in a manner which would have thoroughly pleased Hogg.

The air of uncertainty and sharply shifting convictions about the supernatural in Stevenson's fiction indicates the author's personal confusion. His stance alters not only from story to story, but also within individual works. This is similar to, but not precisely like Scott's approach. There is nothing "half-an-half" about Thrawn Janet as that short story rapidly builds into a conflict between a man and the devil. Similarly, there is nothing equivocal about Gordon Darnaway's terror in The Merry Men as he charges to his death in the sea, pursued by a mysterious black man. However, even in stories as clearly weighted as these, at least one voice of contradiction is introduced. In Thrawn Janet, the minister who eventually confronts the devil had earlier reprimanded the women of his parish for believing that Janet was "sib to the de'il". (5) The narrator of The Merry Men is an even more forthright sceptic, dismissing his uncle's beliefs as "childish superstitions". (6) Stevenson himself, unlike Scott, remains aloof from the argument, as if presenting both sides of a debate, but studiously refusing to acknowledge which side he found most convincing. Thrawn Janet and The Merry Men might appear to confirm that he sided with Hogg, so powerfully rendered are the supernatural elements and so dumbfounded are the internal cynics. However, novels such as Kidnapped and Catriona contain elements which clearly mock superstitions and render them as fit for nothing more than a "winter's tale".

Stevenson did realise that Hogg's attitude had once been almost universal in Scotland. James VI had written books

on witches and the power of evil, almost making an academic study of the subject. During his reign in England, this Scottish monarch had raised the persecution of witches to an unprecedented level, and interest in the supernatural became a political, as well as scholastic concern. The history of James VI, combined with the more recent influence of Burns and Hogg suggested to Stevenson that there was something profoundly Scottish about the old attitudes towards the supernatural. It was also something which he believed could not be wholly subverted even by the influence of what Hogg termed "the modern philosophic mind". (7) The situation mirrors Stevenson's attitude towards Scotland's physical geography, in that ultimately he felt that nothing could wholly overthrow it. The modern, cynical mind is comparable with the "builders" who wreak changes upon the landscape, as it eats away at traditional superstition. However, just as Stevenson saw hope for Scotland's physical appearance, so he also seems to have seen hope for these darker aspects of the Scottish character:

> We have some possessions that not even the infuriate zeal of builders can utterly abolish and destroy. Nothing can abolish the hills, unless it be a cataclysm of nature which shall subvert Edinburgh Castle itself and lay all her florid structures in the dust. And as long as we have the hills and the Firth, we have a famous heritage to leave our children. (8)

Even the scholarly Scott had never firmly come down against superstition and the supernatural. His ghost stories, such as The Tapestried Chamber do exist in a kind of "half-an-half" limbo between acceptance and scepticism. Scott's voice echoes throughout the narrative as he introduces places, "there

were few marks of modern improvement"; and people, "whom we shall call Lord Woodville". (9) His controlling voice also comments upon attitudes towards the supernatural, enhancing the equivocal effect which Hogg so disliked:

> Lord Woodville never once asked him if he was sure he did not dream of the apparition, or suggested any of the possibilities by which it is fashionable to explain supernatural appearances as wild vagaries of the fancy or deceptions of the optic nerves. On the contrary, he seemed deeply impressed with the truth and reality of what he had heard. (10)

Stevenson's use of "supernatural appearances" and other aspects of traditional superstition was clearly much more than decorative, thrilling or amusing. His technique of distancing himself from the narrative by creating other narrators and carefully avoiding intruding with his own comments in the manner of Scott, makes his own opinions much harder to identify. However, his frequent presentations of the supernatural, superstition and evil in his Scottish fiction suggests that he would have accorded with the sentiments which Hogg expressed so well:

> I must likewise relate scenes so far out of the way of usual events, that the sophisticated gloss and polish thrown over by the modern philosophic mind may feel tainted by such antiquated breathings of superstition. Nevertheless, be it mine to cherish the visions that have been, as well as the hope of visions yet in reserve, far in the ocean of eternity, beyond the stars and the sun. For, after all, what is the soul of man without these? What but a cold phlegmatic influence so enclosed within the wall's of modern scepticism as scarcely to be envied by the spirits of the beasts that perish? (11)

Stevenson's involvement of the supernatural in his fiction can be divided into two methods. The first used the

supernatural as part of the background, as an essential but not emphasised aspect of the Scottish scene. This is the technique manifest in Kidnapped, Catriona and Weir of Hermiston. The second method, much more in the style of Hogg made this incidental background feature become the central focus of interest and observation. In stories such as The Merry Men, Thrawn Janet, Markheim and The Body-Snatcher, it is the supernatural element which takes priority and dominance over the direction of the fiction. This classification roughly correlates with Scott's technique in the former, and Hogg's in the latter, but as is so typical with Stevenson, it is impossible and erroneous to attempt to impose a strict classification upon his work. In the former group of novels, despite the prominence of matters such as politics, war, loyalty and love, there are distinct moments when the supernatural asserts itself and the various other elements lose their significance. Similarly, in such supernatural tales as Thrawn Janet, The Merry Men and The Body-Snatcher, not only is a voice of scepticism introduced, but also there are other aspects to the fiction. In The Merry Men, a kind of sub-plot exists concerning the narrator's search for a lost Spanish galleon, and in Thrawn Janet, Stevenson devotes considerable time to depicting the inhospitable and deeply Scottish nature of the landscape. The effect of this approach is to temper the importance of aspects in the fiction which apparently transcend reason and reality. This constant juxtaposition and equivocation reveals an uncertainty in Stevenson's mind, symptomatic of the changes facing nineteenth century Scottish

society. If Hogg could rail against Scott, he would have found Stevenson to be an even worse offender at making his stories in the manner of "Nathaniel Gow's toddy". (12)

Kidnapped and Catriona are not novels which offer a detailed presentation of Scottish superstitions and belief in the supernatural. In spite of the strong Scottish flavour to these works, it is the firm reality of landscape, character and society which is responsible for it, rather than the questionable reality of the supernatural. However on the broad canvas employed to present Scotland, it was necessary for Stevenson to include some consideration of that element of the Scottish character which was so susceptible to supernatural fears. The portrayal of the country would be incomplete without it, but it was Scotland's character as a whole which emerged as important, rather than each particular detail. The manner in which the supernatural is presented is comparable with the way in which the landscape, the weather and the society of Scotland is portrayed. Very different outlooks are considered, from the cynical to the gullible, and very different manifestations are depicted, from the chilling to the absurd.

The first contact with superstition occurs early in Kidnapped when David Balfour is seeking out the House of Shaws. He encounters a "stout, dark, sour-looking woman" (13) who shows him his uncle's home. Suddenly, the tone of the narrative shifts, as the woman calls down curses upon the house

and all associated with it, with the sinister implication that she is some kind of witch:

> "See here!" she cried again. "I spit upon the ground and crack my thumb at it! Black be its fall. If ye see the Laird, tell him what ye hear.... the curse on him and his house, byre, and stable, man, guest and master, wife, miss or bairn - black, black be their fall! (14)

This eruption of hatred and invocation of the supernatural in the form of a comprehensive curse strikes the reader as effectively as it strikes David. Although he attempts to reason against any meaning or threat in her words, he admits that her words, "falling so pat, like a wayside omen... took the pith out of my legs". (15) Until this point in the novel, there has been no reference to the supernatural, and this incident is one of the very few "supernatural" episodes to be found in Kidnapped. This is not to suggest that this brief encounter is a token piece of horror merely used to liven up the introductory chapters. It suggests rather that superstition and acceptance of the supernatural constantly lurks beneath the surface of Scottish life. The suddenness of Jennet's prominence emphasizes how rapidly this "black" tone can break out, into the previously rational tone of the narrative.

Jennet's appearance is magnificently unexpected. There has been no earlier indication that the fiction will involve anything supernatural, and only a few vague hints that there is something strange about the House of Shaws. The steady tone of the narrative is broken as Jennet Clouston's

face lights up with "malignant anger", (16) and the tranquillity established in the first chapter at Essendean is shattered by her vicious curse. It is a curse couched in traditional terms of evil, but an air of absurdity surrounds this woman, and Stevenson wisely does not make her linger in the narrative:

> And the woman, whose voice had risen to a kind of eldritch sing-song, turned with a skip and was gone. (17)

The figure is so conventionally depicted as a witch, that an element of fairy-tale seems to have crept into the fiction. It becomes even more difficult to take seriously the wild woman as an agent of evil as she reveals her own impotence. Twelve-hundred and nineteen times, she boasts to David, she has called down her curse upon the House of Shaws. Ebenezer later reveals this figure to correspond with the exact number of days since he evicted her. Her "curse" is evidently nothing than an out-pouring of bad-feeling and a desire for revenge, with no more sinister power than if it had not been so colourfully couched.

However, despite these weaknesses in the presentation of Jennet Clouston as a realistic character, she does disturb David Balfour. In reflecting upon the incident from a much later date, and with a more mature outlook, he explains his terror of the woman; "in those days, folk still believed in witches and trembled at a curse". (18) At the time, Jennet is certainly not ridiculous, either in the eyes of the fearful

David, or the angry Ebenezer, who vows to "have her roasted on red peats" for being "a proclaimed witch".(19)

Jennet Cloustons's presence in Kidnapped is very brief, is never referred to again and has no bearing upon the plot. Even when David assumes his rightful inheritance, no suggestion is made that he has the witch's curse to thank! From this, it is clear that her presence within the novel is solely as one of background. That is not to cast her as irrelevant, but as a significant part of the Scottish scene, as recognizable and as distinct as the hills, the heather or Edinburgh Castle. Although completely incidental to the plot of the novel, she assumes importance as a feature and a symbol of Scottish superstition. Her role is as part of the active background within which Stevenson set his Scottish fiction. Her brief period of prominence emphasizes the importance which Stevenson ascribed to placing his characters within a realistically varied and familiar world, rather than in front of an undramatic back-drop.

A useful comparison can be drawn between Jennet Clouston and two other "eldritch" women who appear in Stevenson's Scottish fiction. The first is the hag which David Balfour encounters early in Catriona, and the second is the disturbing figure of Janet M'Clour in Thrawn Janet. Both of these women share similarities with Jennet, but also represent further gradations of evil and far less a sense of absurdity.

David encounters his second weird woman at a place exuding "fitness" for such a meeting. The woman is almost an essential part of the scene, just as the witches in Macbeth appear to justify the existence of the "blasted heath". (20) In Catriona, the woman is as much a part of the landscape as Mounter's Hill and the gibbet outside Picardy. It is a macabre scene which Stevenson evokes:

> A gibbet, and two men hanged in chains. They were dipped in tar, as the manner is; the wind spun them, the chains clattered, and the birds hung about the uncanny jumping-jacks and cried. (21)

The hag sitting at the foot of the gallows harmonizes with this scene of death and terror, and does not strike the reader as an incongruous or unnecessary manifestation of Stevenson's interest in the supernatural. However, David at first regards her as a mere oddity as she "nodded and talked aloud to herself with becks and courtesies", dismissing her as a "daft limmer". (22) This seems to be a very reasonable reaction until, like Jennet Clouston, she steps forward for a brief period of prominence. She offers to read David's palm. At once, the tone changes, and as she begins to speak about his situation, the atmosphere becomes distinctly menacing. David's scepticism is suddenly arrested, and he is "struck hard" (23) by her strangely accurate words. It must be more than chance that should make her refer to, "a bonnie lassie that has bricht een... a wee man is a braw coat... and a big man is a powdered wig..." (24) Such clear references to Catriona, Alan and the Lord Advocate from this mysterious woman not known to David, and in this desolate place, are far more shocking than Jennet's oratorical curse upon the

House of Shaws. As the strange woman starts to speak of the "shadow of the gallows" lying across his path and urges David to permit Auld Merren to "spae his weird", the sense of a supernatural presence becomes overpowering. David's rapid flight from Auld Merren, and his reference to her as an "eldritch creature" is understandable. From being an absurd old woman, Auld Merren is transformed in just a few moments into an agent of evil. Despite her conventional appearance, she emerges as a most convincing incarnation of the supernatural. This incident is not rounded off with a neat, mature statement about how in "those days folk still believed in witches". (25) There is no direct undercutting of the impression created by this woman, no suggestion that she is a fraud, or a quaint instance of bygone superstition.

The reason for Merren's existence in the novel, like Jennet Clouston, has nothing to do with plot development. Once David has fled from her, no further reference is made to the encounter, and although she had clearly identified aspects of David's past and present she was not allowed to define his future. In contrast to the situation in Macbeth this is a witch who utters no prophecies despite her evident ability to do so. She can, therefore, have no influence or power over David, and nor can he blame a supernatural influence for his future disasters. Auld Merren takes her place in the novel as a memorable representation of the superstitious elements which could be found in Scotland. Stevenson's control of such superstition is strong, preventing it from taking hold of the

plot. He whisked David away from the hag at the very moment when the supernatural was most likely to take control of the narrative's direction. As the image of the old woman recedes into David's memory, so she recedes in the reader's mind, to become a vague memory of the Scottish scene. She is important as a palpable representative of the belief in the supernatural which was so much a part of Scottish society, but Stevenson clearly did not intend either Kidnapped or Catriona to become so entangled with the supernatural that this aspect should become dominant. In allowing Jennet Clouston and Auld Merren a few moments of prominence in the narrative, Stevenson was acknowledging that such creatures must exist in his fiction if he was to present a faithful picture of Scotland. However, in his disarming of Jennet and his dismissing of Merren, he prevented his stories becoming mere tales of the supernatural.

The third example of an "eldritch" woman in Stevenson's Scottish fiction is much more central to the plot, and even gives the short story its title, Thrawn Janet. This is a tale where the supernatural and the superstitious remains under constant scrutiny as a terrible story of diabolical possession is unravelled.

Janet M'Clour is introduced in a manner which is strikingly similar to the introductions of Jennet Clouston and Auld Merren. She is referred to as an "auld limmer", and enjoys a reputation with the parish of Balweary which well reflects the attitudes of a superstitiously-obsessed society:

> Janet was mair than suspeckit by the best folk in Balweary. Lang or that, she had a wean to a dragoon; she hadna come forrit for maybe thretty year, and bairns had seen her mumblin' to hersel' up on Key's Loan in the gloamin', which was an unco time an' place for a God-fearin' woman. (26)

Her reputation in the area as a witch is based upon typically superstitious and ancient evidence. Her physical appearance, her failure to take Communion and her habit of frequenting a lonely spot contribute to the parishoner's belief that she is an unnatural and almost certainly evil figure. Stevenson could have written a story which exposed the absurdity of such old-fashioned and nonsensical attitudes by presenting Janet as an innocent and misunderstood victim of superstition. However, Stevenson elected not to do this, and created a story which concluded with even the cynical narrator convinced that Janet was indeed "sib to the de'il". Stevenson leaves the reader with no other option but to concur with this, graphically affirming the initial feelings of the credulous parishoners.

Ironically, the suggestion that the fears of the villagers of Balweary might be justified, first occurs as Mr Soulis attempts to prove the absurdity of their attitudes. He is a modern-minded priest who is anxious to remove such ancient superstitions from his parish. In front of his parishoners, he asks Janet to renounce the devil and thereby allay the people's fears. The result of this test is presumably not quite in accordance with Soulis' expectations:

> When he askit that, she gave a girn that fairly frichit them that saw her, an' they could hear her teeth play dirl tegither in her chafts; but there was naething for it, but the ae way or the ither; an' Janet lifted up her hand an' renounced the de'il before them a'. (27)

This startling reaction confirms to the people that their apprehensions are justified, and triggers doubts in the minds of Soulis and the reader which the remainder of the tale only serves to confirm.

After her forced renunciation of the devil, Janet undergoes a terrible transformation which the minister vainly tries to explain as "a stroke of the palsy", occasioned by the "folk's cruelty to her". (28) With skilful subtlety Stevenson builds up the sense that the villagers are accurate in their perceptions of Janet. Although Soulis stands for reason, modern-thinking and Christianity, his words become increasingly empty in the face of the real horror which Janet represents.

> For there was Janet comin' down the clachan - her or her likeness, none could tell - wi' her neck thrawn, an' her heid on ae side like a body that has been hangit; an' a girn on her face like an unstreakit corp... she couldna speak like a Christian woman, but slavered an' played click wi' her teeth like a pair of shears. (29)

Stevenson retains a degree of ambiguity about the nature of Janet M'Clour for as long as possible, an ambiguity which Hogg would have condemned but which gives the story a potent force of realism. The modern, philosophic mind of Soulis is pitted against the might of folklore and superstition. Janet stands between these two forces as a mute symbol of the divisions in Scottish society which attitudes towards the supernatural could

arouse. Thrawn Janet is much more a story about those living around her, and the clash between nineteenth century Christianity and popular traditions which belonged to the sixteenth century, than about the woman herself. She is not quite peripheral to the tale, but Stevenson only uses her as a trigger to an exploration of Scottish attitudes and superstitions. Janet is in no way a tragic figure, seeking the reader's pity and understanding. She is too shadowy and ill-defined for that. Such an approach weakens the tale in terms of sympathetic involvement, but does not affect its power as a piece of supernatural writing.

Janet's appearance gradually affects the cynical and Christian Soulis. His growing unease is comparable with that experienced by David Balfour in his encounters with "eldritch creatures", and he attempts, like David to dismiss his fears as being foolish. David had told himself that Merren's uncannily accurate remarks were "mere chance". As Soulis looks out upon Janet tramping in the Dule water with her diabolical expression and uncanny "croonin' to herself", he struggles to fight back growing fears that his modern mind has encountered something with which it cannot deal. This realisation strikes Soulis' world as the security of modern attitudes is both challenged and destroyed.

