

RLS Site Newsletter

Recent additions to the RLS site

Year 17

No. ii

13 Nov 2017

A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note.
He or she is a radiating focus of goodwill; and their entrance into a room
is as though another candle had been lighted
(‘An Apology for Idlers’)



RLS 2010: next
Stevenson conference
announced, p. 2

My dear Coggie,

New letter,
p, 10

Full of fun. Full of energy

1935: Mrs Clarke
remembers RLS in the
1890s, p. 12-13

RLS Site

RLS day: all information is now on the special [RLS day site](#)¹

For **Recent Studies** and **Critical Reception**, click on ‘Further Studies’ on the ‘Further Studies’ menu (i.e. title is also first item), then scroll to the bottom of the resultant page.

NEd

A series of volumes have now been delivered (or will soon be delivered): *The Amateur Emigrant*, *The Dynamiter*, *Fables* and *Island Nights' Entertainments*, and *Essays I, and IV* (with work progressing intensely on *Essays II, III and V*).

The (one hopes, temporary) end of funding means that these volumes are in a kind of pre-birth limbo. They will be certainly published as all involved are committed to this, but unfortunately we have no timetable for this at the moment.

Conference



RLS 2020: Bordeaux, 18–20 June 2020. Convenors: Nathalie Jaëck and Lesley Graham.

Lecture

Roger Swearingen, 'Two Pieces of Paper and Why They Matter: Original Manuscript Pages from *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum'; St. Helena Public Library, St. Helena, California; 7 November 2017.

Additions and deletions to two MS pages of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in the St Helena Stevenson Museum show how Stevenson moved away from details towards indeterminate or partial knowledge, foregrounded the oddity and puzzling nature of what Utterson and Lanyon discovered, and eliminated digressive incidents (even if interesting in themselves).

Susan Napier, 'Where Shall We Adventure? Hayao Miyazaki Meets Robert Louis Stevenson'; Harry Ransom Center 3.206, Austin, Texas; 7 April 2017.

The significant role *Treasure Island* has played in Japanese films, and the way in which Stevenson has helped to form Japanese artistic and narrative sensibility, with special attention to the animated films of Hayao Miyazaki.



Miyazaki was key animator and story consultant for the 1971 13-part TV serial *Animal Treasure Island*. Susan Napier's *Miyazakiworld* will be published by Yale University Press in 2018.

Recent Studies

Butler, Lisa (2006). '“that damned old business of the war in the members”: The Discourse of (In)Temperance in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*'. [Romanticism on the Net 44](#) (Nov 20016).²

JH reflects contemporary anxieties of degeneration through alcoholism and sexual excess, and its language echoes that of temperance sexual purity movements. S's novella challenges the supremacy of human reason and will as Jekyll loses control of the instinctive part of his nature and assumes a more animal nature. This degeneration maps onto alcoholism, the results of which are a similarly described in contemporary temperance literature as an animal-like condition and slavery to an evil force. Social purity movements (the Society for the Suppression of Vice and others) described sexual irregularity and excess in similar terms. The text can be read as a critique of a late-Victorian discourse of temperance and its efforts to regulate human behaviour. In a letter of 1886, Stevenson offers a paradoxical solution: 'happiness is a question of morality—or of immorality, there is no difference'.

Cushman, Stephen (2017). 'The Strange Case of Dr. Stevenson and Mr. Thoreau'. *Southwest Review* 102.i, 19-39.

An essay examining and attempting to explain S's 'deeply divided attitude towards Thoreau in the essay 'Henry David Thoreau: His Character and Opinions' (1880). S 'saw his own image' in Thoreau: someone struggling, like him, with problems of money, love, art, and health.

Money: to S, Thoreau's asceticism looked like deformity [RD: but if we look at 'Lay Morals' we see that S's objects to Thoreau's renunciations because he was opposed to 'negative virtue'.]

Love: S sees Thoreau as loveless, and Japp (S's source) had not mentioned Thoreau in love; he told him about it on a visit to Braemar in 1881, so that in the Preface to *Familiar Studies* S was able to include a corrective.

Art: S correctly says that Thoreau tended towards parable, but was wrong in saying this was to make his message understandable. S may have been influenced by Thoreau's vivid descriptions of natural features combined with rhythmic prose (e.g. 'The Sea Fogs' and 'A Starry Drive' in *Silverado Squatters*)—but this is difficult to prove. It is strange that he says disparagingly that 'Thoreau could not clothe his opinions in the garment of art' and yet in the corrective Preface he says his own writing was immediately influenced by Thoreau's.

Health: S praises Thoreau's achievement of simple happiness but then criticizes him from abstaining from common pleasures and withdrawing from society and comments on his dislike of wine with the jibe 'perhaps, living in America, he had never tasted any that was good'.

S's opinions in his essay are partly due to overlooking aspects of Thoreau, partly due to his divided attitude to Thoreau, gripped by a kind of competitive insecurity. For example S says Thoreau had high views but did not accompany them 'by some striking act'—here, he does not seem to have read Japp carefully, as the latter must have told him so at Braemar, as S corrected himself in the later Preface. S's attack showed that he himself was perhaps more orthodox and conventional than Thoreau.

Farrell, Joseph (2017). *Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa*. London: MacLehose Press.

The author is a retired professor of Italian with books on Dario Fo and *Sicily: A Cultural History* to his credit, so this is obviously a post-retirement labour of love. Part I is about the path of Stevenson's life to Samoa; Part II, an overview of social, political and colonial conditions in Samoa; Part III is about Vailima; Part IV, Stevenson's writings in this period of his life; and Part V 'Final Days'.

