PAUL GAUGUIN, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC-- A STUDY IN HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY

BY

RICARDO BIGI de AQUINO

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Supervisor: Dr. M. A. Micklewright.

ABSTRACT

This study endeavours to present an overall view of the Pacific work of Paul Gauguin and Robert Louis Stevenson. These two artists were responsible for a considerable expansion of the South Pacific romantic tradition in Western popular thought. Through their works, the 'South Seas myth' was definitively incorporated into the substratum of Western culture and attained permanent forms of artistic expression. The study follows a geographic-humanistic approach to the exposition of the nature and content of the works of Stevenson and Gauguin relating to Pacific themes.

The myth which has been created about the Pacific, attributing characteristics of environmental splendour and ideal living conditions to that geographical area, is rooted in the human belief in the existence of an earthly paradise. This belief is part of man's mystique since time immemorial. The location of this paradise in the islands of the South Pacific was the result of creative processes in which the contributions of eighteenth century explorers and nineteenth century travellers and artists played a role of paramount importance.

Stevenson, along with Herman Melville, Charles Warren Stoddard and Pierre Loti, was among the writers whose works exerted farthest-reaching effects upon the development

of the South Seas myth' in contemporary thought. Stevensonian South Seas prose obeyed the same principles of allurement and romance which had been traditional to previous literary accounts within the spirit of the 'myth.' It was infused, however, with topographical qualities which assured the rendering of a convincing local atmosphere to most of his novels and short stories.

Gauguin developed his Pacific art in a very personal way, synthesizing the physical and human environments of Tahiti and Hiva-Oa in order to obtain a transcendental representation of Polynesian themes. His paintings are not photographic reporductions of the island milieu, although many of them possess descriptive potential to serve as accurate portrayals of late nineteenth century rural life in Tahiti and the Marquesas. Gauguin painted from memory rather than from nature and endowed his works with a quality of permanence based on a personal search for the ultimate reality of places and people.

It is argued that the contribution of Stevenson and Gauguin to the reassertion of the 'South Seas myth' in Western consciousness is strong and permanent and has influenced a significant number of twentieth century Pacific artists.

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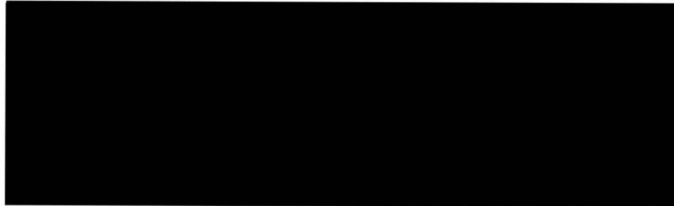

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A definition of humanistic geography

Humanistic geography is concerned with describing and explaining the geographical ideas contained in works which, by their nature, are classified within the field of the humanities (e.g. painting, music, literature). With few exceptions, developments of this type are relatively recent in the context of geographical research.

Artistic and literary sources have been traditionally neglected by most geographers whose interests in research lie only within the rigid limits of what has been conventionally accepted as the justifiable domains of geographic concern. Although some geographers have realized the importance of art and literature as subject-matter and sources of information for distinctive geographic work, the proportion of works dealing with humanistic subjects is exceedingly small when compared with the bulk of the geographic research output.

One of the reasons why art and literature have seldom been fields of primary interest for the professional geographer seems to lie in the apparent incompatibility between Science and Art. Instead of being treated as complementary to each other, Science and Art have been

usually observed in the light of their philosophical disparities and opposing objectives. 'Science,' as performed by the geographer in the exercise of his research and teaching functions was thus in direct contrast with 'Art,' as performed by the writer, the painter, or the musician, for example.

The quantitative revolution of the 1950's and 1960's brought about a major change in the orientation and methodological basis of geographical research. Making wide use of mathematical and statistical techniques, building theoretical models and trying to establish a body of general laws, most geographers tended to overlook approaches that did not conform with the new terms established for research. According to many of them, geography should become nomothetic and should rely on deductive reasoning to the greatest possible extent. More traditional approaches, based on idiographic-inductive techniques, were usually ostensibly discarded as inadequate, lacking mathematical rigour and a practical purpose.[1]

Some scholars, however, remained faithful to the making of a more humane geography. Their approaches were less technically inclined and more meaningful to the

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[1]Taaffe, E. J. (ed.), "Geography as a Social Science," in Geography (Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 5-36; and Chisholm, Michael, Research in Human Geography (London: Heinemann, 1971), pp. 1-7.

thoughtful, the well-read, and perhaps the average person. Carl O. Sauer and John K. Wright were among the first North American geographers to give full consideration to the intellectual possibilities of the relationship between geography and the humanities. Their philosophical standpoint has found continuity in the present day attempts of David Lowenthal, Yi-Fu Tuan and Sister A. Buttimer, among others. The study of these authors provided a dialectical basis for the ideas presented in this work.[2]

Aims of the Study

A myth has been created about the Pacific over the last two hundred years. This myth embodies a set of beliefs according to which the Pacific Islands are seen as earthly paradises, aesthetically pleasing micro-environments where hedonistic existence prevails and where refuge from the strain of civilized life can be easily found. The 'myth of

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[2]Significant titles contributed to geographic literature by the above-mentioned artists are: Carl O. Sauer's The Morphology of Landscape (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925); John K. Wright's "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography," in Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 37, No. 1, March 1947, pp. 1-15; David Lowenthal's "Geography, experience and imagination: towards a geographical epistemology," in Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 51, No. 3, September 1961,-pp. 241-260; Yi-Fu Tuan's "Geography, phenomenology and the study of human nature," in The Canadian Geographer, Vol. 15, No. 3, Fall 1971, pp. 181-192, and Topophilia (Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974); and, finally, Anne Buttimer's Society and Milieu in the French Geographic Tradition, (Chicago: Association of American Geographers-Rand McNally, 1971).

the South Seas,' as it is often called, came into being as a result of several independent intellectual forces. Paramount among these forces were the eighteenth century explorers and the nineteenth century travellers and artists. Through them, the Western world was invaded by a wave of works depicting the South Pacific island environment and native ways of life. Realistic or fictional, these works appealed to the popular mind and established a legend about Pacific lands that is now an integral part of the Western mystique. They are often classified or recognized as the 'Paradise literature school' or the 'literature of Paradise." Generally obeying certain characteristics of form and content, regional literature on the South Seas expresses Western perceptions of the Pacific macrocosm both in prose and poetry. Several artists came to be popularly identified with the Pacific in the last and present centuries. The association of their names with this specifi geographic area was motivated by the consistent centering of their works on Pacific themes. Melville (Typee, 1846; Omoo, 1847), Nordhoff & Hall (Faery Lands of the South Seas, 1921; The Hurricane, 1936; The Bounty Trilogy, 1938), and Michener (Return to Paradise, 1951; Hawaii, 1959) are some of the authors belonging to this category.

This study is concerned with presenting a geographic-humanistic analysis of the life and work of two artists whose popular images are, today as before, closely associated with the Pacific. The artists in question are Paul

Gauguin (1848-1903) and Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894). The major purpose is to evaluate the contributions of Gauguin and Stevenson to the development of the 'South Seas myth' in the core of contemporary Western popular culture. Special attention is given to the power of geographical expression in their works, either as descriptions of the physical and social environment of the islands they visited, or simply as creative/fictional evocations of a South Pacific milieu that is more a personal mental construction than a widely experienced reality.

Although working with different media, Gauguin and Stevenson can be compared in terms of their lives and artistic production. The similarities and contrasts observable between the two artists make the present undertaking worthwhile and often enlightening, since Gauguin and Stevenson have very seldom been united for an analytical inquiry of this nature.

From a geographical point of view, this work is unique in the basis of the selection of its subject-matter and methodological orientation. Its ties with the humanities in general and with art in particular are evident. We regard the closeness of this rapport and the overlapping of influences from fields so diverse in their constitution as factors of intellectual strength rather than as indicators of scientific indiscipline. The sciences and the humanities are viewed here in the light of their relationships and complementary character rather than treated as opposing fields

of human knowledge. It is hoped that this broader perspective will facilitate the understanding of the plurality of ideas contained in the study.

This analysis could also be classified as belonging to the field of 'aesthetic geosophy,' a term coined by John K. Wright to define "the study of the expression of geographical conceptions in literature and in art."[3]

Parts of the study

The study is composed of two main parts which are defined in the form of time periods. This procedure was adopted in order to simplify the exposition of the complex array of information pertaining to the research and, whenever possible, to give more homogeneity to the facts treated under different headings. The two parts are:

I - The Birth of the South Seas Myth (1768-1888)

This phase covers the activities of a number of visitors to the Pacific (explorers, naturalists, travellers, missionaries, government officials, and artists, among others). The year 1768 was purposely chosen to mark the beginning of the period, which lasted 120 years and ended with the departure of Stevenson for the Marquesas in 1888. The events registered within this span of time are intimately related to the birth of the 'South Seas myth' in

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[3]Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Western popular thought. Still very important to be considered are the imprints left in the minds of Gauguin and Stevenson by the work of some of their predecessors in the area.

II - The 'Stevenson-Gauguin era': 1888-1903.

This period encompasses the sum of the Pacific experiences of the two artists. It begins with the arrival of Stevenson in the Marquesas in July, 1888, and it ends with the death of Gauguin in the same island group in May, 1903. For the purposes of this research, the experiences of Stevenson and Gauguin will be treated individually, each artist being dedicated an independent chapter in the study.

The conclusion of the study constitutes an assessment of the impact of the works of Stevenson and Gauguin in the creation of a popular imagery concerning the South Pacific. It also contains a brief evaluation of the contributions of the successors of Stevenson and Gauguin to the development of the 'South Seas myth.' The role of modern mass media in the diffusion of the myth is equally considered.

Methodology

Four main steps were followed in the preparation of the study.

(1) A relatively extensive library research was initiated with the purpose of surveying all titles related to the main topics covered in the study. A comprehensive list of books resulted from this initial survey. This list was

then submitted to the two successive critical evaluations which took into account the intrinsic qualities of each work as well as its potential contributions to the research. The initial list was thus narrowed down to a more selective, substantial bibliography.

(ii) With significant titles already in hand, a research design for the whole study was finally established. The plan included topics that would be the object of special consideration during the reading phase of the research, broad themes around which the main body of the dissertation was to be developed, and tentative dates for the accomplishment of each phase of the study.

(iii) Relying on the research design and utilizing the selected bibliography, the reading phase was commenced. The works were grouped in eight different units, according to their content: (1) Gauguin, (2) Stevenson, (3) geography of the South Pacific, (4) Pacific history, (5) ethnology of Polynesia, (6) philosophy, (7) art, and (8) literature.

(iv) The reading led to the delineation of central themes in each research area, partially based upon the recurring ideas expressed by different authors on a same topic. The subsequent analysis of these themes in terms of their constitution and validity coincided with the first stages of the writing phase of the study.

The research, preparation, and ultimate creation of

the present work as it now stands was the result of subjective processes. The methodology used was essentially qualitative. Freedom, intellectual spontaneity and flexibility dominated all phases of the study. Given the nature of the study and the body of data available for research, it was felt that subjective thinking presented better chances of yielding more meaningful results than the application of restrictive patterns of empirical reasoning. The subjectivity to which we refer was permeated, however, with objectivity and common sense. An adequate level of detachment was observed throughout the study, especially when circumstances of emotional impact required an accurate, faithful rendering of impressions, sensations and feelings.

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTH OF THE SOUTH SEAS MYTH

(1768-1888)

The historical framework

The gradual opening of the Pacific to the European world was a lengthy process which involved four centuries of human activity within an exceedingly vast geographical area. To secure a better understanding of the birth and development of a typical Pacific imagery in Western popular thought some consideration should be given to the interplay of historical facts in this framework of time and space. For present purposes, the focus is upon the second half of the eighteenth century.

1. The eighteenth century voyages of exploration

When Captain James Cook first sailed for the Pacific in August, 1768, the intellectual spheres of Europe had been actively engaged in speculations about the 'South Seas' for at least sixteen years.[1] The wave of curiosity on matters concerning the Pacific was officially started when the French scholar Maupertuis addressed his Lettre sur le

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[1]Beaglehole, John C., The Exploration of the Pacific (London: Black, 1934), pp. 224-229.

<u>progres des sciences</u> to Frederick II of Prussia in 1752. The document proposed three areas of investigation for special attention by scientists of the time. Among these areas, the search for the 'Southern Continent' was the most important topic to be investigated. Influenced by Maupertuis and based on the accounts of the voyages of William Dampier, Jacob Roggeveen and other explorers, Charles de Brosses published his <u>Histoire des Navigations aux Terres Australes</u> in 1756. The work immediately became a classic and motivated French and British commercial and scientific societies to pressure their respective governments for the organization of voyages of exploration to the Pacific.

The scientific, economic, and socio-political consequences of the voyages of exploration are well known and do not relate to the primary objectives of this study.[2] It is important, however, to consider the impact caused by these successive voyages of discovery on the European imagination.

The official accounts of each voyage were the media through which most information concerning such ventures was passed on to the public. These accounts usually consisted

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[2]For an extensive and well documented review of the several phases of Pacific exploration refer to: Beaglehole, <u>op. cit.</u>; Andrew Sharp, <u>The Discovery of the Pacific Islands</u> (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960); and Ernest S. Dodge, <u>Beyond the Capes, Pacific Exploration from Captain Cook to the Challenger, 1776-1877</u> (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

of two sections which complemented one another:

a) a written statement of all events concerning the respective voyage, generally in the form of a journal which included geographical descriptions of the places visited and their inhabitants;

b) an illustrative section, usually consisting of maps and a collection of engraved plates showing topographical scenes, natives, objects of material culture, and botanical and zoological specimens found in the island environment.

In general, the written account was the responsibility of the commander of the expedition. The illustrations and maps, essential complements of the text, were left in charge of the artists and scientific draughtsmen accompanying the group. Together, text and illustrations were published in the form of 'atlases,' avidly sought after by scientists, intellectuals, and members of the upper classes.

The nature of public reaction to these publications was determined by the content of the publication itself. Although the accounts were generally written according to rules of objectivity, scientific detachment and descriptive precision, one notices a basic lack of uniformity between the works published. Such variations seem to be due to differences in the intellectual background and personal temperamental qualities of the respective authors.

The accounts of the voyages of John Byron (1764-1766) and Philip Carteret (1766-1769) are informative and

precise, and contain numerous data concerning latitudinal and longitudinal positions, weather conditions, descriptions of islands and contact situations with native peoples, in addition to information about everyday events aboard the ships. Their style is simple, restrained and technically oriented. The journal of the voyage of Samuel Wallis (1766-1768), written by Master George Robertson, offers an altogether different picture. Although highly informative, basically objective, and punctuated by perceptive observations of physical and human environments, Robertson's work indicates a great deal of emotional involvement on the part of its author. Expressions of aesthetic appreciation are often used, especially in the account of the discovery of and sojourn on Tahiti.

Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1766-1769), arriving in Tahiti shortly after the visit of Wallis, also injected his writings with deeply personal observations. Himself a nobleman enjoying the refinements of a classically-oriented education, Bougainville was one of the most literary-inclined of the navigators who entered the Pacific. His writings are geographically meaningful and contain numerous references to the physical characteristics of the island milieu but these observations are usually rendered in a romantic-poetic vein. References to mythological personages abound, being used in appraisals of the Tahitians' physique as well as in descriptions of their customs and rituals.

Joseph Banks, accompanying Cook on his first voyage to the Pacific (1768-1771), left observations slightly more restrained than those of Bougainville. Being a naturalist, his accounts are obviously oriented towards the description of environmental phenomena and picture the island physiography with great richness of detail. His ethnological accounts of native peoples are also perceptive and accurate. The overall tone of his prose reveals, however, a gift for tasteful analogies and a concern for the beautiful. These traits made Banks a very readable writer and humanized his figure before the public.

Captain James Cook left voluminous documentation concerning the lands he discovered and surveyed in the Pacific during the course of his three voyages: 1768-1771, 1772-1775, and 1776-1780. Of all the eighteenth century explorers he was the one whose writings exerted the most influence upon the European public.[3] His accounts do not have the embellishments of Bougainville or the wit of Banks but they reflect careful observation, accuracy in the description of scenes and events, and attention to detail. Cook was a practical, highly perceptive individual and maintained a notable level of personal detachment throughout

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[3]Dodge, Ernest S., op. cit., p. 15.

his narratives, never allowing his own emotions and feelings to emerge.[4]

2. The nineteenth century: explorers, missionaries and other incomers

The European consciousness of the Pacific took shape little by little, with the successive publication of the accounts of early explorers such as Bougainville, Cook, Bligh and Vancouver. However, in the last years of the century and throughout the first decades of the 1800's, other types of incomers to the Pacific also began to bring their activities to the attention of Europeans. These individuals can be classified in terms of occupational categories. Nine categories are often recognized in the literature associated with specific moments of the history of the Pacific. The categories are: a) explorers, b) missionaries, c) scientists, d) whalers, e) traders, f) beachcombers, g) government officials, h) travellers, and i) artists. The representatives of each category influenced the general public in different ways and through different media.

Among the later explorers and navigators whose names became traditionally associated with the Pacific are the French J. S. C. Dumont d'Urville (1826-1829, 1837-1840)

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[4]Comparing the temperaments of Cook and Bougainville, Philarete Chastes defined Cook as being "plus simple, plus naif, et plus marin" whereas Bougainville was "plus orné, plus dixhuitième siècle," in Alan Moorehead, The Fatal Impact (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 207.

and A. A. Du Petit-Thouars (1836-1839), and the Americans Edmund Fanning (1807-1808) and Charles Wilkes (1838-1842).

Missionaries left a quite extensive record of their stay in the Pacific. Their works, often summing up the totality of their life experiences in the islands, were usually published under the auspice of missionary societies in the United States and Europe. The pattern followed by many missionaries in the composition of their books included a historical, geographic and economic description of the island or island group where the mission was situated, an appraisal of the original culture of the native people they were in charge of converting, and a record of significant events marking the life of the missionary in his island post. Missionary literature was directed to a wide but specific public, composed of churchgoers and supporters of mission work in Europe and in the United States. Outside this s here its influence was minimal. One of the few exceptions to this rule was William Ellis,a missionary whose writings concerning the Pacific attained exceptional popularity out of, as well as in, religious circles. Well known and also representative of the same type of literature are the works of John Williams (1837), George Turner (1861), A. W. Murray (1876), and William W. Gill (1885).

Scientists who did field research in the Pacific and wrote popular accounts of their studious passages through the islands were rare. However, two names do stand out as

authors of classic works regarding the Pacific environment which appealed to wide audiences: Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley.

Whalers, traders and beachcombers contributed little to the popularization of the Pacific island realm. Most of the individuals within these categories left few personal records of their Pacific experiences. Remarkable exceptions in each of the three categories were Frederick D. Bennet, commander of a whaling expedition around the world (1833-1836); E. H. Lamont, trader in one of the Tonga Islands; and Edward Robarts, beachcomber in the Marquesas from 1797 to 1806.[5]

Government officials often published accounts of their years of political activity in the Pacific, but most of these works had little impact on the public as a whole. An outstanding exception to this rule is Jacques-Antoine Moerenhout, author of the classic Voyage aux Îles du Grand Océan (1837). Moerenhout's work is important in the context of the present study because it was used by Gauguin as a source of background information for Ancien Culte Mahorie.

Travellers can be difficult to identify because relatively few individuals travelled as a professional

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[5]Refer to H. E. Maude, "Beachcombers and Castaways," in Of Islands and Men (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1968), Chapter IV, pp. 134-177, for a thorough analysis of the activity of beachcombers in the Pacific during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The paper contains references to William Mariner and Herman Melville.

occupation. Journalists dominated the field for decades. Most of their accounts were published in newspapers and periodicals and did not reach publication in book form, a fact which, in part, accounted for the temporary character of the influence of their individual literary works. In addition, some travel books exist whose authors never visited the Pacific. Making use of secondary and tertiary bibliographical sources, these works were often largely fictitious. Recognized travellers who did contribute to Pacific travel literature during the first half of the century were the Americans James J. Jarves, Thomas J. Farnham, and William M. Wood.

Artists played an important role in the creation of a mass consciousness of the Pacific. Through painting or literature, their works captivated the public and offered a respite to the reading of scientifically-oriented accounts of islands and peoples. Working initially under the influence of scientists and naturalists, and having their creative power limited by the empirical aims of the expeditions, they were offered few opportunities to reflect personal interpretations of the places visited. The influence of academies and 'schools of taste' was also strong at the time and distorted whatever impulses of aesthetic 'personalism' some artists may have tried to express. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that artists were partially liberated from these compromising bonds and started rendering more personal views of physical environments and human

subjects.

The 'South Seas myth' its origin and content

1. Origin

1.1 Literature: the noble, ignoble and romantic savages

The development of a European imagery of the Pacific in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was closely related to literary and artistic influences. Among the works that exerted a decisive weight in the process of formation of the 'South Seas myth' in Western popular thought, four titles are of utmost importance: a) Dalrymple's *An Account of the Discoveries made in the South Pacifick* [sic] *Ocean previous to 1764*, printed in 1767 but not released until two years later; b) Bougainville's *Voyage autour du Monde* (1771); c) Hawkesworth's *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere . . .* (1773); and d) Cook's *Voyages* (1784).

Dalrymple's work is remembered mainly for its speculations concerning the existence of 'Terra Australis Incognita,' a vast continent which was supposed to exist somewhere in the South Pacific. Its publication led to Cook's efforts to check upon the existence of that land. The contribution of Alexander Dalrymple to the birth of the myth was due exclusively to the popularity that his work obtained among the European reading public. His ideas were purely

scientific and no attempts were made to present the Pacific in a romanticized way.[6]

Louis Antoine de Bougainville has been identified by several authors as the true originator of the myth, especially through the idea he conveyed of the existence of an earthly paradise in Tahiti. Although his most important work was Voyage autour du Monde, the greatest impact of his South Pacific views was actually achieved through the previous publication of a smaller account: Relation de la découverte que vient de faire M. de Bouguainville [sic], d'une Isle qu'il a nommée La Nouvelle Cythère (1769). Along with Bougainville's romantic interpretation of the Tahitian physical and social environments, another member of the expedition also created a sensation for his rhapsodic description of the island. His name was Philibert de Commerson and his Lettre . . . sur la découverte de la nouvelle île de Cythère ou Taiti was published with great popular receptivity by the 'Mercure de France' of November, 1769.

In England the 'South Seas myth' was born in 1773, with the appearance of John Hawkesworth's book. Commissioned by the British Admiralty to edit the voyages of John Byron, Philip Carteret, Samuel Wallis and the first of Cook's voyages to the Pacific, Hawkesworth found himself involved in a very difficult task. The official logs of the respective

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[6] Beaglehole, John C., op. cit., pp. 230-232.

voyages were to be followed faithfully but the information therein obtained had to be attractively conveyed in order to please the taste of the intellectual elite. This meant the exclusion of much nautical information from the book as well as the use of a compositional style that was appealing to the popular reader. At the time, Hawkesworth was severely criticized for his editorial job. Although certain critics have recently pointed out valuable qualities in his work, most of his contemporaries condemned the book for its lack of scientific worth and its romanticized content. These criticisms originated mainly in scientific circles. Among the general public the book met with exceptional success and set the tone for much following literature concerning the South Pacific.

Cook's _Voyages_ impressed Europe for the amount of information they contained and for the vividness with which they had been written. The books soon became classic references for all serious or entertaining attempts at interpreting the realities of the Pacific world, and this has remained true to the present.

The information obtained from the accounts of the voyages of exploration was reflected in European philosophical circles in ways that gave definite shape to the 'South Seas myth' in Western consciousness. Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot had some of their theories concerning man and society

applied to the peoples of the Pacific.[7] Although their views and attitudes regarding the natives of the Pacific were not essentially identical, they involuntarily expanded the popularity of the myth through the prestige of their names.

