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## Stevenson's 'little tale' is 'a library': an anthropological approach to 'The Beach of Falesá'

*Sylvie Largeaud-Ortega*

Since its origins with Bougainville in 1771, traditional South Sea literature's sole purpose had been to make the fantasies of the West come true: witness Melville's *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847), Stoddard's *South Sea Idylls* (1873) and Loti's *Marriage de Loti* (1880). The first writer who permanently settled in the Pacific, R. L. Stevenson was also the first writer who broke away from this tradition and practised extensively what anthropologists some 30 years onward were to name 'participating observation'.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, I suggest that his later South Sea fiction – namely 'The Bottle Imp' (1891), 'The Isle of Voices' (1893), 'The Beach of Falesá' (1893) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1894) – should be viewed as examples of 'anthropological fiction'.<sup>2</sup>

During the six and a half years he spent in the Pacific (1888-1894), Stevenson, like an anthropologist, was eager to mix with the natives: he learnt the Polynesian languages – which all have a common basis from Hawai'i to Tahiti, New-Zealand, Easter Island and Samoa – and he researched into Polynesian social customs, sacred rites and mythology. His long stays with native cultural informants like Donat-Rimarau in Fakarava, or King Kalakaua in Hawai'i resulted in an extensive knowledge of Polynesian lore, which he continued to study when he became a resident in the Samoan archipelago, keeping constant company with the native staff in his large homestead, with the many island chiefs whom he strongly supported, and with the Samoan visitors who daily flocked to his home, Vailima. By modern standards, Stevenson can be called a pioneering anthropologist of the Pacific, as Ashley





argues:

the work of ethnographic *flâneurs* like [. . .] Stevenson, living among the people about whom they wrote over a space of years, learning the language, hoping for some kind of understanding from the inside, should be incorporated within the histories of anthropology, or the rich cultural context in which the discipline was founded risks being thinned.<sup>3</sup>

Stevenson identified one thing that was fundamental to pre-European Pacific societies: originally, everything was sacred. Each individual could relate to the gods and to cosmogony, so that there was no such notion as individualism in Polynesia of old. Each and every one belonged to an extended family, or group, which belonged to a larger group or village, which in turn belonged to a still much wider group that eventually reached back to the divine origins of time. Echoes of all this may be found in the author's later South Sea narratives.

This paper focuses on 'The Beach of Falesá', presenting it as an anthropological novella written with the aim (among others) of showing the West how to acquire a better knowledge of the South Seas. As Stevenson rightfully boasted in a letter to Colvin, 'You will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale, than if you had read a library'. I will attempt to show that 'The Beach of Falesá' can be seen as an 'anthropological library' of the South Seas. I suggest browsing through different shelves of this library, from a new reading perspective that incorporates some of the anthropological knowledge Stevenson acquired. It includes a study of the onomastics of Polynesian character-names and considerations of social customs and sacred rites. I aim to show there is much more to 'The Beach of Falesá' than meets Western eyes: a Polynesian tale closely interwoven with a Western one.





First, onomastics: much is conveyed by the meanings and connotations of the Polynesian names in the story.<sup>4</sup> Consider for instance the heroine's name, Uma. In Tahitian, *uma* as a noun refers to 'a discreet signal, a secret warning'. Uma indeed guides her British husband, the narrator Wiltshire, through the South Seas, in order to initiate him to that area. This metaphorically appears from the start of the novella: '[she] ran ahead of me, and stopped and looked back and smiled and ran ahead of me again, thus guiding me through the edge of the bush, and by a quiet way to my own house'.<sup>5</sup> Uma's role as a guide is confirmed throughout till the final climatic action when she rushes up the taboo mountain at night – '[she] lit right out to come and warn me' (p. 63) – and gives her husband a 'secret warning' which saves his life.

As a verb, *uma* means 'to dig' in Tahitian. Uma's role may be said to metaphorically dig the Polynesian soil to try and root her rootless husband who has come from the sea, all the more so as Wiltshire's name pronounced the Polynesian way is 'Vilivili' (p. 57), and in Hawaiian, *vilivili* designates very light wood to make canoes with, or seeds that are adrift. In Polynesia, the metaphor of the drifting seed is often derogatively applied to foreigners who have no roots in the islands. Uma-the-digger's task is to help drifting Vilivili take root in Polynesia. In Samoan, *vilivili* also signifies 'to spin, to wheel', but also 'to strive or compete', which, as Kramer remarks, 'quite aptly describes Wiltshire's behaviour'.<sup>6</sup>

The verb *uma* in Hawaiian also means 'to fight, to struggle', which is precisely what Uma does, following Wiltshire's footsteps, when she bravely fights her way up the taboo mountain – 'she was all knocked and bruised' (p. 63) – in order to try and secure her husband's future in Falesá.

