Robert Louis Stevenson and W. Somerset Maugham

A Call and Response from the Pacific

Richard J. HILL
Chaminade University of Honolulu

ABSTRACT

This essay examines how the series of short stories by the English author W. Somerset Maugham appear to form a certain literary response to similar stories written twenty years earlier by the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson. In the process, it argues that both authors record how the Pacific and some of its communities have changed drastically over a short period of time, between the 1890s and the 1910s. Maugham does this by employing some of the character tropes, settings, and even plot structures of Stevenson's earlier stories, giving them twists which make them relevant to the world he finds in 1916. It also establishes the significance of Stevenson's stories in how western writers perceived and approached such subjects in the early twentieth century.

KEYWORDS: Stevenson, Somerset Maugham, Pacific, short story, "The Bottle Imp," "The Beach of Falesá," "The Ebb-Tide," "Honolulu," The Trembling of a Leaf, Island Nights' Entertainments, Hawaii, Hawaiian, Samoa, colonial, dia-colonial

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§ Richard J. Hill received his PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2005. He is Professor of English at the School of Humanities, Arts and Design, Chaminade University of Honolulu. *Email: richard.hill@chaminade.edu*

Introduction

IN 1894, the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson died in his adopted home of Samoa. During his time in the Pacific, he observed, studied, and ingratiated himself into the indigenous communities he visited throughout the island chains. The result of these experiences was the publication of letters, histories, novels and short stories that attempted to capture the breadth of what he encountered; the most significant of these for this paper are the short stories collected in *Island Nights' Entertainments* (1893)—entitled "The Beach of Falesá," "The Bottle Imp," and "The Isle of Voices"—and "The Ebb-Tide" (1894), which, while little read today, nonetheless stand as innovative and influential in the colonial and post-colonial writings of the twentieth century. Twenty-two years after Stevenson's death in 1916, the English author William Somerset Maugham traveled to the Pacific following his experiences as an ambulance driver in the trenches of the First World War. Maugham's observations are similarly captured in an even less-read collection of short stories named *The Trembling of a Leaf* (1923). These stories were written based on notes he took while travelling through the Pacific with his lover William Haxton. A close reading of both these collections reveals that Maugham was clearly familiar with Stevenson's stories. Their stories, read together, also reveal a Pacific much changed. The years 1894 to 1916 do not on first glance represent a huge leap in time, but these authors' respective narratives demonstrate massive shifts in the social order, in which economic and religious colonization has overwhelmed indigenous world views, racial theory has become fully entrenched, and the "natives" (not just indigenous, but "local" peoples) have become worldly and learned to exploit the systems that are subjugating them.

In *The Haunted Study*, Peter Keating positions Maugham amongst a group of British novelists who were influenced by the work of Emile Zola and by French realism. Maugham's literary works were concerned with the psychological realism of his characters, predicated on personal experience or observations of human behavior. Within the same paragraph, Keating also notes that Stevenson's late Pacific work also falls into this style, "notably 'The Beach of Falesá' (1893) and 'The Ebb Tide' (1894)" (116). This matching of Maugham's style with Stevenson's Pacific stories is helpful to this paper, as Stevenson's two stories seem to loom large in *The Trembling of a Leaf*, Maugham's collection of short stories set in the Pacific in the mid-1910s. *The Trembling of a Leaf* was published nearly thirty years after Stevenson's *Island Nights' Entertainments* (1893), which represents a huge jump in cultural contexts, following the end of the Victorian era, the establishment of colonial and proxy governments, and World War I. The Pacific of the mid-to-late 1910s was a much different place from the one Stevenson had travelled through in the early 1890s, though for travelers and writers, Stevenson's works cast a long

shadow in how the Pacific was understood and interpreted by western readers. Maugham's stories reference Stevenson himself, but I will argue further that *The Trembling of a Leaf* is in part a literary response to Stevenson's Pacific fiction, and, further, provides evidence that Stevenson himself provided the literary foundation for western responses to the Pacific in literature for the decades after his death.

Stevenson set sail from England with his wife Fanny, mother, and step-son Lloyd Osbourne following the death of his father in 1887, traveling across the American mainland by train, and setting sail into the South Seas from San Francisco, never to return. They traveled through various island chains, and eventually settled in Samoa, where he died at the age of 44. While in the Pacific, Stevenson wrote some of his most innovative work, including the novels *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), *Catriona* (1894), and the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston*. He also explored and studied the indigenous cultures he encountered throughout the Pacific Island chains, attempting to record the traditions, customs, and stories specific to each island nation they stayed in (resulting in a proto-ethnographic study titled *In the South Seas*). He incorporated aspects of these stories into his imaginative work, including *Island Nights' Entertainments*.