Part II in particular benefits from extensive reading in journals, reference books, official reports and memoirs on Samoa in this and the immediately preceding period. Farrell gives a good idea of the Samoan tangle, of the politics and the feelings of the islanders (accustomed to pick fruit wherever they found it; then punished for doing so on the new extensive plantations). The discussion of Stevenson's attitude to colonialism (pp. 159-61) picks out a few conventional opinions (troops should be sent to save Gordon; the Samoans should cultivate an industrious spirit) amid his generally enlightened views and indignation at unprincipled commercial and colonial exploitation, and quotes an editorial in a Samoan newspaper 'universally attributed to Stevenson' as 'one of his most outraged and contemptuous denunciations of imperial interference' (171).

There are a sprinkling of mistakes, which shall not be listed here, apart from the confusion of 'ballad' and 'ballade' on pp. 275-6. A couple of passages attempt to sum up the character and temperament of Fanny, the best part of which is the well-chosen quotation from Roslyn Jolly: 'she was a wonderful emotional and professional support; she was a terrible emotional and financial drain'. (The editor of this Newsletter admires that sentence and will be imitating it.)

Federico, Annette R. (2017). *Thus I Lived with Words: Robert Louis Stevenson and the Writer's Craft*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2017. 15 Nov 2017.

Nine chapters, with tempting titles: RLS, Romance, Simplicity, Play, Reading, Truth, Teaching, Style, Dreams. From the publisher's presentation: 'Stevenson believed that an author could do no better than to find the appetite for joy, the secret place of delight that is the hidden nucleus of most people's lives.' A longer note on this book will be included in the next Newsletter.

Jaëck, Nathalie (2005). 'La correspondance entre Henry James et Robert Louis Stevenson: pour un réalisme aventureux', in Lerat, Christian (ed.), *Echanges intellectuels, littéraires et artistiques dans le monde transatlantique*. Pessac: MSHA, pp. 37-48.

While Besant felt fiction had to have adventure as content, both J and S saw adventure in the form of the text, as method of narration based on imminence. (True, J said fiction gives an illusion of reality, but for him reality was multiple.) They both prefer omission to Naturalist saturation of details; both reject an omniscient narrator in favour of a subjective exploration where the textual surface becomes important; both prefer an a-systematic text of experienced incident with adventure as the form of the work. Both writers produced narratives with proliferating texts and non-authoritative narrators, where delay of the expected is foregrounded. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is a particularly extreme example of the disintegration of the Naturalist narrative where intrusive texts take over the last two chapters and the first person narrator of the long last chapter no longer has any clear referent.

Swafford, Kevin (2010). 'Claiming Contact: Narrative Discourse and the Epistemology of Travel in R. L. Stevenson's *In the South Seas*'. *Pacific Coast Philology* 45 (2010), pp. 26-41.

In 1888 S had an ambitious project to make a socio-cultural-historical study of the South Seas, but soon ran into problems; his wife complained he wanted 'the whole thing to be impersonal', and he himself hoped to find a theory to bind everything together (L7: 65--

6), but as he learned more, he said, 'my work comes part by part in pieces'. Then, as he realized he could not write a totalizing work of representation and analysis, 'his writing began to reflect and embrace the experientially rooted nature of cultural knowledge and perspective' and he adopted an '(inter)subjective, hybrid narration'.

In his South Seas studies for the book, S sometimes finds what he expects to find, e.g. at the first landfall in the Marquesas—then follows this with passages that call these expectations into question. 'stevenson's images and impressions often change and are repositioned from different vantage points and experiences'. Others see S writing ultimately from the European perspective; but Swafford sees S as undermining the possibility of objective knowledge and the logic of colonial discourse. S's writing is characterized by 'a wide variance of form, voice, and perspective which challenges univocal or monologic discourse and representation': it 'shifts stylistically from autobiographical realism to ethnography; from romance and adventure to the impressionistic and mythic': and these forms suggest different ways of knowing. 'stevenson's emerging discourse suggests the convergence of impressions through ever widening experiences and multiple stories told in multiple ways allows for the best approximation to the truth'. S's stylistic shifts highlight the variable nature of truth and the need for a dialogic relationship between subject and object.

Apart from forms, S's narrative *content* also draws attention to the limits of cultural knowledge: the things he describes are uncertain, mutable, impermanent; local, contingent knowledge is essential to understanding (e.g. fish that change from being edible to being poisonous). Comparison with recent Highland history suggests the transitory nature of social structures. Authentic meaning can, however, be provisionally established by cross-cultural connection, by establishing common ground: 'It is this sense of kinship that the traveller must rouse and shape'. It was through his struggle with the problems of knowledge and representation that S came to reject the claims and rationalizations of colonialism.

Review

Lucien Deprijck, *Fanny und Robert Louis Stevenson: Südseejahre – Eine aussergewöhnliche Ehe in Tagebüchern und Briefen*. Hamburg: Mare, 2011 (reprint 2016).

Gilbert K. Chesterton in his book about Robert Louis Stevenson (1927) prophesied that RLS will be remembered again, all of a sudden, after a century—after his critics have been forgotten, but it seems that it took only a few decades—if at all—to reestablish his reputation as an outstanding writer. And now in Germany, where his *Treasure Island* and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* had previously been almost the only works to keep him alive, there is a new biography (by Michael Reinbold, 1995) and more recently, after the classic translation of his "Gesammelten Werken" (Collected Works) by M. and C. Thesing in 1924, new translations are being published, even of his less popular works. Among these, Deprijck's book with Fanny's diary and RLS's letters is the first time that this more intimate literature has been translated (and annotated) in German. The author hereby roughly follows the pattern adopted by Charles Neider in *Our Samoan Adventure* (1956), i.e. to complement Fanny's diary entries with letters of RLS.

After a preface "Vertreibung ins Paradies" (expulsion into paradise) to acquaint the non-expert readers with the biographies and works of the two main characters and the other members of the family, the texts are grouped in four chronological chapters beginning with arrival in Samoa (Sept. 1890) and ending in October 1894, a month before RLS's death. Whereas Fanny's Diary is quoted unabridged (except the deleted passages that could not be restored) RLS's letters are selected excerpts only. An afterword (like the introduction by the translator) deals with the fates of the *dramatis personae* after RLS's death. Thus this publication provides a very welcome source for

further in-depth information for German readers whose enthusiasm may have been stimulated by reading RLS's prose and want to get to know more about these two rather extraordinary persons.