> He, for his part, hardly kenned what he was lookin' at. Syne she turned round, an showed her face; Mr Soulis had the same cauld grue as twice that day afore, an' it was borne in upon him what folk said, that Janet was deid long syne, an' this was a bogle in her clay-cauld flesh... she was tramp-trampin' in the claes, croonin' to herself and eh! Gude guide us but it was a fearsome

face. (30)

The narrator of the tale is one of the "older folk" of the parish, warmed "into courage over his third tumbler" (31) and completely convinced from the start about the reality of the supernatural. Soulis, in contrast, strives to ignore the evidence of his senses and the insinuations of his parishoners. He reprimands himself for entertaining fears about Janet, "a puir, auld, afflicted wife that hadna a freend forbye himsel'." (32) His holding on to modern cynicism is certainly tenacious, if ultimately, futile.

However, even Soulis' tenacity is broken by the events which occur in his house. He is confronted with Janet's corpse hanging from a nail in her room, miraculously suspended about the floor by "a single worsted thread". Then the "corpse" walks out of the room, onto the landing, presenting a most terrifying spectacle. The final confrontation between Janet and Soulis leaves no room for doubts about the nature of Janet's situation, and the reality of "the powers of evil". Amidst a suitably apocalyptic thunderstorm, Soulis turns upon the being, no longer feeling that it is only an "auld friendless wife". His words echo with strongly "gothic" tones and finally God appears to intervene:

> "Witch, beldame, devil", he cried; "I charge you by the power of God, begone! If you be dead, to the grave - if you be damned, to hell!" (33)

A great flash of lightning strook the "horror whaur it stood", and reduced it to ashes, freeing the parish, and Soulis, from

diabolical influence.

The difficulty with comparing the eldritch woman in Kidnapped, Catriona and Thrawn Janet concerns the nature of the narrator. David Balfour is an intelligent young man, filled with a lively scepticism but also possessing a responsive spirit. He does not casually dismiss his encounters with "weird women", but is not disturbed by them for long, nor is he inclined to pursue them further. The narrator of Thrawn Janet is a superstitious, old man, harbouring no doubts about the existence of the devil, witches, bogles and other supernatural paraphrenalia. His attitude of conviction is firmly asserted in the final paragraphs as he states that the devil had certainly taken possession of Janet's body:

> There's little doubt but it was him that dwalled sae long in Janet's body; but he was awa' at last; an sinsyne, the de'il has never fashed us in Ba'weary. (34)

Stevenson carefully moderates this unquestioning belief through the creation of Soulis, a necessary voice of reason, even if it is within a place where reason is usurped.

Despite the contrast of narrators, the three "eldritch women" in Stevenson's Scottish fictions do share affinities, reflecting popular Scottish superstition. In Kidnapped and Catriona their presence is as part of the living Scottish background, in which the story of David exists. Thrawn Janet is a very different work. Stevenson's wife even recorded that the writing of it frightened her husband:

> By the time the tale was finished, my husband had fairly frightened himself, and we crept down the stairs clinging hand in hand like two scared children. (35)

Without this story, Stevenson's attitude to witches and witchcraft would appear acutely sceptical. In Kidnapped and Catriona, he did little more than acknowledge belief in witches as an interesting feature of the Scottish canon of superstition. In creating a tale of such intense and unquestionable horror as Thrawn Janet, Stevenson wrote in a style very similar to James Hogg's. Hogg would not have been pleased with the cursory treatment given to Jennet and Auld Merren, but with Thrawn Janet he would have been satisfied. In overwhelming Soulis' sceptical approach to rustic Scottish superstition, Stevenson made a powerful affirmation of the existence of the supernatural, and exposed further the range of his artistic skill in portraying his country.

It would be wrong to suggest that because of the success of Thrawn Janet and Stevenson's own reflection that "he had really, as he said, "pulled it off"" (36) his affinities as a writer, lay close to Hogg. Thrawn Janet stands out from his Scottish fiction because it is a tale in which the supernatural is unashamedly real. The narrator of the tale is responsible for this presentation; Stevenson having carefully distanced his own hand before the story begins:

> Now and again, only, one of the older folk would warm into courage over his third tumbler, and recount the cause of the minister's strange looks and solitary life. (37)

Stevenson's own voice in his fiction, or that of one of his more clearly defined narrators considered the question of the supernatural with a much lesser degree of belief. The attitude which emerges from Kidnapped, Catriona, the Master of Ballantrae and The Merry Men is distinctly agnostic with regard to the supernatural, never completely dismissive, but never completely credulous. Hogg would have been disappointed that the hand which wrote Thrawn Janet could so debase itself in these other works.

Stevenson's pursuit of Scottish superstitions led him to consider the most Scottish of all fiends, the "bogle". "Bogle" is a generic term, covering a wide-range of evil and supernatural elements. It also clearly served as a useful excuse for irrational and uncharacteristic fears. Catriona, for example, put her fears of the darkness down to a belief in bogles, when she was telling of her part in the Jacobite Rebellion:

> "Yes I have walked in the night, many's the time, and my heart great in me for terror of the darkness. It is a strange thing I will never have been meddled with a bogle, but they say a maid goes safe". (38)

Without any embarrassment, Catriona repeats the superstitious beliefs prevalent in the remoter parts of Scotland at the end of the eighteenth century. She does not question the existence of bogles but finds a common superstition to explain her never encountering one. Her unquestioning attitude is not challenged,

either by David Balfour or by Stevenson. It is allowed to stand as a testimony to the pervading superstitions of Catriona's time and place, as incontrovertible as the landscape.

In his Scottish fiction, Stevenson established a very close association between "bogles" and eerie locations. The strong undercurrent of belief in such creatures, as demonstrated by Catriona, enhanced the weirdness of landscapes. Simultaneously, the mysterious, spectacular and threatening landscapes of Scotland offered powerful justification for belief in various spirits and fiends. During the crossing of Rannoch Moor, David Balfour describes the unpleasant landscape through which he and Alan are travelling, and the "horrible imaginings" (39) which automatically arise in him. The sombre, strange moorland stimulates his imagination into the creation of superstitious fears. The landscape acts not only upon David's physical condition, but also affects his psychological state. His spirits are depressed and his mind opened to supernatural suggestions.

> And for the best part of three nights we travelled on eerie mountains and among the well-heads of wild rivers; often buried in mist, almost continually blown and rained upon, and not once cheered by any glimpse of sunshine. (40)

A parallel can be drawn once more with Macbeth. Macbeth's encounter with the "weird sisters" was upon a suitably "blasted heath". The atmosphere and landscape surrounding their appearance harmonized with their nature, and contributed to the

assailing of Macbeth's spirits. David Balfour's sceptical spirit is broken by the dismal and eerie nature of his surroundings. As his body becomes fatigued by the incessant clambering over "breakneck hills and among rude crags", (41) his mind becomes increasingly receptive to superstitions which in other circumstances he would have ignored or even mocked.

The final trigger to David's fears is the sound of "an infinite number of rivers", which on account of the prevailing spate conditions suggest to him a voice, "now booming like thunder, now with an angry cry". (42) In the face of such onslaughts upon his body, his senses and his confused mind, he finds it easy to comprehend stories about a bogle of rivers and streams, the 'Water Kelpie':

> I could well understand the story of the Water Kelpie, that demon of the streams, who is fabled to keep wailing and roaring at the ford until the coming of the doomed traveller. Alan I saw believed it, or half believed it; and when the cry of the river rose more than usually sharp I was little surprised... to see him cross himself in the manner of the Catholics. (43)

Alan and David do not encounter any "bogles". Like Catriona, they proceed unmolested by such demons. The tone of David's narrative, written as it is from a future position, suggests that the Water Kelpie is no more than a "story". David's use of words such as "story" and "fabled", indicates his desire to distance himself from such beliefs, just as Stevenson himself did by employing character-narrators in his fiction. Stevenson wisely refrained from creating an incongruous encounter between David and a "bogle" but also

carefully avoided completely dismissing such a possibility. The plots of Kidnapped and Catriona do not require active supernatural involvement. They would forfeit their status as successful historical romances if the supernatural was permitted to intrude. However, throughout these works, there lies an acknowledgement of the beliefs and fears which so possessed people from all levels of Scottish society at the time. Even in these stories of political intrigue and historical authenticity Stevenson does not desert the "breathings of superstition" which James Hogg had so cherished. Such "breathings" were, after all, an integral part of the historical scene.

The most prolonged and fascinating breath of superstition in the story of David Balfour occurs during his confinement upon the Bass Rock in Catriona. Suddenly, one of David's gaolers takes over the narrative and the reader is plunged into a sinister Highland story of the supernatural, "Black Andie's tale of Tod Lapraik". (44).

Once again, the geographical environment combines with David's emotional position in preparation for the introduction of the supernatural. The isolated Bass Rock, the strange noises continually reverberating around it, the frightening appearance of the Highlanders and the total hopelessness of David's situation are factors building towards Andie's tale. Although the story can be read in isolation from the rest of the novel, it is only as an integral part of David's adventures

that it can best be appreciated. It is a further part of the collage of impressions with which David is beset in his gradual understanding of Scotland.

David prompts Andie into his story-telling when he is puzzled by the mysterious statement that the Bass had been witness to creatures "waur then bogles". The fiend which Andie states had lived upon the rock was a "warlock", and as David and his Highland custodians sit around a fire upon that strange rock he offers to relate the "queer tale". With David and the others being for once "all of the one mind", David's narrative is suspended, replaced temporarily by that of Black Andie. (45).

Andie's tale, in the third person and in very heavy dialect, effectively places the reader alongside David on the Bass Rock. To have reported the story indirectly, through the medium of David's own narrative, would have been a disappointing dilution of effect. Elsewhere in Kidnapped and Catriona, David Balfour recorded his conversations and the words of other characters. However, just as with the evocations of the landscape, it was always clear that David was the author, and the perspective was consistently from his point of view. The suppression of this style for the account of the Tale of Tod Lapraik, gives this incident added emphasis. The ability to lift this chapter out of the novel and read it as a short story, suggests that it is not a necessary part of the structure of Catriona and that it could even jar with the rest

of the novel. It does indeed serve no purpose in the development of the plot, but it is wrong to regard it as an incongruous aspect of the novel. Although Andie's Highland voice breaks into the narrative as a surprise, Stevenson has carefully orchestrated a build-up to this point.

David's attempts to give suitable impressions of the strange nature of the Bass Rock are vague. There is something about the place which he does not understand, and which his Lowland sensibility cannot feel. The Highlanders are very different, and David quietly notices their susceptibility to "superstitious fear." Although he sees his guards as "tractable, simple creatures", (46) he does not mock their fears. Gradually, his anger and frustration from being restrained on the rock give way to a growing unease and a sharing of the Highlander's fears. The urge to escape from the rock in order to fulfil his political and judicial commitments is superseded as the strange atmosphere of the Bass Rock makes itself tangibly apparent. The weird place, like the isolated gallows or the parish of Balweary demands to be haunted. The Highlanders' response to their environment is much more rapid than David's, but he is not belittling their reaction when he speaks of the natural causes behind their supernatural fears.

> Dwelling in that isolated place, in the old falling ruins of a prison, and among endless strange sounds of the sea and the sea-birds, I thought I perceived in them early, the effects of superstitious fear. (47)

The most striking description of how the nature of the Bass could disturb a man, concerns once of the Highlanders who

physically betrays the terror of his mind:

> I would see him sit and listen and look about him in a progression of uneasiness. Starting, his face blanching, his hands clutched, a man strung like a bow. (48)

This image highlights the susceptibility of even the toughest men in Scotland to superstition and active supernatural fear. David's unease is largely derived from his observation of his keepers. Although he does not understand their Gaelic, their reactions speak a universal language:

> The nature of these fears I had never an occasion to find out, but the sight of them was catching. (49)

The "sight" of fear in another, instilling fear in the beholder, is an idea which is found in other parts of Stevenson's Scottish fiction. It was an approach which permitted Stevenson to create an atmosphere of threat, unease or terror without explicitly delineating the cause. In addition, by presenting the effects of supernatural fear, but not the supernatural element itself, he could write in a way that was simultaneously realistic and romantic. Hogg might have seen such a method as another example of a "half-an-half" approach, committing the story to neither side. Stevenson's skill in his handling of the supernatural in Scotland was to present it as appearing highly likely, but not to the exclusion of all doubt. Men such as the Highlanders on the Bass or Gordon Darnaway on Aros are convinced of the reality of the supernatural. Their intense fears are presented realistically, but Stevenson constantly preserves a feeling that perhaps they

may be deceived and that they suffer no other visitant than a fevered imagination. The infectious nature of superstitious fears was an important theme of both David's imprisonment on the Bass, and the short story, The Merry Men.

The narrator of The Merry Men is a young Lowlander, a student at Edinburgh University, and shows much similarity to David Balfour. The first statement which he makes about himself, as he sets out for his uncle's house at Aros is that he was "far from being a native of these parts". (50) Like David Balfour, he encounters superstitions and beliefs with which he has never before been in contact. He met these attitudes with an air of intelligent scepticism, speaking of how "the country people had many a story about Aros", (51) which included, "sea kelpies", "mermaids" and Gaelic-speaking seals. His dismissal of such tales as "old wives stories" made his later reactions, like those of David on the Bass, much more striking.

In Gordon Darnaway, the narrator encounters a man obsessed with the supernatural, consumed with unnatural fears and eventually driven by personal terrors to his death. Darnaway's terrors are first presented during the great storm at Aros. His fear infects those around him even though, like Faustus, his terrors are personal. As the sea and the chain of rocks assert their almost demonical power to consume another hapless ship, Darnaway appears to be enjoying the murderous spectable. However, his uncontrollable shouting and constant

drinking suggests that this is nothing more than bravado, a pathetic attempt to cover up the terrors which so dominate his mind. He is terrified of the sea, convinced of its inherent supernatural and evil nature. Although the young narrator does not share his uncle's superstitions, and had even mocked such beliefs, on the day after the storm, he finds Darnaway's appearance sufficiently shocking to make him question his own preconceived attitudes. He fails to understand his uncle's terror, but is disturbed by its power. It is a situation similar to that in Macbeth, where none of Macbeth's guests can see the ghost of Banquo. Despite this, they are disturbed and frightened by Macbeth's manifest fear. Darnaway reacts very much as Macbeth did to the vision of Banquo, the source of his terror being the sea:

> His terror of the sea, although conquered for the moment was still undiminished; had the sea been a lake of living flames, he could not have shrunk more panically from its touch; and once, when his foot slipped and he plunged to the mid-leg into a pool of water, the shriek that came up out of his soul was like the cry of death. (52)

The vivid portrayal of fear in Darnaway is presented in much greater detail than the vague fears of Balfour's gaolers, but in both instances, the presentations of fear precede an unusual development in the narrative. In Catriona, the fear of the Highlanders set up an appropriate tone for the telling of Andie's tale. It is an effective preliminary, permitting the terrible tale to knit itself into the fabric of the novel. In The Merry Men, Darnaway's terror and his demonic response to the sea and the storm prepares for

the apocalyptic appearance of the "black man". By the time that the "black man" appears, it is not only Darnaway's mind which is filled with fear. His nephew has also been infected and his reaction of horror at the sudden appearance is understandable and ironically, very realistic.

> I turned, and if I was not appalled to the same degree, [as Darnaway] as I return thanks to heaven that I had not the cause, I was still startled by the sight that met my eyes. The form of a man stood upright on the cabin-hatch of the wrecked ship; his back was towards us; he appeared to be scanning the offing with shaded eyes, and his figure was relieved to its full height, which was plainly very great against the sea and sky. I have said a thousand times that I am not superstitious, but at that moment, with my mind running upon death and sin, the unexplained appearance of a stranger on that sea-girt solitary island filled me with a surprise that bordered close on terror. (53)

The technique of instilling fear in characters with intelligent, cynical and "modern" outlooks, merely by placing them in proximity to figures who are their very opposites is a striking feature of Stevenson's Scottish fiction. The superstitious and fearful characters never fall under the influence of those who mock them. By the end of The Merry Men, the young nephew is filled with uncertainty regarding the nature of the "black man". In witnessing the violent death of his uncle in the sea, he inherited that man's darkest fears. The jokes about "old wives stories" are no longer made; the mood at the end of the story is very sombre, filled with the "breathings of superstition". Similarly, David Balfour is rendered subdued and silent by Andie's tale. The firm belief in evil and in the truth of Andie's tale shown by the Highlanders infected David as powerfully as the strange noises

and weird landscapes of the Highlands. In presenting the contrasts between superstitious and non-superstitious Scottish characters Stevenson not only explored the possibilities of each extreme, but also the power of the former over the latter. The men who accept and believe in superstition and the supernatural continually win the argument, undercutting all the attacks of cynicism or rational though. Murdock Soulis, Darnaway's nephew and David Balfour are all made to reconsider their assumptions about the supernatural; the parishoners of Balweary, Gordon Darnaway and David's gaolers never do. If Stevenson wrote with a "half-an-half" style, it is one which certainly concluded with a bias towards acceptance of the supernatural.

