

RLS Site Newsletter

Recent additions to the RLS site

Year 16

No. ii

27 November 2016

a land of holly-hocks and country houses; a land where at night, in thorny and sequestered bypaths, you will meet masqueraders going to a ball in their sedans, and the rector steering homeward by the light of his lantern;

a land of the windmill, and the west wind,

and the flowering hawthorn with a little scented letter in the hollow of its trunk,

and the kites flying over all in the season of kites, and the far away blue spires of a cathedral city.

(Letter to Austin Dobson, Feb 1885:

the poetic country belonging to Dobson)



RLS 2017 Conference, p. 3



RLS in a 1914 illustrated edition of the *Fables*, p. 7



Brecht and Benjamin praise *Ballantrae*, p. 12

RLS Site

The Ernest and Joyce Mehew Collection of Robert Louis Stevenson books at the Edinburgh Napier University has now been housed and catalogued.

The catalogue can be found [here](#)¹; the search box takes titles, dates etc. and returns a list of titles only, in order of relevance, and this list may have to be searched through by clicking titles to see the full library form. Browsing is by title only.

The collection was inaugurated with a lecture by Nick Rankin, which can be viewed [here](#).²

Information about navigating the RLS site:

To find 'Recent Studies' and 'Critical Reception', you need to click on the menu title 'Further Studies' to produce a page with further links; clicking the other menu titles also produces a page with additional links besides those on the drop-down list.

RLS Day 2016

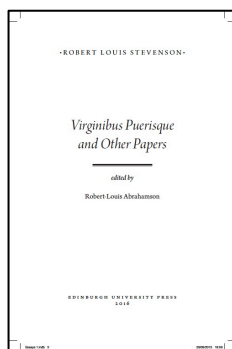


This year's Edinburgh programme was spread over a week. For pictures and comments, see [RLS day tweets](#).³

A high point was a public lecture on *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* by Prof. Barry Menikoff, who has edited and published the manuscript of both books.

EdRLS

Volumes in the final stages of production:



Gillian Hughes (ed.), *Weir of Hermiston* (a new transcription of the MS),

Robert-Louis Abrahamson (ed.), *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers* (from the 1881 first edition),

Bill Gray (ed.), *Fables. Island Nights' Entertainments* (the first transcription of the Fables MSS since 1895, including the two Yale Fables and ordered in part by the late group of numbered fair-copy manuscripts; followed by the three tales Stevenson had intended for 'Island Nights' Entertainments' or 'A Volume of Märchen').

Behind them and nearing completion:

Penny Fielding (ed.), *The Dynamiter* (from the 1885 first edition)

Richard Dury (ed.), *Essays IV: Uncollected Essays 1868-1879* (from MSS and first publications, with transcriptions from two travel Notebooks)

Julia Reid (ed.), *The Amateur Emigrant* (from the 1880 MS with the short gaps filled by 'Across the Plains' published in *Longman's Magazine* in 1883 and by the 1895 posthumous first edition)

Setting up in type in the Edinburgh office is proceeding slowly (but *proceeding*), the slow-down being due to a present low level of funding. Anyone wishing to give financial support to speed up this worthwhile project should contact Penny Fielding at the University of Edinburgh: penny dot fielding at ed dot ac dot uk.

Conference



RLS 2017: Robert Louis Stevenson: New Perspectives, Edinburgh Napier University, 5-8 July 2017.

Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words to Dr Lena Wanggren at Edinburgh Napier University by Tuesday 31 January 2017: l.wanggren@napier.ac.uk

From the call for papers: 'As well as papers that discuss Stevenson and other writers, other cultures and a range of related contexts, we are keen to encourage contributions that challenge traditional approaches to Stevenson's works. Though new perspectives on *Jekyll and Hyde* are welcome, it is the aim of the conference to broaden its scope beyond this well-trodden literary terrain. To that end we welcome proposals for papers that cover areas of literary studies that have connections with Stevenson, however tenuous, as well as papers that consider some of Stevenson's lesser-known works, and works that have received scant critical attention. As Scotland is the location of this conference, papers on Stevenson and Scotland would be very welcome.'

