

Feedback

Splendid magazine!

o Stephen Murray-Smith, editor, *Overland*, Mount Eliza, Victoria, Australia

ET is a very readable journal – exhibiting every sign of assured editorship. Sincere congratulations!

o L G Alexander, Haslemere, Surrey, England

Thank you for an uncommonly readable and well-informed magazine. Our staff pounces on each new issue, and Uppsala subscriptions are proliferating, as you might have noticed.

o Donald MacQueen, Engelska Institutionen, Uppsala Universitet, Sweden.

I like the level of sophistication that *English Today* achieves without becoming academically tedious.

o Wilfrid B Race, Toronto, Canada

We are writing to you on behalf of a large number of people teaching and studying English at Tartu State University, who have taken great interest in this periodical. We are extremely interested in getting *English Today* regularly.

o Laine Peep, Director, Library of Tartu State University, USSR Estonian SSR

As per the case of 'case'

I suppose it is on the ground of long-term usage that Latinisms like *per annum*, *miles per hour* and *miles per second* have been accepted into our terminology. Salesmen of almost any commodity or service are addicted to 'per', and it is to this that I object. What is wrong with '20p a lb' rather than '20p per lb'?

In addition, there appears to be an incalculable number of cases in the world. General practitioners and surgeons have living cases – their patients, but in conversation and televised speech the phrase 'the case of' may refer to anything: with starvation and malnutrition one has 'the case of Ethiopia', in international economics 'the case of the EEC', and in the sport of steeple-chasing 'the case of Aintree'. In each of these instances 'the case' is superfluous; such phrases can obviously be rendered 'Starvation and malnutrition in Ethiopia', and so on.

o Ronald Roper, Worthing, West Sussex, England

Mississippi mishap?

The publication from which you took the Native names of the American states (*ET5*) fell victim to an old myth: that *Mississippi* means 'Father of Waters'. In fact, as most of the other names show, the Natives didn't go in much for poetical language, and according to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, 'Mississippi' means merely 'big river' – which indeed it is. 'Idaho' is also probably of Native origin, and so possibly is Oregon – an earlier name for the Columbia River.

o Robert Claiborne, New York City, U.S.A.

Cheesed off about Kees

With reference to the article on 'Skunks, squash and Yankees' (*ET5*, Jan 86), where Robert Claiborne says 'Some indeed trace the name [Yankee] to Dutch Jan Kees ('John Cheese') . . .', I should like to point out that *Kees* is a common Dutch first name but the Dutch word for 'cheese' is *KAAS*.

o Jane Meijlink, *Vertaalster Engels*, Rockanje, The Netherlands

As sharp or even sharper than our subscription department

I quote from the subscription order form in *ET5*: '1986 prices are *the same or even lower than 1985*' (your italics). English today?

o Adrian Room, Petersfield, Hampshire, England

Pain in Spain

The cutting below contains a slang word which I have not met before. Have I just been lucky, or is it a horrible addition to our language? –

Alicante's Regional Council is to *outlay* more than 26 million pesetas during 1986 planting some two million trees divided among the mountain slopes of 18 municipalities. (*Holiday Maker and Residents' News*, Alicante and Province, 8 Feb 86.)

I should be interested in any comments.

o T K Alcock, Altea, Alicante, Spain

'Outlay' as a verb has been around, especially in North America, since at least the early 1960s. We would be glad to hear from readers about both this and any other unfamiliar verb usages of this kind. (See also p. 39.) *Ed*.

The wrong William

ET5 arrived today (welcome sight!); the letters to the editor especially good this issue. However, regarding your Penguin review on p. 45, I'm afraid that it wasn't Richmal Crompton's *William* that appeared in the first ten Penguins, but a book called *William* by E H Young.

o Anna Dunlop, Edinburgh, Scotland

Salty Tongues

You cannot be too upset with a man who's name you share, but Bill Broughton has got himself up a gum tree by claiming so many of my sea derivations are wrong (Reader's Letters *ET3*). His is the classic mistake of learning language with his eyes instead of his ears. You cannot take books down cold from the shelf and expect them to explain the phrases and terms of the streets and the fields – even though compilers have made a stab at it. You have to live with it!

