

# Under Lowland Eyes: David Balfour in the Land of the Jacobites

## Robert Louis Stevenson's Mapping of 18th-century Scotland in *Kidnapped*

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**Abstract** This article explores the relationship between travel, space and history in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped*. It provides a mapping of the protagonist's movement, highlighting the historical implications conveyed in the way in which the Highlands and the rest of Scotland are described. An interesting essay in literary geography, this is an attempt to provide the reader with a new perspective on Stevenson's novel, stressing his interest in Scottish history and his attention to internal colonialism.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Mapping Scotland as an Example of the World. – 3 David's Perspective: Experience, Passions and Mistakes.

**Keywords** Stevenson. *Kidnapped*. Highlands. Landscape. History. Literary geography.

### 1 Introduction

*Kidnapped* was published in 1886, when Robert Louis Stevenson was 36 years old and had already written several works, among them *An Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels with a Donkey* (1879) and *Treasure Island* (1883). Like other works by Stevenson, *Kidnapped* hinges upon the ideas of travel and adventure. Though, there are many eye-catching features distinguishing this novel from the previous ones. *Kidnapped* is not just an adventure tale, but a historical novel: it is set in 1751 – a few years after the 1745 Jacobite rising – and is peopled with accurately reconstructed historical characters (Alan Breck Stewart, James Stewart of the Glen, Cluny Macpherson, Robin Oig). The structuring principle of the novel is travel; David's adventures follow one another while he travels around Scotland. As in Scott's *Waverley*, the protagonist experiences what being an outsider means; indeed, both David Balfour and Edward Waverley travel through the Highlands, a territory completely unknown to them. Unlike *Waverley*, however, David does not dream of a life of romantic adventures. Instead, when he leaves Essendean it is with a prospect of a wealthy, ordinary life; David expects stability, rather than adventure.

In this essay, I will explore two main issues, namely: the function of the setting and its historical meaning – why the Highlands? Why the year 1751? –; and the protagonist's emotional perception of the Highlands. *Kidnapped* is a retrospective story told by the protagonist, David Balfour, a seventeen-year old Lowland boy with a country rearing, who is compelled to leave his well-known, provincial world, in order to travel through the Highlands with a Highlander (Alan Breck) charged with having killed Colin Campbell of Glenure (the so called Appin Murder, in which David gets accidentally involved). This story-telling structure allows the reader to distinguish between David's own perception of the world and the historical reality portrayed by Stevenson.

## 2 Mapping Scotland as an Example of the World

Scotland seemed to offer in miniature the key to a complete global understanding that would make time and space simultaneously available as a subject of inquiry (Fielding 2011).

The geography of eighteenth-century Scotland can be very useful in order to understand the changes that led Europe from feudalism into modernity. Like Scott, Stevenson was aware that the years following the 1707 Act of Union not only were of crucial importance to the development of Scotland, but they also condensed in half a century events that in the rest of Europe took about two centuries to happen. In *Kidnapped*, Stevenson portrays eighteenth-century Scotland as a divided world, where each area represents a different stage in social development:

The bleak landscape and clan society of the Highlands, the agricultural improvements of the Lowlands and the flourishing cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, bourgeois centres of commerce and the professions, could be read as a kind of living museum in which all stages of society could be exhibited to the historical observer. (Fielding 2011, 3)

Accordingly, the inhabitants of one area differ from those of other areas. In *The Fictions of Geography*, Penny Fielding calls this feature “geographical determinism”, meaning that “social organisation” is “an expression of the experiences of the local population” (2011, 4). Since people are influenced by their experience of the land they live in, a Lowlander as David has nothing in common with a Highlander as Alan.

Stevenson's mapping of eighteenth-century Scotland in the novel is organized around two main lines: the Highland-Lowland divide and the primitive-civilised divide. Before Culloden, the Highlands stood apart from the Lowlands; as Stevenson wrote in “The Foreigner at Home”, the Highlanders “wore a different costume [tartan], spoke a different language

[Gaelic], worshipped in another church, held different morals, and obeyed a different social constitution from his fellow countrymen either of the south or north" (1895, 21). On the Highlands, feudalism was still present; people lived in clans and obeyed their chieftains. Agricultural techniques were outdated and scarcely productive; the Lowlands, instead, were opening to modern economic systems and advanced agricultural techniques, as well as to commercial and industrial activities. The divide was not only geographical, but also temporal. The Lowlands were opening to the present and were already on the track to progress and modernity, while the Highlands were stuck in the past.