Recent Studies

Abrahamson, Robert-Louis (2015). ' "Here gather daily those young eaglets of glory": Robert Louis Stevenson and the Savile Club'. *Cahiers victoriens et edouardiens* 81 (spring 2015). [Online](#).⁴

The Savile aimed to be a different club, encouraging conversation; RLS enjoyed it but sometimes felt like an outsider, hence the ambivalence of 'Diogenes at the Savile Club' and the Savile-like 'Suicide Club'. In various writings at the same time, he is actually questioning the typical world-view of Club-members: the gentleman, aesthetic self-cultivation and bohemianism. he was also exploring the idea of ethical conduct in life seen as a battle, and good talk is also a battle—a point in favour of the Club.

Brown, Neil Macara (2016). 'Speculating on *The Wrecker*: some sources surveyed'. *Journal of Stevenson Studies* 13: 168-201.

S's use of contemporary sources and knowledge of social phenomena drawn on for aspects of *The Wrecker*: (i) conversations with Walker and Cameron who had captained the *Wandering Minstrel*; the Findlay, Admiralty directories and the survey by Reynolds for details of Midway Island; (ii) personal experience and newspaper reports of organized picnics in San Francisco, of 'remittance men' and of the South Clifton landslip and railway navvies in Australia, and of opium smuggling among Pacific islands.

Cazzato, Luigi (2015). 'In the South Seas: Robert L. Stevenson's Anglo-Southern Relations, or Orientalisms denied'. [Loxias](#)⁵ 48.

At S's time, writings about the Pacific showed an exoticism reminiscent of colonialism (Loti, Kipling), yet there was also was an exoticism, such as that we find in S, which tried

to distance itself from the colonial project and endeavoured to come to terms with alterity rather than aim for identity.

Della Valle, Paola (2015). 'A Little Book with a Wide Perspective: Stevenson's *A Footnote to History*'. *Loxias*⁶ 48.

In his late Pacific writings S dismantled colonial literary clichés and acknowledged the viewpoint of the indigenous "other" and the legitimacy of indigenous resistance to imperial power. In *A Footnote to History* (1892), he denounces the fight for supremacy of the three Western powers in the archipelago (Germany, Britain and the USA) and sides with the Samoan rebels led by local chief Mataafa and opposing the puppet king chosen by the Germans. S is willing to listen to "other" narratives and takes account of the cultural reasons behind the choices and behaviours of indigenous people.

Dury, Richard (2016). 'Reading "Forest Notes" '. *Journal of Stevenson Studies* 13: 5-34.

The article starts with 'A defence of Stevenson's essays' against critical neglect or the view that they are inferior or mere preparations for his fiction, arguing that the characteristics of the genre are well-suited to S's world-view of phenomena and individuals in constant transformation. There follows a 'Reading of "Forest Notes" ', a collage of fragments of ordinary experience touched with emotion, reminiscent of poetic cinema. Each of its six sections is examined in turn, with comments especially on aspects of stylistic experimentation. Finally, 'Thoughts on "Forest Notes" ' sums up the previous section, noting in particular the essay's exploration of the unstable nature of personality (through present-tense, second person singular narration), of the mixture of memories and thoughts in states of reverie, and its imitation of the paintings of the Barbizon school and the Impressionists.

Graham, Lesley (2016). 'Rivers, freedom and constraint in some of Stevenson's autobiographical writing'. Ian Brown, David Clark and Rubén Jarazo-Álvarez (eds). *Taking Liberties: Scottish Literature and Expressions of Freedom*. Glasgow: Scottish Literature International. 124-136.

How S's 1880s essays use rivers and their flow as metaphors of freedoms and constraints—freedom to move forward professionally, to travel unfettered, checked by the feeling (especially in Davos in the Swiss Alps) of being circumscribed by geography, family, inheritance and illness. The essay form allowed S to explore the tensions between extremes of freedom and dependence, often through images of flowing rivers, constrained by river-banks but constantly moving forwards, and bringing with them (like inheritance passing down generations) the traces of the places and times through which they have passed.

Hill, Richard (2016). *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Pictorial Text: A Case Study in the Victorian Illustrated Novel*. New York: Routledge.

The first of two Stevenson monographs reported in this Newsletter, it explores the genesis, production and the critical appreciation of the illustrations to S's fiction. Often praised as a visual writer, S's descriptions are actually sparse—suggestions rather than descriptions. Nevertheless, S sought illustrations for his narrative works, wrote on the art of illustration and often started writing from a pictorial idea. The book deals with the first illustrations for S's novels (ch. 1), his writings on art and illustration (ch. 2), his own *Moral Emblems* and his critique of the Roux *Treasure Island* illustrations (ch. 3), and the illustrations for novels set in Britain (ch. 4) and the Pacific (ch. 5). S is revealed as an important thinker and writer on the subject of illustrated literature, and on the marriage of literature and visual arts.

