Louis Becke's Modern Buccaneer: The transformation of William "Bully" Hayes into the first modern literary pirate of the Pacific

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> Hayes was no better or worse than other people in the South Seas then were; he had only one fault, which a lot of people still have today: he always forgot to pay his bills!
> Charles Netzler, a Samoan neighbour.[2]

Between 1893 and 1913, the Australian writer Louis Becke re-envisioned the notorious thief, conman, and rogue Captain William 'Bully' Hayes in a series of stories and novellas, creating the first and most famous iconic South Pacific pirate in Australian literature. Although Becke's writing career extended over barely twenty years, his legacy of some 35 volumes of fiction, history, and ethnography, along with well over 220 known articles for newspapers and periodicals, published in a number of languages other than English, establishes him as Australia's most internationally recognized writer of the Pacific Oceanic region at the end of the nineteenth century. 'If one wants an honest, evocative, unpretentious and at times fearfully moving account of the Pacific,' argue James A. Michener and A. Gordon Day, 'he must read Louis Becke.'[3] Acknowledging Becke's unique style, the distinguished Australian literature critic A. R. Chisholm observed that Becke was a 'very successful explorer in that peculiar limbo of literature where fiction merges with fact, and fact becomes a basis for genuinely successful creative writing,' and Becke's transformation of Hayes into the iconic Pacific pirate is a prime example of this technique of combining fiction with fact.[4] Throughout his career, literally from his first published work to his last,

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[2] Joan Druett, *The Notorious Captain Hayes: The Remarkable True Story of William 'Bully' Hayes, Pirate of the Pacific* (Auckland: Harper Collins, 2016), 5.
[3] James A. Michener, and A. Grove Day, *Rascals in Paradise* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), 260, 261.
[4] A. Grove Day, *Louis Becke* (Melbourne: Hill of Content Publishing Co., 1966), 11.

Becke continued to write about Hayes, with whom he'd only sailed briefly in the early 1870s, but who provided raw material for Becke's prolific pen that was developed into at least fifteen major published stories about Hayes, as well as at least half-a-dozen other pieces about Becke's time with Islanders after the wreck of Hayes' ship, the *Leonora*. In these tales, Becke merges fact with fiction to transform a nautical rogue with few morals and no fixed address into such a successful literary legend in Becke's own time that Hayes was eventually known as 'Louis Becke's pirate.'[5]

In this article, I argue that Louis Becke created a new literary character trope, the iconic Pacific pirate, and that in doing so he may have been inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson's iconic pirate character in his 1883 novel *Treasure Island*, Long John Silver, while drawing on an historic heritage of pirate activity in the Pacific region. Like Stevenson, Beck based his fictional character on a real person, Captain William 'Bully' Hayes, expanding their brief relationship of a few weeks into a series of fictional voyages and adventures over some years. But while Stevenson was drawing on well-known literary prototypes of Caribbean pirates, before Louis Becke created his version of 'Bully' Hayes there was no major individual pirate protagonist in Australian or Pacific literature, although there was certainly a large group of pirates in Pacific history from which to choose, some of whom were guilty of deeds and bloodshed far worse than anything with which Hayes was ever involved. With perhaps an eye on retaining as broad a readership as possible, Becke remained protective of Hayes' reputation as a gentleman pirate, criticizing other writers who invented bloodthirsty Hayes deeds and villainy. Rather than portraying a traditional pirate villain who burned ships after torturing and killing those on board, Becke portrayed Hayes as a charming bandit who romanced ladies and did the occasional

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[5] " 'Bully Hayes': Louis Becke's Pirate," *Sunday Times* (Perth), 14 September 1913, 20.

good deed, while thumbing his nose at authorities as he escaped into the tropical

darkness with their ships and their money. Nevertheless, as Becke developed the

literary image of his enduring Pacific pirate, he found it more difficult as time went on

to rationalize that earlier romantic image with the increasingly violent behaviour of

the real 'Bully' Hayes. Becke's vision grew darker as the raw clay of the criminal

became more visible in the feet of his pirate idol.

Louis Becke

To appreciate the development of the fictional 'Bully' Hayes, we need to know more

about his creator: Louis Becke. Unlike Stevenson, who while advocating that 'the

author must know his countryside, real or imaginary,' admitted that in the case of

Treasure Island his knowledge was predominantly due to studying published

sources, Louis Becke wrote from real life experience.[6] He had physically sailed

through the geography of his stories and had met his pirate personally. Born in Port

Macquarie, New South Wales, in 1855, Becke led a rather Huckleberry Finn

childhood, preferring to be outdoors fishing and sailing rather than in the schoolroom,

until his family moved to Sydney when he was eleven. Understandably, Becke found

it hard to settle into city life, and three years later left to join his brothers in San

Francisco. By the time he was 18, he was working in Samoa when he was employed

to deliver a ketch to 'Bully' Hayes at Milli Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Hayes sized

Becke up as the smart young entrepreneur that he was and offered him a job as

supercargo on his trading ship, *Leonora*, but only a few weeks later, in March 1874,

that ship was wrecked on Kosrae Island in a hurricane and Becke, Hayes, and a

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[6] For this article, I am using the Oxford World Classics edition: Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 199.

drunk, quarreling, and riotous crew were stranded there. When order deteriorated

quickly in this isolated place, Becke and Hayes fell out over the men's behaviour

and, consequently, Becke moved to the other side of the island where he lived

idyllically with a local chief and his family until he was rescued by a ship, HMS

Rosario, employed by the New South Wales colonial administration to hunt Hayes

down and arrest him. However, Hayes abandoned Becke and escaped the island

before that could eventuate and Becke came back to Australia, never to meet Hayes

again.

Becke returned to the Pacific over the next two decades on a series of trading

ventures, living and working on various Islands, and becoming deeply interested and

involved in Island languages, customs, and culture. However, his health declined

due to recurrent bouts of malaria and dengue fever after working in New Britain, and

he was forced to return to Australia for increasingly longer recovery periods, during

one of which he married. Unable to find work in the Islands in the early 1890s, he

was employed digging out stumps on a building site in Sydney when he was heard

telling stories about his Pacific adventures in a bar one day by J. F. Archibald, editor

of *The Bulletin*, who invited him to write them for the magazine. Becke wrote

prolifically and quickly assembled enough material for a collection of stories that was

published in London in 1894 by T. Fisher Unwin as *By Reef and Palm*, impressing

critics and readers alike with their realistic, no-holds-barred accounts of life in the

Islands. From then until his death in 1913, Becke continued to write stories steadily

and fluently for newspapers and periodicals, as well as accounts of Island life and

environment, most of which were eventually collected into books and published for

an ever-widening global audience.[7] Even before the release of *By Reef and Palm*,

however, Becke had already published his first story about his pirate Hayes.