But was RLS's and Fanny's matrimony "aussergewöhnlich" (exceptional, outstanding, fabulous), as stated in the book's subtitle? Was it been "glücklich" (happy), or were there tensions, jealousy, even sexual jealousies? These questions are posed by the editor in his comments. Certainly there had been Fanny's well known phases of depression, there were some "needling" between the two (e.g. concerning RLS's involvement in the inner-Samoan political struggles), there were her sighs about her "role as Louis' wife" (20th July, 1893) but I found no evidence whatsoever for any sexual escapades. What the diary and letters reveal is very hard physical work in the beginning, the commitment to keeping their "firm" running thereafter, while maintaining good relations with the staff, all permanently overshadowed by RLS's periods of illness and later by the battles among the natives and the colonial powers. In such circumstances, it seems to have been quite a "normal" matrimony, but still, I think, "denkwürdig" (memorable, worthy of remembrance).

Thomas Obst

Recent Editions

Robert Louis Stevenson: An Anthology (2017), selected by Jorge Luis Borges & Adolfo Bioy Casares, edited by Kevin MacNeil (Edinburgh: Birlinn)

A collection of essays and short stories that Borges and Bioy Casares planned in the 1940s (the outline was discovered by [Daniel Balderston](#)).³ Their draft table of contents is divided between 12 essays and 12 fictional narratives (7 fables, plus 'The Suicide Club', 'The Bottle Imp' and extracts from *Ballantrae*, *The Ebb-Tide* and *Weir*).

MacNeil has now recreated this anthology and added an Introduction. For an interview with MacNeil, see 'Radio programmes about RLS and his works' below.

Recent Editions—translations

Melanie Walz (transl., afterword etc.) (2010). *Der Master von Ballantrae: Eine Wintergeschichte*. Hamburg: Mare (reprinted by dtv, 2012).

The back matter includes Stevenson's drafted Introduction, full notes (pp. 299-300), and the editor's Afterword (pp. 327-48) covering with composition, publication and reception and then discussing with the themes of the novel.

The full truth of this odd matter is what the world has long been looking for, and public curiosity is sure to welcome.

Seit Langem erwartet man, die voll Wahrheit über diese sonderbare Begebenheit zu erfahren, und die interessierte Öffentlichkeit wird sie zweifellos begrüßen.

Argaud, Elise (transl.) (2008). *Devenir écrivain*. Paris: Rivages (Petite Bibliothèque).

'A College Magazine', 'The Foreigner at Home' 'The Character of Dogs'



Kenneth Jordan Núñez (transl.), Fernando Savater (pref.) (2010). *Aventuras y desventuras del Príncipe Otto*. Barcelona: Backlist.

'La joya escondida del maestro clásico de la literatura de aventuras'

She saw the white cascade, the stars wavering in the shaken pool, foam flitting, and high overhead the tall pines on either hand serenely drinking starshine; and in the sudden quiet of her spirit, she heard with joy the firm plunge of the cataract in the pool.

Vio la blanca cascada, el reflejo de las estrellas que temblaban en la agitada superficie de aquel remanso, la espuma que formaba el agua al caer y, por encima de su cabeza, a ambos lados, los altos pinos bebiendo con serenidad del cielo estrellado, y en aquel súbito momento de paz empezó a disfrutar del ruido del salto de agua.

Matías Battistón, transl. and ed. (2017), *Enamorarse*. Buenos Aires: Interzona.

A handful of essays ('Virginibus Puerisque', 'On Falling in Love', 'Truth of Intercourse'), plus several fragments taken from letters and a few articles, all related to love and marriage.

Marriage is a step so grave and decisive that it attracts light-headed, variable men by its very awfulness. They have been so tried among the inconstant squalls and currents, so often sailed for islands in the air or lain becalmed with burning heart, that they will risk all for solid ground below their feet.

El matrimonio es un paso tan importante y decisivo, que su misma enormidad atrae a los hombres más inestables y volubles. Se han visto tan atribulados por los cambiantes vientos y mareas de su vida, han navegado tantas veces en busca de islas en las nubes, o quedado varados con galopante impaciencia, que están dispuestos a arriesgarlo todo por algo de tierra firme bajo sus pies.

Derivative works—illustrated editions



Illustration to 'The Destroying Angel' in the *New York World*, 28 Feb. 1902.

The title in the newspaper is actually 'The Dynamiter. A Story of the Destroying Angel': this part of *The Dynamiter* has been divided into chapters for serial publication. This is ch. 2 'The Warning'. The caption is: 'The driver laid his lash about the horse's flanks'.

This image comes from Brian Harman in Winnipeg who found it behind the wooden back of an old mirror.

Derivative works—prequels and sequels

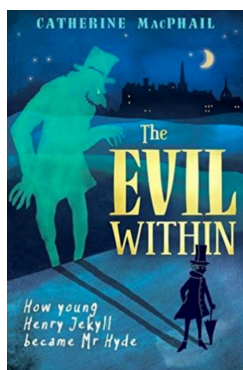
Anthony O'Neill (2017). *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Seek*. Edinburgh/Sydney: Black and White Publishing/Xoum Publishing.

A week before Dr. Jekyll is to be officially declared dead and Utterson is to inherit his fortune, a gentleman shows up claiming to be Dr. Jekyll. Utterson makes it his mission to discredit the forger. After trying the police with no luck, he then visits his friends, one

by one, but it would seem none of them agree with him. Is this man an impostor out to steal Dr. Jekyll's estate, or has Utterson's desire to claim the estate for himself made him not be able to see that this man really is his friend?

Opening sentence:

A sulphurous yellow fog, so thick it muffles the chimes of the Sunday Church bells, had fastened overnight to London and refused to be dislodged by even the stiffest of breezes.