Jasper, Kirsty-Anne (2016). [‘Jack the Ripper: Literary Creation’](#).⁷ *The Victorianist: BAVS Postgraduates*, victorianist.wordpress, 14 Sep 2016.

S’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* has provided a template for interpreting the Ripper murders right from 1888.

Léger-St Jean, Marie (2016). ‘Serialization and Story-Telling Illustrations: R.L. Stevenson Window-Shopping for Penny Dreadfuls’. Paul Raphael Rooney and Anna Gasperini (eds), *Media and Print Culture Consumption in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. pp. 111-129.

Two accounts of ‘reading’ illustrated serials in shop-windows and reconstructing the story during the second half of nineteenth-century Britain: 1. James Greenwood, ‘Penny Awfuls’ (1873), containing the story of two boys who turn to theft to buy illustrated magazines displayed in a shop window and find out ‘what was over leaf’, and an attack on publishers and shopkeepers for producing bad examples and creating an addiction; 2. RLS, ‘Popular Authors’ (1888) on the playful attractions of anticipating and guessing the story via the illustrations displayed in the same way. The same reading practice (shop-window reading) can produce widely different reading experiences (even varying with each reader and reading). [The above summary is pieced together from selected pages displayed enticingly in the shop window of Google Books.]

Luis, Raphaël (2015). ‘Ballades de la mer salée : fictions du Pacifique chez Robert Louis Stevenson et Hugo Pratt’. [Loxias](#)⁸ 48.

The works by Stevenson and Pratt about Pacific navigation give the Pacific Ocean a mythical form in a poetic fantasy space, outside maps and detached from history, aiming at a universal dimension in their narratives of men and forces larger than them.

Niederhof, Burkhard (2016). ‘The Miller as Artist: “Will o’ the Mill” and the Aestheticism of Stevenson’s Early Essays’. *Journal of Stevenson Studies* 13: 35-55.

Although in 1893 S claimed that in ‘Will’ he had adopted the point-of-view, not his, of the futility of action, we can see affinities with S’s aestheticism in his early essays. Quiller-Couch saw ‘Will’ as a cautionary tale about a timid fool, but Henry James underlines the tale’s invitation to interpret, constantly frustrated. The story also corresponds to S’s attraction to Paterian aestheticism 1870’s and the importance of contemplating beauty (in ‘Ordered South’, ‘An Autumn Effect’ and ‘Roads’), just as Will is content to be a spectator of the beautiful plain from afar.

Olsen, Trenton B. (2016). ‘Robert Louis Stevenson’s Evolutionary Wordsworth’. *Victorian Literature and Culture* 44 (2016): 887-906.

S revised W’s ideas in the light of Darwinianism, but also enlisted him to temper Darwinian harshness. (i) W’s idea of heavenly pre-existence was reinterpreted as inherited instinct (‘Character of Dogs’). (ii) Nature (for W, inspirational, a moral anchor, and a promoter of love of mankind) is seen by S as uncertain and violent. For W, ‘Stepping Westward’ is towards the divine, for Archy in *Weir of Hermiston*, it is walking towards chance, unconscious choice and death. W has a simple view of love, S sees the unconscious choices of sexual attraction. In *Dr Jekyll*, the Romantic maid contemplating the moon and the kindly old gentleman meeting Hyde lead not to wisdom and understanding but anger and violence. (iii) W sees the creation of poetry in ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling’ and ‘tranquil recollection’, but for S spontaneous overflowings of feeling result in primitive aggression (e.g. by the poetry-loving Bellairs in *The Wrecker*) and when Archy sits down next to a waterfall in *Weir* to write poetry he can’t think of anything to write. But W was also used by S to temper the

Darwinian world: we can train ourselves to observe beauty, even though the landscape is bleak and inhospitable ('Unpleasant Places'). (Section V is about S's competitive Darwinian relationship as author with W.)

Ripoll, Aude (2015). 'L'identité polynésienne au contact de l'Occident: une étude comparative de la nouvelle « La Bouteille Endiablée » de Robert Louis Stevenson et du roman *The Bone People* de Keri Hulme'. [Loxias](#)⁹ 48.