From an English and Lowland viewpoint, there was a wide civilisation gap between Lowlands and Highlands. Indeed, for the 36-year-old Stevenson, the Highlands represented what the South Seas represented for the middle-aged Stevenson – they were a relic of our shared past as primitive men, worthy to be preserved rather than destroyed by civilisation. As Kenneth McNeil argues in *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, the Highlanders “were an anachronism, a people on the first rung of the ladder of social progress, sharing affinity with other contemporaneous ‘primitives’ around the globe while living adjacent to, and sometimes venturing into, the civil space of the modern nation” (2007, 21). In the half-century following the 1707 Act of Union the Highlands were brought (by force) into modernity, they were ridden of their primitive feudal system and introduced to English economics, politics and laws.<sup>1</sup> When David Balfour, a Lowland Whig, crosses the border between Lowlands and Highlands and enters what he calls “the wrong side of the Highland Line”, he steps into a most bewildering world, in which the conflict between past (James of the Glen and Alan Breck Stewart) and present (the Red Fox, King George’s agent) produces violence and poverty.<sup>2</sup>

In this “chronicle of modernization”, present and past are closely connected with the Highland-Lowland divide (Maxwell & Trumpener 2001,

1 Law is a crucial issue in the novel; Alan and David hold different viewpoints about what is right and what is wrong. David believes things in the Highlands work the same way they do in the Lowlands, but Alan knows very well that clan-laws are rather different from the idea of justice held by Edinburgh lawyers. After the Appin Murder, both David and Alan are pursued as partakers in the crime. David, quite naively, has the idea to go to the authorities and declare their innocence. Alan stops him from doing such a foolish thing and explains to David how justice works in the Highlands: “This is a Campbell that’s been killed. Well, it’ll be tried in Inverara, the Campbell’s head place; with fifteen Campbells in the jury-box, and the biggest Campbell of all (and that’s the Duke) sitting cocking on the bench. Justice, David? The same justice, by all the world, as Glenure found a while ago at the road-side” (Stevenson 2007, 126).

2 Donald McFarlan’s notes to the text thus explain the idea of the Highland line: “A cultural boundary (and, to a certain extent, a geographical fault) between the predominantly Gaelic-speaking clan territories of the west and the Scotch-speaking lowlands to the east. Very roughly, it can be considered to start at the southern end of Loch Lomond and run northwards to Inverness” (Stevenson 2007, 231).

108). These two regions of Scotland are embodied in two characters: Alan and David. Alan Breck represents the past, David the present. Alan is a native of the Highlands, a region that, due to its feudal social system, is considered as a symbol of the past. Moreover, he embodies the figure of the story-teller, establishing a relationship between the past and the present; he tells David about both national history and personal story; he proudly speaks about his father and his clan, his relatives and his roots. On the other hand, David embodies the present; as such, he knows little or nothing about his roots; he knows nothing about his family on the side of his father, a schoolmaster in Essendean, and only supposes his mother's family was from Angus. When he is hosted by Duncan Dhu Maclaren in Balquidder, David receives a visit by Robin Oig, one of Rob Roy's sons and a notorious outlaw, who fought in the 1745 Jacobite rising. The Highlander asks David about his family and origins, but the young man is unable to answer. David's ignorance of his roots is received as a shameful thing by Oig, who calls him a "kinless loon that didn't know his own father" (Stevenson 2007, 183). David's role is to represent the present; he does not need to know his past, because the narrator's emphasis is on his present impressions and experiences.

Stevenson's narrative is set at the periphery of Great Britain, in what can be called the 'outlands'. In an essay called *The Romance of the Outlands. The fin-de-siècle Adventure Story Between History and Geography*, Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (2001) explore the idea of the "romance of the outlands". Their source is a 1905 article written by Edward Wright and published in the *Quarterly Review*, in which the phrase "romance of the outlands" is coined for W.H. Hudson's works and extended to the novels written by Joseph Conrad and Robert Louis Stevenson (106). Maxwell and Trumpener explain that the romance of the outlands is characterised by three main features: it must be set on the frontier between two worlds, it must avoid exoticism and must "expand the spatial boundaries of the Victorian fictional world" (106). I decided to call this paper "Under Lowland Eyes" in order to draw attention to the fact that both *Kidnapped* and Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1911) are structured around the principle of juxtaposition; in fact, the plot of both novels revolves around the opposition of two conflicting worlds: the Lowlands and the Highlands for Stevenson, East and West for Conrad. In both cases one of the conflicting parts is showed to the readership through the experiencing subjectivity of a first person narrator, who belongs to the other area; moreover, the dramatic event at the core of both novels is a politically tinged murder connected with a failing revolution.

At a first glance the conflict underlying society in *Under Western Eyes* is more global than that in *Kidnapped*. The East-West divide concerns Eurasia while the Lowland-Highland divide concerns Scotland only; though, the conflict between East and West is located in Russia, a local place consid-

ered for centuries as the very periphery of the civilised world. Some late nineteenth-century Russian philosophers focussing on Russian identity maintained that Russia had itself a double identity, an Eastern one and a Western one.<sup>3</sup> The divide is not only geographical, but also temporal. In a similar way the Highland line divides Scotland into two worlds different not only in culture but also in their degree of civilisation, the Urals divide Russia (and Eurasia) between East and West. After Peter the Great's work of Europeanization, the inhabitants of the Western parts of Russia felt closer to Europe and adopted Volterian rationalism as a way to come out of their primitivism, which they identified with oriental features such as mysticism, apathy and tyranny. The tsars treated the regions beyond the Urals as a colonial possession, the same way Stevenson suggests the English did with Scotland.<sup>4</sup>