In Hawaiian, the noun *uma* means 'chest', 'breast', and figuratively, 'heart' and 'generosity'. This underlines Uma's symbolic role as the nourishing mother – Wiltshire's cherished 'A 1 wife' (p. 71) and the mother of their large half-caste family, so generous 'she would give the roof off the station' (p. 70). Taken literally, 'A'





and 'I' suggest that Uma stands for the beginnings of Creation – she embodies nourishing Mother Earth.

This is confirmed by the Samoan meanings of *uma*: 'whole', 'entire', as in the expression '*O Sāmoa uma*, which designates 'the whole Samoan archipelago'; as a verb, an adjective or an adverb, *uma* means 'to end' and 'final(ly)' or 'eternal(ly)' – as a noun, it means 'the infinite'.<sup>7</sup> It may be inferred once again that Uma symbolises all Polynesian women, '*O vahine uma*,<sup>8</sup> she is the primal South Sea woman, Mother Earth incarnated. By choosing this name for his heroine, Tusitala provided a major clue, prodding Western readers into following Wiltshire's steps in order to try and 'know more about the South Seas'.

A selective study of onomastics in 'The Beach of Falesá' contributes to a small part of a first shelf in Stevenson's anthropological 'library'. Other shelves are occupied by commentaries on Wiltshire and Uma's wedding scene, which centres on the following marriage contract:

This is to certify that Uma daughter of Fa'avao of Falesa island of ----, is illegally married to Mr John Wiltshire for one night, and Mr John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell next morning.

John Blackamoor  
Chaplain to the Hulks

Extracted from the register  
By William T. Randall  
Master Mariner.

(p. 11)

At first sight, this key passage is bound to be read from a Western point of view, and may be introduced in this way. Wiltshire is a white trader who has just arrived in Falesá. Upon his landing, he is greeted by a rival trader, Case, who immediately urges him to pretend to marry an island girl, Uma, taking great care to hide from him that she is tabooed and that, consequently,





Wiltshire will be tabooed too and unable to trade with the villagers. Wiltshire is only too eager to agree, complies with the fake wedding ceremony, and obligingly signs the marriage contract. The girl, for her part, believes the wedding ceremony is genuine, as she can neither read nor understand the certificate that states that she is 'illegally married to Mr John Wiltshire for one night'.

This notorious marriage contract can be compared to other legal-sounding instruments used by colonial powers to appropriate land and resources, for example the infamous agreement on a much larger scale which was signed between British administrators and Polynesian chiefs in New Zealand in 1840, namely, the Treaty of Waitangi. That contract was unashamedly presented in their own language to the Maori of the time as 'Queen Victoria's act of love to you'.<sup>9</sup> The British signatories were eager (like Case) to exclude rival Western trading powers from the island in the context of fierce colonial competition, and (like Wiltshire) to lay an exclusive claim on the object of their pursuit – in that instance, the riches of the island. And (like Uma) the island chiefs could neither read nor understand English, so they signed the so-called 'love contract' blindly.

A Western reading of the wedding scene will clearly be in terms of the hypocrisy and injustice of colonialism. It greatly shocked Stevenson's contemporary readers, as the marriage contract unmistakably gave the lie to the civilising mission the West claimed to carry out among benighted islanders: 'the empire existed to civilise and uplift its subjects, or so its champions claimed'.<sup>10</sup> Although Stevenson had actually been a witness to the very same kind of fraudulent marriage contract on his South Sea wanderings<sup>11</sup> the contract he presented in his fiction was totally disbelieved, wildly criticised at the time, and bowdlerised by the publishers.