In "The Bottle Imp", Polynesian society is both enthralled by the opulence of the West and resolute to keep its traditions alive. This quest for stability, which is symbolised by the construction of a welcoming home, also allows female characters to be assigned a more critical role. Hulme also writes about a bicultural country, while revolutionising the traditional depiction of women in literature. Stevenson's knowledge of anthropology and mythology is seen in the rehabilitation of the gift / counter-gift principle when his characters return to their roots. Hulme repeats the Maori creation myth, from *Te Kore* to *Te Ao Mārama*. Both works, hybrids of European and Polynesian cultures, seem to indicate a possibility for the West to be assimilated into the Pacific.

Singer, Jefferson A. (2016). *The Proper Pirate. Robert Louis Stevenson's Quest for identity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stevenson's work endures because he transcended Victorian dualities, in narratives of internal moral conflict and complicated moral vision. He himself combined transgression with loyalty and decency: a 'proper pirate'. In the chapters of this monograph, Singer examines a number of S's major works and stages in his life, using Erik Erikson's identity theory and Dan McAdam's narrative psychology to explore S's quest to define his identity in life and imaginative art.

Recent Editions—translations

Robert Louis Stevenson, transl. Pierre Leyris, pref. and notes Alain Jumeau (2016) *Olalla*. Paris: Gallimard (Folio bilingue).

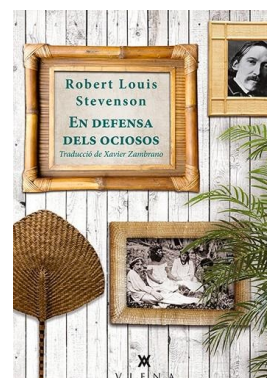


Parallel English-French text. The translation by Leyris originally appeared as *Olalla des montagnes* in 1995 (Paris: Libro). Leyris (d. 2001) was an acclaimed translator of English prose and poetry. His translation has been lightly revised here by Alain Jumeau, who sees the work as 'un petit chef d'œuvre'.

See 'Documentary programmes' below for an interview with Alain Jumeau.

Robert Louis Stevenson, Xavier Zambrano (transl.), *En defensa dels ociosos* [An Apology for Idlers]. Barcelona: Viena.

Contains six essays: 'En defensa dels ociosos' ('An Apology for Idlers'), 'Carta a un jove que vol abraçar la carrera artística' ('Letter to a Young Gentleman who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art'), 'Sobre l'encant dels llocs desagradables' ('On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places'), 'Apunts sobre el bosc: hores ocioses' (the 'Idle Hours' section of 'Forest Notes'), 'Sobre l'enamorament' ('On Falling in Love'), and 'Vellesa rondinaire i joventut' ('Crabbed Age and Youth'). An internet



reviewer calls it (in Catalan) ‘una petita joia literària’, another says reading these essays ‘és un autèntic plaer!’

*Vells i joves
estem tots en la nostra última navegació.*

*No hi ha cap deure que desatenguem tant
com el deure de ser feliços.*

*Old and young,
we are all on our last cruise.*

*There is no duty we so much underrate
as the duty of being happy.*

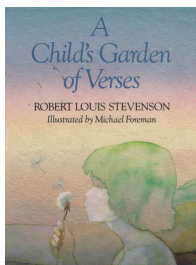
Robert Louis Stevenson, transl. and notes Fabrizio Pasanisi, intro. Giorgio Manganelli, postface Dario Pontuale, *Gli allegri compari* [The Merry Men]. Roma: Nutrimenti Mare.

As introduction, there is a short piece by Giorgio Manganelli (1922-90) from 1980 on the pleasure of reading Stevenson: ‘permanent inhabitant of labyrinths’, among the few writers who can ‘slow down and fragment the reading process in order to avoid arriving at the terrible moment of conclusion’.

Illustrated editions

E. R. Herrmann (ill.) *Fables*. London: Longman, 1914.

Illustration for ‘The Person of the Tale’: RLS takes a break in writing while Silver and Smollet discuss the possible developments of the plot and the author’s preference for bad or virtuous characters.



Michael Foreman (ill.) (1985). *A Child's Garden of Verses*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Foreman (b. 1938) is a prolific British illustrator of Children’s books and two-time winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal. This edition was apparently only published in the USA.

