



Psychological Impact of Human Life in the Works of R.I.stevenson

S.Lalitha

Asst Prof. of English, Meenakshi College of Engineering, Chennai.

Dr.R.Pushkala

Professor & Head, Dept. of English, Dr.MGR Educational & Research Institute

ABSTRACT

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson was a Scottish novelist, poet, essayist, and travel writer. Robert Louis Stevenson, sitting in admiration precocious son expounded on religious dogma. Stevenson inevitably reacted to the morbidity of his religious education and to the stiffness of his family's middle-class values, but that rebellion would come only after he entered Edinburgh University. His most famous works are Treasure Island, Kidnapped, and Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Robert Louis Stevenson travelled often, and his global wanderings lent themselves well to his brand of fiction. Stevenson developed a desire to write early in life, having no interest in the family business of lighthouse engineering. He was often abroad, usually for health reasons, and his journeys led to some of his beautiful poems and early literary works. From a Railway Carriage, A Good Play, "Fear Not, Dear Friend...," Fixed is the Doom, The Flowers, Love, What Is Love?, etc. Stevenson has been acknowledged as one of the most important writers of Scottish fiction. His writing highlighted the social, philosophical and cultural divisions of nineteenth-century Scotland and has been the inspiration for numerous later writers. The present paper presents a synoptic view on the pen-portrayals of Robert Louis Stevenson.

KEYWORDS :

DETAILED PAPER

Stevenson was one of the happy few writers: he knew his life's business from childhood. He was to write books. Happier still, and one of even a smaller minority, he early discovered that authorship is an art requiring a long and rigorous apprenticeship; that, if a man is to write, he must first study how, putting himself under tuition and devoting himself to practice; that an author no more than a pianist can begin with "pieces" and a public performance. In short, Stevenson had from the beginning an idea of literary composition as a fine art, an art not to be picked up some pleasant day by the roadside as later in life he essayed, for whim's sake, to pick up the art of writing music, nor acquired, with other more or less useful pieces of knowledge at a grammar school or university, but to be attained, if at all, by years of drill.

Originality is a gift of the gods; it is born with a man, or it is not born with him. The technique of a prose style, on the other hand, could be learned, and Stevenson's business was to learn it, in the only way of which he had any knowledge, the way in which he mastered and learned it, practiced based on imitation. During his boyhood, he spent holidays with his maternal grandfather, a minister and professor of moral philosophy who shared his love of sermons and storytelling with him. Prone to illness, Stevenson spent many of his early winters in bed, entertained only by his imagination and a great love of reading, especially William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, John Bunyan and The Arabian Nights .etc. Stevenson spent the next four years travelling through Europe, mostly around Paris, publishing essays and articles about his travels .became a literary celebrity during his life when works such as Treasure Island, Kidnapped, and Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde were released to eager audience. His spirit of adventure truly began to appear at this stage. A literary celebrity during his lifetime, Stevenson now ranks great among the most translated authors in the world. His works have been admired by many other writers Stevenson's life, itself the subject of many a scholar, is also mirrored in many of his works; he left a treasure trove of essays, diaries, poetry, letters, short stories, and unfinished manuscripts .

The children were dazzled by Stevenson's outgoing personality and pirate stories, and Louis and Fanny fell in love. A representative of Neo-romanticism during the Modernist period of English literature, Stevenson was an incredibly popular and successful writer. Stevenson is ranked the 25th most translated author in the world, ahead of fellow Victorians. Stevenson's life, itself the subject of many a scholar, is also mirrored in many of his works; he left a treasure trove of essays, diaries, poetry, letters, short stories, and unfinished manuscripts at the time of his death at age forty-four, including Weir of Hermiston .

Other popular novels include his Scottish historical tales of David Balfour in Kidnapped and its sequel Catriona , and his study of split-per-

sonality, good versus evil in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde .Slowly and surely, he earned a name for himself in journalism and his pieces began appearing in distinguished journals such as The Fortnightly Review. While establishing his name as a writer slowly but surely, he earned a name for himself in journalism and his pieces began appearing in distinguished journals such as The Fortnightly Review. His style is singularly fascinating, graceful, various, subtle, and with a charm all its own. While establishing his name as a writer, the originality and power of Stevenson's writings was recognised from the first by a select few, it was only slowly that he caught the ear of the general public. The tide may be said to have turned with the publication in 1882, which at once gave him an assured place among the foremost imaginative writers of the day. His greatest power is, however, shown in those works which deal with Scotland in the 18th century. These issues were to be integral to his writing, while exploring the duality of good and evil, was also a criticism of Victorian morality.