Captain 'Bully' Hayes

The life model for Becke's fictional Pirate Hayes of the Pacific was the historical

Captain William 'Bully' Hayes, who was notorious as a swindler, thief, con-man, and

thug with a taste for very young women until his murder in 1877, and who had

remained a source of tall tales and legend. Becke added his own Hayes stories to an

Australian pirate genre that includes, for example, the tale of the privateer William

Campbell who in the *Harrington* used Sydney as a base while raiding Spanish ships

along the South American coast in 1804, only for the *Harrington* to be seized by

convicts five years later and sailed to the Philippines.[8] According to Ian Duffield, this

was only one of at least 211 piracy incidents in Australian waters between 1790 and

1859 that included 82 ships seized by transported convicts. Two of the more

renowned incidents were that of the 1829 seizure of the *Cyprus* that sailed from

Macquarie Harbour in Tasmania to South America, and that of William Bryant who

with his wife, two children, and seven convicts, seized the cutter belonging to the

Governor of New South Wales in 1791 and sailed it to the island of Timor. Duffield

argues that in enacting liberty by electing leaders and democratically deciding

course, destination, and shipboard regulations, these local pirates were influenced

by representations of the Golden Age of piracy in print culture and in ballads in

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[7] See David Carter and Roger Osborne, *Australian Books and Authors in the American Marketplace 1840s – 1940s* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2018), 67-81.
[8] E. W. O'Sullivan, "Pirates and Privateers in Australasia," *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 3 March 1909, 19.

Georgian British culture.[9] As late as 1909, Louis Becke commented in a newspaper

article that piracy 'is not yet quite extinct in China and East Indian waters,' and that

there were still western New Guinea people he had met during his trading career

who continued to combine 'the business of head hunting with piracy.' One particular

example of Pacific piracy he presents is the case of the Belgian brothers Joseph and

Alexander Rorique, who in 1893 captured the schooner *Niuroahit*i and murdered all

seven on board.[10] Becke's stories about Hayes, then, fitted right in with tales such as

this of the lawless Pacific.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in the United States of America (USA) around 1828,

the real 'Bully' Hayes joined the USA Navy as a young man, rising quickly to the rank

of Master Commander. Court-marshalled after hanging some Chinese pirates

without trial, Hayes acquired his own ship and began transporting Chinese coolies to

California and Australia during the respective gold rushes. However, never one to

pay his debts, he had to escape Australia in a stolen ship. By 1865, Hayes was a

notorious figure along the Aotearoa New Zealand coast, sailing between there and

various Pacific islands to trade, smuggle goods, transport Islander laborers, and

sometimes sail off with young ladies (not always with their permission), until he was

arrested in Samoa on kidnapping charges. While he had accrued a reputation for

being tough on his crews, but that was not unusual for sailing ship captains and

Hayes was not the only one to earn the 'Bully' nickname: James 'Bully' Forbes, for

example, was captain of the famous Australian immigrant ship *Marco Polo* in the

1850s and Robert 'Bully' Waterman was master of the equally famous tea clipper,

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[9] Ian Duffield, "Cutting Out and Taking Liberties: Australia's Convict Pirates 1790-1829," *International Review of Social History* 58 (2013): 197-227.

[10] Louis Becke, "Stirring Incidents in the South Seas: Pirates of the 20th Century," *The Age*, October 20, 1906, 19. See also: *Henri Jacquier, Piracy in the Pacific: the story of the notorious Rorique brothers* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1976).

Sea Witch.[11] Again, Hayes escaped in another stolen ship renamed *Leonora* in

which he sailed to Pacific islands where he set up copra plantations and trading

stations financed by robbing other traders. After he fled Louis Becke and arrest by

HMS *Rosario*, Hayes was murdered by one of his crew three years later.[12]

Hayes' dubious career attracted newspaper attention after an article detailing

his escapades, 'The Story of a Scoundrel', appeared in the *Honolulu Advertiser* in

September of 1859 and was widely circulated in Australian newspapers the following

year. Although there was no attribution of any serious destruction of property or

murder to Hayes at this early point, this writer declared for the first time in print that

Hayes was, 'to all intents and purposes a pirate,' permanently defining his place in

society.[13] Subsequent material written about Hayes during the following years did

nothing to dispel that reputation. In fact, like many a notorious character, Hayes'

fame became even greater posthumously and his first major appearance in a book,

H. Stonehewer Cooper's *Coral Lands,* came only three years after his death.

Although Cooper's work perpetuates the Hayes legend as 'the last of the pirates of

the Pacific,' Becke was critical of its unevidenced claims that Hayes was 'the terror of

all honest men in that wide region' because 'the gossip of the Pacific credits him with

many murders, especially of women.'[14]

A few years later, in 1889, Frederick Moss reminded his readers in *Through*

Atolls and Islands in the Great South Seas of Hayes' continuing notoriety. 'From one

end of the Pacific to the other,' he asserted, 'the name of Bully Hayes may still be

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[11] Ron Mundle, *Under Full Sail* (Sydney: ABC Books/Harper Collins, 2016), 2,15.
[12] This short biography has been summarised from Druett's, *The Notorious Captain Hayes*.
[13] "The Story of a Scoundrel," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 January 1860, 3.
[14] H. Stonehewer Cooper, *Coral Lands Vol. II* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1880), 59, 65. Becke
protested in his, "Captain 'Bully' Hayes: Alleged Pirate of the Pacific," *World's News*, 12 November
1910, 22.

heard.'[15] However, Moss admits, despite Hayes having lied, cheated, and stolen and

smuggled munitions, there was no evidence he was associated with murder or

bloodshed. Instead, a 'strange compound of unblushing roguery, rough humour, and

strong sentiment dashed with insanity formed the character of this old Pacific

notoriety.'[16] In his 1970 biography of Hayes, Frank Clune agrees with Moss about

Hayes' lack of convictions for any serious criminal offence, adding that he was never

guilty of actual piracy, that is possession of a ship by force, nor of being a buccaneer

engaged in armed plundering (although some of his victims might have debated that

definition). If anything, he argues, in some cases Hayes proved to be a smarter

businessperson than those who foolishly trusted him with their money.[17]

However, almost as soon as the ink was dry on Becke's posthumously

published *Bully Hayes: Buccaneer*, he was being criticized in November 1913 by

Australian historian and journalist A. T. Saunders for romanticizing 'a vile ruffian' who

had been charged with indecent assault of one young New Zealand woman and who

had attempted to abduct another, who had allegedly raped two very young girls in

the Islands, and who had 'accidentally' drowned his own wife and child.[18] The

following year, Saunders put many of these criticisms, along with supporting

evidence, into two small booklets, *Bully Hayes, Louis Becke, and the Earl of

Pembroke*, and *Bully Hayes the Pirate: True History of the South Seas Buccaneer*,

which he followed in 1932 with a longer 61 page critical volume, *Bully Hayes:

Barrator, Bigamist, Buccaneer, Blackbirder, and Pirate*. Clearly, Saunders did not

want readers to be ignorant of Hayes' dark side nor of Becke's participation in

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[15] Frederick Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Seas* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1889), 84.
[16] Moss, *Through Atolls*, 92.
[17] Frank Clune, *Captain Bully Hayes: Blackbirder and Bigamist* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson,1970), 2.
[18] A. T. Saunders, "Bully Hayes and Louis Becke," *Sunday Times* (Perth), 16 November 1913, 21.

publicizing it, while ironically piquing the reading public's interest in Hayes just as

Becke had done.

