Dedications to Stevenson

After the post on ‘Stevenson’s dedications to others’, here are the printed dedications by others to him. These trace a network of friendships and give an idea of his growing repute, while several of them allude to friendship (as in Stevenson’s dedications) and to shared Scottish sentiments. They were appreciated by the recipient; referring to the first from Symonds and Low’s proposed dedication, Stevenson wrote to Low: ‘It is a compliment I value much; I don’t know any that I should prefer’ (L5, 87).

1. The first book dedicated to Stevenson was by John Addington Symonds, a friend of many conversations at Davos in the winters of 1880–81 and 1881–2, in his Wine, Women, and Song: Mediæval Latin Students’ Songs (London: Chatto & Windus, 1884). It’s in the form of the letter to a friend, a kind of dedication that if not invented by Stevenson, was developed and popularized by him:

   TO
   ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

   DEAR LOUIS,
   To you, in memory of past symposia, when you (your wit) flowed freer than our old Formans, I dedicate this little book, my pastime through three anxious months.
   Yours,
   JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.
   Villa Emily, San Remo,
   May 1884.

2. The following year brought the dedication to Stevenson from someone not personally known to him (though they had mutual friends), an American couple who had moved to London: the illustrator Joseph Pennell and his wife the writer Elizabeth Robins Pennell. They dedicated their illustrated account of a journey from London to Canterbury on a tandem tricycle: A Canterbury Pilgrimage, ridden, written and illustrated by Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell (London: Seeley, 1885). It is an inscription with something of Stevenson’s charm and graceful phrasing:

   TO
   MR. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON,

   WE, who are unknown to him,
   dedicate this record of one of our short journeys on a Tricycle,
   in gratitude for the happy hours we have spent travelling with him and his Donkey.

   (For Stevenson’s letter of thanks, see L5, 121–2.)

3. Another admirer unknown to Stevenson personally was Joseph Gleeson White who dedicated to him Ballades and...
Rondeaus, Chants Royal, Sestinas, Villanelles, &c. (London: Walter Scott, 1887). This takes the form of a brief inscription followed by a message, not fully in the form of a letter, but with address directly to Stevenson:

To
Robert Louis Stevenson.
THE crowning pleasure in the compilation of this book is the permission to dedicate it to you, and this token of personal admiration is not without special fitness, since you were among the earliest to experiment in these French rhythms, and to introduce Charles d’Orléans and Francois Villon to the majority of English readers.

(For Stevenson’s thoughts on whether he deserved such praise, See L5, 370.)

4. The following year Will Low, an old and close friend, dedicated to Stevenson his illustrated edition of Keats’ Lamia (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1888) within an illustration:

On the thin scroll above the top border is a quotation in Latin from Cicero ‘There is no more sure tie between friends than when they are united in their objects and wishes’. The text of the dedication displayed by an amoretto is: IN TESTIMONY OF LOYAL FRIENDSHIP AND OF A COMMON FAITH IN DOUBTFUL TALES FROM FAERY LAND, I DEDICATE TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON MY WORK IN THIS BOOK : WHL

The use of ‘doubtful’ to mean (probably) ‘open to many interpretations’ (a meaning not found in the OED) is influenced by a use of French douteux; it imitates Stevenson's own use of epithets and Gallicisms, creating new meaning through the context of use.

In Stevenson’s copy, sold 1914 (now at Brown University) Low, in 1928, added a long note to the flyleaf, in which he says it was a book which held for Stevenson and myself more than the text, more than the drawings, would imply. The common faith “in doubtful tales from fairyland”, was more than a form of words it was the basis of our friendship.

Stevenson wrote to Low thanking him for ‘the handsome and apt words of the dedication (L5, 62–3) and sent him a poem in thanks (‘Youth now flees on feathered foot’, L5, 164)

5. The same year brought a dedication on a work of visual art, the gilded copper plaque by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Robert Louis Stevenson, in the first version (1888):
The panel includes Stevenson’s poem ‘To Will H. Low’ above Stevenson’s lifted hand holding a pencil, and in the top right-hand corner the dedication: TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON / FROM HIS FRIEND AUGUSTUS / SAINT-GAUDENS. The bond of friendship (here, between three friends) is again specifically mentioned, as in many of Stevenson’s own dedications to others.

6. In 1891 Marcel Schwob dedicated to him Cœur double (Paris: Ollendorff) with the the simple inscription: A / ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON. But in the presentation copy he sent to Stevenson he added the following in English below:

“To Robert Louis Stevenson this book is dedicated in admiration of ‘Treasure Island’, ‘Kidnapped’, ‘The Master of Ballantrae’, in the name of the new shape he has given to the romance, for the sake of our dear Francis Villon — Marcel Schwob.

7. In 1892 the critic George Saintsbury, fellow Savile Club member, dedicated to Stevenson his edition of The Essays of Montaigne Done into English by John Florio (London: David Nutt), with another simple inscription:

TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
THIS NEW FASHIONING OF AN OLD AND FAMOUS BOOK IS DEDICATED BY ITS CONTRIVERS

The ‘contrivers’ included W. E. Henley, general editor of The Tudor Translations series of which this was one. Henley’s original idea had been to dedicate it to “To the R.L.S. of Virginibus Puerisque, Memories & Portraits, Across the Plains” (letter to Baxter, 4 May 1892; Yale, B 4633), associating the volume of Montaigne specifically with Stevenson the essayist (possibly also intended as the early Stevenson, from in the period when they had both been close friends). Perhaps Saintsbury, the austere critic, did not approve the association of Stevenson the essayist with the acknowledged master of the genre; for whatever reason, the resultant dedication seems strangely unbalanced.

8. The same year Alan Walters dedicated to Stevenson his Palms & Pearls; or: Scenes in Ceylon (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1892). Walters, clearly trying too hard, produced an elaborate classical-style inscription:
9. A classical inscription, but in contrast concise and densely poetic, was also chosen by S. R. Crockett for his dedication to *The Stickit Minister* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1893):

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TO

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON,

of Scotland and Samoa,

I dedicate these stories

of that grey Galloway land,

where, about the graves of the Martyrs,

the whaups are crying—

his heart has not forgotten how.
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Stevenson was touched by this evocation of the hills of Galloway (seen on his ‘Winter’s Walk’ in January 1876), while ‘the graves of the martyrs’ made him think instead of Allermuir close to Swanston (familiar from his student days and through his early career) (L8, 159, 193–4). It inspired him to write a poem (later included in the posthumous Songs of Travel of 1895) and include it in the letter of thanks to Crocket (L8, 152–4). The first of the three stanzas is: ‘Blows the wind today, and the sun and the rain are flying, / Blows the wind on the moors today and now, / Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying, / My heart remembers how!’ The last line of this first stanza then inspired Crocket to change the last line of his dedication in future editions so that it echoed Stevenson’s poem:

In addition to the changed last line to the Dedication, the ‘second edition’ (1894) has a ‘Letter Declaratory’ beginning ‘Dear Louis Stevenson’ modeled on Stevenson’s own elegant dedicatory letters, preceded, on the page facing the dedication, by a facsimile of Stevenson’s MS poem and a transcription of it.

10. The last dedication to Stevenson was a dedicatory poem in Scots by his friend Andrew Lang in The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies, ed. by Robert Kirk and Andrew Lang (London: David Nutt, 1893). This addresses ‘Louis’ in a far land where the inhabitants know nothing of Scottish religion (self-mockingly presented) but have many supernatural tales, and encourages him to tell them Scottish supernatural tales, which ‘stamped wi’ TUSITALA’S name / They’ll a’ receive them’ and ends with the world-weary poet wishing himself to be taken away by the fairies. Here is the first of the seven verses:

![Facsimile of Stevenson's MS poem and a transcription of it.](image-url)
Stevenson’s dedications to others

with one comment

Cope Cornford on Stevenson’s Dedications

Leslie Cope Cornford, a novelist and journalist specializing in maritime matters, published one of the earliest studies of Stevenson in 1899: *Robert Louis Stevenson*, a short volume just under two hundred pages, part biographical, part critical. The last section of the penultimate chapter, devoted to ‘His Style’, begins as follows:

> But Stevenson’s most notable achievements as an executant were, perhaps, his Dedications. It is upon record that Thomas Stevenson, when all books failed him, as books will fail us all at times, would take down the volumes of his son and read the Dedications therein. These, at least, never, to the last day of his life, failed to give him the same pleasure. Since Ben Jonson wrote, there have been no better examples of this form of composition, made up, as the perfect Dedication must be, of tact, delicacy, eloquence, and cunning craftsmanship.

*(p. 191)*

The present-day reader is surprised; why would Cope Cornford pick out Stevenson’s Dedications for such praise?

Cope Cornford was a friend and later biographer of W. E. Henley, and had worked for him on the *National Observer*, and in the Preface he thanks him for his help. We know that Henley felt he had been mistreated by Stevenson, so we can perhaps see Henley’s influence in the choice of the word ‘executant’ (also the last word in the book), which implies that Stevenson was essentially a wonderful craftsman, attentive to form, and the choice of his Dedications for high praise may
Yet at the same time Cope Cornford also admired Stevenson, and, no doubt inspired by *Treasure Island*, was to publish his own pirate romance *The Last Buccaneer* in 1902. In the quotation just given he seems to be in two minds: his acclaim seems genuine, he really does find the Dedications worthy of praise, and he goes on to quote with approval from those for *Virginibus Puerisque* (to Henley), *The Merry Men* (to Lady Taylor), *Travels with a Donkey* (to Colvin), *The Master of Ballantrae* (to Sir Percy and Lady Shelley) and *Catriona* (to Baxter).

The anecdote of Thomas Stevenson at the end of his life reading Stevenson’s Dedications is touching, and gives an idea of the pleasure, gracefulness and charm of Stevenson’s style in these short texts: ‘tact, delicacy, eloquence, and cunning craftsmanship’.

What follows is an attempt to understand more fully why anyone should select Stevenson’s Dedications as one of his notable achievements.