But, from an early age, Robert found himself drawn to storytelling. At this point in Stevenson's life, he had dedicated himself to becoming a writer, but did, however, begin reading for the law to mollify his parents. Though Thomas was wounded by his son's abandonment of his career and his faith, he loved his son dearly and would go on to support Robert through many years of struggle as a writer. There he fell in with a group of artists and writers whose influence helped steer and nurture his early writing. His first published piece was an essay titled "Roads," published in the journal The Portfolio. He continued to publish essays, living in London for a time and travelling throughout the British Isles, France, and Low Countries. Back in Edinburgh in 1875, he met William E. Henley, a poet and playwright with a wooden leg. The two would go on to collaborate on a number of unsuccessful plays during the 1880s and would later suffer a falling out. Perhaps the most fruitful aspect of their friendship came in the possible inspiration for the one-legged character in Treasure Island, Long John Silver.

Stevenson began the most prolific period of his career. Although struggling to find a place to settle that would be conducive to his near-constant ill health, he managed to publish Treasure Island, A Child's Garden of Verses , a book of children's poems; The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and Kidnapped .Treasure Island became his first popular success, but it was Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde that vaulted him to fame and wealth as an author. Our reading of this scene will be enhanced by turning to Jekyll and Hyde, where a version of it also occurs. The farmyard nightmare resembles one of its original, dreamed scenes, 'Incident at the window,' where Jekyll is sitting looking sadly down into the bare courtyard below. Jekyll's smile is succeeded by 'abject terror and despair', as he suddenly disappears,

in the throes of his by now involuntary transformation into Edward Hyde.

An adventure novel by Scottish writer Robert, *Kidnapped* was first published serially in the juvenile magazine *Young Folks* in 1886. Set in Scotland in the mid-1700s, it is a stirring coming-of-age story featuring young David Balfour, who discovers after the death of his father that his uncle Ebenezer has cheated him out of his inheritance. Ebenezer has David kidnapped and imprisoned on a ship bound for the Carolinas. Aboard ship, Balfour meets Alan Breck Stewart, a political rebel, and together they take over the ship and sail back to Scotland. Balfour eventually reclaims his inheritance and also aids Breck's cause. Balfour's adventures continue in a sequel, *Catriona* - the most comprehensive web resource dedicated to Robert Louis Stevenson, designed for all: academics, school children and everybody interested in learning.

The information on Stevenson's life and works and much more is not just as the author of *Treasure Island* and *Hyde*. We find that he's also a poet, a playwright, a Gothist, a historian, an anthropologist, a Victorian, and a Postmodernist. In short, an outstanding modern writer constantly is experimenting. Whether in the South of France or the South Seas, Stevenson wrote numerous novels, stories, and collections of essays based on his travels including *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, *travels in Belgium and France via canoe* inspiring *An Inland Voyage*, and *In the South Seas* (1893). While on one of his many forays in France, Stevenson met American artist Fanny Osborne, who was there without her husband but with son Lloyd and daughter Isabel in tow.

When one reads the non-fiction work of Robert Louis Stevenson along with the novels and short stories, a more complete portrait emerges of the author than that of the romantic vagabond one usually associates with his best-known fiction. Stevenson as a non-fiction prose is a writer involved in the issues of his craft, his milieu, and his soul. Moreover, one can see the record of his maturation in critical essays, political tracts, biographies, and letters to family and friends. What Stevenson lacks, especially for the tastes of this age, is specificity and expertise: But he was a shrewd observer of humankind, and his essays reveal his lively and perspicacious mind. Though he lacked originality, he created a rapport with the reader, who senses his enthusiastic embrace of life and art. If Stevenson at first wrote like one who only skimmed the surface of experience, by the end of his life he was passionately committed to his adopted land of Samoa, to his own history, and to the creation of his fiction.

The idea for *Treasure Island* was ignited by a map that Stevenson had drawn for his 12-year-old stepson; Stevenson had conjured a pirate adventure story to accompany the drawing, and it was serialized in the boys' magazine *Young Folks* from October 1881 to January 1882. When *Treasure Island* was published in book form in 1883, Stevenson got his first real taste of widespread popularity, and his career as a profitable writer had finally begun. The book was Stevenson's first volume-length fictional work, as well as the first of his writings that would be dubbed "for children." By the end of the 1880s, it was one of the period's most popular and widely read books.