Black Andie's tale works through crescendo. It is an agglomeration of strange episodes, linked together by the theme of supernatural interference. It is not so much a tale of one man, rather a recent history of supernatural activity upon the rock. The language in which the tale is told, [a very strong Scottish dialect], the geography which is evoked, and the series of events which are considered combine to give this part of Catriona a profoundly Scottish feel. It once more demonstrates Stevenson's perception of Scotland as a country breathing superstition, demanding to be haunted by elements of the supernatural. It also indicates how strong an influence Stevenson allowed such beliefs to have upon his Scottish fiction.

The tale itself, like Kidnapped and Catriona, opens with a precise definition of its geographical and historical setting. It is located "upon the Bass", during the "Days of the Persecution", the time of the Scottish Covenanting Martyrs. (54) Andie's father, Tam Dale is an agent of this religious persecution, only a simple soldier, but perceptive enough to feel unease at "hagging and hashing at Christs' kirk". (55) The first indication of supernatural activity upon the Bass surrounds the old Covenanter, Peden the Prophet. He castigates a girl who mocks him, telling her that he can foresee her violent death. A few days later, his prophecy is uncannily fulfilled when the girl is blown off the Bass by a sudden gust of wind. This event gives rise to an interesting paradox. Peden is a religious man, even referred to as a "saint". His words to the girl suggest the reality of divine retribution, but a retribution which is disturbingly out of proportion. For mocking his devotions, the girl appears to have incurred a deadly punishment:

> "the Lord has a deid shot prepared for you". (56)

Peden is not an agent of evil, but his appearance is unnatural, "wild's a peat hag, fearsome to look at", and his words are described as "like coals of fire". (57) He is a Christian martyr who elicits no pity. His part in this strange event is menacing, bordering upon the supernatural, as Christianity takes on the machinery of evil.

Peden continues to be a disturbing force upon the island, striking such fear into Tam Dale by his statement that he can "see the de'il at his oxter", that Tam gives up his soldiership:

> "I will nae mair lift arms against the cause o' Christ". (58)

Peden represents an extreme form of Christianity, generating fear and a strong sense of the supernatural. He is a prophet of terror with his faith in a God of violent retribution, and a conviction in the reality of the devil. The presentation of this character is completely incidental to the tale of Tod Lapraik, having no direct bearing at all upon this tale. However, this introduction does serve to establish the rock as historically suitable for weird happenings, just as the Praying Weaver's stone in Weir of Hermiston is a suitable place for further bloodshed, having witnessed it once before. Until this point, David Balfour has only felt the Bass to be an "unco" place because of its isolation and the strange sounds "of the calling of the Solans, and the plash of the sea and the rock echoes that hung continually" (59) The story of Prophet Peden, the apparent curse laid upon Tam's girl, and the reference to the devil standing near Tam gives the place a much more sinister atmosphere.

Andie eventually narrates the tale of Tod Lapriak, and although it is very short, it is told with an intensity and a directness which makes it sublimely successful as a story of the supernatural. The odd dispute with the Highlanders at the

end of the telling, would suggest that it was similar to other Scottish stories, drawn from the canon of Scottish supernatural fiction. This is not important. The significance lies with the fact that for a brief time, a voice other than David's controls the narrative. David sits silent, perhaps like Stevenson, unable to comment upon the story when it is concluded.

The tale is filled with such elements of Scottish superstition and understanding of evil as would have pleased James Hogg. Todd Lapraik is clearly the victim of "possession". His unnatural "dwams" are occasions when his possessed soul leaves his body to take on other likenesses. Tam Dale is attacked by one of these supernatural manifestations. As he collects young geese from the cliffs of the Bass, a large goose attempts to drive him onto the rocks below:

> There was never the solan made that wroucht as that solan wroucht; and it seemed to understand its employ, brawly birzing the soft rope between the neb of it and a crunkled jag o' stone.
>
> There gaed a could stench o' fear into Tam's heart. "This thing is nae bird" thinks he. (60)

The confirmation of Lapraik being "no canny" occurs when Andie himself goes on a fishing expedition with his grandfather and another man. They see a human figure cavorting upon the Bass Rock. At first the image appears ridiculous, but within the context of this sinister tale, a sense of evil is rapidly asserted:

> He was in a crinkle o' green brae, a wee below the chaipel, a' by his lee lane, and lowped and play and danced like a daft queen at a waddin'. (61)

The figure is that of Tod Lapraik, or as Andie's grandfather darkly puts it, "ane in the likeness o' him". It is evident that the only possible explanation for this dancing figure, like that for "Thrawn Janet", must be an unnatural one. Andie refers to the capering man upon the rock not as "he", but as "it", reinforcing the suggestion that it is not human. The reason for the disturbing, macabre dance is ascribed to a terrible kind of happiness:

> It was joy in the creature's heart; the joy o' hell, I daursay; joy whatever! (62)

The paradox of "joy" representing such intense horror is effective. It was also a powerful feature of <u>Thrawn Janet.</u> There, one of the most frightening aspects of the girl's possession had been her grin and her inane dancing in the burn. Such perversion of happiness gives to these manifestations of the supernatural an extra element of horror.

Andie's tale is rapidly concluded. The dancing fiend is shot with both lead and a silver "tester", upon which it vanishes. This is the moment when any doubts about something supernatural cavorting on the Bass are completely eschewed. Upon Sandie's shooting of the dancing "wonder", people in the town had seen Lapraik wake from his "dwam" and then fall dead with the "silver tester" in his heart. The proof of Lapraik's existence as a warlock lies with the superstition that although

lead was useless against such monsters, silver was not.

> My grandsire gied Sandie a siller tester to pit in his gun wi' the lead draps, bein' mair deidly again bogles. (63)

There is much that is odd about the inclusion of the story of Tod Lapraik in Catriona. Rather like the encounters between David and "eldritch women", it is an incident which has no bearing upon the plot and which is never recalled later. Upon finishing his narrative, Andie is once more faced with the animosity of his fellow Highlanders who doubt the originality of his story. Stevenson seems at pains to dissolve rapidly the atmosphere created by Andie's tale. He makes David recall his worldly commitments and begin again his plans to get away from the Bass. During the description of the "unco" nature of the Bass and during Andie's tale such matters had been suspended, and almost forgotten. Stevenson is keen not to let the supernatural become the sole focus of interest in this novel, and the sudden change of tone after Andie's tale, although a little jarring, does prevent this from happening.

Stevenson's method in introducing, developing and then apparently ignoring the "Tale of Tod Lapraik" is very similar to that employed by Sir Walter Scott in Redgauntlet with regard to "Wandering Willie's Tale". This also constitutes a part of the narrative which can be lifted whole from the novel and read in its own right as a masterful tale of the supernatural. Like the Tale of Tod Lapraik, Wandering Willie's Tale is also recounted by a figure who briefly takes on the role of

narrator. The narrator of Redgauntlet, introduces Willie's narrative, acknowledging that neither the story, nor the words are his own:

> He commenced his tale accordingly, in a distinct narrative tone of voice, which he raised and depressed with considerable skill - at times sinking almost into a whisper... I will not spare a syllable of it, although it be of the longest; so I make a dash - and begin: (64)

Willie's language, like Andie's is of a heavily accented Highland dialect, offering a strident contrast with the preceding prose. It is a longer tale than Andie's and again seems like an intermission in the novel. The events of the main plot are forgotten as Willie weaves his story of devils and warlocks. Scott, like Stevenson, also seems keen to prevent his novel speeding too long in the world of the supernatural, and cleverly brings it back onto the rails when Willie finishes his story:

> "Look out my gentle chap", he resumed in a different tone; "ye should see the lights at Brokenburn Glen by this time". (65)

Stevenson's use of Andie's tale does much to maintain the flavour of Scotland in Catriona, at a point where there is a danger that it might be lost. Catriona is a much more political novel than Kidnapped and the influence of Scotland is less easily discerned. Stevenson devotes considerable time to David's relationships with several ladies and to the political and legal machinations of London and Edinburgh. There is much less description of Scotland's geography, much less traversing of the Highlands, and much less the sense of a country being

explored, and defined. When David embarks from Leith in this novel his destination is not the Highlands and Islands, but the new world of "the continent". Catriona is a novel with a Scottish foundation, but it is not as strongly permeated with the flavour of that country as either Kidnapped, Weir of Hermiston, or stories such as Thrawn Janet and The Merry Men. Black Andie's tale, with its content, dialect and style affirms the Scottish influence behind the novel. Within the context of the novel, it serves to afford David Balfour with another of Scotland's aspects. The "breathings of superstition" transpiring through the medium of a well-told story of the supernatural emerge with as much significance to the Scottish character as "the hills and the Firth". (66). The dispute between Andie and Neil over the origin of the tale suggests that it is very typical of its genre, and David's contact with such a familiar tale is a further lesson towards his growing understanding of the nature of Scotland. In Kidnapped, his education had been harshly physical as he was taken on a voyage of discovery through the wild Highlands. His discoveries in Catriona are of a much more psychological kind. He is confronted with the people who govern the country, the strong bonds of clan-spirit and in Andie's tale, a dramatic demonstration of attitudes towards the supernatural. His education here is guided towards an understanding of the people of Scotland and how they harmonize or clash with the country's physical georgraphy.

The ultimate "bogle" in Scottish superstition is the

devil. He was a figure readily conceived with a physical presence in Scottish literary tradition, complementing depictions of "eldritch women", "warlocks" and other "bogles". There is much less a sense of "half-an-half" conviction about the existence of the devil than other supernatural paraphernalia in Stevenson's fiction. He brought the nature of the devil under close scrutiny and even depicted him in various recognizable guises. Stevenson clearly believed in evil, and his presentations of a tangible Satan figure reflect this conviction. However, Stevenson did not unequivocally assert the reality of the devil in his fiction. As with other considerations upon the supernatural, sceptics live in the same stories as believers, and alongside even more zealous converts. His own voice is rarely heard in his Scottish fiction. His communities of characters speak, argue and think for him, delineating not only Stevenson's own attitudes but also those which prevailed in people throughout Scotland.

The importance of the devil in Stevenson's Scottish fiction is apparent both in works where involvement extends no further than that of another aspect of the Scottish background, and in works where it is a central, dynamic feature of the plot. Belief in the devil was the most widely held superstition in the supernatural panorama of tales such as Kidnapped, Catriona, The Master of Ballantrae and Weir of Hermiston. Stevenson's treatment of this theme extends from jovial, almost contemptuous references to "Auld Hornie" (67) to chilling presentations of satanic evil. A reviewer of

Stevenson's collection of tales under the title "The Merry Men" considered his attitude towards the existence of the devil:

> He probably does not believe that the devil habitually takes shape of men or beast or fish the better to work his wicked will; but if he didn't come very near that, he couldn't make his reader afraid to look over his shoulder lest he should see the Prince of Darkness behind him. The personal and incarnate devil is a conspicuous figure in most of the stories. (68)

Stevenson himself confessed to harbouring intense fears about the devil, and in Nuits Blanches revealed the most likely source to be from his childhood:

> I had an extreme terror of Hell, implanted in me, I suppose, by my good nurse, which used to haunt me terribly on stormy nights. (69)

Stevenson's presentations of the devil ranged from vague suggestions which might "make his reader afraid to look over his shoulder", to clear manifestations confronting the reader head-on with "the Prince of Darkness" and Stevenson's personal "terror of Hell". The common thread running through this aspect of his Scottish fiction was the considering of evil. Evil obsesses, excites and destroys various figures in his fiction and although the devil is not always made apparent, his role as a controller and creator of evil is never doubted. One of Stevenson's twentieth century biographers, Richard Aldington, records how Stevenson was heard "crooning" the following verse to himself when only six years old:

> Had not an angel got the pride of man,
> No evil though, no hardened heart would have been seen,
> No hell to go to, but a heaven so pure;
> That angel was the Devil. (70)

The problem with writing about evil and the machinations of the devil is that the work runs the risk of lapsing into the realms of "crawler" fiction. One of Stevenson's stories, The Body-Snatcher, is of this kind, but most of his evil-orientated fiction rises above it. He transfigured the ghastly, the horrific and the terrific into both an art-form and a valuable commentary on the nature of the Scottish character. Although he could declare to Lady Taylor in 1887 that "I do not think it is a wholesome part of me that broods on the evil in the world and man", (71) it was a part of him which he could never expurgate, and which enriched his fiction.

In reference to The Body-Snatcher Richard Aldington delivered the following assault:

> But are such violations of our nerves to be considered art? Stevenson was surely pot-boiling here, and the lavish praise of these atrocities is the measure of his admirer's taste. The next step would be to photograph a decayed coffin and film a rape. Tragedy is terrific not horrific. (72)

The Body-Snatcher is an intense story concerning the grisly task of producing human specimens for medical dissection at Edinburgh University. The story is one of increasing horror, culminating in the climatic moment when the two young body-snatchers discover their latest specimen to have undergone an awful change. Instead of an old farmer's wife, they are confronted with the body of a man whom they had murdered and dissected several weeks earlier. This terrible punishment which is visited upon the young men repays them for their evil

deeds and contempt for human life. However it would be wrong to view this tale as a kind of parable, extolling the worth of human life, and the dangers facing those who trespass against the natural order. It is primarily a story of stark horror, told concisely and well, but with no greater purpose than to chill the reader. The Body-Snatcher is important in two respects. Firstly, it was popular in Scotland, as well as elsewhere, reflecting Scottish interest in such fiction. The editor of the Pall Mall Gazette in 1889 wrote in reference to The Wrong Box:

> Some years ago [1884] Mr Stevenson contributed to an extra Christmas number of this paper a weird story under the title of The Body-Snatcher, but we can hardly think that the success of that little tale warranted a return once more to "a deader" as a leading element in a work of fiction. (73)

Such popularity, is not, as Aldington points out, an assurance of artistic merit, but it might help to explain why Stevenson involved elements of evil and the supernatural in his most "artistic" works. Secondly, The Body-Snatcher is important in the way that it differs from works such as Thrawn Janet, The Merry Men and The Master of Ballantrae. These are quite correctly viewed as much more than simple "crawlers", despite their possessing much the same context and machinery as The Body-Snatcher.

The Body-Snatcher lacks tragedy. It is impossible to feel any sympathy for Fettes and Macfarlane as they systematically plundered Scottish church-yards and even organised murder for the purpose of gaining some more specimens

for their dissecting-room. They are abhorrent figures, deserving punishment, not pity, and completely fail to awaken our interest in them as human beings. Unlike Stevenson's other tales of evil and devilry this is a tale of unmitigated horror. There is no Soulis figure with whom the reader can sympathise, or a narrator like Darnaway's nephew in whom the reader can trust. This lack of relief from horror is the story's weakness; the atrocities appear to be presented just for the sake of shocking. It is a ghastly, pornographic vision of evil in the world.

There is an element of irony in the way the Fettes and Macfarlane are finally challenged by a force of evil which is stronger than their own. Theirs is a "natural" evil involving deception, grave-robbing and murder. The evil which confronts them at the end of the story as they look upon the intact "body of the dead and long-dissected Gray" (74) is supernatural. This irony is compounded by Fettes bold words to Macfarlane as they go about their unnatural business.

> The great things is not to be afraid. Now between you and me, I don't want to hang. That's practical, but for all the cant Macfarlane, I was born with a contempt, Hell, God, Devil, right, wrong, sin, crime and all the old gallery of curiosities - they may frighten boys, but men of the world, like you and me, despise them. (75)

The story ends abruptly, with the manifestation of an "unnatural miracle", filling the contemptuous grave-robbers with a "horror of what could not be... that some nameless change had befallen the dead body" (76). Nothing is said about

what is responsible for this "miracle", no "black man" appears to explain it as diabolical. It is a story without any purpose other than to shock, and once the "shocking element" has reached a climax, the story ends. The rawness of this tale no doubt appealed to Stevenson's Scottish readers who enjoyed such shocking presentations of their country, but fortunately, it was a rawness which was rarely exhibited in Stevenson's fiction, as if he too was aware that "violations of the nerves" on their own, seldom endure as "art". (77)

Markheim is a much more successful exploration of evil and man's relationship with the devil. It is not set in Scotland, but in London and so is not strictly from Stevenson's canon of Scottish fiction. However, this is one of Stevenson's rare pieces of fiction, in that the geographical location is an irrelevance, interest lying solely with Markheim and his strange visitant. The action of Markheim would suggest that it is mere "shocker" fiction. A young man, heavily in debt, callously murders an antiques dealer on Christmas Day in order to steal the money which will clear his debts. However, this outrageous action is not the important feature of the story. It is merely a means of introducing the confrontation between Markheim and a figure who must be presumed to be the devil. This figure is very different from "the muckle black de'il" which appears in Thrawn Janet and The Merry Men, but there is an interesting link with James Hogg in the depiction. When Markheim first sees his visitor he feels that, "at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself" (78) This echoes Hogg's

suggestion in <u>Confessions of a Justified Sinner</u> that the devil's supernatural power extended to his being able to change his appearance so that he might even look like his intended victim.