**Dedications before Stevenson**

The dedication in from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries typically took the form of the dedicatory letter displaying rhetorical skill to a high-status dedicatee who is treated with ceremonious praise, while at the same time the ‘little book’ is modestly down-played. The heyday such long epistolary Dedications was ca. 1560 to 1720 (Manfred Görlach, *Text Types and the History of English* (Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 114) and ‘the long type of dedicatory letter was definitely dead by 1800’ (ibid., 120).

Dedications were either absent from a volume or confined to the brief, centrally aligned inscription headed by the word ‘To’. However, the importance placed on friendship by the Romantic poets led to a brief season in which the link of friendship is stressed in an affectionate dedicatory letter.

Byron dedicated *The Corsair* (1814) to his friend Thomas Moore in a long letter (also functioning as a preface) beginning ‘My dear Moore’; and dedicated the fourth canto of *Child Harold* (1818) to another friend John Cam Hobhouse in a similar long letter, beginning ‘My dear Hobhouse’, praising him as ‘a friend often tried and never found wanting’. Shelley, similarly, dedicated his verse drama *The Cenci* (1919) in a letter to Leigh Hunt, which starts as follows:

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DEDICATION.

TO
LEIGH HUNT, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture, which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you!

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME,
May 29, 1819.
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Dedications in Stevenson’s day
The first study of Dedications was Henry Wheatley’s *Dedication of Books to Patron and Friend: A Chapter in Literary History* (1887). In his last chapter ‘Modern Dedications’ he says ‘As formerly no book was issued without a dedication, so now few are published with them’. Although Wheatley unfortunately overlooks Stevenson, his testimony shows how at this time Stevenson’s books—almost every one with a dedication—must have stood out as unusual.

Novels were not normally associated with dedications: Dickens has brief inscriptions in only two of his (*Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend*), Thackeray dedicated *Pendennis* (1850) to his doctor in a brief letter of gratitude for his attentions the previous year; George Eliot and Thomas Hardy did without dedications; Meredith and later Conrad confined themselves to brief inscriptions.

As for essays, Lamb’s *Essays of Elia* are playfully dedicated ‘To the Friendly and Judicious Reader’, but there are no dedications to Leigh Hunt’s *Essays*, Hazlitt’s *Table Talk*, Alexander Smith’s *Dreamthorp* or Thackeray’s *Roundabout Papers*.

The only example I have found from the immediately preceding period that seems close to Stevenson’s dedicatory letters—perhaps the gentle reader may find some others—is Edward Bulwer Lytton’s dedication to *Caxtoniana* of 1863, one of the essays of which is referred to by Stevenson in 1868 (L1, 147). This has the same allusion to shared memories and emphasis on friendship:

![Stevenson's dedication to Heinrich Ernst](image)

Stevenson’s dedications

As we have seen, apart from *Caxtoniana* (and any other—I suspect, rare—examples), the lack of dedications in contemporary collections of essays must have meant that to the first readers it would have been a surprise to open *Virginibus Puerisque* in 1881 and see the collection of previously published essays presented as a self-standing work and with a dedicatory letter (not even preceded by the title ‘Dedication’) written in a foregrounded style, with a bold beginning reminiscent of the brusqueness of Bacon or Thomas Browne:

![Stevenson's dedication to William Ernest Henley](image)

and ending elegantly, emphasizing the bonds of friendship with the dedicatee:
Leaving aside the volumes co-authored with Lloyd Osbourne, for which there are no dedications, Stevenson wrote ten dedicatory letters, six inscriptions and four dedicatory poems (and also inscriptions, to Lang and Meredith, to two of the plays written with Henley). They are notable for their elegant style and affectionate tone, emphasizing in most cases the ties of friendship and shared memories. In some cases there are allusions that only the dedicatee can understand, as in the dedication to Baxter of *Kidnapped*, in which he refers to ‘the old Speculative’, ‘the inglorious MacBean’ and ‘that great society, the L.J.R.’ Such details emphasize that this is indeed a private communication, and in the dedication to Sidney Colvin of *Travels with a Donkey* he even playfully suggests that the ordinary reader is just helping to pay for the delivery of the dedicatory letter to the dedicatee:

> Every book is, in an intimate sense, a circular letter to the friends of him who writes it. They alone take his meaning; they find private messages, assurances of love, and expressions of gratitude, dropped for them in every corner. The public is but a generous patron who defrays the postage. Yet though the letter is directed to all, we have an old and kindly custom of addressing it on the outside to one. Of what shall a man be proud, if he is not proud of his friends? And so, my dear Sidney Colvin, it is with pride that I sign myself affectionately yours,

> R. L. S.

Stevenson’s influence

To estimate Stevenson’s influence in the writing of dedications would require a separate study, but here are two examples. First of all, the dedication to *Critical Kit-Kats* (1896) by Stevenson’s friend Edmund Gosse. It is a long, personal, friendly, stylishly witty dedication letter to Thomas Hardy, with reference to conversations and long friendship:

> **Dedication**

> **To THOMAS HARDY**

> **My Dear Hardy,**

> You will recollect, I think—for we have often laughed over the little incident—how, many years ago, you and I, having lost our way in the leafy mazes of the borough of Bridport, asked a grave young man our road to the railway-station. Not
It ends, like Stevenson’s dedication to Henley with a hope for continued friendship in the future:

And for a second example, let us take John Buchan’s *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), an adventure romance that owes something to *Kidnapped*, dedicated to the Scottish rugby player and publisher Thomas Arthur Nelson (killed in France two years later):

**TO

THOMAS ARTHUR NELSON

LOTHIAN AND BORDER HORSE


MY DEAR TOMMY,

You and I have long cherished an affection for that elementary type of tale which Americans call the “dime novel,” and which we know as the “shocker”—the romance where the incidents defy the probabilities, and march just inside the borders of the possible. During an illness last winter I exhausted my store of those aids to cheerfulness, and was driven to write one for myself. This little volume is the result, and I should like to put your name on it in memory of our long friendship, in these days when the wildest fictions are so much less improbable than the facts.

J. B.

Other examples of such dedications are welcomed from the gentle reader. For the moment, though, perhaps we have understood a little more why Stevenson’s dedications stood out for his first readers as artistically innovative, as something unexpected and new.

Following the post on *Stevenson’s Bournemouth*, here are four listings of books that were acquired and read in the Bournemouth years. They were obtained by filtered searches on the RLS Library Database [link](http://bit.ly/RLSLibrary). Facts, raw data, bits of information etc. as stored in records and surveys, are themselves sterile and need to be selected, isolated and linked to stimulate understanding. This explains the eternal fascination of lists and the way the few facts on a series of tombstones can open up unsuspected stories. Let’s see what we can do by grouping together some of the entries in the RLS Library Database concerning books that Stevenson read while in Bournemouth.
None of the descriptions of Skerryvore mention bookshelves or bookcases, but we may imagine that books would have been kept in the drawing room and in the separate bedrooms of Fanny and Louis. The following lists contain the books that were probably acquired in the Bournemouth years. There were other books, with the Skerryvore bookplate too, but they had been acquired earlier and had been transported from Edinburgh or Hyères, and these have been excluded. Like the casual visitor who looks over the bookshelves or at the books lying on tables while waiting alone in a room, running the eye down these lists (in the momentary absence of the master and the mistress of the house) gives us some idea of the interests, current interests, and character of their owners.

The first list gives an idea of a network of literary friends sending each other copies of their latest books. One unexpected result of this listing is that it includes two books published in 1886 that their authors call a shilling romance or shilling dreadful—the same format/genre adopted by the *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, suggesting how this work inspired others to try their hand at something similar. There are also presentation copies from their Bournemouth friends the Taylors and (following Stevenson’s growing repute) a number of unsolicited books, some welcome, others less so.

### 1. Presentation volumes from friends and other writers

**Vernon Lee [Violet Paget], *The Countess of Albany* (1884)**

probably a presentation copy, untraced; discussed in a letter to the author, Oct 1884

**John Webster, Edmund Gosse (ed.), *Love’s Graduate* (1885)**

presentation copy with inscription: ‘Robert Louis Stevenson from his friend Edmund Gosse 5. 6. 85.’


a tandem tricycle journey from London to Canterbury; volume dedication to Stevenson: ‘To Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, We, who are unknown to him, dedicate this record of one of our short journeys on a Tricycle, in gratitude for the happy hours we have spent travelling with him and his Donkey’; RLS replied with thanks in July 1885: ‘when I received the Pilgrimage, I was in a state (not at all common with me) of depression, and the pleasant testimony that my work had not all been in vain did much to set me up again.’ (L5, p.121).


presentation copy, untraced; letter from the author, 27 Nov 1885: ‘I venture to send you my new book, hoping you may find something to like in it’ (McKay, 4, 5825, p. 1654)

**Henry James, *The Author of Beltraffio, etc.* (1885)**

presentation copy with inscription: ‘Louis and Fanny Stevenson – with the love of their devoted friend, the author.’
presentation copy with inscription: ‘Robert Louis Stevenson, from his friend of many evenings, Henry James’

William Wilberforce Newton, *Summer Sermons from a Berkshire Pulpit* (1885)
presentation copy with inscription to RLS; at Yale, inscription not seen

Gabriel Sarrazin (ed.), *Poetes modernes de l’Angleterre* (1885)
presentation copy with inscription to RLS; inscription not seen

received 1886

William Sharp (ed.), *Sonnets of this Century* (1886)
presentation copy with inscription: ‘To Robert Louis Stevenson in slight acknowledgment of an irredeemable debt of pleasure—from William Sharp January ’86’; Sharp produced a second edition including ‘The Touch of Life’, one of the two sonnets that Stevenson sent with his reply (Letters 5, pp. 191–2)

William Sharp (ed.), *Sonnets of this Century* (large paper copy) (1886)
presentation copy with inscription: ‘To Robert Louis Stevenson, with high regard — William Sharp’, from a letter sent in Dec, this was sent early Nov 1886 (McKay, 4, 5488, p.1574)

John Coventry [John Williamson Palmer], *After his Kind* (1886)
untraced presentation copy from an American physician and poet; see RLS’s cool reply, 13 Feb 1886: ‘Thank you for your letter and book, which is of more promise (in my eyes) than performance’ etc. (L5, p. 201)

presentation copy with inscription: ‘Robert Louis Stevenson from his friend Edmund Gosse – 28/3/86’

Andrew Lang, *The Mark of Cain* (1886)
presentation copy with inscription: ‘A. L. can scribble, A. L. can scrawl, / A. L. can rhyme all day, / But he can’t hit it off with a shilling romance, / For, – he never was built that way! / A. L. // To the author of / The Hells of Gourock. / Mr. Hide and Dr. Seek-ill. / A Sequel. / In Fact / To R. L. Stevenson. / puris omnia pura’ (L5, p. 253); see letter from RLS to Lang, May 1886: I have never thanked you for the magnificent Mark de luxe. I had already read it in the bob [= shilling] form etc.’ (L5, p.253); Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde was also in price and format ‘a shilling romance’(see note for Vernon Lee below)

William Archer, *About the Theatre. Essays and Studies* (1886)
presentation copy on half-title: ‘Robert Louis Stevenson from W. A. 5 June: 86’

Edmund W. Gosse, *Raleigh* (1886)
probably a presentation copy, untraced; letter from RLS to Gosse, 29 July 1886: ‘I must not lose a moment in congratulating you on your Raleigh. It is a thoroughly sound piece of narrative, and brilliant, not in patches, but by general effect etc.’ (5, p. 295).