Saunders' 1932 work had been preceded the previous year by the well-known

seafarer and author Basil Lubbock's *Bully Hayes: South Seas Pirate*, but it was then

nearly four decades until Frank Clune wrote *Captain Bully Hayes: Blackbirder and*

Bigamist in 1970. However, between those two biographies, Hayes and Becke's

characterization of him was revived and discussed in a number of works by James

A. Michener and A. Grove Day, such as *Rascals in Paradise* (1957), and Day's *Mad*

About Islands (1987) along with his biography *Louis Becke* (1966). Interest in Hayes

continues to the present day with his most recent biography, Joan Druett's *The*

Notorious Captain Hayes: The Remarkable True Story of William 'Bully' Hayes,

Pirate of the Pacific (2016).

Pirates in the Pacific

By the time Louis Becke began to write about Hayes, he was doing so within a

context because there was already a long tradition of published accounts of pirate

voyages in the Pacific. In fact, it was through published accounts of pirate voyages

that Europeans first became acquainted with and fascinated by this new South Sea.

'Every empire produces its own pirates,' proposes Bradley Deane, 'redefining the

criminals of the sea in order to assert, by contrast, the legitimacy of its own overseas

adventures,' and England was no exception.[19] Francis Drake, for example, in his

ship *Golden Hind*, was both the first Englishman and the first English pirate to sail

into the Pacific Ocean, between 1577 and 1580, commissioned by Queen Elizabeth I

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[19] Bradley Deane, "Imperial Boyhood: Piracy and the Play Ethic," *Victorian Studies* 53, no. 4 (Summer 2011): 694.

(thus he was technically a privateer) to search for and seize Spanish treasure in the

holds of galleons returning from South America.[20] He was so successful that Queen

Elizabeth knighted him on his return, calling him 'my dear pirate.'[21] Drake's

adventures were publicized within a few years in at least two popular accounts, and

he was quickly followed into the Pacific by others with similar commissions.[22] The

successful and popular English pirate Henry Morgan, raider of Panama in 1670 and

future acting governor of Jamaica, became notorious through his depiction as a

depraved and cruel monster in Alexander Exquemelin's (or Esquemelin's) best-seller

Buccaneers of America (in Dutch 1678, in English 1684).[23] Like Louis Becke,

Exquemelin claimed to write with authority because he sailed with Morgan as ship's

surgeon, but that did not stop Morgan from successfully suing him for libel.

Nevertheless, Stephan Talty declares, Exquemelin's 'stories of the buccaneers

almost single-handedly created the pirate craze that obsessed Daniel Defoe and

enchanted Robert Louis Stevenson and gave birth to the image of the pirate as

cruel, wild and free.' [24]

When 330 men crossed the isthmus of Panama ten years after Morgan in

1680 with Captains Bartholomew Sharp, Richard Sawkins (or Hawkins), and John

Coxon, they spread out to sail in search of treasure up and down the Pacific coast of

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[20] Privateers were sailors from one nation who had been given permission by their monarchs, in documents called letters of marque or commissions, to attack and capture enemy shipping. In return, the monarch expected a share of the treasure. While Drake was a pirate according to the Spanish, to the English he was of course a hero.

[21] James A Michener and A Grove Day, *Rascals in Paradise* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957), 80-82.

[22] Richard Hakluyt's *The Famous Voyage of Sir Francis Drake into the South Sea* (1589), and Sir Francis Drake the Younger's *The World Encompassed by Sir Francis Drake* (1628).

[23] Kenneth Maxwell, *Naked in the Tropics: Essays on Empire and Other Rogues* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 107. 'Buccaneer' applied to pirates in the Caribbean and along the Atlantic seaboard of the Americas. The name was derived from hunters in Haiti (Hispaniola), later pirates, who used the *boucaner* (smoking over an open flame) process to cook their meat.

[24] Stephan Talty, *Empire of Blue Water: Henry Morgan and the Pirates Who Ruled the Caribbean Waves* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 56.

South America. Plundering on land and sea, they called themselves 'the

Commanders of the whole South Seas,' the most famous of whom (for his

exploration as much as his privateering) became William Dampier after publication of

his account, *A New Voyage Around the World,* in 1697. The last of this early group of

Elizabethan privateers was George Shelvocke, whose disastrous voyage of death

and mayhem between 1719 and 1722 in the *Speedwell* to also plunder the Pacific

coast of the Americas provided inspiration in 1797 for Samuel Coleridge's poem *The*

Rime of the Ancient Mariner when he read that one of Shelvocke's captains shot an

albatross.[25]

Dampier was the most significant of this group to Australian history, sailing on

further voyages through what are now the Philippines and Indonesia, and eventually

to the Western Australia coast in the *Cygnet* with Captain John Reed in 1687.

Subsequently, Dampier's *New Voyage* account went into several editions in a

number of languages and the maps he included rendered the outline of New Holland

familiar in England for the first time. In 1699, he landed at Western Australia's Shark

Bay during yet another voyage. A few years later, Dampier returned to the Pacific as

a pilot on the privateering voyage of Captain Woodes Rogers, capturing a treasure

galleon and rescuing from the island of Juan Fernandez that most famous of

castaways, Alexander Selkirk, Defoe's model for Robinson Crusoe, all of which

appeared in Rogers' *A Cruising Voyage Around the World* (1712).[26] Even the

explorer George Anson first arrived in the Pacific among privateers, and his 1748

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[25] Christopher Lloyd, *Pacific Horizons: The Exploration of the Pacific before Captain Cook* (London: George Allan and Unwin Ltd., 1946), 89, 91, 104. Also, George Shelvocke, *A Privateer's Voyage Around the World* (Ed. Vincent McInerney) (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2010). The ensuing court cases and more than one published account of the voyage meant that, happily for history if not for the participants, it was ultimately one of the best recorded of these early voyages.
[26] Glyndwr Williams, "Buccaneers, Castaways, and Satirists: The South Seas in the English Consciousness before 1750," *Eighteenth Century Life* 18 (November 1994): 116-120.

book, *A Voyage Around the World*, was so popular (five editions in that year) that it prompted the imaginative concept of a Pacific region of islands, rather than of continents, to take hold in the English consciousness, provoking interest in it.[27]

The appeal of pirates and pirate literature

The on-going popularity of these pirate publications demonstrates that readers have long been fascinated by the voyages and deeds of pirates, buccaneers, and privateers, whether factual or fictional, ever since the Roman Empire first defined them as *hostes humani generis*: enemies of all humanity.[28] Pirates appeal to us because they live by their own rules, suggests M. Daphne Kutzer. Seemingly free from authority and dominion, an alternate political community on a *mare liberum* (free sea), they have adventures that are out of reach to readers in ordered societies bound by laws and ethical mores.[29] As the maritime equivalent of barbarians beyond the borders of civilization, pirates have been the ideal traditional literary foils whose typical functions as characters since the classics have been to negate, upset, or threaten societal order. In Longus' second century play *Daphnis and Chloe*, for example, the order of romance is endangered when Daphnis is captured by pirates from who he is duly rescued by a resourceful Chloe.[30] Claire Jowitt argues that Heliodurus' *An Aethiopian History,* written in the third or fourth century, was a major influence on the many depictions of pirates in Renaissance literature, such as those