The Highlands of Stevenson, as well as those of Scott, are the outlands in which the identity of the protagonist is discussed and redefined, in which the boy becomes a man by confronting himself with a hostile world. The word 'outlandish' is used by Stevenson himself, through David's narration, while speaking of those "strange, outlandish Gaelic names" (2007, 202) and that "poor enough attire of an outlandish fashion" that David is wearing at the end of his Highland journey" (190). The transformation at the end of the novel concerns not only David's outward appearances, but also his perception and knowledge of the world.

As a romance of the outlands, *Kidnapped* consistently hinges upon the representation of space and geography. In fact, the novel can comfortably be considered as belonging to the genre of geographical fiction. In *Kidnapped* great importance is attached to places. Its plot does not revolve around a concatenated series of adventures that are tightly connected with one another; instead, it is more like a 'necklace', a series of episodes arranged as successive stages of a journey (Clunas 1983, 110). Each place visited is crucial to the development of the story, and plays the same function a real character would in the plot. This is in tune with what Stevenson wrote in "A Gossip on Romance":

It is thus that tracts of young fir, and low rocks that reach into deep soundings, that particularly torture and delight me. Something must have happened in such places, and perhaps ages back, to members of my

3 See, for instance, the article published by Maksim Gor'kij in 1915 on the journal *Letopis* (1, Moscow). The article is called "Dve Dushi", which means 'the two souls'; by this phrase, the author hints to the two souls that characterize the East and the West (Europe and the Far East, more in specific).

4 An interesting study about the colonialist approach adopted by Russians in the conquest of the lands beyond the Urals is provided by Aldo Ferrari in *La foresta e la steppa. Il mito dell'Eurasia nella cultura russa* (2003).

race; and when I was a child I tried in vain to invent appropriate games for them, as I still try, just as vainly, to fit them with the proper story. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. (1895, 252)

The titles of chapters are symptomatic of the importance attached to places in the novels. Most chapters are called after placenames, especially the headings of central chapters, where the pronoun 'I' and other characters' names disappear. The route followed by David describes a sort of anti-clockwise circle – the boy leaves the Lowlands, circumnavigates the northern regions of Scotland, shipwrecks on the Isle of Mull, goes through the Highlands and eventually arrives in Queen's Ferry again (the Lowland port where he was kidnapped at the beginning of his sea voyage). David's journey serves Stevenson's purpose to provide his contemporary readership with a compared view of two worlds, Highlands and Lowlands, portrayed when they were still in conflict. In 1886, in fact, not only was Scotland a modernised part of the British Empire, but the Highlands were a well-integrated part of Scotland. In 1751 things were rather different.

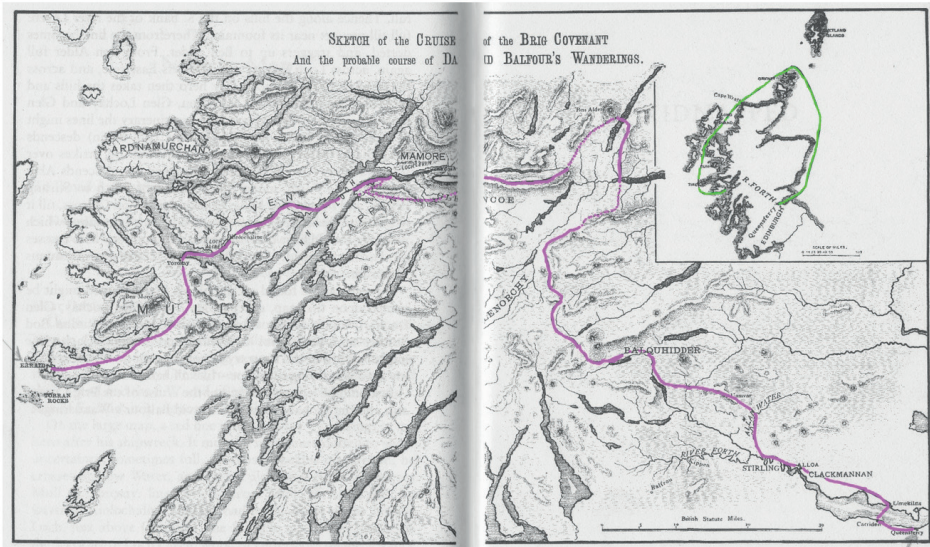


Figure 1. Reproduction of the map included by Stevenson at the beginning of the novel. David's route is highlighted; the green line in the smaller picture shows David's voyage by sea, while the pink one shows his route by land

The book opens on David Balfour leaving his country village of Essendean for the house of Shaws, his uncle's dwelling. The already motherless boy has recently lost his father, so that his only relation in the world is his uncle. Throughout the narration, the reader is informed that uncle Ebenezer had, unfairly, taken possession of the house of Shaws instead of David's father; therefore, David is the rightful heir to the estate. Lowland countryside is here described as it would be in a pastoral poem, with blackbirds whistling, hawthorn bushes in full bloom, low hills covered with woods, pastures dotted with sheep and fertile plains. David is ready to leave this peaceful, idyllic scenery, in order to move to what he thinks is a "great, busy house, among rich and respected gentleness of [his] own name and blood" (Stevenson 2007, 10).