Catherine MacPhail (2017). *The Evil Within*. Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke.

An imagining of Henry Jekyll's life as a young boy. The story opens in 1850, and Edinburgh's Old Town is being tormented by a monster. Meanwhile, streets away in the safer, more respectable New Town, young Henry Jekyll is tormented by horrible nightmares. His mother believes these are caused by the scary stories of the beast whispered through the house by the maids, but could there be a more sinister explanation? A book designed for children and teens.

Derivative works—films

2016 *Madame Hyde (Mrs Hyde)* (Bozon)

Director and screenplay: Serge Bozon

Production: Les Films Pelléas, Frakas Productions, Arte France

Cast: Isabelle Huppert (Marie Géquil/Madame Hyde)

Notes: A shy physics teacher ('Géquil', pronounced 'Jekyll') in a difficult *banlieu* school in Marseille is hit by lightning, and undergoes a personality change to become intense and confident (*The Nutty Professor* twist) but at night dangerous to mix with (like Hulk). She inspires her pupils to face reality in a rational way (so the opposite of *Dead Poets' Society*). Absurdist comedy, dark farce, discussion film with its own merits, though not really a version of JH.

Derivative works—dramatizations

2017 *Jekyll & Hyde* (Placey)

Type: stage play

Author: Evan Placey

First performance: National Youth Theatre, Ambassadors Theatre, London

Director: Roy Alexander Weise

Cast: Elizabeth Mcafferty (Harriet Jekyll), Florence Monroe (Jenny Walser)

Notes: Harriet, J's widow, wants to continue her husband's researches and is also drawn to nascent feminism and develops a second self, Flossie Hyde, in one half of a multi-layered ensemble work that also involves twenty-first-century Florence Monroe, young feminist writer.

2012 Treasure Island (Oates)

Type: theatre-in-the-round play, six-hander (3 m, 3 f)

Author: Debbie Oates

First performance: The Dukes Theatre, Lancaster, 23 November 2012

Director: Joe Sumsion

Cast: Nisa Cole (Jem Hawkins), Ali Watt (Long John Silver), Ann Marcuson (Captain Molly Hands)

Notes: Slapstick, Monte Python, physical theatre, puppetry, songs; the action starts in local Morecombe Bay. Adapted as open-air promenade play, summer 2017, in Williamson Park, Lancaster, with Natasha Davidson as Jem Hawkins

Derivative works—music



‘Sing Me a Song of a Lad that is Gone’, arranged by Bear McCreary, sung by Raya Yarbrough (2015). Title music for the *Outlander* TV series (2014-18).

Outlander is a time-travel/romance-fantasy story of Scotland in 1945 and 1743, based on Diana Gabalon’s novel series, produced by Starz for Sony Pictures, and presently on series 3, with another promised. In the title song Stevenson’s ‘lad’ is changed to ‘lass’.

The [title sequence](#)⁴ with song seemed to the editor of this Newsletter a little too densely Caledonian.

Gilbert, Norman (1955). ‘Windy Nights’ (Novello). Canon for two-part soprano voices and piano.

A correspondent remembers singing this ‘fine and rollicking’ setting at school in the late 60s/early 70s and considers it superior to the often-chosen setting by Cynthia Gray.



Derivative works—comic books

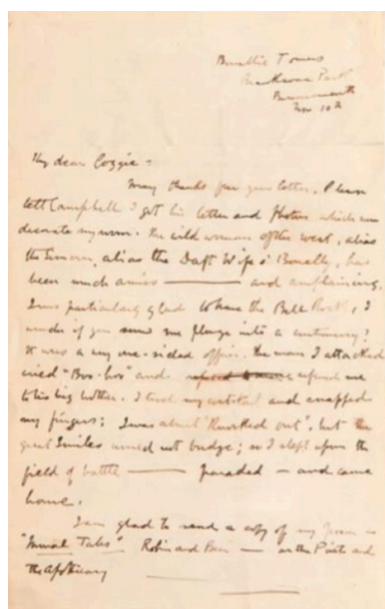


William B. Jones, Jr. (2017). 'Classics Illustrated and the Evolving Art of Comic-Book Literary Adaptation'. *The Oxford Book of Adaptation Studies*, ed. Thomas Leitch (New York: Oxford University Press), ch. 12, pp. 214-36.

The chapter contains a section on scriptwriter Kenneth W. Fitch and his treatment of *The Master of Ballantrae* (*Classics Illustrated*, 82, Apr. 1951); Fitch's original script shows that characters and scenes derive in part from the William Hole *Ballantrae* illustrations. Six pages of the adaptation are illustrated.

New letter

A letter to Coggie Ferrier dated 10 November [1884], sold by Sumner and Stillman, Yarmouth, Maine, August 2017.



The letter is a version of another letter to Coggie dated 12 November, Letter 1324 in the Yale letters (L5: 24-5): the latter contains similar material and phrasing in the first half, but instead of the quotation from the poem ends with humorous chatting in Scots. With part of the two letters almost identical, it looks as if the new 10 November letter was not sent: perhaps because Stevenson realized that in it he had thanked Lewis Campbell for the photos, while the letter of 12 November starts thanking Coggie for them; perhaps also because he wanted to make it a nicer thank-you letter, with the Scots chattiness at the end creating a feeling of solidarity between the two.

Bonallie Towers
Branksome Park
Bournemouth
Nov 10th [1884]

My dear Coggie,
Many thanks for your letter. Please / tell Campbell I got his letter and photos which now / decorate my room. The wild woman of the West, alias / the Simoon alias the Daft Wife o' Bonally, has / been much amiss — — — and complaining. / I was particularly glad to have the Bell Rock, I wonder if you saw me plunge into a controversy? / It was a very one-sided affair. The man I attacked / cried "Boo-hoo" and referred me / to his big brother. I trod my coat-tail and snapped / my fingers; I was about "knocked out", but the / great Smiles would not budge; so I slept upon the / field of battle-----paraded---and came / home.

