

8-31-2013

# "And the Roadside Fire": Portrayals of Home through National Song in Stevenson's Scottish Adventures

Christy Danelle Di Frances  
*Gordon College, MA*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl>

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Di Frances, Christy Danelle (2013) "'And the Roadside Fire': Portrayals of Home through National Song in Stevenson's Scottish Adventures," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 39: Iss. 1, 183–202.  
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol39/iss1/15>

This Article is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Studies in Scottish Literature by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu).

**“AND THE ROADSIDE FIRE”:  
PORTRAYALS OF HOME THROUGH NATIONAL  
SONG IN STEVENSON’S SCOTTISH ADVENTURES**

*Christy Danelle Di Frances*

In a poem dedicated to his friend Will H. Low, Stevenson observes, “None can choose to stay at home, / All must follow, all must roam.”<sup>1</sup> Perhaps no other sentence in his oeuvre better encapsulates that curious mix of wanderlust and the desire for return that permeates his aesthetic of adventure. This author famous for writing “I travel for travel’s sake. The great affair is to move” also ends one of his finest narratives by observing that

you may paddle all day long; but it is when you come back at nightfall, and look in at the familiar room, that you find Love or Death awaiting you beside the stove; and the most beautiful adventures are not those we go to seek (*Travels with a Donkey*, 156-157).<sup>2</sup>

Such seemingly passing references signal his lifelong fascination with home as the essential destination in adventure narrative.<sup>3</sup> This article considers allusions to popular Scottish song in Stevenson’s texts – with a particular focus on David Balfour’s story in *Kidnapped* – as a critical lens through which to interrogate Stevenson’s broader configuration of home, which is both intensely personal and deeply engaged with the Scottish

---

<sup>1</sup> Roger C. Lewis, ed., *The Collected Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2004), 79; hereafter in the text as *CP*.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, prose works of Stevenson are cited in the text by volume and page number (and short title where needed) from *Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Second Vailima Edition (London: William Heinemann in association with Chatto and Windus; Cassell and Co; and Longmans, Chatto and Windus; and Longmans, Green and Co; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921-1923).

<sup>3</sup> See also Anne C. Colley, “Locating home,” *Journal of Stevenson Studies*, 8 (2011): 234-244.

national consciousness. It thus explores how he succeeds in preserving home as an essential element of his modern adventure aesthetics through extensive references to popular Scottish song, since ballads and folk songs in this tradition focus on the homegoing experience and on the construction of home as both a personal and a collective destination.

Such songs and poems as “Home No More,” “To S. R. Crockett,” “Evensong,” and, of course, the haunting “Requiem” demonstrate Stevenson’s comprehension of and sensitivity towards the transient nature of home as the adventurer’s destination, while lines like “Be it granted me to behold you again in dying, / Hills of home!” evoke an mood of epic adventures such as the *Odyssey* (CP 201). Yet his works do more than merely gesture towards the tone with which home is so frequently portrayed in adventure narrative; in them, home functions as a microcosm of the destination archetype. Thus, an early draft of one poem concludes with the following stanza:

And this shall be for music when no one else is near,  
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!  
The song that I remember, and all the world forgets,  
Of the brown plain that stretches, the red sun that sets,  
The broad road that wanders, the bare feet that go,  
Where the white rain hisses and the lonely winds blow.<sup>4</sup>

However, in its finished form, Stevenson replaces the poem’s final emphasis on the barren and isolated topography of the journey with domestic imagery:

And this shall be for music when no one else is near,  
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!  
That only I remember, that only you admire,  
Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire (CP 177).

This alteration to the poem’s ending re-locates the wanderer’s destination from the exotic spatial constructs typically associated with adventure to the homely setting of a blazing hearth. Indeed, a study of home within Stevenson’s oeuvre furnishes new insights into its significance as an ultimate destination within his adventures.

### **Stevenson’s Re-imagination of Home**

Famously restless from a geographical as well as an ideological perspective, Stevenson is perhaps best located in his frequent contemplations of home, which engage with a cultural consciousness

---

<sup>4</sup> Ms 6377: #37, Beinecke Library.

heavily informed by the Scottish oral tradition. His work demonstrates an awareness of that tentative intersection between oral and textual cultures which emerged with the proliferation of ballad-collecting and folk-writing of such early nineteenth-century writers as Robert Burns, Joanna Baillie, Walter Scott, and James Hogg. As Ian Duncan observes of Scott's *Waverley* (1814), such texts often unite an "internal allegory of the emergence of the novel as the genre of modern life from the premodern traditions of ballad, epic, allegory, and romance with the thematic revisitation of 1745, the historical moment ... of the last *ancien régime* insurgency."<sup>5</sup> In this mode of literary synthesis, which highlights the significance of folk songs and ballads to the Scottish national consciousness, narratives can be read as conscious endeavors to "inscribe" oral culture sustainably for a society rapidly transitioning towards a text-centric cultural matrix.<sup>6</sup> Stevenson's work interacts with this tradition by constructing significant associations between references to orality and depictions of home in both individual and national contexts.