Despite the beauty of the surrounding landscape, the house of Shaws turns out to be an infernal place; a dark, ruined house, inhabited by an old villain laying out the most mischievous plans to get himself rid of David. Ebenezer, in fact, has David kidnapped by Helias Hoseason, the captain of a ship called *Covenant*. Ebenezer's aim is having David sold into slavery in the South Carolinas. Instead of sailing to the Americas, the *Covenant* unexplainably follows a different route, circumnavigating northern Scotland. On board, David experiences the hard life of the cabin boy; he is mistreated and desperate for being far from home. During a storm, the *Covenant* crew rescues a shipwrecked Highlander dressed in French clothes called Alan Breck Stewart. His outlooks are extremely interesting, but at the same time disquieting; to David, Alan's eyes are "both engaging and alarming" (58-61). David grows more and more interested in the stranger and decides to warn him against Captain Hoseason's plan to kill and rob him. David supports Alan in his fight against Hoseason and they took control of the ship. Unfortunately, due to the storm the *Covenant* crashes against the Torran Rocks, in the neighbourhoods of the Isle of Mull.

David is shipwrecked on the small tidal islet of Earraid, whence he sets on a long journey through the Highlands in quest of Alan, the only person he knows there. On his way to James of the Glens' house, where he has been told Alan is waiting for him, David gets involved in the Appin Murder. While asking for some information to a company of soldiers on a road in the wood of Lettermore, the leader of the party is shot dead by somebody concealed among the trees. The man's name is Colin Campbell, Factor of the King. Campbell's fellows charge David with being an accomplice to the murderer and order redcoats to apprehend him. Providentially, Alan comes out of the wood and hides David from the redcoats. Together they set on a long flight, which will lead them through the Highlands to the Lowlands, where David will be restored his rightful inheritance and Alan is supposed to leave for France to serve his exiled chief.

The Highlands experienced by David are not the exotic destination for travellers they became during the Victorian age. The aftermaths of the Act

of Union first and of the defeat at Culloden then had sorely impaired the economy of a land which was already quite poor, due to a scarcely fertile soil and a cold climate.<sup>5</sup> In chapter XII, David and Alan have just defeated Captain Hoseason and took lead of the brig *Covenant*; while having some rest after their heroic deed, they tell each other their own stories. Alan tells David about his mission (collecting a second rent from the Appin farmers and delivering it into his chief's hands) and provides him and the reader with an account of what the defeat of Culloden entailed for clan chiefs and tenants:

When the men of the clans were broken at Culloden, and the good cause went down, [...] Ardshiel had to flee like a poor deer upon the mountain, he and his lady and his bairns. A sair job we had of it before we got him shipped; and while he still lay in the heather, the English rogues, that couldnae come at his life, were striking at his rights. They stripped him of his powers; they stripped him of his lands; they plucked the weapons from the hands of his clansmen, that had borne arms for thirty centuries; ay, and the very clothes off their backs – so that it's now a sin to wear a tartan plaid, and a man may be cast into gaol if he has but a kilt about his legs. One thing they couldnae kill. That was the love the clansmen bore their chief. (82)

Alan is talking about the repressive measures adopted by the English government in order to suppress the Highlanders' spirit of rebellion. The core event of the novel, the Appin Murder, is the direct consequence of these measures; once the chiefs had been spoiled of their lands, their properties were given to people like Colin Campbell of Glenure – King George's Factors collecting rents from the tenants and administering justice. Therefore, Colin Roy Campbell became the catalyst of the Appin people's rage against the new government and its measures. Moreover, the conflict between the Campbells and the Stewarts was a long-standing

5 Life conditions in Scotland after the union of the Parliaments are well described in "The Price of Union", the twelfth chapter of Peter and Fiona Somerset Fry's *History of Scotland* (1992). Besides the Jacobite Risings, this chapter gives useful information about the government's measures against the Highlanders, which were "aimed at destroying completely the whole Highland clan structure": "the chiefs were stripped of all their authority and powers. Hereditary sheriffdoms and other jurisdictions were abolished, and in so doing the government bracketed the jurisdictions of clans who had not supported the Jacobites. [...] the clan chiefs were left with no powers, no pride, no purpose. The wearing of tartans and kilts, the playing of pipes, and the owning of weapons of any kind, were all forbidden on pain of death or long-term imprisonment. Even the speaking of Gaelic was prohibited. It was a systematic attempt to 'obliterate the Celtic mode of life'". According to Peter and Fiona Somerset Fry, the cause of this "devastation of the Highlands" is that both the London government and "many Lowland and Presbyterian Scots [...] hated Highlanders more for their stubborn adherence to the Roman Catholic faith than their loyalty to the Stewarts" (1992, 197-8).