Donna Green (ill.) (1992). *Leaves from a Child's Garden of Verses*.

Green is an American illustrator with a retro style, much pinned on Pinterest.



Juanita C. Bennett (1932). *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Racine, Wisc.: Whitman Publishing Co. / New York: Grosset & Dunlap.

In the footsteps

[Kidnapped130](#).¹⁰

Ian Rankin and Willie Gibson started on 20 May 2016, sailed round Cape Wrath to Erraid, and walked overland to Loch Rannoch, at which point injury struck. They picked up the trail again two months later and finished on 13 August in Edinburgh.

Greiz to Châtillon Stevenson trail.

The '[Association R. L. Stevenson de Barbizon à Greiz](#)'¹¹ has created a 154 km trail from Greiz-sur-Loing to Châtillon-sur-Loing, walked by RLS and Sir Walter Simpson in August 1875.

Derivative works—films

1912 *Treasure Island* (Edison)

Production: Edison, USA

Cast: Ben F. Wilson (Silver), Addison Roethermel (Jim)

Notes: A print of this has recently been discovered by Kirk Bauer. It was originally a 1050 ft 35 mm film for cinema theatres, later reformatted for 22 mm Home Kinetoscope for home showing (the format of the recently-discovered print).



Derivative works—drama

2016 *Stevenson: Jekyll and Hyde* (Grave)

Type: stage play

Author: Gary Grave (in collaboration with the Central Works company)

Director: Jan Zvaifler

First performance: 14 May 2016, Berkeley City Club

Cast: Brian Herndon (RLS), Danielle Levin (Fanny Stevenson)

Notes: Stevenson wakes, tells Fanny his dream. She begs him not to write the book, threatens to destroy it. A central element is Stevenson's medicinal use of cocaine and the effect it had on him and what might have been in the destroyed first draft.

Penny Dreadful (2014-16) is a TV series about monster fighters in 1890s London; in series 3, Dr Henry Jekyll (Shazad Latif) meets his old friend of Dr Victor Frankenstein.

Jekyll (English father, Indian mother, now an outcast figure) has his electro-chemical laboratory in Bedlam Hospital where he develops a serum for the patients: [clip](#).¹² For more clips, if you really must, see YouTube.

Derivative works—radio dramatizations

1974 **The Cezar Curse [Olalla]**

Type: radio dramatization (CBS Radio Mystery Theater, episode 0239)

Author: Murray Burnett

First broadcast: 14 March and 8 June 1975

Cast: Richard Kiley (narrator, George Capewell)

Notes: 42 mins; the narrator falls ill while [vacationing](#) in Spain. Follows the plot, emphasizing the uncanny aspects, but only picks up the words in the dialogue from time to time. Available in streaming and for downloading [here](#).¹³

1974 **The Beach of Falesá**

Type: radio dramatization (CBS Radio Mystery Theater, episode 0131)

Author: Ian Martin

First broadcast: 12 Aug 1974

Cast: Alexander Scourby (Wiltshire), Evie Juster (Uma)

Notes: 45 mins. Follows the plot with dialogue freely adapted. Available in streaming and for downloading [here](#).¹⁴

1974 **The Body Snatchers**

Type: radio dramatization (CBS Radio Mystery Theater, episode 0183)

Author: Ian Martin

First broadcast: 5 Dec 1974

Cast: Howard Da Silva (Cameron Fergus)

Notes: 45 mins. Strong performance from Howard Da Silva. Available in streaming and for downloading [here](#).¹⁵

2016 **Robert Louis Stevenson: Kidnapped**

Type: radio dramatization (BBC Radio 4 Drama)

Author: Chris Dolan

First broadcast: 20 and 27 Nov 2016

Producer/Director: Bruce Young

Cast: David Tennant (David), Michael Nardone (Alan Breck)

Notes: two 58 min. episodes; available No-Dec 2016 on BBC iplayer. Short one-minute introduction to episode 1 by David Tennant. [MP3](#)¹⁶ of the Introduction.

2016 **Robert Louis Stevenson: Terror in the South Seas [The Beach of Falesá]**

Type: radio dramatization (BBC Radio 4 Drama)

Author: Jane Rogers

First broadcast: 4 Dec 2016

Producer/Director: Clive Brill

Cast: David Tennant (Wiltshire), Adjoa Andoh (Uma)

2016 The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Type: radio dramatization (BBC Radio 4 Drama)

Author: Neil Brand

First broadcast: 19 Nov 2016

Director: David Hunter

Cast: Stuart McQuarrie (J), John Dougall (H), Madeleine Worrall (Lorna Utterson, narrator)



Notes: 90 mins; a 'feminist, social-justice-focussed reimagining' of the tale, set in Edinburgh; short introduction by David Tennant.