An avid reader of Scottish literature, Stevenson was, as Barry Menikoff notes, steeped in "everything from border ballads to Robert Burns, from church history and martyrology to folklore, philosophy, and criminal jurisprudence."<sup>7</sup> Heavily influenced by both Burns and Scott, he also felt a deep kinship with fellow Edinburgh-born poet Robert Fergusson.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Menikoff rightly suggests that, "in our own time we have forgotten how deeply historical Stevenson was, how familiar he was with all aspects of Scottish life and culture, and how determined he was to represent it in his fiction."<sup>9</sup> In addition to the Scottish novels, such non-fiction works as *Edinburgh Picturesque Notes* (1878) and the posthumously-published *Records of a Family of Engineers* (1896) bear testimony to his abiding interest in his homeland, with its familial

---

<sup>5</sup> Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 136.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Barry Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland: The Imagination of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Columbia, S. C.: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>8</sup> On Stevenson's intellectual engagement with his Scottish precursors, see David Daiches, "Stevenson and Scotland," in *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*, ed. Jenni Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1981), 11-32.

<sup>9</sup> Barry Menikoff, "Introduction," in *Kidnapped* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2006), xliii.

connotations. Of course, a preoccupation with representing and re-envisioning the domestic landscape of Scotland is hardly unique to Stevenson; rather, his writing builds upon contemporary ideological interests that were sparked in part by an increasing awareness of globalization and emigration which prompted many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors to re-consider the significance of home in their work. Tamara S. Wagner associates this literary concentration on home with broader cultural preoccupations by demonstrating the significant link between constructions of home and the motif of nostalgia in Victorian fiction: “nostalgia is premised on a perception of homelessness or un-homeliness, and it thereby generates representations of the ‘unhomely’ in order to underline the homely.”<sup>10</sup>

For Stevenson, Scotland’s wooded glens and rugged mountains, striking coastlines and rocky islands, urban wynds and gloomy kirkyards inform the nation’s cultural and geographical “homescape”; his work is therefore rich in descriptions of Scottish topographies.<sup>11</sup> And, if the author’s visual conceptualisation of home is conveyed through these representations of nationalized landscape, then his language of home draws heavily upon corresponding oral and textual conventions. Certainly the Scottish folk tradition offers a myriad of songs and ballads that address issues of homeleaving, homegoing, and homebreaking – all of which represent major concerns of Scottish cultural history. In particular, the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were eras of widespread emigration due to economic necessity, religious unrest, political exile (frequently related to the Jacobite Risings), and the Highland Clearances. While modern historians tend to downplay the significance of enforced migration within the larger context of the Scottish diaspora, it is worthwhile to note, as T. M. Devine does, that “to a much greater extent than in later times, transatlantic emigration from

---

<sup>10</sup> Tamara S. Wagner, *Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel, 1740-1890* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 2004), 71.

<sup>11</sup> In particular, the city of Edinburgh, which frequently functions as a setting in Stevenson’s fiction, eventually came to represent for him a symbol of home in a national context. Consequently, that place never failed to evoke a complex emotional response from him: “happy the passengers who shake off the dust of Edinburgh, and have heard for the last time the cry of the east wind among her chimney-tops! And yet the place establishes an interest in people’s hearts; go where they will, they find no city of the same distinction; go where they will, they take a pride in their old home” (*Edinburgh Picturesque Notes*: 1:370).

Scotland before 1815 was dominated by Highlanders," a statistic which certainly indicates some causal link between Jacobite allegiance, the Clearances, and exile.<sup>12</sup>

Christian Isobel Johnstone's 1815 novel, *Clan-Albin: A National Tale*, offers damning commentary on the effects of the Clearances, employing folk song as indicative of a rapidly vanishing culture throughout the Scottish Highlands and Islands. Johnstone observes in an explanatory note to the text how her fictional characters' song ("We return, we return, we return no more!") resounds with historical connotations by mirroring those

wild desponding strain[s], sung or played by the Highlanders on leaving their country. Verses expressive of local regret are adapted to this melody by the inhabitants of different districts. This very popular national lament [...] possesses a soul-harrowing, indescribable influence over the feelings of the Highlanders.<sup>13</sup>

Stevenson's writing is also laced with allusions to, and quotations from, popular Scottish songs. Indeed, the initial essay in his *Memories and Portraits* (1887) opens with an epigraph comprised of words from just such a song: "This is no' my ain house; I ken by the biggin' o't" (12:14). This and similar examples can be read as relating directly to a construction of home through the vehicle of folk songs in his work.

Both Stevenson's prose and his poetry can be located within a national aesthetic that draws heavily upon ballads and folk songs. After all, as Murray Pittock points out, "[Allan] Ramsay began by publishing broadsides, Fergusson distributed them, and many songs attributed to Burns have a huge hinterland in street literature and the songs of balladeers."<sup>14</sup> Popular song in Scotland before the twentieth century sustains an inherently domestic aspect – folk ballads and national tunes were alike in that they belonged as much to the "homely" as to the public sphere, frequently transmitted from parent to child beside the hearth or in the fields. This category of song fits naturally into the imagery of home which forms the basis for Stevenson's re-imagining of destination as a

---

<sup>12</sup> T. M. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth : Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750-2010* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Books, 2011), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Christian Isobel Johnstone, *Clan-Albin : A National Tale*, ed. Andrew Monnickendam (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2003), 62.