one, so that Alan Breck Stewart's hostility to the Campbells also represents his clansmen's refusal to give up their loyalty to their chief in order to submit to their old enemy.<sup>6</sup>

The emphasis laid by Stevenson upon Alan's words suggests that the writer's sympathy was likely to be on the Jacobite side. About Alan's passionate story-telling, Barry Menikoff (2005) writes: "Alan in *Kidnapped*, via Allan in the *Trial*, is the voice for all that rage directed toward the clan Campbell - and via the Campbells toward the entire political, economic, and social system that led to the defeat and subjugation of all those who followed Prince Charles just six years earlier" (142). Moreover, many tenants were compelled to leave their farms and either go abroad or became outlaws and hide themselves in the Highlands. The clearing off of the farms passed under the name of 'Highland clearances'. This phenomenon was still a matter of interest in Stevenson's days; many of the societies created in the nineteenth century for the preservation of Highland traditions took interest not only in Highland literature, but also in their history. In 1872 an interesting paper appeared in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, in which John Macdonald called attention to the aftermath of the union between Scotland and England:

Events that have so completely changed the outward aspect of the North and the social condition of its people, will not and cannot be so easily forgotten, at any rate so long as the injustice perpetrated on a peaceable and industrious people is attempted to be justified under the mask of a false political economy. [...] In justification of the evictions we are continually reminded that the Highlanders have always benefited and improved in circumstances when removed from the scenes of their childhood. [...] but not a word do we ever hear of the thousands of cases of individual and family suffering caused, [of people] sank into poverty and ill-health, dying broken-hearted. (1871-72, 79-80)

Fourteen years after the publication of this paper (which we have no evidence Stevenson ever read), *Kidnapped* was published and read by both Scotsmen and Englishmen. Its appeal to the public is undeniable; readers of every age appreciate this romance, although they may be fond of it for different reasons - some may love its dynamism, others its historical accuracy, others its setting and characters. Although he avoided clichéd exoticism, Stevenson loved the picturesque. Noteworthy, to Stevenson the word did not merely describe a pictorial category; in *Kidnapped*, in fact, the picturesque seems to be connected more with dress and local identity,

6 This conflict is frequently hinted at by Alan, for instance when he says: "[...] as for the Campbells, they would never spare siller where there was a Stewart to be hurt" (Stevenson 2007, 149).

than with landscape. Moreover, it stresses aspects of Highland life that make David feel increasingly an outsider, highlighting the differences between Highlanders and Lowlanders.

Alan, for instance, is the most picturesque of characters, as can be understood by reading the following description, which was given by the authorities in a bill issued to recognize him (and a hundred pounds prize was put on his and David's heads): "a small, pock-marked, active man of thirty-five or nearby, dressed in a feathered hat, a French side-coat of blue with silver buttons and lace a great deal tarnished, a red waistcoat and breeches of black shag" (Stevenson 2007, 152). The French clothes Alan considers as 'fineness' and wears proudly, David sees as odd and almost ridiculous. The Highlanders' attire is picturesque as well, but the description is rather sympathetic; after the tartan was forbidden, people did not resign to give up their dress, but adapted it in the oddest ways: "Some went bare, only for a hanging cloak or great coat, and carried their trousers on their backs like a useless burthen; some had made imitation of the tartan with little parti-coloured stripes patched together like an old wife's quilt; others, again, still wore the highland philabeg, but by putting a few stitches between the legs, transformed it into a pair of trousers like a Dutchman's" (102-3).

In Stevenson's reconstruction of mid-eighteenth-century Scotland, the tartan had a very important social function - it identified the clan to which the wearer belonged. When David meets Colin Roy Campbell and asks him some pieces of information about the residence of the Stuarts, some knowledge about tartan colours would have spared him lots of troubles. Actually, a man of the party, probably a servant, is wearing some tartan clothes in the Argyll colours (blue, green and yellow); a Highlander would have known at once the Campbell colours and would have never asked a Campbell about the Stewart of Aucharn; David's lack of experience in Highland affairs, instead, makes him asking Colin Roy Campbell about James Stewart of the Glen's house and is automatically considered as a friend of the Stewarts and a supporter of the Jacobites.

Picturesque episodes also occur; some of them are concerned with local colour and myth (Cluny's 'cage', the duel at the pipes between Alan and Robin Oig), others with Alan's wits (when he and David are in the wood and in need to write a letter, he transforms a dove-feather into a pen and uses gunpowder and water to make ink), others with poverty, dirtiness and lawlessness. All this, which David labels as "curiosities of the time and place" (112), is not the fruit of Stevenson's invention; instead, he drew most of these episodes from the sources he studied. G.W.T. Omond, in an essay called *Notes on the Art of Robert Louis Stevenson* (1900), focused on the care with which Stevenson transformed historical sources into true-to-life descriptions and dialogues; about Alan's clothes, for instance, he writes: "The 'French clothes' worn by Alan Breck [...] are so described by

the witnesses who gave testimony against the real Alan Breck. The silver buttons [...] figure also in the evidence" (35).