If Mr Broughton had spent any time in ships seeing the actions which I have described and straight after hearing expressions which allude to them then he could not help but make the connection. I won't claim that all the derivations I have collected are 100% nautical because it is impossible to be dogmatic. But my connections with the sea go back thirty years and I believe that gives me a greater authority than a man who relies merely on his library.

o Bill Beavis, Hordle, Hampshire, England

Clichés: a non-art form

The tell-tale phrase in Nicholas Bagnall's 'In Defence of Clichés' (*ET5*, Jan 86) is in the middle of p. 20: ' . . . if we take [cliché] to mean something that has lost its impact by constant use, we cannot call those newspaper terms clichés since, for millions, they plainly have not lost their impact.'

There is nothing to substantiate the assertions contained in this passage. I assert that 'cannot' should be 'can', that 'have' should be italicised and that 'not' should be deleted. The objection to the apparently compulsive use of such phrases as 'raging inferno' and 'death toll' is precisely that they may have lost their impact by constant use. I think that the millions who read them – or more probably skim over them – are anaesthetised by what they semi-read. I suspect that news, heard or seen, that is laced with clichés has the same stultifying effect as the social realism of

soap opera – a sub-species of drama cliché. Life and non-art tend to coalesce if the language dies on its feet.

This is not to excuse bogus originality designed to embellish plain fact. The 'odd goal in nine' is no more informative than '5-4'. The fact is limited: the dressing-up is silly. What we need is writing that is better than a mere sequence of attention turn-offs (clichés for example). We need writing that compels the same fresh attention from the reader that it has received from the writer. If you don't think as you write, you should not expect people to think as they read. Without thought, on both sides, the transaction is pointless. Cliché, in the literary sense, is the black art of making words do duty for thought. I am 'agin it' and expect to be pilloried when I drift into it.

○ Eric Stockton, Sanday, Orkney

A euge success

In response to P J Keen's letter [ET5, Jan 86] about *euthusiast*, the typo in ET1, I would like to offer the following possible definitions for this rather delightful word: a hearty eater (cf. *eupepsy*, a good digestion); a happy person (cf. *euphrasy*, cheerfulness); a proponent of *euthanasia*; a member of the European Parliament, an enthusiast about Europe; a tourist who 'does' Europe in a fortnight, or less; a fanatically devoted follower of an individual or cause, much given to *eulogising* – or a person with a genius for making excuses, from *Euclates* of Athens, noted for his excuses for neglecting his duties. Or of course it could be just the right word for a devoted *euphonium* player!

○ Sandra Slade, East Grinstead, Sussex, England

The English gambit in Chinese romance

According to a study by the magazine *China's Youth*, 70% of Chinese women want to find a husband that is more capable than them in every respect. Now that English is the latest craze, a new trend is developing: A young man flaunts his knowledge of English by inserting a word or two here and there in his conversation with a would-be girlfriend. I've seen many young couples on buses and in parks playing this language game. However, it is the man who talks while the woman is all ears. If the young woman tries out her English, the dominant male laughs at her, corrects her pronunciation, and

The floorless Times



"And I say my spelling is flawless!
F-L-O-O-R-L-E-S-S, Flawless!"

Readers not familiar with Received Pronunciation, especially in South-Eastern England, may find the caption of our cartoon puzzling – initially at least. The cartoon is Doug Baker's own work, inspired by his own awareness of usage, and has been most felicitously backed up by Jack Conrad, who has sent in the following (from an ad in *The Times* of London, 9 Apr 86):

'French speaking P.A./Secretary with floorless English, good English shorthand and word processing/personal computer experience, required by City [of London] merchant bank – Multilingual Services, Recruitment consultants.'

Jack Conrad adds: 'In my wildest dreams I never thought the time would come when our allegedly most prestigious newspaper, one which is regarded with reverence not only by the British but abroad, would descend to this level – or should I say this floor?'

teaches her a new word (often incorrectly, I might add).