<sup>14</sup> Murray Pittock, "Scottish Song and the Jacobite Cause," in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, vol 2, ed. Ian Brown and Susan Manning (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2007), 105.

broader national consideration – not to mention an essential trope of the adventure mode. That penchant for gesturing towards past songs in his fiction links Stevenson with his narrative forerunners, thus establishing a correlation between their thematic interests and his own. Scott, for example, drew upon “popular literature of all kinds – broadside ballads, chapbooks, and published songs: but his first introduction to such material was *oral* and he never lost the sense of popular tradition as being not simply a matter of documents shut up in dusty archives, but rather a living record on the lips of successive generations.”<sup>15</sup> Stevenson demonstrates a keen awareness of this narrative tradition – and an obvious desire to establish his own work in dialogue with this major thematic concern of Scottish literary culture.

In Stevenson’s unfinished *Weir of Hermiston* (1896), young Kirsty’s singing to Archie by the Weaver’s Stone signifies the pair’s link with their common ancestors now dead, of their rude wars composed, their weapons buried with them, and of these strange changelings, their descendants, who lingered a little in their places, and would soon be gone also, and perhaps sung of by others at the gloaming hour (18:345).

This quotation can be viewed an excellent example of what Penny Fielding refers to when she writes how *Weir of Hermiston* demonstrates Stevenson’s interest “in the oral as a site in which the unconscious exerts a pressure on the conscious.”<sup>16</sup> Whether or not they are aware of it within their fictive settings, his characters maintain strong (if latent) cognitive ties with the past which can be accessed through folk songs and ballads. In *The Master of Ballantrae*, Colonel Burke “set off down to the boat, with the money under his arms, and whistling as he went the pathetic air of *Shule Aroon*” (14:116). Although the Irish Burke is fittingly given a song translated from the Irish Gaelic (“*Siúil a Ríúin*”), the image of leaving Scotland by boat—particularly when it is coupled with the Colonel’s title of “Chevalier”—is an intensely resonant one following the 1745 Jacobite Rising.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Crawford, *Scott* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Fielding, 184.

<sup>17</sup> There are many literary examples of this alias being assigned to Prince Charles Edward Stuart (“Bonnie Prince Charlie”). In both *Waverley* and *Redgauntlet*, for example, Walter Scott refers to the Jacobite leader as the “Young Chevalier” and the “Chevalier,” respectively. The frequent connection of this title with Prince Charles in Scottish popular song will be further discussed later in this article.

Stevenson returns to a nationalized version of this homebreaking motif later in *The Master of Ballantrae*, once again choosing to represent the broader concept by means of an intentional personalization. This time, the narrator records how James Durie:

struck up the same air as I had heard the Colonel whistle; but now to words, rustic indeed, yet most pathetically setting forth a poor girl's aspirations for an exiled lover: of which one verse indeed (or something like it) still sticks by me:

"O, I will dye my petticoat red  
With my dear boy I'll beg my bread,  
Though all my friends should wish me dead,  
For Willie among the rushes, O!" (14:147).

Here, Stevenson re-imagines the words of the song in a uniquely Scottish way, as demonstrated by his allusion to Burns's "Green Grow the Rashes." In this version, the themes of exile from one's homeland, such common ones in adventure narrative, are inexorably coupled with a distinctly national consciousness as they employ song to project an intimate vision of Scotland not dissimilar to that invoked by earlier Scottish authors. The departure which ultimately proves to be James Durie's final journey from Scotland for the New World is similarly marked:

I observed the Master kept his head out, looking back on these splashed walls and glimmering roofs, till they were suddenly swallowed in the mist; and I must suppose some natural sadness fell upon the man at this departure; or was it some prevision of the end? At least, upon our mounting the long brae from Durrisddeer, as we walked side by side in the wet, he began first to whistle, and then to sing the saddest of our country tunes, which sets folk weeping in a tavern, *Wandering Willie*. The set of words he used with it, I have not heard elsewhere, and could never come by any copy; but some of them which were the most appropriate to our departure. One verse began:

"Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces;  
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child" (14:258-259).

Stevenson's self-conscious allusion to past song has broad inter-textual resonances which can be recognized as part of the wider Scottish compositional tradition of recycling existing frames of reference. Concurrently, it addresses the sociological question of whether an era



largely characterized by print culture can succeed in conveying a national consciousness that has traditionally been rendered in oral terms.<sup>18</sup>

The passage quoted above signals a reference to Scott's "Wandering Willie's Tale," in *Redgauntlet* (1824), but of course many of Scott's novels—from *Waverley* to *Castle Dangerous* (1831)—are laced with (frequently political) allusions to existent song and the minstrel tradition. "The construction of nineteenth-century Scottish orality," Fielding writes, "has its roots in Scotland's attempts to establish a cohesive sense of British nationhood in the second half of the previous century following the collapse of militaristic Scottish nationalism at Culloden in 1746."<sup>19</sup> And Stevenson builds upon this narrative legacy by presenting popular song as a powerful agent for successfully portraying a historic identity that supersedes text in its ability to create and convey socio-political associations. After all, as William Donaldson notes, in Scotland

political song was based upon the wholesale pillage of existing lyrics. Stanzas were borrowed, refrains preserved unaltered, words and phrases of the parent text carried over (sometimes with scant regard to sense), themes adapted and re-made, and then re-made all over again, so that from a single starting point a whole radiating network of song could spread.<sup>20</sup>

Stevenson's reliance upon both real and imagined ballads and songs intentionally reflects a cultural tradition of "song-pillaging." Nevertheless, it is important to realize that, unlike Hogg, whose *Jacobite Relics* (1819-1821) can be thought of as "the first to distinguish political song from the traditional historical ballad on the one hand, and art-song from folk song upon the other,"<sup>21</sup> Stevenson's employment of Scottish song is not based upon the nuances amongst musical or ideological categories. Rather, in his texts song operates as a means of reinforcing specific motifs—particularly the construction of home as both a personal and national destination.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> It is also significant that, although Stevenson's employment of traditional song is particularly evident in his Scottish fiction, it is certainly not limited to these works. Early in *The Ebb-Tide*, for example, Captain Davis launches into a pathetic rendition of Burns's "Auld Lang Syne" (18:27).