William Smith, *Morley, Ancient and Modern* (1886)
presentation copy with inscription: ‘To R. L. Stevenson, Esq., with the Author’s kind regards, Morley, Aug. 17, 1886.’; Skerryvore bookplate; in a letter accompanying the book dated 17 Aug 1886, the author asks if he could have a copy of one of Stevenson’s works with an autograph inscription; local history and description of a Yorkshire town

Vernon Lee [Violet Paget], *A Phantom Lover* (1886)
presentation copy, untraced, sent with a letter in which the author calls it a ‘shilling dreadful’, McKay, 6, p. 2556; see letter from RLS, late Aug 1886: ‘I am just but returned and have found the dreadful and your note etc.’ (L5, pp. 396-7); another ‘shilling dreadful’ possibly inspired by Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (see Andrew Lang above)

Aubrey de Vere, *The Search after Proserpine and other Poems* (1886)
presentation copy with inscription: ‘R. Louis Stevenson, from Aubrey de Vere, August 31, 1886’; letter from RLS to Ida Taylor, late Aug / early Sept 1886: ‘I am death on [= (slang) enthusiastic about] Aubrey de Vere’s poems, and shall write to him soon (L5, p. 308); de Vere was a cousin of the Stevensons’ Bournemouth friend Lady Taylor

John C Dunlop & Alison Hay Dunlop, William Hole (ill.), *The Book of Old Edinburgh* (1886)
presentation copy from Stevenson’s friend William Hole, illustrator of Kidnapped and author of the illustrations in the book; see letter from RLS to Hole, late Sept 1886: ‘Many thanks for the beautiful book; some of the pictures are most engaging, and some very spirited’ (L5, p. 325)

Ida A. Taylor, *Allegiance: a Novel* (1886)
probably a presentation copy, untraced

Richard W Gilder, *Lyrics* (1885)
presentation copy with inscription: ‘To Robert Louis Stevenson, with the regard & admiration of his friend, R. W. Gilder – Oct. 1887’; Skerryvore bookplate; Gilder was poet and editor of the Century Magazine in which The Silverado Squatters had been published in 1883

received 1887

Sir Stephen Edward de Vere, *Translations from Horace and a few original Poems* (1886)
presentation copy with inscription to RLS, 1887; elder brother of Aubrey de Vere
2. English language literature

Excluding books known to have been acquired and read later

published 1884

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

read enthusiastically immediately upon London publication in Dec 1884; Henley was among the earliest reviewers

(*Athenæum*, 27 Dec 1884 (L5, pp. 41, 80; L6, pp. 161–2)

published 1885

H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (1885)


George Meredith, *Diana of the Crossways* (1885)

published 16 Feb 1885; in a letter c. 6 May 1885 RLS says he is ‘sitting now in the porch, now out on the gravel, reading Meredith, looking at the rhododendrons and red hawthorn’

Brander Matthews, *The Last Meeting* (1885)

sent by Henley; letter from Henley to Brander Matthews 24 Dec 1885: ‘I am going to send Louis the Last Meeting. Whatever he says of it you shall hear’; letter from RLS to Henley early Jan 1886: ‘Brander Matthews is one of the damndest idiots on record. He had better stick to criticism; the reviews on his swindle of a story are a disgrace to journalism’ (L5, p. 174; how Henley replied to Matthews is not known

Henry James, *Stories Revived* (1885)

recommended by William Archer (perhaps sent as a gift by him); see RLS’s enthusiastic letter to Archer of March 1886 (L5, 224–5)

Andrew Lang, *Letters to Dead Authors* (1886)

untraced; bought by Stevenson himself; see letter from RLS to Lang, c. 10 March 1886: Letter from [Bournemouth to Andrew Lang, [c10 Mar 1886: ‘I treated myself to your Dead Authors, by way of an unbirthday present; and I can fancy none better. I think it the best thing you have done, I have read it once, much of it twice, and am not yet done reading etc.’ (L5, pp. 226–7).

Andrew Lang, *In the Wrong Paradise: and other Stories* (1886)

untraced

Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886)

untraced; see letter from RLS to Hardy, June 1886: ‘I have read The Mayor of Casterbridge with sincere admiration: Henchard is a great fellow, and Dorchester is touched in with the hand of a master. Do you think you could let me try to dramatise it?’ (L5, p. 259)

Alfred Tennyson, *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After etc.* (1886)

possibly acquired later

Eric Sutherland Robertson (ed.), *The Children of the Poets. An Anthology from English and American Writers of Three Centuries* (1886)

sold at auction 1914, untraced; possibly a presentation copy; Robertson was a London-based Scottish man of letters who RLS probably knew

3. French and Russian literature

Excluding books known to have been acquired and read later

published 1884

Dostoievsky, *Le Crime et le chatiment* [Crime and Punishment] (1884)

see letter Letter Henley, early Nov 1885: ‘Dostoieffsky is of course simply immense: it is not reading a book, it is having a brain fever, to read it etc.’ (L5, p. 151

Dostoievsky, *Humiliés et offensés* [The Insulted and the Injured] (1884)

see letter to Symonds, early March 1886: ‘even more incoherent than Le Crime et le Chatiment; but breathes the same lovely goodness, and has passages of power’ (L5, pp. 220–1)
Alexandre Dumas, *Le vicomte de Bragelonne* (1884)
'I have now just risen from my last (let me call it my fifth) perusal', 'Gossip on a Novel by Dumas' (1887)
*published 1885*

Alphonse Daudet, *Tartarin sur les Alpes* (1885)
possibly acquired later

Alexandre Dumas, *La tulipe noire* (1885)
possibly acquired later

Ernest Renan, *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques* (1885)
possibly acquired later

Jules Verne, *La Jangada: huit cent lieues sur l’Amazone* (1885)
with inscription: 'Mrs. Osbourne’s copy — Eastham, Bournemouth West'; Eastham was the name of the house in Bournemouth West (exact location unknown, but somewhere near Skerryvore) where Lloyd was a resident pupil of the Rev. Henry John Storr (see L4, p. 41n), though he had left to go to Hyères in 1883 and by late Feb/early March 1885 he was a student at Edinburgh University (L5, p. 80); perhaps Fanny lent the book after a social visit
*published 1886*

Octave Feuillet, *La Morte* (1886)
possibly acquired later

### 4. Other books acquired and read 1884–87

*Excluding books bought in the USA, Sep-Dec 1887*

George Meredith, *The Tragic Comedians* (1881).
*read on the train to London during his years in Bournemouth (1884–87) as reported by William Sharp (Literary Geography (1904), 20–23).*
*published 1884*

Margaret Stuart (Mrs. Calderwood), Alexander Fergusson (ed.), *Letters and Journals of Mrs. Calderwood of Polton, from England, Holland and the Low Countries in 1756*, (1884)
*sold at auction 1914, untraced; Skerryvore bookplate; much local colour in chapters 21–3 of Catriona comes from here*
*published 1885*

Horace Beng Dobell, *The Medical Aspects of Bournemouth and its Surroundings* (1885)

Henry Bruce and David Chalmers, *Mr Gladstone and the Paper Duties, by Two Midlothian Paper-Makers* (1885)
untraced, sold at auction 1914; possibly left behind at Skerryvore by Thomas Stevenson

Clifford was a fellow member of the Savile Club, first met through Sidney Colvin in late August 1873 (see the continuation of 'Memoirs of Himself' dictated in Samoa, Vailima Edition, 26 (1926), 235-236)

John S. Keltie, *A History of the Scottish Highlands, Highland Clans and Highland Regiments* (1885)

*sold at auction 1914, untraced; Skerryvore bookplate; for the planned Wellington biography*

Leslie Stephen, *Dictionary of National Biography* (1885–), earliest volumes

Lady Adelaide Cadogan, *Illustrated Games of Patience* (1886)
Skerryvore bookplate

RLS’s Skerryvore visiting card as bookplate
*published/read 1886*

William Youatt, *The Dog* (1886)
*veterinary treatise*

Charles Warren Stoddard, *Summer Cruising in the South Seas* (1881)
  Skerryvore bookplate; originally published in 1873, the same year as the American edition (with the title South-sea Idyls), which Stevenson also possessed (probably a gift from the author in San Francisco in 1880). Stevenson was re-
Stevenson’s Bournemouth

I. Skerryvore in Stevenson’s day

Robert Louis Stevenson’s famous house of Skerryvore, where he lived from April 1885 to August 1887, was at 61 Alum Chine Road in Westbourne, only just recently included in Bournemouth, and about a half hour’s walk NW of the centre. Travelling by train from London Waterloo you went to Bournemouth station, 4 km away at the eastern end of town (the nearer Branksome station was built later). The house, destroyed by a stray World War II bomb, is now reduced to low walls tracing the outlines of the house plan, set amid a public park.

Fig. 1. Skerryvore today: foundations of drawing room with bay

But what was it like in Stevenson’s day?