It is these stories, in addition to "The Ebb-Tide," that seem to have formed a template to which Maugham reacts in *Trembling of a Leaf*, not only in narrative form (a collection of short stories) but in the characters, settings, even plot structures. Selina Hastings, Maugham's recent biographer, states, "Since boyhood, when he had read Melville and Pierre Loti and the Polynesian novels of Robert Louis Stevenson, Maugham's imagination had been fired by dreams of the South Seas…". This essay will argue further that Stevenson's and Maugham's Pacific stories should be read together, to create a broader understanding of how these writers perceived the Pacific at two relatively close points in time: the 1890s and 1910s. Maugham's work, read next to Stevenson's, reveals sociological, economic, political, and colonial differences not just in the colonized, but in the colonizers themselves. I will discuss various characters and incidents to highlight these differences, but I will focus on two of Maugham's stories in particular, "Honolulu," and "Mackintosh."

Maugham's *Trembling of a Leaf* contains the following short stories in order: "The Pacific," (which is a descriptive introduction) "Mackintosh," "The Fall of Edward Barnard," "Red," "The Pool," "Honolulu," "Rain," and "Envoi." [1] As with *Island Nights' Entertainments*, these stories should be read *as* a collection, as they serve to create a collaged impression of a wide range of experiences in different parts of the Pacific. However, while there is a great deal that could be analyzed as responsive to Stevenson, I will focus here on location (specifically Honolulu), female characters, race, and colonialism. I will attempt to demonstrate how a close reading of these stories reveals the ways in which some of Stevenson's

worst fears for Polynesia and its peoples had become realities by the 1910s, but also how those peoples have developed skills and techniques to assert their own identities, and subvert authority, within a colonial hierarchy.

"Civilized" Honolulu, 1889-1916

STEVENSON and Maugham arrived in Hawai'i to very different racial and political environments. Stevenson first arrived in Hawai'i in 1889, when Hawai'i was still a kingdom, ruled by an inspirational, if flawed, king, Kalākaua. Hawai'i was one of the most literate nations in the world, still predominantly Native Hawaiian by population, and economically independent.[2] However, the rot of "civilization"—western economic and military colonialism—was setting in, as the sons of the original missionaries enriched and empowered themselves at the expense of indigenous peoples and leaders. Stevenson was greeted personally and befriended by Kalākaua, an honor aided by the fact that the king's brother-in-law, Archibald Cleghorn, was Scottish by descent. Photographs of the time show Kalākaua hosting Stevenson, Fanny (his wife), his mother, and his stepson Lloyd Osbourne at Honolulu Harbor, and others show Stevenson deep in conversation with then-Princess Lili'uokalani as special guests of the royal family at a luau in Waikiki. These were the last years of the Hawaiian Kingdom, however. By the time Stevenson returned to Hawai'i briefly in 1893, Kalākaua's brilliant but doomed sister, Lili'uokalani, had been usurped and the kingdom had been overthrown by the "Missionary Boys," the sons and relatives of the original missionaries, who had subsequently established a provisional government.[3] Stevenson greatly admired Lili'uokalani; he sympathized with the plight of the indigenous people and was appalled at their treatment. When he settled in Samoa, he was insistent that it avoid the same fate.

When Maugham arrived in Honolulu in 1916, Hawai'i had undergone many changes. Hawai'i had been annexed to the US in 1898 by President McKinley, white rule was firmly established, and local peoples—meaning both indigenous Hawaiians and settled outsiders—were learning to live under the imposed rules of an illegal government. Hawai'i was a US territory, immigration from the US Mainland, China, Japan, the Philippines, and other Pacific islands had changed the racial landscape of Hawai'i, pushing Native Hawaiians out of their traditional settlements, all while the government suppressed their rights to practice their culture or speak their language. Honolulu, which Stevenson had found so over-developed in 1889 on his first trip, had undergone radical changes by the 1910s. For example, in 1900, a "controlled" fire meant to stop the progress of bubonic plague, quickly burned down most of Chinatown, much of which was

reconstructed over the following decade (Scott 319-336). In Waikiki, traditionally the site of lands belonging to the royal family, a massive irrigation project with the construction of the Ala Wai Canal, the parceling off of royal lands, and the construction of the first hotel laid the foundations for what would become the modern center of tourism in the Islands (White and Kraus 69).[4] In addition, Europe was in the throes of World War I, and though the US was yet to join the war, tensions were high on the streets of Honolulu, as citizens from both sides of the conflict mingled in the bars and shops. Despite all these physical, racial, and socio-economic changes between Stevenson's last visit in 1894 and Maugham's arrival in 1916, Maugham's observations of life in the Pacific share similarities in their observations of an urbanized and diverse population, and the increasing marginalization of Native Hawaiians as the predominant ethnicity.