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[27] Williams, "Buccaneers, Castaways, and Satirists," 125. Also, George Anson, *A Voyage Around the World* (Ed. D Laing Purves), (London: William P Nimmo, 1878).
[28] Bradley Deane, "Imperial Boyhood," 694.
[29] M Daphne Kutzer, *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 2000), 8.
[30] See Longus, *Daphne and Cloe* (Trans. George Thornley. London: William Heinemann, 1916).

in Shakespeare's plays *The Merchant of Venice (1596-1598), Twelfth Night* (1600-1601), and *Pericles Prince of Tyre (1606-1609)*.[31]

Reputedly, the original source of modern pirate stereotypes and our knowledge about them was Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* (1724). Glamorizing and publicizing notable pirates as anti-heroes, it quickly became so popular that an enlarged fourth edition was published within two years and such an enduring source that Robert Louis Stevenson referred to it when writing *Treasure Island,* as did J. M. Barrie when creating Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*.[32] Lord Byron's 1814 poem, *The Corsair*, enhanced the literary notoriety of the Barbary corsairs who had marauded along the Mediterranean North African coast for some three centuries. Like the later Long John Silver and 'Bully' Hayes, Byron's proud and tyrannical corsair pirate Conrad had 'the vices of a Gothic villain with the ideals of a noble outlaw,' and as in the cases of the creators of Silver and Hayes, this proved a popular combination of qualities for Byron: *The Corsair* sold 10,000 copies on its first day and seven editions by the end of the month.[33] Louis Becke and Rolf Boldrewood both saw in the poem some similarities to their own pirate hero Hayes, quoting edited lines from *The Corsair* at the end of their novel *A Modern Buccaneer*.[34]

By the mid-nineteenth century, pirates were appearing in British boys' stories as the opponents of British virtue and colonizing pluck, such as in William Kingston's

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[31] Claire Jowitt, *The Culture of Piracy, 1580-1630: English Literature and Seaborn Crime* (London: Routledge, 2016), 11. Also: Claire Jowitt, " 'Parrots and Pieces of Eight': Recent trends in pirate studies." *Literature Compass* 1, RE 015, (2003): 2.
[32] See Maxwell, *Naked in the Tropics*, 113-4, also *Treasure Island*, 204, 205.
[33] Maxwell, *Naked in the Tropics*, 115, 116.
[34] See Rolf Boldrewood, *A Modern Buccaneer* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1894), 338. "Who died and left a name to other times,/ Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes." This couplet is adapted from the last two lines of *The Corsair*.

The Pirate of the Mediterranean (1851), Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855),

and R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857), in which piracy is the test by which

moral British boyhoods can be confirmed.[35] In this genre of the colonial adventure

story, the development of the boy heroes' confidence and power depends on the

pirates either being defeated or reformed, promoting the ideal of indigenous

'savages' being civilized by colonizing empire-builders.

However, by the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the

purpose and type of pirates in literature, along with the reasons for their popularity,

had changed. Deane proposes that pirates were 'powerfully linked to boyhood in the

Victorian imagination' not only because of their prominence in late nineteenth

century boys' adventure literature but because, after the publication of Robert Louis

Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, fiction became aimed at a broader purchasing

demographic of 'synthesized man-boy readership.' The changing ethics of

imperialism in the late nineteenth century, too, no longer demanded that pirates be

the foils of righteously moral and civilizing boy heroes; instead, they became

'doubles, partners, or secret sharers' of protagonists who, like the readers, could

accept pirate heroes as 'cynical, amoral, brutal adventurers,' such as the mercenary,

violent Captain Kettle of Cutcliffe Hynes' popular books of the 1890s, or Russell

Thorndike's vicious Captain Clegg in the early twentieth century.[36] These heroes of a

new liberal imperialism could even be as far removed from the bounds of English

Christianity as Rafael Sabatini's English knight in *The Sea Hawk*, who becomes the

Muslim leader of a crew of Arab pirates or, indeed, as that American scoundrel of the

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[35] Bradley Deane, "Imperial Boyhood," 694-5.
[36] Deane, "Imperial Boyhood," 693. Between 1895 and 1928, C J Cutcliffe Hyne wrote twelve novels and collections of stories featuring Captain Kettle. Rusell Thorndike wrote seven novels between 1915 and 1944 featuring the character Dr Syn who becomes a pirate known as Captain Clegg.

Pacific Ocean, 'Bully' Hayes.[37] During the last decade of the nineteenth century,

Louis Becke would diffuse those earlier, clear moral distinctions between pirate and

hero. 'Bully' Hayes was never reformed, neither in real life nor as a fictional

character, and he was not even defeated by death, for Becke made sure his legacy

lived on in literature well into the future.

Becke's source of inspiration in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*

Before we look too far into the future, though, I want to discuss one of the main

works that would have influenced Becke's creation of his Pacific pirate. From his

childhood reading, Becke would have been familiar with pirate adventure stories that

were typically located in the Caribbean, and he evidently saw the literary marketing

advantages of popularizing an already well-known rogue as a local variety of modern

Pacific pirate, of whom there were no examples as major characters in current

literature. In creating such a character, Becke drew from a rich literary heritage of

pirate lore and tales, the most recent and popular example of which was *Treasure

Island* (1883), written by Becke's immediate predecessor in storytelling about Pacific

Islands, Robert Louis Stevenson, in which he'd created the memorable pirate

character of Long John Silver, of whom he was 'not a little proud.'[38] When this work

first appeared, it quickly became apparent that although this book had been

ostensibly written as a boys' adventure story, it was not that popular with boys.

Instead, it was popular with men who wanted to revert to being boys, probably

because Jim Hawkins was not the stereotypical, public-school educated, Christian

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[37] See Rafael Sabatini, *The Sea Hawk* (London: Hutchinson & Co., c. 1924 [orig. 1915]).
[38] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 198.

soldier hero of that period's boys' adventure stories.[39] Nor, for that matter, did

Stevenson create Silver as the typical pirate villain: not only is he not punished for

his crimes at the end of the story, but he is a cook, a well-educated seaman who can

read and write, and a man of compelling and dangerous charm who can readily put

forward a convincing argument as he smoothly changes sides. As Jim Hawkins

astutely perceives, Silver is a man of 'cruelty, duplicity, and power.'[40] Although

Stevenson might claim *Treasure Island* would be a 'romance retold/Exactly in the

same way' that will 'fetch the kids,' Silver is much too complex a character to be your

average children's pirate.[41]

     Just as Stevenson drew on previous sources when writing *Treasure Island*, it

is more than likely that, given the book's international popularity and Becke's lifelong

love of reading, he was inspired by the character of Silver when creating his own

pirate, a decade later. There are similarities between the two pirate characters and

their narrator companions that provide some clues to the fictionalised Hayes' literary

heritage and to the context within which Becke created him, although these pirate

stories are set in subsequent eras: *Treasure Island* in the eighteenth century and

Becke's tales of Hayes in the nineteenth. Given the long-standing presence of pirate

stories in literature, both Hayes and Silver are self-conscious literary creations for

which their authors drew on previous successfully commercial literary models with an

eye to their present market. Both pirates were based on real people. Both are

dangerous yet romantic, fascinating yet repellant, congenial and persuasive yet

unpredictably violent. They are both unrepentant villains who make selfish and

morally questionable choices, and both are accompanied by star-struck young men

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[39] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, ix.
[40] *Ibid*., 64.
[41] *Ibid*., vii, xxx.

who become progressively disillusioned as the behaviour of their heroes

deteriorates. Yet, both Hayes and Silver appealed to readers as pirate icons.