This is a complex drama inspired by the original and covering many contemporary social themes. Jekyll is a shy, sexually-repressed, stuttering doctor at Craiglockhart mental asylum, who records his thoughts and experiments on psychological division (including his first transformation) onto a phonograph cylinder. Miss Utterson is a competent, socially-aware legal assistant (acting for her father, suffering arteriosclerosis), with another quick-witted independent new woman friend Christabel Campbell (Catriona McFarlane). Available for a time on the [BBC iplayer](#).¹⁷

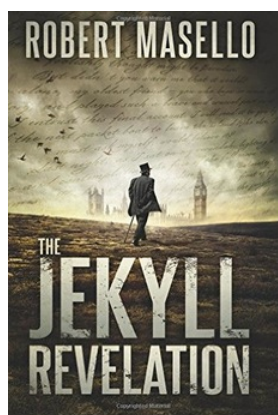
Derivative works—music

Kirsty Law (2016). 'Rainbow/Shadows'. [Soundcloud](#).¹⁸

The first part is a Scottish nursery rhyme, followed by a setting of 'Shadow March' from *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Kirsty Law is an Edinburgh-based singer/songwriter inspired by traditional tunes and poems, whose first album, *Shift* was released in 2014.

Derivative works—sequels, prequels and retellings

Robert Masello (2016). *The Jekyll Revelation*. 47North (Amazon Publishing).



A historical fiction/horror mash-up, in which chapters alternate between letters and a journal by RLS with the narrative of environmental scientist Rafe Salazar who finds an old steamer trunk containing the journal and... a mysterious flask containing the last drops of Jekyll's potion. Stevenson's story takes him to the London for the stage version of *Dr Jekyll* at the same time as the Ripper murders. The relevance of the present-day action isn't immediately clear, but eventually arrives.

First sentences: '26 November 1894. Dear Henley—What I must tell you now, I tell you with dread. It has happened again. What we thought—what we prayed—we had left behind us in the back alleys and darkened doorways of Whitechapel has, I fear, awakened from its awful slumber'.

Spurious quotations

‘You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving’, and close variants, gets over 4000 Google hits attributing it to Stevenson, though it has not been found in his works.

Another 2500 attribute it to Victor Hugo. Although only 300 identify it as a Cambodian Khmer proverb, that looks a more promising source. It is interesting that Stevenson attracts attribution of such quotations about kindness and simple pleasures, here with an element of paradox.

Documentary programmes about Stevenson’s works

‘Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson’, a 30 min radio discussion in the programme ‘Books and Authors’ on BBC Radio 4, first broadcast on 6 October 2016. Available [online](#).¹⁹

James Naughtie talks with author Louise Walsh and then chairs a discussion with the audience. Recorded in the Hawes Inn at South Queensferry, scene of one of the chapters in the book itself.

‘Robert Louis Stevenson’, four 50 min radio documentaries in the programme ‘La compagnie des auteurs’ on France culture, 27 June 2016. (An impressive coverage and collection of speakers that might profitably be imitated by the BBC.)

1. [‘L’éternale enfant’](#),²⁰ with Michel Le Bris, translator, editor and biographer of Stevenson. Stevenson’s life and travels and overview of his work.
 2. [‘L’autre menaçant \(Jekyll, Hyde et Ballantrae\)’](#),²¹ with Jean-Pierre Naugrette, Professor of English literature and Stevenson specialist at the university la Sorbonne-Nouvelle-Paris 3. The double in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Master of Ballantrae*.
 3. [‘Il était une île’](#),²² with Marc Porée, Professor of English literature at the Ecole Normale and Paris 3. *Treasure Island* and Stevenson as ‘écrivain ludique’ who plays with literary conventions.
 4. [‘Le voyage dans les Cévennes, Ollala !!’](#), with Eric Poindron, writer, author of *Belles étoiles, avec Stevenson dans les Cévennes* (2001), and (at 34:00) Alain Jumeau, Emeritus Professor at the Sorbonne, also translator of ‘Ollala’.
-

Etc.