This game is indicative of the tone of relationships between young men and women where the man struts about with an air of knowing everything and the woman acts submissive and feigns knowing nothing, all for the sake of romance. Women do this in spite of the fact that they need higher marks to get into many universities and get as good marks as men in their studies, if not better. Since the May 4th Movement of 1919, many women have joined the productive work force establishing the economic base for equality. And Chairman Mao *did* say that women hold up half the sky. Hmm . . .

○ Elizabeth-Anne Malischewski,
Canadian Language Training
Programme, Central Southern China
Electric Power Design Institute,
Wuhan, China

The problem of impurism

Impurism, not purism, is the problem. Power is not to the People, but to the pretentious, the press, broadcaster and demagogue. Language development has changed direction. It had always involved euphemisms, snobberies, misunderstandings; but newer factors – wider literacy, the loss of Latin and Greek, the stopping of grammar teaching, and the snobbery of technologies – have affected speakers, writers, and teachers themselves. Taste is affronted, respect for words is gone,

but, worse, precision of thought is lost.

Some offenders are specialists: a mathematician's 'curve' may have no curvature. More often a specialist word is misused, e.g. 'encapsulates', and 'to careen' for 'to career'. Misuse of 'disinterested' robs us of the word for action that is free of self-interest. Native prepositions like 'over', 'before', are supplanted by pretentious phrases: 'in excess of', 'prior to'. Having lost grammatical sense we make ambiguous statements like 'Based on this report, the agreement was shelved'. Ignorant of the Classics, *Times* writers produce 'a bacteria'. Monsters like 'gi-normous' and 'washeteria' flourish. 'Gay' betrays the gaiety society has already lost; other euphemisms set one imagining a New Testament with the 'visually challenged' leading the 'visually challenged'. A counter-movement for simplicity has made vague our thought with expressions like 'He's into history'.

Pronunciation is in confusion. We hear 'makizmo' for Spanish *machismo*, 'bohnafed' for *bona fide*, and anthropologists mispronounce 'Cromagnon'. Yet a word like 'trauma' gets de-naturalized into 'trowma'. Native names lose character: Moray ('murry') becomes 'mawrae'. 'Die-sect' is broadcast for 'dissect', and 'diffused', dangerously, for 'defused'.

Language reflects society. Shall we watch both decline? Or could a permanent body of the *disinterested* publicize the relations of words and check the media? Is it too late to introduce language-awareness into schools?

○ David I Masson, Leeds, England

Tulu Today?

A Lebanese scholar recently sent a shudder through both the Arab and Jewish worlds by suggesting that the ancient land of Israel was not located in Palestine at all, but in Saudi Arabia. Comparably, another historical investigator has proposed that the site of Troy was not in Asia Minor but on the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia. And there have been ads in recent British Sunday supplements for a book which avers that Jesus was an Englishman.

Late last year documents began to arrive on the editorial desk of *English Today* with a similar intention of standing the world of received scholarship on its head. In letters, an offprint and other items, retired Squadron Leader P Shivaprasad Rai from Bangalore in India argues that he has 'established that all the unique features of English . . . are from Tulu,' an ancient vernacular language of India, now spoken by about a million and a

half people on the south west coast of India. Some of the Tulus – like the Gypsies but much longer ago – left their eastern homeland, he asserts, in a 'Tulu Anglian odyssey', at length settling in the island of Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries AD as the Angles. 'They called themselves Engles and the others called them Angles. In Tulu ENKL, ENGL means *we*, excluding you, and AKL, ANGL means *they*. The Tulu speaking Angli called themselves ENGLE (*we*). They called their new home in Britain ENGLA-CUND which evolved into England. ENGLA is the genitive case of ENGLE in Old English and it is also the genitive of ENGL in Tulu. Land is CUND in Old English and it is KANDA in Tulu. The Angles called their original home FEORAN CUND (the distant far away land) and in Tulu PURAANA KANDA means the distant, ancient, fertile land.'