Markheim is convinced that he is in the presence of the devil, and the apparition does nothing to put the reader in any doubt, until possibly, the final paragraph:

> and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God... "What are you?" cried Markheim: "the devil?" (79)

The stranger, paradoxically through his "strange air of the commonplace", exudes menace. He is a disturbing presence, and as dangerous a tempter as Christ encountered is the wilderness. This is a story of far more sophisticated terror than <u>The Body-Snatcher</u> or <u>Thrawn Janet</u>. The presentation of the devil as a calm-speaking, rational being, rather than as a giant black man or a monster with cloven feet is a far more subtle but ingeniously effective way of instilling terror. There is something very chilling about the devil's first appearance to Markheim, as he seems to be nonchalantly checking on his progress:

> A face was thrust into the aperture, glanced round the room, looked at him, nodded and smiled as if in friendly recognition, and then withdrew again and the door closed behind it. (80)

Markheim had feared that the dead dealer was "walking" when the door was opened. Such a device would have brought this story very much into line with <u>Thrawn Janet</u> and <u>The Body-Snatcher</u> as

a classic element of the supernatural. The lack of such "horrific" elements allows the devil's words to be heard, and the full import of Markheim's crime to be understood.

> "I know you", replied the visitant, with a sort of kind severity or rather firmness. "I know you to the soul". (81)

Throughout the dialogue between Markheim and this stranger, nothing is said to temper the suggestion that it is not a dialogue between a sinner and the devil. Everything which the stranger says, reinforces the initial assumption that he is an incarnation of the devil:

> "Evil, for which I live, consists not in action, but in character; the bad man is dear to me.." (82)

The voice hisses with temptation, urging Markheim to serve him, for which he will be rewarded by escaping the gallows! The language becomes increasingly melodramatic and detracts from the effect which the earlier calm voice of the devil had evoked. It is as if Stevenson found it impossible to strip his fiction of the supernatural from all the trappings of convention. He might envisage a devil with an unconventional appearance but fails to give him an original voice.

> "I am not so hard a master. Try me. Accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto; please yourself more amply spread your elbows at the board; and when the night begins to fall, and the curtains to be drawn, I tell you, for your greater comfort that you will find it easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience and to make a truckling peace with your God". (83)

This melodramatic scene of temptation builds to a sudden climax

when the maid returns to the shop in which Markheim has murdered the dealer. The visitant's voice rises in tempo as he urges Markheim, like Macbeth, to commit another murder in order to safe-guard himself. Like Macbeth, Markheim is "in blood stepp'd in so far", that "returning were as tedious as go o'er", (84) and stands with a very powerful tempter at his shoulder:

> "The same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in your path. Thenceforward, you have the whole evening, the whole night if needful, to ransack the treasures of the house and make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. Up!" he cried: "up friend; your life hangs trembling in the scales: up and act!" (85)

The devil seems to be on the brink of asserting his authority in the world, in a way which is not seen in Stevenson's other explorations of evil. His persuasive tongue, despite the melodrama, is redolent with evil, bringing the tale out of the realm of mere "crawler" fiction. However, the story ends with a peculiar enigma, giving the tale in the final paragraph an unexpected, and possibly unfathomable complexity. Stevenson speaks of the visitant undergoing a strange transformation when Markheim resolves to give himself up and to reject the temptation to commit more crime:

> The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change; they brightened and softened with a tender triumph; and even as they brightened, faded and dislimmed. (86)

No further comment is made upon this perplexing "change" and Markheim does not even witness it. The sentence suggests that

Markheim might not have been speaking with the devil, but quite possibly with an angel. It would be incongruous for the devil to express "tender triumph" immediately after Markheim's renunciation of his tempting. However, it is similarly incongruous to believe that an agent of "good" could speak with such evil intonations as this visitor, and permit Markheim to commit murder before intervening. It is perhaps an over-simplification, of the story, and an over-simplification of Stevenson's attitude towards evil, to see Markheim's visitor as either the devil or an angel. Stevenson may be presenting the devil as an embodiment of Markheim's troubled conscience, an aspect of the dualism which he perceived in man, and which he presented most clearly in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Without the "transformation" at the end, Markheim is a straightforward tale of murder and diabolic intervention, strengthened by the dead body of the pawnbroker, the flickering candles and the eerie ticking and chiming of the numerous clocks. In one sentence, Stevenson makes Markheim disturbingly open-ended. It permits him to distance himself from an emphatic statement about the devil's existence and influence in the world, and allows him to present the reader with the unpalatable suggestion that the devil may only exist as a part of man.

Markheim brings together two very recognizable traits in Stevenson's supernatural fiction. Firstly, it illustrates his skill in creating an eerie atmosphere, through an agglomeration of observations:

> Time had some score of small voices in that shop, some stately and slow as was becoming to their great age; others garrulous and hurried. All these told out the seconds in an intricate chorus of tickings... He looked about him awfully. The candle stood on the counter, its flame solemnly wagging in a draught; and by that inconsiderable movement, the whole room was filled with noiseless bustle, and kept heaving like a sea; the tall shadows nodding, the gross blots of darkness swelling and dwindling as with respiration, the faces of the portraits and the china gods changing and wavering like images in water. The inner door stood ajar, and peered into that leaguer of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger. (87)

The sense of foreboding and horror evoked by this succession of images prepares for the entry of the visitant. The "fitness" of place which concerned Stevenson, is here, brilliantly realised. Secondly, Markheim offers an insight into a man's mind which reveals very clearly the potential for both "good" and "evil". This duality of nature is often presented by Stevenson through the appearance of the "supernatural", men such as Darnaway, Dr. Jekyll and Ballantrae are all seemingly involved with, or possessed by evil forces. The statement which is tentatively made in Markheim is that to classify such forces as "supernatural" may be to disguise them. Perhaps such manifestations are really extreme examples of the "natural". If there is something disturbing about seeing Markheim's visitant as the devil, or Ballantrae's cruelty as the result of a "possession", there is something terrifying about regarding such things as belonging solely to their own, human natures.

The Master of Ballantrae is a much more elaborate and "romantic" work than Markheim. It is so filled with improbable

characters and events and at times so hyperbolically melodramatic that Stevenson appears to have ultimately lost control, and brought it to a rapid and unreal conclusion in the frozen waste-land of America. Throughout the novel, attention is focussed upon the character of the Master, who increasingly takes on the grim majesty of the devil. Whether Stevenson intended the Master to be regarded as supernatural or merely as a man with an evil nature is left as unclear as in Markheim. Stevenson did write to Colvin in 1887 that "the Master is all I know of the devil... has nothing else but his devilry" (88) A letter to Henry James in 1888 reinforced the suggestion that in the person of the Master, Stevenson created an incarnation of the devil:

> The elder brother is an INCUBUS: supposed to be killed at Culloden, he turns up again and bleeds the family of money; on that stopping, he comes and lives with them, whence flows the real tragedy, the nocturnal duel of the brothers, (very naturally, and indeed, I think, inevitably arising), and second supposed death of the elder. Husband and wife now really make up and then the cloven hoof appears. For the third supposed death and the manner of the third re-appearance is steep... and I fear it shames the honest stuff so far. (89)

The steering of a course between the "honest stuff" of his fiction and the "steep" aspects is one which occupied Stevenson in Kidnapped, Catriona and The Merry Men. The problem which presenting the supernatural or the diabolical raised, was one of control. It was very easy for such elements to become the dominant feature of the fiction even if this was not the author's original intention. In Kidnapped and Catriona, Stevenson sought to avoid this by isolating and sharply defining these elements. David Balfour hurries on from

his encounters with weird women, Alan and David do not pause to wonder about the existence of the Water Kelpie, and Andie's tale on the Bass is as isolated from the main stream of the narrative as Stevenson could make it. In The Merry Men, the confrontation between the narrator's scepticism and the various appearances of the supernatural strikes a faltering balance. In tales such as The Body-Snatcher and Thrawn Janet there is no balance; the "steep" aspects dominate completely. Stevenson's comment on The Master of Ballantrae that he felt that the supernatural "steepness" shamed the work, suggests that he felt the novel was flawed. This flaw runs throughout the fiction because it is caused by the character of the Master.

Stevenson's own appraisal of the Master's nature, the words of the characters in the novel, and the attitudes of reviewers, all emphasise the problem which this creation posed for the author. The identification between this character and the devil is a powerful feature of the fiction but stunts the growth of other elements. Stevenson attempts to maintain a balance between the supernatural and the natural and invents a series of ingenious explanations for the Master's several "returns from the dead", and for his malevolence. Ultimately, these explanations become ineffective and the reader is left wondering with Mackellar about the truth of the Master.

> "Was the man moved by a particular sentiment against Mr Henry? Or by what he thought to be his interest? Or by a mere delight in cruelty such as cats display and theologians tell us of the devil? (90)

Mackellar's words outline the three possibilities about the

Master. At first, his actions and enmity appears to stem from jealousy of his brother. Later, his malevolence seems to be explicable as purely selfish. However, the thread which lasts throughout the novel is the much more sinister concept that the Master's evil is of supernatural origin. This might fascinate the reader, and reflect Scottish belief in the devil but subverts any chance of creating psychological insight. If the Master is to be perceived as an incarnation of the devil, his tormenting of his brother is not fraternal jealousy but "evil" encountering "good". Stevenson's desire not to allow this novel to become such a simple parable led him into complex situations as he attempted to provide some alternative, and natural explanations for the Master's supernatural existence.

Stevenson's greatest difficulty lay with the Master's invincibility and apparent immortality. Nothing seems capable of destroying the Master. He survives Jacobite battles, capture by pirates, being run through by a sword, attack by American Indians and for a brief moment, at the very end of the story, almost survives a week's burial. The agglomeration of these escapes from death suggests that he is not a natural being. As Stevenson acknowledged, he becomes increasingly hard to accept, or "steep", if the novel is to maintain a balance of realism or "honest stuff".

The quest to preserve this balance in the face of the mighty character which he had created clearly troubled Stevenson. His attempts to play down the idea that the Master

was a devil are weak because he had allowed his creation too much freedom, and also appears to have enjoyed presenting the supernatural and diabolic side of this character. The scene in which the Master and his brother Henry duel in the shrubbery is, as W.E. Henley stated, "as sinister, black, and ghastly as a scene in Webster". (91) Henry's sword transfixes the Master, and the evil brother's body falls to the ground "where it writhed a moment like a trodden worm and then lay motionless". The emphasis laid upon this appearance of physical death prepares for the horror of the moment when the Master's body is found to have disappeared:

> And there was the bloodstain in the midst, and a little further off, Mr Henry's sword, the pommel of which was of silver, but of the body, not a trace. My heart thumped upon my ribs, the hair stirred upon my scalp as I stood there staring - so strange was the sight, so dire the fears it wakened. (92)

Stevenson seems to delight in waking these fears, both in Mackellar, his credulous narrator, and in the reader who is confronted with very stark horror. There seems no reason to doubt the awful suppositions of Mackellar and Henry Durie concerning the disappearance of the Master's body. Mackellar's reference to the "pommel" of Henry's sword being made of silver obliquely hints at the suggestion that had the blade also been of silver, the Master would have lain where he fell. The words of Black Andie's grandfather echo faintly around Mackellar's observation; silver "being mair deidly again bogles". (93) Mackellar and Henry pass on their fears about the nature of the renegade brother to Henry's son Sandie. They make no attempt to offer a rational explanation. In their disturbed minds, the

only possible explanation is supernatural:

> I have just been telling Sandie the story of this place and how there was a man whom the devil tried to kill, and how near he came to kill the devil instead. (94)

Mackellar sees no reason to dispute such an affirmation about the Master even in front of an innocent boy:

> "But so much is true", I cried, "that I have met the devil in these woods and seen him foiled here. Blessed be God that we escaped with life - blessed be God that one stone yet stands upon another in the walls of Durrisdeer! And Oh! Mr Alexander, if ever you come by this spot, though it was a hundred years hence and you came with the gayest and the highest in the land, I would step aside, and remember a bit prayer" (95)

Stevenson eventually concocts a rational account of how the Master escaped from the shrubbery and survived his wound. It does, however, have little effect in limiting the sense that the Master is at least in league with the devil, if not actually a devil himself. The weakness of the Master's explanation for his escape highlights the major flaw in the novel. Stevenson attempted to create a "half-an-half" piece of fiction, with neither the supernatural, nor the prosaically natural assuming total dominance. It was an approach which worked to good effect in Kidnapped and Catriona, but in The Master of Ballantrae, the supernatural elements, in the form of the principal character, hold sway, and Stevenson's attempts to minimalise them are exposed as insignificant and weak. The Master is one of Stevenson's most memorable, and certainly his most powerful creations. W.E. Henley captured his character brilliantly in his famous essay on the novel:

> The figure is hardly human. It seems touched with livid flickerings from the Pit. It has the superhuman cunning, the malignity and mockery, the exquisite delight in evil of a fiend. Insidions, false, murderous, with a veneer of sensibility and a heart rotten with egotism, taking a feline delight in torturing his victims, an artist in deceit, endowed with a diabolic charm, alternately the polished gentleman and the fleering scoundrel, vain, insolent and insatiably greedy - it would be hard to conceive a more hateful character than the Master of Ballantrae. (96)

Any attempt Stevenson might try to make to bring such a character back to the plinth of realism from which he had soared was bound to fail. The Master defied Stevenson, and in the very last page, made a mockery of the "honest stuff" by momentarily recovering life:

> I beheld his eyelids flutter; the next, they rose entirely, and the week-old corpse looked me for a moment in the face. (97)

It is Stevenson's own embarrassment about this character which affects the novel so badly. His striving to find rational answers for the Master were weak apologies which were not required. The Master is as clearly horrific as the walking body of thrawn Janet but unlike Soulis, Stevenson attempted to find modern, natural reasons to account for the horror. In refusing to accept the evidence of his senses, unlike Mackellar, Henry Durie, and most probably the reader as well, Stevenson undercut his own majestic imagination.

Thrawn Janet and The Merry Men are two stories in which Stevenson unashamedly depicted the devil in traditional Scottish terms. The bashfulness expressed by Stevenson in The

Master of Ballantrae is lost, as he confronts hardened sceptics with the reality of the devil. These short stories were the closest Stevenson's work came to imitating Hogg's. They are rooted in the wild geography of Scotland, the characters are all Scottish, speaking in strong dialects and the attitudes which emerge harmonize with this environment. The portraits of Scotland and the presentations of supernatural power fuse together as Stevenson resists the urge to attempt a division.

During the transition in *Thrawn Janet*, between the explosion of superstitious fear in the villagers and Soulis' understanding that their fears were justified, a mysterious "black man" appears in the parish. Murdock Soulis discovers this sinister stranger perched on a tombstone. As soon as the man has been described as "of a great stature, and black as Hell", (98) Stevenson interrupts the narrative with an informative, but somewhat jovial footnote:

> It was a common belief in Scotland that the devil appeared as a black man. This appears in several witch trials and I think in Law's "Memorials", that delightful storehouse of the quaint and grisly. (99)

The last phrase of this footnote indicates that although Stevenson had drunk deep of Scottish superstition, his initial judgement was not intoxicated. However, the ensuing events of *Thrawn Janet* are neither "delightful" or "quaint". The appearance of the black man affects the hitherto sceptical Soulis, and he uncharacteristically senses "a kind of cauld grue in the marrow of his bones". (100) The "unco" nature of this stranger so disturbs Soulis that he chases him out of the

churchyard before losing him in the surrounding countryside. He even tells Janet that if there is not a black man newly come to the parish, then he has just been in contact with "the Accuser of the Brethren". (101) Soulis' sudden suggestion that an evil presence may exist in his remote parish is reinforced by his nocturnal reflections upon the nature of the black man. His "modern" mind begins to perceive some connection between the stranger and Janet and ultimately, "that either or baith o' them were bogles". (102) The dawning of this terrible realisation in Soulis is followed by the final encounter with the possessed body of Janet. Soulis calls upon God to destroy this obscenity and a flash of lightning destroys the "horror whaur it stood".

> the auld, deid, desecrated corp o' the witch-wife, sae long keepit frae the grave and hirsled round by de'ils, lowed up like a brunstone spunk an' fell in ashes to the grund. (103)

The consequence of this instance of apparent divine intervention is seen the next morning:

> John Christie saw the Black Man pass the Muckle Cairn as it was chappin' six; before eicht, he gaed by the change-house at Knockdow; on no long after, Sandy M'Lellan saw him gaun linkin' down the braes frae Kilmackerlie. (104)

There is no contrary explanation for the nature of the black man offered. The word of the Scottish narrator and the ensuing madness of Soulis are sufficient proof that, in this instance, the story is concerned with the reality of a diabolical visitation and possession. There is no urge to question the narrator's assertion about the black man. Even the careful Stevenson allowed the words to stand with truthful

frankness:

> There's little doubt but it was him that dwalled sae long in Janet's body; but he was awa' at last; an sinsyne the de'il has never fashed us in Ba'weary. (105)

The only break in the story occurs in the footnote when Stevenson wryly suggests that such ancient Scottish superstitions are merely "delightful", "quaint" or "grisly". However, the convincing of a man in the form of Murdock Soulis, that such superstitions are real, exposes Stevenson's cynical stance as weak. It is therefore no surprise that Stevenson's wife could later say of the writing of this story that "by the time the tale was finished, my husband had fairly frightened himself, and we crept down the stairs clinging hand in hand like two scared children". (106).