<sup>19</sup> Fielding, 8.

<sup>20</sup> William Donaldson, *The Jacobite Song* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1988), 31.

<sup>21</sup> Donaldson, 98.

<sup>22</sup> Stevenson knew the differences inherent in various types of song, but those differences are irrelevant to the broader treatment of song within his oeuvre.

### Home and National Song in the David Balfour Adventures

Stevenson's formation of a construct of home based upon traditional song is powerfully conveyed in the David Balfour saga, where the author subtly employs allusions to songs as a means of "mapping" the adventurer's homegoing story onto a nationalized framework. In so doing he echoes what Duncan refers to as "the symbolic complex of national bildungsroman" which Scott established with the publication of *Waverley*.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, as various critics have discussed, in Scottish literature "the national tale continued to evolve in the wake of *Waverley*, and in reaction to it," while that novel's influence created a ripple effect throughout England and continental Europe.<sup>24</sup> Writing nearly a century after Scott, Stevenson demonstrates interest in re-envisioning his predecessor's narrative enactment of national and historical considerations—an impulse that can be traced through the aesthetic trajectory of his Scottish fiction, from his earliest publication, "The Pentland Rising," to *Weir of Hermiston*.

In *Kidnapped*, as Alison Lumsden notes, "David's novel of quest or *bildungsroman* is 'hijacked' by one of historical significance; while the inheritance plot can be resolved, the discourse of Scottish history remains an indeterminate question, incapable of simple or straightforward resolution."<sup>25</sup> Here Stevenson presents a complex version of the homegoing experience which thematically overlays the parallel foci of David's "struggle to claim his inheritance, and his Highland countrymen's struggle to preserve their land."<sup>26</sup> The connotations of home implicit in this adventure certainly warrant further examination, since Stevenson's investigation of homelessness on both a personal and a cultural level provides rich insights into how his construction of home reflects broader issues. Certainly within the David Balfour saga, home becomes thematically inseparable from the idea of destination as a *national* preoccupation. Evidence of this can be read in *Catriona's* dedication to Charles Baxter:

---

<sup>23</sup> Duncan, 23.

<sup>24</sup> Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), 148.

<sup>25</sup> Alison Lumsden, "Stevenson, Scott and Scottish History," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2010), 77.

<sup>26</sup> Irving S. Saposnik, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Twayne, 1974), 112.

you are still—as when first I saw, as when I last addressed you—in the venerable city [of Edinburgh] which I must always think of as my home. And I have come so far; and the sights and thoughts of my youth pursue me; and I see like a vision the youth of my father, and of his father, and the whole stream of lives flowing down there far in the north, with the sound of laughter and tears, to cast me out in the end, as by a sudden freshet, on these ultimate islands. And I admire and bow my head before the romance of destiny (10:8).<sup>27</sup>

Yet, while the importance of home to the structure of the text has been often remarked upon, it continues to elude extensive critical investigation.

In both *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Catriona* (1893), song functions as a personalisation of Stevenson's broader interrogation of the notions of exile and return that are fundamental to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century oral and literary culture in Scotland. While, as previously mentioned, widespread Scottish emigration during these centuries occurred for a variety of reasons, the expulsion instigated by sequential Jacobite Risings and the Clearances certainly contributed to deeply negative cultural associations concerning diaspora (at least for some Scots). We need look no further than a work such as Johnstone's previously discussed *Clan-Albin: A National Tale* or Scott's "Culloden Papers" for evidence of this. Unsurprisingly, exile and emigration are common motifs in songs of the Jacobite tradition. William Donaldson states that, although "the twin themes of exile and restoration" existed in such songs before the mid-eighteenth century, certainly "by 1750 Jacobite song had acquired everything necessary to its existence as an independent type."<sup>28</sup> This "type" is, of course, bound up with the violent aftermath of the 1745 Rising, of which the Appin murder—which features so centrally in *Kidnapped*—was undoubtedly an indirect result. Donaldson also observes how "characteristics of these later Jacobite songs" include "the wild landscapes, the preoccupation with defeat, and the pervasive ambience of exile and loss."<sup>29</sup> A close reading of the David Balfour story illuminates Stevenson's transferral of these cultural themes to a microcosmic level—and his frequent employment of traditional song to achieve this re-rendering.

---

<sup>27</sup> In this article, I treat *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* as two thematically indivisible components of one saga.

<sup>28</sup> Donaldson, 35; 67.

<sup>29</sup> Donaldson, 79.