Two stories are pertinent here: Stevenson's "The Bottle Imp," and Maugham's "Honolulu." "The Bottle Imp" is set in Hawaii, between the Big Island and Oahu (with trips to San Francisco and Tahiti interwoven). The story is narrated from an indigenous perspective, the protagonist Keawe and his bride Kokua attempting to navigate a new world of consumerism, economic necessity, and a changing racial landscape. Briefly, the bottle Keawe procures in San Francisco allows him to wish for anything he desires, but it must be sold for less than he bought it, otherwise he will burn in hell for eternity.[5] The bottle disappears from his life once he has manifested the white house he desired; he meets and marries Kokua, but soon discovers a patch of suspicious skin—leprosy—and must find the bottle to cure himself again. He tracks the bottle down to a *haole* living on Beretania Street in Honolulu who bought the bottle for two cents, and he begs Keawe to buy it from him to save his own soul. Keawe does so, but despairs of his fate until Kokua (which means helper in Hawaiian) saves his life. From a socio-political perspective, this story communicates much about the Hawaiian Kingdom (as it still was in 1891): our protagonists are full Native Hawaiian, with agency and intelligence; there appears to be a clear racial separation between indigenous Hawaiians and *haoles* (broadly meaning foreigners, but with particular respect to white colonists); and while there is certainly a Chinese presence, racial lines are still relatively clear. Western imperialism is taking hold, and Keawe and Kokua must adapt and learn to survive economically, while preserving their Hawaiian-ness. Like their royalty, they must learn to blend the old with the new, tradition with commercialism. The bottle contains an ancient *aitu* (spirit), but it bows to the rules of commercialism, being bought and sold for ever decreasing value; this duality of spiritualism and materialism encapsulates the dilemma of Polynesian cultures who were learning the ropes of western commercialism. Lili'uokalani herself articulates this dilemma in describing a cabinet of King Lunalilo, who were staunchly pro-American:

> The policy of the new cabinet was distinctively American, in opposition to that which may properly be called Hawaiian; the latter looking to the prosperity and progress of the nation as an independent sovereignty, the former seeking to render the Islands a mere dependency, either openly or under sufficient disguise, on the government of the United States. (Lili‘uokalani 37-38)

“The Bottle Imp” is a story of hope for Polynesians, as Stevenson seems to be offering his readers a path forward in the new world from an indigenous perspective, navigating these two extremes. It is told from a Native Hawaiian perspective through limited third-person narration, as Keawe and Kokua navigate the Pacific and observe the drunken, lecherous behavior of the *haoles* around them. “Hawai‘i” as a kingdom, and as an idea, is under threat, but not yet lost to modernity. Guided by his wife Kokua, Keawe finds a way to navigate the violent collision of the ancient indigenous world and that of commercialism and colonialism, finding a middle way that allows them to find agency and retain their Hawaiian identities. The story blends social realism with magic and superstition, which perform a metaphorical function representing the “invisible hands” of commercialism and the moral pitfalls of material desires.

Maugham’s story “Honolulu,” however, appears to represent a very different reality. Maugham’s visit to Hawai‘i in 1916 presented him with the opportunity to see for himself a society defined in part by Stevenson’s “The Bottle Imp.” Stevenson’s hopeful premise, however, seems to have evaporated when read against Maugham’s later story. In “Honolulu,” the narrative focuses instead on the *haole* perspective, told through the eyes of a white visitor to Hawai‘i, probably not far removed from Maugham himself. As such, we encounter Honolulu as a new place, one that is described for the reader as a place of bustling modernity. There is no magic in this Hawai‘i; Maugham’s narrative is rooted in the material world. Our unnamed white tourist-narrator befriends an American named Winter, who introduces us to Captain Butler. Through this frame, the captain relates a story about his love interest, “my girl” (it is unclear if this is a wife or paramour, but she is certainly local, probably Hawaiian). The narrator tells us,

> She was certainly a most attractive creature. It was easy to see that the captain was madly in love with her. He could not take his eyes off her; he wanted to touch her all the time. That was very easy to understand; but what seemed to me stranger was that the girl was apparently in love with him. There was a light in her eyes that was unmistakable, and her lips were slightly parted as though in a sigh of desire. It was thrilling. (Maugham 1921b: 217-218)

The story takes us in flashback to a trading journey in which his first mate Wheeler, nicknamed "Bananas" (which sounds more racist today than the story suggests it is) falls for and sexually pursues the captain's girl. In a show of loyalty, and after the captain has beaten then forgiven Wheeler for his transgressions, the woman saves her captain from a poisoning by Wheeler, and she then kills Wheeler into the bargain.