Michael Stead of Bournemouth Libraries has found plans from 1880 made for the previous owner Captain Best when the house was named Sea View. The following plans (Fig. 2) have South (and the garden) at the top, North (and the road) at the bottom:
Fig. 2. Skerryvore, 1880 additions, ground floor plan
(Bournemouth Library)
The additions planned in November 1880 (so probably carried out in 1881) are coloured red: they consisted of a large kitchen area (with floors above) and an adjoining 'veranda porch' with W.C. (Fig. 3) and then a separate stable block and coach house between the house and the road (Fig. 2).
The path on the left of Fig. 2 leading to the 'yard' behind the kitchen was the one to which Henry James (mistaken for an expected carpet dealer) was directed to by the maid Valentine Roch on his first visit in April 1885 (LS: 104).

Plans from 1900 (Fig. 4) show further additions made at that date: 1. extensive additions the North side of the house incorporating the former stable block and adding a separate small bicycle house, and an additional bay window to the South side. The plans also show that a small infill extension has been built at some time in the angle made by the outside walls just South of the veranda porch.

The bay window is shown in the South elevation 'New Bay Facing Garden':
Photographs and drawings with the additional bay therefore date from after 1900:

1. Entrance

In the 1880 plan (Fig. 7) the porch was open but this could have been altered during construction or later.
Adelaide Boodle describes the first visit to the house with her mother: there was something wrong with the bell ‘and in that hospitable porch, all prepared with seats, we had to wait for several minutes and finally to pull a second time’ (Boodle, 6).

William Archer in 1887 refers to

“the little porch veranda enclosed with wire netting, the model in Skerryvore granite of Skerryvore light, designed to serve as a lamp to this vestibule [...] Behind it is a panelled wall, the divisions of which are in time to be filled up with mural paintings by the artists who are among the most frequent guests at Skerryvore. Some of the panels are already occupied — two at least by the pleasant landscape-work of Mr H. R. Bloomer, the American painter, one of Mr Stevenson’s oldest friends [...].

*Archer, qu. Terry, 106*

(So Bloomer, then living in Chelsea (L5: 356), must have made an otherwise unrecorded visit to Bournemouth.) Archer says that the panelled wall with painted panels was ‘behind it’—this could mean behind the model lighthouse, but that would mean the panels would be exposed to the elements, or more probably behind the porch veranda, i.e. behind the front door and in the hall or vestibule with the staircase.

A photograph taken after Stevenson’s time (Fig. 8) shows the porch closed by a wooden screen, the upper half apparently glazed.
Fig. 8. Entrance porch post-1880 with corner infill to the right

Perhaps the squares in the upper porch façade, if they existed in Stevenson’s time, were filled by Archer’s wire netting in 1885. The netting was presumably to keep out birds—but this would only work if there was a door that could be closed and which must open and hidden in the photograph.

2. Dining room

The two rooms at the garden (south) side of the original house were the dining room, on the left in the two plans above (Fig. 2 and 4); and on the right a drawing room (with a bay window facing the garden).

The dining room had a fireplace on the North side (Fig. 4). The decor of the room in 1887 is described by Stevenson’s friend Wiliam Archer, a frequent guest at Skerryvore:

“Over the fireplace is an engraving of Turner’s ‘Bell Rock Lighthouse’, built by Stevenson’s grandfather. Another wall is adorned by two of Piranesi’s great Roman etchings, between which hangs the conventional portrait of Shelley (a gift from his son, Sir Percy Shelley […]), with under it a portrait of Mary Wolstonecraft.

Archer, qu. Terry, 106
Which room was the blue room?

Archer goes on to mention ‘the Venetian mirror, presented to the poet by that “Prince of Men, Henry James”’ and he quotes the poem by Stevenson which refers to it as opposite the fireplace in the ‘blue room’. This leads us to a problem because Archer says specifically that the mirror and other items of decor so far mentioned are ‘in the “blue room”[…]’. It is an ordinary English dining-room’ (qu. Terry, 106). However if we compare details of two of Sargent’s portraits of Stevenson:

From the discussion of these two portraits below, it is clear that A., which from the view through to the entrance-hall can
only be the dining room, has walls painted pompeian red, while B., which from the furnishing can only be the drawing room, has walls painted cornflower blue. Hence it is the drawing room that must have been called the ‘blue room’ while the dining room was probably called the ‘red room’.

Since Stevenson places the Venetian mirror in the ‘blue room’ in his poem, that is definitely where it was in 1886, i.e. in the drawing room. Archer has not only confused the colour scheme of the two rooms but has placed in the dining room a mirror that was certainly in the drawing room in February and March 1886 (see below and L5: 210, 222–3). It is of course possible that it was moved to the dining room later, but from practical knowledge of how people tend not to change room decor, one should assume that it stayed in the drawing room and that Archer is confusing the two rooms.

And the most likely source of his confusion is the fact that there was another and distinctly different mirror in the dining room. This was a convex mirror, possibly also opposite the fire, but not James’s present, as Stevenson says in a letter of late July 1885, ‘We have bought a convex mirror for the dining room’ (L5: 122). This confusion of mirrors, plus the poem that locates James’s mirror in the blue room is perhaps the origin of the mix-up. If so, Archer’s description of other items in the dining room is going to be reliable.

Archer continues that below the mirror (i.e. the convex mirror, possibly on the wall opposite the fireplace) were ‘buccaneering weapons […] , some of which were presented to Mr Stevenson as having belonged to Pew and Long John Silver’. One of these, perhaps the first, was ‘Long John Silver’s’ pistol given to Stevenson by Henley’s brother Joe as a birthday present in November 1884 (L5: 31). Then there were photographs of Sidney Colvin and Sir Henry Taylor; an etching by Stevenson’s friend Will Low; a watercolour of the nearby New Forest by Henley’s brother Anthony; and some prized blue china. In his later description of the drawing room (see ‘2. Drawing room’ below), Archer specifically refers back to the photo of Colvin in the dining room.

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In which room was the photo taken of Stevenson looking up from writing?

The well-known writing portrait photograph of 1885 was taken in front of a bay window, of which there were three in Stevenson’s day: on the east wall of the dining room, on the south wall of the drawing room, and on the same wall of the floor above, no doubt a master bedroom. (The south bay window of the dining room shown in the 1900 plans did not exist in Stevenson’s day). But which room was it? if we compare the proportions of the lower part of the central window in the photograph (Fig. 13)
Fig. 13. Stevenson, Skerryvore 1885

with the South elevation drawing from 1900 (Fig. 14).
it is clear that it is not the bedroom (A), and since the south bay of the dining room (C) did not exist, it is either the drawing room (B) or the east bay of the dining room, for which no elevation has yet been found. We can exclude the drawing room windows (B) as decidedly narrower than those of the photograph, which leaves the east dining room bay. It is possible that the later south bay (C) was modelled on this, and here the proportions are certainly closer than to the narrower drawing room windows. In addition, Stevenson is not writing at a work desk but what could well be a dining room table. William Archer tells us that the dining room had Sheriton furniture taken over from the previous owner, so this could possibly be a Sheriton dining table such as the following:

![Fig. 15. Sheriton dining table (later 18th cent.)](image)

It seems, therefore, that the photo was taken in the dining room with the east bay window in the background.

In which room did Stevenson do his writing?

Unfortunately, from the size of the paper, Stevenson in the famous photo must be writing a letter and not *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. However we know that he wrote most of this and other works in bed or anyway in his bedroom: his stepson said that ‘came down to luncheon’ after writing all morning, and the family occasionally saw him ‘sitting up in bed, writing, writing, writing, with the counterpane littered with his sheets’ (Osbourne, 62, 66). Of all the rooms in the house his bedroom was most probably the room above the drawing room, with its bay window and a glimpse of the sea.

If we visit the site of Skerryvore today, the stones might at first seem uneloquent, but we need to use a little imagination, stand in the space behind the south-west bay window where the drawing room was (easy to identify), and think hard that it was in the bedroom above this that Stevenson wrote two masterpieces both published in 1886, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Kidnapped*.

Where was Sargent’s walking portrait painted?

One of Singer Sargent’s famous paintings of Stevenson at Skerryvore shows him and Fanny at the other end of the dining room.
Fig. 16. John Singer Sargent, ‘Robert Louis Stevenson and his Wife’ (1885); Fanny is sitting in ‘Henry James’s Chair’ that had belonged to Stevenson’s grandfather (now in the RLS Museum, St Helena) (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art)

If we compare this with the relevant part of the 1900 plans (Fig. 17, here turned with part of the dining room at the bottom), we can see that what is visible through the door at the back of Sargent’s picture is the hallway with the staircase and, at the far end, the half-glazed door to the entrance porch.

Fig. 17. Skerryvore, part of dining room, hallway with stairs and door to veranda porch

3. Drawing room
It was in the drawing room that there were the unconventional wickerwork armchairs (and an unusual rug) and a large oaken cabinet as shown in the Sargent seated portrait (Fig. 18).

Fig. 18. John Singer Sargent, ‘Robert Louis Stevenson’ (1887)
(Taft Museum of Art)

Fanny describes ‘a side wall’ (possibly the west wall) of the drawing room in a letter of February 1886 accompanied by a sketch:

Fig. 19. ‘side wall’ of the drawing room, Feb 1886

“A magic mirror has come to us which seems to reflect not only our own plain faces but the kindly one of a friend entwined in the midst of all sorts of pleasant memories. […] The above, as you will readily perceive, is the present aspect of the side wall of our drawing room, correctly and carefully drawn. Miss Taylor’s beautiful work, Mr Lemon’s adorable picture of horses, the magic mirror, Sargent’s picture of Louis, and the copy of Chatterton.


(Clearly Fanny had tried unsuccessfully to sketch the picture of Chatterton and then blacked it out.)
Stevenson’s wrote James a poem, to thank him for the gift and sent it in a letter of 7 March 1886 (L5: 222-3). It includes the lines

“To the sparkling fire I face
In the blue room at Skerryvore
‘The Mirror Speaks’, Underwoods

This shows that there must have been a fireplace in the drawing room, not shown on the plans above. If the mirror was on the west wall, the the fireplace was on the east.

Archer’s 1887 description of the drawing room.