The presentation of the devil as a black man is picked up again in The Merry Men, although there is far less certainty here than in Thrawn Janet. It is a story, like Thrawn Janet, set amidst Scotland's wildest aspects and amongst people with traditionally superstitious minds. The environment is suitably "fit" for supernatural and diabolical events and as the rocks appear to sing with Mirthful malevolence, Stevenson must have realised that a story of evil was demanded. The promise of such a tale is increased by Stevenson's skill in conveying the atmosphere of the stormy Hebrides. Richard Aldington suggested that in his description of the storm on Aros, Stevenson not only excelled himself, but also "all his contemporaries in prose":

> Who that has read <u>The Merry Men</u> can forget that storm? It is true that "the storm" has been hackneyed since Homer, and that since Stevenson, we have had Conrad's <u>Typhoon</u> and Richard Hughes' <u>A High Wind in Jamaica</u>. Without disparaging any of them, let us give Stevenson his due - that storm in the Scottish Isles is a masterly achievement. (107)

Stevenson's failure to satisfy such promise reflected a trend in his work, and possibly in his writing career. In a contemporary review of <u>The Merry Men</u>, E.T. Cook wrote that "the disappointment of the final episode is complete. The story, indeed, seems to collapse, and the reader almost feels that he has been interested only to be made a fool of". (108) Such a sentiment is understandable. The rapid conclusion, the confusion about the nature of the black man and the lack of narratorial comment leaves the story inconclusive, confusing and unsatisfactory. It is open to a number of interpretations, which weakens the promise that it was to be a tale of devilish retribution. The story seems to undergo a crisis of identity and direction, not dissimilar to that of <u>The Master of Ballantrae</u>. Stevenson's recognition of this failure is recorded by his wife, who wrote that, "the story itself, overshadowed by its surroundings, did not come so easily as <u>Thrawn Janet</u>, and never quite satisfied its author, who believed that he had succeeded in giving the terror of the sea, but had failed to get a real grip on his story." (109)

Stevenson's failure to maintain a "real grip on his story", explains its confused identity. It is suspended between being a sympathetic portrayal of Scottish belief in the devil, and an objective dismissal of remote fears in the remote land.

The presence of a mysterious "black man" strongly echoed the "muckle black de'il" of Thrawn Janet. However, in The Merry Men there is no explanatory footnote and it is only Darnaway who perceives the stranger as a supernatural visitant. To the narrator and the other characters the black man is merely a fortunate survivor from the wrecked ship. Darnaway's nephew speaks of feeling "a surprise that bordered close on terror", (110) when he first sees the black man on "that sea-girt, solitary island", but this is a natural reaction. Darnaway's reaction is one of irrational and uncontrollable terror. It is the same terror which afflicted Murdock Soulis and Ephraim Mackellar, inspired by the conviction that they are confronted by the devil. The same kind of incoherence and madness which gripped these other characters assailed Darnaway as the black man approached:

> My kinsman began swearing and praying in a mingled stream. I looked at him; he had fallen on his knees, his face was agonized; at each step of the castaway's, the pitch of his voice rose, the volubility of his utterance and the fervour of his language redoubled. I call it prayer, for it was addressed to God; but surely no such ranting incongruities were ever before addressed to the Creator by a creature; surely, if prayer can be a sin, this mad harangue was sinful. (111)

Similarly, Darnaway's headlong flight from the source of his terror, ("my uncle was already far away, bounding from rock to rock") (112) recalls Soulis' flight from Janet's possessed body:

> And Mr Soulis lowped through the garden hedge an' ran wi' skellock upon skellock for the clachan. (113)

Darnaway's terror of the "black" is so powerful that he finally

runs to his death in the sea rather than be caught by the stranger:

> My kinsman did not pause, but dashed straight into the surf; and the black man, now almost within reach still followed swiftly behind him. (114)

The difficulty with this story lies with the nature of the black man. If he is to be regarded as an incarnation of the devil similar to that of Thrawn Janet, it is inconceivable that he should be able to live with the rest of Darnaway's family. The other characters pity and try to help the castaway and the narrator speaks of feeling "respect" for the negro, and of having "almost forgotten, and wholly forgiven him his uncanny colour" (115) It is similarly difficult to regard the "black" as simply a "castaway". Even if rational explanations can be found for his appearance on Aros, and the impossibility of his leaving the island, his hounding of Darnaway is most unnatural. The modern-minded nephew states that the chase into the sea defied human understanding, but attributes it to God rather than to the devil:

> Rorie and I both stopped, for the thing was now beyond the hands of men, and these were the decrees of God that came to pass before our eyes. (116)

This allusion to God, at the climatic point of the tale further dilutes the diabolic feel of the fiction. It might explain the nephew's respect for the black, but it is impossible to believe that Stevenson intended this wild "symphony of the sea" to conclude with a strong affirmation of Christianity.

Stevenson may have intended <u>The Merry Men</u> to be a far more subtle exploration of evil than stories such as <u>Thrawn Janet</u> and <u>The Body-Snatcher</u>. It is possible that the black man was a manifestation of Darnaway's guilt-ridden conscience, the chase into the sea being an extreme form of self-retribution. The problem with regarding this tale as a complex understanding of human guilt is the fact that it employs so many traditional elements of Scottish superstition. A "bogle" is reputed to haunt the bay, a storm of supernatural frenzy strikes the island, and a black man, appears to emerge from the ocean. The reader is drawn into expecting a supernatural conclusion, a confirmation of Darnaway's beliefs and a victory over modern scepticism. However, the story ends without resolution. The narrator ascribes the events to the will of God; Darnaway clearly feels that the devil is at his heels, the reader is left puzzling between these extremes, and the story collapses into confusion.

Only in <u>Thrawn Janet</u>, does Stevenson make a definite assertion of the devil's existence, but none of his Scottish fiction emphatically contradicts such belief. Unlike "weird women", ghosts and the "Water-Kelpie", the devil is not mocked or rendered as a merely historical superstition by Stevenson. He perceived "evil" as a very real force in human life and never disputed the existence of evil in the world. Stevenson's involvement of the devil in his fiction confirmed his obsession with evil, both as it was perceived in the past and as he himself perceived it. A review of <u>The Merry Men</u> in 1887

suggested that it was such an interest in Stevenson which so coloured his Scottish fiction. It was an interest derived from his strict Calvinistic background:

> Mr Stevenson has softened and humanized the stern Calvinistic creed - as he calls it, "the dammatory creed" - but it is nevertheless the pivot of his genius. It is to the pith and marrow of his work what "de'ils, bogles, sea-spensters, and sic-like" are to the embellishment. He probably does not believe that the devil habitually takes shape of man or beast or fish the better to work his wicked will; but if he didn't come very near that, he couldn't make his reader afraid to look over his shoulder lest he should see the Prince of Darkness behind him. (117)

It was in his considerations of the devil that Stevenson's attitudes towards superstition and the supernatural were made most apparent. It was much more than aptness of place or historical authenticity which made him bring the devil into his Scottish fiction. It was perhaps a fear of the power of evil and a fear that the modern mind might seek to dismiss evil as an aspect of ancient superstition not relevant to modern existence, which was responsible. This might explain the pattern of young, intelligent and sceptical characters being brought into an educational contact with "ancient breathings of superstition", and more direct elements of evil. Murdock Soulis undergoes a painful "conversion". The Body-Snatcher concerns two university students, who though their own evil activities trigger the most evil transformation of a corpse. Darnaway's nephew, during a brief vacation in the Hebrides, learns of matters unknown, untaught and unfelt at Edinburgh University:

> The voice of those tide-breakers was still raised for havoc. They seemed indeed to be part of the world's evil and the tragic side of life - a great fear fell

upon me of God's judgements and the evil in the world. (118)

The superstitious and supernatural elements of Stevenson's Scottish fiction simultaneously reflected his interest in the nature of his country, and his interest in understanding the presence of evil in the world. Each interest appears to depend upon the other. Stevenson required both a language and a medium through which he could speak about evil, and in Scotland, he found such material. He investigated Scotland's superstitious, supernatural landscape as diligently and as successfully as its geographical landscape. In a similar way, he was rewarded with rich material for his imagination to work into fiction. His Scottish stories emphasize how important superstition was to the Scottish character and to the shaping of Scottish society. The supernatural was clearly an important part of the nation's heritage. He could not ignore changing attitudes in Scotland, and his work is most certainly not of the genre advocated by James Hogg. Although there is little overt mocking of superstitious beliefs, Stevenson clearly did prefer to look at such attitudes with an intelligent, slightly cynical eye. This took his work beyond the boundaries of conventional "ghost stories", but still allowed him to portray the traditional fears which so charmed his countrymen.

Stevenson's cynical eye did not reduce the various supernatural "embellishments" to palpable non-sense, but paradoxically hinted at the significance of such ancient attitudes. His belief in the terror of evil overcame the

various absurd devices and forces the reader to question his own assumptions. Although there is confusion in some of his stories, there is much that is disturbing. Although there is absurdity in some of the presentations of the supernatural, there is also an element of truth. That truth is the presence of evil in the world, and whether it is expressed through the words of an eldritch woman, waves crashing upon rocks, corpses transforming themselves or black men mysteriously appearing, it is a truth which Stevenson was keen to impart. From his understanding of Scotland, he could feel it and although he could declare that, "I do not think it is a wholesome part of me that broods on the evil in the world and man", (119) it was a part of him which he could not ignore. In identifying this unwholesome part of himself, he could investigate the unwholesome part of his country which could resist the "sophisticated gloss and polish thrown over by the modern philosophic mind". (120) Stevenson's Scottish fiction viewed this resistance sympathetically, thereby falling into accordance with Hogg's view that without it, men's souls would become so cold as "scarcely to be envied by the spirits of the beasts that perish". (121) Stevenson clearly had a high regard for the stubborn, antiquated, superstitious souls of his countrymen.

CHAPTER III

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CHAPTER IV

INTIMATIONS OF EDINBURGH

"... O! For ten Edinburgh minutes!"

Stevenson's yearning for Scotland in general, and Edinburgh in particular, did not belong solely to his last years at Vailima. In 1881, he wrote to Charles Baxter from Switzerland, where he had been sent on medical advice, in a tone which anticipated much of his future correspondence:

> Pray write to me something cheery. A little Edinburgh gossip in heaven's name! Ah what would I not give to steal this evening with you through the big echoing college archway... we had such sport with all our spirits and all our distresses, that it looks like a lamplit, vicious fairy land behind me. O for ten Edinburgh minutes! (1)

Stevenson constantly tempered his nostalgia, and although his greatest writing was that derived from Scotland, his fiction, like his letters and his poetry, was never purely Panegyrical. Edinburgh fascinated him, and although he could state that his imagination inhabited "that cold, old huddle of grey hills", (2) it was often the capital city of those hills which was the target for both his attention and imagination. His fascination with "Auld Reekie" (3) encompassed warm nostalgia, lavish praise and cutting criticism. Mircrocosmically, it reflected his attitude towards the whole of Scotland. Even in his moments of greatest yearning, Edinburgh was not a 'lamplit fairy land', but "a lamplit vicious fairy land". (4) The conflicts, divisions and incongruities which Stevenson recognised in Scotland appeared to emmanate from his perceptions of Edinburgh. Many of the themes and philosophies concerning Scotland which were developed in his fiction can be discerned within the much earlier Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes (1878). "In a word, and above all, she is a curiosity", (5) he wrote of Edinburgh, making it

supremely suitable as Scotland's capital. He could have been speaking for the whole nation; a place constantly influencing his writing but also constantly repelling him with threats of discomfort, a "damnatory creed", (6) and death. In his discussions and presentations of his home city, Stevenson came closest to not only seeking an understanding of the nature of Scotland and the Scottish, but also an understanding of his own relationship with that "cold, old, huddle of grey hills". (7)

Stevenson's belief that Edinburgh was his true home, is one which appears to have grown stronger, the longer and further that he journeyed away from it. Letters and dedications abound with references to Edinburgh and memories of his time there. A growing poignancy developed as he began to understand that return was impossible. To S.R. Crockett in May 1893, eighteen months before his death, he wrote from Vailima:

> I shall never see Auld Reekie. I shall never set my foot upon the heather. Here I am until I die and here will I be buried. The word is out and the doom is written. (8)

Statements such as this make it clear that although Robert Louis Stevenson could live at Vailima, he never recognised it as "home". There is more than a trace of Stevenson in Alan Breck Stewart, who also yearned for the heather:

> "I kind of weary for Scots divots and the Scots peat-reek". (9)

In the dedications of Kidnapped to Charles Baxter, Stevenson wrote: "you are still in the venerable city which I must always

think of as my home". (10) His enforced wanderings, like those of Alan Breck Stewart, made him anxious to focus upon one specific place as a 'home'. As with Alan, Stevenson's true 'home' was to be a place in which he could not live. Politics drove the former out of Scotland, illness harried Stevenson out of Edinburgh. Both could criticize their home, for reasons of politics in Alan's case and climate in Stevenson's, but both felt an unassailable bond with their respective 'homes'. It might seem pitiable that Stevenson could not return and that he recognised the inevitability of his completing his life in the Pacific. However, his writing strongly suggests that it was only personal distance from Scotland, a magnification of the "Olympian Station" which the Pentland Hills commanded over Edinburgh, which gave his Scottish fiction power, imagination and flair. Perhaps if he had returned to Scotland, "home from sea", (11) his fiction of the South Seas would have matched his Scottish fiction. From a house in Edinburgh, had he been able to return, the late 1890s might have seen Stevenson's imagination haunting those, 'warm, young huddle of green islands' on the other side of the world.

Stevenson's perceptions of Edinburgh, and an understanding of the town's influence upon his creative mind emerge from a number of sources. Primarily, there is <u>Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes</u> which Stevenson described so modestly as "a few more home pictures". (12) It presents a very personal, and yet very public picture of contemporary Edinburgh. As Stevenson intended, it would be instantly recognizable to any emigrant,

his concluding comments ironically anticipating his own future:

> There is no Edinburgh emigrant, far or near, from China to Peru, but he or she carries some lively pictures of the mind... indelible in the memory and delightful to study in the intervals of toil. (13)

In many respects, the work is a promotional presentation of the city, as it details Edinburgh's appearance, status, and events and characters from its history. However, in its complete form, it would not be acceptable to Edinburgh's tourist agency. Stevenson is as unstinting in his portrayals of the city's failings as he is in his praise for its triumphs. With particular venom, he attacks the inhospitable climate, the tenement flats euphemistically called "Lands", and the new incongruous villas which had been built. It is part of the mystery surrounding Stevenson's relationship with his home, that from the tropics, he could long to be back in the city from which he had envied the southward-bound passengers from Waverley Station. _Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes_, published in 1878, was written before Stevenson became a compulsory emigrant, but in directing it towards the "Edinburgh emigrant", a tone of nostalgia did emerge. Rather as the young Stevenson could anticipate a lifetime of illness, he seems also to have anticipated his exile from Edinburgh.

Stevenson's Scottish fiction offers further examples of 'home pictures', and glimpses of Edinburgh appear in _Kidnapped_, _Catriona_, _Weir of Hermiston_ and _The Body-Snatcher_. It is odd that Stevenson did not write a novel which was set solely in Edinburgh, but his fiction, like his life, was most

peripatetic in nature. Catriona contains the most detailed and prolonged fictional depiction of Edinburgh, but even in this novel David Balfour finds himself travelling again, and ultimately goes across the sea to Holland. Stevenson knew Edinburgh well enough to have written a complete 'Edinburgh novel', and the first parts of both Catriona and Weir of Hermiston demonstrate how well he could write about the city. It is clear that his own memories could effectively enrich his fiction. Stevenson's fictional Edinburgh is very like Hardy's Casterbridge (Dorchester). The town is populated by half-real figures, who live in precisely realised, and familiar surroundings. It is possible that Stevenson felt that he could not sustain his depictions of Edinburgh. He may also have felt that readers who did not come from Edinburgh would soon lose interest. The nostalgic yearnings of an Edinburgh emigrant could not be guaranteed to interest many people. As Stevenson's life was one of travel, it was perhaps natural for his fiction to be of this kind. However, it remains a pity that he never wrote a novel of Edinburgh, either of an historical or a contemporary nature. His pen would surely never have had a better subject, nor his knowledge and memories have ever served him so well.

The final written sources for information about Stevenson's relationship with Edinburgh are the letters and poems which he wrote so freely. From these, it would seem impossible that Stevenson never wrote a complete 'Edinburgh novel'. His letters made frequent and very varied reference to

the city. He recalls youthful memories, asks for current gossip and news, and reflects upon the possibility of his seeing the city again. He wrote poems of moving nostalgia. He evoked the past with an artistic conciseness, focussing upon sights and sounds which had once been so close. From Vailima, he confessed that he was almost possessed by memories of his city, and the dedication of Weir of Hermiston to his wife emphasized how the world of the South Seas never fully permeated his soul:

> Heartening I hear again.
> In my precipitous city beaten bells.
> Winnow the keen sea wind. (14)

Although Stevenson wrote Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes at a very early stage in his career, (1878), it contained much which was to appear in later works. In looking back through Stevenson's writing, it is striking how clearly Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes did anticipate the direction and content of his Scottish novels and stories. Apart from clear accounts of the physical appearance of the city and its surroundings, Stevenson probed in his "Notes" into its history, illustrious and notorious sons, the superstitious element both of the past and the present, and the divisions and incongruities which gave the city such a recognizable 'character'. If Stevenson had produced Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes at the end of his life, it would have been seen as a final drawing together and compressing of the threads and themes which had emerged from his Scottish fiction. However, as it was written so much earlier, it must rather be regarded as Stevenson's starting point with Scotland. Edinburgh was his starting point in life, and from his knowledge

of the city, in whose history he had immersed himself, he began to develop a perception of the country beyond it. His development was one of expansion not compression. His view of Scotland was coloured by his view of Edinburgh, and much that he said about Edinburgh was later applied to Scotland. It was an ironic, but apt comment upon Scotland, that despite his expanding outlook, Stevenson found the same ideas and attitudes applicable both to the city and the whole country. To Stevenson, Scotland was a larger version of Edinburgh, as different from other countries as Edinburgh was different from other towns.