P S Rai first put forward his thesis in a paper to a conference on literature in translation, held at Jawaharlal University in New Delhi in March 1984. Among his hundreds of 'English-Tulu correspondences' are such eyebrow raisers as *aged/ajjer, alarm/allambra, apple/aapala, baby/baabu, open/odeppn, serpent/sarpe, stick/tikk, water/wosar* and *yes/iye*. Additionally, however, he offers such philological mystifiers as *amen/wo amma, awe/poodige, bandicoot/percude, boy/kinni, circus/kasrat, embrace/aramb, haunch/sonta, mademoiselle/madmal, rotten/kuritna, snout/musunt* and *Wednesday/budaara*. As Squadron Leader Rai observes: 'If any Englishman says [English] is a dialect of German and hence Indo-European, I say that he does not know the greatness of his mother tongue.' [P S Rai may be contacted at 180 Defence Colony, Bangalore 560038 India.]

Epicene pronouns, Part 2

Epicene [as used in Professor Baron's letter, *ETS*, Jan 86] meanz having dhe karakteristikz ov both sexez. A possibl anser tu dhe problem ov dhe epicene pronoun woud be tu use dhe complete *he* paradigm for malez, dhe complete *she* paradigm for femalez, but tu kombine dhem wher neutrality iz rekuired; using *she* for the nominativ kace tu replace *he* in the *he* paradigm, e.g.: 'She kan du it for himself.' Dhis solucion haz already been parcially adopted widh dhe uce ov *s/he* in advertismentz.

In Somerset we hav always had an epicene pronoun. It is *er*. Thus, 'Er be comical er be', 'Er d'keep enself to enself', 'Er hit I', 'Er d'do es best', 'Er give it to en yesterdy', and so on.

○Robert Craig, Weston-super-Mare, Avon, England

p.s. Isn't it about time that we learned tu differentiate between Inglish the language and English, the peopl? It woud certainly help tu clarify a titel such as 'The English in Japanese', wich appeared in *IT6*. (Linguists can't aford tu be without *IT*).

Readers' letters are welcomed. *ET* policy is to publish as representative and informative a selection as possible in each issue. Such correspondence, however, may be subject to editorial adaptation in order to make the most effective use of both the letters and the space available.

Tell en to leave grammar alone

I can't resist the temptation of both replying to Katie Wales and expressing my indignation over Dr Burchfield's antiquated views on grammar. This 'angle of vision' is appallingly myopic, and his partisan answers can only arouse partisan feelings in those who, like myself, don't always agree with Chomsky but are convinced that he is nonetheless a leading figure in modern linguistics.

Katie Wales (*ETS*, p. 5)

If she is interested to have examples of *she*, Katie Wales should ask Dr Martyn Wakelin, also of Royal Holloway College. In his *English Dialects: An Introduction* (p. 113), he specifies that *she/her* can occasionally 'denote an inanimate object' in the West of England. The Southwest prefers *he* and *en* (him) in a similar context. The phenomenon was well explained in the last century by William Barnes, the Dorset poet and dialectologist, whose words are quoted in Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Grammar*.

Whereas Old English had a grammatical gender like Latin or modern German, standard English has a lexical or natural gender, but some English dialects have developed a third system, based on a tendency to personify inanimate objects. Nouns belong either to the personal class (a tree, a tool, etc.) or the impersonal class (water, dust, etc.), depending on whether they are countables or uncountables. After humorously protesting against a frequent caricature

of the speech of SW people ('Then it is said of western people that they make everything *he* but a tom-cat which they call *she*'), Barnes gives a clear example of the real distinction: 'We say of a tree "he's a-cut down, John vell'd en", but of water we should say "it's a-dried up".' (*A Glossary of the Dorset Dialect with a Grammar*, p. 17).

According to the *Survey of English Dialects*, that use of *he/en* can still be heard in the SW: the most frequent form is *en*, but *he* (instead of *it*) is also found in Dorset, Cornwall and Berkshire. Barnes even used *he* for a female creature of the personal class. Wiltshire-born N Rogers testifies that *he* can sometimes be used to refer to a cow (*Wessex Dialect*, 1979, p. 35). There is a similar possibility in colloquial Dutch: 'De koe, hij ligt op de grond' (lit. 'The cow, he is lying on the ground'). Dialect *he* and Dutch *hij* are thus unmarked pronouns, as opposed to dialect *she* and Dutch *ze*, which are only feminine.