The idea of a Golden Age surviving far from the centers of civilization, in lands inhabited by Rousseauian 'natural men,' was used as an evidence of the corruption of Western culture. The myth of the 'noble savage' was an intellectual creation with sources in European social self-criticism. Its basis in actual facts was so brittle that the whole concept could not remain unaltered for long. The observation of cannibalism and infanticide, the news of massacres inflicted by native peoples on European exploratory groups (including the deaths of Cook, Marion du Fresne, and members of the expeditions of Furneaux and La Pérouse), allied to the bias brought into Pa ific literature by the adverse missionary view of native cultures, explained the reversal in the general attitude of the public toward the Pacific man. The concept of the 'ignoble savage' appeared as the result of these new influences. Certain geographical areas remained associated with ideas of 'soft primitivism' due to

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[7]For an excellent analysis of the philosophical ideas of Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot, refer to Romain Rolland, André Maurois and Edouard Herriot, French Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1953).

the pleasantness of their natural environment and to the docility of the local population, as typified by conditions in the Society Islands; other areas became known as poles of 'hard primitivism' by reason of their harsher climate and the unattractive and ruthless character of their inhabitants. This was the case of New Zealand, Australia and parts of Melanesia.[8]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, when the idea of progress and the belief in the material worth of Western civilization had replaced the old revisionist eighteenth century view, the opposing extremes separating the 'noble savage' from the 'ignoble savage' had yielded and converged to a moderate position in the scale of values. The figure of a 'romantic savage' was then brought into light, reuniting the qualities of the former and the faults of the latter. Still an abstraction, the new creation was at least closer to conventional reality and avoided the extremes of the previous views.[9]

Already following the new trend, Chateaubriand gave in Le Génie du Christianisme (1802) a view of Tahiti that is essentially romantic. In this work, besides commenting on

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[8]Smith, Bernard, European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768-1850 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 6-7.

[9]A classic work dealing with the 'noble savage' theme is H. N. Fairchild, The Noble Savage, a study in Romantic Naturalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928).

the changes which missionary activity had introduced into Tahitian life, he stresses with vehemence the idea of the transientness of human life even in environments so paradisiacal in their constitution as that of Tahiti.

1.2 Painting: three phases of Pacific pictorial representation

Painting followed literature in this historical evolution. Excluding the Pacific voyages prior to 1750, which yielded a scanty artistic output, three phases can usually be defined when a classification of early Pacific pictorial representation is attempted.

a) The first phase, between 1770 and 1800, is dominated by classical influences and the idea of the 'noble savage.' To this period belong celebrated artists whose works immortalized the South Pacific landscape and the 'noble savage' ideal in European thought. The trio Sydney Parkinson-William Hodges-John Webber was responsible for the creation of the visual 'South Seas myth.'

Sydney Parkinson, contracted as a natural history draughtsman for Cook's first voyage, found himself obligated to act as a landscapist when the sudden death of Alexander Buchan deprived the expedition of the latter's services. An expert in the drawing of botanical subjects, Parkinson tried to convey the same fidelity to form in the drawings of topographical views and coastal profiles. As a portraitist, he was ethnographically accurate to a degree that Hodges and

Webber failed to achieve. Parkinson's works reveal geographic precision and a taste for the picturesque and exotic.

William Hodges, deeply influenced by Claude, attained in his works the highest level of achievement in the representation of Tahiti as an island paradise. Seeking to combine scientific precision and classical idealism in order to please simultaneously the circles of science and those of taste, he created views of Tahiti that were accurate in their topographical aspects but remained essentially idealized as a whole. As Bernard Smith observed, Hodges attempted

> to elevate exotic topography to the high places reserved for the ideal landscapes of Claude, the heroic landscapes of Poussin, and the picturesque landscapes of Salvator Rosa.[10]

In this endeavour Hodges was never matched by any of his contemporaries.

John Webber, professional draughtsmen in Cook's third voyage, left works whose nature was essentially illustrative. Drawing botanical and zoological as well as topographic and ethnographic subjects, it was in the former that he showed the highest level of perception and fidelity to the reality of the islands. His topographical views were equally satisfactory but he failed to render ethnographic data accurately. Webber's portraits of natives reveal excessive Europeanization in the facial features and garments.

The works of Parkinson, Hodges and Webber, made

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[10]Smith, Bernard, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 47-48.

popular through the editions of Cook's _Voyages_ and multiplied incessantly in the form of engravings, became the dominant source of Pacific pictorial representation in European and American publications until the 1830's.

b) The second phase coincides with the beginning of missionary activity in the Pacific and spans several decades, although its period of intellectual genesis is concentrated in the years from 1796 to the 1820's. The works of the period are characterized by a strong religious appeal and serve the purpose of illustrating aspects of early missionary life in the islands. The stereotype of the 'ignoble savage' appears as a result of the new ways of portraying native life, now seen through the stern eyes of the pioneering missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant. Engravings based on Parkinson, Hodges and Webber were purposely altered to convey the cruelty of native customs and the horrors of paganism. Aspects of the physical environment are rendered with relative precision but most of the works focus upon the figure of the missionary in his struggle to christianize the heathen. No artists of note are associated with this phase.

c) The third and last phase brings together all previous influences and presents them in a realistic, scientific perspective. The 'noble savage' and the 'ignoble savage' stereotypes merge into a more accurate representation of Pacific islands and their occupants. The rising interest in

studies of the earth sciences and ethnology, allied to great improvements in the technological aspects of pictorial representation, led to the birth of an art closely associated with science. From the 1820's on this tendency evolved with increasing intensity and only lost its artistic impact with the advent of photography years later. Jacques Arago is the best known artist of this period, which also includes Thomas Henry Huxley. Huxley was a naturalist with great artistic ability who worked extensively in the islands of Melanesia. It is, however, the published accounts of the voyages of Dumont d'Urville and Charles Wilkes that best define the artistic-scientific endeavours of the time.

2. Content of the 'myth'

The content of the 'South Seas myth' can be analyzed under four separate headings: a) Beauty, b) Sexuality, c) Plenty, and d) Escape. Each of these classificatory categories retains in itself a great number of significant elements that help to define the overall meaning of the 'myth.'

2.1 Beauty

The idea of the beautiful is associated with the 'South Seas myth' in two ways. The first of these levels corresponds to the beauty perceived in the natural environment. The second dimension of beauty is the one which idealizes the Polynesian physical type in the splendour of its ethnologic exoticism. Both ideas concerning the beauty of the Pacific physical and human environments were first

divulged in Europe with the publication of the accounts of the great voyages of discovery.

The physical setting of the islands is usually described in alluring terms. The warmth and amenity of the climate and the exuberance of the tropical vegetation score high in the number of references made by the first visitors. In general, it seems that the high volcanic islands exerted more aesthetic appeal on the European mind than did the low coral atolls, but the South Sea island stereotype cannot be defined only in terms of topographical characteristics. Both high islands and atolls are part of the myth. The conventional South Sea island picture is one of palm-fringed beaches, blue seas and fascinating coral formations, limpid lagoons teeming with sea life, rustic native huts grouped together or scattered amidst a luxuriant vegetation, a sunny, transparent atmosphere sometimes disturbed by strong winds and violent showers, and a general tranquillity that leads to inconsequential pastimes and relaxation.

The human element received as much attention on the part of the European observers as did the environment in which they lived. Following the 'noble savage' stereotype, they were described as possessing attractive facial features and sculpturally-shaped bodies. This model was usually applied to Polynesian people only, especially those living in areas identified with the concept of 'soft primitivism,' as the Society Islands or the Marquesas. The picture conveyed of Melanesian peoples and Australian aborigines was far less

favorable and stressed the ugliness of their physique and their lack of grace. This reaction led to the invention of a 'comic savage' stereotype applied to the natives of the mentioned areas.[11]

2.2 Sexuality

The notion of sexual permissiveness is attached to the most basic elements of the 'myth.' It had its origin in the accounts of Bougainville, Robertson, Banks, Cook and de Commerson, describing their friendly reception by the Tahitians and the readiness with which the women of Tahiti engaged in sexual intercourse with the members of the expeditions. Naturalness with regard to nudity was also another praised quality of the island people and here the beauty of the Polynesian physique came into play. It is important to note that the sexual content of the 'South Seas myth' is oriented almost exclusively to the perspective of male visitors. The stereotype of South Sea island paradise seldom offers opportunity for a Western woman to establish willful sexual relationship with a native man. This imbalance is due, perhaps, to the overwhelming number of male writers who devoted books to South Pacific themes. The vision of a Western man surrounded by a solicitous group of Polynesian beauties is indeed typical of the male-oriented myth and has become a part of the 'mirage oceanien' since the times of

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[11]Smith, Bernard, op. cit., pp. 165-166.

Bougainville.

2.3 Plenty

One of the popular assumptions involving the 'South Seas myth' is related to the theme of economic survival. Retaining much of the Golden Age mystique of material abundance without toil, and based on the early observations of explorers that recorded the atmosphere of plenty inherent to Tahiti and other Polynesian islands, this facet of the 'myth' contrasted directly with the harsher life of nineteenth century Europe. The vision of a land of eternal summer where all the necessities of life were generously provided by Nature with a minimum of human effort became the idealized representation of the typical South Sea island in contemporary Western popular thought. Associated with the notion of plenty was also the idea of native hospitality towards white visitors, providing for the latter's material needs during their stay on the island.

2.4 Escape

The element of escape is perhaps the most notorious aspect of the creation of the 'South Seas myth' in its present form. The intense symbolism associated with the idea of 'island,' a self-contained world, a microenvironment where one leads an existence of peace and harmony with one's own self, far from the turbulence of civilized life, permeated the myth with an indelible Utopian quality. This

longing for life in a better world, a world characterized by simplicity, spontaneity and beauty, away from the artificial mechanisms of civilization, is indeed inherent in the 'back-to-nature' dream and was thoroughly coloured by Rousseauian thought during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Escape was the element of strength in the formation of the myth, the implicit leitmotif of most works produced by the 'Paradise literature school,' and the 'raison-d'être' of the myth itself.

The Pacific in literature: Melville, Stoddard, Loti and others

It was in the domain of literature, both fictional and non-fictional, that the 'South Seas myth' attained its greatest development as an expression of stereotyped images and ideas. Several writers contributed to this development during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and many of them became popularly associated with the Pacific by virtue of the regional character of their novels and travel accounts. For the purpose of the present study thirteen authors were selected among those whose works best characterized the South Seas in literature prior to the arrival of Robert Louis Stevenson in the area (1888). Three of these authors, Herman Melville, Charles Warren Stoddard, and Pierre Loti, will be considered with special attention due to the representativeness of their works in the context of Pacific literature.

1. <u>The eighteenth century</u>

Two names traditionally associated with the Pacific in eighteenth century fictional literature are Daniel Defoe (1659-1731) and Jonathan Swift (1667-1745). Defoe's work, <u>Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe</u>, was published in 1719. Based on the true experiences of Alexander Selkirk in the Juan Fernandez group, the book contained ingredients of popular appeal and showed some of the elements that would make Paradise literature conspicuously famous in the course of the following century. Jonathan Swift's <u>Gulliver's Travels</u>, published roughly two years later, would also enjoy the same literary destiny of popular success. Influenced by accounts of the voyages of William Dampier, Swift gave a geographical basis for his novel in the Western Pacific and located the island of Lilliput to the west of 'Diemen's Land.' Both works are historically connected with the initial phase of Pacific exploration and helped to canalize popular curiosity to the area. It is erroneous, however, to consider <u>Robinson Crusoe</u> and <u>Gulliver's Travels</u> as early examples of typical South Sea island novel. Both works were created before the advent of the 'noble savage' myth in its Pacific context; Defoe set his novel in the Caribbean and not in the South Pacific; and, finally, the physical and human milieus depicted in the Gulliver story are characteristically European and not Polynesian.

Following the great voyages of discovery of the second half of the century and strongly influenced by them,

two important pieces of work were published having the Pacific as their geographical setting. The first of them was George Keate's Account of the Pelew Islands (1788); the second was Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1798). Both authors used the voyages of exploration as sources of inspiration not only for the narration of events but also for the creation of an accurate local atmosphere in which to situate the stories. According to Bernard Smith, "Keate's Account is the most thoroughgoing and elaborate presentation of the noble savage in the literature of the South Seas."[12]

2. The nineteenth century

Other works still closely associated with the era of discoveries were Mary Russell Mitford's Christina, The Maid of the South Seas (1811) and George Byron's The Island, or, Christian and his Comrades (1823). Both based their plots on the events resulting from the Bounty mutiny and the subsequent settlement of Pitcairn Island by the group of Fletcher Christian. The Pacific described by both Mitford and Byron in their poems is highly coloured by romantic tones, already within the spirit of the myth. However, the imagery used in both works is essentially European.

Two American novelists who left fictional works about imaginary Pacific islands were Edgar Allan Poe and James

[12]Smith, Bernard, op. cit., p. 99.

Fenimore Cooper. Their inclusion in this review is justified by the popularity they obtained in other realms of fiction. Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838) and Cooper's The Crater, or Vulcan's Peak (1847) have qualities of their own and show many of the characteristics of style which made the notoriety of their authors, but neither Poe nor Cooper considered themselves South Sea novelists and their contributions are seen today as literary curiosities.

Another American writer who contributed to Pacific literature although not professionally or popularly identified with the area is Samuel L. Clemens (1835-1910), literarily known as Mark Twain. In 1866, Clemens was sent to the Hawaiian Islands as a newspaper correspondent for the 'Weekly Union' of Sacramento, California. His stay on the islands lasted four months and resulted in the publication of twenty-five letters later put together in Roughing It (1872). Twain's descriptions of Hawaii are geographically accurate and written in a journalistic style but his romanticized views have been criticized by many as not being representative of the social reality of the islands at the time.

In France, also in the 1860's, a work was published that would become a classic of French Pacific literature. The author, Max Radiguet, had acted as secretary of Du Petit-Thouars during the latter's naval expedition to the Pacific between 1841 and 1845. A perceptive and artistically gifted individual, Radiguet transposed to Les Derniers

Sauvages the observations he had been able to make during his long stay in the Marquesas. Most of the book is concerned with ethnological data, treated non-technically and seen through a romantic vein. A collection of drawings was also prepared by the author but only came to be inserted in the written account with the 1929 edition of the book.[13]

2.1 Herman Melville

Herman Melville (1819-1891) is today unanimously considered the great novelist of the Pacific, the major literary genius to write on Pacific themes. Among his works, one (Moby Dick, 1851) is ranked among the masterpieces of world literature and has been cited by Geoffrey Stone as the greatest novel ever written by an American.[14]

Melville's literary career began in 1846 with the publication of Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life. Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas followed in 1847. Both novels were based on his experiences in the Pacific

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[13]Excellent anthologies of Pacific literature have been edited by Arthur Grove Day and Carl Stroven, both of the University of Hawaii. Significant titles are: The Spell of the Pacific (New York: MacMillan, 1949), Best South Sea Stories (New York: Appleton-Century, 1964), True Tales of the South Seas (New York: Appleton-Century, 1966), and The Spell of Hawaii (New York: Meredith Press, 1968). An anthological bibliography of important works of Pacific literature has also been edited by Arthur G. Day under the title Pacific Islands Literature (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1971).

[14]Stone, Geoffrey, Melville (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1949), p. 5.

(1841-1844) and thus have a strong autobiographical flavour. Typee deals with Melville's stay on the island of Nuku-Hiva, in the Marquesas, where he was befriended by a local tribe for a period of four weeks, although in the book this stay is purposely extended to four months. Omoo is practically a sequel to the adventures of Typee and relates the events which surrounded Melville's stay in Tahiti after the mutiny of the 'Lucy Ann.' These two novels elevated their author to a privileged position in the American literary world of the mid-nineteenth century. Published almost simultaneously in the United States and England, they brought to Melville a sudden fame that he did not altogether expect. This fame would be short-lived, however, because Melville as a writer was incomparably ahead of his time. His next works, although superior in literary quality to the first, did not obtain the same popular acclaim enjoyed by Typee and Omoo. They were more ambitious, more carefully written and researched, and possessed greater refinement of style, but they failed to satisfy the taste of the general public. This was particularly the case of Mardi: and a Voyage Thither (1849), an allegorical novel set in fictitious Pacific islands. Choosing not to compromise his artistic goals and philosophical beliefs, Melville was little by little relegated to an obscurity not at all compatible with his literary genius. The process of his recognition as a significant writer started after 1920, through the efforts of other writers, intellectuals and critics, both in the United States and Europe.

The importance of Melville's South Sea novels resides not only in their intrinsic literary qualities but also in the influence that they eventually exerted on the minds of artists, including Stevenson. Arthur G. Day mentions that Omoo eventually became a quasi tourist guide to the Society Islands and was read by Henry Adams, Charles Warren Stoddard, Robert Louis Stevenson and Jack London as background information for their respective voyages to the Pacific.[15]

The secret of the excellence of Melville's prose seems to lie in his own personal ability to blend fact and fiction and to support his actual experiences of the Pacific with information drawn from accounts of other writers. For the making of Typee, which some authors consider the first genuine Pacific novel, Melville consulted all accessible sources concerning the area, from Cook's Voyages to missionary reports and traveller's accounts. One of his great sources of inspiration was William Ellis, whose Polynesian Researches account for much of the background of Typee and Omoo. This concern for the creation of an accurate setting for his novels, obeying the geographical and anthropological realities of the places described, gives a quality of faithfulness to Melville's prose that few other authors have been able to equal. Melville's landscapes and seascapes are realistic depictions of the South Pacific environment in all

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[15]Day, Arthur G., Melville's South Seas (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1970), p. 87.

its detail. Indeed, some critics have called attention to Melville's respect for geographical detail and defined his landscapes and seascapes as characteristically baroque, as if they had been inspired from paintings of Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa.[16]

Herman Melville elevated South Seas literature to heights seldom attained before or after his visit to the Pacific. His literary subscription to the belief in an Arcadian reality in the South Pacific and his opposition to the excesses of missionization and colonialism in the area place his works within the molds of the pre-existing South Seas literary myth. The value of Melville's contribution to the continuation and reassertion of the myth is to be felt nowadays, when a historical perspective involves comparison

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[16]Arvin, Newton, Herman Melville (New York: Sloane, 1950), pp. 82-83. Arvin describes the pictorial qualities of Melville's prose in the following terms:

> His first two books abound in pictorial effects that can only be described as in some sense romantic; wild and fearful like the gorges, ravines, and chasms of Nuku-Hiva through which he and Toby make their painful way in Typee; solemn, deeply shaded, and awe-inspiring, like the tabu groves in Taipi-Vai; uncannily beautiful like another fishing party by torchlight, in Omoo, in the sullen surf off Moorea; or in a wholly different vein--the vein of Claude rather than of Salvator--pastoral, Arcadian, richly reposeful, like the first breathless glimpse of the Paradisal valley of Taipi. Already in these early, experimental books, with varying degree of success, Melville knows how to cover a gamut of painterly and emotional effects that ranges all the way from the broad and serene to the wild, the grim, and even the grotesque.

of his works with the literary output of other authors.

2.2 Charles Warren Stoddard

In the history of South Seas literature, Charles Warren Stoddard (1843-1909) represents a natural link between Herman Melville and Robert Louis Stevenson. Indeed, it was through Stoddard that Stevenson was brought to read Typee and Omoo, well before his departure for the Pacific in 1888.

Born in Rochester, New York, Stoddard started his literary career in San Francisco, California, where he established his permanent home in the 1860's. Poetry was at first his exclusive interest and his associations in the intellectual circles of San Francisco included Bret Harte, Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce. Later, as a result of extensive travels in the Pacific, especially in the Hawaiian Islands, Stoddard decided to experiment with travel sketches. The first attempts proved encouraging and he started contributing sketches of his voyages to popular periodicals of the time: 'Atlantic Monthly,' 'The Overland Monthly,' and 'Lippincott's Magazine.' The best of these short travel accounts were eventually published in book form under the title South Sea Idylls (1873). Favourably received by the public and critics, the book opened the way for Stoddard's successful career as a romantic recorder of Polynesian life. His impressions of the islands were reaffirmed in The Lepers of Molokai (1885), Hawaiian Life

(1894), and The Island of Tranquil Delights (1904).

Literarily, Stoddard continued the tradition of South Sea island writing which had attained its maximum development under Melville and which would have a new peak with the work of Stevenson years later. His prose is geographically meaningful, containing perceptive and well-composed descriptions of landscapes and scenes of everyday life on the islands. Although markedly romantic, his views contain a feeling of realism and local colour that few other writers have been able to imitate. As with Melville, and later Stevenson, Stoddard was opposed to the domination of the Pacific by the Western powers and dedicated many of his pages to the consideration of the adverse effects of civilization upon native life. He was particularly sympathetic towards the native element and painted it in sentimental, poetic terms. His sense of humour, which some consider unsurpassed even by Melville, permitted him to treat exotic human subjects with great ease and thoughtful understanding.

Stevenson's admiration for Stoddard's work led him to declare once that, in his opinion, Stoddard and Melville were the writers who had touched the Pacific with greatest genius.[17] The present century acknowledged the genius of Melville but relegated Stoddard's work to an oblivion that is not entirely deserved.

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[17] Day, Arthur G., and Stroven, Carl, The Spell of the Pacific (New York: MacMillan, 1949), p. 187.

2.3 Pierre Loti

Louis Marie Julien Viaud (1850-1923), literarily known as Pierre Loti, was responsible for the reassertion of the Tahitian myth in contemporary European popular thought. Entering the French Navy at the age of twenty, he was able to travel extensively and visit numerous parts of the world. This personal experience of exotic places found in literature an outlet for a very perceptive mind and Loti became widely known as a writer of exotic novels: Aziyadé (1879), Le Mariage de Loti (1880), Pêcheur d'Islande (1886), Madame Chrysanthème (1887), Au Maroc (1890), and Un Pèlerin d'Ankor (1912).

Although preceded by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Chateaubriand, Pierre Loti is today rightfully considered the great master of 'exoticism' in French literature.[18] With Le Mariage de Loti he elevated the exotic novel to a level of excellence never before attained in France. Even considering that he later published works of better quality (Pêcheur d'Islande, Mon Frère Yves), the popularity of his Tahitian novel remained essentially unchanged over the years.

The genesis of Le Mariage de Loti took place years after the short stay (73 days) of the author in Tahiti (1872). One of the essential characteristics of the book,

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[18] Jourda, Pierre, L'exotisme dans la littérature Française depuis Chateaubriand (Paris: P.U.F., 1956), pp. 125-157.

as indeed of all Loti's works, is the extremely personal nature of its content. Concerned with essential aspects of the human condition, searching for the absolute and for the meaning of life, Loti presents in his novels the same metaphysical questions that also pervade Melville's later works. Simplicity, directness of address, sensuality and truth, these are the important qualities of his art. Le Mariage de Loti depicts Tahitian life in highly romanticized images but it does not hide the changes which had been introduced in the island by a century of Western contact. Without resorting to technical terms, Loti catches the essences of the geographical and ethnological nature of the Tahitian environment, and gives to his statements an overwhelming quality that can only be called 'definitive.'

Concerning the popular impact of Le Mariage de Loti, Day and Stroven observed that "no book published since has had more influence in determinin the tone and viewpoint of South Seas fiction and travel literature."[18]

Le Mariage de Loti acquires special importance in the context of the present study because this was the only fictional account on the South Seas read by Gauguin prior to his trip to Tahiti.

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[18]Day, Arthur G. and Stroven, Carl, op. cit., p. 205.

CHAPTER III

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Biographical data and literary career prior to 1888

Robert Louis Stevenson was born on the 13th of November, 1850, in Edinburgh, Scotland. His father, Thomas Stevenson, was a civil engineer and lighthouse builder. His mother, Margaret Isabella Balfour Stevenson, came from a family of ministers and doctors. Strongly religious, conservative-minded, and enjoying all the austerity of a typical nineteenth century Scottish middle-class background, the Stevensons provided their only son with a severely controlled, restrained childhood. In their endeavours, they had the collaboration of Alison Cunningham, intimately known as 'Cummy,' who was to nurse the young Stevenson in his early years.