 Although Silver, according to Stevenson, was born out of admiration,

fascination, and sympathy for a morally upright role model, the literary character of

Hayes was born from admiration, fascination, and sympathy for a very different role

model: the real-life villainous 'Bully' Hayes. While Stevenson stated that he left out

the finer qualities of his model to create Silver, Becke added them in to create a

more moral literary character than the original model.[42] We have already discussed

the historic origins of 'Bully' Hayes, but Silver was also based on a historic character,

Stevenson's friend and poet W. E. Henley whose leg had to be amputated due to

tuberculosis complications and whose poem about overcoming trial and determining

one's fate, *Invictus,* became the modern inspiration for the Invictus Games.

Stevenson explained to him in an 1883 letter that, 'It was the sight of your maimed

strength and masterfulness that begot John Silver in *Treasure Island*' but hastened

to clarify that it was only the *idea* of the 'maimed man' that had inspired him, as

Silver was 'not in any other quality or feature the least like you.'[43] Nevertheless, he

wrote, he had retained Henley's 'strength, his courage, his quickness, and his

magnificent geniality' in the character of Silver.[44] Thus, Stevenson claimed, Silver

had been created out of his 'admiration, fascination, and sympathy for Henley.'[45] In

fact, Stevenson drew on various well-known secondary sources for inspiration about

*Treasure Island'*s characters and situations, and consequently the work retains a ring

of historical authenticity. The Admiral Benbow Inn is named after a famous

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[42] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 203.
[43] *Ibid*., 203.
[44] Camutal Noimann, "He a Cripple and I a Boy: The Pirate and the Gentleman in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*," *Topic: The Washington and Jefferson College Review* (2012): 60.
[45] Noimann, 61.

eighteenth-century British admiral, for example, while Squire Trelawney's name was that of the English seaman who recovered the body of the poet Shelley, and Flint, Blackbeard, Kidd, and Captain Edward England were of course actual pirates.[46] While containing some elements of typical romantic stories, then, Stevenson's pirate tale has a similar hard edge of historic veracity and violence that we find in Becke's stories of Hayes. While their work about pirates can be read as fiction, it has the same heritage of and a grounding in actual pirate tradition, history, and events.

Hayes and Silver are both skilled, educated, and gregarious men who turn to piracy. 'He's no common man,' says Israel Hands of Silver. 'He had good schooling in his young days and can speak like a book when so minded.'[47] They are clever seamen and expert navigators who can command men. Hayes is 'a man of iron resolution and dauntless courage – a man who was born to lead and command…men bent upon some noble enterprise of deed or daring.'[48] He could be tactful, claims Becke, as well as suave, 'as courteous, and as clever as the trained diplomatist when occasion demanded the arts of civilization,' and who 'never omitted a nod of approval or a word of praise to a sailor who did his work well.'[49] Silver, writes Stevenson, has 'a way of talking to each, and doing everybody some particular service,'[50] and likewise Hayes' manner with women is 'captivating, and no one entered more heartily into a romp with little native children, whom he allowed to do anything they liked with him.'[51] Yet Becke's story, 'Hope, A Memory of "Bully" Hayes', reveals Hayes' darker side of self-interest to the point of being 'as vain as a

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[46] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 201-203.
[47] *Ibid*., 54.
[48] Louis Becke, "Hope: A Memory of Bully Hayes." In *The Jelasco Brig* (London: Anthony Treherne & Co., 1902), 188.
[49] Becke, "Bully Hayes," 29.
[50] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 54.
[51] Becke, "Bully Hayes," 29.

child in some things.'[52] After accidentally killing an Islander, Hayes adopts his young

son Hope who on one occasion dives from his canoe into the water between the

Supercargo and pursuing sharks to save his life rather than that of Hayes because,

he admits, 'I am afraid of him when he strokes his beard and his eyes come

together, and he speaks thickly,' for this is 'a man to be dreaded when in anger'

because he can kill with one punch.[53]

Yet in the case of both Silver and Hayes, we are not reading stories told by

them. Instead, the reader's experience of these romantic, yet immoral and

dangerous anti-heroes is filtered through the perception of the moral, at times naive

young men who are narrating the events. Although the focus is ostensibly on the

pirates, these are really symbiotic couples: there would be no Silver without Jim

Hawkins and no Hayes without the Supercargoes. These young men are not merely

narrators and recorders but are themselves characters who are active participants in

these stories who help shape the events. In both cases, these storytellers are young

men for whom these pirates are, at times, paternal mentor figures who are quite

different from their fathers (Hawkins' father is an inn-keeper for example). Ultimately,

both young men are to some extent disillusioned when the romance of their

childhood reading does not prove to be the reality of pirate life. In the aftermath of

events, Hawkins vows he'll never return to the sea while Becke's supercargoes

become critical of Hayes and his lifestyle.

Ultimately, it is a sense of betrayal of a romantic ideal that prompts them to

reject the company of pirates. 'I'm deadly sick of living here day after day,'

announces the Supercargo to Hayes on the island of Kusaie after the wreck of the

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[52] Becke, "Hope," 205.
[53] *Ibid*., 216, 191.

Leonora has stranded them together, 'sick of the eternal quarrels and fights and blood-letting.' He reveals his disapproval of Hayes' kidnapping of a group of local women and division of them among his men.[54] Jim Hawkins, too, is horrified by Silver's 'cruelty, duplicity, and power' after over-hearing him from within the apple barrel discuss plans for mutiny with the crew.[55] Yet, they still find themselves attracted to these darker personalities. Although declaring to Silver that, 'I've seen too many die since I fell in with you,' Hawkins still offers to bear witness to save them from the gallows at a piracy trial,[56] much like Becke's Supercargo who, faced with the evil of Hayes, though he 'hated some of the things he had done, yet liked the man sincerely.'[57]

Becke and his Pirate Hayes

'Bully' Hayes was so significant a character in Louis Becke's writing career that he was the subject of the first of Becke's long stories to be published and the subject of the title novella in the last collection of his work. That first story, '"Bully" Hayes: The Pirate of the Pacific. A Chapter in South Sea History,' appeared in two parts in *The Bulletin* in February 1893.[58] Although Becke's name does not appear either as the writer or as a participant in the events, he was revealed as the author when an edited and extended version of the article appeared under his name as, 'Concerning "Bully" Hayes,' in *The Strange Adventures of James Shervinton and Other Stories*

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[54] Becke, "Hope," 204.
[55] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 64.
[56] *Ibid*., 152.
[57] Becke, "Hope," 203.
[58] "Bully Hayes: The Pirate of the Pacific: A Chapter in South Seas History. Part I," *The Bulletin*, February 4, 1893, 22-23. Also, "Bully Hayes: The Pirate of the Pacific: A Chapter in South Seas History Part II," *The Bulletin*, 18 February 1893, 21.