In 1887 William Archer describes other items of decor (items placed in bold here for the reader’s convenience):

It is not encumbered with superfluous furniture […] Halfway along one side of the room runs a low divan formed of a series of oak boxes covered with yellow silk cushions. Lounging chairs, mainly of light wickerwork, are scattered about, and a large oaken cabinet stands beside he door. It is surmounted by a beautiful group in plaster executed as an illustration to one of Victor Hugo’s poems by the French sculptor Rodin […]. This group is flanked by a couple of grinning Burmese gods; and, perhaps to counteract the influences of these uncanny deities, a Catholic devotional image of ancient date stands in an opposite corner. Over the cabinet, again, hangs a beautiful ‘Landscape with Horses’ by Mr Arthur Lemon, with a photograph of the late Prof. Fleeming Jenkin to the right of it and one of Mr W. E. Henley to the left, both being, like the photograph of Mr Colvin in the dining-room, the work of a private friend. From another wall, Mr John E. Sargent’s [sic, John Singer Sargent] half-grotesque yet speaking portrait of Mr Stevenson himself looks out at us livingly. It represents him pacing noiselessly up and down this very room [actually the dining room, see above] […]. Underneath this quaint little picture hangs a copy by Miss Una Taylor […] of what purports to be an authentic portrait of Chatterton, with hard by it an imposing piece of flower-embroidery, framed and glazed, by the same accomplished lady. Over the divan some curious little wood-cuts […] are pinned to the wall. They illustrate a certain moral ballad of a converted pirate, and are the work of Mr Stevenson himself […].

(Terry, pp. 107–8)
The Sargent portrait over Una Taylor’s picture of Chatterton and her flower embroidery nearby agree with Fanny’s description from February 1886, but Arthur Lemon’s landscape with horses has been moved over the cabinet on another wall. Presumably the Venetian mirror was also there in 1887 and on the same wall facing the fire.
The Arthur Lemon painting of horses is now at the RLS Museum at St. Helena, California.

Fanny ‘was nearly always to be found after luncheon’ in the Blue Room (Boodle, 13).

If any reader knows of illustrations and present whereabouts of any of the items from the dining or drawing room, please add a comment about it and the information with acknowledgements will be added to the posting.

4. Stable

Another 1880-1 addition was the stable block and yard. The stable roof had a picturesque feature: what looks like a louvered belfry topped by a conical ‘cap’ and a weather vane. Adelaide Boodle tells us that the stables were not used (p. 1), so the Stevensons were not ‘carriage folk’. The stable yard was ‘a sheltered little place, paved with red brick’ (p. 15), later dedicated to Fanny’s cultivation of tomatoes ‘at that date very little cultivated in England’ (p. 115).

![Fig. 23. Skerryvore, 1880 additions, stable block (Bournemouth Library)](image)

The stable block can be seen in a photograph dated to 1898 (Fig. 24, from O’Hagan) with behind it a three-storey block built after Stevenson’s time, but not yet linked to the original house as in the plans of 1900 (Fig. 4).

![Fig. 24. Skerryvore 1898](image)

II. Stevenson’s Bournemouth

This section deals with the other houses where Stevenson lived in Bournemouth and the houses of his Bournemouth friends (the people described by Andrew O’Hagan in his LRB article).
1. Stevenson’s Bournemouth residences

12–19 July 1884: the Highcliffe Mansions Hotel, a large new modern hotel on the cliff top opened in 1872; now the Bournemouth Highcliff Marriott Hotel, 105 St Michael’s Road.

19 July to September 1884: Sunnington Rise, a boarding house on West Cliff Gardens.

Sept–Nov 1884: Wensleydale, ‘one of a tall row of lodging-houses on the West Cliff of Bournemouth [West Cliff Gardens], overlooking the sands below, and with a glorious sparkling view of the Needles and the Isle of Wight’ (Osbourne, 51). The exact location of these two boarding houses has not been ascertained, but there’s a good chance that the houses still exist as there are numerous Victorian houses along the street.

In these first residences near the centre of Bournemouth Stevenson was busy writing plays in collaboration with Henley.

November 1884 to early April 1885: Bonallie Tower, a recently built furnished house on Burton Road in Branksome Park, an area of scattered houses among pine trees just west of Bournemouth; the house (later renamed ‘Blythwood’) was demolished in the 1970s and the site of Bonallie Tower will be under the garages of what is now ‘Lissenden’, 1 Burton Road. No photographs seem to have survived, though Lawrence Popplewell says ‘The surviving property next door [at No. 3] was probably almost identical (without the tower) and probably by the same builder’ (Dorset Echo). (Fig. 25, drawn before the information from Popplewell, shows the house on the correct side of the street but too far south: it was the second house from the north end of the street.) Here he wrote ‘Markheim’, ‘A Humble Remonstrance’ and ‘On Style in Literature’, finished writing ‘The Dynamiter’ in collaboration with Fanny and continued writing plays with Henley.

Early April 1885 to 20 August 1887: Sea View, renamed Skerryvore, bought by Thomas Stevenson as a wedding gift for Fanny. Here he wrote his Memoir of Fleeming Jenkin, Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, ‘The Misadventures of John Nicholson’, ‘Olalla’, Kidnapped, and published A Child’s Garden of Verses, The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables, Underwoods and Memories and Portraits. These were, as O’Hagan says, ‘the best years of his writing life’.

2. A network of friends

Henry James arrived in Bournemouth on 18 April 1885 to be near his sick sister and stayed at St Albans Cliff boarding house in South Cliff Road (where now the BIC conference centre is; the exact location of the house on maps of the period has not been found). He first came to call at the end of April and then came ‘every evening after dinner’ (L5: 104), walking there from the centre of town just under half an hour away. When he left Bournemouth at the end of June after ten weeks of frequent visits, both Louis and Fanny felt his absence keenly (L5: 120).

Sir Henry and Lady Taylor with their two daughters Ida and Una lived near the centre of town at ‘The Roost’, a villa in Hinton Road (since demolished and the exact location not yet ascertained). In May 1885 they began a close friendship with the Stevensons, following an introduction by Wilfred Meynell, who Stevenson knew through the Savile Club (L5: 109). The Taylors were also friends of the Shelleys.

Sir Percy Shelley and his wife lived at the grand mansion of Boscombe Place, 6 km away, halfway between Bournemouth and Christchurch, 2.5 km on the eastern side of the centre of Bournemouth. No doubt they sent their carriage to pick up the Stevensons when they were to visit.

Adelaide Boodle, 26 years old, lived with her parents on the Poole Road in a house called Lostock on the corner of the
semicircular Seamoor Road (in Fig. 20 it is placed on the western corner, but it could have been on the eastern corner.) She heard the news that a writer called Stevenson (and thought it must be the Stevenson who had written An Inland Voyage and 'The Treasure of Franchard'), now living in Bonallie Tower, was about to move to a house even closer to hers. She persuaded her mother to join her on a formal call to the new house in the spring of 1884, and found the Stevensons still unpacking after moving in. As she was interested in writing some time later she plucked up the courage to ask if it would be possible to have lessons. Fanny at first did this to save her husband the strain, but then Louis took over. An interesting record of Stevenson's teachings is given in her later memoir R.L.S. and his Sine Qua Non. As she walked down Middle Road (now Robert Louis Stevenson Avenue) she would see Skerryvore ahead of her at the end of the street.

In addition to local friends, the Stevensons had many visits from family and London friends, sometimes being unable to accommodate them all at Skerryvore: Stevenson's parents, cousin Bob Stevenson and his wife, Bob's sister Katherine De Mattos and children, W. E. Henley, Charles Baxter, Sidney Colvin, Mrs Fleeming Jenkin, 'Coggie' Ferrier (sister of his close friend James Walter Ferrier who died tragically young), John Singer Sargent, James Sully, William Archer, and others (Fanny Stevenson, xvi–xvii; Balfour II, 7-9).

After his happy years in Hyères, in Bournemouth Stevenson was often seriously ill and confined to the house, but he produced masterpieces, had the enthusiasm to study and write music, and the ‘evenings of interesting, clever, and brilliant talk were amongst the pleasantest experiences’ of his life (Fanny Stevenson, xvii). Though Skerryvore marked the end of his Bohemian years and ‘he never spoke about it with regret’ (Osbourne, 59), it was, perhaps, ‘the time of his life’.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND NOTES

Thanks to Michael Stead of Bournemouth Libraries who found the 1880 Skerryvore plans and then shared them with me. Thanks also to Roger Swearingen for information on items in the RLS Museum, St Helena, California. Thanks to Mafalda Cippolone for the images of Stevenson's Rodin sculpture, of a convex mirror and of a landscape with horses by Arthur Lemon; as Roger Swearingen says, the actual painting and perhaps the mirror should now be in the RLS Museum, St Helena. The convex mirror in the RLS Museum, Vailima, is probably not Stevenson's but is placed there to reproduce the furnishing in Stevenson's time. Thanks to Neil Macara Brown for indicating another bookseller offering the 1900 plans for sale.

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Stevenson and Bourget: an enigma

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Why was RLS so enthusiastic about Sensations d'Italie?
Paul Bourget

Paul Bourget (1852–1935), French critic, essayist, novelist and poet, much appreciated in his own day, is not now widely known even in France. The publisher’s presentation of an introductory volume Avez-vous lu Paul Bourget? (2007) begins by saying that he is now ‘little known, even scorned’ (‘méconnu, voire méprisé’). Quite a downfall for a writer who was nominated for the Nobel prize no fewer than four times.

Stevenson’s reaction to Sensations d’Italie

Bourget’s friend Henry James sent Stevenson a copy of Sensations d’Italie (1891), which he later described to Stevenson as ‘one of the most exquisite things of our time’ (Letters of Henry James, I, p. 188). Stevenson was enthusiastic—sent off immediately for all Bourget’s essays and at the same time wrote ‘I have gone crazy over Bourget’s Sensations d’Italie (L7, 197, 205) and told James ‘I am delighted beyond expression by Bourget’s book; he has phrases which effect me almost like Montaigne’ and the following day told him, ‘I have just been breakfasting at Baiae and Brindisi, and this charm of Bourget hag-rides me. […] I have read no new book for years that gave me the same literary thrill as him Sensations
Not only this, but he looked forward to meeting Bourget on a planned trip to Europe and dedicated Across the Plains to him, the only one of his volumes not dedicated to a personal friend or family member.