From its onset, the adventure of David Balfour is a story about going home. Early on in *Kidnapped* the protagonist approaches Cramond parish near Edinburgh, location of his ancestral home, and begins to inquire after the House of Shaws. Stevenson here places a great deal of emphasis upon the exterior of the house, which will later serve to strengthen his anthropomorphic portrayal of it. David records how

spying an honest fellow coming along a lane on the shaft of his cart, I asked him if he had ever heard tell of a house they called the house of Shaws.

He stopped his cart and looked at me, like the others.

"Ay," said he. "What for?"

"It's a great house?" I asked.

"Doubtless," says he. "The house is a big, muckle house."

"Ay," said I, "but the folk that are in it?"

"Folk?" cried he. "Are ye daft? There's nae folk there—to call folk."

"What?" say I; "not Mr. Ebenezer?"

"Ou, ay," says the man; "there's the laird, to be sure, if it's him you're wanting" (9:23).

On one level, the house which David seeks is "a big, muckle" one, yet by all accounts it is dogged by an ominous reputation. Hence, the people of Cramond are loathe to refer to its lone resident – the "laird" – as "folk," thus implying that Ebenezer Balfour has, through the dehumanising effects of selfishness and greed, dwindled to a mere wraith of his former self. The House of Shaws has become a place void of human presence, and this presentation is in keeping with the novel's eighteenth-century placement within Scottish literary tradition. Pittock records how, "the idea of the empty palace or house is a common one in Scottish Jacobite poetry, acting as an image of exclusion from the intimacies of possession and family."<sup>30</sup> More specifically, Carol McGuirk cites Baroness Nairne's "This Auld House" as an example of a song in which "the stanzas echo Jacobitism not only in lamenting the decline of an old house but in predicting the utter insufficiency of any possible replacement."<sup>31</sup> These sentiments are certainly akin to David's feelings from early in *Kidnapped* until nearly the last scene of *Catriona*, as Stevenson draws upon such Jacobite ideology in order to demonstrate—on a personal level—the

<sup>30</sup> Murray Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 135.

<sup>31</sup> Carol McGuirk, "Jacobite History to National Song: Robert Burns and Carolina Olyphant (Baroness Nairne)," *The Eighteenth Century* 47.2 (2006): 271.

disastrous ramifications resulting from the collapse of the Stuart house following Culloden.

David remembers how “there came up into my mind (quite unbidden by me and even discouraged) a story like some ballad I had heard folk singing, of a poor lad that was a rightful heir and a wicked kinsman that tried to keep him from his own” (9:43). This recollection reiterates a prominent motif in Jacobite song, which Pittock summarizes as the idea that “not only might one’s house be altered or emptied, but it might be occupied by another.”<sup>32</sup> Similar themes of usurpation infuse some of Burns’s works, as in the conclusion to “Scots Wha Hae”:

Lay the proud Usurpers low!  
Tyrants fall in every foe!  
LIBERTY’S in every blow!  
Let us DO—OR DIE!!!<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, it is difficult to overstate just how prevalent the subject of usurpation is in Jacobite and patriotic songs of the eighteenth century, so it comes as no surprise that Stevenson should re-imagine this theme within the text of *Kidnapped*—going to great lengths to display the results of Ebenezer Balfour’s charade of being rightful heir to the Balfour home. Significantly, a part of the house’s structure, the unfinished tower, is used by Ebenezer as a weapon in his failed attempt to murder David.<sup>34</sup> The scene thus becomes a vivid and disturbing personalisation of the domestic usurpation brought about by eighteenth century political strife. Indeed, the grim accounts of David’s ancestral home cause him enough apprehension to voice the concerns of many Scots in the wake of 1745:

What kind of a great house was this, that all the parish should start and stare to be asked the way to it? or what sort of a gentleman, that his ill-fame should be thus current on the wayside? If an hour’s walking would have brought me back to Essendean, I had left my adventure then and there, and returned to Mr. Campbell’s (9:24).

So the adventure which began with a home-leaving now shows signs of revealing a previous home-breaking, for the once-esteemed House of Shaws has come to ruin. David cannot instantly “fix” his rightful home, nor will he return to the secure life represented by Mr. Campbell, for to

---

<sup>32</sup> Pittock, *Poetry*, 136.

<sup>33</sup> James Kinsley, ed., *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), II:708, cited in the text below as Kinsley. This idea is discussed in Pittock, *Poetry*, 219.

<sup>34</sup> Stevenson, *Kidnapped*, 47-49.

do so would represent a betrayal of the familial home which so desperately requires re-building. Like James of the Glens after the Appin murder, David's quest oscillates between the personal and the national as he becomes caught between collapsing national affiliations and the "foreign" sanctuary of Campbell alliances.

Stevenson further personalizes the tragedy of eighteenth-century Scotland when he positions David on a ferry crossing from Torosay to the Highlands, where the protagonist hears "Gaelic boat-songs" sung by emigrants on another ship bound to the Americas:

the chief singer in our boat struck into a melancholy air, which was presently taken up both by the emigrants and their friends upon the beach, so that it sounded from all sides like a lament for the dying. I saw the tears run down the cheeks of the men and women in the boat, even as they bent at the oars; and the circumstances and the music of the song (which is one called "Lochaber no more") were highly affecting even to myself (9:169-171).