### 3 David's Perspective: Experience, Passions and Mistakes

The reef on which we had struck was close under the south-west of Mull [...]. Sometimes the swell broke clean over us; sometimes it only ground the poor brig upon the reef, so that we could hear her beat herself to pieces; and what with the great noise of the sails, and the singing of the wind, and the flying of the spay in the moonlight, and the sense of danger, I think my head must have been partly turned, for I could scarcely understand the things I saw. ("The Loss of the Brig", in Stevenson 2007).

Highland landscape and its inhabitants are described in the novel from the perspective of the protagonist, David. As its sequel *Catriona, Kidnapped* is a retrospective tale of the protagonist's growth into a full-grown man. Nevertheless, this is not a *Bildungsroman*, but a historical novel of adventure. David's growth, indeed, is not represented as the chief event of the novel, but rather as a consequence of what the young man sees, perceives, feels and experiences throughout his adventures in a foreign land. When finally back home, David exclaims: "So the beggar in the ballad had come home", identifying himself with the hero of a traditional Scottish ballad (218). The ballad plot David imagines for himself is the same he had a thought of at the beginning of the novel, while trying to explain to himself his uncle's mean and vicious behaviour. This element works as a foretelling narrative feature: "[...] there came up into my mind (quite unbidden by me and even discouraged) a story like some ballad I had heard folk singing, of a poor lad that was a rightful heir and a wicked kinsman that tried to keep him from his own" (26). Such a plot was quite common not only in ballads but also in novels; in *Guy Mannering*, for instance, Sir Walter Scott tells quite a similar story: Henry Bertram, the rightful heir to the Ellangowan properties, is kidnapped when only a child and led by events to learn about his true origins and to gain his rightful inheritance.<sup>7</sup>

Like Henry Bertram, David comes back to Essendean and becomes the laird of his family's estate; not only has he rightfully inherited the house and lands, but he has also gained important knowledge of the world: now, David is a man. Instead of going on a Grand Tour on the continent, as Ebenezer says to people in order to conceal David's kidnapping, David has

<sup>7</sup> Stevenson knew *Guy Mannering* very well and mentioned it in "A Gossip on Romance" as a "model instance of romantic method", but also as an "idly" written novel, maintaining that Scott, though he "conjured up the romantic with delight [...], had hardly patience to describe it" (Stevenson 1895, 270-4).

actually gone on a tour in the outlands, attaining what we may call an “outlandish” education. It is due to his incredible adventures on the Highlands and to the strong emotions he felt there – pain, fear, weariness, anger, pity, horror, loneliness and friendship – that David has finally become a man.

Experience is the key word in *Kidnapped* and it is gained in an unsophisticated, primitive land. David the story-teller is the full-grown man, the experienced man who tries to describe events and emotions as he experienced them when he was a boy. As a consequence, experience influences the narration and makes the retrospective element of the novel clearer to the reader. Evidence of this is spread all over the text; sometimes David openly anticipates forth-coming events, sometimes he employs certain adjectives which suggest his changed opinions about what he lived in 1751.<sup>8</sup> Changed opinions seem to be more frequent when David describes his relationship to other people, and in particular to Alan. Their friendship is quite a weird one; David has saved Alan’s life on board the *Covenant*, but he privately charges Alan with being the cause of their dangerous and peniless flight from the redcoats among the Highlands. When David comes to a quarrel with Alan, David the story-teller acknowledges his former childishness and seems to reproach himself for the way in which he treated Alan and himself; instances of this attitude are present in Chapter XXIV:

I knew it was my own doing, and no one else’s; but I was too miserable to repent. I felt I could drag myself but little farther; pretty soon, I must lie down and die on these wet mountains like a sheep or a fox, and my bones must whiten there like the bones of a beast. My head was light, perhaps; but I began to love the prospect, I began to glory in the thought of such a death, alone in the desert, with the wild eagles besieging my mast moments. Alan would repent then, I thought; he would remember, when I was dead, how much he owed me, and the remembrance would be torture. So I went like a sick, silly, and bad-hearted schoolboy, feeding my anger against a fellow-man, when I would have been better on my knees, crying on God for mercy. (1775)

The whole novel is imbibed with David’s feelings; the first-person narration never censures David’s passions, even the most private and least honourable. David-the-grown-man is the actual narrator of the story, but he presents things as he saw and felt them when he was a boy; sometimes,