You cannot step twice into the same book

Some years ago, inspired by such an impressive recommendation, I bought a second-hand copy of Sensations d'Italie, expecting it to be a cross between Montaigne and Proust and promising myself an exquisite reading experience. Unfortunately, what struck me then were the mentions of trains and inns and long appreciations of paintings. It did not resemble Stevenson's own travel writing: there are no descriptions of his feelings or of the people he meets, no detached irony.

Why was Stevenson so enthusiastic? The best way to answer this question would be to look at his copy of the book with his scorings and approving underlinings. It is in the Fales Library of New York University on Washington Square in Manhattan—which unfortunately is closed because of the present pandemic emergency, and probably will be closed after that as closure for renovation was planned from May to September 2020.

Stevenson’s copy being unavailable, I decided to re-read the copy I had with a fresh eye, suppressing the expectations of the previous occasion.

Amazingly, this time I read a different book. I noticed the essayistic passages about art and artistry, the ethical, psychological and aesthetic passages and the embedded narratives with striking and memorable details. The uncomfortable trains and inns were still there, but this time they faded into the background.

What Stevenson may have appreciated

We cannot be certain about what Stevenson liked about Sensations d'Italie but we can make an educated guess, especially concerning aspects that might have found an echo in his own thinking. When Stevenson’s copy of Sensations d'Italie becomes available again, it will be interesting to see which of the following passages are marked. (Quotations are from the 1892 English translation, Impressions of Italy, with page references followed by page references of Sensations d'Italie.)

Affinities with Montaigne

One clue from Stevenson’s letters on the book is his praise for ‘phrases which effect me almost like Montaigne’. I think perhaps he may be thinking here of Montaigne's striking metaphors (such as that of the give and take of conversation being like playing tennis). Here is what seems a Montaigne-like metaphor:

In every work of art, whether it be a picture or a book, a statue or a piece of music, there is a hidden principle of life, that is to say, a secret virtuality unsuspected by the creator of the work. Have you ever seen a ropemaker at his work, walking backward without looking where he is going ? We are all, great and small, working like him, half consciously, half blindly, and above all we do not know what purpose our work will serve when it is finished. (p. 126; SdI, pp. 129–30)

Affinities with Stevenson’s style:

1. Chapter 17 begins realistically with the ‘local train which moves almost like a steam tramway’ across ‘the vast plain of Apulia’ but then it changes register to the imaginative picturesque as Bourget’s destination reminds him of the story of how Manfred, last of the Hohenstaufen dynasty of Sicily, following defeat by Charles of Anjou and the revolt of his barons, sought refuge in Lucera ‘among his father’s Saracens’.

The story, too long to quote in full here, reminds me of Stevenson’s praise of ‘the poetry of circumstance’, ‘the fitness in events and places’, and ‘fit and striking incident’, which stamps the story home like an illustration’ (in ‘A Gossip on Romance’). It has elements that are similar to the assassination of Archbishop Sharp that had long fascinated Stevenson and that he recounts in ‘The History of Fife’. In short, I hereby predict that when the volume in the Fales Library can be consulted again, the pages containing the story of Manfred’s flight (SdI, pp. 179–82) will be approvingly marked in Stevenson’s hand.
Bourget says that the story is recorded by a chronicler ‘with a rare mixture of strength and simplicity’ (reminding me of Stevenson’s attraction to the prose of the Covenanters), it is a kind of passage that is ‘short, but which remain in the memory’ (‘si courtes mais qui restent dans l’esprit’), like the ‘striking incident’ praised by Stevenson in ‘A Gossip on Romance’. Bourget then quotes the words of the chronicler:

“After a bivouac overnight Manfred arrived at the walls of Lucera where ‘he was obliged to make himself known — an incident so romantic as to seem taken from a romance [trait si romanesque qu’il en semble romantique] — by his beautiful fair hair.’ The Moors had orders not to admit him, but said he could get round the order by entering through the sewer. Manfred prepared to do this and then (in the words of the chronicler) ‘This humiliation of the son of their beloved emperor awakened their remorse. They broke down the gates and Manfred entered in triumph.’

2. The only clue from his letters as to what part of Bourget’s book he might have found fascinating is the comment, ‘I have just been breakfasting at Baiae and Brindisi, and this charm of Bourget hag-rides me’. It should be mentioned, however, that Bourget does not go near Baiae or Naples, so Stevenson has just introduced that name for the alliteration to suggest a large part of southern Italy. Brindisi, however, is there and is associated with a haunting impression:

“by having heard, by hearing still, the clanking of the chains worn by the galley-slaves resounding through the castle on the seashore. I have seen many prisons and many abodes of misery, […] but nothing has pierced my heart like the sound of those chains, forever and forever accompanying my steps, as I walked through the courts and the halls of the fortress. […] The noise made by each one, walking with his heavy step, is slight; but all these slight sounds of iron clanking against iron unite together in a sort of metallic roar, making the whole fortress vibrate. It is indistinct, mysterious, sinister’ (pp. 217–18; SdI, p. 222–3)

This reminds me of the haunting sound of the waves in Treasure Island and in other texts by Stevenson.

3. Perhaps too Stevenson appreciated impressionistic descriptions that reminded him of his writing in the 1870s, such as:

Little girls […] whisper and laugh together and shake their pretty heads, bright patches on the dark background of the church [taches clairs sur le fond obscur de l’église]. (p. 74; SdI, 75)

**Ethical concerns**

Stevenson admired those who did what they thought was right and bravely faced the consequences, like the Covenanters and Yoshida-Torajiri, with his ‘stubborn superiority to defeat’, and Bourget provides us with another example of such a type. In ch. 21 he visits the castle of duke Sigismondo Castromediano: a ‘deserted manor’ where everything shows a strange abandonment, yet inhabited by the eighty-year old Duke who has suffered all the tortures of a proscription as cruel as that of the companions of the Stuart conspirator. He threw himself, heart and soul, into the movement against the Bourbons of Naples, after the events of 1848. Arrested and condemned to death, his sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life in the galleys, and, refusing to sue for pardon, he was for eleven years a galley-slave. (p. 241; SdI, p. 246)

Eventually he escaped to England and returned at the time of Garibaldi. The castle ‘he has left untouched whether from a stoical indifference in regard to the comforts of life, acquired in misfortune, or from pride in his sufferings’ (p. 242; SdI, p. 247).

**Psychological concerns**

1. From about 1880 Stevenson was increasingly interested in how we can understand the world-view of people from very different cultural traditions, and we find this too in Bourget:

[the myths of the ancients:] the human feeling which underlies their religious ideal makes it possible for us to have communion with them, in spite of the differences of creeds and customs. (p. 92; SdI, p. 95)

2. In two essays written in 1887 ‘Pastoral’ and ‘The Manse’, Stevenson speculates on inherited primitive memories and how his ancestors are a part of him and he found some similar thoughts in Bourget:

the innumerable threads which heredity inextricably weaves into our being, so that in the sincere Christians of to-day their pagan ancestors, and other ancestors of still darker beliefs, live again (p. 273; SdI, p. 279).

3. The following passage has various echoes in Stevenson’s idea of constant variation in identity;

[T]he varying complexity of the / [la complexité changeante du moi] (pp. 56–7; SdI, p. 58)

4. In Bourget, Stevenson would have found ideas that were close to his own about the moral nature of the artist, about
talent has always, and without exception, a close resemblance to the moral nature of the individual. I mean a
certain sort of talent; that which consists neither in facility of execution, nor a profound knowledge of effects, but
in a sympathetic interpretation of feeling. The facts of a man’s life are so little significant of his real nature! The
likeness of us which our actions stamp on the imagination of others is so deceptive! Do others, even, ever
thoroughly understand our actions, and if they understand them are they able to unravel their hidden motives?
Do we confide to others the world of thoughts that has stirred within us since we have come into existence: our
innmost feelings, the secret tragedy of our hopes and our sorrows, the pangs of wounded self-love, the
disappointment of ideals overthrown? (p. 45; SdI, p. 46)

Neither the doctrines of these believers nor their prejudices concern us any longer; it is their
— like ours in its
secret needs, but which possessed what we so greatly desire — yes, it is this pious and heroic / which kindles
our fervor from the depths of the impenetrable abyss into which it has returned. (p. 140; SdI, p. 143–4)

Thoughts on art
Finally, Stevenson was interested not only in theories of narrative and in technique and style but also in the philosophy of
art, the nature of artistic genius, common elements of all the arts, the relationship between the artist and the finished
work, the elusive charm of the artistic experience. Bourget too was interested in these aesthetic questions and in his book
Stevenson would have found a writer with whom he could engage in an exchange of ideas.

‘Why, recognizing in every human action something of unconsciousness and of destiny, should we not admit
that the genius of the great artists was greater than they themselves knew?’ (p. 53; SdI, p. 53)

Is the purpose of literature, then — I mean literature which is worthy of the name — different from that of the
other arts — music and architecture, sculpture and painting ? Like them, and in a language of its own, what
does it express but shades of human feeling? (p. 130; SdI, 133–4)

The supreme gift reveals itself in them [artists of genius], as it does wherever it is met with, by the master virtue,
unerring cleanness of vision. (p. 137; SdI, pp. 140–1)

This word [charm], so vague in its signification, […] is the only one which expresses the magic of certain […]
works, shadowy, incomplete, […] but by which one feels one’s self loved as by a person, and which one loves
in the same way. There are two classes of artists who have always shared between them the dominion of the
world: those who depict objects, effacing themselves altogether ; and those whose works serve chiefly as a
pretext to lay bare their own hearts. It is in vain that I admire the former with my whole strength and tell myself
that they will never deceive me, while the sincerity of the others is often doubtful and they may always be
suspected of posing — my sympathies go with the latter, it is with them I like to be. (pp. 117–18; SdI, pp. 120–
1)

a book […] is not entirely the same a hundred years after it has been written. The words are unchanged, but do
they preserve exactly the same signification ? What reader of intellectual tastes does not understand that for a
man of the seventeenth century Racine’s poetry was not what it has become for us ? (p. 127; SdI, p. 130)

RLS on his father

with 4 comments

Father and son relationships are often difficult, and the Stevenson family was no exception. For an idea of how this may
have influenced RLS’s writings we need only think of the overbearing father figures in his fiction.