(1902).[59] The title of *The Bulletin* story connects Hayes to past tradition while at the same time declaring his predominance in a new Pacific one. He is, declares Becke, not just *a* pirate: Hayes appears in this title as *the* pirate - of a new place and a new era. Becke's pirate legend leaves behind the established Spanish Main and West Indies pirate traditions of literature to bring a pirate of the New World into a new ocean.

By 1893, Hayes had been dead long enough for his escapades to become folklore across the Pacific region, but Becke had an edge here over Stevenson and Long John Silver. He had personally sailed with his pirate and lived to write about it, as Exquemelin had with Morgan, and as the years went by, Becke learned how to make the most of that unique relationship. More fascinating still, Becke seems to have quickly assimilated his elaborations into his own life story, or at least did so for the media, as we will see later. That first Becke story about Hayes in *The Bulletin*, however, sticks to well-known facts and sets up the basic storyline around which he would develop his pirate legend over the years as he makes an appeal to primacy and veracity. 'I will not spin a fancifully embroidered tale,' his narrator declares, but will 'relate what I did see and what did occur,' and Becke would often insert the qualifier 'real' or 'true' into the titles of subsequent stories about Hayes to maintain that position of the historic observer. Hayes might have killed men with his bare hands during a mutiny and participated in morally questionable actions, he admits, but nevertheless he remains honorable because, like all staunch pirates, his is a 'world of dauntless courage and iron resolution.'[60]

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[59] Louis Becke, "Concerning 'Bully Hayes." In *The Strange Adventure of James Shervinton and Other Stories* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1902), 214-216.
[60] "Bully Hayes: the Pirate of the Pacific," 4 February 1893, 22.

Becke departs from nineteenth century literature tradition here in a similar way to Robert Louis Stevenson in *Treasure Island*. No longer is there the clear distinction between the morally defunct pirate and the good Christian boy soldier that existed in adventure stories of the mid-nineteenth century. Instead, the narrator may now be empathetic with the pirate's behaviour and even admire some aspects of it. Like Stevenson's narrator, Jim Hawkins, Becke's narrators of the Hayes stories are also young men (although Hawkins at fourteen is younger) who have to survive in a world vastly different than the one in which they have been raised and whose somewhat paternalistic pirate mentor is a vastly more experienced adult with a dubious reputation. Ultimately, both Silver and Hayes will use their younger companions to attain their own ends and then promptly abandon them. In the process, however, events prove to be a learning experience for these young men and, one way or the other, the pirate is established as a significant personal figure in their lives who is never forgotten, neither in Jim Hawkins' dreams nor in the nostalgic memories of Hilary Telfer in *A Modern Buccaneer*.

Although *A Modern Buccaneer* was published in 1894 under the name of colonial author Thomas A. Browne, better known as Rolf Boldrewood, it was largely written by Louis Becke. In it, he reveals more about his personal adoration of Hayes as a young man than he ever did later, possibly because he knew his contribution would be anonymously subsumed into Rolf Boldrewood's words. Becke had been invited by Boldrewood to send him some background descriptive material that he could use in a new book he was planning, for which he would be paid, but instead the prolific Becke dashed off a novel-length manuscript. While Boldrewood acknowledged the contribution, he never forwarded any proofs and so Becke was astonished on reading the newly published *A Modern Buccaneer* to discover

Boldrewood had merely added one original chapter to Becke's material and then published it as his own work. However, this brazen plagiarism fooled no one: reviewers and readers were jointly puzzled both by the clearly different writing styles and by Boldrewood's sudden and unexplained familiarity with South Pacific geography. Faced with a court battle, Boldrewood was forced to publicly apologize and to print an acknowledgement of Becke's contribution in future editions.[61]

Going to sea at seventeen, the protagonist of *A Modern Buccaneer*, Hilary Telfer, reveals that one of his motivations has been a promise to himself to become acquainted with that 'picturesque and romantic personage,' Captain William Henry Hayston, a thinly disguised Hayes. 'Much that could excite a boyish imagination had been related to me concerning him,' he explains, as he anticipates meeting a 'real pirate' and tangible hero whose adventures 'so stirred my blood that, I felt, if I could only once behold my boyhood's idol, I should not have lived in vain.'[62] His detailed description of the hair, eyes, nose, and 'well-cut, full-lipped mouth' of this giant with his 'magnificent physique,' as 'one of the most remarkably handsome men about this time that I have ever seen' is that of a dazed fan in the presence of a rock music idol.[63] Despite Hayston's main character flaw of an 'ungovernable temper' that was 'absolutely beyond his mastery,' Telfer protests that he has never seen him commit an act of 'deliberate cruelty,' leaving the reader to wonder how many accidental acts there might have been while his pirate was 'ungovernable.' This pirate hero is practically perfect: as well as being handsome, he is also an accomplished musician and singer, speaks German, French, and Spanish, as well as island languages, can be generous, trusting, hates liars and cheats, and has a great weakness for women.

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[61] See Day, *Louis Becke*, 102-3.
[62] Boldrewood, *A Modern Buccaneer*, 7-8.
[63] *Ibid*., 14.

He is, Telfer concludes breathlessly, 'A man who, no matter what his faults may have been, possessed qualities which, had they been devoted to higher aims in life, might have rendered him the hero of a nation.'[64] However, as heroic as he may be in the eyes of his companion, Pirate Hayes is still capable of committing the ultimate act of betrayal, escaping into the night to leave Telfer to face alone the wrath of HMS *Rosario*'s captain. Yet, Telfer is not bitter about that in any way. Instead, apparently able to appreciate Hayes' 'many noble qualities and fine natural impulses,' he still sees in later life 'the lawless rover of the South Seas' that he continues to think of as his 'true friend and most indulgent commander,' sailing alone, hand on the tiller, into the sunset.[65]

Despite the book's suggestive title, though, Telfer's association with Hayston occupies only about two-thirds of *A Modern Buccaneer*. Rather than stay in the Islands, Telfer subsequently decides to return to civilized life in Sydney, leaving us to ultimately wonder, 'Who is the modern buccaneer?' in this novel. Does the title refer to Hayston as the modern Pacific pirate, as it would seem to at first glance, or does it refer to Telfer for whom buccaneering became, in a very modern sense, a learning experience? As a result of his adventures, Telfer develops a maturity that enables him to become a successful father and businessman, who at the end of the novel can concede he has 'slaked my thirst for adventure, danger and mystery' and can now accept the responsibilities inherent in family and country. He is conscious of having escaped that past buccaneering life, to where Hayston is now relegated in his mind as a figure of a nostalgic dream, for a safer and secure modern life, yet he may

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[64] Boldrewood, *A Modern Buccaneer*, 13.
[65] *Ibid*, 224.

not have become this modern man if he had not considered becoming a modern buccaneer.

Telfer's adulation of this pirate's larger-than-life presence and a life-style that is so defiant of authority suggests some clues to solving the mystery of why the seemingly principled and moral Becke might not only ally himself to the very un-principled Hayes, but also spend the last third of his life defending Hayes' dubious activities. Hayes would always be more than a literary character for Becke, who could never sufficiently distance himself from him to be entirely objective. Try as he might, and he did, to achieve some separation, Becke evidently could not ultimately leave behind the memory of the living man with whom he had sailed and who remained there in his memories, as he did in the mind of Hilary Telfer.