<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of his adventure David anticipates what would happen to him: “The warlock of Essendean, they say, had made a mirror in which men could read the future; it must have been of other stuff than burning coal; for in all the shake and pictures that I sat and gazed at, there was never a ship, never a seaman with a hairy cap, never a big bludgeon for my silly head, or the least sign of all those tribulations that were ripe to fall on me” (Stevenson 2007, 33).

he himself criticizes his former attitude towards Alan and the Highlands, ending up in reinforcing the reader's feeling that young David's perception of the Highlands is wrong. At a first reading, David can result as an unsympathetic character, an ungrateful, spoiled child, who despises Alan and the Highlanders instead of appreciating their helping attitude and hospitality. At a second read, one becomes more aware of David-the-grown-man's opinions, i.e. of his grateful feelings for Alan and of his friendship with him. This feature makes the reader disengage his opinions from young David's, so that when David criticizes the Highlanders and Alan, the reader tends to find an excuse for their faults, growing sympathetic with their poor conditions. Actually, the reader does what Stevenson did when he wrote the novel, that is to say ending up siding with Alan and the Jacobites.

Young David appears as an unreliable character because he is often blind about what is really going on around him. Passions and emotions repeatedly overwhelm his intellectual faculties and stop him from acting; he often falls a victim to blunders and wrong opinions. It is only afterwards, when other people show him how things really are, that he changes his mind and adjusts his behaviour. The most representative episode of David's utter unawareness of reality is his shipwreck on the Isle of Earraid. When the *Covenant* hits the Torran Rocks, he is flung off the ship and led by the flow on the shores of a small islet. This is the first time David experiences utter loneliness, hostile nature, cold, hunger and weariness; as a result, he is panic-stricken. Fear and horror blind his eyes and his mind, he crosses Earraid on all sides and looks around in search for human beings, instead of waiting for the tide to be off. The Isle of Earraid, indeed, is a tidal islet and can be reached and left on foot twice a day. It is only when two Gaelic-speaking fishers tell him the word 'tide' - in their bad English - that David's "sense of horror [...] whenever [he] was quite alone with dead rocks, and fowls, and the rain, and the cold sea" abandoned him and his mental faculties are restored (95). As he himself laments at the end of this four-day dreadful sojourn, "a sea-bred boy would have stayed a day on Earraid", and even himself, "if [he] had sat down to think, instead of raging at [his] fate, must have soon guessed the secret, and got free" (99).

David's "sense of horror" for nature is recurrent in the novel; unlike Edward Waverley, Scott's character, David is indifferent to, and even horrified by, mountain and natural sublime. Highland nature is rather different from the Lowland nature David is used to - his heart belongs to the low country, and when he finally returns to the Lowlands his heart is filled with pleasure at the sight of that "comfortable, green, cultivated hills and the busy people both of the field and sea" (190). The Highlands stand in clear opposition to David's countryside, they are scarcely cultivated and scarcely inhabited. In the three chapters called "The flight in the Heather", David experiences how nature can be cruel to man; he frequently employs the words 'horror', 'horrible', and 'horrid'. When Alan and David find them-

selves compelled to jump across a thundering river, David is stricken by such a strong fear that abates his intellectual faculties:

So we stood, side by side upon a small rock slippery with spray, a far broader leap in front of us, and the river dinning upon all sides. When I saw where I was, there came on me a deadly sickness of fear, and I put my hand over my eyes. Alan took me and shook me; I saw he was speaking, but the roaring of the falls and the trouble of my mind prevented me from hearing; only I saw his face was red with anger, and that he stamped upon the rock. The same look showed me the water raging by, and the mist hanging in the air; and with that, I covered my eyes again and shuddered. (139)

Alan's redness might not be a symptom of anger, but rather of fear and strong emotions; in fact, Alan is much more experienced in Highland nature than David, and manages to make his young friend win his fear, by giving him a dram of brandy; this helps David to turn his fear into courage: "I bent low on my knees and flung myself forth, with that kind of anger of despair that has sometimes stood me in stead of courage" (139). David's experience of the moor is even worse; in their flight, the two fellows are compelled to go eastward and cross a country "as waste as the sea": "Much of it was red with heather; much of the rest broken up with bogs and hags and peaty pools; some had been burnt black in heath fire; and in another place there was quite a forest of dead firs, standing like skeletons. A wearier looking desert man never saw" (155).

David's body is as unused to the moor as his mind is. In order to avoid being seen by the redcoats, they must run on their hands and knees, protected by the heather. While Alan is swift and nimble in his movements, "as though it were his natural way of going", David's body cannot stand that posture: "The aching and faintness of my body, the labouring of my heart, the soreness of my hands, and the smarting of my throat and eyes in the continual smoke of dust and ashes, had soon grown to be so unbearable that I would gladly have given up" (157). Once again it is fear that supports David: "Nothing but the fear of Alan lent me enough of a false kind of courage to continue" (157).

The "sense of horror" produced in David by nature is inferior only to the horror of violence and death. Right after the murder of the Red Fox, David and Alan meet and hide themselves in the bushes; David is convinced that his friend is a killer and says: "[...] my only friend in that country was blood-guilty in the first degree; I held him in horror; I could not look upon his face; I would rather have lain alone in the rain on my cold isle, than in that warm wood beside a murderer" (123).