An interesting document in this regard is the record of his father’s ‘faculties’ (bodily and mental characteristics and
aspects of personality) in the copy of Galton’s Records of Family Faculties in the library at Vailima and now at Yale,
reproduced in Julia Reid’s Robert Louis Stevenson, Science and the Fin de Siècle:

Reid says this is ‘in Fanny’s hand’ but it seems clear to me that it is by Stevenson himself. Take the word ‘dark’:

and compare it with the same word in ‘Memoirs of Himself’ written in 1880:

Here we see the very typical R-shaped ‘k’ and the inverted-v ‘r’. Other typical features (not shown here) are the lead-in line to the ‘f’ rising to a spur and the same in the case of the ‘b’ but the ‘p’ starting with a hook. Having studied Stevenson’s handwriting for some time, my opinion is that this is written by him not Fanny. This only makes the entry more interesting.

An interesting description

The description of ‘Character and temperament’ begins ‘choleric, hasty, frank, shifty’. The adjective ‘hasty’ must be
his gillies trembled and crouched away from him like children before a **hasty** father.

Kidnapped, ch. 23

Hastie is the first name of the white-heared Dr Lanyon in *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and he is quick tempered in his outbursts against Jekyll (‘scientific balderdash’, ‘I am quite done with that person’), a habit of thoughtless and absolute rejection that makes him similar to Jekyll (who uses the same words as Lanyon when he twice repeats that he is ‘done with’ Hyde).

The last adjective is ‘shifty’. I don’t think that can mean ‘dishonest, not to be depended on’ etc. There’s no entry for the word in the Dictionary of the Scots Language but I can imagine it had a special use north of the border from two OED citations:

1859 […] The canny, **shifty**, far-seeing Scot
1888 W. Black [writer of the kaleyard school] In Far Lochaber xxiii She was in many ways a **shifty** and business-like young person

So it could have the positive meaning of ‘well able to shift for oneself’. But context is very important in determining meaning and here the other three adjectives are about the quality of interactions with others rather than such a practical ability, so perhaps we should search further. Some help comes from Stevenson’s use of the word in his essay on John Knox:

> He was vehement in affection, as in doctrine. I will not deny that there may have been, along with his vehemence, **something shifty, and for the moment only**; that, like many men, and many Scotchmen, he saw the world and his own heart, not so much under any very steady, equable light, as by extreme flashes of passion, **true for the moment**, but not true in the long run.

Here ‘something shifty, and for the moment’ is associated with ‘vehemence’ and ‘passion’. It looks like a ‘shifty’ person is someone who changes position and beliefs as his passions dictate. Could this be the authoritarian person who can quickly justify any action?

Some more evidence of Stevenson’s use of the word is found in *Weir of Hermiston* (ch. 2), where the elder Kirstie has only the company of the maidservant

> who, being but a lassie and entirely at her mercy, must submit to the **shifty** weather of the mistress’s moods without complaint, and be willing to take buffets or caresses according to the temper of the hour.

Here ‘shifty’ is associated with the changeable and unpredictable moods of an authoritarian person and this might fit Thomas Stevenson better.

Finally, in the company of the other three adjectives ‘frank’ probably doesn’t mean ‘open, sincere’ but more ‘candid, outspoken, unreserved’.
Dear Madam,

I shall attend to the affair of Signora Santarelli [1] with my best diligence, which is a relative diligence. It is right, however, that I should explain to you how I stand. If the permission be granted in the case of the first series it will be of the grace of Messrs Chatto & Windus; and if in the case of the second, [2] Signora Santarelli will have to divide her thanks between the authors and Messrs Longman. So far as the authors are concerned, it is already done; neither my wife nor I would dream of denying any invalid what may possibly prove to be an entertainment: we have both unfortunately too much reason to sympathise with the sick.

Your Prince [3] has arrived only this morning; and I have only read the introduction: if the rest be at all of a piece with it, you have sent me a great treat.

I believe we have two more common friends than you allude? to [4]: Symonds [5] and Prince Charlie. I, who had mostly stolen? the bright pages of Charlie’s [sic] Stuart’s life, felt it as perhaps a defect in your very interesting “Countess of Albany”, that you failed to bring out the contrast. He was a bright boy; rather he was the bright boy of history, full of dash, full of endurance, full of superficial generosity, of blood more than of mind; he lived through great feats and dangers not unworthily. I should have liked perhaps, if you could not screw out a tear over so base a fall, that you had smiled a little sadly. We may all fall as low before we are done with it, and not have the picturesque and generous to look back upon. And indeed if you introduce your pretty countess to the bottle and keep her for months in Hebridean caves with no other consolation, I suspect she would sink as low.

I am a fault finder in grain [8] and you must not wonder if I seize on the occasion of your letter to pick this quarrel which I have long been musing.

(I am amused at the way in which I have bracketed the living lion and the dead dog, [9] but I meant no disrespect to either, surely not to Symonds), With many thanks Believe me yours truly

Robert Louis Stevenson

[1] Symonds
[2] Signora Santarelli
[3] Prince Charlie
[4] Symonds
[5] Prince Charlie
[6] superficial
[7] Hebridean caves
[8] grain
[9] living lion and the dead dog
NOTES

[1] Signora Sofia Fortini-Santarelli: translator, wife of Cavaliere Emilio Santarelli of Florence who owned relics of the Young Pretender. She translated various works of Herbert Spencer, Ouida, and Symonds’s The Renaissance in Italy. In her letter, Paget describes her as “a lady who has taken to translating for the pastime which her recuperation affords her in a maiming & incurable malady”.

[2] the first series … the second: New Arabian Nights (1882) and More New Arabian Nights: The Dynamiter (1885). The latter was written in collaboration with Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson.


[4] common friends: Paget had mentioned Henry James and John Sargent as friends they had in common.


[6] superficial: after this word Stevenson wrote, then deleted, ‘and not very wise’.

[7] in Hebridean caves: Charles hid out in some remote refuges in Benbecula and South Uist between April and June 1746.

[8] in grain: through and through, by nature (from ‘dyed in grain’, ingrained).

[9] the living lion and the dead dog: i.e. the two “acquaintances” they have in common: J. A. Symonds and Charles Edward Stuart.

Lesley Graham
University of Bordeaux

Reviews of the New Edinburgh Edition of Virginibus Puerisque

1. from Howell Chickering, ‘RLA on RLS’, Amherst, Fall 2019, pp. 48–9:

Virginibus Puerisque has a secure place in the history of the English familiar essay, being much admired and often reprinted. Stevenson took its title from Horace’s Odes III.1 where the poet says he will sing a song “of [or for] maidens and youths.” The first four essays discuss the merits and pitfalls of marriage from the viewpoint of a young man (maidens appear mainly in the title). Most of the essays in the volume were written during Stevenson’s mid to late 20s, though the voice we hear sounds older and wiser. He proposed to his publisher a series of disparate essays on “aesthetic contentment and a hint to the careless to look around them for disregarded pleasure” to be taken in the things of this world. So among the “Other Papers” we find such topics as “Child’s Play,” “An Apology for Idlers” and “Walking Tours.” (The last should only be taken by oneself.) Stevenson’s style is undogmatic, playful, both charming and intellectually penetrating. Herbert Tucker, Amherst classmate of Abrahamson and now an eminent Victorian scholar, recalls that, upon first coming upon the book, courtesy of RLA, he was blown away by “the urbane energy that drives the essays unpredictably forward and sideways.”
Abrahamson’s Introduction and the comprehensive discussion of “Stevenson as Essayist” (an article in its own right), along with the copious notes, make it easy to understand and enjoy reading Stevenson in his historical and literary contexts. The whole book is meticulously edited and sets a very high standard for further volumes in the series. In fact, in 2020 the press will publish Essays II: Familiar Studies of Men and Books, ed. Robert-Louis Abrahamson and Richard Dury.

2. from Alan Sandison, in The Bottle Imp, 25 (2019):

The reaction to the appearance of this volume of the New Edinburgh Edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson has, first and foremost, got to be one of gratitude. As the finer distillation of humane sentiment is remorselessly adulterated with every day that passes, we are given another opportunity to listen to the voice which once gave it such eloquent expression; and if we are to take this volume as a fair example of the promise the new edition holds for us, we (and Stevenson) shall be very well served.

There is a pleasing briskness about the opening formalities, though that briskness might have been modified just a little when it resulted in the heading ‘Note on the Text’ losing its indefinite article; but that is an insignificant matter of personal taste. More important is the entirely adequate (as well as economical) defence of the copy text adopted, thus side-stepping a multitude of editorial entanglements.

What the editors cannot escape is an engagement with the definition of the essay – particularly when the exponent can be respectful of the conventions at one moment and at another apparently quite cavalier. The editors are, of course, well aware of just how Protean this writer can be. Yet, though his readiness to exploit different anatomies for the essay-form might have resulted in a random miscellaneity, it doesn’t: to define the nature of the disentropic glue which gives order to his literary world is therefore to define the character of Stevenson the essayist.

So he can refer to these works sometimes as ‘Familiar’ essays, sometimes as ‘Studies’ and sometimes even as ‘Gossips’; and include within these categories further sub-sets. Thus they can sometimes appear in letters as does ‘Night outside the Wick Mail’ in a letter to his cousin Bob, or as ‘essayistic passage’ as in some of his early letters to Fanny Sitwell. ‘The lack of clear literary status for the essays’, write the present editors, ‘is reflected in the arrangement of the Edinburgh Edition proposed by Colvin and accepted by Stevenson: the essays were placed in a series of volumes entitled Miscellanies’.