Nevertheless, what Western readers generally failed to grasp in this emblematic passage was the anthropological information it conveys, which is at least as important as its anti-imperialist





message, and which calls for a Polynesian reading of the scene. This standpoint reveals that there is much more to Uma than the obvious *clichés* of the beautiful bare-breasted *vahine*<sup>12</sup> and of the Noble Savage who ‘carried it the way a countess might, so proud and humble’ (p. 12). Because Uma believes the wedding ceremony is genuine, she and her mother dutifully perform the necessary Polynesian wedding rituals. To start with, marriages were prearranged by the bride’s parents; so Case, true to typically colonialist conduct, sets himself up as a father figure: ‘I’ll make it square with the old lady’ (p. 7). Uma’s mother, Fa’avao, thereupon makes her appearance:

a strange old native woman crawled into the house almost on her belly. [. . .] She said no plain word, but smacked and mumbled with her lips, and hummed aloud, like a child over a Christmas pudding. [Then] she slipped into a kind of song [. . .]; the song rose into a cry, and stopped; the woman crouched out of the house the same way she came in. (pp. 9-10)

Newly-arrived Wiltshire is dumbfounded at what he terms the old woman’s ‘rum manners’ (p. 10). Had the bridegroom been Polynesian, however, Fa’avao’s behaviour would have seemed only natural. First, crouching in and out of a room was completely in keeping with Polynesian customs, which considered it offensive to be standing inside a house or even when moving in and out of it. One had to bend down to show respect to the others. Second, those ‘manners’ were actually the first stages of a Polynesian wedding ritual. In Tahitian, *fa’ava’o* means ‘orator, master of ceremonies’. So Fa’avao dutifully chants the bride and bridegroom’s genealogy, as was the custom, and as is perceived by the owner of the house, a long-standing South Sea resident: ‘the captain told me she was making up a quantity of poetry in my praise because I was to marry Uma’ (p. 10).





Fa'avao's appearance – 'her face was tattooed, which was not the practice in that island' (p. 9) – informs the reader about the status of herself and Uma as out-islanders in Falesá: '[Uma] was born in one of the Line Islands' (p. 30), north-east of Samoa.<sup>13</sup> There is another woman coming from an outer island in the novella: Case's wife. 'She was a Samoa woman [. . .]; and when [Case] came to die [. . .] she went off home in the schooner *Manu'a*' (p. 5). Because she sails home in a schooner named *Manu'a*, it may be inferred that Case's wife comes from the island of the same name, *Manu'a*, Samoa's easternmost island. These three native women were born in the East – hence the question: what do eastern origins imply in terms of Polynesian history and mythology? In Polynesian migration history, the East was the direction of new conquests from when, around 2,000 B. C., the Polynesian people started their exploratory voyages from South-East Asia and gradually expanded eastwards in the uncharted Pacific.<sup>14</sup> The East was 'the direction of a renewal, of life, and [. . .] consequently a direction that [was] worth exploring. The "land of light" might be there'.<sup>15</sup> So, from a historical point of view, the three women from the East symbolise a new birth, the call of the wild and of new promising perspectives.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, in Polynesian cosmogony, the East was the place of divine origins. In Samoa, the island *Manu'a* is known as the very first island the primal god *Tagaloa* created on earth, and the place where he decided to make his sacred home.<sup>17</sup> It follows that from a mythological point of view, women from the East symbolised primal women, the bearers of creation, the divine solar principle. 'Sacred home' translates in Samoan into *fale sá* (with a macron on the *a* to indicate a long vowel).<sup>18</sup> There is no place named *Falesá* in Polynesia: it's a nonexistent place, a utopia in the etymological sense, whose name Stevenson composed from Samoan words. So one can imagine that *Falesá*-the-sacred-home, is a replica of *Manu'a*, *Tagaloa*'s sacred home on earth, which itself is a replica of the primal god's original sacred home in heaven. In other words,







*Falesā* represents primal sacred Polynesia. It is the original island, a metonymy of the South Seas, a symbol of all Polynesian islands. *Falesā* is *ō fanua uma*, ‘all the islands’, ‘the whole of Polynesia’ – a geographical and cultural equivalent to Uma herself. As an epitome of the South Seas, it is very probably what Stevenson had in mind when he wrote to Colvin, ‘You will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale, than if you had read a library.’