This is the other side of the coin that Katie Wales is asking about. All the same, I have been dealing with sex in language, or rather its absence, as is probably the case too in the examples of Australian English that she gives. In 'She's an absolute bastard, this truck', *she* may be devoid of antipathy – I mean sexual antipathy. In which case the use of *she* for a truck would be as 'sexless' as the dialect use of *he* for a tree or a cow.

Robert Burchfield (*ETS*, p. 17)

Everybody will agree that Dr Burchfield is a respectable old-timer of English lexicography but, whenever he

Laurence Urdang has done more than anyone else in modern times to build lexicographic bridges between the USA and Britain. So it is gratifying that he should have taken an interest in my article on British and American English in *ET4* (Oct 85).

With regard to collective nouns, my main point was that Americans dislike treating nouns like *committee* and *jury* as plurals, and are astonished to discover that people in Britain can do so by saying (1) *The committee have issued their report*. But I went on to make the more 'delicate' point that with such nouns Americans dislike plural verbs *even more* than plural pronouns or possessives. Thus they would be more likely (or even less unlikely) to say (2) *The committee has issued their report*. To this Mr Urdang replies that in AmE 'the preferred form would be' (3) *The committee has issued its report*. So it would be (and I hope that was clear from my article). He also says that though (2) is heard, it would be considered a solecism. So it would be! If Mr Urdang would also agree that, by contrast, (1) is so *unlikely* to be heard in AmE that it is not a usage problem (a potential solecism) for Americans, then I fail to see how he and I are in disagreement at all!

He also comments on the British-American glossary appended to my article. This glossary began as a condensation of a longer list in *The Right Word at the Right Time* (Reader's Digest UK, 1985). Many hands have

been at work on it since then, while the original Reader's Digest list is kept under review, and will be adjusted, as appropriate, with each reprinting of the book. Mr Urdang apparently accepts most of the items in the glossary. His critical comments are typically of two kinds: First, there are some things that are not in the glossary but should be. The glossary, however, is meant to be 'representative' but not 'exhaustive'. Second, some things given as BrE are also to be found in AmE, and should therefore have the label W for 'worldwide'. He is certainly right about all the spelling variants like *defence* and *monologue* (except *cheque* and *tyre*). As for the lexical items, he is right about some (*railway*, for example, is World English), but he may well be wrong about others. Take *leader* (as defined in his own *Collins English Dictionary*, as 'the principal first violinist of an orchestra. . .'). Is this sense of *leader* AmE? In *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (US), the relevant sense of *leader* is explained as follows: 'the leading performer of a musical ensemble <the concert master is the leader of the violin section>'. What this definition-cum-example shows is that in AmE *leader* can indeed be used in describing the principal first violinist; but that the AmE name for this musician is *concertmaster* (from German *Konzertmeister*).

Finally, about still other items Mr Urdang's assessment is debatable. Take *bird*, 'girl'. He says it is used in AmE.

Is it? A whole range of dictionaries whose names I could provide list the usage as British slang or, if American, do not list this sense at all. It is of course possible that American usage has changed in the last few years, and indeed this very discussion of *bird* in an international journal may inspire Americans to use it. You see how hard it is to compile BrE-AmE glossaries, and (to quote my article) how 'misleading' such glossaries are bound to be by their very nature. They always tend to maximise differences, minimise similarities. Note in this connection the difference between the title of my article in *ET4* ('Diversity in Unity: British and American English') and its representation on the magazine's front cover ('American and British – the differences'). Would people have been as interested if the front cover read: 'American and British – the similarities'?

What we really need are far more sophisticated techniques for comparing standard varieties of a single language that not only change internally but also interact continuously. We need techniques that are not limited to comparing individual linguistic items (sounds, spellings, words, grammatical constructions), but can be used to compare patterns of discourse as well. We need, in short, a new discipline – 'varietology'.

○ Robert Ilson, the Survey of English Usage, University College London, England

writes or talks about grammar, his criticism of modern linguistics is incredibly 'old hat', and his ingrained allergy to Chomsky is bound to erupt. If reading the American linguist for the first time can indeed be an experience similar to one's first cigarette or beer, Dr Burchfield is still like a teenager with a headache and too shy to have another try and feel like an adult. And, instead of persevering, he virtuously prefers to remain an outsider and rail against Chomsky and his host of followers worldwide.