The relationship between Captain Butler and a local girl calls to mind Stevenson's "Beach of Falesá," in which Wiltshire's wife, Uma, saves her husband from the murderous white trader, Case. Like Maugham's unnamed love interest, Uma is first described in very sexualized terms: "all she wore was a chemise, and it was wetted through. She was young and very slender for an Island maid…" (Stevenson 1996a: 7). As Roslyn Jolly and Mandy Treagus have both pointed out, Wiltshire's sham marriage becomes something much more meaningful as he gradually falls for his wife (and marries her legally). [6] Uma proves loyal, intelligent, and courageous, much like Captain Butler's "girl," and despite Wiltshire's inevitable colonial misgivings about her ethnicity, he ultimately acknowledges her humanity through his love for her. While the driving motivations are different—Wiltshire wants security on Falesá, Captain Butler wants sexual conquest—the theme of a native woman and white man falling in love, with a certain social and racial superiority assumed by the husbands, and complete loyalty demonstrated by the wives, is consistent between the stories. It's difficult to read Maugham's "Honolulu" and not be reminded of "The Beach of Falesá," especially in the construction of the characters and their relationships: in Captain Butler we can loosely see Wiltshire, and in "my girl" we can almost see Uma.

However, Maugham then provides a twist that undermines this construction: the woman we see snuggling lovingly up to Captain Butler turns out *not* to be the same lover in the story, who had, in fact, run off with the Chinese cook! [7] We are told in the last few lines that the girl they are looking at is, "a new one. He's only had her there about two months" (Maugham 1921: 240). This brief comic ending rewrites and subverts Stevenson's earlier story. In *this* Pacific, the captain is used then duped by an indigenous girl, who clearly is not in thrall to him (in contrast to what her actions suggest). Not only that, but he is cuckolded by a Chinese cook, someone supposedly inferior to him both in racial and social terms (if the Captain rules the ship, the cook represents the workforce). The captain, however, also sees this relationship as transactional, happy to "keep" a beautiful young woman and swap her out when she runs out on him. The relationship is mutually beneficial, and based on money and sex, each one using the other transactionally to their own ends. The captain's besotted gaze at the beginning of the story, therefore, suggests not love but infatuation, replicating the gaze of Wiltshire the first time he sees Uma, or of the colonizer encountering new lands. Unlike "The Beach of Falesá," in which

miscegenation suggests, again, a certain hope for the Pacific, Maugham's "Honolulu" underlines the now ingrained racial lines of white social superiority, and the ways in which locals have adapted to the new realities of life in the Pacific: natives are being dispossessed, trade and commerce are displacing ancient indigenous social hierarchies, and racial lines are clearly drawn, with whites at the top and Native peoples at the bottom.

So what does Maugham's story have to do with the city of Honolulu, which, after all, is the title? In 1916 Honolulu was, and remains, the urban hub of the Pacific, both for trade and military advantage. Honolulu is the environment in which all these social, economic, and racial tensions were concentrated. The story opens in Honolulu, and the narrator, not far removed from Maugham's own voice, reflects on the city. It is worth quoting some of the opening passages, because they shape the narrative that follows.

> It is a typical western city. Shacks are cheek by jowl with stone mansions; dilapidated frame houses stand next door to smart stores with plate glass windows; electric cars rumble noisily along the streets; and motors, Fords, Buicks, Packards, line the pavement. The shops are filled with all the necessities of American civilisation. Every third house is a bank and every fifth the agency of a steamship company.
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> Along the streets crowd an unimaginable assortment of people. The Americans, ignoring the climate, wear black coats and high, starched collars, straw hats, soft hats, and bowlers. The Kanakas, pale brown, with crisp hair, have nothing on but a shirt and a pair of trousers; but the half-breeds are very smart with flaring ties and patent-leather boots. The Japanese, with their obsequious smile, are neat and trim in white duck, while their women walk a step or two behind them, in native dress, with a baby on their backs. The Japanese children, in bright coloured frocks, their little heads shaven, look like quaint dolls. Then there are the Chinese. The men, fat and prosperous, wear their American clothes oddly, but the women are enchanting with their tightly-dressed black hair, so neat that you feel it can never be disarranged […]. Lastly there are the Filipinos, the men in huge straw hats, the women in bright yellow muslin with great puffed sleeves. (Maugham 1921: 207)