I am glad to send a copy of my poem — / "Moral Tales," Robin and Ben—or the Pirate and / the Apothecary— —

[p. 2]

Come, lend me an attentive ear
a startling moral tale to hear
Of Pirate Rob and Chemist Ben
And different destinies of men

Deep in the greenest of the vales
That nestle near the coast of Wales
The heaving main but just in view,
Robin and Ben together grew,
Together worked and played the fool,
Together shunned the Sunday school
And pulled each other's youthful noses
Around the cots, among the roses.

Together but unlike they grew.
Robin was rough and through and through,
Bold, inconsiderate and manly
Like some historic Bruce or Stanley.
Ben had a mean and servile soul.
He robbed not, though he often stole.
He sang on Sunday in the choir
And tamely capped the village squire.

At length, intolerant of trammels—
Wild as the wild Bithynian camels.
Wild as the wild sea-eagles — Bob
His widowed dam contrives to rob.
And thus with great originality
Effectuates his personality.
Thenceforth, his terror-haunted flight
He follows through the starry night;
and with the early morning breeze
Behold him on the azure seas!

Please excuse this scrawl; understand what is said; and accept for yourself and all in the family, my most sincere good wishes,

Affectionately yours,
Robert Louis Stevenson

Notes

Bonallie Towers: the house in Bournemouth where the Stevensons lived from October 1884 to March 1885, i.e. before moving to the house later renamed Skerryvore, where they lived from April 1885 until August 1887.

Coggie: Elizabeth Ann Ferrier, sister of James Walter Ferrier.

Campbell: Lewis Campbell (1830-1908), Professor of Greek at St Andrews, 1863-98.

The wild woman of the West: Fanny Stevenson, who had lived in the West of the USA.

Simoon: strong, hot desert wind, mentioned in the *Arabian Nights*. 'simoom' in Letter 1324 (but they are variant spellings then as now).

Daft wife: (Scots) silly woman. Bonally or Bonaly is a part of Colinton, so Stevenson was struck by the familiarity of the name of his new house.

Bell Rock: the Bell Rock lighthouse, built by Stevenson's grandfather, Robert Stevenson.

a controversy: about a wrongful attribution to John Rennie of designs and execution of the lighthouse in a recently published book (see L5: 11-12, 15-16). Frederick Whympers, in his book *The Sea: its Stirring Story of Adventure, Peril and Heroism*, said that John Rennie had designed and built the Bell Rock lighthouse with Robert Stevenson as his assistant. Stevenson complained to the *Athenæum* about this, saying that his grandfather was the effective designer and executor of the lighthouse, and Whympers replied by saying that the information came from *Lives of the Engineers* (1861-74) by Samuel Smiles (the 'elder brother', i.e. the well-known author of *Self Help*).

I trod my coat-tail: this looks like a slip—in Letter 1324 it is corrected to 'I trod *on* my coat-tail'. Perhaps this means 'I had a tantrum'?

"knocked out": the meaning 'defeated' doesn't fit with the idea of singing a Teum Deum of victory; but in letter 1324 he says, speaking of his health, 'I am about knocked out of time, now a miserable [...] shadow and remains of a man', where 'knocked out of time' is the original boxing term, meaning not only 'knocked out' but also 'vanquished' and 'exhausted', and it is this last meaning that seems to the one intended both here and in the parallel letter 1324 of two days later.

the great Smiles would not budge: this could mean 1. Smiles entered the controversy to confirm what he had written, 2. Smiles refused to enter the debate, 3. Whympers refused accept that the statement of Smiles could be questioned.

Come, lend me an attentive ear ...: The first thirty lines of 'Robin and Ben', written at Davos in 1882, first published in vol. 28 of the Edinburgh Edition (1898), and then (with the same text) in *Moral Tales* (1921). The text here is slightly different from the first printed editions, which is from a MS not yet identified, but which seems to be earlier than another MS of the text at Yale (the readings of which, being later, should be preferred). The lines in the letter seem to be taken from this later Yale version, so far unpublished.

Biography

Sian Mackay (2014). *The House on the Chine: Robert Louis Stevenson at Skerryvore*. London: Thistle Publishing.

A fictionalized biography based on local research of Stevenson in Bournemouth (1884-87).

Opening paragraph:

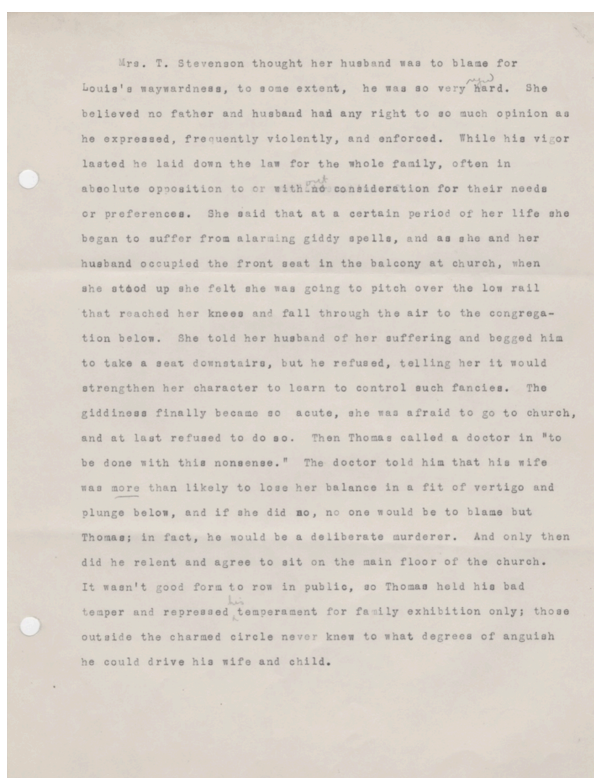
With measured pace he follows the edge of the lawn where it meets the gravel path. Like a landlocked mariner, he thinks, recalling the deck of the last ship he sailed. These days, when he hadn't the strength to venture far beyond the gateposts of the villa, pacing is his only exercise. Pacing calms his nerves and has been known to foster inspiration. He paces. One arm juts out at right angles from his thin body, the wrist limp, the long fingers grasping a cigarette. Occasionally, he pauses to watch the family pantomime in full swing at the side of the house. Then back and forth he goes again, longing for his family to leave him in peace to get on with his writing.