Not even satisfied with Quirk's latest grammar, which he does not deem 'big enough', as if the quality of a grammar depended on its size or weight, Dr Burchfield has in mind a 'monument' which 'would be like a great castle on a hill'. There is a real medievalist's mirage. The venture is eminently quixotic – I can spy windmills on that hill – because he can't surpass Jespersen and his *Modern Grammar on Historical Principles* (7 vols.), especially at a time when, sad to say, the majority of students, even in Germany, don't

care a fig about a detailed history 'from Anglo-Saxon times'. Why not from Proto-Indo-European? That would make the book bigger and heavier still.

○ Jean-Marc Gachelin, Université de Haute Normandie, Mont Saint Aignan, France

View from a former colony

Best wishes to your fine new journal. It seems to have found a rich vein between sterile specialism and vaporous dilettantism.

I wish to take exception to a statement by Robert Burchfield in *ET5*, namely: 'You would know whether you were dealing with something quite new-fangled, with something that was British to the core, or was a novelty of one of the former colonies.' As it stands, Mr Burchfield's second term, 'British to the core,' excludes all extra-insular survivals, as for example 'I've gotten three warnings' and 'I suggest he do it'. In contrast, there is

no dearth of extra-insular reference in the combination of his first term, 'new-fangled' (juxtaposed as it is to 'British to the core'), and his third term, 'a novelty of one of the former colonies'. Conceivably, something on the order of 'in the British core' – with a pre-Jamestown, or even a pre-Pale definition of 'core' – was at least partly intended. And admittedly, the three terms were not held out as being exhaustive. But even so, a further diagnostic emerges from Mr Burchfield's introduction without qualification *into this context* of the words 'former colonies', quite as if there were little linguistic difference between mother-tongue colonies and all the others.

In his writings, Mr Burchfield allows that *some* Americans have the language as an heirloom (the 'long-established lawn' perhaps being extensible), but alas – and here the studies on diglossia seem to carry small weight – not *other* Americans. For example:

(1) In his article *On That Other Great*

Dictionary (*Encounter*, May 1977), Mr Burchfield attributes the passionate clamor that greeted *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* to the 'unbeautiful language' of everybody from Mickey Spillane to the Pennsylvania Dutch(!). According to his lurid scenario, educated-standard American English is being overwhelmed by a tsunami of 'meretricious' – and Mayflowerless – ruck, while all the while in Britain its counterpart exercises an ever-so-serene hegemony straight out of *Mrs Miniver*. Yet it is hardly a secret that the gravamen against *Webster's Third* was its (desperately misguided) removal of certain restricted-usage labels, especially from the word *ain't*. The proper proof of Mr Burchfield's pudding would be for him to remove from the *OED* the same restricted-usage labels *Webster's* removed, while including in the *OED* an equally generous swath of the living language (such as all those things I hear in British movies), and then to see what happens. Until Mr Burchfield has done this, his argument – which, in any event, amounts to taking the dedication of the police force as the prime measure of the crime rate – has little charm.

(2) In his book *The English Language* (Oxford University Press, 1985), having asserted that the hold Americans have on their own educated-standard language is a tenuous thing, and having presented some of the more dramatic paradigm-restructurings of Black English (formerly called dialect), Mr Burchfield then goes on to characterize Black English as potentially 'subversive'. In other words, one day soon I'll pick up an Internal Revenue Service form that begins 'You gots to fill out Lines 1 through 8'. That's summit oy be lookin forward to. But meanwhile, consider the above-noted 'passionate clamor' and draw your own conclusion.

Over sixty years ago, Edward Sapir set forth his concept of 'drift', which is the essence of grammar on historical principles and puts the lie to all narrowly synchronic grammars. Hyperion to Chomsky's satyr. Yes, a full-size, Oxford-style (if not necessarily Oxford-based) grammar 'on Historical Principles' would be a thing of great and lasting value. Like so many of Mr Burchfield's ideas, this is a splendid one.