Uma’s role, as a woman coming from the East, the area of Samoan origins, is to help her foreign husband build their new home in *Falesā*. Their house is ‘the last house to the east’, a fit place for life to start anew. As a consequence, their home can be viewed as a new sacred home, a *fale sā*, for a hybrid Western and Polynesian couple. The whole novella ‘The Beach of Falesá’ can thus be read – or heard – as the genealogical chant of a new hybrid family being born in the South Seas. It combines in its title ‘the beach’, which represents the profane white community,<sup>19</sup> and *fale sā*, the sacred Polynesian community. It therefore offers a hybrid and very much true-to-life picture of the South Seas at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the context of Polynesian wedding rituals, Uma conforms to tradition through ceremonial adornments and gifts, which I now propose to analyse. First, she makes a display of flowers: ‘[s]he was scented [. . .]; her bust, [. . .] she wore bare only for some half a dozen necklaces of seeds and flowers’ (p. 11). In ancient Polynesia, fragrance was a privileged means to communicate with gods. The flowers’ scent gave access to the *mana*, or spiritual power, and Uma’s wedding flowers were a compulsory ritual endowment, a perfumed prayer addressed to the gods of fecundity. Uma’s second ceremonial contribution is tapa: ‘her kilt was of fine tapa, looking richer in the folds than any silk’ (p. 11). Tapa is a piece of bark-cloth, ritually beaten by women into a cloth-like thinness, which was only exhibited on ceremonial occasions.<sup>20</sup> When Uma adorns herself with tapa, she certifies the cultural validity of her wedding.





Anthropologist Marcel Mauss calls tapa ‘a mana object’:<sup>21</sup> as Uma’s tapa marks the sacredness of the event, grants Wiltshire the right to possess her and allows him into her whole family line, down to the origins of times. Not unlike a Western family tree – though on a much larger scale – tapa symbolises genealogy: its fine fibres stand for ancestry lines and their descendants. In the words of Young Leslie, tapa denotes genealogical wealth: ‘The cloth wealth stands in, analogically and metonymically, for the maternal kin, and represents the potential fecundity of her line, for many future generations’.<sup>22</sup> Stevenson was well aware of the symbolic values of Polynesian cloth, as can be noted in his presentation of a former pretender of Uma’s: ‘He was a small chief, and had some fine mats and old songs in his family’ (p. 31). Traditionally, tapa, together with ‘fine mats and old songs’, were used conjointly to extol one’s genealogical wealth. Vegetal strands and lines of oratory interwove to pay tribute to successive genealogies. Bearing in mind that, in Polynesia of old, there was no such thing as an individual, and that everyone was related to primal gods, Uma’s gorgeous tapa represents the history of her ancestry as far back as original times, down to primal gods. Since Uma comes from the East, her genealogy is highly sacred, hence the outstanding beauty of her barkcloth, ‘richer in the folds than any silk’. Wiltshire could hope for no better gift of introduction to the South Seas.

At this point we may make a fleeting comparison with Kirstie in the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston* (written in Samoa):

[she] knows the legend of her own family, and may count kinship with some illustrious dead. For it is the mark of the Scot of all classes: that he [. . .] remembers and cherishes the memory of his forefathers, good or bad; and there burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation. [. . .] They were all, and Kirstie the first of all, ready and eager to pour forth the particulars of their genealogy.<sup>23</sup>





Scottish Stevenson in Samoa knew that tracing their roots was fundamental to both Polynesians and Scots. Anthropologist Mauss compares tapa to a European coat-of-arms<sup>24</sup> since, like a coat-of-arms, tapa bears the history and the symbols of a clan or an extended family. As a writer of anthropological fiction, Stevenson could thus draw attention to what Lévi-Strauss calls ‘the unconscious structure’<sup>25</sup> of diverse cultures, and in a pioneering way point to a closeness between the peoples from both sides of the earth.

Uma’s third appropriate ceremonial contribution consists of a gift of herself: offering herself up as a pig, ‘I belong you all-e-same pig!’ (p. 13), she cries to Wiltshire in *Beach la mar*.<sup>26</sup> In ancient Polynesia, pigs were an incarnation of a minor god, Kamapua’a, who was himself a representative on earth of the god of fertility, Lono. Kamapua’a was half human, half pig, as his name indicates – proto-Polynesian *kama* or *tama* meaning ‘human child’ and *pua’a*, ‘pig’ – so that sacrificing a pig had connotations of human sacrifice. By offering herself as a pig to Wiltshire, Uma offers ‘a part of [her]self’ to the god of fertility.<sup>27</sup> The implied prayer is: may the god grant her husband be a father of an island progeny in return. Moreover, the gift of pigs is also connected with a passage from darkness to light: in order to be offered, pigs were brought from the pigsty to the front of the house, namely from darkness to light.<sup>28</sup> This passage from darkness to light was the axiom of Polynesian cosmogony: it re-enacted primal Creation.