Delicate, with poor health and a nervous temperament, lonely, attending school intermittently and educated at home by a succession of tutors, Stevenson developed into a "precocious, interesting, affected, egregiously egotistic" child.[1] His politeness and good-manners in social events led the adults of his family circle to call him 'the little Frenchman.'

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[1]Allen, Walter, Six Great Novelists (London: Hamilton, 1955), p. 130.

Forced to leave the harsh Scottish climate for a time, he made his first trip to the Continent at the age of twelve. This was to be the first of a series of trips southward-bound, in search of warmer and sunnier places, where his health could be temporarily restored. Cultivating a taste for travel and a 'love for foreign parts,' Stevenson became particularly familiar with parts of Southern France where he enjoyed long rest periods and interesting social experiences, which reinforced his already well-developed liking for things French.

Entering Edinburgh University at the age of seventeen, Stevenson was initially pressured by his father to study engineering. Feeling, however, that the paternal profession did not fit into his personal scheme of intellectual prospects, he gave up engineering for law in April, 1871. At the end of an irregular university life he was admitted to the Scottish Bar in July, 1875. Stevenson never used his degree in law for professional purposes. Literature was already, by then, his main professional and deeply personal concern.

Stevenson showed strong literary tendencies very early in life. At the age of three he dictated his first story to Cummy. When he was six his mother wrote down an essay of his which centered on the character of Moses. Along with his cousin Bob, whom he sometimes met for games and pastimes, the young Stevenson lived in an imaginary world,

peopled with soldiers and pirates, kings and knights. In 1863, when he was thirteen, he organized and printed his own magazine, called 'The Schoolboy's Magazine,' containing four short stories of his authorship: Jan van Steen's Adventures; A Ghost Story; The Shipwreckers; and Creek Island, or Adventures in the South Seas. The subject matter of the stories was already characteristically Stevensonian, basic themes that he would develop to perfection in his mature years as a writer. In 1864, Louis met Robert Michael Ballantyne, the popular author of The Coral Island and The Dog Crusoe, who was at the time looking for authentic background information on lighthouse-keeping for his novel The Lighthouse (1865), then in preparation. This acquaintanceship had positive results. Ballantyne's encouragement led the young author to pursue his literary endeavours with increasing expectations of future success.

An insatiable reader, Stevenson was inclined at first towards the novelists and poets of his native Scotland. Sir Walter Scott and Robert Ferguson were his literary heroes in the early stages of his development as a writer. Along with them, and accompanying his interest in French literature, he became acquainted with the historical romances of Alexandre Dumas. This was the beginning of a long process of intellectual involvement with the works of the French masters. Stevenson studied them carefully and thoroughly. Charles d'Orléans, Villon, Marot, Montaigne, Rabelais, Molière, Victor Hugo, Balzac, Taine, Renan, Michelet, Sainte

Beuve, Flaubert and Baudelaire, among others, were read by him with greater or lesser enthusiasm and left permanent imprints on Stevenson's fictional art.

Outside the overwhelming French influence, he read Horace, Burns, Sterne, Keats and Fielding with great gusto. Observing the characteristics of the art of his intellectual mentors and trying to imitate their literary styles to perfection, Stevenson later confessed that he "played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Brown, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne, to Baudelaire, and to Obermann."[2] By teaching himself how to write, Stevenson little by little evolved his own literary techniques, which were personal and unique, and reached a degree of excellence in the mastery of the English language seldom matched. Henry James, himself a stylist and perfectionist, admired the quality of Stevenson's prose and made public his admiration more than once, in contributions to literary journals.[3]

The years between 1870 and 1875 were decisive in Stevenson's personal and literary existence. Revolting against his parents' Calvinistic principles and strict outlook on life, reading Spencer and Darwin, Huxley, Montaigne and Heine, he became increasingly skeptical of the religious

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[2]Butts, Dennis, Robert Louis Stevenson (New York: H. Z. Walck, 1966), p. 14.

[3]Cooper, Lettice, Robert Louis Stevenson (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1967 [1947]), p. 62.

order which his parents had sought to instill in him. Becoming first an agnostic, he eventually evolved a personal form of atheism that was to last until the end of his life. The freedom and all the excitements of a bohemian student life while attending Edinburgh University offered him a new range of yet untried experiences. His perspectives on life widened, with inevitable effects upon his future prose.

At the age of twenty, still strongly influenced by his father, he wrote a paper entitled On a New Form of Intermittent Light for Lighthouses, which was read before the Royal Scottish Society of Arts. The work won him the Society's silver medal. Encouraged by this initial success, he went on to new attempts at literature, now seeking more personal ways of expression and subject-matters more closely identified with his own self.

In 1873, while travelling in the South of England, he met two people that would become his closest literary friends for the rest of his life: Sidney Colvin and Mrs. Frances Sitwell. Impressed by Stevenson's talent and influential in the London literary milieu, they helped Stevenson to publish his first essay, Roads, which was accepted by 'Portfolio' for publication in the same year. This essay, an account of his impressions of the British countryside while walking along the roads of Suffolk, already displays the distinctive topographical quality that would become one of the characteristic traits of Stevenson's future prose. His second essay, Ordered South, dealing with impressions

gained during his recent stay on the French Riviera, was published in 'Macmillan's Magazine' in the following year. Also in 1874, besides an article on the romances of Victor Hugo, he obtained publication for another topographical essay, On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places. Other essays of the same gender would follow in the years to come, portraying Stevenson's perceptions of, and reactions to, the landscape of England, Scotland and France. An Autumn Effect (1875); A winter's walk in Carrick and Galloway (written in 1876 but not published until 1896); Forest Notes (1876); Walking Tours (1876); Fontainebleau (1884); and Memoirs of an Islet (1887) all possess the same geographical awareness, the same 'feeling of place' as distilled through the sensitive receptacle of their author.

Irving S. Saposnik explains Stevenson's attitude to new environments, with its eventual translation in literary terms, in this manner:

> Forced to travel in his youth because of health (his own and his parents'), and fond of traveling because of its modishness, Stevenson attempts to make his adult travels a philosophical experience in which he appears as both subject and object. His plan is to deal with each of the topographical essays within the broader context of a sentimental journey (somewhat in the manner of Lawrence Sterne) in which the power of his personality will both lend and receive impressions necessary to a full and meaningful appreciation and exposition. In the short essays, the self is prominent, the direction centripetal. Wishing to escape, or at least lay down, the burden of existence, Stevenson attempts to withdraw into an arcadia, a forest of Arden straight out of his favorite Shakespearian play, where he may free

himself from the call of history.[4]

This empathic and escapist appreciation of environmental elements was again vividly portrayed in works of a broader scope. An Inland Voyage (1878), his first book, dealt with the canoe trip which he undertook with Sir Walter Simpson in the summer of 1876, from Antwerp up the Scheldt and the Belgian canals all the way down the Oise as far as the environs of Paris. The physical and human geography of the places visited was subjectively described by Stevenson in comments on aspects of the riverside country in all its physiographic complexity. Also published in 1878, his Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh contained much topographical information about the city he loved, which was depicted through angles personal and yet universally valid. In June of the following year, he saw the publication of another book of travel, Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes, an account of his walking tour of the Cevennes, with a donkey, in September-October, 1878. These three works were well received by the critics but obtained little commercial success.

In August, 1879, Stevenson sailed for America for the first time. In San Francisco, he was to see Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, the woman he had loved since the summer of 1875, when they met casually in an art colony in the forest

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[4] Saposnik, Irving S., Robert Louis Stevenson (New York: Twayne, 1974), p. 29.

of Fontainebleau. Fanny was already separated from her first husband and awaited the granting of her divorce in order to marry Stevenson. The wedding finally took place in May, 1880. In August, Stevenson and his wife returned to Europe, where they would remain for the next seven years.

The period between 1881 and 1886 found Stevenson in feverish literary activity. Settled at Braemar in the early fall of 1881, he started writing Treasure Island (initially called The Sea-Cook) almost by accident. As he himself explained, the novel originated from the drawing of a map which he made in collaboration with his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, in a moment of idle relaxation. In his own words:

> There was a schoolboy home for the holidays, and much in want of 'something craggy to break his mind upon.' He had no thought of literature; it was the art of Raphael that received his fleeting suffrages; and with the aid of pen and ink and a shilling box of water colors, he had soon turned one of the rooms into a picture gallery. My more immediate duty towards the gallery was to be showman; but I would sometimes unbend a little, join the artist (so to speak) at the easel, and pass the afternoon with him in a generous emulation, making coloured drawings. On one of these occasions, I made the map of an island; it was elaborately and (I thought) beautifully coloured; and the shape of it took my fancy beyond expression; it contained harbours that pleased me like sonnets; and with the unconsciousness of the predestined, I ticketed my performance 'Treasure Island' . . . As I paused upon my map of 'Treasure Island,' the future character of the book began to appear there visibly among imaginary woods; and their brown faces and bright weapons peeped out upon me from unexpected quarters, as they passed to and fro, fighting and hunting treasure, on these few square inches of flat projection . . .
>
> On a chill September morning, by the cheek of a brisk fire, and the rain drumming on the window, I began "The Sea-Cook,' for that was the original

> title . . . I had counted on one boy. I found I had two in my audience. My father caught fire at once with all the romance and childishness of his original nature. His own stories, that every night of his life he put himself to sleep with, dealt perpetually with ships, roadside inns, robbers, old sailors, and commercial travellers before the era of steam. He never finished one of these romances; the lucky man did not require to . . . But in 'Treasure Island' he recognized something kindred to his own imagination; it was his kind of picturesque; and he not only heard with delight the daily chapter, but set himself acting to collaborate. When the time came for Billy Bone's chest to be ransacked, he must have passed the better part of a day preparing, on the back of a legal envelope, an inventory of its contents, which I exactly followed; and the name of 'Flint's old ship'--the 'Walrus'--was given at his particular request.[5]

Keeping in mind the readings of his youth, which included Daniel Defoe, James Fenimore Cooper, Robert Michael Ballantyne, William H. G. Kingston and Captain Frederick Marryat, and based on his and his father's experience of lighthouses, Stevenson found himself on familiar ground during the writing of Treasure Island. The imagery that he used to portray the physical environment of the island was based on his impressions of the California coast, whose landscape he had intimately observed during his stay in Monterey and San Francisco. The island milieu which he described is not tropical and does not possess any of the stereotyped characteristics of a South Sea island. Stevenson was not yet acquainted with the South Pacific and his geographical awareness of the area was still superficial.

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[5]Allen, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

Published in serialized form by 'Young Folks,' Treasure Island finally became a book in December, 1883. Its reception by the reading public, small at first, rose in a surprising crescendo shortly after the book was made available. Critics unanimously praised Stevenson for the many qualities of his work, which was compared to Robinson Crusoe and is still considered by many scholars as the finest expression of the 'desert island romance' in world literature.[6] Stevenson's popularity, restricted to small intellectual circles in the years prior to 1883, reached its apex in the period 1883-1886, with the publication of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (March, 1886) and Kidnapped (July, 1886). The latter, a novel of adventure set in eighteenth century Scotland, is rich in historical and geographical associations. Commenting upon Stevenson's topographical sense in his excellent biography of the author, David Daiches defines it as a "deep sense of human landscape against which human dramas are acted out."[7]

From then on he was secure among the most popular authors of the English-speaking world. In August, 1887, Stevenson and his family left Europe for good. After a brief stay in New York City, where he was received with all

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[6] Watson, Harold F., Coasts of Treasure Island (San Antonio: Naylor, 1969), p. 5.

[7] Daiches, David, Robert Louis Stevenson and his world (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 16.

the honors due to great celebrities, he settled on an isolated farm at Saranac Lake, in the Adirondack Mountains of Upper New York State. There he spent the winter and the following spring, working on The Master of Ballantrae, a novel with Scottish backgrounds, and making plans for a long cruise in tropical seas. S. S. McClure, representative of a syndicate of newspapers, immediately offered a large sum in exchange for Stevenson's periodic contribution of travel sketches describing the places visited during the cruise. This offer gave definite substance to Stevenson's plans. With the aid of maps and Findlay's Directories of the World, Stevenson and his family started tracing the route to be followed in their proposed voyage to the tropics. The Atlantic was considered, with possible visits to Bermuda, the Azores, and the Mediterranean islands off the coasts of Italy and Greece. It was the Pacific, however, that centered most of the group's attention and interest. 'Marquesas,' 'Galapagos,' 'Guayaquil,' these were the names that most stirred their imagination. As Lloyd Osbourne recalled years later, remembering the days of reading and cartographic research spent at Saranac:

> Such was our reading, such the stuff our dreams were made of as the snow drove against our frozen windows; as the Arctic days closed in, gloomy and wild, and snowshoes and buffalo coats were put by to steam in corners while we gathered round the lamp. Visions of palms while our ears were yet tingling from the snow we had rubbed on to save them from frost-bite; cascading streams in tropic Arcadies, with water as clear as crystal, while our own bedroom jugs upstairs were as solid as so much rock; undraped

> womanhood, bedecked with flowers, frisking in vales of Eden, while we were wooled to the neck like polar explorers, and dared not even thaw too quickly for fear of chilblains.[8]

The search for a boat adequate for the cruise took Fanny to California. From San Francisco, she sent a telegram communicating the availability of the yacht 'Casco' for a six-month cruise to the South Pacific. The good news immediately brought Stevenson with the rest of the family to the West Coast. On June 28, 1888, they finally left the continent. Stevenson was to spend six years in the Pacific and from his experiences in the area stemmed some of his important works.

Stevenson in the Pacific

Stevenson's travels in the Pacific took him to numerous island groups. In the span of six years, he visited parts of Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia. Three long cruises kept him approximately sixteen months at sea, not including his stays in Hawaii and Samoa, which totalled several months. Not a single writer, before or after his time, had the chance of knowing the Pacific with such depth.

The cruise of the yacht 'Casco' lasted seven months. Leaving San Francisco on June 28, 1888, it arrived at its final destination, Honolulu, on January 24, 1889. During the seven-month period four island groups were visited, all

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[8] Osbourne, Lloyd, An Intimate Portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York: Scribner's, 1924), pp. 83-84.

of them within Polynesia: the Marquesas, the Tuamotus, the Society Islands, and the Hawaiian Islands. The initial plans, which included visits to the Galápagos Islands and to Guayaquil, off the coast of Ecuador, were altered due to their peripheral geographic location in relation to the other archipelagos.

The Marquesas were reached on July 28, 1888. Six weeks were spent cruising the islands, with protracted stays in Nuku-Hiva and Hiva-Oa, where Stevenson and his party interacted with the natives and representatives of the colonial power. On September 4, the yacht left the Marquesas bound for the Tuamotus. Fakarava, the administrative center of the archipelago, was reached on September 9. Seventeen days was the length of their stay on the atoll. There, Stevenson resumed the collection of material about local cultures, as he had previously done in the Marquesas. Tahiti, the principal of the Society Islands, came under their eyes on September 27. After a brief stay in Papeete, where Stevenson received medical care, the group moved to Taravao and then, again, to Tautira. In that village, situated on the East and 'wild' side of Tahiti, Stevenson was able to establish very close and friendly contact with the local native population. His long stay, prolonged by technical difficulties requiring repair of the yacht, made possible the collection of voluminous material concerning Tahitian customs and legends. On December 25, the 'Casco' was finally made ready and departed towards Hawaii, arriving

in Honolulu on January 24, 1889.

Stevenson's stay in the Hawaiian Islands lasted exactly six months. During this time he met the Hawaiian King and nobility and was entertained by the local white population. Working steadily on new projects, he also found time to visit some places outside Oahu. When at Molokai, he went ashore to visit the leper station made famous by the work of Father Damien, a Catholic Belgian missionary. Stevenson would eventually defend the memory of Father Damien in his violent letter to Rev. Hyde of Honolulu.[9]

Wishing to get away from the 'civilized' milieu of Honolulu and to leave in search of wilder islands, Stevenson chartered the trading schooner 'Equator' for another cruise, this time southwestwards. Micronesia was now his main objective. Among the islands he counted on visiting were some of the Marshalls, Gilberts, Carolines and Marianas. In the event, however, he was forced to content himself with the Gilberts only. Honolulu was left on June 24, 1889. On July 12, they arrived in Butaritari, on the island of Great Makin, one of the Gilberts. The sojourn on the island lasted a month, with Stevenson actively engaged in recording information for his future literary works. From Butaritari the party went to the atoll of Apemana, famous in the Gilberts for the belligerent and eccentric behaviour of its ruler,

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[9]Stevenson, Robert Louis, _Father Damien: An Open Letter to the Reverend Dr. Hyde of Honolulu_ (Sydney: privately printed, 1890).

King Tembinoka. Stevenson was profoundly interested in studying the character of the monarch, and managed to secure his permission to stay on the island for an indefinite period of time. The relationship between Stevenson, his group, and Tembinoka became eventually quite friendly and yielded valuable data concerning the ways of life prevalent within his kingdom.

Leaving Apemana, the 'Equator' finally headed for Samoa, where Stevenson intended to do a study of the complex political situation which permanently convulsed that island group. Apia was reached on December 7, thus concluding the trip. The cruise of the 'Equator' had lasted for a period of slightly more than five months.

The length of Stevenson's residence in Samoa was calculated in order to give him enough time to conduct all the interviews necessary to assure a comprehensive coverage of the events that kept the islands in chronic political turmoil. Besides this more immediate task, he also toured Upolu and became superficially acquainted with some of the Westerners settled on the island. One of them, an American trader called Harry J. Moors, was directly responsible for the future establishment of Stevenson in Samoa. By this time, Stevenson was already convinced that he could not live outside the tropics anymore. His health was too delicate to endure the harsh climates of higher latitudes. Within the Pacific, relatively few places could offer him satisfactory conditions for permanent settlement. He disliked Hawaii for

being too Westernized. He loved Tahiti but this island was a French colony and presented all the problems inherent in this fact. Besides, it was poorly connected with the rest of the world. Sydney and Auckland were too big and too cold. After pondering carefully the 'pros' and 'cons' involved in the question, Stevenson's choice finally fell upon Samoa, in spite of the negative political situation. With the help of Moors, Stevenson bought an extensive patch of land in the hill-country overlooking Apia. When he left Samoa for Sydney in February, 1890, orders were given to clear part of the jungle covering the property and to erect a temporary dwelling for the use of his family upon their return from Australia. This was the birth of 'Vailima,' where he would live the last years of his life.

The stay in Sydney resulted in health problems. Once more, the doctors recommended a voyage to warmer places. Obtaining acommodations in the 'Janet Nicoll,' a small trading steamer bound for Micronesia, Stevenson, Fanny and Lloyd embarked on their last Pacific cruise on April 11, 1890. After an initial stop in Auckland, the ship headed northwards, to Nuieue, Samoa, and parts of the Manihiki, Tokelau, Ellice, Gilbert, and Marshall groups. In the Gilberts, Apemana was revisited and Tembinoka met once again. On the way back to Australia, a last stop was made in New Caledonia, where Stevenson sojourned for a short period. On July 25 he was again in Sydney. The cruise of the 'Janet Nicholl' had lasted almost four months and offered Stevenson the

opportunity of visiting approximately thirty-five islands, mostly Micronesian.

In September, 1890, Stevenson and his family settled in Samoa on a permanent basis. 'Vailima' was built and prospered. Apart from two visits to Australia (January, 1891; February, 1893) and a second visit to Hawaii (October, 1893), Stevenson remained in Samoa until the end of his life. He died in 'Vailima' on December 3, 1894. His body, according to his own will, was buried on the summit of Mount Vaea, overlooking 'Vailima' and Apia.

Stevenson's Pacific literary output

The literary output of Stevenson's Pacific experiences can be classified in three different categories. The first of these comprises his fictional works, in the form of novels, short stories, ballads and poems. Another category embraces his work of a 'journalistic' nature, mostly in the form of letters that were contributed to the New York Sun, according to his contract with S. S. McClure. The third category refers to his political writing, which was not extensive but which did produce a single work of great importance.

1. Stevensonian 'South Seas' fiction

Stevenson's fictional works with Pacific backgrounds consist of three short stories (The Beach of Falesá, The Bottle Imp, and The Isle of Voices), published in a joint volume under the title of Island Nights' Entertainments

(1893); two South Sea ballads (The Song of Rahero and The Feast of Famine), written during his stay in Tahiti and based on Tahitian and Marquesan legends; and a novel (The Ebb Tide, 1894), written in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne during the cruise of the 'Equator.' Stevenson also wrote a few poems inspired by his Tahitian and Hawaiian experiences, but most of them were experimental works left unpublished. A novel written in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne (The Wrecker, 1892), was partially set in Europe although some of the first and final chapters were Pacific-based.

Several novels whose action was set in Europe also came to be written by Stevenson during his six-year stay in the Pacific. The Master of Ballantrae was started in Saranac and finished in Hawaii, being published in September, 1889. Also in 1889 was published another work of collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne, The Wrong Box. The Samoan period resulted in the production of three novels: Catriona, published in 1893; Weir of Hermiston; and St. Ives, both left unfinished, being published posthumously, in 1896 and 1897, respectively.

Stevenson's fictional art involving Pacific themes followed the same literary path previously opened by Herman Melville and Charles Warren Stoddard. It was through the works of these two authors that he first developed an interest in the South Seas. His knowledge of Oceania had been practically nil prior to 1875. From June of that year

dates the first recorded reference that Stevenson made to the Pacific. In a letter to Mrs. Frances Sitwell, he mentioned that his family had been visited by a former Secretary to the Customs and Marine Department of New Zealand,

> . . . telling us all about the South Sea Islands till I was sick with desire to go there: beautiful places, green forever; perfect climate; perfect shapes of men and women, with red flowers in their hair; and nothing to do but to study oratory and etiquette, sit in the sun, and pick up the fruits as they fall. Navigator's Island is the place; absolute balsam for the weary.[10]

In the description that Stevenson was given of the South Pacific milieu can be found all the elements composing the essence of the 'South Seas myth': attractive islands inhabited by natives of beautiful physique and carefree behaviour, erotic atmosphere coloured by tints of material abundance and relaxed living. It was this imagery of the Pacific that Stevenson retained in his mind. Years later, in 1880, during his first stay in America, he had the opportunity of meeting Charles Warren Stoddard. Already a famous, well-established author, contributor to important literary periodicals and correspondent of the 'San Francisco Morning Chronicle,' Stoddard invited the then obscure Scottish writer to his home. Recalling their first encounter, he observed:

> . . . the stranger came, on my invitation, into my studio. We were acquainted in a jiffy and our

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[10]Colvin, Sidney (ed.), The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York: Scribner's, 1901), Volume I, pp. 108-109.

> talk turned immediately on the South Seas, for his eye had fallen on my book, South Sea Idylls. You may know I had already loitered in Hawaii and Tahiti. Well, Stevenson's eyes blazed with interest. I had two of Herman Melville's books, Typee and Omoo. When he left I had loaned him both of these and my own Idylls. He told me later that these books he thought had centered his interest in the Pacific Islands.[11]

It was through Melville and Stoddard's works that Stevenson gained his first insights into Polynesian life. From 1880 to 1888 he maintained his thoughts on things Pacific on a secondary plane, busy as he was with European-centered projects. It was with the cruise of the 'Casco' that his acquaintance with Polynesia became established in terms of a real, factual experience of places and peoples. Observing attentively and forever collecting abundant material on the cultures of the islands visited in the course of his three Pacific cruises , Stevenson was soon in possession of a considerable understanding of Polynesian ways. This capacity to understand the complex array of elements composing the Pacific world he reflected in his art. Stevenson's novels and short stories set in the islands contain a Pacific flavour. His 'topographical sense' was exerted not only to foster a better rendition of the island's physical environment but also found itself canalized into descriptions of the native and foreign elements of these places.

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[11]Issler, Anne R., Happier for his presence; San Francisco and Robert Louis Stevenson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949), pp. 60-61.