In *Treasure Island*, the child moves in an adult world and must learn about adulthood and morality. Knowledge is the key to this development and the opening of *Kidnapped* also resonates with this. *Kidnapped* itself furthers the idea that factual understanding is important, as it is the language of adulthood. The last phrase of the novel's first sentence signals the main character's final move from childhood to the adult world: 'I took the key for the last time out of my father's house!' This contrasts with the first phrase of *Treasure Island* telling us that there is 'treasure there not yet lifted.' The treasure is used as a metaphor throughout the novel for the imagination.

His enduring work, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, was an immediate success and helped cement Stevenson's reputation. The work is decidedly of the "adult" classification, as it presents a jarring and horrific exploration of various conflicting traits lurking within a single person. It is a short but complicated text; a masterpiece of timing and disclosure helped by the use of letters and multiple narratives. The text is meant to be unsettling and make us question whether we can ever be secure that our own dark side will not emerge.

There is an insidious evil within Jekyll and it shocks us that a respected pillar of society is capable of murdering children.

Jekyll is not a supernatural change; but man-made, scientifically constructed. Jekyll and Hyde appear to be polar opposites but they cannot survive together. Yet they also need each other dependently. In 1889, they arrived in the Samoan islands, where they decided to build a house and settle. The island setting stimulated Stevenson's imagination, and, subsequently, influenced his writing during this time: Several of his later works are about the Pacific isles, including *The Wrecker*, *Island Nights' Entertainments*, *The Ebb-Tide* and *In the South Seas*. The children were dazzled by Stevenson's outgoing personality and pirate stories, and Louis and Fanny fell in love.

In short, Stevenson had from the beginning an idea of literary composition as a fine art,—an art not to be picked up some pleasant day by the roadside, as later in life he essayed, for whim's sake, to pick up the art of writing music nor acquired, with other more or less useful pieces of knowledge at a grammar school or university, but to be attained, if at all, by years of drill. Another man may write "well enough," and perhaps successfully, so far as material rewards go, by nature and the rule of thumb; but the artist aims at perfection,—perfection for its own sake. That aim, the pursuit of that ideal, is what makes him an artist. Stevenson's books, the narratives of travel and the essays not less than the novels,—perhaps even more and are galleries of portraits. Wherever he went he found men: not caricatures, mere burlesques and oddities, useful materials for print, creatures of a single crying peculiarity, so easily drawn and, for neither one reading, so "effective;" nor lay figures simply, wire frames. Literature is populated with them on which to hang "the trappings of composition," but breathing men, full like the rest of us, of complexity and paradox, nobly designed, perhaps, but—still like the rest of us—more or less spoiled in the making; men who had known, each for himself, the war in the members (happy for them if they knew it still!), and had drunk every one of the mingled cup of tragedy and comedy. He loved the sight of them; their talk, wise or foolish, was music to his ears; and the queerest and ugliest of them, under his capable and affectionate hand, wear something of a human grace upon the canvas.

Stevenson had followed up *Treasure Island* with another boy's adventure story called *The Black Arrow*, which was published serially in *Young Folks* in 1883 and as a book in 1888. Although more popular with the juvenile readers of *Young Folks* than *Treasure Island* had been, *The Black Arrow* is far from being a classic. His next serial was a distinct improvement. *Kidnapped* ran in *Young Folks* in 1886 and was published as a book the same year. Set in the Scottish Highlands in 1751, the story relates the wanderings of young David Balfour in the company of the reckless Alan Breck. *Kidnapped* was an achievement on a level with *Treasure Island*, and its characters are in many ways superior. Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver of the earlier book are charming stereotypes, but Balfour and Breck are personalities with psychological depth. Seven years after *Kidnapped*, Stevenson wrote a sequel called *Catriona*, but it did not measure up to the original work.

A poem about enjoying looking at stars at night instead of going to bed. Caretakers finally catch the poet and put him to bed, but he can still remember the sights of the stars. He wrote some wonderful stories for older children and for adults but is most famous for a book of poems for children called *A Child's Garden of Verse*. Unusually, the book has been pretty much continuously in print ever since.

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed. I
woke before the morning, I was happy all the day,
I never said an ugly word, but smiled and stuck to play.....
But slumbers hold me tightly till I waken in the dawn,
And hear the thrushes singing in the lilacs round the lawn.