The source of the darkness that made darkness  
 The source of the night that made night  
 The intense darkness, the deep darkness [ . . . ]  
 Darkness slips into light [ . . . ]  
 Child of the night of black darkness is born  
 The night gives birth.<sup>29</sup>

Uma offers herself as a pig at the moment when the couple reach





their nuptial home, to which she has guided her husband through the night. It may be said that the newly-weds are thus brought from darkness to light: 'her shadow went all the way up behind her into the hollow of the iron roof; she stood against it bright, the lamplight shining on her skin' (pp. 12-13). Aggrandised by a huge black halo, with her dark skin illuminated, primal Uma may be seen as the sacred night, the *Pō*, from where light originated according to Pacific cosmogony. Through her wedding gifts, Uma repeats this genesis, persistently encouraging her husband to root himself in Polynesia.

All these ritualistic messages are lost on Wiltshire – just as they are lost on Western readers ignorant of Polynesian ways. For these Western readers, the wedding scene may be summed up as follows: we have, on one side, a bridegroom who is familiar with Western wedding rituals and therefore knows he is the signatory of a fallacious marriage contract, and on the other side, a native bride who is starkly ignorant of those rituals and cheated into believing that her wedding ceremony is genuine. For Polynesian readers, however, the summary could run thus: an island bride dutifully performs the local rites pertaining to a genuine Polynesian wedding, while the Western bridegroom fails to realise that he is being earnestly implicated in an authentic South Sea wedding ceremony. Fundamentally, this major scene is based on a mutual cultural misunderstanding. On the one hand, Uma cannot read the marriage certificate. But on the other hand, Wiltshire cannot read Uma's cultural signs either: his mother-in-law's prayers, his wife's flowers, tapa and gift of a pig – all are a closed book to him. So in actual fact, both characters are just as uneducated as the other, both are equally ignorant of the other's culture. Exactly like the Western hero, Wiltshire, the Western readers who are not informed about Polynesian rites and customs may prove as uneducated, and may fail to grasp an important aspect of this scene.

I suggest that Stevenson's key purpose in this scene from 'The





Beach of Falesá' was to provide those readers who wished to 'know more about the South Seas' with an extremely powerful image: a metaphor of the act of reading South Sea fiction. It stresses the necessity of a hybrid approach: both Western and Polynesian. Such may be Stevenson's most solemn message in all his later South Sea writings: each one of us needs to be instructed in the Other's culture. The wedding scene in 'The Beach of Falesá', as part of Stevenson's anthropological 'library', actually contains two texts. One text which proclaims itself openly to the West: it tells a plain tale that can be instantly and easily recognised – a kind of Jekyll text (to make an easy and therefore summary comparison based on a popular opposition). And one text that lurks underneath, a text that lies in the shadow of the obvious one, one that needs to be ferreted out but is nevertheless of paramount importance – a Hyde text, I might say (if I am very careful to suppress the negative connotations conveyed by this expression). The more accessible first text exhibits Uma's ignorance and gullibility. The more cryptic second text unveils Wiltshire's equivalent ignorance and gullibility<sup>30</sup> – there is anti-imperialism and cultural relativism with a vengeance for late 19<sup>th</sup> century Western readers. To those who might patronisingly feel inclined to scoff at native Uma because she cannot read, Stevenson slyly addresses the question: 'Are you quite sure *you* can read?' To be able to better decipher this wedding scene, as well as the whole novella, one needs to have access to both cultures, Western and Polynesian. In other words, one needs to be acquainted with some of the anthropological knowledge Stevenson had enthusiastically acquired about the South Seas.