Stevenson here alludes to the well-known Jacobite song "Lochaber," which had appeared both in Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* in the 1720s and again in Burns's time in James Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*. The song reinforces Stevenson's focus on the Highlands as a home in dissolution following the 1745 Rising:

Farewell to Lochaber, and farewell, my Jean,  
Where heartsome with thee I've mony day been;  
For Lochaber no more, Lochaber no more,  
We'll may be return to Lochaber no more.  
These tears that I shed, they are a' for my dear,  
& no for the dangers attending on weir;  
Tho' bore on rough seas to a far bloody shore,  
May be to return to Lochaber no more.<sup>35</sup>

Geographically, of course, Lochaber refers to a specific region of the western Highlands, but in this context it could perhaps be taken to represent any area of Scotland from which a Jacobite might have been exiled.<sup>36</sup> Certainly in Stevenson's textual re-rendering, the traditional

---

<sup>35</sup> Allan Ramsay, *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, 2 vols. (Glasgow: Crum, 1871), 114-115; James Johnson, *Scots Musical Museum*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Sold and subscriptions taken in, by ... N. Stewart, R. Bremner, Corri & Sutherland—R. Ross, Ednr., & all the Music Sellers of London, 1787), 96.

<sup>36</sup> See Herman Moll, *The West Part of Inverness Sh. Lochaber with all the Territories West from it* (London: Bowles and Bowles, 1745). From National Library of Scotland, 22 March 2010: <http://www.nls.uk/maps/detail.cfm?id=251>.

song becomes overlaid with multiple ideas of Scottish emigration, including resonances of the failed Risings and the Clearances. Thus, time and again throughout David Balfour's story, allusions and references to popular Scottish song are employed as a means of counterpointing the adventurer's personal destination with a far wider construction of the homecoming idea. By repeatedly juxtaposing a fictional protagonist's quest with settings of "real" cultural and historical significance, Stevenson complicates the adventure mode through a conflation of the immediate and the imaginary in ways which demand a high level of moral engagement from his readers.

A more violent parallel to the loss experienced by the Gaelic-speaking exiles aboard the boat occurs with the dramatic homebreaking of James of the Glens, an event which immediately follows the Appin murder in *Kidnapped*. Indeed, James's house becomes a personalized enactment of how, according to Menikoff, "the defeat at Culloden and the post-Culloden laws disrupted the Highlands' traditional familial and economic structure."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the scene provides an individualized expression of loss typified by songs such as "Auld Lang Syne," in which, as Pittock observes, "as so often in Burns, the intimacy and domesticity of the Jacobite lyric's lament for a lost homeland and an invaded home is transferred, with an ease inherited from codes of the subgenre, to a world of individuated grief, love and loss."<sup>38</sup> James Stewart knows that the iron-ruling fist of English government will seize upon the Appin Murder as an excuse to further vanquish the Highlanders. Like the homes of so many Highland families, his own domestic realm is thrown into a state of panic and disarray. David notices how:

James carried me accordingly into the kitchen and sat down with me at table, smiling and talking at first in a very hospitable manner. But presently the gloom returned upon him; he sat frowning and biting his fingers; only remembered me from time to time; and then gave me but a word or two and a poor smile, and back into his private terrors. His wife sat by the fire and wept, with her face in her hands; his eldest son was crouched upon the floor, running over a great mass of papers and now and again setting one alight and burning it to the bitter end (9:205).

This atmosphere of terror imposed upon James Stewart's domestic sphere ultimately culminates in the home's physical dissolution, which

---

<sup>37</sup> Menikoff, *Narrating Scotland*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Pittock, *Poetry*, 139.

corresponds to yet another prevalent trope of Jacobite song. As Pittock again notes:

earlier in the eighteenth century, the actuality of exile was not so fully realized, but its metaphors were powerful ones, more domestic than the Aenean symbolism of England. In "This is no my ain House," politically bowdlerized by Allan Ramsay, the Hanoverian succession appears as a personal violation of the ordinary Scottish home.<sup>39</sup>

In *Kidnapped*, Stevenson depicts homebreaking through a series of unique but analogous events—beginning with David Balfour's troubles with the House of Shaws and progressing through the violent (and ultimately more tragic) scene at James of the Glens' domicile. In both cases, the loss of home is deeply personal, just as it is portrayed in Jacobite verse.

Pittock observes how, "in Scotland, ... the nation usually speaks in her own voice. Often this voice ... is distinctively domestic, as in 'This is No My Ain Hoose,' where the usurpation of the kingdom is realized through the metaphor of eviction."<sup>40</sup> By allowing the reader to view the expulsion of James Stewart's family through David's eyes, Stevenson continues to progressively "map" his protagonist's individual experience of destination-seeking onto a broader national one.<sup>41</sup> Rather than allowing his adventure to exist as mere "escapist" literature, Stevenson once again re-inscribes tropic elements of the mode as a means of facilitating serious moral and psychological considerations. And the ethical quandaries of the *individual* which he so intentionally foregrounds throughout both *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* prefigure a central concern of the modern adventure aesthetic.

---

<sup>39</sup> Pittock, *Poetry*, 136. Gerard Carruthers notes the political appropriation to Burns of non-Burnsian material, commenting "it took the labors of many in the first part of the nineteenth century before the Burns corpus was disinterred amidst a confusing welter of bowdlerized, suppressed, and wrongly attributed material": Carruthers, "Burns's Political Reputation in North America," in *Robert Burns and Transatlantic Culture*, ed. Sharon Alker, Leith Davis and Holly Faith Nelson, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 87-98 (91).