The landscape descriptions of Stevenson's Scottish fiction had been anticipated in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes. He began that work with as clear a definition of Edinburgh's appearance as he was to give of Essendean in Kidnapped, Balweary in Thrawn Janet, Aros in The Merry Men or even Edinburgh in Catriona.

> The ancient and famous metropolis of the North sits overlooking a windy estuary from the slope and summit of three hills. (15)

Throughout Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, as in his Scottish fiction, Stevenson pictured clearly the landscape and townscape of the place with which he was so familiar. Although it is properly defined as non-fiction, even in descriptions of the landscape, Stevenson employed a style in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes which removed it from such a straightforward classification. In reference to the Calton Hill, he pictured

the scene at night in a way that suggests a scene in Kidnapped:

> Return thither on some clear, dark moonless night, with a ring of frost in the air, and only a star or two set sparsely in the vault of heaven; and you will find a sight as stimulating as the hoariest summit of the Alps. The solitude seems perfect. (16)

David Balfour was to experience a similar sense of wonder during his journey across Scotland. As he and Alan Breck Stewart travelled, "up the steep sides of mountains and along the brows of cliffs" (17) in the middle of the night, David memorably captured the magic and solitude of the moment:

> At this sight we both paused: I struck with wonder to behold myself so high, and walking (as it seemed to me) upon clouds. (18)

The similarity of style in these passages indicates how far removed the prose of Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes was from that of mundane non-fiction. Stevenson's portrait of the Calton Hill is so artistically realised as imagination weaves with realism, that it would not jar if it was placed into a novel. It is this aspect of the work which largely justifies the use of the word "picturesque" in the title. Without this degree of artistry, the essay would be merely 'notes of Edinburgh'. If any clues were needed in 1878 concerning the nature of Stevenson's future fiction, Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes indicated clearly the importance of the visually artistic and imaginative realism in his writing.

By "picturesque", Stevenson did not necessarily mean "beautiful", and in both his notes on Edinburgh, and in his

Scottish fiction, he was not afraid of depicting sordid, ugly, or discordant landscapes. David Balfour did not travel only through a landscape of majestic mountains. He was also made to struggle across featureless moors, barren islands and desolate valleys. Similarly, Stevenson's perceptions of Edinburgh's appearance were not without reference to the ugliness of certain areas. There were no moors to match "Rannock" or "Balweary" but there was the ugliness and discomfort of the dirty town. Smoke and soot combined to stain the buildings, a smoky haze restricted the view and the city was blessed with the suitable nickname of "Auld Reekie" as the "smoke of the Old Town" blew across "the subjacent country". (19) Stevenson did not dwell long on the dirty nature of his city, reserving his strongest attacks for an aspect of Edinburgh's appearance over which no-one had any control.

Stevenson's most consistent attacks on Scotland were aimed at its weather and his critical observations of Edinburgh's climate were expanded to encompass the rest of the country. In 1878 Stevenson declared that:

> Edinburgh pays cruelly for her high seat in one of the vilest climates under heaven... the weather is raw and boisterous in Winter, shifty and ungenial in Summer, and a downright meteorological purgatory in the Spring. (20).

Such passionate hatred of Edinburgh's weather, had extended by 1893 to take in the rest of Scotland. It is a further irony in Stevenson's life, that a man from a family of famous lighthouse designers should feel such strong dislike for bad weather! The

characters of Stevenson's fiction were also made to endure the assaults of "one of the vilest climates under heaven" (21) and his own experience of "meteorological purgatory" (22) certainly strengthened the 'Scottishness' of his stories. However, a definite sense does emerge that neither Edinburgh nor Scotland ever enjoys favourable weather. David Balfour suffered inhospitable weather conditions throughout Scotland. He was beset with storms, fog, gales, constant rain and unseasonal cold. The Merry Men contains an impressive description of a west coast storm, presumably inspired by Stevenson's own experiences during his educational tours of lighthouses with his father. The terrifying power of nature witnessed in the Hebrides is much greater than that which afflicted Edinburgh, but Stevenson's frequent reference to the weather, and frequent involvement of it in the affairs of men was of a very similar kind. The weather which he regarded as so significant is the fashioning of Edinburgh and the definition of her citizens was equally important in the shaping of people and events throughout Scotland. The madness of the Hebridean storm encouraged, if not wholly created, the madness of Gordon Darnaway:

> Intervals of a groping twilight alternated with spells of utter blackness; and it was impossible to trace the reason of these changes in the flying horror of the sky. The wind blew the breath out of a man's nostrils; all heaven seemed to thunder overhead like one huge Sail; and when there fell a momentary lull on Aros, we could hear the gusts dismally sweeping in the distance. (23)

Similarly, the dismal nature of the parish of Balweary encouraged a proportionately dismal tale of evil. The symmetry of weather and event attains a rare perfections in Thrawn Janet,

as Stevenson introduced a "spell o' weather, the like o't never was in that countryside," (24) to match the unnaturalness of Janet's story. The close weather was as sinister as Janet's physical appearance or the ancient superstitions of the villagers. The corruption of the natural extended in a most menacing way beyond Janet's body, even to the inclusion of the weather:

> It was lowen, an' het an' heartless; the herds couldna' win up the Black Hill, the bairns were ower weariet to play; an' yet it were gousty too, wi' claps o' het wund that rumm'led in the glens, and bits o' showers that slockened naething... it was aye the same uncanny weather sair on folks and bestial. (25)

The rain which poured onto the parish after Janet's exorcism was of a purging kind, washing away the taints of evil which Janet's possession had brought to the parish.

Stevenson's use of the weather in his fiction had been anticipated in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes. There, he had written about the weather killing "the delicate", and about how the prevailing climate, "endowed the language of Scotland with words", and "modified the spirit of its poetry". (26) He ascribed the cheerful festivities of 'New Year' to the city's beauty when it is "sheeted in white": (27)

> An indescribable cheerfulness breathes about the city and the well-fed heart sits lightly and beats gaily in the bosom. It is New Year's weather. (28)

In writing about Fergusson, the "delicate youth" and Edinburgh poet with whom he often indentified himself, ("I believe Fergusson lives in me") (29) Stevenson wryly suggested that it

was Edinburgh's weather which was responsible for the nature of his poetry. Fergusson was not suited to the harshness of Edinburgh's weather, and in a similar way to Stevenson, "shrunk from the robustious winter to an inn fireside". (30) Stevenson noted the inevitable "sentiment of indoor revelry which pervades the poor boy's verses". (31) Rather than ascribing this to a weakness in the boy's character, as other critics did, he developed a witty defence which was clearly a comment upon his own habits as well as Fergusson's. He stated that Fergusson's revelry-ridden verses were symptomatic of "his native town". (32) Paradoxically, Edinburgh had been the cause of his unpopularity. Stevenson's argument resounds with self-justification, which his fellow Edinburgh lawyers would have found difficult to like:

> It was not choice, so much as external fate that kept Fergusson in this round of sordid pleasures. A Scot of poetic temperament, and without religious exaltation drops, as if by native into the public house. The picture may not be pleasing, but what else is a man to do in this dog's weather? (33)

This amusing digression in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes did not diminish the importance which Stevenson attached to the climate of Edinburgh and Scotland. His knowledge of Edinburgh was thorough, and Stevenson saw its weather as a fundamental part of its understanding. His Scottish fiction which was to follow developed a similar understanding for the rest of Scotland. As he looked out across Edinburgh in the late 1870s, Stevenson felt that there was nothing attractive or comfortable about its climate. It was a permanent source of misery, against which her citizens had to struggle. It was as

much an element of their lives as the storms of the Hebrides were for their inhabitants:

> To none but those who have themselves suffered the thing in the body, can the gloom and depression of our Edinburgh winter be brought home... People go by, so drenched and draggle-tailed, that I have often wondered how they found the heart to undress. And meantime, the wind whistles through the town as if it were an open meadow; and if you lie awake all night, you hear it shrieking and raving overhead with a noise of shipwrecks and of falling houses. In a word, life is so unsightly that there are times when the heart turns sick in a man's inside. (34)

From this passage of Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, it is clear from where Stevenson drew the inspiration for developing landscape, atmosphere and plot through the medium of the weather. Stevenson knew it because he had felt it, and even from the South Seas, his 'sense-memory' remained acute.

Although Stevenson did escape from Edinburgh, to become one of the happy passengers who shook off "the dust of Edinburgh", (35) he retained with great clarity his memories of the weather, and in subsequent letters and essays, he returned to it with an instinctive nostalgia. From Royat in 1884 he wrote to his parents about the similarity offered by the place to his home town, particularly by the wind, which instantly recalled that of Edinburgh:

> The imitation of Edinburgh is, at times deceptive; there is a note among the chimney-pots that suggests Howe Street, though I think the shrillest spot in Christendom was not upon the Howe Street side, but in front... a sort of bleat that used to divide the marrow in my joints. (36)

From an essay entitled Ordered South, Stevenson remembered the

most pitiful scenes of Edinburgh, where human misery was embroiled with the prevailing weather conditions. The weather shaped and defined the misery, just as in the fiction, it could determine a sense of horror, elation or solitude. Stevenson's memories of Edinburgh aligned with his contemporary visions to give the city a consistently poor appearance of congeniality:

> grim, wintry streets at home. The hopeless huddled attitudes of tramps in doorways; the flinching gait of barefoot children on the icy pavement; the sheen of the rainy streets toward afternoon; the meagre anatomy of the poor defined by the clinging of the wet garments; the high canorous notes of the Northeaster on days when the very houses seem to stiffen with cold. (37)

The 'vicious' nature of Edinburgh's weather was certainly a blight on the 'lamplit fairy land' which could never be ignored.

The consonancy between landscape and history, which was to emerge in Stevenson's Scottish fiction was also anticipated in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes. From his overview of contemporary Edinburgh, Stevenson quickly moved into contemplating its history. It appears that he was never content to write merely about his own time, and both his fiction and his non-fiction show him persistently probing into Scotland's past. Stevenson's avoidance of his own times was strange and it is particularly odd that two of his major Scottish novels should focus upon the Jacobite period, an era which Scott had apparently monopolised. Scott was popular, and Stevenson admired his work and the rapidity with which he had

written, but he certainly took a risk in setting his own fiction in the same historical context. To have earned the title of 'a lesser Scott' would not have been an auspicious opening to Stevenson's literary career. However, Stevenson's historical interest did extend beyond the Jacobite era, and several of his works make reference to the much earlier time of the Covenanting Martyrs. Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes encompasses a massive historical spectrum confirming both Stevenson's interest in history and his conviction that the present and the past were indissolubly bonded. In Edinburgh, as in Scotland, the past breathed through the present. No landscape could be imaginatively barren when its historical import was considered. In Edinburgh, Stevenson inevitably found a place which was largely comprised of its history. Nowhere was history so visible, and perhaps nowhere could the consonancy between landscape and history be better illustrated.

Edinburgh's charm, Stevenson believed, lay "in a certain consonancy between the aspect of the city and its odd and stirring history," (38) This was the type of charm which his later writing ascribed to the rest of Scotland. David Balfour was made aware of such "consonancy" upon the Bass Rock, and in Weir of Hermiston, Archie experienced a similar perception of the 'Praying Weaver's Stone'. Stevenson further declared in Edinburgh: Pictureque Notes that "the character of a place is often most perfectly expressed in its associations". (39) Just as the Bass Rock assumed an interesting character of religious peace in conflict with superstitious fear, and the 'Praying Weaver's Stone' assumed an air of wrongdoing, so Edinburgh could present a character which was only visible to those who probed into its history.

Stevenson's historically imaginative awareness gave Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes an interest beyond that of plain factual presentation. On the second page, he portrayed the Palace of Holyrood as it used to be. His comprehensive eye had quickly noticed the Palace standing alone, "left aside in the growth of Edinburgh". (40) His imagination responded to this immediately by recalling the life of "a house of many memories". (41) In a few short phrases, the grey, silent building is transformed and its magnificent past is vividly discovered:

> Wars have been plotted, dancing has lasted deep into the night, murder has been done in its chambers. There Prince Charlie held his phantom levees, and in a very gallant manner represented a fallen dynasty for some hours. (42)

The disintegration of this vision is sudden, like the end of David Balfour's vision of Roman soldiers on the Bass, or Darnaway's nephew's vision of a Spanish galleon sinking off the Aros Coast. In Holyrood, the "kings and queens, buffoons and grave ambassadors", (43) who were dancing bravely are quickly replaced by the current appearance, which had triggered the memories, and a sombre reflection on the ephemeral nature of existence. The incident ends with a sense of pity and a sense of reassurance. It was an attitude which was to emerge from much of Stevenson's Scottish fiction:

> All these things of clay are mingled with the dust; the king's crown itself is shown for sixpence to the vulgar; but the stone palace has outlived these changes. (44)

By 1894, Stevenson's vision encompassed the whole of Scotland. His concern for evoking the past and his avoidance of discussing deeply the present did not mean that he was out of touch. He was very much in touch with his country because he could recognize how Scotland's foundations, symbolised by "the stone palace", (45) could outlive the changes felt by men. He perceived an ironic contrast in Scotland, which was microcosmically represented by the Palace of Holyrood. The ephemeral politics, religions, wars and festivities existed in an environment which embodied permanence and which could rise above change. The 'busy' histories of Holyrood, Edinburgh and Scotland contrasted with their reassuringly permanent backgrounds. Stevenson understood the power of this

permanence, despite his enjoying a 'busy' life of change and movement. Perhaps his own life allowed him to better understand and feel how necessary a sense of permanence was to man.

Stevenson concluded the introductory chapter of Edinburgh: Pictureqe Notes with a panoramic sweep through Edinburgh's human history. From its primitive time as, "a capital thatched with heather", (46) he progressed to when the "New Town began to spread abroad its draughty parallelograms." (47) Like Jaques' 'Seven Ages of Man' speech which concisely evokes with memorable clarity the changing progress of an individual life, Stevenson's pencil sketches of Edinburgh's turbulent history are similarly clear and memorable. The mute history of the city is translated into vivacious reality by his historical imagination. The same authorial hand behind the historical romances of Kidnapped and Catriona is detectable in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes. The influence of the past upon the present and Stevenson's obvious delight in recreating scenes from history were clearly apparent, and strengthened his fiction as much as his non-fiction. He saw the past at least as vividly as the present and was keen to communicate his vision to his readers. In Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, John Knox appears, reproving Mary Queen of Scots; James VI is seen sharing wine with George Heriot; Grahame of Claverhouse and his dragoons ride through "for their lives", and Burns quits the "plough tail" for a town of, "gilt unbelief and artificial letters". (48) Stevenson did not paint such historical

portraits merely to avoid portraying the present. Edinburgh: Pictureque Notes did consider the city as it appeared in 1878, but as Stevenson understood, and was to develop in such Scottish works as Kidnapped, Catriona and Weir of Hermiston, the understanding of a place came largely from a knowledge and understanding of its past.

Stevenson announced in his introduction to Edinburgh that the city was, "above all a curiosity". (49) This was reinforced by his later assertion that "the story of the town is as eccentric as its appearance." (50) The telling of this story explains the 'curious' nature of Edinburgh. This mirrors the situation in Kidnapped, where only through an understanding of what happened during the Jacobite rebellions can David Balfour appreciate the environment into which he is suddenly plunged. The "hard country" (51) of Appin and the lonely Bass Rock are only 'beautiful' when a sympathetic appreciation of history is applied to them. Beauty, it appears, lies not in the useful, but in the historical, and in Edinburgh, Stevenson was faced with history wherever he chose to look. It was, therefore, a kind of beauty which could transcend nineteenth century soot, a changing population, and even the horrors of the climate.

The search for 'fitness' of place was a persistent aim in Stevenson's Scottish fiction. By 'fitness', Stevenson acknowledged both the significance of history to a place, and also a more indefinable feeling of 'genius loci'. Long before

he wrote Kidnapped, Weir of Hermiston and such place-orientated tales as Thrawn Janet and The Merry Men, Stevenson had spoken of this 'fitness' in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes. His subsequent fiction picked up his early ideas with emphatic precision:

> The character of a place is often most perfectly expressed in its associations. An event strikes root, and grows into a legend when it has happened amongst congenial surroundings. Ugly actions, above all in ugly places have the true romantic quality and become an undying property of their scene. To a man like Scott, the different appearances of nature seemed to contain its own legend ready-made which it was his to call forth. (52)

The reference to "ugly actions" in "ugly places" anticipated the introductory chapter to Weir of Hermiston. There, ugly historical actions associate with the ugly location to give "this wild end of a moorland parish" a "true romantic quality", (53) which could initiate further suitable actions:

> Public and domestic history have thus marked with a bloody finger this hollow among the hills; and since the Cameronian gave his life there, two hundred years ago, in a glorious folly and without comprehension or regret, the silence of the moss has been broken once again by the report of firearms and the cry of the dying. (54)

In 1878, Stevenson had grasped this theory, but looked to Scott as its supreme practitioner. In 1894, with Weir of Hermiston, he was able to "call forth" legend as skilfully and artistically himself, and bind it into a piece of fiction of unquestionable power. Kidnapped and Catriona are more novels of pure history. There are only fleeting moments of this 'legendary' style. The plots are more directly factual, and

although the relationship between landscape and history is drawn, they lack the power which was to emerge in his final, unfinished piece of Scottish fiction.