From the diary of Gertrude Hills (Yale, Beinecke Library)

Gertrude M. Hills (née Martin) did research and cataloguing for Edwin J. Beinecke from 1931 to about 1940. In 1935 she went to England to interview the widow of W. E.

Clarke, missionary in Apia, who had known Stevenson and the Vailima household. She had known them all well, and especially Stevenson's mother, and in the interview gave her candid impressions and opinions about them all. Gertrude Hills then wrote up the interview and probably gave the typescript to EJB.

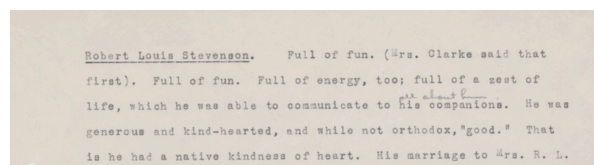
[Images of the typescript](#) are available on the Beinecke website, where the call number is given only as GEN MSS 664, i.e. the huge Stevenson collection of Edwin J. Beinecke; possibly it is GEN MSS 664 box 79 folders 1983-87 ('Gertrude Hills' notes'). The document is presumably subject to copyright (to the heirs of GH or EJB), but since it has been published on the Beinecke website I feel free to copy one and a bit pages from there and to offer a transcription of this small part of the text. The full and legible typescript can be read by anyone directly on the site. Strangely it does not seem to have been used in any biography so far. It is improbable there would be any problem of publication but you would have to go through the task of locating descendants and obtaining permission first.



[f. 11] Mrs T. Stevenson thought her husband was to blame for Louis's waywardness, to some extent, he was so very hard. She believed no father and husband had any right to so much opinion as he expressed, frequently violently, and enforced. While his vigour lasted he laid down the law for the whole family, often in absolute opposition to or without consideration for their needs or preferences. She said that in a certain period of her life she began to suffer from alarming giddy spells, and as she and her husband occupied the front seat in the balcony at church, when she stood up she felt she was going to pitch over the low rail that reached her knees and fall through the air to the congregation below. She told her husband of her suffering and begged him to take a seat downstairs, but he refused, telling her it would strengthen her character to learn to control such fancies. The giddiness finally became so acute, she was afraid to go to church, and at last refused to do so. Then Thomas called a doctor in "to be done with this nonsense." The doctor told him that his wife was more than likely to lose her balance in a fit of vertigo and plunge below, and if she did so, no one would be to blame but Thomas; in fact, he would be a deliberate murderer. And only then did he relent and agree to sit on the main floor of the church. It wasn't good form to row in public, so Thomas held his bad temper and repressed his temperament for family exhibition only; those outside the charmed circle never knew to what degree of anguish he could drive his wife and child.

deliberate murderer. And only then did he relent and agree to sit on the main floor of the church. It wasn't good form to row in public, so Thomas held his bad temper and repressed his temperament for family exhibition only; those outside the charmed circle never knew to what degree of anguish he could drive his wife and child.

[f.12] Robert Louis Stevenson. Full of fun (Mrs. Clarke said that first). Full of fun. Full of energy; full of a zest of life, which he was able to communicate to all about him. He was generous and kind-hearted, and while not orthodox, "good". That is he had a native kindness of heart.



University of Edinburgh Matriculation Register for 1874-75:

1066	Robert Louis Stevenson	Edinburgh	23	Saw	3 rd
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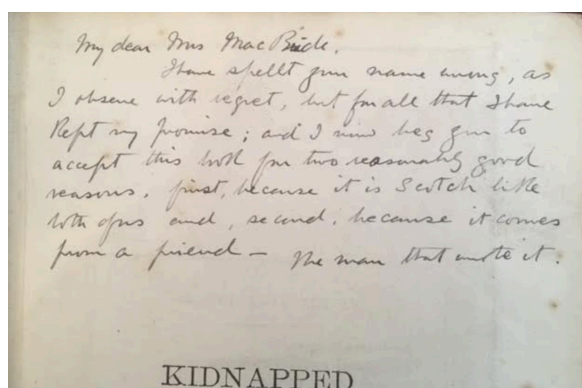
From the University of Edinburgh [website](#).⁵ RLS has written his name, his place of birth and age last birthday and is matriculating for the third year in the Faculty of Law.

Cheque signed by RLS, 31 December 1886. Sold by icollector.com, 15 September 2010.



The cheque, for £8 5s 6d, is made out to Carlo Grassi. There is no mention of this name in the *Letters*. Perhaps it is Carlo Grassi of Gerrard Street, Soho, wine and spirit merchant, importer of Italian wines and olive oil. Could this be for twelve dozen bottles of wine? The only problem is that Stevenson always talks of French wine, but perhaps Grassi also dealt in wines from various areas.

Inscribed copy of *Kidnapped*



A Scottish correspondent sends RLS's inscription in a copy of *Kidnapped* in his possession:

'My dear Mrs. MacBride, I have spellt your name wrong, as I observe with regret, but for all that I have kept my promise; and I now beg you to accept this book for two reasonably good reasons, first because it is Scotch like both of us and, second, because it comes from a friend — The man that wrote it.

Mrs MacBride: Molly MacBride (née Boyle), sister of William Ernest Henley's wife Anna, and wife of William MacBride, landscape and portrait painter.