<sup>40</sup> Pittock, "Scottish Song," 107.

<sup>41</sup> The idea of David Balfour as a witness to the political events in eighteenth-century Scotland is explored in Matthew Wickman, *The Ruins of Experience: Scotland's "Romantic" Highlands and the Birth of the Modern Witness* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 43-68.



The resulting sense of dislocation is, of course, devastating – both culturally and domestically. This is evident in the novel when David recalls how James:

observed his son burning a paper which he thought should have been kept; and at that his excitement burst out so that it was painful to witness. He struck the lad repeatedly.

“Are you gone gyte?” he cried. “Do you wish to hang your father?” and forgetful of my presence, carried on at him a long time together in the Gaelic, the young man answering nothing; only the wife, at the name of hanging, throwing her apron over her face and sobbing out louder than before (9:206).

The *external* threat upon home has the added tragedy of producing *internal* aggression and despair. It is also significant that the protagonist should inform his readers how, at this dark moment, James forgets his guest’s presence in the house. Symbolically, James turns a blind eye to the Lowlanders, because the civil rift within Scotland has become so deep that neither side can expect aid from the other. This polarity reflects obvious civil fault lines within the national consciousness.<sup>42</sup> The (often brutal) regime which begets James Stewart’s situation also serves to cast him into the hostile mould which it will subsequently condemn him for espousing. His character functions both as a tragic paradox and as an embodiment of the cycle of violence so prevalent in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Highlands.

Stevenson further investigates this idea of Jacobite history in Scotland as comprising a tragic pattern in *The Master of Ballantrae*, where, as Lumsden suggests, “rather than producing a historical *process* which leads to resolution,... Stevenson’s novel suggests that this pivotal moment in Scottish history [the Rising] only produces an endless cycle where the two brothers [James and Henry Durie] seem doomed to repeat their

---

<sup>42</sup> David Goldie puts it well when he describes *Kidnapped* as “the first of four major novels in which Stevenson adapts the pace and tone of his earlier adventure books to explorations of the self-divisions of historical Scottish identity. The split in *Kidnapped* is not so much psychological and psycho-geographical, a division, reminiscent of Scott, between the mentalities of highland and lowland Scotland in the years immediately after the failed Jacobite rising of 1745”: David Goldie, “Scottish, Irish, and Welsh Fiction in the Late Nineteenth Century,” in *The Reinvention of the British and Irish Novel, 1880-1940* [Oxford History of the Novel in English, Vol. 4], ed. Patrick Parrinder and Andrzej Gasiorek (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), 174-175.

quarrel until it is ultimately resolved in death.”<sup>43</sup> Both *Kidnapped* and *The Master of Ballantrae* recognize and lament the widespread homebreaking which devastated the Highlands following Culloden. In doing so, these texts provide a unique extrapolation of that tropic element of adventure narrative which inevitably leads to the protagonist's search for a “homely” destination. Stevenson's intentional positioning of the adventurer as a home-seeker is reminiscent of many staple texts of the tradition, such as *The Odyssey*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and even, though certainly to a lesser extent, R. M. Ballantyne's *Coral Island* (1858). This alignment serves to further reinforce the author's broader theorizing of contemporary adventure literature. And, unsurprisingly, his rendering of the quest motif is further complicated by an ethically problematized mapping of the homegoing trope onto a national question which infuses adventure with significant cultural concerns.

Another instance of Stevenson's domesticization of eighteenth-century Scottish political strife in *Kidnapped* occurs after David has fallen out with Alan over the older man's gambling losses to the Highland chief, Cluny. Tired and sickening, David harbours resentment towards Alan, who seems to have “quite forgave himself for the affair at Cluny's; cocked his hat again, walked jauntily, whistled airs, and looked at me upon one side with a provoking smile” (9:269). The songs which Alan whistles are doubtless of a Jacobite strain, calculated to incite his friend's annoyance. Eventually, Alan verbalizes his provocations to taunt David, who accuses him of “cast[ing] my politics in my teeth” (9:271). Alan's response to this is blatant: he whistles a tune which specifically emphasizes David's sense of homelessness in the Jacobite Highlands.

Alan had stopped opposite to me, his hat cocked, his hands in his breeches pockets, his head a little on one side. He listened, smiling evilly, as I could see by the starlight; and when I had done he began to whistle a Jacobite air. It was the air made in mockery of General Cope's defeat at Preston Pans:

“Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye waukin' yet,  
And are your drums a-beatin' yet?” (9:271).

Alan's baiting touches a raw nerve for David, whose fragile sense of identity is much tied up with the Whiggish political stance of his Lowland upbringing, and he lashes back at Alan by insulting his own political side-switching in the past. Unsurprisingly, Pittock writes that,

---

<sup>43</sup> Lumsden, 76-77.

historically, “the opponent of the Whig song was the Jacobite song tradition, particularly the Scottish tradition.... Jacobite literature was often (though by no means always) poetry or song.”<sup>44</sup> By basing David and Alan’s most significant quarrel on a combination of political debate and song, Stevenson highlights a larger portrayal of the oppositional forces tearing their homeland apart.