These are the subjective observations, and intonations, of a white tourist. He is shocked by the diversity in front of him, not just along racial lines, but of clothing, colour, poverty, and wealth. The phrase "[s]hacks are cheek by jowl with stone mansions" recalls the London streets of Stevenson's *Strange Case of Jekyll and*

Hyde, which, "[e]ven on Sunday," "shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest" (Stevenson 2002: 256). Honolulu, therefore, is a city that recalls the great metropolises of the West, though fringed with the ancient cultures of Polynesia. For both Maugham and Stevenson, the clash of the old with the new, the indigenous and the cosmopolitan, east and west, produces rich new fodder for the creative imagination.

The shock of Honolulu here echoes that of Stevenson's nearly thirty years before when he experienced the city for the first time; he found it depressing, too touched by civilization. He writes in *In the South Seas* of a Native Hawaiian, Tari (or Charlie) who had left Honolulu as a youth on an American whaling ship, only to be cruelly marooned on Nuku Hiva amongst a cannibal tribe; Charlie escaped, married, and when Stevenson met him was "a widower with a married son and a granddaughter" (1918: 28-29). Stevenson wonders of the old Charlie,

> what he would think if he could be carried there indeed, and see the modern town of Honolulu brisk with traffic, and the palace with its guards, and the great hotel, and Mr. Berger's band with their uniforms and outlandish instruments; or what he would think to see the brown faces grown so few and the white so many; and his father's land sold, for planting sugar, and his father's house quite perished, or perhaps the last of them struck leprous and immured between the surf and the cliffs on Molokai? So simply, even in South Sea Islands, and so sadly, the changes come. (1918: 29)

These changes only accelerated after his last visit in 1894; by the time Maugham arrives in 1916, there are electric trams, motor cars, telephone and electricity lines, many more buildings, and a much larger, more diverse population. In many ways, Maugham's description of the Honolulu streets realizes Stevenson's worst fears for the capital of Hawai'i.

The rough neighborhoods of Honolulu shape the characters such as Captain Butler's girl, or the formidable *haole* prostitute Sadie Thompson from "Rain," who creates and manages her own business while trapped in a hotel in Pago-Pago. While bound for the port of Apia, the protagonists' ship is forced into mooring at Pago-Pago due to a heavy storm, and the passengers take up temporary residence together in the local hotel while the rain persists. Sadie's boisterous behavior and particular trade are shocking to the middle-class passengers, and the evangelical missionary Mr. Davidson decides to try to convert Sadie and save her soul. Sadie resists Davidson's attempts to convert her and change her ways, and instead makes him commit the very sin he seems so keen to rid her of: she seduces him. Sadie is one of Maugham's most enduring characters. She personifies the harsh realities of life on the streets of Honolulu, and what people learn to survive. No area of

Honolulu contains these challenges more than the district of Iwilei, an area west of Downtown, which, even today, is riddled with poverty, crime, prostitution, homelessness, drugs, and despair. In 1916, Maugham identified this same area as the place that shaped Sadie's survival instincts. Hastings writes that,

> The two men [Maugham and Haxton] were fascinated by the contrast between downtown Honolulu, a modern American city, and the rough red-light district of Iwilei, openly catering to every variety of sexual taste. On their last night, there was a police raid in Iwilei, and the following day, a few minutes before the *Sonoma* was due to sail, a young woman came hurrying up the gangplank, clearly in a state of panic. She was … an Iwilei prostitute in flight from the law.

Prostitution in Chinatown and Iwilei had been tolerated for decades, but the increasing traffic of military and naval servicemen during the 1910s had necessitated police intervention. However, this was only an occasional occurrence, as Hotel Street in particular remained an active red-light district well into World War II (Scott 506). Maugham was fascinated by this trade, and sex, as presented in Maugham's stories, is central as a means of balancing power, not only by local girls (such as Captain Butler's girl), but also by Sadie, a white woman of Irish descent. It is Honolulu, the American city in a Pacific paradise, that has shaped these characters, hardening them to employ any means at their disposal to upset the white patriarchy.