From the opening paragraph of Weir of Hermiston a sense of timelessness and 'legend' emerges, which is deepened throughout the novel. Archie sees Holyrood as Stevenson had done in 1878, awakening memories of its glorious past in a contrast to his own inglorious present. The description of Archie's vision of Holyrood echoes strongly the description in Edinburgh: Pictureque Notes. It is as if Stevenson had always wanted to include such a vision in his fiction, but had only found the right opportunity in his last work. The description which had laid dormant since 1878 suddenly burst into his fiction in 1894 with a deceiving freshness and an artistic aptness:

> He saw Holyrood in a dream, remembrance of its romance awoke in him and faded; he had a vision of the old radiant stories, of Queen Mary and Prince Charlie, of the hooded stag, of the splendour and crime, the velvet and bright iron of the past; and dismissed them with a cry of pain (55).

This scene is one of historical legend, where a sense of time is made apparent. It prepares for Stevenson's movement into contemplating a much vaster attitude. This occurs through Archie's experience at Hermiston church shortly before he first sees Christina. In the churchyard, Archie had felt a deep sense of pity, engendered by the realistation of the transience and apparent unimportance of human life. This sadness, a pessimistic perception of the meaning of history is of the same

kind as Archie felt when remembering the ghosts of Holyrood. However, inside the church, Archie's experience is much more positive, and triumphs over the pity of human life and "the chill of the grave". (56) Stevenson expressed Archie's state of supreme awareness with exquisite poetry which matched the beauty of the moment:

> Brightness of azure, clouds of fragrance, a tinkle of falling water and singing birds rose like exhalations from some deeper aboriginal memory that was not his, but belonged to the flesh on his bones. His body remembered, and it seemed to him that his body was in no way gross, but ethereal and perishable like a strain of music. (57)

This experience transcends the 'history' of other works, and makes a profound comment on man's place in the universe. The expanding perception of Stevenson, which moved from Edinburgh to Scotland, appears also to have moved from simple history to a contemplation of infinity. Archie's experience goes beyond the academic and the emotional satisfaction of understanding history, to suggest a state where history becomes insignificant. The suggestion that this is a state which involves the body rather than the mind is at once primitive and sophisticated. For a brief moment, Archie suspends his modern, mind-directed perceptions and allows his subjugated "body" to respond freely. This complex vision was to be Stevenson's last comment on the relationship between the present and the past. It makes clear that 'history' was only the surface of the past, and that beneath it lay a deep sea of primitive memories which could only rarely be glimpsed and never understood.

Stevenson's view of Scotland as a divided nation which could only be recognised as a unity from certain angles, also emerged in the microcosmic world of Edinburgh. In _Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes_, Stevenson portrayed a city made up of division and almost thoroughly lacking any consonancy. The difficulty of characterizing such a place was made clear in his statement that Edinburgh was "half a capital and half a country town". (58) The whole city appeared to lead "a double existence, it is half alive and half a monumental marble." (59) The idea of "double existence" was to translate itself beyond Edinburgh in Stevenson's later works, culminating in the classic tale of dual existence, _The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde_. Stevenson also applied this concept to landscape, history, religion and superstition. Scotland's divisions were certainly more pervasive than the obvious one between Highland and Lowland, which formed the basis for _Kidnapped_ and _Catriona_. Stevenson had said that Scotland appeared to be two separate nations, but both _Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes_ and his fiction suggest that it was a nation composed of a multiplicity of disputed aspects. The divisions which he saw in Edinburgh were explored by him in 1878 as widely and as systematically as the divisions which he later focused upon in his fiction. The root of much of his writing was division, and the possibility of opposites coexisting and forming a paradoxical unity.

Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes presented a city of contrast, division and stark incongruity. In its physical

appearance, Stevenson emphasised the clashing nature both of the underlying landscape and of the architecture which decorated it. The crag upon which the Castle and Old Town were founded contrasted with the cultivated gardens beneath it, and the level ground to the Firth upon which the New Town was built. The awesome grandeur of the Castle contrasted with the garrets, and 'Lands' of the Old Town, which was in turn so different from the geometically-designed openness of the New Town. Stevenson criticised Edinburgh's housing, but not because it was so disjointed in appearance. The squalour, danger and degradation which he saw in the Old Town 'lands' was appropriately attacked, offering a rare glimpse of Stevenson's attitude towards social problems of his own time. However, in a manner which was similar to the way in which he saw the past enhancing the present, Stevenson saw the contrasting physical aspects of Edinburgh also enhancing each other. Of the Old Town, he commented that, rather than looking out of place in its new nineteenth century surroundings, it "depends for much of its effect on the new quarters that lie around it... the point is to see this embellished Stirling planted in the midst of a large, active, and fantastic, modern city, for there, the two react in a picturesque sense, and the one is the making of the other." (60) This positive attitude towards contrast and change suggests that Stevenson was not wholly depressed by his own era. In Scotland, as in Edinburgh, he felt always that, "everything worth judging, whether it be a man, a work of art, or only a fine city, must be judged upon its merits as a whole. " (61). From a distance of both time and place, Stevenson

gained the opportunity to regard Scotland "as a whole". The islands of the Pacific ultimately provided him with a suitable position from which to regard his home.

Stevenson did not attempt to depict Edinburgh as a unified city, and although he did show the relationship between the diverse parts, he also underlined the impossible gulfs in the city. The most striking characteristic of Edinburgh, as of Scotland, was the level of discord which could prevail. In his later fiction, he found the gulf between the Highlands and Lowlands a suitable expression of Scottish division. In the compressed world of Edinburgh he found an equally emphatic image which he termed with admirable conciseness, "chalk lines". (62)

In the short chapter, 'Legends', Stevenson created a minute picture of two Edinburgh sisters who lived together in total discord. They both lived in a single room, and fell out with each other on a "point of controversial divinity." (63) The division was unbridgeable. The sisters never spoke to each other, but remained in the same room. Into this room, they introduced a line of division as abrupt as that which separated the Highlands from the Lowlands:

> a chalk line drawn upon the floor separated their two domains. (64)

The alignment of this situation with that in Edinburgh as a whole, and ultimately Scotland, is easily recognised. The hatred and distrust over a matter of religion strongly echoed

the Jacobite situation, which Stevenson was to explore in Kidnapped, Catriona and The Master of Ballantrae. In 1878, Stevenson felt deep frustration at such an unnatural situation. He cried against such extreme "unsisterliness," (65) and the fact that time made them grow, "only the more steeled in enmity." (66) However, even in 1878, he knew how typical of his country was this painful situation. His personal sadness at such an understanding broke out suddenly into this chapter of Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes.

> Alas! To those who know the ecclesiastical history of the race - the most perverse and melancholy in man's annals - this will seem only a figure of much that is typical of Scotland and her highseated capital above the Forth - a figure so grimly realistic that it may pass with strangers for a caricature. (67)

Stevenson attempted to present the absurdity of religious division, and the fact that Scotland's divisions must seem ridiculous to an outside observer. He ended his life as both a Scot and an outside observer. He could regard Scotland with distant objectivity and sympathetic involvement. In 1878 he had not spent much time away from his country, but he could still recognise and feel saddened by its divided self. Of the religious conflicts, which ultimately formed the most enduring divisions, Stevenson commented that, "the sects in Scotland form a large family of sisters, and the chalk lines are thickly drawn". (68) Edinburgh was but a smaller version of Scotland. In his depiction of the "dismal" sound of an Edinburgh Sabbath, he expressed much of the spirit, and much of the pity of the entire nation:

> But in Edinburgh all manner of loud bells join, or rather disjoin, in one swelling, brutal babblement of noise. Now one overtakes another, and now lags behind it; now five or six all strike on the pained tympanum at the same punctual instant of time, and make together a dismal chord of discord... a harsh ecclesiastical tocsin; the outcry of incongruous orthodoxies, calling on every separate conventicler to put up a protest... (69)

The din of an Edinburgh Sabbath symbolised for Stevenson the disjointed nature of his country. His wittily assessed the Scottish problem as a "fantastic tragedy" on the subject of "Much Ado about Nothing". (70) The pity lay with the impossibility of resolving the tragedy. The epitaph for Scotland's divisions was simple, and the terrible story of the two Edinburgh sisters emphasised the permanence of the position:

> But there are the chalk lines. (71)

There was much more in Edinburgh that was ugly and Stevenson's recognition in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes of poverty, social inequality and the inevitable evils of a large town is interesting. The accusation that Stevenson lived in the past is largely borne out by the subjects of his fiction. None of his novels of Scotland pick up the social difficulties of his own time, or even focus upon the late nineteenth century. Stevenson may have felt that Mrs Gaskell and Charles Dickens had fully exploited the subject, upon whose work he could not improve. His avoidance of contemporary matters in his fiction was certainly not because he would not look at them. He revealed in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes that he did look at them, and could write powerfully upon the subject.

Edinburgh's incongruity shone through his descriptions.

In Stevenson's time, the residents of the Old Town were the poor, who had replaced the previous wealthy inhabitants earlier in the century. The traces of former, finer days coexisted with the dirt and over-population of modern times. Stevenson condensed the scene into a memorable epithet:

> The Bedouins camp within Pharaoh's palace walls. (72)

In terms of social realism, parts of Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes are as striking as that offered either by Mrs Gaskell or Charles Dickens. The "Bedouins" are not unrealistically romanticised. Stevenson did not shrink from describing the darkness and overcrowding of the flats on the hill but did direct attention to the social change which had overwhelmed the area:

> Washing dangles above washing from the windows... grown people sit upon their doorsteps... and as you look up, out pops the head of a slatternly woman from the Countess' window. (73)

The contrast between the old inhabitants and the new is interesting, but so also is Stevenson's awareness that Edinburgh offered many of its citizens much worse than simple climatic discomfort.

The horror of life in Edinburgh's old "Lands" was intense, and Stevenson devoted a chapter of Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes to its realization. The residents faced a

bestial existence, which was visible to all. Their dwellings lay in the heart of the city, where once the only form of overcrowding had occurred at wealthy parties. The pity of the current situation elicited from Stevenson a tone of acute shame:

> In one house, perhaps two score families herd together; and perhaps not one of them is wholly out of the reach of want. The great hotel is given over to discomfort from the foundation to the chimney-tops; everywhere, a pinching narrow habit; scanty meals, and an air of sluttishness and dirt... And even if God tempers his dispensations to the young, and all the ill does not arise that our apprehensions may forecast, the sight of such a way of living is disquieting to people who are more happily circumstanced. Social inequality is nowhere more ostentatious than in Edinburgh. (74)

Although the ostentatious nature of Edinburgh's social divisions did not form the basis for his Scottish fiction, there are moments in Kidnapped and Catriona when this tone is heard. David Balfour, the archetypal rural lowlander, could view Edinburgh objectively. His comments on his first impressions of the city at the end of Kidnapped strongly resembled Stevenson's own youthful voice in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes. He does not speak of the traditionally picturesque aspect of the place, but experiences an ugliness for which even his time in Scotland's dismal deserts had not prepared him. It was the ugliness of wealth and poverty, the constant noise, the terrible smells and the foulness of the buildings. His vision is not one of patriotic warmth, but one of nightmare:

> The huge height of the buildings, running up to ten and fifteen storeys, the narrow arched entries that

> constantly vomited passengers, the waves of the merchants in their windows. The hubbub and endless stir, the foul smells and the fine clothes and a hundred other particulars too small to mention struck me into a kind of stupor of surprise. (75)

In Catriona, David compared his perception of Edinburgh with his previous understanding of Scotland, and discovered that it struck a discordant note:

> It was a New World for me after the moorland braes, the sea-sands and the still countryside. (76)

There is far more about the countryside in Stevenson's Scottish fiction, than the towns. Tales such as Thrawn Janet and The Merry Men have almost no contact with the world of the town. The presentation of towns which did occur in his fiction was not sympathetic, suggesting an antipathy in Stevenson towards such places. David Balfour portrayed Edinburgh's ugliness, both in physical terms:

> for all the world like a rabbit warren, not only by the number of its indwellers, but the complication of its passages and holes, (77)

and also in a more sinister fashion. The ugliness of political and judicial manoeuvring also disgusted David and permitted Stevenson to attack the profession for which he had qualified, but clearly detested.

The courts were an aspect of Edinburgh which Stevenson saw as redolent with Scotland's "national flavour". He contrasted the fineness of legal argument so favoured in Edinburgh's courts, ("we treat law as a fine art, and relish

and digest a good distinction"), (78) with its often pitiable targets. This struck Stevenson hard, and rather as Archie rebelled in Weir of Hermiston, Stevenson's voice was raised at such callousness in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes:

> Many a man's life has been argued away from him during long hours in the court above. (79)

The contrast between the public approval of lawyers' skill's and the reality of their inhuman profession symbolised much of Edinburgh's rottenness.

The overwhelming ugliness of Edinburgh lay not with the particulars of division, poverty or suppression, but with "the whole". In his selection of various representative particulars. Stevenson uncovered a side to Edinburgh which challenged traditional patriotic pride in the city. Stevenson brought the two sides together in order to better understand his home. He was to do the same in his fiction. David Balfour's heart leapt in him when he beheld 'Auld Reekie', but upon actually walking in the town he was filled with disgust. Within Edinburgh: Pictureque Notes, Stevenson glorified the city as a centre of civilisation and as his home, but also condemned it for its dirty, divided and unfair side. It was all part of Scotland's discordant character and it was supremely apt that the town should produce such feelings of love and hostility in the same man.

Superstitious belief and elements of the supernatural were as detectable in Edinburgh as in the rest of Scotland. In

Edinburgh: Pictureque Notes, Stevenson gave a number of typical examples which suggested a strong bond between the city and the rest of the country. Tales such as Thrawn Janet, The Merry Men and The Master of Ballantrae might suggest that only Scotland's remote areas were 'fit' for unnatural events. However, in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes, Stevenson uncovered a similar fitness in the middle of the city, giving it a share in this distinct "national flavour".

In Edinburgh, Stevenson saw a place which was as supernaturally suggestive as the parish of Balweary or the crags of the Bass Rock. The architecture of the Old Town demanded to be haunted at least as strongly as any lonely rural spot. In focusing upon this aspect of Edinburgh, Stevenson's prose again rose above that of simple non-fiction. His language was so poetic that it could be mistaken for the introduction to an Edinburgh ghost story.

> So in the low dens and high-flying garrets of Edinburgh, people may go back upon dark passages in the town's adventures, and chill their marrow with winter's tales about the fire; tales that are singularly apposite and characteristic, not only of the old life, but of the very constitution of built nature in that part, and singularly well qualified to add horror to horror when the wind pipes around the tall lands and hoots down arched passages, and the far-spread wilderness of city lamps keeps quavering and flaring in the gusts. (80)

The physical appearance, the history and the population of Edinburgh combined to encourage and protect the superstitious characteristic of Scotland in the city. Having set the scene so well, Stevenson recalled a number of tales and references

which heightened the sense that Edinburgh was at least as haunted as elsewhere in Scotland.

The acute lack of space in parts of the city determined, as Stevenson grimly put it, that "only a few inches separate the living from the dead". (81) Scottish obsession with death was as marked in Edinburgh as in the rest of the country, and in Greyfriars graveyard, Stevenson suggested that there was ample evidence to qualify the Scots as, "highest among nations in the matter of grimly illustrating death. (82) The huge monuments, their pithy verses and the ubiquitous symbols of change and decay combined to give the place an air which typified Scotland, "serious to the point of melancholy". (83) The proximity to death, and the constant reminders of it in the city, would inevitably encourage superstitions and belief in the supernatural. It would have been most unnatural if it had not.

The harbouring of superstitions and dark supernatural fears was also derived from the "dark and vehement religion" (84) against which Stevenson rebelled so strongly. The Calvinistic creed, with its attendant threatened horror and terror of Hell gave encouragement to superstitions which fitted its stern precepts. This was not unique to Edinburgh, but in the confined, overcrowded city, it helped to ferment traditional superstition into a powerful brew of legends, rumours, stories and nameless fears.

Edinburgh appeared to be besieged by superstition, confirming Stevenson's assessment that it was a "superstitious city". (85) The fears of plague, for example, lingered for generations after the event, and Stevenson evoked a scene of fear and potential horror in his portrait of "fatal houses", (84) where the disease was believed to linger. The avoidance of these places, their remaining untenanted, and the perpetuating of such fears in the young might appear absurd, but to his fellow "superstitious citizens", (87) Stevenson could see that they were very real. Even to the most sensible citizen, Stevenson remarked, the fear persisted that in these shunned houses, the plague "lay ambushed like a basilisk, ready to flow forth." (88)

The fear of "fatal houses" (89) was almost rational in comparison with other elements of Edinburgh's supernatural canon. Stevenson recalled how his father was told tales in the nursery about the terrible figure of Major Weir. Nursery tales of the "devil's coach drawn by six coal-black horses with fiery eyes", within which people "might see the dead Major", (90) were symptomatic of a superstitious population. The telling of such stories in Edinburgh formed a union with the rest of Scotland. The same kind of story would be told in a Highland cottage or a Lowland farm.