Stevenson's environmental descriptions are a faithful portrayal of the Pacific Island landscape. Topographic details, climatic conditions, vegetation types, native dwellings, these and other data are conveyed directly, through brief allusions to the nature of the island environment, or indirectly, through the expressed perceptions of the characters involved in the story, who occasionally reveal their own awareness of the physio-graphic characteristics of their milieu. Several human types are also presented in Stevenson's fiction. Among them can be found all the varieties of persons prominent to the nineteenth-century Pacific scene: traders, planters, beachcombers, missionaries, colonial officials, travellers, and 'Kanakas.' Stevenson's residence in the islands gave him numerous chances to observe the diversified human world of Tahiti, Hawaii and Samoa. In his novels, the characterization of fictional human beings was solidly based on real people with whom fate had made him acquainted. From this personal contact with the physical and human dimensions of the Pacific stem the 'realism' of his romantic art.

The Ebb Tide, based on a plot designed by Lloyd Osbourne, was rewritten by Stevenson and endowed with every realistic element he could find to give complete verisimilitude to the story. The South Sea environment was portrayed with maximum of physical exactitude. Moral issues, one of the recurring themes of Stevenson's art, played here a dominant part and were closely connected with the adventurous plot. Apart from the eternal conflict between good and

evil which takes place throughout the narrative, one of the important things about the story remains the theme of nostalgia for civilization amidst the exuberance of a distant tropical paradise. Stevenson was personally identified with this feeling and expressed it through the words and actions of his characters.

The Bottle Imp and The Isle of Voices, both dealing with Hawaiian motifs, contain vivid evocations of place and atmosphere. The Bottle Imp does not present numerous environmental descriptions as such, but the Hawaiian colour is obtained through the constant use of native names, either referring to the story's characters (Keawa, Lopaka, Kokua, Kiano) or places (Hamakua, Honaunau, Kau, Motuiti, Kona, Waikiki, Hookena, Pele, Kailua, Kahiki, Kalaupapa, Maui, Molokai, etc.). The Isle of Voices is more fertile in actual environmental allusions. Expressions like 'shining sand,' 'a line of palms against the sky . . . tall and fresh and beautiful . . . hanging out withered fans like gold among the green,' 'brightness of the cloven sea,' 'starry sea,' 'wide shallow water . . . bright with ten thousand stars,' reveal not only environmental appreciation but also confer an intangible and vanishing quality to concrete components of the island milieu.

The Beach of Falesá has been considered by most critics and reviewers of Stevenson's works as his Pacific literary masterpiece. The author himself was pleased with the results he obtained, and expressed this feeling to

Sidney Colvin:

> . . . the first realistic South Sea story; I mean with real South Sea character and details of life. Everybody else who has tried, that I have seen, got carried away by the romance, and ended in a kind of sugar-candy sham epic, and the whole effect was lost--there was no etching, no human grin, consequently no conviction. Now I have got the smell, and the look of the thing a great deal. You will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale than if you had read a library.[12]

The Beach of Falesa: Selections of Stevenson's South Seas Prose

For the purpose of illustrating the character of Stevensonian Pacific fiction, some parts of The Beach of Falesa will be here briefly focused upon. These excerpts were chosen on the basis of their representativeness in the context of the story and their inclusive descriptions of interest in place human subjects, and island life.

> I saw that island first when it was neither night nor morning. The moon was to the west, setting, but still broad and bright. To the east, and right amidships of the dawn, which was all pink, the daystar sparkled like a diamond. The land breeze blew in our faces, and smelt strong of wild lime and vanilla: other things besides, but these were the most plain; and the chill of it set me sneezing. I should say I had been for years on a low island near the line, living for the most part solitary among the natives. Here was a fresh experience: even the tongue would be quite strange to me; and the look of them, renewed my blood (pp. 11-12).

> I had a glass or two on board; I was just off a long cruise, and the ground heaved under me like a ship's deck. The world was like all new painted; my foot went along with the music; Falesa might have been Fiddler's Green, if there is such a place, and

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[12]Ellison, Joseph W., Tusitala of the South Seas (New York: Hastings House, 1953), p. 191.

> more's the pity if there isn't! It was good to foot the grass, to look aloft at the green mountains, to see the men with their green wreaths and the women in their bright dresses, red and blue. On we went, in the strong sun and the cool shadow, liking both; and all the children in the town came trotting after with their shaven heads and their brown bodies, and raising a thin kind of a cheer in our wake, like crowing poultry (p. 18).

These two passages are mostly concerned with descriptions of the island environment. They reflect with subtlety the perceptions of Wiltshire regarding Falesá and the physical-human dimensions of the local milieu. It is worth noticing that Stevenson's prose is not crowded with descriptive details; much to the contrary, it remains usually on a basic sensory level and deals with the environment in terms of perceptions and feelings.

> The night was nearly come; the village smelt of trees and flowers and the sea and bread-fruit-cooking; there came a fine roll of sea from the reef, and from a distance, among the woods and houses, many pretty sounds of men and children. It did me good to breathe free air; it did me good to be done with the captain and see instead, the creature at my side. I felt for all the world as though she were some girl at home in the Old Country, and, forgetting myself for the minute, took her hand to walk with. Her fingers nestled into mine, I heard her breathe deep and quick, and all at once she caught my hand to her face and pressed it there. "You good!" she cried, and 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 (pp. 28-29).

The important idea stressed here concerns the erotic relationship established between Wiltshire, a European trader, and Uma, a local native girl whom Wiltshire took as his wife. The sexual involvement of Westerners with Polynesian women is characteristic of most South Sea stories and became basic to

the concept of the 'myth.'

> However, there's no use crying over spilt milk. It was done now, and couldn't be undone. All I could do was to get what was left of it, and my new stuff (my own choice) in order, to go round and get after the rats and cockroaches, and to fix up that store regular Sydeny style. A fine show I made of it; and the third morning when I had lit my pipe and stood in the doorway and looked in, and turned and looked far up the mountain and saw the cocoanuts waving and posted up the tons of copra, and over the village green and saw the island dandies and reckoned up the years of print they wanted for their kilts and dresses, I felt as if I was in the right place to make a fortune, and go home again and start a public-house. There was I, sitting in that verandah, in as handsome a piece of scenery as you could find, a splendid sun, and a fine fresh healthy trade that stirred up a man's blood like sea-bathing; and the whole thing was clean gone from me, and I was dreaming England, which is, after all, a nasty, cold, muddy hole, with not enough light to see to read by; and dreaming the looks of my public, by a cant of a broad high-road like an avenue, and with the sign on a green tree (pp. 38-39).

Here Stevenson introduces us to the psychological mechanism of Wiltshire's mind, to his concern for making a fortune out of his trading activities, and, finally, to the nostalgia which dominated his being when thoughts led him to England and to prosperous future days in the 'Mother Country.' Worth noticing is the contrast which the main character establishes between the pleasantness of Falesá, endowed with every element of environmental perfection, and the disagreeable image which he attributes to England, his home country.

> The next day was a Sunday, when there was no business to be looked for. Uma asked me in the morning if I was going to "pray;" I told her she bet not, and she stopped herself with no more words. I thought this seemed unlike a native, and a native woman, and a woman that had new clothes to show off; however, it suited me to the ground, and I made the less of it.

> The queer thing was that I came next door to going to church after all, a thing I'm little likely to forget. I had turned out for a stroll, and heard the hymn tune up. You know how it is. If you hear folks singing, it seems to draw you; and pretty soon I found myself alongside the church. It was a little long low place, coral built, rounded off at both ends like a whale-boat, a big native roof on the top of it, windows without sashes and doorways without doors. I stuck my head into one of the windows, and the sight was so new to me--for things went quite different in the islands I was acquainted with--that I stayed and looked on. The congregation sat on the floor on mats, the women on one side, the men on the other, all rigged out to kill--the women with dresses and trade hats, the men in white jackets and shirts. The hymn was over; the pastor, a big buck Kanaka, was in the pulpit, preaching for his life; and by the way he wagged his hand, and worked his voice, and made his points, and seemed to argue with the folk, I made out he was a gun at the business. Well, he looked up suddenly and caught my eye, and I give you my word he staggered in the pulpit; his eyes bulged out of his head, his hand rose and pointed at me like as if against his will, and the sermon stopped right there (pp. 46-48).

This passage is meaningful for its reference to a typical Christian religious service and its allusions to aspects of change in the spiritual and material culture of the island people. It was written in a comic-satirical mood which heightened the caricatural effect sought by Stevenson to give colour and ambience to the scene.

> As I came out on the verandah, the mission boat was shooting for the mouth of the river. She was a long whale-boat painted white; a bit of an awning astern; a native pastor crouched on the wedge of the poop, steering; some four-and-twenty paddles flashing and dipping, true to the boat-song; and the missionary under the awning, in his white clothes, reading a book, and set him up! It was pretty to see and hear; there's no smarter sight in the islands than a missionary boat with a good crew and a good pipe to them; and I considered it for half a minute, with a bit of envy perhaps, and then strolled

down towards the river (p. 71.

The boat was close in; I saw the missionary had laid his book to one side, and I smiled to myself. "He'll know I'm a man, anyway," thinks I.

This was the first time, in all my years in the Pacific, I had ever exchanged two words with any missionary, let alone asked one for a favour. I didn't like the lot, no trader does; they look down upon us, and make no concealment; and besides, they're partly Kanakaised, and suck up with natives instead of other white men like themselves. I had on a rig of clean striped pyjamas--for, of course, I had dressed decent to go before the chiefs; but when I saw the missionary step out of this boat in the regular uniform, white duck clothes, pith helmet, white shirt and tie, and yellow boots to his feet, I could have bunged stones at him. As he came nearer, queering me pretty curious . . . I saw he looked mortal sick, for the truth was he had a fever on, and had just had a chill in the boat.

"Mr. Tarleton, I believe?" says I, for I had got his name.

"And you, I suppose, are the new trader?" says he.

"And I want to tell you first that I don't hold with missions," I went on, "and that I think you and the likes of you do a sight of harm, filling up the natives with old wives' tales and bumptiousness."

"You are perfectly entitled to your opinions," says he, looking a bit ugly, "but I have no call to hear them."

"It so happens that you've got to hear them," I said. "I'm no missionary, nor missionary lover; I'm no Kanaka, nor favourer of Kanakas--I'm just a trader; I'm just a common, low-down, Goddamned white man and British subject, the sort you would like to wipe your boots on. I hope that's plain!"

"Yes, my man," said he. "It's more plain than creditable. When you are sober, you'll be sorry for this."

In this final quotation Stevenson confronts the trader and the missionary with regard to their respective

roles on island life. Special attention was given to the exposition of Wiltshire's reaction to the figure of the white missionary, negative and hostile, which he characterized in general terms to encompass the whole missionary class working in the Pacific.

Stevenson attained in The Beach of Falesa his primary objectives of realistic treatment and capture of a true South Seas imagery of physical and human milieus. The text is rich in environmental descriptions. It also contains historical and sociological validity rarely equalled by other South Sea stories. No artificial local colour is added. The delineation of the main characters is vivid and convincing. In contrast to most of the other stories written by Stevenson, in which sex is sublimated by action and heroism, and where the physical contact of man with brute nature usually means sexuality,[13] some parts of The Beach of Falesa possess a clear erotic appeal, especially in the expressions charac erizing the sensuality of Uma, the leading female character. The theme of nostalgia for civilization is also present throughout the story, expressed in the thoughts of its leading character, Wiltshire.

2. Stevenson's journalistic literature

The contract which Stevenson signed with S. S. Mc Clure left him obligated to contribute a series of articles

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[13]Kiely, Robert, Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964) p. 262.

to the American press, narrating his experiences in the Pacific and his first-hand impressions of peoples and places. Written in the form of letters--a total of seventy--these articles were published by the New York Sun from February 6 to December 13, 1891, and simultaneously in England by 'Black and White.'

Being accounts of his own experiences while on the islands, the letters necessarily contain much information concerning Stevenson's reactions to tropical landscapes, contacts with natives, missionaries, and white settlers, and observations of ethnological character. Trying to be as objective and concise as possible, and filling his letters with what he considered 'serious information,' Stevenson produced short pieces of journalistic literature that are a valid reflection of the conditions of life in the Pacific in a given historical moment. At the time, however, the public reacted unfavourably to his writings. The readers were disappointed with the impersonal and often technical nature of the articles. They expected picturesque descriptions of Polynesian lands according to the traditional formula of literary exoticism.[14]

Stevenson counted on using the information contained in the letters, complemented with his journals of travel and other notes, to compose a monumental work to be called The

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[14] Furnas, J. C., Voyage to Windward, The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York: Sloane, 1951), p. 352.

South Seas. The book would be a documentary of the 'unjust yet inevitable' extinction of the Polynesians through the ill-doings of successive generations of Westerners exploiting the islands. For this purpose, he started a thorough research on the history, geography, anthropology, folklore, philology and politics of Oceania. Fanny, his wife, strongly opposed his plans and wrote a long complaint to their mutual friend Sidney Colvin, asking him to advise Stevenson otherwise:

> I am very much exercised by one thing. Louis has the most enchanting material that any one ever had in the whole world for his book, and I am afraid he is 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, comparing the different languages (of which he known nothing, really) and the different peoples, the object being to settle the question as to whether they are of common Malay origin or not. Also to compare the Protestant and Catholic missions, etc., and the whole thing to be impersonal, leaving out all he knows of the people themselves. I believe there is no one living who has got so near to them, or who understands them as he does. Think of a smal treatise on the Polynesian races being offered to people who are dying to hear about Ori a Ori, the making of brothers with cannibals, the strange stories they told, and the extraordinary adventures that befell us: --suppose Herman Melville had given us his theories as to the Polynesian language and the probable good or evil results of the missionary influence instead of Omoo and Typee, or Kinglake instead of Eothen. Louis says it is a stern of duty that is at the bottom of it, which is more alarming than anything else. I am so sure that you will agree with me that I am going to ask you to throw the weight of your influence as heavily as possible in the scales with me.[15]

The protests of Fanny and Colvin did not change

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[15]Ellison, Joseph W., op. cit., p. 189.

Stevenson's determination to realize his ambitious plan. Writing to Colvin still aboard the 'Equator,' between the Gilberts and Samoa, he expressed his ideas as follows:

> My book is now practically modelled: if I can execute what is designed, there are few better books now extant on this globe, bar the epics, and the big tragedies, and histories, and the choice lyric poetics and a novel or so--none. But it is not executed yet; and let not him that putteth on his armour, vaunt himself. At least, nobody has had such stuff; such wild stories, such beautiful scenes, such singular intimacies, such manners and traditions, so incredible a mixture of the beautiful and the horrible, the savage and civilised. I will give you here some idea of the table of contents, which ought to make your mouth water. I propose to call the book The South Seas: it is rather a large title, but not many people have seen more of them than I, perhaps no one--certainly no one capable of using the material.

Part I. General. "Of schooners, islands and maroons."

Chapter I. Marine.
" II. Contraband (smuggling, barratry, labour traffic).
" III. The Beachcomber.
" IV. Beachcomber stories. i. The Murder of the Chinaman. ii. The Death of a Beachcomber. iii. A Character. iv. The Apia Blacksmith.

Part II. The Marquesas.

Chapter V. Anaho. i. Arrival. ii. Death. iii. The Tapu. iv. Morals. v. Hoka.
" VI. Tai-o-hae. i. Arrival. ii. The French. iii. The Royal Family. iv. Chiefless Folk. v. The Catholics. vi. Hawaiian missionaries.

" VII. Observations of a Long Pig. i. Cannibalism. ii. Hatiheu. iii. Frere Michel. iv. Toahauka and Atuona. v. The Vale of Atuona. vi. Moipu. vii. Captain Hati.

Part III. The Dangerous Archipelago.

Chapter VIII. The Group.
" IX. A House to let in a Low Island.
" X. A Paumotuan Funeral. i. The Funeral. ii. Tales of the Dead.

Part IV. Tahiti.

Chapter XI. Tautira.
" XII. Village Government in Tahiti.
" XIII. A Journey in Quest of Legends.
" XIV. Legends and Songs.
" XV. Life in Eden.
" XVI. Note on the French Regimen.

Part V. The Eight Islands.

Chapter XVII. A Note on Missions.
" XVIII. The Kona Coast of Hawaii. i. Hookena. ii. A Ride in the Forest. iii. A Law Case. iv. The City of Refuge. v. The Lepers.
" XIX. Molokai. i. A Week in the Precinct. ii. History of the Leper Settlement. iii. The Mokolii. iv. The Free Island.

Part VI. The Gilberts.

Chapter XX. The Group. i. Position of Woman. ii. The Missions. iii. Devil-work. iv. Republics.
" XXI. Rule and Misrule of Makin. i. Butaritari, its King and Court. ii. History of Three Kings. iii. The Drink Question.
" XXII. A Butaritarian Festival.
" XXIII. The King of Apemana. i. First Impressions. ii. Equator Town and the Palace. iii. The Three Corselets.

Part VII. Samoa.

which I have not yet reached.[16]

Stevenson never carried out this gigantic enterprise. The time of his residence in Samoa was all taken by his fictional and political writings, his letters to McClure's syndicate, his responsibilities as a landowner, and his family obligations. The end product of all his effort, the letters themselves, were compiled and published in a posthumous

[16] Colvin, Sidney (ed.), op. cit., Volume II, pp. 198-200.

volume, In the South Seas (1896). The South Seas volume contained only three of the parts previously designed by Stevenson: Part II (The Marquesas); Part III (The Dangerous Archipelago), dealing with the Tuamotu Islands; and Part VI (The Gilberts). Part I (Of schooners, islands, and maroons) and Part IV (Tahiti) were never completed. Part V (The Eight Islands), dealing with Hawaii, was not included in the original and subsequent editions of the South Seas book. It was only through the initiative of Arthur G. Day that Stevenson's Hawaiian writings were finally published (Travels in Hawaii, 1973). The Samoan chapter, Part VII, eventually became A Footnote to History (1892), a political work.

3. Stevenson's political writings.

The only work distinctively political that Stevenson wrote in the Pacific was A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa (1892). He was profoundly interested in exposing the causes of the conflict which involved natives and Westerners in a rival struggle for political dominance over the islands. To accomplish this task, Stevenson interviewed every person from whom valuable information could be obtained. Representatives of the four factions involved in the conflict, Germans, British, Americans and Samoans, were interrogated--the latter through the aid of interpreters. Although not objective by temperament, Stevenson strove to perform his work with a sensible degree of detachment and maximum accuracy. As he later explained:

> I did not go in for literature; address myself to sensible rather than sensitive. And, indeed, it is a kind of journalism.[17]

The desire to maintain a high level of impersonality throughout the study did not prevent him from showing a strong sympathy towards the native cause. Anti-colonialist at heart, Stevenson went deep into denouncing the abuses perpetuated by the Westerners against the Samoan people. His attack was mostly directed towards the Germans. Established on the islands as traders in the mid-eighteen hundreds, the Germans managed to take hold of the best native land through a system of indebtment in which the natives were always losers. By 1875 they virtually dominated Samoan commerce. The political implications of this ascendency went against the imperialistic ambitions of Great Britain and the United States, both also interested in the islands. The complexity of the situation was still furthered by rivalries between native Samoan chiefs, duly stimulated by the Westerners involved.

Stevenson did not spare any effort to expose the reality of the Samoan situation to the rest of the world, either in articles to the American and European press or in his book project. A Footnote to History remains today a valuable piece of political literature. Written in the ardour of so many political happenings, it depicts an extremely complex political situation through the eyes of a man-of-letters.

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[17]Johnstone, Arthur, Recollections of Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific (London: Chatto and Windus, 1905), p. 179.

This fact makes the attempt a very original one, indeed. Although criticized at the time for its bias in favour of the Samoan people, Stevenson's work is now an important title in the study of South Pacific history.[18]

Appraisals of Stevenson's Pacific-based works

Literary critics, Pacific scholars and students of Stevensoniana exhibit diverse opinions in evaluating the merits and faults of Stevenson's Pacific-based works. Up to the present, several biographical studies have appeared which comment upon details of Stevenson's life while presenting a general view of the nature and characteristics of his works. Studies adopting more technical and specific approaches are also numerous, consisting mainly of literary analyses of his novels, poems and short stories.

Not considering the varying quality-level of these studies, it is possible to observe how different authors reacted to Stevenson's prose in different periods of time. Books written shortly after the author's death generally abstain from criticizing the content of his works and tend to glorify his memory as a man and as a writer. In this category fall most of his works published by his family members, his intimate friends and people with whom Stevenson developed an acquaintance during his lifetime. Recent studies, especially those of a more uncompromising nature, tend to present

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[18] Furnas, J. C., op. cit., p. 397.

Stevenson's works under sharper critical focus and display their author's views without emotional restraints.

The major criticism that some authors have made of Stevenson's Pacific prose concerns his political ideology.[19] As Melville and Stoddard before him, Stevenson was strongly concerned with the damages inflicted by Westerners on the life of Pacific peoples. He was against the excesses of the colonial regime's exploitation of the islands and did not accept as natural the mistreatment of the natives by the domineering outsiders. It was true also that he was able to recognize the benefits brought by civilization into island life as well as the efforts of some individuals for improving the living conditions of the native peoples, missionaries in particular.

In the beginning of the present century Stevenson's anti-colonialist views were not well accepted by most sections of the Pacific European populati n. Arthur Johnstone, editor of the Pacific Commerical Advertiser of Honolulu, presented the following criticism in his book on Stevenson, published in 1905:

> Upon his arrival in the South Seas, Stevenson was without knowledge and experience in island affairs, and while he proved an acute, he soon demonstrated that he was not a comprehensive observer. He found no difficulty in viewing one side at a time of any subject that fell in his way, but it was most difficult, or quite impossible, for him to consider all sides of the intricate commercial and racial problems alive in the

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[19]Johnstone, Arthur, op. cit., pp. 178-180.

> Pacific. A brilliant composer of sentences, he failed when it came to putting in place the facts composing the complex puzzle of life and government in Oceanica . . . A perusal of his writings about the South Seas clearly shows that Stevenson did idealize the Polynesians, and that his views of them were too often disturbed by sentiment or prejedice . . . These instances will warn us against an indiscriminate acceptance of the novelist's views on island life and affairs. Otherwise there are many pages in the South Sea writings which are reliable and charming, where he seems to have quite escaped from his perpositions and theories; hence contradictions, seeming or real, will be found in many of the pages that he has penned of Polynesia and the Polynesians.[20]

Dennis Butts, on the other hand, makes an altogether different appraisal of Stevenson's South Sea writings. In his biography of the author he states:

> When . . . Stevenson began his series of voyages into the south seas, and wrote up his account of them, subsequently turned into a book, <u>In the South Seas</u> (1900) . . .hard qualities of shrewd observation and precise description are evident. Stevenson himself is said to have preferred the parts of the book dealing with his residence in the Gilberts . . . where he described manners and governments which were already fast disappearing.[21]

Joseph W. Ellison, in <u>Tusitala of the South Seas</u> (1953), also defends Stevenson against the criticisms referring to his bias in favour of Polynesians and consequent prejudice against the whites domiciled on the islands. He observes:

> In the Marquesas Stevenson learned his first lesson of the sad consequences of imperialism and the impact of white man's civilization and religion upon the

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[20]Johnstone, Arthur, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 147-151.

[21]Butts, Dennis, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 58.

> natives . . . Like Walt Whitman, whom he admired, Stevenson had always been a man with a strong sense of justice and a champion of the cause of the underdog, a hater of sanctimonious hypocrisy . . . In 1881 he severely criticized Britain for her shameful attack on weak and liberty-loving Transvaal . . . Now Stevenson became the champion of the cause of the Polynesian race. He was always ready to battle for his rights. He did not idealize the natives; his was a genuine sympathy for them. He did not refer to them as savages; he did not deprecate their code of morals. In the Marquesas, later in Hawaii, and in Samoa the natives felt that they had found in him a true friend and vehement champion.[22]

Apart from the criticisms directed to his political attitudes, Stevenson was also criticized in literary grounds for using an artificial imagery in the portrayal of the South Pacific landscape. Adopting imported images, in order to describe the physical environment of the area, and expressing a need to describe environmental elements by constant analogy with civilized symbols, Stevenson developed a South Seas imagery partially dependent on correspondent Western twins or opposites for its own existence.