My last point in the study of the wedding scene is this: because the wedding is, quite strikingly, situated at the beginning of the novella, it proves to be only one first stage in Wiltshire's – and the readers' – rites of passage to Polynesia. Under the guidance of Uma, the ceremony is but a stepping stone to the hero's apprenticeship in Falesá. The autobiographical narrative subsequently





takes hero and readers along successive ‘voyage[s] of discovery’ (p. 51), and those subsequent rites of passage supply Stevenson’s anthropological ‘library’ with a substantial number of additional volumes. At the end of the novella, both cultures no longer stand parallel and unbeknown to each other, but ultimately join in the narrator’s persona.

The fact that ‘The Beach of Falesá’ is a first-person narrative makes this point even more striking, as readers are called upon to mark the difference between Wiltshire’s narrated-I – the way he perceived things in the narrated past – and his narrating-I – the way he perceives things in the narrating present. Wiltshire as the narrating character who tells his tale some twenty years after the events is definitely, although grudgingly, more aware of and more amenable to Polynesian lore than he was as a newly-arrived narrated character. He has, then, more or less successfully, gone through all his successive rites of passage. While Wiltshire depicts the natives as the Others, he himself, as a white man, has also unwittingly become somewhat Other. Given access to the core of Polynesia, the narrator tells a tale which allows his fellow Western contemporaries to learn, in their turn, about the Pacific. Stevenson’s most earnest wish may have been that Western readers might follow in Wiltshire’s footsteps, and likewise become somewhat Other. This wish is clearly expressed in a letter to Sydney Colvin:

Please remember that my life passes among my ‘blacks or chocolates’. [. . .] You must try to exercise a trifle of imagination, and put yourself, perhaps with an effort, into some sort of sympathy with these people, or how am I to write to you? I think you are truly a little too cockney with me.<sup>31</sup>

Wiltshire’s narrative turns out to be a symbolic return, or counter-gift, to the Pacific, a fundamental notion in pre-European Polynesian societies. True to South Sea traditions,





Stevenson makes the hero deliver a story which is meant to start a dialogue between the West and the Pacific, in search of mutually significant Others. The novella concludes with Uma and Wiltshire being doubly blessed by a Polynesian high chief and a white Protestant missionary who have conjointly taught them – and Western readers – how to read hybrid late 19<sup>th</sup>-century secular and sacred, written and oral, South Sea texts. In return, Wiltshire tells the couple's own tale so that the rest of the world will know better the South Seas. Their half-caste children are a potent symbol of the South Seas' future which, tellingly enough, may all be contained in the novella's concluding question mark. As a ground-breaking anthropological novelist, Stevenson would not impose his own views as a white man on either Western or Polynesian communities. The question is left open for the future, engaging others to try and 'know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale'.

To conclude, I have consistently been asked if Stevenson really acquired as much anthropological understanding as I am claiming. My answer is yes, as most Stevenson biographers testify: he did collect an immense amount of information about Polynesian beliefs and traditions from all over the South Seas. What's more, his foremost intent in the Pacific was to write a vastly ambitious piece of anthropological work, against the advice of his wife and most of his Western advisors from Britain and the States. Witness this letter from his wife Fanny to Sydney Colvin:

Louis has the most enchanting material than anyone ever had in the whole world for his book, and I am afraid he's going to spoil it all. He has taken into his Scotch Stevenson head, that a stern duty lies before him, and that his book must be a sort of scientific and historical impersonal thing.<sup>32</sup>

A difficult task was lying ahead of him, as he confided to Henry





James as early as 1890: ‘Think of writing books of travels on the spot, when I am continually extending my information, revising my opinions, and seeing the most finely finished portions of my work come part to part in pieces’.<sup>33</sup> Sadly, Stevenson died before he had a chance to finish even taking down notes. Only a few of those are left to modern day readers, collected under the posthumously published title *In the South Seas*. Had this vast book been completed, it would have been a significant further contribution to Stevenson’s anthropological ‘library’. What readers do have, though, is ‘The Beach of Falesá’: an outstanding piece of anthropological fiction about Polynesia, to help Westerners and islanders alike to try and build a multicultural world, according to Stevenson’s wishes. The novella is like ‘Uma’, meaning in Tahitian, we remember, ‘a discreet signal, a secret warning’: it signals to the West there is a whole ‘library’ waiting to be read, and continued, in the Pacific.