The "Successful" Colonial

STEVENSON's "The Ebb-Tide" provides literature with one of his most significant, innovative, and influential tyrannical characters, Attwater. "The Ebb-Tide" follows the adventures of three down-and-out white men on Tahiti, "beachcombers", who are commissioned to man a shipment of champagne to Sydney, after the original crew come down with smallpox. During their voyage they decide to steer the ship to Peru, where they would sell the merchandise and escape with the profits. They start to drink the champagne and soon find out they are subject of a fraud, as most of the bottles are filled with water. Captain Davis's drunken preparations have meant they do not have the food to make Peru, so instead of returning to Pape`ete, they spy a small island ruled by an Englishman named Attwater, who collects and sells local pearls with the aid of his enslaved native workforce. The three men decide to rob Attwater of his pearls, but Herrick's guilty behavior and Huish's drunken talking give the plan away, and Attwater forces them to retreat to their ship. Racked with guilt, Herrick, a failed university-educated businessman, attempts suicide by swimming out into the ocean, only to

fail in this also, and returns to the island to throw himself on Attwater's mercy, a broken man. Weeks later, as Attwater's own ship approaches the island, Huish suggests a plan to the American Captain Davis to trick Attwater with a flag of truce before pouring acid on him. The plan fails, Attwater kills Huish, and Davis gives up, becoming almost irrationally religious. Attwater's kingdom is not only safe, but he has recruited three more pliable white men as adjutants to run the island.

Much has been written about Attwater's various means of power on the island, and how he appears to anticipate, if not directly influence, more famous successors like Joseph Conrad's Kurtz from *The Heart of Darkness* (1899): a white alpha-colonizer at the edge of known civilization, succumbing to the limitlessness of his power and the worst excesses of his own inner darkness. By 1916, Conrad and others had inscribed such characters into popular culture, so Maugham's own tyrant, Walker, from the first story "Mackintosh," is not necessarily new to the genre. However, when read in the context as a reaction to Stevenson's "The Ebb-Tide," Walker becomes a comment on how this character-type, and the people over whom he rules, have developed a co-dependency that baffles the new administrator, Mackintosh. Walker's grip on the island of Talua, "one of the larger islands in the Samoan group," recalls the techniques and cruelties of Attwater: "[h]e ruled the island despotically, but with complete success" (Maugham 1921a: 21). Walker is patronizing, cruel, cunning, everything you'd need as an overseer of an unwilling people. He resists the efforts of the native population to compromise on their payment for building a new road, instead hiring neighbor islanders to do the job for more money, understanding all the while that due to local traditions, the locals would be obliged to house and feed their replacements. Walker's calculated cruelty owes much to the model that Attwater establishes in "The Ebb-Tide." Like Walker after him, Attwater describes himself as a "man of the world," concerned with the maintenance of his absolute authority on the island and making sure the workforce stays in line. Mckintosh is increasingly morally appalled at his treatment of the natives, and, like Herrick, walks a fine line between morality and necessity (in his eyes) in agreeing to help the chief's son kill Walker.

However, a comparison of the ways in which they rule demonstrate how colonial methods of control and exploitation have evolved. Where Attwater's authoritarianism stems from his public use of violence, much in the early Victorian mode, Walker resorts to economic, cultural, and psychological violence. Attwater is unforgivingly, even proudly, violent towards his workforce, making it clear to his visitors that he is there to exploit the island's resources; the authority comes from his innate belief in his "God-given" racial superiority. His authority is divinely ordained: "[…] I made my mission pay. No good ever came of coddling. A man has to stand up in God's sight and work up to his weight […]. I gave these beggars what they wanted: a judge in Israel, the bearer of the sword and scourge"

(Stevenson 1996b: 204). In his eyes, the islanders need to be civilized through force if necessary, for their own good, and he is God's agent in doing so. Attwater is intelligent, western-educated, worldly, and physically imposing, which reinforces a Victorian sense of racial superiority over the natives. However, Walker, by comparison, is overweight, physically inferior, under-educated (he mocks Mackintosh for the books he reads), and an alcoholic. As a specimen of white superiority, he fits more in the mold of Conrad's "flabby devils" than Attwater. When we first meet Walker, he is described through Mackintosh's eyes as "a little man, considerably less than of middle height, and enormously stout; he had a large, fleshy face, clean-shaven, with the cheeks hanging on each side in great dew-laps, and three vast chins; his small features were all dissolved in fat […] he reminded you of Mr Pickwick" (Maugham 1921a: 18). This is in contrast to a native policeman who "stood at the door, a picturesque figure in his white jacket and *lava-lava*, the loin cloth of the Samoan" (Maugham 1921a: 18). Walker's natives are clearly physically superior to him, and, in the chief's son Manuma, they begin to demonstrate a worldliness of their own. Manuma is described in terms of physical beauty, "a tall, handsome fellow, copper-coloured, with his fuzzy hair dyed red with lime […]" (Maugham 1921a: 34). However, his dress displays a new kind of modernity: "The upper part of his body was naked, but to show that he was no longer a savage, since he had lived in Apia, he wore a pair of dungarees instead of a *lava-lava*" (Maugham 1921a: 34-35). Manuma essentially organizes a strike, stiffening his people's resolve not to work for anything less than "a hundred pounds," but Walker overcomes them through his own industrial tricks by bringing in a new workforce. Manuma is thoroughly defeated, and then humiliated, and so by association are the rest of the islanders, who ultimately beg Walker to work so they can eat.