[UK RED](#), or The Reading Experience Database, captures the reading tastes and habits of British subjects, both the famous and the ordinary, the young and the old, men and

women, between the invention of printing in 1450 and 1945. It includes [records of books read by RLS](#) and [records of Stevenson's books read by others](#).

Critical reception and influence on other writers



Brecht and Benjamin playing chess, 1934

Berthold Brecht praised *The Master of Ballantrae* in a short article in 1925, and Stevenson's novel may have had an influence on a famous line in his *Threepenny Opera* of 1928.

In 1925 Brecht wrote that *The Master of Ballantrae* was 'the extraordinary example of a novel of adventure in which the sympathy of the reader for the adventurer himself (a sympathy which is the exclusive life blood of all other adventure novels) is only achieved slowly and with an effort' ('Glossen zu Stevenson'. *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (19 May, 1925)).

At the end of Act II of *The Threepenny Opera* (*Der Dreigroschenoper*) (1928), Macheath sings a ballad with the famous line 'Erst kommt das fressen, dann kommt die Moral!', 'first food, then morals' (i.e. there are situations where one simply cannot afford to act morally). An idea for this line may have come from reading of *The Master of Ballantrae* shortly before: in the last chapter, the Master coolly faces his enemies: ' "Do not let us be in haste," says he. "Meat first and public speaking after."'

Walter Benjamin, writer, philosopher and critic, also thought highly of Stevenson and of *The Master of Ballantrae*.

Benjamin considered Stevenson one of the few modern writers who preserved vestiges of oral storytelling (in 'Der Erzähler', 1936) and praises 'A Plea for Gas Lamps' as a record of a historic period of city life. ('Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire', 1938).

In a letter to his old school friend Alfred Cohn in December 1934 he wrote 'You will probably already have noted that for three months I have been tirelessly speaking of Stevenson's novel, *The Master of Ballantrae*, and it will hardly be necessary for me to recommend it to you' (*The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, trans. Manfred R. & Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). p. 466).

In a [2002 interview](#)²³ Donna Tartt admitted she is an admirer of Robert Louis Stevenson: 'There are writers I love and admire but one doesn't feel as emotionally connected with them as I do with Stevenson.'



The Little Friend (2002) contains several homages to *Treasure Island*, for example the description of someone's eye which 'sparkled, colorfully, like a blue chip of glass' (like Long John Silver's 'a mere pinpoint in his face, but gleaming like a crumb of glass'). In her latest novel, *The Goldfinch* (2013), the adolescent Theo Decker, fires a gun awkwardly under direct threat, 'eyes half-closed against the noise and my arm jolting with every shot', which reminds one of David in the Roundhouse in *Kidnapped* or Jim in the rigging in *Treasure Island*.

Social media



Twitter: [R.L. Stevenson](#)²⁴ — RLS tweets, including news from the editors of the The New Edinburgh Edition [of](#) the Collected Works of Robert Louis Stevenson

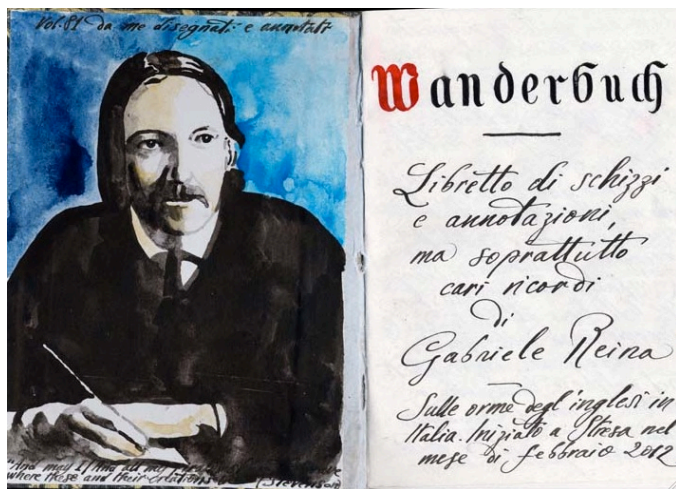
Flickr: [Robert Louis Stevenson Group Pool](#) — images connected with RLS and his works.

Tumblr: [Robert Louis Stevenson Snippets](#)²⁵ collects images, video clips etc. flagged by Twitter [twitter.com/@RLSte](#) or posted on Flickr.