## NOTES

- 1 Bronislaw Malinowski, *Les Argonautes du Pacifique Occidental* (Paris: Gallimard, 1922).
- 2 I suggest a distinction between Stevenson's *The Wrecker* (1892, but started as early as summer 1889; see Roger Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson*, (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 130) and later, more anthropologically sensitive works listed in the text.
- 3 Scott Ashley, 'The Poetics of Race in 1890s Ireland: an Ethnography of the Aran Islands', *Patterns of Prejudice* 35.ii (2001), 5-18 (p. 18).
- 4 For a previous study of names in 'Falesá', see Jürgen Kramer, 'The Strange/r Case of "The Beach of Falesá": a reading of R. L. Stevenson's first realistic South Sea story', in *Neue Brennpunkte des Englischunterrichts*, ed. by Dieter Buttjes et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), pp. 80-83.
- 5 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Beach of Falesá' in *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 12. Henceforth cited in the text by page number only.
- 6 Kramer, p. 80.
- 7 G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary, Samoan-English – English-Samoan* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 2003), p. 300.
- 8 'O vahine uma: in Samoan means 'all women', or 'the whole female principle'.
- 9 Claudia Orange, *The Story of a Treaty* (Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget William Books, 2005), p. 18.
- 10 Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacus, 1997), p. xiv.
- 11 Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, ed. Neil Rennie (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 200.
- 12 Vahine: 'woman' in Proto-Polynesian.
- 13 'The Line Islands', now the Kiribati Republic, lie astride the Equator, hence their former name.
- 14 Matthew Spriggs, 'Archéologie Insulaire', in *Le Pacifique ou l'Odyssée de l'Espèce. Bilan Civilisationniste du Grand Océan*, ed. by Serge Dunis (Paris: Kliencksieck, 1996), 19-37 (p. 28).
- 15 Serge Tcherkézoff, *Faa Samoa, une Identité Polynésienne*.





- L'Anthropologie comme Dialogue Culturel* (Paris: L'Harmattan, Connaissance des Hommes, 2003), p. 39.
- 16 Ben Finney, 'De l'Océan à l'Espace', in *Le Pacifique ou l'Odyssée de l'Espèce*, 39-59 (p. 46).
- 17 Tcherkézoff, p.360.
- 18 In the 19th century, accented vowel letters were used to indicate long vowels, so, in accordance with the common usage of the time, Stevenson uses an accented-a in 'Falesá' (My thanks to Richard Dury for this information). Nowadays long vowels are indicated by a macron over the vowel, so 'Falesá' would be spelt 'Falesā'.
- 19 Roslyn Jolly 'Notes', in Robert Louis Stevenson, *South Sea Tales*, ed. by Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 259.
- 20 Tcherkézoff, p. 341.
- 21 Marcel Mauss, 'Essai sur le don, forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques', *Année Sociologique* n.s. 1 (1923-1924), reprinted in *Sociologie et Anthropologie*, Paris, Quadrige / Presses Universitaires de France, 1950, transl. W. D. Halls, *The Gift: Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge 1990), p. 157.
- 22 Heather Young Leslie, 'Bons Baisers de Samoa: les bonites de Hina et le Tu'iha'angana de Tonga', *Bulletin de la Société des Études Océaniques*, 303/304 (2005), p. 116.
- 23 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 53.
- 24 Mauss, 161.
- 25 Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Introduction à l'Œuvre de Marcel Mauss', in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris: P. U. F., 1950), ix-lii (p. xxvii).
- 26 Beach la mar: Pacific island pidgin.
- 27 Valerio Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice, Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 48-49.
- 28 Tcherkézoff, p. 46.
- 29 Martha Warren Beckwith (transl. and ed.), *The Kumulipo, a Hawaiian Creation Chant* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1972), p. 77.
- 30 Wiltshire is not gulled by Uma, but by Case, who knows as well as she





does that her wedding rites are in earnest

31 24 or 25 April 1994, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1994-95), VIII, 281. 'Blacks or chocolates' is a quotation from Colvin's letter to Stevenson dated 21 March 1894: 'for three letters or more you have not uttered a single word about anything but your beloved blacks – or chocolates – confound them; beloved no doubt to you; to us detested, as shutting out your thoughts, or so it often seems, from the main currents of human affairs' (qu. in *Letters VIII*: 279 n 1).

32 21 May 1889, qu. in *Letters VI*, 303-304.

33 29 December 1890, *Letters VII*, 65-66.