Robert Kiely, in <u>Fiction of Adventure</u> (1964), makes the following remarks concerning Stevenson's 'artificial imagery':

> . . . Stevenson's visualization . . . seems to have Victorian Edinburgh, London, and parts of continental Europe impressed indelibly upon it . . . It quickly becomes clear that the pleasure in reading <u>Songs of Travel</u>, <u>In the South Seas</u>, <u>Island Night's Entertainments</u>, <u>The Wrecker</u>, and <u>The Ebb Tide</u> is rarely that of sensing the oppressive heat, the presence of luxuriant vegetation pressing along the banks of slow

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[22]Ellison, Joseph W., <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 24.

> brown rivers, or the illusion of involvement in the unfamiliar rhythms of native life. It is not, in other words, even superficially Melvillean. The pleasure is in observing the author-narrator touring the South Seas, often without shoes and wearing a funny hat, but always accompanied by a picturesque if cumbersome bundle of Victorian keepsakes . . . The Beach of Falesá, published in 1892 and later included in Island Nights' Entertainments, was regarded by Stevenson as containing the 'essence' of the South Seas. It might have more accurate if he had said that it contains the essence of himself and his epoch in the South Seas.[23]

These observations are not entirely deserved. Although carrying numerous allusions to Western symbols, Stevenson's imagery reveals the South Sea landscape with geographical accuracy and an authentic 'sense of place.' His fiction and his South Sea journals contain many references to the physical and human environments of the Pacific. Stevenson described them expertly, facing the discovery of new things with his customary sensibility and intelligence. The exoticism contained in his prose is neither cheap nor gratuitous. Stevenson marked South S as literature with true genius. His only equivalent in the field is Herman Melville, who preceded him in the Pacific and with whom he unconsciously shared many philosophical standpoints.

Stevenson's contribution to the South Seas myth

Robert Louis Stevenson's contribution to the diffusion and popularization of the 'South Seas myth' in Western consciousness deserves some consideration at this point.

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[23]Kiely, Robert, op. cit., pp. 168-169.

First of all, it should be observed that the 'myth' preceded Stevenson in the Pacific. Stevenson was not the creator of the South Seas legend of exotic island-paradises. Before him, many other artists had already visited the area and made their contributions to the formation of the myth. Stevenson was only one piece in the long chain of recognized contributors to the legend. His work, however, proved of fundamental importance for the survival and continuity of the South Seas romantic tradition in contemporary Western thought.

Stevenson was a well-known author before visiting Oceania. His writings, popular throughout the English-speaking world, exerted great appeal upon the reading public and won him many faithful admirers expecially among the young. The move from Europe to Samoa apparently did not affect the growth or intensity of Stevenson's popularity in the Western world. His works continued on large demand in the literary market nd, indeed, it was this pre-existing demand for Stevenson's books in European and North American markets which assured the ready acceptance of his South Sea novels by the reading public.

Although the location of his novels shifted from European to Polynesian settings, the subject matter of Stevenson's books remained essentially in the same tradition of action, adventure and romance which characterized his earlier works. This fact certainly predisposed the public to the reading of Stevenson's Pacific fiction and inevitably contributed to the diffusion of ideas pertaining to the myth.

The excellence of Stevenson's work elevated the quality of South Seas literature to levels seldom before attained in the field, not including the Pacific prose of Herman Melville. This high level of achievement in the expression of ideas about the Pacific also affected the myth, giving a permanent literary value to the romantic vision of the Pacific island realm.

Stevenson's Pacific prose, although exhibiting great refinement of style, was not markedly original as far as its Polynesian imagery is concerned. Stevenson's imagery of the Polynesian environment contain numerous European-based elements. In his writings on South Sea themes Stevenson followed essentially the same patterns of environmental description which had been used by previous authors in the field, such as Melville and Stoddard, to cite two of the most important. His evocations of the island milieu have visual strength and are geographically convincing but they generally submit to traditional systems of environmental representation.

The influence of Stevenson's work on the literary formation of twentieth century Pacific writers was considerable. His mastery of a literary gender, the fiction of adventure, set an example to the incoming generations of potential South Sea romanticists. This observation is slightly ironic, however, because Stevenson was never a true Pacific writer. Although he wrote excellent pages of South Seas fiction, Stevenson's most representative works, his literary

masterpieces, were actually set outside the Pacific. This was the case of Treasure Island, which did not possess any reference to the South Pacific; Kidnapped, which took place in eighteenth century Scotland; Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, whose setting was nineteenth century England; and Weir of Hermiston, written in Samoa but dealing with Scottish subjects. Considering the number of his works dedicated to Pacific themes against the overwhelming representativeness of his European-centered novels, Stevenson fails to be labelled as a Pacific writer in the tradition that Louis Becke and James N. Hall developed years later. His literary immersion in Pacific themes was only partial, even though it had excellent stylistic results.

The circumstances of Stevenson's life and voyages in Polynesia endowed his Pacific years with an aura of magic and romance that eventually stimulated the creation of a popular image associating his name with the South Pacific. The impact of Stevenson's works in fostering new developments within the myth was partially due to the popularization of aspects of his own life in the South Seas. In this sense, it can be said that Stevenson, the 'personality,' contributed as much to the development of the 'South Seas myth' as did Stevenson, the writer. In other words, it is possible to say that, perhaps, the greatest contribution Stevenson ever gave to the 'South Seas myth' was the simple association of his name with the Pacific--as the literary prestige of his

name aroused a new wave of interest in things Pacific.

CHAPTER IV

PAUL GAUGUIN

Biographical data

Paul Gauguin was born in Paris on June 7, 1848. His father, Clovis Gauguin, was a journalist interested in political affairs. His mother, Aline Chazal Gauguin, came from a family of Spanish aristocrats settled in Peru.

When the government of France was taken over by Napoleon III, Clovis Gauguin emigrated to South America in order to escape the political effects of his journalistic activities. Accompanied by Aline and their two children, Marie and Paul, he left for Peru in 1851. Clovis did not reach his destination, however, for he died suddenly at sea, and was buried at Port Famine, on the Strait of Magellan. Aline and the children continued on to Lima, where they remained for the next four years.

Gauguin's early childhood was therefore spent in the fashionable environment of the Moscoso's estate in Lima. Of those early years he would retain many memories, most of them concerned with the exotic surroundings of his mother's family property. Vivid street and domestic scenes, adorned with a multitide of strange and colorful things, found a complement in the presence of the many native servants who perpetually cared for the children's daily needs. Gauguin

grew increasingly used to the sight of exotic faces, costumes and attitudes; elements which would have a major influence in the aesthetic development of his future years.

In 1855, Aline decided to return to France with her children. Paul was then seven years old and spoke Spanish. Settled in Orleans, in the house of Isidore Gauguin, Paul's uncle, the family tried to start a new life. Paul was eleven years old when he was admitted to the 'Petit Seminaire' of Orleans. By this time he had already mastered French, a language that his South American tutors had not taught him. In the 'Seminaire' he received the basics of a classically-oriented education, complemented later with studies in the local 'Lycee.'

In 1865, ten years after his return from Peru, this formal education came to an end. Gauguin at seventeen decided to join the merchant marine. In December of that year he was admitted as a pilot's apprentice on the 'Luzitano,' and made two successive voyages between Le Havre and Rio de Janeiro. The first voyage lasted three months and twenty-one days. The second voyage lasted approximately four months. Gauguin's stay in Rio represented for him a rediscovery of the 'exotic.' He was dazzled with the light and the colour of the tropics and with the exuberant beauty of the Brazilian environment.

Soon after his return to France, Gauguin embarked on another voyage to South America. Sailing on the 'Chili' as

a second-lieutenant, he spent almost fourteen months on the route between Le Havre and Valparaiso. Aline, his mother, died during this long absence. Back in France and without immediate prospects, Gauguin enlisted in the French Navy. During a term of service which lasted more than three years, he visited the Eastern Mediterranean, including the Adriatic, the Aegean and the Black Sea, the Northern Atlantic as far as the Norwegian coast and the Arctic Circle, and the Baltic. In April, 1871, Gauguin left the Navy and settled in Paris. He had spent more than five years at sea and his life was already rich in experiences of distant places and exotic peoples.

This year 1871 was particularly important in Gauguin's life. At the age of twenty-three, young and intelligent, he was placed under the patronage of Gustave Arosa, his official guardian by the will of Aline. At Gauguin's request, Arosa obtained a position for him with the stockbroking firm of Bertin et Cie, in the rue Laffitte. Gauguin soon showed signs of initiative in his new occupation. In the same firm he met Emile Schuffenecker, a stockbroker who was also a dilettante painter. Both Schuffenecker and Arosa were men of taste, profoundly interested in art. Their influence on Gauguin was strong and decisive. Arosa's private collection of paintings included works by Delacroix, Corot, Courbet, Daumier, Jongkind, and Pissarro. His daughter, Marguerite Arosa was also a painter. Through her, Gauguin learned the basic techniques of painting in oils. He also became more

and more interested in drawing. The first results of his casual artistic attempts were impressive. Encouraged by Marguerite and Schuffenecker, Gauguin entered, somewhat reluctantly, the world of art.

By 1872, Gauguin was a successful stockbroker. In his free time he continued to experiment with drawing and painting, and made extensive visits to the museums and art galleries of Paris--artistic excursions in which he was invariably accompanied by Schuffenecker. In November, 1873, he took another important step by marrying Mette Sophie Gad, a girl from an influential Danish family. This union was happy in its typically bourgeois patterns. For a few years, Gauguin was able to lead a balanced existence, dividing his time between his business activities, his family life, and his growing aspirations as an artist.

Painting in the outskirts of Paris on weekends and accompanying Schuffenecker in frequent visits to the Atelier Colarossi, Gauguin became more self-confident and skilled in the expression of his art. In 1875, he met Camille Pissarro and through him a number of other Impressionist painters. Enjoying a prosperous financial position, he also began to build his own collection of paintings, and bought works by Cezanne, Pissarro, Degas, Sisley, Monet and Renoir. In 1876, the Salon accepted his landscape "Sous-bois a Virolay." In these five years Gauguin had made great progress both in his professional and artistic life.

The evolution which started in 1871 continued through the last years of the decade. Gauguin became progressively more involved with his art. He was still a dilettante but regarded his artistic work seriously and with an increasing awareness of his potential talents. In 1877, under the supervision of the sculptor Bouillot, he made his first experiments with modelling and carving. With a few exceptions, the subject-matter of his works centered around his family, which he portrayed through different media: oils, crayons, pastel, water colour, sculpture. Gauguin's friendship with Pissarro became closer in the course of these years. In 1879, they worked together at Pontoise during the summer holidays. Pissarro's influence on the artistic development of Gauguin was immense. In this initial period, Gauguin painted in an Impressionist manner, using delicate brush-strokes and pale colours. His style owed much to Pissarro, Corot and Jongkind.

From 1880 to 1882, Gauguin showed several of his works at the fifth, sixth and seventh Impressionist exhibitions. His "Etude de Nu" (1881) was highly praised by the critic Huysmans, this being the first official recognition of his talent. With a strong belief in his own possibilities as a painter and encouraged by the eventfulness of his recent years in matters artistic, Gauguin took the most daring decision of his life and resigned his position as stockbroker in January, 1883. From this moment onwards, he intended to give himself exclusively to art. He was

thirty-four years old.

The sudden change in his professional perspectives had serious financial consequences. Moving the family to Rouen and later to Copenhagen, Gauguin found himself unable to cope with the burden of supporting his wife and his five children. Mette decided to stay in Copenhagen, teaching French and doing translation work in order to maintain the family. Gauguin returned to Paris with his six-year old son Clovis. The winter 1885-1886 was a period of critical poverty in Gauguin's life. Clovis fell sick and Gauguin, unable to sell his paintings, was forced to take a job as a bill-poster in order to pay his son's medical expenses. In the spring of 1886, he took part in the eighth and last Impressionist exhibition with a great number of canvases but was little noticed. In June, after leaving Clovis in a 'pension' in the suburbs of Paris, Gauguin departed for Brittany.

From 1886 to 1890 Gauguin made several sojourns in Brittany, seeking refuge from the financial difficulties which tormented his life in Paris. In Pont-Aven and later at Le Pouldu he found not only inspiration and subject-matter for new paintings but also the stimulating companionship of a group of young artists. In August, 1888, his meeting with Emile Bernard would have decisive consequences for the future of modern art. Out of their discussions were born 'Cloisonnism' and Synthetism,' two philosophies that

embodied a whole new conception of painting.[1] The year 1888 marked Gauguin's rupture with Impressionism and the beginning of a long phase of intensely personal artistic expression. Also from 1888 dates his first great masterpiece, "Vision after the Sermon," already within 'Cloisonnist' and 'Synthetist' molds.

The same decade witnessed Gauguin's first attempt to settle in the tropics. Encouraged by the fact that his brother-in-law had business interests in Panama and counting on the companionship of Charles Laval, a young painter who was willing to try the same venture, Gauguin left for America in April, 1887. He wanted to live as primitively as possible, in close contact with nature, and away from the financial strain of European life. The plans nurtured for Panama did not yield the expected results, however. His brother-in-law was unable or unwilling to help them and Panama proved not to be as primitive as they had initially imagined. His savings completely exhausted, Gauguin worked as a labourer in the digging of the Canal in order to pay his way back to Europe. However, by the time he had saved sufficient money for the return, he and Laval decided to leave for Martinique, instead. The island impressed both artists in the deepest way. The tropical environment and the exotic human ambience offered them an abundant supply of subject

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[1]Boudaille, Georges, Gauguin (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), p. 88.

matter for new paintings. Gauguin's West Indian period is marked by the adoption of a palette of brighter colours and a more adventurous use of lines. He starts to drift away from Impressionism. The sojourn in Martinique did not end well, however. Attacked with fever and dysentery, Gauguin and Laval were left with no other choice but to return to France. Helped by Schuffenecker, he survived the winter 1887-1888.

In October-December, 1888, another famous episode of Gauguin's life took place in Southern France. Invited by Vincent van Gogh to share his small apartment in the 'Maison Jaune,' Gauguin left for Arles, hoping that, with the help of van Gogh's brother, Théo, he would be able to live without financial problems for some time. Unhappily, the two months of life in common were marked by frequent misunderstandings and conflicts of personality between the two men. Although bound by great affection, Gauguin and van Gogh could hardly agree on artistic or philosophical matters. The stay ended with the tragic events of December 24, when van Gogh cut off his own ear.

The opening of the Paris World's Fair of 1889 offered Gauguin the opportunity to admire several examples of oriental art. He was especially fascinated with the Indian, Indonesian and Tonkinese displays, whose exoticism aroused his enthusiasm in an unprecedented way. From this time date his attempts to obtain a governmental position in Indo-China,

which proved unsuccessful.

In his artistic affairs, the year 1889 was marked by the famous exhibition at the 'Café des Arts' ('Café Volpini'), organized by Schuffenecker under the denomination of 'Impressionist and Synthetist Group.' Among the paintings exhibited were works by Gauguin, Anquetin, Schuffenecker, Laval, Bernard, de Monfreid, and others. Although rejected by the majority of the public and critics, the exhibition highly impressed the young 'Nabis': Sérusier, Denis and Bonnard.[2]

Returning from Brittany late in the fall of 1890, Gauguin came in contact with some of the major Symbolist poets of the time.[3] With them he developed the habit of gathering at the 'Café Voltaire' for lively discussions on art. Identifying himself with many Symbolist ideals, and transposing his ideas to his paintings, Gauguin added a new dimension to his art--its highly symbolic quality. At the 'Café Voltaire' he met Verlaine, Moréas, Carrière, and Charles Morice, who in turn introduced him to one their leaders, Stéphane Mallarmé.

Since the end of 1889 Gauguin had realized that living in Europe offered him no chances of economic and artistic survival. Among his plans, he envisaged the possibility

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[2]Goldwater, Robert, Paul Gauguin (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Francaises, 1957), p. 23.

[3]Alley, Ronald, Gauguin, (London: Spring Books, 1964), p. 15.

of founding an artist colony in the tropics, where life was cheaper and offered an inexhaustible variety of artistic themes. Faced with the impossibility of settling in Indo-China, he decided to make Madagascar the site of this colony. It was Emile Bernard who told him about Tahiti and provided him with literature on the South Seas. Enraptured by these accounts of the islands, he made up his mind and left for the Pacific in April, 1891. Before his departure, an auction of his paintings at the Hôtel Drouot provided him with enough money to defray the costs of the first months of his stay in Tahiti.

Gauguin's first sojourn in Tahiti lasted from June, 1891, to June, 1893. These two years were marked by intense personal experiences in close contact with the island environment. Reflecting Gauguin's reaction to his new surroundings, his paintings became personal interpretations of Polynesian landscapes and scenes of everyday native life. Complementing the oil paintings, his production during the first period also included drawings, water colours and sculptures. The year 1892 was fruitful in artistic matters, but health problems became a handicap with which he could not deal adequately. Abandoned by most of his friends in Europe, destitute, suffering from starvation and in constant conflict with the French colonial class, Gauguin finally asked to be repatriated. He arrived in Paris in August, 1893.

The following period in France was divided between

sojourns in Paris and Brittany. With the assistance of Degas, Gauguin was able to exhibit his Tahitian canvases at Durand-Ruel's. Although without financial success, the show impressed Vuillard, Bernard and other painters. In May, 1894, in a visit to the Breton village of Concarneau, Gauguin got involved in a brawl with sailors and had his ankle broken. The convalescence was lengthy and painful, keeping him from painting for a considerable time. This period was, nevertheless, marked by the writing of Noa Noa in collaboration with Charles Morice. Ten woodcuts were carved to illustrate the book.

Gauguin's decision to return to the South Seas was taken because of the disappointments of his stay in France. He sailed again in May, 1895, after an unsuccessful sale of his works at the Hôtel Drouot. The second Tahitian phase lasted from July, 1895, to September, 1901. Again, suffering from ill-health, feeling abandoned and forgotten by his friends and forever tormented by financial worries, Gauguin lived through periods of intense depression temporarily relieved by brief phases of a happy and carefree existence. The death of his daughter Aline in 1897 threw him into a state of complete desperation and he attempted suicide. The attempt failed but left him prostrated. In 1898, in order to survive, he took a clerk's job in the Public Works office at Papeete. Once relieved from his most pressing debts, he quit the job and resumed painting. In 1899, besides painting and sculpting, Gauguin started publishing his own satirical

paper, Le Sourire. Invited to contribute articles to Les Guêpes, an anti-Protestant and anti-government paper, he accepted and denounced with energy the misdoings of the local politicians. This attitude would cause him many conflicts with the island authorities in the future.

In 1901, benefiting from a contract with a Parisian art dealer, Ambroise Vollard, he decided to move to the Marquesas in the hope of finding in those islands better conditions of life and work. In September, he settled at Atuana, on the island of Hiva-Oa. The beginning of his stay was quiet and promising. Many paintings resulted from his observations of the island milieu. However, his sympathy towards the natives turned him against the French political and religious authorities on the island. The frequent clashes between Gauguin and the colonial representatives resulted in a sentence of imprisonment and a fine of 1,000 francs in March, 1903. Gauguin was expecting the outcome of his appeal to the Court in Papeete when he died on May 8, of a heart attack. He was fifty-four years old.

The sources of Gauguin's exoticism

The exotic content of Gauguin's artistic production of the Pacific period was not merely a reflection of his views of the Polynesian environment. It embodied a whole philosophy of life, thoughts and beliefs nurtured by him during his entire existence as a man and as an artist.

Gauguin spent almost half, or twenty-three years of

his life outside the Parisian milieu. Of these twenty-three years, not less than fourteen were spent in activities directly concerned with art. Considering that Gauguin's life as a professional artist lasted twenty years, from 1883 to 1903, the fourteen years spent in quest of his philosophical ideal represent an important segment.

Systematizing his travels and artistic sojourns according to geographical areas and periods of time, one arrives at the following results:

1. Peru: 4 years
   1851-1855

2. South America, Eastern Mediterranean, and Northern Europe: 5 years
   December 1865 - April 1871

3. Brittany: 3 years

   3.1 First stay (Pont-Aven): 6 months
   June 1886 - November 1886

   3.2 Second stay (Pont-Aven): 9 months
   February 1888 - October 1888

   3.3 Third stay (Pont-Aven; Le Pouldu: 1 year and 9 months
   April 1889 - December 1890

4. Panama-Martinique: 8 months
   April 1887 - November 1887

5. Arles: 2 months
   October 1888 - December 1888

6. Tahiti: 8 years

   6.1 First stay: 2 years
   June 1891 - June 1893

   6.2 Second stay: 6 years
   July 1895 - August 1901

7. Marquesas: 1 year and 9 months
   September 1901 - May 1903

This wide experience of different physical and cultural environments, perceived through the senses of one of the keenest observers that the world of art has ever known, had deep and permanent consequences in the shaping of Gauguin's ideas on life, society and art. His childhood, spent in the foreign atmosphere of mid-nineteenth century Lima, and his several voyages to South America and parts of Europe during his late adolescent years, provided Gauguin with a body of impressions and souvenirs of distant lands which predisposed him to the acceptance, understanding, and admiration of the 'exotic.'

In Gauguin's system of values, the 'exotic' became invariably connected with the aesthetic appreciation of the primitive, the rejection of civilization as a provider of social goodness, and the inner necessity to escape the pressures and restraints of sterilizing ways of life. These traits can be found in most accounts of his expectations regarding life outside Europe.

In his study of the exotic sources of Gauguin's art, Bengt Danielsson came to the conclusion that this exoticism derived from three different artistic and geographical nuclei: American pre-Columbian art, especially pottery; Japanese 'ukiyo-e' techniques; and African and Oriental art from five well-defined sources: Egypt, Persia, India, Java and

Cambodia.[4]

Ceramics of American pre-Columbian type, which were the main inspirational source for his own attempts at making pottery, existed in the collection of the Moscoso family in Lima, in Gustave Arosa's collection in Paris, and in some of the Parisian museums that Gauguin visited in the company of Schuffenecker. Gauguin was charmed and inspired by their simplicity.

Japanese art had already been in vogue among European artists since the 1850's. Manet, Pissarro, Degas, Monet and van Gogh, to mention some of the most important, studied and adopted particular aspects of the Japanese 'ukiyo-e' prints in their Impressionist canvases. It was Gauguin, however, who, in collaboration with Emile Bernard, took the revolutionary step of utilizing Japanese techniques to create a new style of painting. 'Synthetism' and 'Cloisonnism' were born out of their joint artistic endeavour in the summer of 1888. "The Vision after the Sermon," the first of Gauguin's paintings to show the credo of the new aesthetic order, presents most of the characteristics inherent in the works of Hokusai, Hiroshige and Utamaro, three of his favourite Japanese artists: "flat areas of unmodulated color, simplified forms, arbitrary perspective, high viewpoint, asymmetric composition,

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[4] Danielsson, Bengt, "The Exotic Sources of Gauguin's Art," in Expedition, Volume II, Number 4, Summer 1969, pp. 16-26.

decorative elaboration, and a conception of painting as symbolic."[5]

Oriental art fascinated Gauguin for its harmonious character, intense symbolism, and essentially decorative forms. These qualities became his primary objectives in the pursuit of his own work. Gauguin's baggage in both trips to the Pacific included prints of the paintings he admired the most; their influence on Gauguin's art can be traced until his last works of the Marquesan period.

Gauguin's search for the 'exotic'

Gauguin's first recorded reference to the South Seas is linked with his voyage to Brazil on the 'Luzitano' (1866):

> On my first trip as a pilot's apprentice on the 'Luzitano,' bound for Rio de Janeiro, it was my duty to stand watch at night with the lieutenant. He told me the following.
>
> He had been a cabin-boy on a little ship that made long voyages in Oceania with cargoes of all sorts of cheap goods. One fine morning, while he was washing the deck, he fell into the sea without anyone's noticing it. He did not let go of his broom, and thanks to this broom the boy kept up for forty-eight hours in the ocean. By an extraordinary chance a ship happened to pass and saved him. Then, some time later, as this ship had put in at a hospitable little island, our cabin-boy went for a walk and stayed a little too long. So he remained for good and all.
>
> Our little cabin-boy pleased everybody, so there he was settled, with nothing to do, forced to lose his virginity on the spot, fed, lodged, petted and flattered in every way. He was very happy. This lasted two years; then one fine

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[5]Danielsson, Bengt, op. cit., p. 19.