Becke made only passing references to Hayes in his following short story collections, *By Reef and Palm* (1894), and *The Ebbing of the Tide* (1895), but in December 1895, Becke's story 'Memories of Bully Hayes,' in the *Evening News* contained a detailed account of events before and after the wreck of Hayes' ship *Leonora*, without any of *A Modern Buccaneer*'s adulation. The narrator makes it clear here that he and Hayes parted ways after the wreck because he did not approve of Hayes' behaviour.[66] It is not until a group of three stories in *Pacific Tales* (1897) that Becke re-introduces his primary literary alter-ego, Tom Denison, as a character around whom events concerning Hayes revolve and to whom stories about Hayes are told. This framing method of having one of a group tell a story that the narrator records or remembers and then re-tells to the reader was a favourite technique of Becke. It enabled him to create distance between author and narrative, although the reader is not conscious of the distance because Becke typically tells the

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[66] Louis Becke, "Memories of Bully Hayes," *Evening News* (Sydney), 14 December 1895, 1.

story in first person, inviting the reader into the story-teller's confidence.[67] These

three stories, 'An Island Memory,' 'In Old Beachcombing Days,' and 'The Shadows

of the Dead,' are set on Kusaie (also Strong's Island, now known as Kosrae) after

the wreck of the *Leonora*. Once again, the narrator quarrels with Hayes and leaves

to live idyllically in the village of Leassé, on the other side of the island, with the

chief, Kusis, and his wife and child. In 'An Island Memory' Tom Denison is,

consistently with 'Memories of Bully Hayes,' critical of the behaviour of Hayes and

his crew who 'drank and robbed and fought and cut each other's throats, and stole

women…and turned an island paradise into a hell of base and wicked passions.'[68]

Becke uses these tales as moral fables to demonstrate the idyllic island life that

might have been possible if Hayes and his crew had heeded their environment and

treated the Islanders ethically, responsibly, and respectfully. While Hayes and his

murderous crew make enemies of the Islanders, Denison is treated as a son by his

adopted native family, deeply appreciating their kindness and their way of life on the

island that he shares with them.

In 'The Wreck of the Leonora,' in *Ridan the Devil and Other Stories* (1899),

the narrator (to whom I will refer simply as the Supercargo) expands further on the

events on Kusaie. While this is the first published story in which Becke introduces his

legend of the two-year voyage with Hayes, he had clearly already taken personal

possession of this part of the story because three years earlier, in an interview with

the *South Australian Register* on his way to England in June 1896, he claimed, 'I was

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[67] Denison first appears in "A Dead Loss" in *The Ebbing of the Tide* (1895). See Anne Lane
Bradshaw, "Joseph Conrad and Louis Becke," *English Studies* 86, no.3 (2005): 206-225, for a
discussion of Becke's framing and its possible influence on Conrad.
[68] Louis Becke, "An Island Memory," In *Pacific Tales* (London: KPI Limited, 1987 [originally published
1897]), 4.

with him for about two years and six months.'[69] Becke also introduces a myth during

this same interview that has persisted well into modern times: that he was arrested

for piracy by the captain of HMS *Rosario* and subsequently put on trial.[70] The

Supercargo defends Hayes in 'The Wreck' as being only an 'alleged pirate,' not a

'remorseless ruffian,' as well as an excellent seaman. 'Had he lived in the time of

Drake or Dampier,' he declares, aligning him with other famous privateers, 'he would

have been a hero, for he was a man born to command and lead.'[71] He respects

Hayes' physical strength and his ability to protect the weak and to defend himself

with his fists against those who attack him, and it is this strength that helps save the

lives of many on board when the *Leonora* is destroyed by a severe storm while at

Kosrae. Nevertheless, the Supercargo gives cliff-hanger hints that 'mutiny, treachery,

murder, and sudden death' eventuated among these survivors, but Becke would

leave his audience waiting until the publication of *The Strange Adventure of James

Shervinton and Other Stories* (1902) for further development of the Hayes legend.[72]

   In the opening novella, 'The Strange Adventure of James Shervinton,' Becke's

protagonist arrives at Hayes' base, Ujelang Atoll (Providence Island), after meeting

Hayes two years previously and declining his invitation to make the Atoll their joint

headquarters. Although Hayes is a delightful raconteur with 'merry, laughing blue

eyes, jovial voice and handsome face,' Shervinton instinctively distrusts this

contradictory 'South Sea pirate' who could be 'all things to all men.'[73] Hayes might

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[69] "Louis Becke Interviewed: True History of Bully Hayes," *South Australian Register*, 23 June 1896, 5.
[70] There is no mention of Becke's arrest nor of any legal proceedings in the official report by the Captain of HMS *Rosario* to the Colonial government. See: *Queensland Government Gazette* 17, no.96 (28 August 1875): 1672-1678. Neither is there any report of his trial in newspapers of that period.
[71] Louis Becke, "The Wreck of the Leonora," In *Ridan the Devil and Other Stories* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1899), 281.
[72] *Ibid.*, 295.
[73] Louis Becke, "The Strange Adventure of James Shervinton." In *The Strange Adventure of James Shervinton and Other Stories* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1902), 131.

well seem to be a good man who appreciates beautiful women and is kind and generous to the sick and poor, but he could also be 'hot and sudden in his anger' and liked the feel of his finger on a trigger too much for Shervinton's liking.[74]

Then, within the same collection, Becke ostensibly moves away from fiction into a 55-page, five chapter 'memoir', 'Concerning Bully Hayes.' An expanded re-write of Becke's similarly titled earlier 1893 *Bulletin* story, this is the longest and most fully developed of Becke's shorter works about Hayes. Despite repeating the myth of the two-year voyage, Becke stresses the historic authenticity of this piece, setting it within the nostalgic context of the 'halcyon days of the sixties and seventies' while again reminding the reader that this was written only sixteen years after Hayes' death, relatively close to actual times and events.[75] Becke remains consistent here in his persistent defence of his hero's reputation, protesting that 'many a fancifully embroidered tale has been told of the terrible "massacres" he [Hayes] perpetrated' that were 'purely apocryphal.'[76] However, as Becke's own reputation had developed considerably during the intervening nine years since the original version had been published, he evidently felt confident about adding three further chapters that focus on the writer's period on Kusaie away from Hayes, also editing in entire paragraphs from his 1895 'Memories of Bully Hayes' story.

It is after publication of this 'memoir,' though, that Becke's vision of his pirate darkens, for it is an uglier version of him who appears in Becke's next novel, *Tom Wallis: A Tale of the South Seas*, published for The Religious Tract Society in 1903, in which Becke seizes his chance, given the Protestant persuasion of his publishers, to air his strong feelings about Catholic missionaries in the Islands and their

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[74] Becke, *James Shervinton*, 182.

[75] Louis Becke, "Concerning Bully Hayes," 215, 217.