○ Robert L Moore, New York City, U.S.A.

Round Tuits Some manufacturers of oddments have recently been offering the public small 'indispensable' circular objects called round tuits. Indispensable? Yes indeed, because people have been saying for years that they would be able to do all sorts of things once they got a round tuit.

Jekyll and Hyde centenary

Your readers may like to be reminded that January 1986 marked the centenary of the publication of the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson that introduced into the English language a new phrase, 'Jekyll and Hyde'.

The sales of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* were slow at first, but news soon spread of the book's fascinating theme of man's dual personality. A long review appeared in *The Times*, a sermon was preached on the theme in St Paul's and *Punch* printed a parody on the book in its February number. Soon *Jekyll and Hyde* was being widely talked of and sales of the book shot up, bringing R.L.S. his first commercial success, at the time surpassing his book for boys, *Treasure Island*, which had been published in book form in December 1884.

Stevenson himself took to using Jekyll and Hyde in letters to his friends and relations, as a code name for good and evil striving for ascendancy. In the letter he sent with a copy of the book to his cousin to whom he had dedicated it, he wrote: 'It is sent to you by one that loves you, Jekyll not Hyde.'

In April 1886 when Stevenson had taken his elderly and mentally-sick father on holiday he wrote home to his mother: 'My father, I am sorry to say, gave me a good dose of Hyde this morning.' And later in the letter added: 'I suppose I am gloomy today because I could not sleep last night, and the dose of Hyde at breakfast finished me (Jekyll had been in the ascendant until now).'

The story of Jekyll and Hyde had come to Stevenson in a dream during a prolonged period of illness while he and his wife were living in Bournemouth. One morning in the early hours, tossing in feverish sleep, he cried out in terror; when his wife sought to quieten him he rebuked her, complaining that she had woken him from a 'fine bogey tale' he was dreaming, of a man fumbling in a medicine cabinet for a white powder which would bring about a miraculous transformation and personality change.

The next day R.L.S., fired with enthusiasm, was soon busy on the first draft of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. 'Jekyll,' he later wrote, 'was conceived, written, re-written and re-re-written inside ten weeks,' adding that it was written with urgency because of the need to pay the butcher's bill.

Old Mr Stevenson died in 1887 and in September, in a desperate search for a climate where his own health would improve, Stevenson, his wife, stepson and widowed mother set sail for America, the start of a journey which would lead to Samoa and his final home. He was hailed in America as a literary celebrity, author of *Jekyll and Hyde*. The pilot who came aboard to bring the ship into New York happened



"I shall be pleased when we've devised an oral form of communication, won't you?"

to be a man named Hyde and something of a taskmaster, whose more easy-going mate was nicknamed Jekyll by the crew.

Two days after their arrival in New York the first performance was given in a theatre of a dramatisation by a Mr Sullivan of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. R.L.S. was not well enough to attend but his wife and mother were present. His mother wrote home to say: 'The play was a most thrilling and a great success. Hyde is the most dreadful creature you can imagine.'

Their next stop was Plattsburg en route for Lake Saranac in the Adirondacks. Here old Mrs Stevenson attended the Presbyterian church and wrote home to her sister telling of the good sermon she had heard, in which the preacher spoke of the dangers of yielding to evil and warned that 'in the end Hyde would conquer Jekyll'.

The cold mountain climate at Saranac suited Stevenson and reminded him of Scotland. When walking on the verandah one dark evening an inspiration came to him for a new story. Another devil incarnate seemed to come striding towards him out of the darkness. This figure took shape as the leading character in *The Master of Ballantrae*. 'The Master is all I know of the devil,' R.L.S. wrote to a friend. Another Hyde? No, for the Master had a handsome exterior and a fatal charm which might perhaps be called his Jekyll mask.

I am indebted to Mr Roger Lancelyn Green who wrote a letter to *The Times* in November 1980 giving a clue to the correct pronunciation of Jekyll. He quoted from verses written by two of Stevenson's contemporaries:

I am your Dr Jekyll,
And you're my Mr Hyde
On my head mortals wreak ill
Of me they often speak ill.

○ Barbara Brill, Stockport, England