> morning another ship happened to be passing and our young man wanted to go back to France.
>
> 'My God, what a fool I was,' he said to me. 'Here I am now obliged to fight my way against wind and wave . . . And I was so happy . . . '
>
> Living among the savages is all very well, but there is such a thing as Homesickness.[6]

Whatever may have been the intent with which Gauguin recalled this passage, ironic or moralizing, the fact is that the Pacific held little attraction for him until late in his life. Before concentrating his thoughts on Tahiti as his 'promised land,' he felt strongly allured by the artistic and architectonic treasures of Oriental civilizations.

It was the impossibility of going to Indo-China which led Gauguin to settle his mind on more primitive places. His first choice was Madagascar, as he explained in a letter to Théo van Gogh (April, 1890):

> Then I shall go to Madagascar, buy a small mud hut there and enlarge it myself, industrious sculptor that I am. I shall live like a barbarian peasant. Without worries about money I shall be able to work there at my art as I have not yet ever been able to do . . . I expect to send you from Madagascar beautiful new things, done with great care, as there I shall have models free of charge every day. I shall not produce many pictures, but what I do will be closely knit, complete.[7]

The preoccupation with financial details and the emphasis on his self-definition as a 'savage' are constant

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[6]Gauguin, Paul, Intimate Journals (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 221-222.

[7]Rewald, John, Post Impressionism (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1956), p. 388.

characteristics of Gauguin's letters of the period. To these two traits can be added his personal search for pure forms of primitivism, as he stated in this letter to Emile Bernard (July, 1890):

> It is true that Tahiti is a paradise for Europeans. But the trip is much more expensive because it is in the South Seas. Besides, Madagascar offers many more possibilities as far as types, religion, mysticism, symbolism go. There you have Indians from Calcutta, black tribes, Arabs, and Hovas who are Polynesians. Just the same, get some information about the voyage . . . [8]

Bernard was responsible for Gauguin's sudden change of mind after the summer of 1890. Having read Le Mariage de Loti, Bernard lent it to Gauguin, who was initially very skeptic about the veracity of Loti's Tahitian exploits. It was only after consulting an official publication of the Colonial Department that he became definitively convinced of the advisability of going to the South Pacific.[9] In a letter to Schuffenecker, he stated his hopes as follows (Brittany, summer 1890):

> I have a booklet published by the Colonial Department which gives a great deal of information about life in Tahiti. Marvelous country where I should like to finish my life with all my children. I shall see later about having them follow me. There is in Paris a Society for Colonization which provides free passages . . . I only live in the hope of this promised land; de Haan, Bernard, and I, and possibly later my family. With work and will power we can form there

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[8]Gauguin, Paul, Lettres de Gauguin à sa femme et à ses amis (Paris: Grasset, 1946), p. 198

[9]Henrique, L. et al., Les colonies françaises, Paris, 1889.

a hale and hearty little circle, for you know that Tahiti is the healthiest country that exists . . . The future of our children is pretty black . . . --even with some money--in this rotten and mean Europe . . . But the Tahitians, happy inhabitants of the unexplored paradises of Oceania, know only the sweet aspects of life. For them to live is to sing and to love. Here is food for thought for Europeans who complain about their existence.[10]

This idealized conception of the Tahitian environment found a complement in Gauguin's confessed urge for escape. A man without roots, wandering was his fate. In an interview to the Echo de Paris of February 23, 1891, he mentioned this element of escape and stressed its connection with the creation of a new form or art:

The reason why I am leaving is that I wish to live in peace and to avoid being influenced by our civilization. I only desire to create a simple art. In order to achieve this, it is necessary for me to steep myself in virgin nature, to see no one but savages, to share their life and have as my sole occupation to render, just as children would do, the images of my own brain, using exclusively the means offered by primitive art, which are the only true and valid ones.[11]

Officially, in his contacts with the higher spheres of the Establishment, Gauguin defined the object of his voyage in different terms. Writing to the Minister of Fine Arts on March 15, shortly before his departure, he gave the following explanation of his intent:

Monsieur le Ministre,
I desire to go to Tahiti in order to paint there a series of pictures representing the country whose

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[10]Rewald, John, op. cit., p. 449

[11]Danielsson, Bengt, op. cit., p. 21.

> character and light I have the ambition to explore. I have the honor to ask you to be gracious enough to entrust me with a mission . . . which, though without a salary, would nevertheless, through the advantages pertaining to it, facilitate my studies and my transportation.[12]

The failure of the first experience in Tahiti led Gauguin to abandon his plans of settlement in the tropics and return to France and civilization; the process had a close resemblance to his previous attempt to settle in Panama. His letter of June 12, 1892, addressed to the Minister of Fine Arts, represents, in a way, an answer to the illusory expectations of his anterior letters--the admission of his defeat.

> Monsieur le Ministre,
> At my request you were kind enough to entrust me with a mission in Tahiti, to study the customs and scenery of the island. I hope that upon my return you will judge my works favorably. But no matter how economical one is, life in Tahiti is very expensive and the voyage very costly. I therefore have the honor to request that I be repatriated, and rely on your benevolence to make my return to France possible.[13]

In his letters to the Minister of Fine Arts Gauguin gives an almost geographic-scientific objective to his South Pacific venture. By 'representing the country,' exploring its 'character and light,' and studying the 'customs and scenery' of Tahiti, he certainly meant the observation and portrayal of an environment that was still foreign to him; an environment which required an understanding of its

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[12] Rewald, John, op. cit., p. 484.

[13] Ibid., p. 520.

characteristics by a continual immersion in the unknown--
a process dependent on Gauguin's search for his own self.

Gauguin's search for the exotic and the primitive was accompanied by a parallel struggle for self-discovery. Art was the unifying element which made both efforts real. Gauguin found himself through his art. The exotic and primitive content of his works was a product of his own creation, a reflection of his nature upon the canvas. Gauguin mastered the perception of his surrounding environment to such depth that his paintings became the pictorial representation of a new world, recreated in detail by the selective mind of the artist. This world, idealized as it was, remained firmly based on reality. A reality distilled, purified, reinvented by Gauguin's creative power.

<u>The Pacific art of Gauguin</u>

Gauguin arrived in Tahiti with some knowledge of the environment in which he was going to live. This knowledge, idealized as it was, had been gleaned from the reading of two books: a novel by Pierre Loti, and an official publication of the Colonial Department. Both sources depicted the island in romanticized terms, according to the traditional South Seas mythical image popularized in Europe since the time of the voyages of exploration. Besides this information of literary character, Gauguin also possessed in his background a personal experience of tropical milieus, acquired during his trips to Rio de Janeiro, Panama, and Martinique.

The expectations nurtured by Gauguin concerning the island environment underwent a severe shock when the painter came in contact with the Tahitian reality. The Westernized atmosphere of Papeete shocked him and he was especially disgusted with the degree of acculturation presented by the natives inhabiting the capital and its surroundings. In both of his stays in Tahiti, Gauguin avoided the cosmopolitan environment of Papeete and settled in districts which, although influenced by things Western, still retained a slow-paced and semi-primitive way of life. He lived from 1891 to 1893 in Mataiea, on the south coast of the island. During his second stay, from 1895 to 1901, a need for occasional communication with Papeete led him to choose a location of easier accessibility to the city, and he settled in Punaauia, on the island's west coast.

Gauguin's artistic production relating to Pacific themes exists in the form of oil , drawings, water colours, woodcuts and sculptures. Drawings and water colours were primarily used as sketches and preliminary studies for the composition of oil paintings. Woodcuts and sculptures, an important part of Gauguin's Pacific work, were usually made during periods of poor health, when his ability to paint inevitably decreased. The oil paintings, by reason of their power of environmental visualization, their profusion in number, and their popularity, will be the focus of this examination.

Gauguin's works of the Tahitian phase and, later, the ones created in the Marquesas, reflect not only artistic conceptions of a personal nature but also constitute a clear testimony of his preference for specific subjects of artistic representation.

Gauguin was not a landscape painter and consequently was not interested in portraying the Tahitian and Marquesan environments with photographic exactitude. Although deeply concerned with, and even dazzled by, the elements of the island landscape, Gauguin generally used them as a setting for a given human situation. The green wilderness of the mountain slopes, the shady interior of the rain forest, the deep blue of the Tahitian lagoon, or the cliffs of the Marquesan coasts were never the central theme of any of his works. Nor was he interested in painting extensive plantations, eminent French officials or anonymous Chinese merchants. Gauguin was more interested in the native human element. His paintings show the natives in every situation of their everyday life and, most important, stress the balance of their relations to the environment.

There are three major divisions according to which the thematic basis of Gauguin's Pacific works can be classified: a) human subjects, b) landscapes, and c) mythological representations.

Gauguin's interest in human subjects was of primary importance in his art. He was eager to learn and adopt native ways as a means of reaching a deeper understanding of

the nature of primitivism. This understanding he eventually transposed to the canvas. His Tahitian and Marquesan works, especially the later ones, are not studies in picturesque exoticism; they go beyond that level and attain a quality that can be defined as 'eternal.' As remarked by John Rewald, "Gauguin recorded the life around him with an eye to the permanent and the significant."[14] Details without importance were discarded in favour of elements bearing permanent value. He painted people in the most typical situations of their day-to-day existence, working, playing, chatting, bathing in the streams, and endowed his paintings with a mysterious and unmoving charm which is a reflection of the Polynesian character.

Gauguin's landscape paintings are usually human landscapes. They portray a tropical environment whose elements are reduced to their essential forms in order to compose an adequate background for a certain human situation. Mountains and rivers; forests and open fields; lagoons, reefs, and beaches; sea and sky; human habitations and domesticated animals; these and other elements do not exist independently of the human being. In Gauguin's paintings, the human being gives meaning and purpose to the physical environment. Gauguin creates a stage where his actors unconsciously play a situation predetermined by him. Geographically speaking,

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[14] Rewald, John, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 532.

the microcosm is complete. It has all the characteristics of the real places which they represent. Avoiding super-naturalist, scientific accuracy, Gauguin conveys pictorial delineations of environmental elements which are both realistic and geographically correct. In this sense, it is possible to say that Gauguin's pictures are faithful renderings of late nineteenth-century rural Tahitian milieus.

Also part of Gauguin's Pacific output are canvases illustrating passages of Polynesian mythological accounts. Soon after his arrival in Tahiti, in 1891, he came across two books which immediately caught his attention. One of them was Jacques-Antoine Moerenhout's _Voyages aux îles du Grand Océan_ (1837); the other was Edmond de Bovis' _Etat de la Société Tahitienne à l'arrivée des Européens_, published by the 'Revue Coloniale' in 1855. With his imagination greatly enlivened by reading Polynesian mythology and culture history, Gauguin eventually created many works centering on famous mythological beings or depicting meaningful passages of traditional Tahitian legends. He also utilized Moerenhout's work as his main source of information for the composition of _Ancien Culte Mahorie_, a book which he illustrated with numerous drawings and water colours.

According to Robert Goldwater, Gauguin's paintings represent idealized documents "in which correct details are merged into a whole that is meant to be the unspoiled essence of the primitive world, a world which, because it is

both symbolic and ideal, remains outside and apart from both the artist and the native life it is meant to interpret."[15]

Most of Gauguin's works constitute intellectual creations; they are the product of his mind, the result of a personal effort to create eternal images of certain themes. An analysis of his paintings shows, however, that Gauguin did not idealize Tahitian or Marquesan life in many of his compositions. Although he often created edenistic scenes, scenes that were evocative of Polynesian life in pre-European times, many of his works were actual representations of things he saw and experienced while in the South Pacific. It was the stylizing treatment given to most of his themes that endowed the paintings with a transcendental quality, making them appear as 'ideal,' in spite of their foundation on commonly experienced 'reality.' Georges Boudaille made an excellent and conclusive appreciation of this aspect of Gauguin's art in his biography of the painter:

> His landscapes became more real once he had transposed them. They were no longer an image approaching reality without ever reaching it, but became a perfectly homogeneous plastic equivalent of reality, which recreated the atmosphere experienced in a certain place, without attempting to reproduce it faithfully either in detail or in colour. Their truth lay in their poetry, their related tones, and in the harmony of their different parts, placed as

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[15]Goldwater, Robert, Primitivism in Modern Art (New York: Vintage, 1967[1938]), p. 106.

they were on the canvas by the magic of Gauguin's talent.[16]

Twelve of Gauguin's pictorial works will be briefly examined in this review. Their selection was made according to their content, date of execution, representativeness of the Polynesian environment and way of life, and their relative importance in the context of Gauguin's Pacific output. Six of the works belong to the first Tahitian period (1891-1893). "The Day of the God" dates from 1894. The other five works belong to the second Pacific period (1895-1903).

1. "Tahitian Landscape" (1891).
   Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis.

This was one of the first landscapes painted by Gauguin in Tahiti. Allured by the exotic charm of the tropical environment, he set himself to study its components and to give them a faithful but also poetical plastic representation. This painting is one of the very few in which environmental elements become dominant and man is restricted to a complementary position. With a perceptive eye to characteristics of the physical milieu, Gauguin painted it with accuracy and feeling. In the background, the eroded mountain slopes remain partially in the shade whereas the grass fields in the foreground are bathed by the sun with intense brightness. Between them, giving equilibrium to the composition,

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[16] Boudaille, Georges, op. cit., p. 178.

is a cluster of trees and shrubs. Gauguin painted them with a greater concern for suggesting their exuberant tropicality than with conveying details of botanical exactitude. Coconut trees emerge, their leaves trembling against a transparent sky. To the right, one of the many small rivers of the island gives continuity to the line of trees. Amidst this environmental exuberance, following the red-earthen path, a man dressed in a loin-cloth carries a bundle of ripe bananas and other fruits. Covering his head, to protect him from the sun, a straw hat. To the left, in the fields, a dark animal stands alone. The composition communicates warmth and tranquility. Gauguin gave it a static quality that is synonymous of a scene many times repeated. Allusions to Eden are non-existent. This is the representation of a typical Tahitian scene as it was witnessed by Gauguin and transposed to the canvas with sensitivity and precision.

2. "Street in Tahiti" (1891).
   Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio.

This is another composition in which the environment plays a fundamental part. In this painting, however, the human element enjoys a more important position and creates a mood of its own. The scene is dominated by the towering mountains of Tahiti, portrayed with attention to their capricious geomorphology. Below them, and semi-hidden by the lush vegetation, the lagoon occupies the geometric center of the picture, being almost touched by the road, which

advances in linear perspective. The foreground is occupied by the street itself and a hut, to the right. The street's surface is earthen and partially covered with grass. The hut, common to late nineteenth century Polynesia, shows the influence of Western ways, although its building materials are taken from the island environment. Sitting on the portico, legs crossed and deep in thought, a Tahitian woman assumes a typical Polynesian mood. She appears to be contemplating the intangible. Two women walking along the road, dressed in their 'Mother-Hubbards' and wearing straw hats, are a reminder of changes in Tahitian costumes after a century of Western contact. The horse, also brought by the Western colonizers, complements the picture of a Tahitian world forever deprived of its anterior originality.

3. "Te Poipoi-Morning" (1892).
Charles S. Payson Collection, New York.

Here is a painting whose main interest is the depiction of the perfect interaction of man and nature in the Tahitian environment. The central point of the composition is occupied by a meandering stream, which also divides the picture into two more or less balanced parts. In the foreground, crouched and with her dress raised to the waist, a woman bathes. The naturalness of her attitude reveals the ordinary gestures of a daily habit. Across the stream, on a sandy beach, a woman stands by herself, with her breasts uncovered, apparently preparing herself for a bath. The surrounding environment shelters the two characters, offering

them intimacy and restful tranquility. It is an ordered, stylized environment, which nevertheless expresses the idea of tropical exuberance with great strength. This is one of the canvases in which Gauguin best portrayed the Polynesian custom of morning ablution in the fresh water streams of high volcanic islands. Without being an Edenic scene, it reveals man and his environment as a single unit and shows an aspect of native life as it still existed in the Tahiti of the turn of the century.

4. "Landscape with Peacock" (1892).
Pushkin Museum, Moscow.

A flamboyant landscape, "Landscape with Peacock" stands between two poles: geographical and social realism versus edenic imagery. The subject-matter of the painting is Polynesian as far as its main elements go. In the foreground, a man with an axe cuts the fallen branch of a tree. On the left, the two peacocks that give name to the composition are kept at a distance, probably due to the rhythm of the man's movements. Behind them, a fire burns. In the path that leads to the hut, two women apparently talk, facing each other. Dominating the scene, a luxuriant mass of vegetation encircles the domestic micro-environment, separating it from the steep mountains that emerge in the background. Gauguin presents here an idealized representation of the Tahitian milieu. This idealization is intentional and relies exclusively on his painting techniques, on his use of colour

and on the disposition which he gave to the subjects portrayed. The composition is highly decorative and Gauguin carried this purposeful stylization to an extreme degree of refinement. The overall effect conveyed by the scene is that of an earthly paradise, even though this Golden Age is already polluted by the presence of a steel axe and missionary-introduced clothes. Despite its stylization, the basis for the creation of the painting was found in real scenes that Gauguin witnessed in his day-to-day existence in Tahiti.

5. "The Siesta" (1893)
   Ira Haupt Collection, New York.

"The Siesta" is one of the most expressive compositions of the first Tahitian period. In the portico of a house, four women spend together the first hours of the afternoon. They are protected from the sun but nevertheless involv d in the warm atmosphere that impregnates the island. It is a moment of relaxation, filled with indolent gestures, quiet talk, gossips, and refreshing dozes. In spite of the changes introduced in their lives through the action of alien agents, the Tahitians are here portrayed in one of the typical habits they inherited from their pre-colonial ancestors. The result is an interesting mixture of the old and new, a moment of intimate native life captured with perception by Gauguin. The emphasis on flat areas and clearly defined lines is part of the application of his Synthetist and Cloisonnist techniques to the portrayal of a Tahitian

theme. Also of extreme originality is the disposition of the figures on the canvas, especially the girl in the foreground, whose pose expresses grace and exquisite charm. "The Siesta" emanates a feeling of repose and tranquility which is the essence of the main theme.

6. "Pastorales Tahitiennes" (1893).
   Hermitage Museum, Leningrad

An idealized, carefully studied composition, "Pastorales Tahitiennes" reveals Gauguin in one of his moments of reverie, trying to recreate in images the state of perfect beauty and happiness of a Tahiti that never existed. The dream of a Golden Age is here presented in a Tahitian setting, whose stylization Gauguin purposely undertook. In this setting, man and nature are grouped in the perfect equilibrium of a single, dream-bound ecosystem. Behind the capriciously designed tree, two women live moments of a daily life in a state of bliss. In the foreground, assuming a relaxed but nevertheless, protective attitude, a dog watches. He is the guardian of this earthly paradise, defending its purity against the intruding of aliens. The composition exhales quietness and repose, a feeling which is enhanced by the static attitude of the main characters. It also communicates a sense of musicality, music that comes from the flute played by one of the women and which lives transposed in the lines and angles defining the picture. The use of flat areas of pure colour is another example of

Gauguin's Synthetist and Cloisonnist techniques, inherited from his passion for Japanese art. "Pastorales Tahitiennes" was one of Gauguin's favourite works.

7. "Mahama no atua-The Day of the God" (1894).
   Art Institute, Chicago.

This composition dates from the stay of Gauguin in Paris, after his return to France in August, 1893. "The Day of the God," as the preceding "Pastorales Tahitiennes," is also an idealized rendition of a Tahitian scene. All its elements were combined by Gauguin to create an allegory to the mysteries of South Seas religion and mythology. The process of stylization of pictorial motifs attains here one of its highest points. On the Tahitian shore, a group of natives gather around the statue of a local deity. They came to make offerings and to worship their God. Assuming different attitudes, they give expression to their inner feelings each in his own way. Allusions to the cycle of life and death are present both in the foreground and in the background, perhaps as a prelude to the theme that Gauguin would develop years later, in the great masterpiece and spiritual testament of his life: "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" (1897). Water, the element originator of life, dominates the picture. It is present in the strengely designed pond in the foreground, perhaps an allegory to the puzzle of human existence, and in the vase expanse of sea and surf that appears in the background. The idol is Taaroa,

deity of the Tahitians. Its form and expression are, however, without any ethnographic realism, being an exclusive product of Gauguin's imagination. The local Polynesian colour conveyed by the painting is introduced in the presence of the natives in their exotic clothes and postures, the pandanus tree to the left of the idol, the surf breaking on the beach, and the mountains in the background, all depicted under a radiant tropical light.

8. "Eiaha ohipa-Do not work" (1896).
Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

This is another painting depicting a stereotyped aspect of the Tahitian way of life which is thoroughly familiar to most readers of South Sea stories. In the interior of a hut, a man and a woman spend a day in idleness, refusing to commit themselves to unnecessary or superfluous work. Surprised in a moment of inward reflection, they are bound together by the same feeling and the same attitude towards work. In the coolness of their hut, they find shelter from the heat and light that set the outside world on fire. Their faces and the posture of their bodies express a sensuous indolence which is inherent to the stereotyped Polynesian character. The cat, in the foreground, and the dog, in the background, participate in the scene by accentuating its atmosphere of passivity and torpor. The pervading mood is one of silence and repose, effects that Gauguin attained with unsurpassed felicity.

9. "Why are you angry?" (1896).
Art Institute, Chicago.

Returning to the depiction of a domestic native scene, Gauguin created once more a poetical yet realistic portrait of late nineteenth century rural Tahitian life. Realistic elements are found in the hut which dominates the picture's background, with its windowless walls of round bamboo canes and its roof of coconut palm leaves. The same care with realistic description was taken in the composition of the yard, including its domestic animals and plants. The center of interest of the painting rotates, however, around human beings and human feelings. Of the six women portrayed on the canvas, only the ones in the foreground are directly involved in the picture's thematic 'raison d'etre.' The old woman sitting by the door is just an observer and the ones on the right do not take any active part in the scene itself; they are mere complementary presences. The theme of anger was here treated by Gauguin as part of the essence of human nature. Its occurrence in a Tahitian setting only gives additional colour and exoticism to an emotion that is inherent to the human condition.

10. "Tahitian women with mango blossoms" (1899).
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

With this composition Gauguin makes a tribute to the exotic beauty of the Polynesian woman, whose grace and innate elegance he incessantly praised in his writings from the South Seas. A perceptive observer of human subjects,

Gauguin was the first great painter to portray the physical features of the Polynesians with anthropological accuracy. He refused to present the Tahitians according to the stereotyped image of the 'noble savage,' as his precedent colleagues often did. Both in Tahiti and in the Marquesas, his paintings reveal a human dimension which is often universal, unbound by barriers of race or culture, even when, through idealization or allegory, he molded the Polynesian reality to suit his artistic purposes. In "Tahitian women with mango blossoms" Gauguin created an archetype of Polynesian female beauty and immortalized the charm and mystery of the Tahitian woman in world painting.

11. "Rupe Rupe-Picking Fruit" (1899).
Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

"Rupe Rupe" belongs to the so-called 'cycle of Faa Iheihe,' an important composition which Gauguin painted in 1898, shortly after he attempted suicide. To the same cycle also belongs "Te Avae no Maria," painted in 1899. Optimism again permeated Gauguin's thoughts and this inner feeling found expression in his art. "Rupe Rupe" is a good example of idealized rendition of a Tahitian scene. The Tahitian environment is here portrayed in a stylized and decorative manner, according to the idea of an earthly paradise. Four natives are seen, together, under the trees. Picking fruits and flowers, assuming reposeful attitudes, they symbolize human existence in a state of bliss. Three themes pervade the composition: fertility, represented by the

fruits and flowers; harmony and gentleness in human relations; and happiness in its purest form. Man and nature are depicted here in close and harmonious rapport. A feeling of serenity emanates from every element of the composition. Gauguin intended this painting as the representation of an ideal scene, without parallels with common reality.