David's dominant passions are fear and anger; they provide him with a surrogate of courage that make him react to events and misfortunes. His

relationship to the hostile world of the Highlands is conditioned by his flawed perception of it; finding himself in a totally unknown world, both his mind and his senses are unable to perceive it properly. Moreover, his body is unable to face with Highland hostile nature, while Alan's is much better at it. In an essay about the *Umwelt*, a term by which the author means the individual lifeworld each person experiences thanks to his/her own perceptive capacities, John Deely (2001) investigates the connection between subject and object, as to perception and experience. Every living being experiences reality in a different and unique way; like a bird perceives light, colours or distance differently from a man, every person perceives the world in his own way, according to his own past experiences and rearing. David was born and reared in the Lowland country, his eyes are skilled at recognising a blackbird, or a hawthorn, but he is amazed at the sight of a seaport and horrified by the wilderness of the mountains. *Umwelt* describes the lifeworld each living being creates, by means of the fragments of reality his body and mind are able to perceive and process: "For an Umwelt is not merely the aspects of the environment accessed in sensation. Far more is it the manner in which those aspects are networked together as and to constitute 'objects of experience'. [...] the organism does not simply respond to or act in terms of what it senses as sensed, but rather in terms of what it *makes* of that sensation, what it perceives to be sensed, rightly or wrongly" (Deely 2001, 127-8).

The idea of *Umwelt* entails a deeper relationship between man and environment, in which the way man approaches the world is conditioned by the capacities of his body. In *Kidnapped* the reactions of the body to wilderness and hostile nature are very well described - unlike Alan, David is always terribly fatigued and wearied, he often falls ill and loses his senses, he slows the flight and nourishes a growing hatred towards Alan and the places he leads him through. Instead of acknowledging Alan as a worthy guide, without whose experience he would have been caught by the redcoats, David blames him for every hardship they have to face. Moreover, if it were not for Alan, David would have probably been shipped to the Carolinas and become a slave in the plantations.

Perception plays a rather crucial role in the novel. It is through David's eyes and emotions that we know characters, places and events. As to characters, it may be of some interest to point to the importance of David's perception in the creation of some of them. Many people in the novel, in fact, are described by a predominant feature, which is indissolubly attached to them by David. Uncle Ebenezer, for instance, is associated with darkness - the absence of light in the house, the "pitch darkness" in the tower - while Captain Hoseason with cold: "It's a habit I have [...] I'm a cold-rife man by my nature; I have a cold blood, sir. There's neither fur, nor flannel - no, sir, nor hot rum, will warm up what they call the temperature" (Stevenson 2007, 40).

David's unreliable perception of the Highlands serves a precise function in the economy of the novel. *Kidnapped* is a pleasant diversion from the canon established by Scott's *Waverley*, not only because the novel is set six years after Scott's *Forty-five*, but also because Stevenson's attitude towards the Jacobites is clearer than Scott's. Indeed, while Scott accurately avoids to take part in the Whig-Jacobite conflict, Stevenson seems to side with the Highlanders and the Jacobites. Actually, his most exploited source is Colonel David Stewart's *Sketches of the Character, Manners and Present State of the Highlands of Scotland*, an author who "not only bears the name of the royal line whose cause was defeated, but [whose] work is suffused with an attitude that can only be elegiac" (Menikoff 2005, 30). Stevenson's partaking with the Jacobites is supported not only by the sources he employed in his preparatory studies, but also by David's narrative function in the novel. David is a complex character; at the beginning of the novel he is definitely a stereotypical Lowlander, a Whig and Covenanter full of prejudices about the Highlands, but at the end of his adventures he becomes some sort of hybrid man, half Lowlander and half Highlander.

David inherits the House of Shaws in the Lowlands, but he nevertheless decides to go back to the Highlands, in the name of his friendship with Alan. Actually, in the Highlands, David has found a new home; while in the Lowlands he has no longer a family, in the Highlands he has a good friend, a man who has helped him out of his childhood and led him into adulthood. It is thanks to Alan, to the Highlanders and to Highland nature that David is grown up a man. When he leaves from Essendean, David's *Umwelt* is that of a Lowlander, but when he comes back at the end of the novel, his *Umwelt* is that of a complete Scotsman, a man who is both a Lowlander and a Highlander. The divide between Lowlands and Highlands is eventually bridged in David Balfour, a complex character by whom Stevenson shows his readers that everybody, even those who were reared in the most provincial villages, can learn to understand other cultures and to make friends with foreigners. In addition to this, Stevenson makes his readers more aware of the aftermath of the Union between England and Scotland in the Highlands; as he did later on in his South Sea stories, his attention is always on the poor, the defeated, the outlandish inhabitant of the periphery of the British Empire whose culture is being eradicated in the name of modernization.



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