Mackintosh's outrage at Walker's cruelty echoes closely that of Herrick from "The Ebb-Tide," who is appalled by Attwater's use of violence. Again, Mackintosh almost demands to be read as a twentieth-century counterpart to Herrick: both are educated, both adhere to moral principles but are guided by those around them to betray those principles—they believe in the greater good (the death of the tyrant and the emancipation of their workers). Herrick is disgusted by Attwater's shooting of a worker who had caused trouble. On describing the execution of Obsequiousness, a name he had given to one of his native workers, he screams, "It was a murder […]. A cold-hearted, bloody-minded murder! You monstrous being! Murderer and hypocrite—murderer and hypocrite…" (Stevenson 1996b: 219). Herrick does not, at this point, share Attwater's racial assumptions concerning white supremacy in the Pacific, and so what Attwater views as an execution as an example to the other workers, Herrick views as the murder of a human soul. This, plus their failure to better Attwater, leads Herrick to despair, and he contemplates

suicide: he swims from the ship out into open water, towards "that open door of suicide" (Stevenson 1996b: 227). Herrick recognizes his own uselessness within the Pacific colonial framework. He is educated, but not skilled; he has a moral compass, but betrays it; he hates that Attwater recognizes in him a fellow university man, but that Attwater has applied his knowledge, like Shakespeare's Prospero in *The Tempest*, to the ruling of a colony. His version of God is dead, and suicide is the only remedy. However, ideating and realizing suicide are very different, and he quickly understands that he is physically incapable of committing it. He returns to shore and essentially succumbs to Attwater's authority; as Captain Davis points out, Attwater is now Herrick's god. Herrick tells Attwater, "you know all" (Stevenson 1996b: 231), principally about the plot to murder him, but figuratively as a god-like presence.

Mackintosh is presented with a similar proposition at the end of Maugham's story. The imagery, again, echoes Stevenson's, as he too contemplates suicide. However, the outcome is very different:

> Mackintosh disengaged his hand from the dead man's [Walker's], and staggering like one drunk with sleep he went out of the room. He went to the locked drawer in his writing-desk and took out the revolver. He walked down to the sea and walked into the lagoon; he waded out cautiously, so that he should not trip against a coral rock, till the water came up to his arm-pits. Then he put a bullet through his head. (Maugham 1921a: 65)

As with Herrick, it is night; the water seems to attract their sense of the eternal, and provides the stage for their self-destruction.[8] I suggest Maugham is inviting his reader to draw comparisons with Herrick; where Herrick chooses a menial life, Mackintosh ends his own. Unlike the trio from "The Ebb-Tide," Mackintosh achieves what they could not and is complicit in Walker's murder. He is, therefore, in line to take over Walker's position and can improve the lives of the islanders. Why, then, does he destroy himself? In Mackintosh, in the 1910s, we come across another educated, mild-mannered, principled man, whose views of the universe are up-ended by the realities of life in a colony. Unlike Herrick, however, he is now an accomplice to murder, and perhaps he cannot square this with his moral compass.

In addition, he is also clearly shocked by the reaction of the islanders to Walker's death. He had presumed a certain celebration in their emancipation; the tyrant is dead! Instead, as Walker breathes his last, he is surrounded by the very natives he had subjugated, starved, humiliated, and beaten (though not murdered). In a shocking twist, the natives "broke out with loud cries. The tears ran down their faces, and they beat their breasts" (Maugham 1921a: 65). This reaction confounds Mackintosh, who had helped commit the murder to free them in the first place.

There is no place, and no God, here for Mackintosh; he could never replace Walker as he doesn't understand the nature of the people he is supposed to govern. How, then, is the overseer-islander relationship different between the two stories? In Stevenson's 1890s, Attwater is the white god of the island, dispensing justice (Herrick describes him as "a fatalist") and maintaining power through violence (or the threat of it); his Winchester is always at his side. Walker, however, remains unarmed. The secret of his authority lies in a paternalistic relationship with the islanders:

> he looked upon the natives as his children. And that was the amazing thing about this coarse, vulgar, selfish man; he loved the island on which he had lived so long with passion, and he had for the natives a strange rough tenderness which was quite wonderful. (Maugham 1921a: 27)