12. "The Call" (1902).
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

"The Call" is one of the most important paintings of Gauguin's Marquesan period. It is also an idealized composition, full of symbolism and poetry. The canvas is dominated by the figures of two mysterious women. They stand quietly, close to one another, in static positions. Next to them, sitting on the banks of a small river, a naked woman rests. The environment which surrounds them is pastoral and visually relaxing. The vegetation is portrayed in highly stylized patterns, with studied application of sophisticated colours and lines. The idea of paradise still persists in "The Call," but the feeling of happiness is here a vanishing one. The overall impression emanating from the composition is one of melancholy and decay: an allegory, perhaps, to the decline of the Marquesan people, physically and culturally affected by the white man's ways.

Gauguin's South Sea writings

Gauguin left an important legacy in written form. His writings cover a wide variety of subjects and reveal

numerous traits of his personality. The last factor is of special importance for a better understanding of his pictorial art.

Gauguin, as a man and as an artist, was extraordinarily ahead of his time. Anti-Establishment at heart, he led a constant philosophical fight against the oppressive forces of society. Defending free love and the emancipation of women, pacifist, anti-Army, and anti-Church, anti-colonialist with conviction, he ended his life championing the rights and the freedom of the Polynesians, a conquered and, at the time, vanishing people.

There were three major written works left by Gauguin which developed South Sea themes: Ancien Culte Mahorie, Noa Noa, and Avant et Après. To these titles should be added works of a different nature that were written during his sojourn in the South Pacific. They are: Cahier pour Aline, L'esprit moderne et le catholicisme, and Racontars de Rapin. Finally, very important for their analysis of colonial politics and social life are the articles he wrote for Le Sourire and Les Guêpes.

Ancien Culte Mahorie was written during Gauguin's first sojourn in Tahiti (1892). It deals with Tahitian mythology and relies strongly on two literary sources: Jacques-Antoine Moerenhout's Voyages aux îles du Grand Océan (1837), and Edmond de Bovis' Etat de la Société Tahitienne à l'arrivée des Européens (1855). Gauguin was particularly

interested in Moerenhout's account, which he often copied, using the exact phraseology of the original text. The work was eventually adorned with numerous drawings and water colours depicting mythological deities and meaningful passages of the written account. It is possible that Gauguin did not intend the work to be published, since the original manuscript was kept by him until the end of his life.

Ancien Culte Mahorie was utilized by Gauguin as a source of information for the composition of certain passages of Noa Noa. The latter work was written in 1893-1894, during Gauguin's stay in France. It was intended as an account of his two-year sojourn in Tahiti and comprised of descriptions of the island environment, scenes of the native life, and narratives of his experiences with the islanders. The work developed with the collaboration of Charles Morice, who was supposed to contribute poems to enhance and illustrate the text. Morice, however, overdid his part in the collaboration and altered the original account to a great extent. Published by the 'Revue Blanche' in 1887, and finally, as a book, in 1901, Noa Noa profoundly disappointed Gauguin, who saw in its pages much unauthentic authorship. Several subsequent editions of the book suffered from the same problem. It was only in 1966 that a definitive version of Noa Noa was finally published, faithfully based on

Gauguin's original account.[17]

Avant et Après is a collection of thoughts and memories covering several phases of Gauguin's life. It was written a few months before his death, in the Marquesas, and sums up much of Gauguin's views on life, art, and mankind. The book is particularly interesting for its account of Gauguin's life in Hiva-Oa, since Noa Noa covers only his Tahitian experiences between 1891 and 1893. Avant et Après was written in a very dramatic period, when Gauguin faced problems of health and became involved in several conflicts with the religious and political authorities on the island. The text shows this inner struggle for survival with justice and honour. Gauguin states clearly what his thoughts are, using the same directness and precision of insight that are characteristic of his style. This was the last important literary contribution that he gave to the world.

Apart from the three major works mentioned above Gauguin left other written documents of interest, although most of them are not directly concerned with his life in the Pacific. Cahier pour Aline was written during Gauguin's first stay in Tahiti (1892). As with Avant et Après, it deals with Gauguin's philosophy of life and his views on society. Water colours also illustrate the text. The original manuscript, kept by the 'Bibliotheque d'Art et d'Archeologie' of Paris,

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[17]Gauguin, Paul, Noa Noa (Paris: A. Balland, 1966), edited by Jean Loize.

was never published except for a facsimile edition prepared in 1963 by the museum's curator, Suzane Damiron.

L'esprit moderne et le catholicisme is a work in essay form dealing with Gauguin's views on religion. It dates from 1902, although it was actually inspired by an earlier attempt on the same topic, L'église catholique et les temps modernes, which Gauguin wrote in 1897 and left unfinished. The original manuscript is presently kept by the Art Museum of Saint Louis, U.S.A.

Racontars de Rapin are notes on Art written in 1902, when Gauguin was established in Hiva-Oa, in the Marquesas. Due to its satirical style and frequent allusions to some well-accepted painters of the day, the paper was refused publication by the 'Mercure de France' still during Gauguin's lifetime. It finally came to be published in 1951, under the auspice of Mme. A. Joly-Ségalen.

Gauguin's journalistic a tivities in Tahiti were centered around two papers: Le Sourire and Les Guêpes. The former was founded by Gauguin himself; the latter was owned by François Cardella, Mayor of Papeete and President of the Tahitian Catholic Party. Le Sourire had a short existence. It was founded by Gauguin in August, 1899, and ran with little commercial success until April, 1900. From this time on, Gauguin decided to concentrate his attention on the writing of articles for Les Guêpes, not only because it was financially more rewarding but also due to the larger receptivity of Cardella's paper among the Tahitian readers.

His contribution to Les Guêpes lasted until August, 1901, when he departed for the Marquesas. Gauguin found in journalism the perfect medium for making public his discontent with the critical political and economic situation which the French colony was facing at the time. Cardella and Gauguin had many common adversaries and their journalistic pact proved rewarding for both. Although Gauguin was anti-church, his relative economic dependence on Cardellas forced him to compromise and, at least temporarily, supress his religious opinions from the articles published. In Gauguin's articles of Le Sourire and Les Guêpes one finds a sharp but often emotional review of Tahitian politics. Gauguin's involvement in his task was deep and sincere, and he never lost a chance to expose the political corruption prevalent in the Tahitian colonial government of the time. The natives had his sympathy and he often defended them against the abuses of the European class.

Besides this legacy of an artistic, philosophic and political nature, an exceedingly important part of all information concerning Gauguin's life in the South Seas stems from his correspondence with his wife and some of his European friends. The letters written by him are open documents to the examination of his personality and his most intimate thoughts. They also give a valuable insight into the real conditions of his everyday life in Tahiti and in the Marquesas, since most of them were written in a frank and unsophisticated way.

PLATE I "Tahitian Landscape" (1891)
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis.

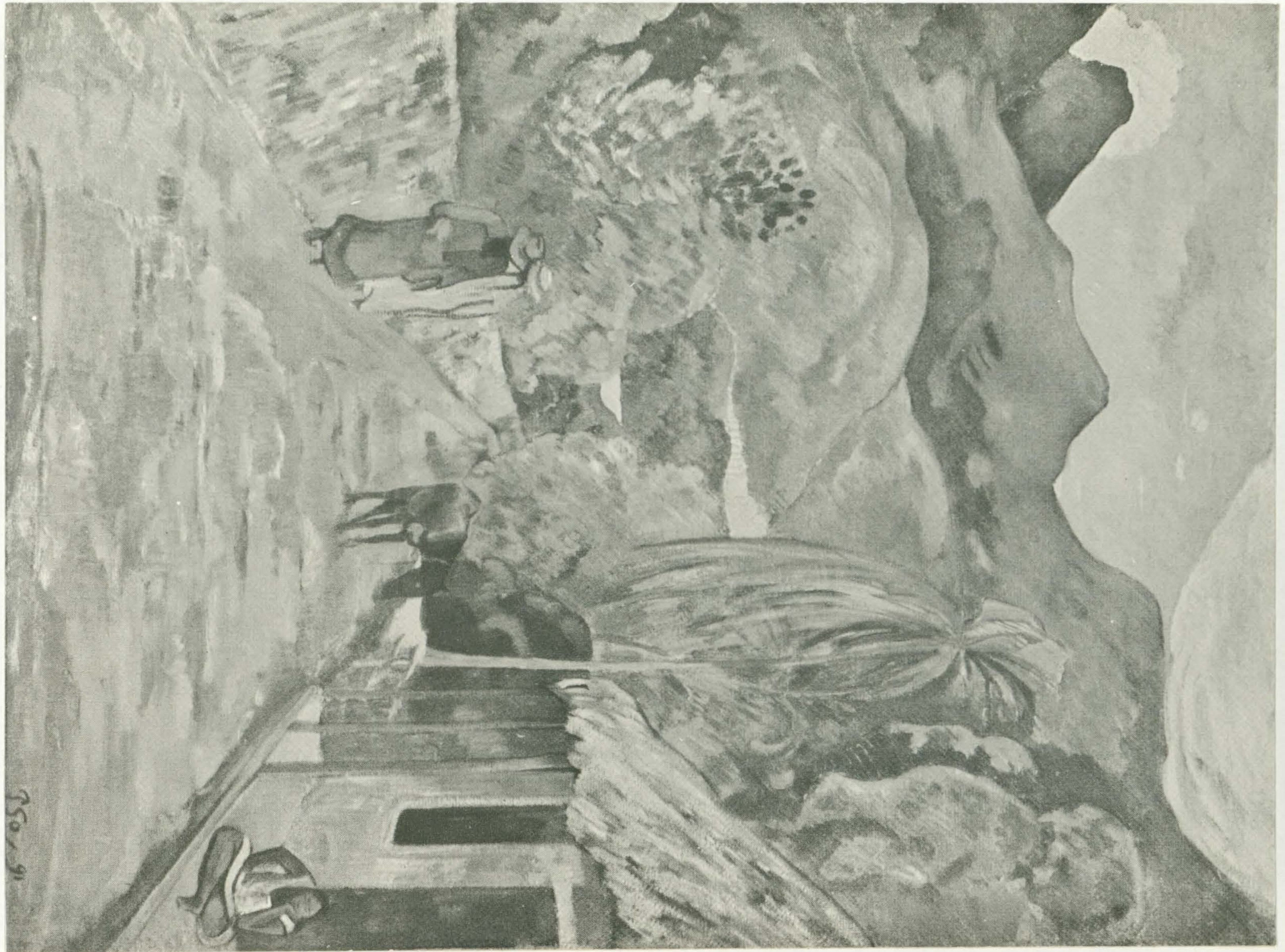

PLATE II "Street in Tahiti" (1891)
Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio.

PLATE III "Te Poipoi - Morning" (1892)
Charles S. Payson Collection, New York.

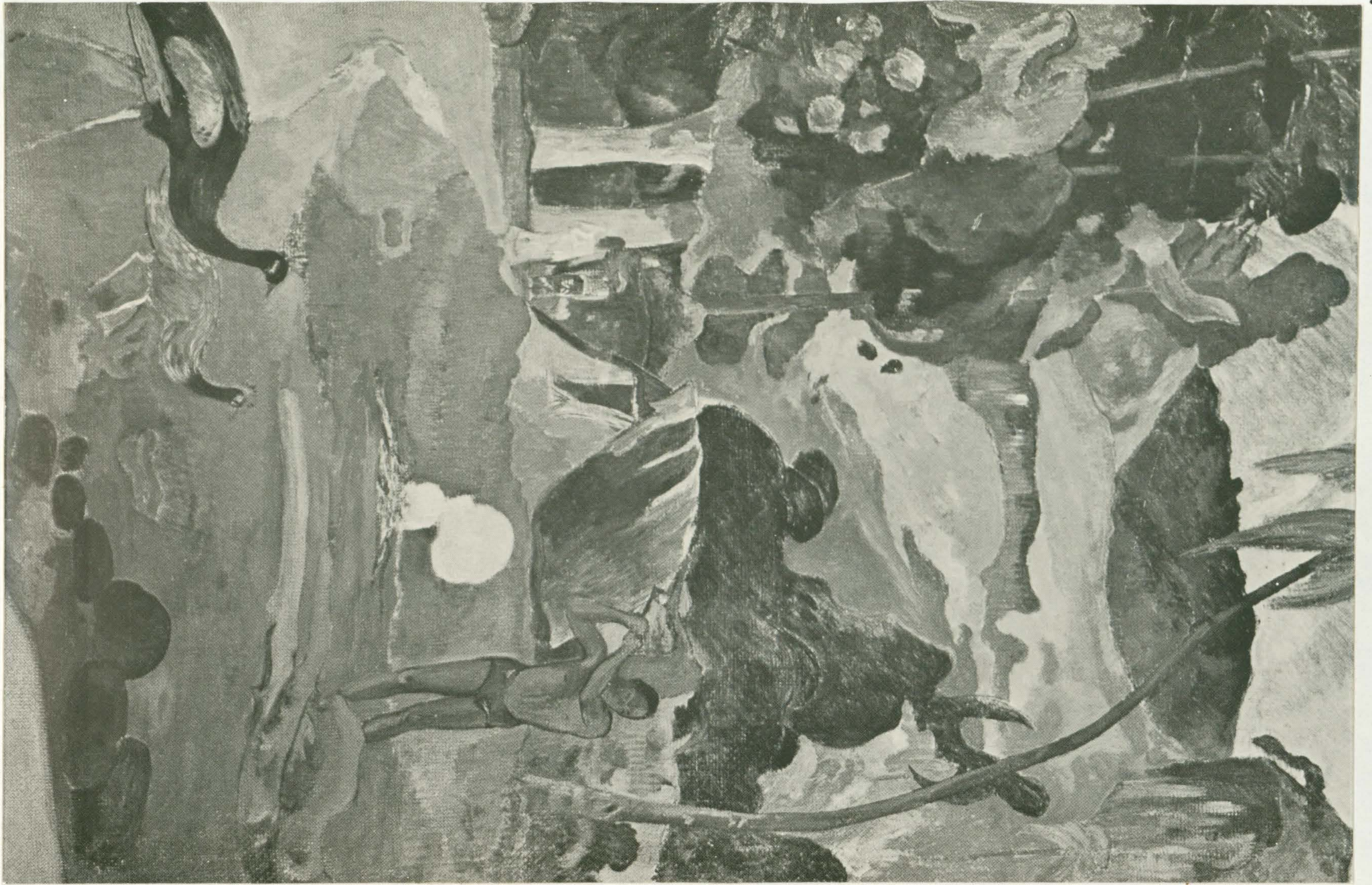

PLATE IV "Landscape with Peacock" (1892)
Pouchkine Museum, Moscow.

PLATE V "The Siesta" (1893)
Ira Haupt Collection, New York.

PLATE VI "Pastorales Tahitiennes" (1893)
Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

PLATE VII "Mahama no Atua - The Day of the God" (1894)
Art Institute, Chicago.

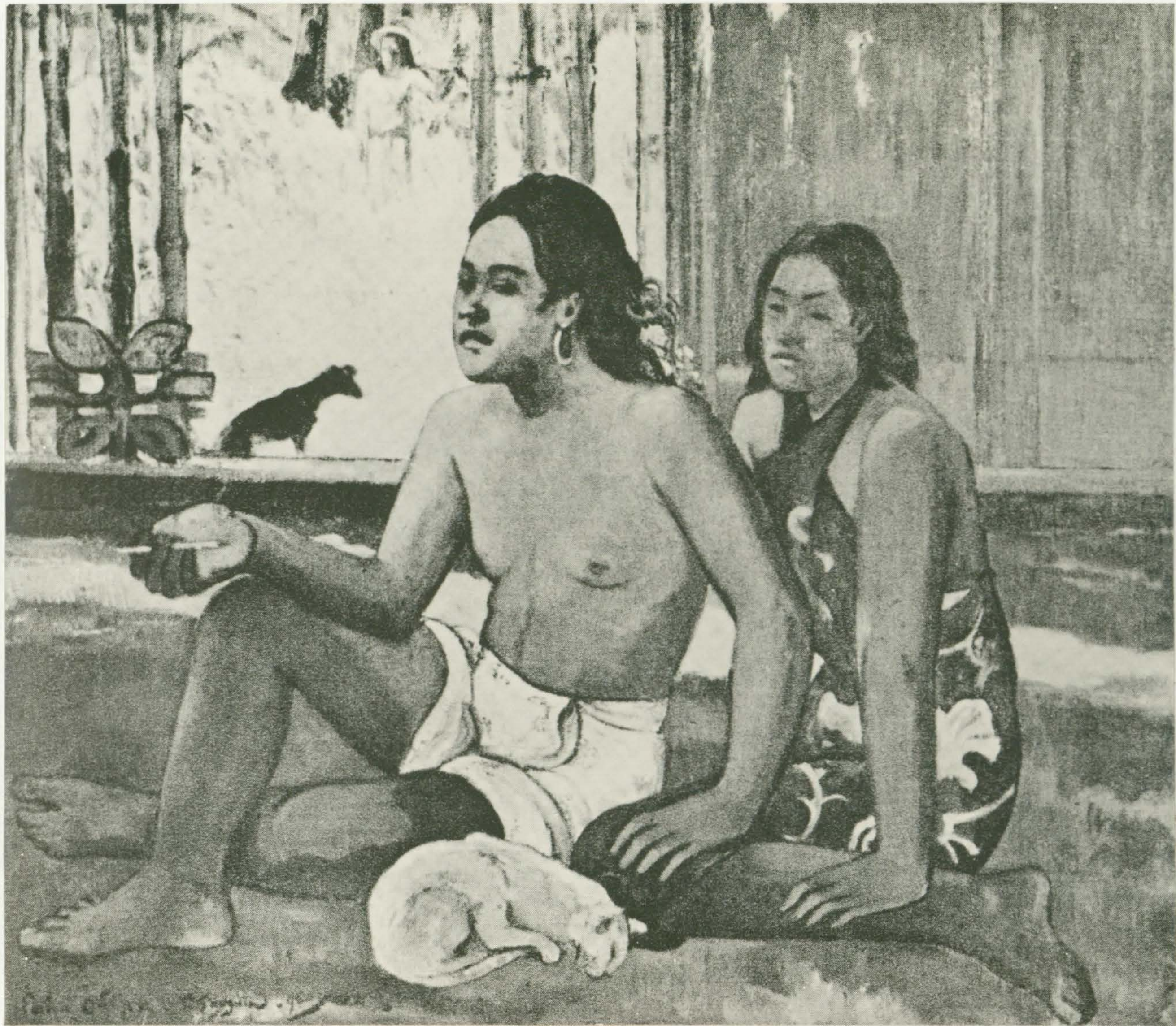

PLATE VIII "Eiaha ohipa - Do Not Work" (1896)
Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

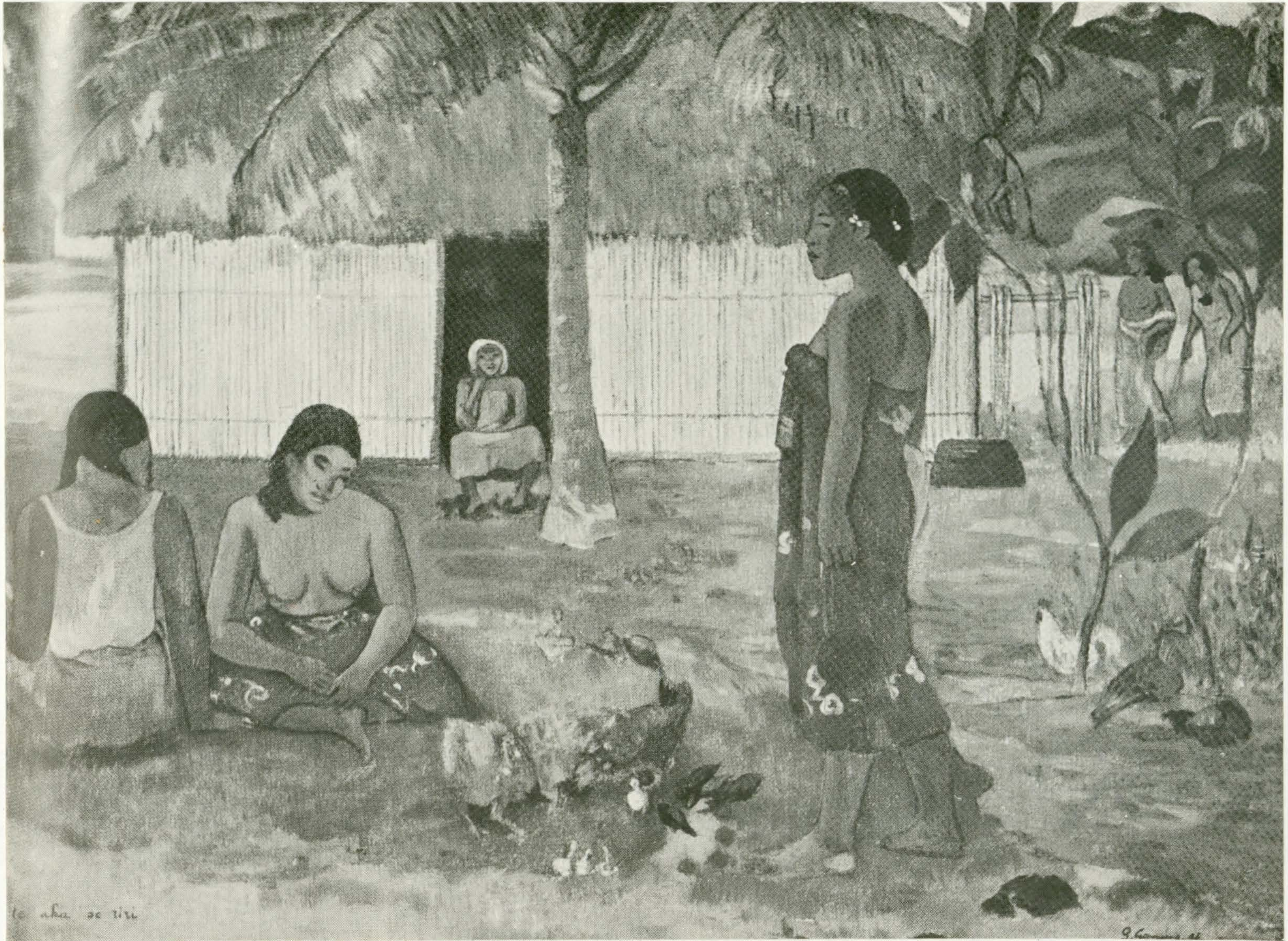

PLATE IX "Why are you angry?" (1896)
Art Institute, Chicago.