Stevenson was scrupulous not to present his tales of haunted Edinburgh as if he was convinced of their truth. He reported his information in the third person or as the memories

of others. In this respect, he was anticipating very precisely the way in which he would handle such matters in his fiction. In speaking about the mysterious disappearance of a piper who sought to explore the reputed subterranean passage between Edinburgh Castle and the Palace of Holyrood, he offered three possible solutions:

> Whether he was choked with gases or perished in a quag or was removed bodily by the Evil One remains a point of doubt. (91)

The three possibilities culminate with an acknowledgement of the prevalence and significance of superstition in Edinburgh. Fanned by the terrors of Calvinism, the possibility that the piper was abducted by the devil was not one to be dismissed easily. It was symbolic of Scotland's superstitious and confused state, that rational and supernatural explanations for an event could be considered together with equal seriousness.

In the final chapter of _Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes_, Stevenson recalled a personal contact which he had had with the city's superstitious side. He remembered visiting a place where in "old days", had stood a "crow-haunted gibbet with two bodies hanged in chains". (92) This was surely the inspiration for the scene in Catriona when David Balfour encountered Auld Merren sitting by an identical gibbet. Stevenson recalled being told that the stone to which the gibbet had been fixed was "never dry". (93) This was presumably a supernatural, but sympathetic response to the fact that the two men had forfeited their lives for "fourpence between them". (94) Stevenson did not state whether the stone was always wet, but suggested that this was an empty

superstition by his remark that only "people of a willing fancy were persuaded." (95) The prevalence of such people in his own time was made clear later, in the presentation of the Pentland Hills, an area "dear to the superstitious". (96) The area was filled with elements of the supernatural, and Stevenson outlined a number of tales which associated the area with the supernatural. The stories were of typical Scottish origin involving such occurrences as the appearance of a "lady in white", (97) and Satan residing in the area for a time. Stevenson refused to cast in his lot with "that disenchanting school of writers" (98) who promoted such stories. He did, however, feel the 'fitness' of that area for such stories, and took time to evoke the supernatural atmosphere of the place:

> And if people sit up all night in lone places on the hills, with Bibles and tremulous psalms, they will be apt to hear some of the most fiendish noises in the world; the wind will beat on doors and dance upon roofs for them, and make the hills howl around their cottage with a clamour like the Judgement Day. (99).

Stevenson's understanding of the Scottish obsession with the supernatural did not tempt him into full acquiescence with such attitudes. However, his later fiction did reveal a far less cynical stance than that taken in Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes. He strove here to detract belief in such stories, and his casting of ghost-story writers as "the makers of sun-myths" (100) was a particularly forceful way of distancing himself from that genre. His growing understanding of the Scottish character, and in particular, the importance of superstition to it, was marked with a growing sympathy in his writing. Stories such as Thrawn Janet and The Body-Snatcher

would even have fallen into the category of "sun-myths". The harmony between Edinburgh and Scotland engendered by superstitious attitudes was another important development in Stevenson's perception. In a country infested with superstition and supernatural events, Edinburgh was a particularly apt capital city.

Stevenson's relationship with Edinburgh was not simple. As his home, he felt an abiding attachment to it and many of his letters, poems and dedications swelled with yearning and nostalgia. There was nothing false about these emotions. They were truly felt, and exacerbated by the distance which lay between himself and home:

> There are no stars so lovely as Edinburgh street lamps. When I forget thee Auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning. (101)

The endearing desire for "Edinburgh gossip", the memories of his youth, and the feeling which grew in him that his exile was to be permanent, reveal a tragic side to Stevenson's life. It was a tragedy made worse by the complexity of his feelings for Edinburgh. His was not an unrealistic love for a place which existed only in his memory, without harshness or hatefulness. In the same breath with which he expressed overwhelming fondness for the place, he could also find words of severe criticism. Moments before idealising Edinburgh's "street lamps", he had recalled with distaste the town where "the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls and the salt showers fly and beat." (102) He recognised the town's dual nature, and

perhaps never better expressed his relationship with it than in a letter to Colvin in August 1893 when he referred to his head being "filled with the blessed, beastly place all the time". (103) The apparent incongruity of "blessed" and "beastly" was resolved in both Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes and in his Scottish fiction. There was much that was unattractive, the climate, the landscape, the poverty, the superstitions, the prevalence of discord, but somehow, this unattractiveness could be transcended. Although the people all walked out of step, from a distance this lack of harmony assumed an appearance of congruity. Stevenson was able to view, and to judge from a simultaneously close and distant range and resolved Edinburgh's discordant jangle into a memorable unity. The difficulty posed by attempting to ascribe a clearly defined character to Edinburgh was superbly symbolic of the problem which the whole country posed. Edinburgh was a city which defied rational judgement and challenged its citizens to like it. Stevenson's perceptions of Edinburgh were as mixed as the city itself, but it is clear that when he thought of 'home', he focused upon Edinburgh. This permanent influence upon his life and upon his writing suggests that the city inspired in him an emotion which defied his harsh words. Stevenson tried to express this feeling in 1878, but at that time he was physically too close to Edinburgh to be able to regard it with the necessary combination of attachment and detachment. In 1890, he sent a poem to Charles Baxter entitled To My Old Comrades. Through a series of recollections of his time in Edinburgh he built up a sense of relief to be away, but the mournful echoing of the

first line in the last line emphasised the bond which he was glad to have with 'Auld Reekie'. Such a paradox was a suitable final comment on Stevenson's relationship with Edinburgh.

> Do you remember - can we e'er forget -
> How in the coiled perplexities of youth,
> In our wild climate, in our scowling town,
> We gloomed and shivered, sorrowed, sobbed and feared?
> The belching wind, the missile rain,
> The rare and welcome silence of the snows,
> The laggard morn, the haggard day, the night,
> The grimy spell of the nocturnal town,
> Do you remember? - ah! could one forget?. (104)

CHAPTER IV

Reference Point

(1) *R.L. Stevenson's Letters to Charles Baxter*. ed. DeLancey, Ferguson and Marshall Waingrow. (New Haven 1956) p.98

(2) Letter to Barrie (1892)

(3) *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*. p.142.

(4) op. cit. (1) p.98.

(5) *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* p.136.

(6) *Letters II* pp.266-7 ed. Sidney Colvin (New York)

(7) Letter to Barrie (1892)

(8) *Letters II* p.344

(9) *Catriona* p.137.

(10) *Kidnapped* Dedication to Charles Baxter.

(11) *Requiem* From, 'The Death of Stevenson'. Osbourne L.

(12) *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* p.197.

(13) ibid. pp.196-7.

(14) Dedication of *Weir of Hermiston* to his wife.

(15) *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* p.135.

(16) ibid. p.180.

(17) *Kidnapped* p.144.

(18) ibid.

(19) *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* p.142.

(20) ibid. p.135.

(21) ibid.

(22) ibid.

(23) *The Merry Men* p.40.

(24) Thrawn Janet p.114.

(25) ibid.

(26) Edinburgh: Pictureque Notes p.185.

(27) ibid.

(28) ibid.

(29) Letters II pp.266-7.

(30) Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes p.183

(31) ibid.

(32) ibid.

(33) ibid.

(34) ibid.

(35) Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes p.136.

(36) Letters I pp.376-7.

(37) 'Ordered South', Nottingham Society ed. (New York) VI, p.216.

(38) Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes p.138.

(39) ibid. p.155.

(40) ibid. p.136.

(41) ibid.

(42) ibid.

(43) ibid.

(44) ibid.

(45) ibid.

(46) ibid. p.140

(47) ibid.

(48) ibid. pp.140-1.

(49) ibid. p.136.

(50) ibid. p.140.

(51) Kidnapped p.178.

(52) Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes p.155.

(53) Weir of Hermiston p.1.

(54) ibid.

(55) ibid. p.25.

(56) ibid. p.72.

(57) ibid.

(58) Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes p.136.

(59) ibid.

(60) ibid. p.142.

(61) ibid.

(62) ibid. p.160.

(63) ibid. p.158.

(64) ibid.

(65) ibid.

(66) ibid. p.159.

(67) ibid.

(68) ibid. p.160

(69) ibid.

(70) ibid.

(71) ibid.

(72) ibid. p.144.

(73) ibid.

(74) ibid. p.146.

(75) Kidnapped p.223.

(76) Catriona p.1.

(77) ibid. p.2

(78) Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes p.153.

(70) ibid.

(80) ibid. p.155.

(81) ibid. p.162.

(82) ibid. p.161.

(83) ibid. p.162

(84) op. cit. (1) p.98

(85) Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes p.157.

(86) ibid.

(87) ibid.

(88) ibid.

(89) ibid.

(90) ibid. p.158.

(91) ibid. p.149.

(92) ibid. p.190.

(93) ibid.

(94) ibid.

(95) ibid.

(96) ibid. p.192.

(97) ibid.

(98) ibid.

(99) ibid.

(100) ibid.

(101) 'The Scot Abroad' From Scotland to Silverado ed. Hart J.D. (Mass. 1966) pp.210-11.

(102) ibid.

(103) Letter to Colvin 1893. Quoted in Collected Poems ed. Smith J.A. (London 1971) p.518.

(104) 'To My Old Comrades' op. cit (1) p.256.

CHAPTER V

"No beauty under the kind heavens, and no society of the wise and good can repay me for my absence from my country."

CONCLUSION

Stevenson died at a time when the "lamplit vicious fairy land" (1) of a home which he could never forget was exercising an intense and sustained influence over him. He died before completing the deeply Scottish Weir of Hermiston, and with plans for several more pieces of Scottish fiction already made. His stepson, Lloyd Osbourne wrote in his essay entitled "The Death of Stevenson" about his stepfather's apparent "premonition of his end". (2) He noticed how Stevenson spoke much more about the past, "as though he were reviewing it". (3) Stevenson also seems to have been goaded by this premonition into reflecting much more upon Scotland. Lloyd Osbourne noted one of Stevenson's comments at that time, which clearly suggested that he was reviewing and seeking to strengthen his bond with Scotland. The connection which he made with his country was a literary association with two previous Scottish writers who had shared his christian name. His remarkably inventive mind suggested that he was "the last of Scotland's three Robbies", (4) the end of a literary sequence which had begun precisely a century before his own birth:

> Robbie Burns, Robbie Fergusson and Robbie Stevenson - and how hardly life treated them all, poor devils! (5)

Stevenson's life was not one of smooth passage, but nor was it one of unrelieved suffering. He was able to live from his chosen artistic career, he was able to travel extensively, he was able to reside in a beautiful place, and he enjoyed the sincere regard of his fellow writers and countrymen. The 'hard' side to his life was the enforced exile

he was made to endure from the country in which both Fergusson and Burns had been able to remain. On several occasions, he expressed his desire to return to Scotland in order to "put up a stone to poor Fergusson on that forgotten grave of his". (6) His motive may have been more than simple affection for a poet whom he admired. In May 1894, Stevenson wrote to Baxter with regard to Fergusson's gravestone. He wanted to associate himself with Fergusson, who had been born exactly a hundred years before Stevenson, but it also seems that Stevenson was keen to have his own name inscribed somewhere in Scotland. If there was the chance of his name appearing on an Edinburgh gravestone, he was keen to take it. He knew that he would never "be buried among good Scots clods," (7) but he could at least have his name chiselled onto a stone in Edinburgh's Canongate churchyard. "I wonder", he asked Baxter rhetorically, "if an inscription like this would look arrogant?

> This stone, originally erected by Robert Burns, has been repaired at the charges of Robert Louis Stevenson, and is by him re-dedicated to the Memory of Robert Fergusson as the gift of one Edinburgh lad to another. (8)

It was not arrogance. A frightening sense of isolation appears to have assailed Stevenson at Vailima, as he sensed the approach of death. His concern for Fergusson's grave reflected his desire to bind himself closer to his home following his "premonition of his end." (9).

During his last weeks, Stevenson's mind was filled with reflections upon Scottish graves. Apart from his concern

for Fergusson's grave, his last piece of fiction, Weir of Hermiston focused upon the grave of the "Praying Weaver". He also recalled the poem written to S.R. Crockett in 1893 which had evoked the scene surrounding the "graves of the Martyrs", where "the whaups are crying". (10) Finally, he gave directions that his prematurely-written poem entitled 'Requiem' should be inscribed upon his tomb on Mount Vaea. The source of this morbidity was his hopeless yearning "to be planted in Scotland". (11) The impossibility of this happening possessed his mind in his last year, and as well as affecting his writing, it may also have been responsible for the precise location of his grave.

Lloyd Osbourne recorded how Stevenson repeated his desire to be buried at the top of Mount Vaea. He also recorded that, "Stevenson was the only one of us who had ever scaled its precipitous slopes". (12) The reason for this extraordinary feat of exertion, and his insistence on being buried there had nothing to do with the spectacular view over Vailima. From the summit, Stevenson must have felt closer to Scotland. As he stared out to sea, he must have been able to imagine the Scottish coast in the distance. It would have been far easier to imagine that Scotland was just over the horizon from the solitude of that hill-top. The summit of Mount Vaea was isolated from the obvious foreign nature of Vailima below. In choosing to be buried there, Stevenson was simultaneously finding a place which reminded him of Scotland, and which was as far away from his foreign dwelling as possible. It was not

Scotland, but nor was it quite Vailima.

Stevenson reflected upon his permanent bond with Scotland as early as 1883 when he wrote the chapter entitled 'The Scot Abroad', in The Silverado Squatters. In the way that Edinburgh: Pictureque Notes anticipated many of the concerns of his Scottish fiction, so this chapter anticipated the feeling of unassailable kinship with Scotland which so obsessed him in his last:

> A few pages back I wrote that a man belonged in these days to a variety of countries; but the old land is still the true love, the others are but pleasant infidelities. (13)

Stevenson's life was, therefore, one of perpetual infidelity. It was however, of a type which could not destroy his "true love". Even the seductive charms of Samoa could not break up his marriage to Scotland. Through his writing, he preserved and deepened his love for Scotland. It was always a troublesome relationship, but it was the one which in his darkest times and in his last few months meant the most to him. In 1894, he turned back towards his one true love, ignoring the numerous mistresses with whom he had dallied during his lifetime of travel.

In 1883, he had also identified the mystery which surrounded his "true love". It was a mystery caused by the fact that even to her lovers, "Scotland is indefinable". (14) He could also see the characteristic rivalries, enmities and 'chalk-lined' divisions which, to a stranger, gave the country

an impression of chaos:

> It has no unity except upon the map. Two languages, many dialects, innumerable forms of piety and countless local patriotisms and prejudices, part us among ourselves. (15)

This was only half of the truth about Scotland. The other half required a far more sensitive perception. It was a perception which both inspired, and transpired from Stevenson's Scottish fiction. Stevenson could feel, and sought to express, that within his "lamplit vicious fairy land" (16) lay a mystery which was "the most inscrutable". (17) He could not solve the mystery, but his writing and his imagination enabled him to demonstrate it. His entire Scottish works may be based on a feeling which he identified in 'The Scot Abroad' but which it was impossible to explain either in poetry or fiction or letters. The mystery of Scotland would always prevail:

> And yet somewhere, deep down in the heart of each one of us something yearns for the old land and the old kindly people. (18)

CHAPTER V

Reference Point

(1) R.L. Stevenson's Letters to Charles Baxter ed. Ferguson and Waingrow (New Haven 1956) p.98.

(2) 'The Death of Stevenson' Osbourne L. Preface to Weir of Hermiston p.vii

(3) ibid.

(4) ibid.

(5) ibid.

(6) ibid.

(7) 'The Scot Abroad' The Silverado Squatters pp.210-11.

(8) op. cit (1) pp.354-5

(9) op. cit (2)

(10) Collected Poems ed. Smith J.A. (London 1971) pp.283-4.

(11) ibid. Quoted p.518. Letter to Colvin.

(12) op. cit. (2) p.viii

(13) op. cit. (7) p.210.

(14) ibid.

(15) ibid.

(16) op. cit (1) p.98.

(17) op. cit. (7).

(18) ibid.

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APPENDIX

Chronology of "Scottish Works".

1878	EDINBURGH: PICTURESQUE NOTES [DECEMBER] PERIODICALLY IN THE PORTFOLIO, JUNE-DECEMBER 1878
1886	KIDNAPPED [JULY] PERIODICALLY IN YOUNG FOLKS 1 MAY - 13 JULY 1886.
1887	THE MERRY MEN [FEBRUARY] STORIES PUBLISHED EARLIER IN CORNHILL, THE BROKEN SHAFT, COURT AND SOCIETY REVIEW, LONGMAN'S
1889	THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE [SEPTEMBER] PERIODICALLY IN SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE NOVEMBER 1888 - OCTOBER 1889
1893	CATRIONA [SEPTEMBER] PERIODICALLY AS "DAVID BALFOUR" IN ATALANTA DECEMBER 1892 - SEPTEMBER 1893
1894	EDINBURGH EDITION VOL. i [NOVEMBER] REMAINING TWENTY-SEVEN VOLUMES APPEARED AT INTERVALS TO JUNE 1898.
	STEVENSON DIES 4 DECEMBER
1895	VAILIMA LETTERS [OCTOBER].
1896	WEIR OF HERMISTON [MAY] PERIODICALLY IN COSMOPOLIS JANUARY - APRIL 1896.
1899	LETTERS TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS. ed. SIDNEY COLVIN [NOVEMBER].
1895 [- 1912]	THISTLE EDITION. [NEW YORK]
1906 [- 1907]	PENTLAND EDITION [LONDON].
1908 [- 1912]	BIOGRAPHICAL EDITION [NEW YORK].
1911	SWANSTON EDITION [LONDON].
1922	VAILIMA EDITION [LONDON].
1924	TUSITALA EDITION [LONDON].
1924 [- 1926]	SKERRYVORE EDITION [LONDON].
1925	SOUTH SEAS EDITION [NEW YORK].