Towards the end of his life, Stevenson's South Seas writing included more of the everyday world, and both his nonfiction and fiction became more powerful than his earlier works. His poetry those that were more mature works not only brought Stevenson lasting fame, they helped to enhance his status with the literary establishment when his work was re-evaluated in the late 20th century, and his abil-

ities were embraced by critics as much as his storytelling had always been by readers. His lines from the poem, 'What Man May Learn, What Man May Do'

highlights his concern for the society.
What man may learn, what man may do,
Of right or wrong of false or true,
While, skipper-like, his course he steers
Through nine and twenty mingled years.....

The poem 'From a railway carriage' is highly rhythmic set to the movement of the train. The poem explains the travel in a train, the experiences, the beauty of nature etc.

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:
All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by.....
And here is a mill, and there is a river:
Each a glimpse and gone forever!

Robert Louis Stevenson, a writer whose work has offered so many prophetic insights into the moral, psychological and cultural ambiguities of the modern world. He is not without ambiguity himself. He was a writer of popular fiction who understood the divided and unstable self; he was an elegant essayist who condemned colonial exploitation in the South Seas; his stories of youth and adventure echo to the sounds of storm and surf with an undercurrent of chaos, betrayal and existential despair. Yet in his own time he rarely received the serious scholarly attention he deserved. However, he wrote a large number of works during his career, which were wildly popular with his contemporaries. He is considered one of the greatest English-language writers of all time. Stevenson's literary reputation has also fluctuated.

The reaction against him set in soon after his death: he was considered a mannered and imitative essayist or only a writer of children's books. But eventually the pendulum began to swing the other way, and by the 1950s his reputation was established among the more discerning as a writer of originality and power; whose essays at their best are cogent and perceptive renderings of aspects of the human condition; whose novels are either brilliant adventure stories with subtle moral overtones or original and impressive presentations of human action in terms of history and topography as well as psychology; whose short stories produce some new and effective permutations in the relation between romance and irony or manage to combine horror and suspense with moral diagnosis; whose poems, though not showing the highest poetic genius, are often skilful, occasionally interesting and original, and sometimes valuable for their exhibition of a special kind of sensibility.

Ideas thronged upon him; books by the dozen, one may almost say, stood waiting for him to make them. The more wonder that, with all this excess of fertility, he could yet rewrite and rewrite, and then write again, still on the search for perfection. Surely the artist was strong in him. As Stevenson's nature was complex and his themes varied so he wrote in many keys. His prose was never "far from variation and quick change." When he put pen to any work—essay, travel sketch, tragedy or comedy—the first thing was to strike "the essential note." Stevenson's poetry is often about the commonplace—childhood, partings, reunions, homesickness, felicitations, greetings, friendship, the open road, the sea—but it is a crafting of common experience into heightened language and optimum form. His verse usually achieves its effects by a rigid application of meter and fixed rhyme scheme, although on occasion he breaks into a Whitmanesque style with a force far exceeding that of his more conventional poetry. Even in conventional poetic forms, however, he generally succeeds in lifting ordinary sentiment to a higher plane by the very simplicity, directness, and clarity of his language. This is one aspect, for example, of *A Child's Garden of Verses*, accounting for its appeal to adults as well as to children.

One can find no better starting place for examining Stevenson's poetry than his envoi "To Any Reader" in *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Here, in eight rhymed couplets, he encapsulates the sentiment of the volume. The reader is first carried back to childhood; Stevenson likens the reader's watchful care over the child in the verses to that which mothers exercise over their children as they play. Then, reminded of the commonplace event of a mother knocking at the window to get her child's attention, the reader is told that the child in the book will not respond in the familiar way. The child is there in the garden in one sense, but not there in another: "It is but a child of air." Stevenson suggests that, however much one might observe and watch over his child, he cannot successfully intervene in his child's life or break out of the historical confinement in which, as an adult, he finds himself. The moment one tries to do more than fix his attention on the child, to have the child in the verses give ear to his concerns, warnings, admonitions, or summonses, the child vanishes; he becomes "grown up," and is "gone away."

Stevenson's poems are poetry of sentiment. At times, the sentiment appears to be artificial posturing that ranges from melancholy to high spirited. He does not make intellectual demands of his readers, but he does ask them to listen carefully; indeed, listening to his poems read aloud is the way most people first come to him. He also asks his readers to participate in the moment as he captures it, if only for that moment's sake. The quality of that moment is often twofold; it has the permanence that poetry can give it, and it vanishes as it is apprehended by the reader.

REFERENCES

1. Alblas, Jacques B.H., 'The Early Production and Reception of Stevenson's Work in England and the Netherlands'. Libregts & Tigges, 1996. | 2. Swinnerton, Frank, R.L. Stevenson: A Critical Study. London: Secker, 1923. |