Pinterest: The very active Silverado [RLS Museum](#)²⁶ at St. Helena, California, has five Pinterest boards, collecting RLS images from the web: The World of RLS, Works of, Images of, Travels of, Inspired by.

The (illustrated) [Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson](#):²⁷ Mafalda Cipollone's blog of the most interesting letters with relevant illustrations and video clips.

New members



Gabriele Reina (gabriele underscore reina at yahoo dot it, http://www.gabrielereina.com/Gabriele_Reina) is an art historian and painter living in Milan (Italy). After being editor-in-chief in the publishing company of *FMR/Franco Maria Ricci*, he is now a curator in a private museum. He writes, 'I have been incurably fond of Scotland and Robert Louis Stevenson since I was a child, and I have been reading his books, especially *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*'. As a lover of hiking on long distances trails, I have

followed in the footsteps of David Balfour and Alan Breck Stewart, sleeping in the heather, in 2004, and I have also hiked in the Cevennes. During these Spartan journeys I keep annotated sketchbooks; the first page of all my sketchbooks is always preceded by a watercolour or oil portrait of Stevenson, who I consider the spiritual father of any traveller worth his salt. I have recently began a series of charcoal portraits of *Kidnapped* and I am always seeking for special faces every time I walk in Scotland.'

Elizabeth Malcom (derekrmwilson at gmail dot com) was first introduced to Stevenson at the age of ten by a wonderful teacher at St Denis School Edinburgh. She has recently bought a complete edition, which, she writes, 'has had me enthralled'.

Thanks to

Gilleen Arjat; Kirk Bauer, Marina Dossena, John Fain, Rick Hurdle

Richard Dury
RLS Site

www.robert-louis-stevenson.org

Nothing in RLS Site Newsletter is copyright unless indicated by ©. Please feel free to download it, store it electronically whole or in part, copy and paste parts of it, and forward it to colleagues.

If you wish to be removed from this mailing list, send the message 'Please remove from RLS list' to xrichard.dury@gmail.com (remove X before mailing)

Endnotes: URLs not given in text:

-
- ¹ <https://mehewcollection.omeka.net/>
 - ² <https://youtu.be/WQ7YBmzPcro>
 - ³ <https://twitter.com/hashtag/rlsday>
 - ⁴ <http://cve.revues.org/1964>
 - ⁵ <http://revel.unice.fr/loxias/index.html?id=8259>
 - ⁶ <http://revel.unice.fr/loxias/index.html?id=8247>
 - ⁷ <https://victorianist.wordpress.com/2015/09/14/jack-the-ripper-literary-creation/>
 - ⁸ <http://revel.unice.fr/loxias/index.html?id=7949>
 - ⁹ <http://revel.unice.fr/loxias/index.html?id=7945>
 - ¹⁰ <http://www.kidnapped130.com/>
 - ¹¹ <http://stevenson-fontainebleau.fr/>
 - ¹² <https://youtu.be/F1Qcd5nnp0E>
 - ¹³ <http://www.cbsrmt.com/episode-239-cezar-curse-the.html>
 - ¹⁴ <http://www.cbsrmt.com/episode-131-the-beach-of-falesa.html>
 - ¹⁵ <http://www.cbsrmt.com/episode-183-the-body-snatchers.html>
 - ¹⁶ <http://davidtennantontwitter.blogspot.it/2016/11/mp3-of-david-tennants-introduction-to.html>
 - ¹⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b082sz7r>
 - ¹⁸ <https://soundcloud.com/kirstylaw/rainbows-shadows-02>
 - ¹⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04f1x7v>
 - ²⁰ <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/la-compagnie-des-auteurs/robert-louis-stevenson-14-l-eternel-enfant#>
 - ²¹ <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/la-compagnie-des-auteurs/robert-louis-stevenson-24-l-autre-menacant-jekyll-hyde-et>
 - ²² <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/la-compagnie-des-auteurs/robert-louis-stevenson-34-il-etait-une-ile>
 - ²³ http://www.languageisavirus.com/donna_tartt/about-bibliophile.php#.V88q4LUwJE4
 - ²⁴ <https://twitter.com/RLSte>
 - ²⁵ <http://rlssnippets.tumblr.com/>
 - ²⁶ <http://pinterest.com/rlsmuseum/>
 - ²⁷ <http://lettersofrobertlouisstevenson.wordpress.com/>