The recurrence of this motif throughout *Kidnapped* serves to reinforce the personalized Jacobite-Whig opposition between Alan and David, who represent two disparate models of Scottish identity. Hence, David’s crowning insult to Alan is uniquely appropriate:

“O!” says I, “I ken ye bear a king’s name. But you are to remember, since I have been in the Highlands, I have seen a good many of those that bear it; and the best I can say of them is this, that they would be none the worse of washing” (9:272).

David’s words contain a clear resonance of contemporary Whig song, one of which, according to Donaldson, contains “repeated reference to the unpleasantness of their [Highlanders’] persons. Again and again the writer insists that they are ‘nasty’ and ‘lousy,’ using the words so often as to suggest a depth of repugnance which he is otherwise unable to articulate.”<sup>45</sup> In *Kidnapped*, the tension climaxes with David’s challenging Alan to a duel. Yet, significantly, in Stevenson’s portrayal even such extreme internal conflict is reconcilable – not by political truce but by a re-establishment of relational homeliness. When David admits the extremity of his illness, Alan eagerly aids him, exclaiming, “I’m no a right man at all; I have neither sense nor kindness; I couldna remember ye were just a bairn, I couldna see ye were dying on your feet; Davie, ye’ll have to try and forgive me” (9:274-275). Alan’s reference to the younger protagonist as a “bairn” functions to re-assert a familial, and thus domestic, construct within the text.

As the action of *Kidnapped* draws to a close, Alan elicits the aid of Alison of Limekilns to help the travellers cross the Firth of Forth by persuading her (in a humorously ironical episode) that David is a Jacobite with a price on his head, and Stevenson once again reinforces the meaning of this through song:

---

<sup>44</sup> Pittock, “Scottish Song,” 106.

<sup>45</sup> Donaldson, 43. The specific song referred to here is “*The Original and Conduct of the Young Pretender*.”

he leaned pretty far over the table, and in a mere breath of a whistle, but with a wonderful pretty sentiment, gave her a few bars of "Charlie is my darling."

"Wheesht," says she, and looked over her shoulder to the door.

"That's it," said Alan.

"And him so young!" cries the lass.

"He's old enough to—" and Alan struck his forefinger on the back part of his neck, meaning that I was old enough to lose my head (9:297).

Of course, "Charlie, He's My Darling" is one of the most celebrated Jacobite songs, which Donaldson describes as having been "inspired by the folk and street traditions."<sup>46</sup> As Kinsley notes, Burns was adapting a much longer romantic street ballad from 1775 (Kinsley III: 1503). Burns's song first appeared in the *Scots Musical Museum* in 1796:

'Twas on a monday morning,

Right early in the year,

That Charlie cam to our town,

The young Chevalier.—

Chorus

An' Charlie he's my darling, my darling, my darling,

Charlie he's my darling, the young Chevalier.— (Kinsley II:846-847).

Menikoff notes that, in designing this episode where Alison of Limekilns agrees to rescue Alan and David by rowing them across the river, Stevenson may be recalling the legendary courage of Flora Macdonald, thus signalling a further alignment with Jacobitism.<sup>47</sup> If this is indeed the case, then it reflects Stevenson's poem, "Sing Me a Song," which suggests his interest in re-imagining Prince Charles's escape, and its text conflates the poet's own experience with that of the defeated Stewart:

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,

Say, could that lad be I?

Merry of soul he sailed on a day

Over the sea to Skye (*CP* 200).

Reading this poem in conjunction with *Kidnapped* reveals how Stevenson closes the circle of a shared national consciousness by superimposing contemporary *psychological* experience onto a significant episode in Scotland's *historical* chronology.

---

<sup>46</sup> Donaldson, 78.

<sup>47</sup> Menikoff, "Introduction," lix.

Similarly, the popular Jacobite song “O’er the water to Charlie” has roots in the 1745 Rising, and Donaldson describes it as “a vision of joyous pilgrimage to a better land in which the messianic pull of the Chevalier is balanced by the thoughts and feelings of his ordinary followers and political rhetoric counterpointed by a delicate particularity, even down to the name of the boatman.”<sup>48</sup> One of the best known renderings of the song is Burns’s 1788 version:

Come boat me o’er, come row me o’er,  
 Come boat me o’er to Charlie;  
 I’ll gie John Ross anither bawbee  
 To boat me o’er to Charlie.—

Chorus

We’ll o’er the water, we’ll o’er the sea,  
 We’ll o’er the water to Charlie;  
 Come weal, come woe, we’ll gather nda [*sic*] go,  
 And live or die wi’ Charlie.— (Kinsley II:400).

Here, as in *Kidnapped*, the idea of personal loyalty in the face of exile is linked with that of a homecoming as a yearned-for destination. Stevenson constructs his text as something of an enactment of the old story – complete with Alison in the role of a Flora MacDonald (or John Ross) figure, boating her hunted Jacobites to a safe haven across the river. Once again, Stevenson employs popular Scottish song in order to establish a new kind of destination: a re-constructed home for the wandering adventurer. In so doing he also succeeds in re-negotiating the complex nature of “homeliness” through the generative acts of imagining and enacting a shared historical experience. So *Kidnapped* succeeds in presenting us with a morally significant adventure by transposing the microcosmic *bildungsroman* onto a broader cultural framework for an increasingly modern readership.

*Gordon College*

---

<sup>48</sup> Donaldson, 81.