Gravestone of Alison Cunningham, Morningside Cemetery



Radio programmes about RLS and his works

Vikki Reilly and Kristian Kerr (2017), *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Scottish Literature*, Episode 8: 'Emma Tennant - *Two Women of London*' ([podcast](#)⁶ by Birlinn Ltd., Edinburgh publishers.)

0.56 to 39.05: Emma Tennant (1937–2017) and her *Two Women of London* (a reworking of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*), after a chatty introduction by the two presenters, the discussion of *Two Women of London* begins at 10.36.

39.06: interview with Kevin MacNeil, author of *A Method Actor's Guide to Jekyll and Hyde* (2010) and editor of *Robert Louis Stevenson: An Anthology* (2017) (see 'Recent Editions' above).

In the footsteps



Colinton Manse, Edinburgh: the yew tree and swing.

The tree itself is several centuries old (it is recorded in the Kirk Session minutes of 1630); the iron bands on the branch must date from Stevenson's childhood or earlier. It is referred to in 'The Manse' and 'Reminiscences of Colinton Manse' and in *A Child's Garden of Verses*. There, apart from 'The Swing', the memory of it is evoked in 'To Minnie':

*Below the yew—it is still there—
Our phantom voices haunt the air
As we were still at play,
And I can hear them call and say,
'How far is it to Babylon?'*

Critical reception



Robert Francis (1901–1987)

In about 1910, the poet Robert Francis, then nine years old, met Robert Perkins, 'a student at Harvard Law School'. Perkins spoke of Robert Louis Stevenson as 'a stylist whom he found helpful in forming his own style. Unquestionably this was the first time I had ever heard such a notion, that an author could be read not for what he said but for the way he said it. It must have come as a revelation even to my parents, and made a lasting impression on us all, the fact, namely, that Robert Louis Stevenson was a writer to be read for his style' (Robert Francis, *The Trouble with Francis* (1971), 149–50).

Spurious Quotations

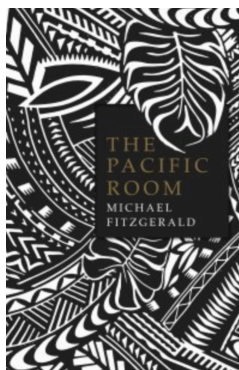
‘Life is not a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well’

A Google search produced over 23,000 pages with this quote (or variants) and ‘Robert Louis Stevenson’, most of these attributing the quote to him. It is not, however, found in his works. The same quote is associated with Jack London on 18,000 pages.

Peter Jensen Brown’s *Early Sports and Pop Culture History Blog* has a post from [9 April 2015](#)⁷ that traces the basic idea, less succinctly phrased, in Walter Scott (1838) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1851), and along with Roger Swearingen (private communication) identifies the originator of the quotation as the American humourist Josh Billings (Henry Wheeler Shaw, 1816-1885), who writes, with his typical phonetic spellings, ‘As in a game ov cards, so in the game ov life, we must play what is dealt tew us, and the glory consists, not so mutch in winning, as in playing a poor hand well’, in *Josh Billings on Ice* (1868).

Denis Waitley, American ‘inspirational lecturer’ and best-selling author *The Psychology of Winning*, which the editor of this Newsletter has no intention of ever reading, has also made the quotation his own in the form ‘success in life comes not from holding a good hand, but in playing a poor hand well’. The subtly different version in our headline above beginning ‘Life is not a matter of’, the form attributed to Stevenson and Jack London, seems to be the work of an anonymous writer.

Stevenson in works of fiction



Michael Fitzgerald (2017). *The Pacific Room*. Yarraville, Australia: Transit Lounge Publishing.

Three narrative threads: Girolamo Nerli, who in 1892 travels from Sydney to Apia to paint Stevenson’s portrait. Present-day art historian Lewis Wakefield comes to Samoa to research Nerli’s painting. Teuila, a Samoan girl but *fa’afafine*, with both male and female traits, descendent of Stevenson’s servant boy Sosimo. Dreamy prose, shifting identities, intermingled present and past.

Opening sentences:

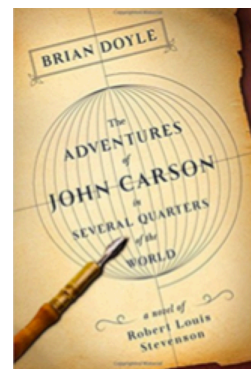
He spits out the pill so it rests like a shiny blue egg in the palm of his hand.

He remembers his Aunt Agatha—Scottish to the core—saying, ‘Elegance is refusal,’ at her bluestone house in Dunedin. He remembers the geranium, neither watered nor pruned, that grew on her kitchen windowsill, patterning the glass like wrought-iron lace gone wild. Refusal can lead to these strange flourishes, he thinks, which can grow elaborate over time and, given the right conditions, burst like a flower through the brain.

We can only imagine what we don’t have, he thinks...

Brian Doyle (2017). *The Adventures of John Carson in Several Quarters of the World: A Novel of Robert Louis Stevenson*. Springfield, IL/NY: Thomas Dunne/St. Martin’s Press.

The story of Stevenson while living poorly in a San Francisco boarding house from December 1879 to April 1880, waiting for Fanny Osbourne to obtain a divorce; also the life stories told by his landlady's globe-trotting husband, which Stevenson in letters said he intended to write up. Now Doyle does it for him, in a style which aims to sound familiar to Stevenson's own. Carson, for example, 'had an essentially riverine style of speaking, and his reminiscence would wander into pools and oxbows, there to swirl meditatively awhile', making the listener experience 'the subtle pleasure of a story paused in full flow'.



Some sentences from the first chapter:

... there may have been no more ready or rapt listener in the world for Mr John Carson, when he sat down by the fire in the dawn of the year 1880 to tell me of his tumultuous life; and perhaps there was no storyteller of more immediate and lasting effect on my life and work subsequently than that estimable San Franciscan, whose voice I can still faintly hear sometimes, in full and headlong flow, on certain days when the wind is up, and the windows are a-rattle, and the fire is ticking low. Even now, many years and miles from that tall mast of a house, I will hear him for a moment, and be thrilled again, and remember the pleasure of his company, and the zest of his tales, and the warmth with which he spoke of his friends, some of which he did not expect to ever see again in this life, but whom he savored and esteemed for their courage and kindness, counting himself the luckiest of men, to have had such companions for a part of his road.