[76] *Ibid.*, 217.

destructive exploitation of Islanders.[77] This Captain Hayes, in a relatively brief

appearance, though apparently educated and well-read, is otherwise arrogant,

untrustworthy, ill-tempered, violent, and overly defensive about his reputation. He

hails and boards the ship on which Tom is a passenger to inform them about the

location of a group of shipwreck survivors. To express their gratitude, Tom is sent

across with a boatload of supplies, only to find himself helping Hayes defend his ship

against kidnapped Islanders who have broken out of the hold. Tom is appalled by the

ensuing slaughter of these people who had been abandoned by the colonial

administration and missionaries alike, too busy feuding among themselves to act

about Islanders being exploited and kidnapped as plantation labour. When Hayes

wants to put Tom's mate Maori Bill on shore as one of his traders, Bill refuses to

leave his role as protector of the young Tom and in a fair fight defeats Hayes, the

only time this happens in any Becke story, only to be captured and imprisoned by the

crew. When Hayes threatens to have him flogged, Tom protests that, "No *man* would

do such a thing!"[78] This condemnation of Hayes' manliness and honour is a far cry

from the admiration of his pirate in *A Modern Buccaneer*; it is a revelation of Becke's

changing perception of Hayes as Becke grows older and further away from that

earlier adolescent enchantment.

A year later Becke remains critical of Hayes in the short story, 'The

Supercargo,' in *Under Tropic Skies* (1904). Once again, his Supercargo protagonist

sails with the 'Pirate of the South Seas' for two years through the Islands before the

Leonora sinks, but although the Supercargo and Hayes mysteriously reconcile in this

version after they argue, the Supercargo settles into an idyllic tropical existence with

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[77] See Becke's attack on the 'Inquisition of the South Seas' on Wallis Island, "Burning Out the Heretics," *The Watchman*, 11 January 1912, 5.

[78] Louis Becke, *Tom Wallis: A Tale of the South Seas* (London: The Religious Tract Society 1903), 94.

the villagers in Leassé, hunting and fishing, while Hayes' settlement descends into 'treachery, debauchery, and murder, and all that was evil' until the arrival of HMS *Rosario*.[79]

Just as he began his career with Hayes, so Becke ended it with Hayes (or at least a publisher did), when a final novella about him appeared in a posthumously published collection of Becke's work, illustrated with Norman Lindsay engravings, *Bully Hayes: Buccaneer, and other stories* (1913). This version of Pirate Hayes had been published previously as 'The Real 'Bully' Hayes' in *The Lone Hand*, on 1 March 1912, but neither version was any more factually 'real' than earlier ones.[80] They repeat the usual legends of extended association between protagonist and pirate (four voyages together over some two years) and of Becke's arrest on piracy charges. In 'Bully Hayes,' however, Becke adds a new fight scene between Hayes and the 'notorious ruffian' Buck Dawson from which Hayes emerges the victor.[81] Perhaps Becke thought his well-published pirate tale needed some freshening up by now, but it appears more likely he just could not bear to leave Hayes as the defeated and disgraced pirate of *Tom Wallis*, for the conclusion of this story is significantly different from any other Becke piece about Hayes. In an epilogue, Becke makes a final plea in defence of pirate in the form of testimonials extracted from two books by well-known authors: one the earlier mentioned work by Stonehewer Cooper and the other by Fredrick Moss.[82] Possibly because public awareness and criticism of the bad behaviour of colonial historic characters like 'Bully' Hayes had increased by now,

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[79] Louis Becke, "The Supercargo." In *Under Tropic Skies* (Philadelphia: J B Lippincott, 1904), 219.
[80] Louis Becke, "Bully Hayes." In *Bully Hayes: Buccaneer, and other stories* (Sydney: NSW Bookstall Co., 1923), 16.
[81] *Ibid*., 8, 18.
[82] See H. Stonehewer Cooper, *Coral Lands Vol. II*, 59-65. Also Frederick Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea*, 84-92.

encouraged by opponents such as A. T. Saunders, Becke evidently thought it

necessary to use the veracity of other witnesses to ratify the more positive, brave,

passionate, charming, and 'big-hearted' side of his pirate hero's character.[83]

Judging by the style of this piece, Becke was feeling pressure to restore

Hayes' image at a time when his versions of the legend were being challenged and

perceptions were changing about Hayes' treatment of Islander peoples. Unlike the

vocabulary of the 1912 version, for example, that today would be deemed profoundly

politically incorrect, the 'n-word' never appears. Only two years previously, in another

extended Hayes account that Becke wrote for the *World's News*, in which he uses

the term 'alleged pirate,' he complained about 'the amount of pure fiction that has

been written concerning "Bully" Hayes' in four recent books, and that a 'score or so

of writers' had 'maligned and vilified him as a heartless murderer and wholesale

slaughterer of his fellow men.' Such tales, he pronounced, would make 'Baron

Munchhausen turn in his grave and groan with envy,' as the Baron may well have

done over Becke's own confabulations about his modern buccaneer.[84]

Conclusion

When Louis Becke embarked on creating his iconic Pacific pirate, some sixteen

years after Hayes' death and nineteen years after they met on Milli Atoll, he did not

rely entirely on his imagination, for a context of Pacific pirate history that included the

legendary conman, rogue, and thief, Captain William "Bully" Hayes, already existed.

During his writing career, Becke re-envisioned and re-worked Hayes' life to create

the iconic Pacific pirate, and due to the enduring quality and power of Becke's

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[83] Becke, "Bully Hayes," 29, 32.
[84] Louis Becke, "Captain 'Bully' Hayes: The Alleged Pirate of the South Pacific, Part I" *The World's News*, 12 November 1910, 22.

writing, the memorable, large, bearded, character of Hayes has continued to cast a long shadow across the literature and culture of the South Pacific region long after the deaths of both the pirate and his amanuensis.[85]

Becke foresaw new directions in Australian literature. Almost no Australian writers before him had looked east towards the Pacific, and in doing so Becke 'enlarged Australian fiction in one of its richest periods,' observes Peter Pierce in his introduction to the 2005 edition of *By Reef and Palm*.[86] In re-imagining 'Bully' Hayes, Becke created not only a new character in Australian adventure literature but the new Pacific pirate literary trope, enlarging the scope of Australian fiction in an entirely unexplored direction as he looked back to the pirate lore and traditions of earlier history and literature, while looking forwards to the age and literature of the modern buccaneer. Over time, Becke did not change the essential character of 'Bully' Hayes as much as he revealed more of him in a broader context and not always for the better. His attitude to his pirate darkened as Becke grew older and his vision of Hayes matured. As he peels back the onion layers of Hayes' character, he seems to like less what he finds there as that early ardent adulation is overtaken by a quiet horror and rebellion at increasing violence. However, because Becke knew his real pirate and was there at the time, he has difficulty with sufficiently distancing himself from Hayes to separate the man he knew from his fictional pirate character. Behind that character, Becke can always see the shadow of the real man. Although readily admitting Hayes' madness and violence, Becke ultimately seems compelled

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[85] He still appears in some Island travel guides, for example, and there are various bars and drinks named after him in America and New Zealand; he featured on Federated State of Micronesia postage stamps in 1986, and there were racehorses named Bully Hayes in Australia and America.

[86] Peter Pierce, "Introduction," in Louis Becke, *By Reef and Palm and The Ebbing of The Tide* (Rowville, Victoria: The Five Mile Press, 2005), 8-9.

to also defend his potential for greatness. 'I have spoken of Hayes,' were Louis

Becke's final words about his pirate, 'as I found him.'[87]

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