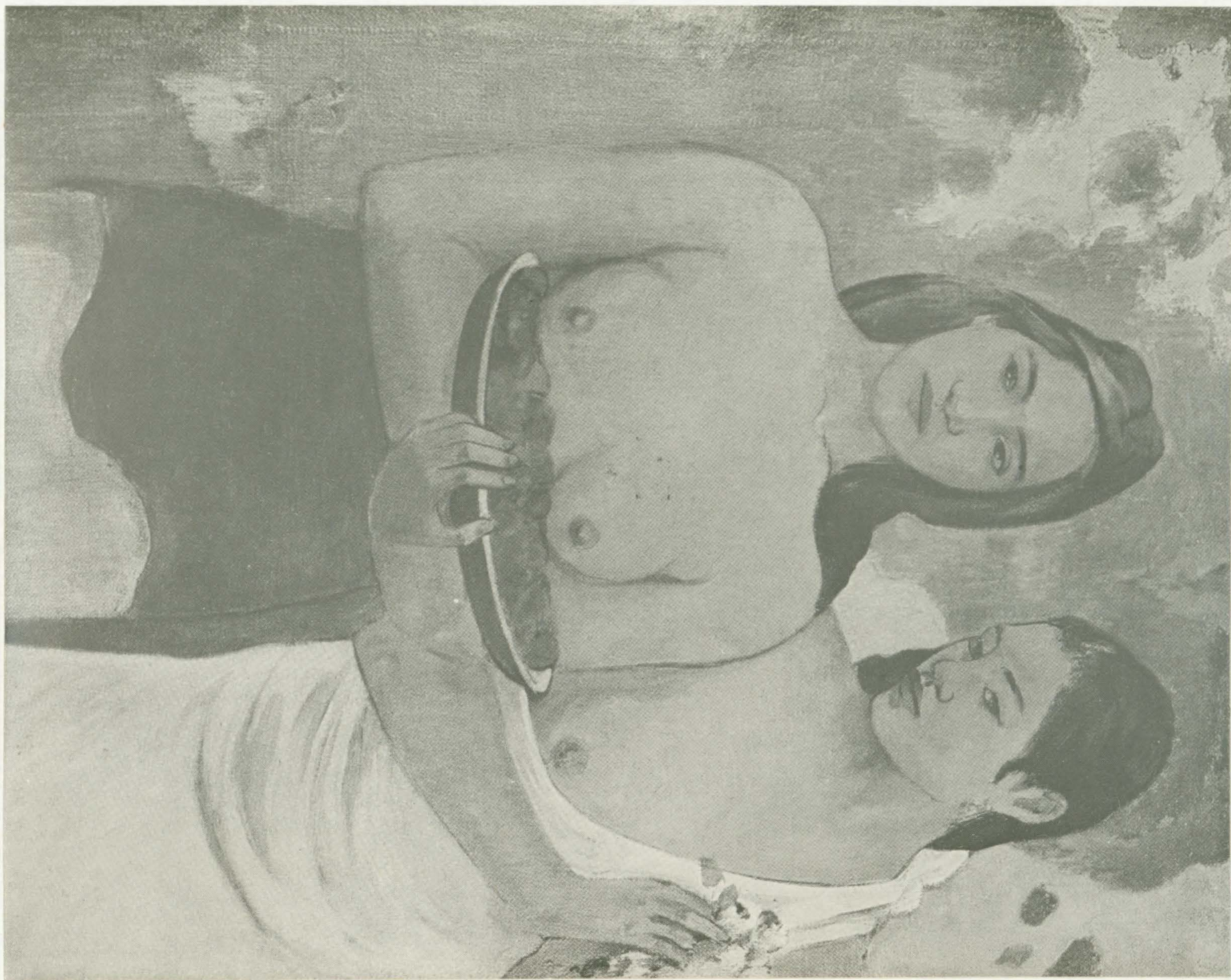

PLATE X "Tahitian women with mango blossoms" (1899)
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

PLATE XI "Rupe Rupe - Picking Fruit" (1899)
Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

PLATE XII "The Call" (1902)
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland.

CHAPTER V

STEVENSON AND GAUGUIN COMPARED

To compare Robert Louis Stevenson and Paul Gauguin in terms of their human and artistic dimension is a task that perhaps has never been attempted. However, similarities and differences between the two artists call for more attention, not only from literary critics and art historians, but also from other scholars concerned with the impact of the nineteenth century Pacific on European popular and scholarly thinking.

Four categories were chosen in which to compare Stevenson and Gauguin on the human and professional levels: A) Age; B) Health; C) Temperament/Personality; and D) Artistic career. Categories A, B, and C show patterns of great similarity between the two artists. Category D, although with one point of historical parallelism, shows essentially different developmental patterns.

A) Age:

Gauguin and Stevenson lived in the same historical period: the second half of the nineteenth century. Gauguin was born in 1848 and Stevenson in 1850. Stevenson died in 1894, at the age of 44. Gauguin outlived him to see the turn of the century; he died in 1903, at the age of 54.

Both men were influenced by the values of their time in social, political and economic matters.

B) Health:

"Health" also establishes a point of parallelism between the two artists, although the nature of their individual problems was essentially different.

Stevenson was a sickly and delicate person from early childhood. This state of permanent frailty led his parents to build a protective micro-environment around him. In time, this artificial milieu proved a fertile ground for the creation of his first fantasies, which were later developed into universally accepted works of fiction. Gauguin, on the contrary, was healthy and strong during his childhood and adolescence and only developed health problems after his first trip to Tahiti, in 1891. From then on, however, ill-health was almost constantly a part of his life.

Stevenson's years in the Pacific led to improvements in his health, perhaps due to the mild characteristics of the South Pacific environment. Gauguin's Pacific years show an opposite trend. Destitute, isolated from his artistic milieu, and in permanent conflict with the French colonial class, he developed health problems that ultimately led him to death.

Stevenson and Gauguin's diseases were different in nature. Stevenson's illness, tuberculosis, manifested itself in his adolescent years and became forever a part of his

physical and psychological self. Gauguin's disease, syphilis, was contracted at the end of his stay in Paris, in 1885. Its development damaged his eyesight and aggravated the healing of his ankle, broken in the incident at Concarneau. Coupled with heart problems manifested since 1892 and the excesses of Gauguin's late years, it considerably shortened his life.

In both Stevenson and Gauguin's case, health problems impaired the rhythm and amount of their artistic production to a degree beyond estimation.

C) Temperament/Personality:

The point of mutual convergence between the personalities of Gauguin and Stevenson is their drive towards escape. This escapism is acutely sensed in the content and nature of their works.

Gauguin and Stevenson had complex, often contradictory personalities. Both were emotional, exuberant men. Both were self-centered and defended their own artistic viewpoints with determination. Stevenson, the Scot, was, by taste and by temperament, French. His passion for French literature and civilization lasted throughout his life. Gauguin, a Frenchman by birth, was primarily a lover of "primitive natures." His temperament, however, was characteristically Gallic in a vivacious and mercurial way. Outside artistic matters, one of Stevenson's great concerns

was his own health, around which his life and the attention of the members of his family permanently centered. In Gauguin's case, the great concern of his late years was paucity of money, from which he suffered throughout his artistic career.

D) Artistic career:

Stevenson's literary career began early in his life, when he created his first short stories. From then on, his works grew in artistic quality to the level of literary masterpieces in his later years. Gauguin's career as a painter started comparatively late. His first amateur attempts were in 1871, when he was already twenty-three.

The year 1883 was by coincidence of great significance in the careers of Stevenson and Gauguin. In that year, Gauguin resigned his position as a stockbroker and turned completely to the world of art. In 1883, Stevenson became internationally famous as the author of Treasure Island, his first artistic and popular success.

From 1883 onwards the trend of their careers took opposite directions. Gauguin, initially a successful stockbroker, became a misunderstood and rejected painter. Stevenson, at first a semi-obscure author, became worldly famous as a fiction writer.

Gauguin and Stevenson in the South Pacific

Gauguin and Stevenson visited the Pacific in the same decade. Stevenson was the first to arrive (1888) and stayed in the area until his death (1894). Gauguin came twice to the Pacific. His first stay in Tahiti lasted from 1891 to 1893. His second stay, beginning in Tahiti and concluding in the Marquesas, lasted from 1895 to 1903.

Different motives brought the two artists to the South Seas. Stevenson came with the intent of making a six-month cruise to improve his health and to collect first-hand material on island life for his future works. The temporary character of his first sojourn evolved into a permanent stay when he came to believe that few other places in the world offered him better conditions of life than Samoa. Gauguin went to Tahiti in order to escape from the financial strain of European life and to make close contact with primitive cultures a d exotic environments. His ultimate purpose was to create a new art, derived from the observation and synthesis of a different physical and cultural milieu.

Prior to 1888, Stevenson had been influenced by Herman Melville and Charles Warren Stoddard in the process of developing his own imagery of South Pacific environments. However, his extensive travels in Polynesia and Micronesia eventually provided him with personal ways of observing and describing the Pacific macrocosm--an asset of which he took exceptional advantage in the writing of his novels and short stories. Gauguin, on the other hand, was not acquainted with

the works of Melville and Stoddard, which had not yet been translated into French. His literary source of information on the Pacific had been Pierre Loti's Le Mariage de Loti, a book of which he did not think very highly.

Stevenson's Pacific output comprised novels, short stories, travel sketches, and works of a journalistic and political nature. Stevensonian South Seas fiction remained faithful to the romantic tradition of "Paradise literature" which had Melville and Stoddard among its most highly reputed members. However, the excellent level of Stevenson's prose places him beyond comparison with any of the other authors belonging to the same 'school,' with the exception of Herman Melville.

Gauguin's Pacific output consisted of paintings, drawings, water colours, sculptures and works of prose. His art is an intellectual art--a personal restructure of experiences and environmental perceptions. Gauguin was also affected by the South Seas romantic tradition but he did not yield to its influence to the same extent as Stevenson. He tried to develop his Polynesian imagery independently of previously explored subjects and created pictorial themes out of his own imagination, regulated by his personal standards of taste and artistic representation.

Although living in the Pacific in the same decade, Stevenson and Gauguin never acknowledged each other's existence in their writings from the South Seas. They settled in islands thousands of miles apart, a fact which made a

meeting of the two artists virtually impossible. Stevenson visited Tahiti in 1888, three years before the arrival of Gauguin. Gauguin, on the other hand, did not have the chance of visiting Samoa during his trip from France to Tahiti via Australia in 1891. It is probable that Gauguin knew of the existence of Stevenson, because by the late 1880's and early 1890's the popularity of the Scottish writer had reached its peak. In his writings, however, Gauguin does not make any reference to Stevenson or to any of Stevenson's books. It seems likely that Gauguin never read any of Stevenson's works, including the ones on the South Seas. Stevenson's death, in December, 1894, found Gauguin in France. The event merited full coverage in the European press and it is unlikely that Gauguin was unaware of the news. His journals, however, do not mention Stevenson. In the same fashion, Stevenson never acknowledged the existence of Gauguin in his vast correspondence from the South Seas. This can be understood because Gauguin at the time was not internationally known. Although he enjoyed some notoriety in the Parisian artistic world, Gauguin was not well established as an accepted painter in his own country, where his name was invariably associated with polemical artistic affairs. Stevenson's intermittent sojourns in France during the 1870's and 1880's gave him many opportunities of making acquaintances in the art circles of the country but it seems unlikely that he ever encountered Gauguin.

Stevenson and Gauguin: accuracy of geographical expression

The Pacific-based works of Stevenson and Gauguin constitute artistic representations of the South Pacific environment. They portray this environment with attention to the diversity of its physical and cultural components.

As works of art, the novels of Stevenson and the paintings of Gauguin are self-contained worlds. They exist independently of all comparison with 'common reality,' undisturbed by the concepts of 'true' and 'false.' They are intellectual creations, products of the artist's will, expressions of his treatment of impressions received and elaborated by his mind.

Neither Stevenson nor Gauguin composed their works with pretension to geographic accuracy. As artists, their objective was to create works with a life of their own, 'real' in their own right. However, these works do contain geographic images, portraying environmental elements in a personal and artistically meaningful way. The question of whether or not the patterns of description and/or portrayal used by the artist correspond to commonly perceived 'reality' is extremely controversial. The most reasonable assessment which can be made with regard to this question is that these works represent 'reality' as perceived and 'intentionally' portrayed by the artist. The metaphysical implication of this statement is beyond refutation.

The artist and the geographer play roles of similar

kind: they both appreciate and interpret environments. Their processes of perceiving and interpreting are, however, distinct. The artist interprets a landscape subjectively and analyzes its components by using the power of his sensitivity and aesthetic standpoint. The geographer does it otherwise. His primary aim is the objective rendering of the fundamental characteristics of a physical or humanized landscape. His thinking patters are empirical; the artist thinks aesthetically. The geographer strives for accuracy and precision in the performance of the task for which he was trained; the artist strives for originality and aesthetic perfection in the expression of his art. The geographer often relies on sophisticated technology in his effort to evaluate environmental data with scientific rigour. The artist simply utilizes the means available to him or the medium in which he is best categorized to give form and expression to his creation.

In order to determine the accuracy with which environmental data are portrayed in a work of art it would be necessary to effect a comparative analysis between the mentioned work of art and correspondent works in the field of science. This effort, essential to the obtaining of any basic results in the analysis, would be fruitful and rewarding for the researcher in the sense that a certain geographical area would be studied and thoroughly known from both a scientific and an artistic perspective. In terms of the artistic or the scientific works, however, the comparison would be

meaningless because both works are mutually exclusive, being representatives of independent types of knowledge and human endeavour. The work of art and the work of science serve different purposes. They exist independently of one another and only complement each other on a psychological level, in the mind of the reader or the beholder.

Three statements can be made with regard to the geographical content of the Pacific works of Stevenson and Gauguin. These statements should be seen in a comprehensive perspective including works related to Oceania by other creative artists:

1. Their works express environmental images in a non-technical, non-scientific way. They are not "unscientific," they are "artistic;"

2. Their works are evocative of the Polynesian atmosphere, which, in itself, is an abstraction. They reveal the nature of the places portrayed without making use of detailed descriptions of environmental factors;

3. Their works contain geographical information transmitted unsystematically through a poetical medium: prose, poetry, or plastic art.

Stevenson attempted to give to his South Sea novels and short stories a true regional character, a local colour unmixed with stereotyped views of South Sea life. His prose, although highly romantic, was full of realistic imagery concerning Polynesian life. Certain aspects of this purposeful naturalism were misunderstood and rejected by a minor part

of the reading public, which expected accounts of a more idealized nature.

Gauguin made a similar struggle against stereotyped imagery but directed his effort in an opposite direction. He intended to convey a true representation of Tahitian life by observing and assimilating its components, eventually transposing them to the canvas with attention to specific traits of a more permanent character. His paintings do not show environmental scenes in a photographic manner. Their geographical content is diluted in poetical structures and tones. The Tahitian atmosphere is captured in its totality through the studied rendition of the essential elements of the island's physical environment and local culture. Even his idealized compositions carry a full load of stylized Tahitian pictorial symbols, giving them an appearance of regional verisimilitude.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

For the last two hundred years the South Pacific has gripped the minds of generations of men in a most fascinating, illusive and delusive way. A myth has been created about the islands of the 'South Seas.' These islands were transformed into earthly paradises by the imagination of men weary of civilization, longing for escape from the pressures and hardships of social life, searching for Eden and a Golden Age.

The development of the 'South Seas myth' in the core of Western culture and imagination was a process of creativity which involved the participation and contribution of people with different backgrounds, experiences and ideas. Since the accounts of the voyages of Wallis, Cook and Bougainville were first published, this myth has been continuously nourished by the work of writers, poets, travellers, painters, photographers, and others, through the media of prose, poetry, music, plastic art, theater and cinema.

Three concepts are singularly important for the understanding of the evolution of the 'South Seas myth.' These are the notions of 'ethnocentrism,' ' individuality,' and 'relativity.'

'Ethnocentrism' has dominated the relationship of the Western man with the Pacific from the time of the first exploratory contacts to the present. This tendency is easily detected in the perceptions that were held of the new land, in the attitudes of the newcomers towards the physical environment of the islands visited and the native human element locally encountered, and, finally, in the categories of ideas and values that were established for comparison between 'home country' and 'new land.' This ethnocentrism was reflected in the way things were described and evaluated, always according to Western standards of taste and morality. On the economic and political level, ethnocentrism coloured the expectations of the newcomers regarding the profits that would be available to them through the exploitation of the territories discovered.

The notion of 'individuality' implies that, although ethnocentrism characterized the physical and mental relationship of the Western man with the Pacific, human differences always existed as far as this relationship is concerned. From these differences sprang a freshness and originality of observation that permitted each participant in the process to retain his own identity as an author and as a human being. This is particularly true in relation to Gauguin, whose works expressed perceptions of physical and human environments in a highly personal, individualistic, form.

The 'relativity' to which we refer is merely the negation of the absolute. No matter what we take into

consideration, concepts, ideas, images, these and all other things are valid and exist in their own right. There is not an overwhelming, absolute truth for anything related to the myth. What really counts are the 'essences,' essences of ideas, feelings, beliefs, essences of the 'already established' in people's minds; in sum, what we accept as 'common knowledge.' The legend of the South Seas has become integrated into the body of beliefs that forms Western man's mystique. This familiarity with the myth transformed its components into pieces of a psychological mosaic in which different units are constantly springing to mind whereas others momentarily recede into a state of oblivion. This mechanism reinforces the condition of 'relativity" inherent to the myth and stresses its basic antagonism to absolute truth.

Artists have played an important role in the popularization of the Pacific, but their influence and the content of their work has varied through time. Initially, besides being personally and psychologically tied to academies and 'schools of taste,' artists had their creative freedom restrained by the simple fact that they were mainly draughtsmen at the service of scientists and naturalists in the voyages of exploration. Later, when travelling on their own initiative, they achieved a greater degree of artistic independence, and rendered their impressions of places and peoples with more fidelity to their own artistic conceptions and imagination.

Many generations of artists came in contact with the Pacific before Stevenson and Gauguin settled in the area. From their preceding counterparts Stevenson and Gauguin received the benefits of a varied cultural legacy, which served as a basis for the creation of their own imagery of Pacific themes. In turn, they were to pass on a legacy that was to influence subsequent artists and thereby continue the evolution of the 'South Seas myth.' Comparatively speaking, Stevenson was more influenced by previous forms of Pacific artistic representation than Gauguin. In Stevenson's background we find familiarity with old Pacific classics as, for example, the Voyages of Cook, besides fictional works by Cooper, Marryat, Melville and Stoddard. Gauguin's only acquaintances with South Seas literature was Loti's classic Le Mariage de Loti, and it seems improbable that he was familiar with the works of Parkinson, Hodges and Webber portraying the Tahitian environment.

In contact with the Pacific, Stevenson and Gauguin added a new dimension to their art. The personal experience of new environments gave them sensory and intellectual support for the creation of art forms authentic in regional character, expressive of a genuine South Pacific atmosphere. This sensible rendering of environmental perceptions was conveyed, however, through Europeanized patterns of artistic representation. Although Polynesian in content, Stevenson's prose and Gauguin's paintings remained overwhelmingly European as far as form and stylistic devices were concerned.

Both Stevenson and Gauguin experienced the cultural influence of the 'South Seas myth.' Developing the essence of the myth in their works, they gave continuity to the flow of ideas that had originated in the diffusion of Pacific accounts during the eighteenth century. The majority of twentieth century Pacific authors was, in turn, influenced by the artistic heritage left by Stevenson and Gauguin. This influence is still felt.

Among the twentieth century authors intellectually swayed by Stevenson but who nevertheless created intensely personal South Seas prose are: Beatrice E. Grimshaw, A. Safroni-Middleton, Frederick O'Brien, James N. Hall, Charles B. Nordhoff, Robert Dean Frisbie, Robert Gibbings, Alain Gerbault, William S. Stone, James A. Michener, James Ramsey Ullman, and Eugene Burdick. With the exception of Alain Gerbault, the authors mentioned above belong to the English-speaking world. To the same list should be added the name of the most important Pacific writer of the turn of the century, Louis Becke, whose literary output is not only vast but also authentic in regional characterization. William Somerset Maugham and Jack London, both internationally acclaimed for their European-based work, also left excellent pages of South Seas fiction. Maugham's novel <u>A Moon and Sixpence</u>, based on Gauguin's life in Tahiti, was the first major attempt to romanticize the experiences of Gauguin in the South Pacific. A final literary figure worthy of mention is Rupert Brooke, whose short stay in

Tahiti resulted in the composition of some of the finest pieces of poetry ever to be dedicated to that island.

Gauguin did not have any successor of similar artistic genius in the Pacific. He still remains today the greatest European painter ever to portray Pacific Island themes. However, among the artists who also contributed to Polynesian pictorial representation in the last and in the present centuries three names deserve special attention. John La Farge, contemporary of Gauguin who accompanied Henry Adams in his extensive cruise across the Pacific; Oscar F. Schmidt, who established himself in the Marquesas in the early part of this century; and Octave Morillot, who settled in the Society Islands. New Zealand painters, for the importance and specific character of their work, are usually classified and studied in a separate category.

Through the years, Gauguin and Stevenson became popularly identified with the Pacific in contemporary Western consciousness. The diffusion of their works by mass media contributed to the expansion of their popularity and secured its permanence in the public mind. The strength of Stevenson's influence is mostly felt in the English-speaking world. Comparatively speaking, Gauguin's name and his art have a more universal appeal. As a matter of fact, the level of association between Gauguin and Tahiti reached such intensity in modern popular thought that it became possible to distinguish two phases of Tahitian pictorial history: the era before Gauguin and the era after Gauguin. Gauguin

recreated the image of Tahiti in the eyes of the world.

The 'South Seas myth' remained a typical Western creation in the twentieth-century. In comparative terms, few authors of Polynesian extraction have contributed to 'Paradise literature' and none of them won international fame for their works. Notable also is the nonexistence of highly reputed Polynesian painters.

Cinema, theater, music and photography offered new frontiers to the expansion of the myth in the last decades. Film, television and stage productions with Pacific-centered plots have enjoyed good popular receptivity in most instances. Travel industry and tourist literature have also exploited the essence of the myth in worldwide publicity campaigns for the promotion of tourism in the Pacific. Much of the material used in their publicity advertisements stems from literary-artistic sources, and stresses with great emphasis the unspoiled character of the Polynesian environment. This commercialized representation of the South Seas, lush in idealized exoticism and erotic appeal, is but one example of the varied forms which the myth has been given in recent years.

The evolution of the 'South Seas myth' started with the propagation of the ideas of Cook and Bougainville about the Tahitian environment, and continued through the literary and artistic input of successive generations of visitors to the Pacific, shows nowadays some new developmental trends. Its phase of purely artistic endeavour is now apparently

over, although 'Paradise literature' still enjoys a reasonable amount of public demand. Taking advantage of the significant degree of public cognizance regarding the romantic vision of the South Pacific, and relying on the efficiency of air transportation, tourism has made extensive advances in the area. Exploiting the praised amenities of the island milieu, publicizing native music and dances, stressing the exoticism of local customs and the delights of Oceanian hospitality, publicity has become an energizing factor in the diffusion of the myth. Quite often local traditions have been artificially revived and objects of native material culture have been partially or totally recreated in order to compose a picture of 'regional authenticity,' according to the stereotyped South Sea island vision. This trend has become particularly marked since the end of World War II, during which time social, economic and transportation developments in the Pacific have led tc an acceleration of the demystification which Stevenson and Gauguin had already been able to witness in their lifetime.

The present study indicates that Stevenson and Gauguin's contribution to the development of the 'South Seas myth' was permanent in character. Their artistic input exerted a deep influence upon twentieth century Pacific artists and stimulated a world wide awareness of the South Pacific in terms of its legendary, mythical image. Although this was not their specific intent, both Stevenson and Gauguin left works which, by their nature, are subjective

interpretations of Polynesian environments. This artistic interpretation of geographical elements has its own validity in the context of human knowledge.

Subjectivity in the portrayal of physical and human landscapes is also inherent to some classic geographical works, such as the essays of Carl O. Sauer depicting the American scene or the monographs produced by Jean Brunhes and Paul Vidal de la Blache, of the 'French Regional School.' These authors have frequently proved that the application of subjective thinking to empirical work can be often extremely enriching, giving a basic human dimension to scientific endeavours.

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Surname: de Aquino Given Names: Ricardo Bigi

Place of Birth: Juiz de Fora, Brazil

Date of Birth: July 13, 1949

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

Institution	Entering		Leaving
Liceu Nilo Pecanha, Niterói, Brazil	1965	to	1968
Alliance Française de Niterói, Brazil	1965	to	1970
Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brazil	1969	to	1972
University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C.	1973	to	1975

Degrees, Diplomas, etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

Certificado (1968), Liceu Nilo Peçanha, Niterói, Brazil

Certificat d'Etudes du Sixième Degré (1970), Alliance Française de Niterói, Brazil

Certificate (1971), Interamerican University Foundation and Harvard Summer School, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Licenciado em Geografia, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brazil

Certificate (1973), University of Oslo-International Summer School, Norway

Honors and Awards:

Alliance Française de Niterói Scholarship (1970)

Interamerican University Foundation Scholarship (1971)

University of Oslo Scholarship (1973)

University of Victoria Graduate Fellowship (1973-1975)

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