Etc.

This year's 'RLS Writing Competition' (the name that the editor of this Newsletter chooses to give to 'The RLS Club/Edinburgh Napier University Writing Competition for senior pupils in Scottish schools') attracted a good number of personal essays and short stories. The adjudicator was Louise Welsh, here are some comments taken from her final judgment:

'Beach Comber' by Anna McPhail of Portobello High School is a beautifully rendered, mature reflective essay. It is a worthy overall winner. Anna successfully conveys a sense of the narrator's grandfather's memories being passed across the generations via the conduit of the sea. This is a story full of controlled emotion and texture.

'The Double' by Felix Swift Roberts of The Gordon Schools is a terrific horror story full of real tension. Sioned Ellis of Banchory Academy has created a disturbing tale inspired by the concept of the doppelganger which kept me hooked right up to its unsettling ending. Morven Stead of Trinity Academy submitted a reflective essay 'st Christopher' which showed originality and mature insight

Social media



Twitter: [R.L. Stevenson](#)⁸ — 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](#)⁹ collects images, video clips etc. flagged by Twitter [twitter.com/@RLSte](#) or posted on Flickr.

Pinterest: The Silverado [RLS Museum](#)¹⁰ 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](#):¹¹ Mafalda Cipollone's blog of the most interesting letters with relevant illustrations and video clips.

New subscribers

Roland Alexander (rha30 at cam dot ac dot uk) worked as a solicitor for five years after his first degree at the University of Melbourne, then did a research M.A. at the University of New South Wales on the topic of 'shame and Imperialism in Robert Louis Stevenson', under the supervision of Stevenson scholar Professor Roslyn Jolly. He first became interested in research on Stevenson's writings when he assisted in the running of the RLS 2013 Conference in Sydney on 'Stevenson, Time and History'. He is now a PhD student at the English Faculty of the University of Cambridge, working on a thesis that involves a study of law and affect in the work of Stevenson. He has just published an essay "On the rack": shame and imperialism in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide*, in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Great Affair: Movement, Memory and Modernity*, ed. Richard J. Hill (London: Routledge: 2017).

Stuart Campbell (jockrobin at me dot com), lives in Glasgow after spending the first part of his life in Edinburgh. He writes: 'My passion for RLS grew from my love of book collecting; I have a large library of Stevenson items. After a career teaching English and then as a mental health trainer, he is now a full-time writer: Sandstone Press recently published his fifth book, *Daniel Defoe's Railway Journey* which describes his travels across Britain talking to strangers. An earlier novel, *John McPake and the Sea Beggars* has been adapted for the stage.

Fred Guida (fredguida44 at yahoo dot com) lives in Branford, Connecticut and is a retired film history instructor. He is the author of *A Christmas Carol and Its Adaptations: Dickens's Story on Screen and Television*. As was the case with Dickens, his introduction to Stevenson came, at age nine or ten, through watching old movies on television and from devouring *Classics Illustrated* comic books. The 'big books' came a little bit later. He is also greatly interested in children's literature.

Brian Johnstone (gilstonbrig at btinternet dot com), was born in Edinburgh, but has lived in rural Fife since the early 70s. He is a poet, writer (author of six poetry collections and a recent memoir), performer and sometime literary events organiser (founder of the StAnza Poetry Festival in 1998). He writes, 'I discovered RLS as a boy through *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*; but my real enthusiasm for him was born of reading his travel writing, in particular the Atlantic/American trilogy. I have gone on to read almost all of his

non-fiction and much of his other fiction, as well as various biographies. I now have as much interest in the man and his life as I do in his writing.'

Patrick Scott is a well-known Stevenson scholar (scottp at mailbox dot sc dot edu); he writes 'I have been interested in RLS for many years, curated a substantial RLS centennial exhibition in 1994 (later mounted on the Web for me by Jason Pierce), published a couple of articles about him (most substantially, on "The Body Snatcher" in 1999), and wrote the introduction to a paperback *Treasure Island* (Signet/NAL 2008). I retired in 2011 as Director of Special Collections and professor of English at the University of South Carolina. Since 2012, I have been joint-editor of *Studies in Scottish Literature* (<http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/>).'

Thanks to

Robert Louis Abrahamson, Neil Macara Brown, Stuart Campbell, Mafalda Cipollone, Olive Classe, Marina Dossena, Brian Harman, Bill Jones, Manfred Malzahn, Thomas Obst, Roger Swearingen

Richard Dury
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Endnotes: URLs not given in text:

¹ <https://rlsday.wordpress.com/events-programme/>

² <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/014000ar>

³ https://www.borges.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/2007_Variaciones_Borges_23.pdf

⁴ <https://youtu.be/ledHVF1ZtDI>

⁵ http://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/UoEgal~4~4~43945~103292:Matriculation-Roll,-1874-1875--No--?sort=work_creator_details%2Cwork_shelfmark%2Cwork_source_page_no%2Cwork_title&qvq=w4s:/who%2FStevenson%252C%2BRobert%2BLouis:sort:work_creator_details%2Cwork_shelfmark%2Cwork_source_page_no%2Cwork_title;lc:UoEgal~4~4&mi=0&trs=1

⁶ <https://soundcloud.com/user-265718587/episode-8-emma-tennant-two-women-of-london>

⁷ <https://esnpc.blogspot.it/2015/04/>

⁸ <https://twitter.com/RLSte>

⁹ <http://rlsnippets.tumblr.com/>

¹⁰ <http://pinterest.com/rlsmuseum/>

¹¹ <http://lettersofrobertlouisstevenson.wordpress.com/>