Walker is tough on his "children," "he ruled them with a rod of iron, brooking no contradiction, [but] he would not suffer any of the white men on the island to take advantage of them" (Maugham 1921a: 28). He rules them like a strict father, but protects them like one too, and this approach seems to be understood—and on some level embraced—by the native population. By the 1910s, Maugham witnesses the entrenchment of racial hierarchies in a manner that, over the course of a generation, has been inscribed into colonial communities, whites at the top, and everyone else graded by blood (there are mixed natives here too, though they do not belong with their western parents). Force is no longer necessary, at least in the literal sense; Walker even reveals that the natives built a prison for him to use on their own population, and he questions why he should need it. It is Mackintosh, in fact, who has the only gun and encourages violence. He has misunderstood his environment as an "enlightened" westerner coming in from the outside, and he realizes through Walker's death that there is no place for him in Samoa, and, due to his actions as a conspirator to murder, no place for him back home either.

Conclusion

IN conclusion, while Maugham's *Trembling of a Leaf* contributes some notable additions to the canon of white literature of the Pacific, most notably that of Hermann Melville, Isabella Bird, Stevenson, and Jack London, it should also be read in the *context* of what was written before; only then do Maugham's stories begin to reveal the depth of observation that he achieves. If Stevenson provides a cultural and socio-political snapshot of the Pacific he encountered in the 1890s, Maugham provides the attentive reader with an update of the situation in the 1910s. No longer does the Attwater-figure have to bring native populations to heel through

brutality; by 1916, Maugham seems to find the hierarchies of race and empire inscribed into the Pacific, and the overseer has come to "love" his children. Their purposes in writing these stories, therefore, seem to diverge. While both men's stories provide critique of the evolving colonial process, Stevenson's stories fire warnings for the future, whereas Maugham's exclaim the realities of colonial life as they have come to exist. In fact, Maugham's Pacific stories articulate to a degree how Stevenson's fears for Pacific peoples have become reality in the intervening 20 years. However, even in this world, the subjugated have learned to resist, adapt, and exploit the weaknesses of the *haoles*, revealing a humanity that cannot be erased, and the resilience of native peoples.

Notes

1. "Rain" would be turned into a 1932 movie of the same name, starring Joan Crawford as Sadie.
2. For a contemporary view of Hawai'i during this period, see the early chapters of Lili'uokalani (1990).
3. This largely peaceful takeover was backed by the US government. For a history of nineteenth-century Hawai'i, see Osorio (2002); for a first-hand account of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, see Lili'uokalani (1990: 243-288); and Allen (1982).
4. White and Kraus describe how, under the first US-appointed governor of Hawai'i, Lucius E. Pinkham, the Waikiki marshlands were drained, dredged, and filled in order to create the Ala Wai Canal, which still runs behind modern Waikiki. They describe this as a "paradigm shift" for Honolulu, forming the foundation for the modern city.
5. Stevenson's story owes much to the *Arabian Nights* story "Aladdin," and the German story "The Spirit in the Bottle"; he uses these models and incorporates Polynesian myths, tropes, and imagery.
6. See Jolly (1996a: ix-xxxiii); and Treagus (2024: 128-141).
7. Even here, the "Chinese cook," while clearly common work for Chinese immigrants at this time, is reminiscent of the Chinese cook of Stevenson's *The Wrecker*.
8. The character Keola of Stevenson's "The Isle of Voices" has a similar moment of despair standing in a lagoon, in which, again, stars are shining (1893c: 223-277).

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史蒂文森與毛姆

來自太平洋的呼喚與回應

理察・詹姆士・希爾
檀香山夏明納大學

摘　要

本文探討英國作家威廉・薩莫塞特・毛姆的短篇小說系列如何與蘇格蘭作家羅伯特・路易斯・史蒂文森二十年前創作的類似小說形成某種文學回應。本文認為，兩位作者都記錄了太平洋地區及其部分區域在一八九〇年代至一九一〇年代的短暫時期內發生的劇烈變化。毛姆運用了史蒂文森早期小說中的一些人物比喻、場景設定甚至情節結構，並對其進行了改編，使其與一九一六年的世界觀相呼應。本文也探討了史蒂文森的小說在二〇世紀初西方作家如何看待和處理此類主題所發揮的重要意義。

關鍵詞：史蒂文森、薩莫塞特・毛姆、太平洋、短篇小說、〈瓶中惡魔〉、〈法萊薩海灘〉、〈退潮〉、〈檀香山〉、《一片葉子的顫動》、《島上夜娛》、夏威夷、夏威夷人、薩摩亞、殖民地、跨殖民