Confronted by such a various essayistic universe, the editors sensibly invoke Montaigne (a seminal influence on Stevenson) on whose model ‘a collection of essays can be quite varied and built up by accretion’. Hybridity of the sort they encounter allows for some pragmatic interpretation of the rules, a necessity which they turn to advantage so that while their discussion of the essay and of Stevenson as essayist is appropriately discriminating, it is also not too prescriptive, allowing room for Stevenson’s own mutable, iridescent literary persona. Stevenson well knew that he was breaching certain formal boundaries, that his inclination ‘to enter into dialogue with readers ‘and wander […] into a little piece of controversy’”, was, as the editors say, not consistent with the typical essay. It was, however, consistent with his ethical and aesthetic principles which emerge from a world-view the editors rightly associate with Montaigne’s scepticism and relativism.

Understanding (through) Annotations,
15th International Connotations Symposium
July 28 – August 1, 2019, Eberhard Karls University Tübingen (Germany)

The following notes on papers of interest to EdRLS are taken from the book of abstracts.

David Fishelov, ‘Annotating Satirical Texts and Its Limitations: Exemplified by Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels’. This talk tackles the problem of whether providing close contemporary context can go too far, turning the text into a historical document.

I will argue in my paper that by anchoring certain textual elements of satirical texts in a specific historical context, these annotations take the risk of narrowing the semantic potentialities and the universal appeal of these elements. I will further argue that the effectiveness of satirical texts lies ultimately in their ability to transcend the concrete historical circumstances of their composition. Effective satirical texts constantly move between the topical, the universal and the fantastic, and we should be careful not to pay too much attention to topical references found in detailed annotations, lest we turn an effective satire into a historical document.

Lena Linne and Burkhard Niederhoff, ‘Against Interpretation: Annotating Literature as an Embedded Textual Practice’. This talk argues for restraint in annotation

Notes should facilitate rather than interfere, support rather than interrupt. They should enable readers to find their own interpretations instead of imposing a particular interpretation on them. A violation of these principles can be found in Roger Luckhurst’s note on the scene in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in which Edward Hyde collides with a girl and then calmly walks over her. Luckhurst suggests that this is an allegory of sexual intercourse or, more specifically, of child prostitution. This note is superfluous or even misleading for two reasons. First, any
reader might arrive at the Freudian interpretation him- or herself. Second, the note detracts from an attentive literal reading of the passage which is more interesting and original than the allegorical one. In our talk, we would like to examine three recent editions of Stevenson’s novella by Luckhurst (World’s Classics), Katherine Linehan (Norton) and Richard Dury (Edizioni C. I. Genova) to distinguish necessary and helpful notes from superfluous and misleading ones and to flesh out the principles of an-notation as an embedded textual practice.

[I fear that the Dury edition will provide a good example of excessive annotation. —RD]


I shall consider in particular:

The nature and range of our assumed audience (‘scholars and informed modern readers, including the able undergraduate’), and its consequences for our practice;

The approach taken in our edition to linguistic, literary, political, personal, and cultural contexts;

Our approach to the relation of commentary to interpretation, including the selection of contextualising information, the illustration and explanation of allusions, and the necessity and value of lexical notes.

Manfred Malzahn, ‘“Let’s do it to them before they do it to us”: Self-Annotation in Scottish Literature’. A talk about the function of self-annotation in texts.

I intend to present and discuss samples of footnotes and glossaries to texts by authors such as Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson or Lewis Grassic Gibbon, in which elements of Scots—whether seen as national language or as dialect—are embedded in standard English.

See also Writing Explanatory Notes.

New Edinburgh Essays I published

with one comment


Published October 2018. £80 (and for around £77 from Amazon).

Review by Alan Sandison in *The Bottle Imp* 25 (2019).
Virginibus Puerisque
and Other Papers

edited by
Robert-Louis Abrahamson

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS
2018
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Stevenson's Essays

1. New Order of Composition

Excluding travel books and fragments; items probably by Stevenson asterisked; the column of dates refers to month of composition completion (documented or estimated); dates in brackets refer to year of publication; Es & E refer to Essays I–V in this Edition.

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2. By Magazine of Publication

Excluding chapters of what were later published as 'travel books', magazines ordered by date of first Stevenson essay publication; items probably by Stevenson asterisked. E1–E4 refers to Essays I–V in this Edition.

**Edinburgh University Magazine**
1. Edinburgh Students in 1874 Jan 1871 E4
2. The Philosophy of Umbrellas Feb 1871 E4
3. The Modern Student Considered Generally Feb 1871 E4
4. Debating Societies Mar 1871 E4
5. An Old Scotch Gardener Mar 1871 E3
6. The Philosophy of Nomenclature Apr 1871 E4

**The Portfolio**
1. Roads Dec 1873 E4
2. Notes on the Movements of Young Children Aug 1874 E4
3. On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places Nov 1874 E4
4. An Autumn Effect Apr, May 1875 E4

**Macmillan's Magazine**
1. Ordered South May 1874 E1
2. John Knox and his Relations to Women Sept, Oct 1875 E2

**Fortnightly Review**
1. Lord Lytton's Fables in Song June 1874 E4
2. The Morality of the Profession of Letters Apr 1881 E5

**The Academy**
1. The Ballads and Songs of Scotland Aug 1874 E4
2. Scottish Rivers Aug 1874 E4
3. A Quiet Corner of England Dec 1874 E4
4. The Works of Edgar Allan Poe Jan 1875 E4
5. The Poets and Poetry of Scotland Feb 1876 E4
6. Shakspere's Macbeth Apr 1876 E4
7. Jules Verne's Stories June 1876 E4
8. The Comedy of the Noces Ambrosiana July 1876 E4
9. New Novels Aug 1877 E4
Stevenson as Essayist

by Robert-Louis Abrahamson, Richard Dury, Lesley Graham, Alex Thomson

DEFINITION OF 'ESSAY'

The essay is a short non-fictional prose composition, characterized by an exploratory approach to its subject. In its archetypical form in Montaigne, it follows the line of the writer's thought, built in part out of quotation and reference to earlier authorities, often about some overlooked everyday phenomenon, adopting a confidential relationship with the reader and creating a distinctive personality for the writer. The genre excludes the long narratives of history and autobiography, as well as prose with the practical aim of persuasion or denunciation.

Such archetypal essays are often called 'familiar' or 'personal essays'. In contrast, the 'formal essay' has less focus on the writer and style, personal memories and observations. Nevertheless, the formal essay is still exploratory and is therefore distinct from the more methodologically rigorous treatise or the scientific paper.

Stevenson himself applies the term to a variety of writing, including the short piece in 'Essays, Reflections and Remarks on Human Life', the paper for debate read to a university debating society, the treatise like 'Lay Morals', his planned study of 'The Transformation of the Highlands' (which he thinks will turn into 'a long essay', Letters 31: 136), and a planned work of comparative literary history ('Ramsay, Ferguson and Burns: An Essay'; Letters 2: 363). He even uses the word to describe Kidnapped, meaning an experiment, a sketch: it is 'no work, only an essay' (Letters 3: 314).

Nevertheless, his normal use of 'essay' corresponds to the consensus definition. It is true that he sometimes makes a distinction between 'essays' and 'studies': freely wandering familiar essays and more focussed literary and historical studies. The former type, familiar essays proper, include those collected in Virginibus Puerisque and Memories and Portraits, which he considered re-issuing together in 1887 as 'Familiar Essays 1 and 11' (Letters 5: 436); implicitly distinguishing them from the essays in the 1880 volume Familiar Studies of Men.
STEVENVSON AS ESSAYIST

himself. Here we may see 'originality' as especially associated with a foregrounded style. Among the men of genius, the only one with that kind of originality' is Shakespeare.

Wordsworth is included as an 'essays' because he explores his thoughts and feelings (perhaps also because in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads he refers to the poems in the volume as 'short essays'). His inclusion as a kind of essayist (an 'Essays' sort') also suggests the importance Stevenson gives to the psychological analysis of memories, perceptions and feelings. Like Wordsworth (and later Proust), Stevenson tries to analyse moments of intense perception accompanied by emotion, as we can see even in his early essays such as 'Ordered South'. Stevenson clearly enjoyed the essayist's freedom to follow thoughts in a non-linear way: he says that one essay 'amblers a little' then adds, 'I like rambling, if the country be pleasant' (Letters 21: 47; Sept 1874). The gusto of Hazlitt clearly appealed to him, his essays 'having the air of [ ... ] being "tasted" as they were written' (Letters 21: 227), and we can see in Stevenson's own essays a similar enthusiasm and desire to give an impression of literary creation, that we may compare to the the non-linear exploitation, stimulating spontaneity and imaginative daring of "good talk" celebrated in "Talk and Talkers".

STEVENVSON'S CAREER AS AN ESSAYIST

Stevenson wrote and published over a hundred essays, chiefly between 1874 and 1888, on a wide variety of subjects, places, people and personal memories. He started his career with familiar essays in the tradition of Montaigne and Hazlitt (writers for whom he often expressed admiration). These essays, distinctly playful, confidential and charming, adopted the persona of the leisured aesthete in early pieces for The Portfolio, then that of the ironic, rebellious, perceptive and sympathetic young man commenting on society and the human condition in the Cornhill essays in the second half of the 1870s. The direction of his writing before his success with fiction in the early 1880s was still not clear, and besides the familiar essays, he also produced historical and literary/historical studies (later collected in Familiar Studies of Men and Books, 1882). Later in the decade, while maintaining his distinctive voice, his essays show an increasing interest in ethics, literary theory and an explorations of his early life, these themes often woven together in the same essay. Throughout, like Montaigne, his world-view remained one of scepticism and relativism: seeing all cultures as equal in their imperfections, condemn-
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EARLY PLANS FOR A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

Vernacular Pursuits and Other Papers was the culmination of a project for a first volume of essays that Robert Louis Stevenson had been working on at least since December 1873 when, in Mentone, he had discussed with his friend and advisor Sidney Colvin his scheme to produce a series of essays promoting a 'friendlier and more thoughtful way of looking at one' (Letters 21: 32). His venue for these essays was The Portfolio, a prestigious art-oriented monthly, whose owner and publisher, Richmond Seeley, was a friend of Colvin. Stevenson contributed three essays to The Portfolio within a year (Roads, December 1873; 'Notes on the Movements of Young Children', August 1874; On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places, November 1874) but refused Seeley's offer to produce monthly essays, insisting that he own pace and take my Essays as they come' (Letters 21: 32; 15 July 1874).

When in August 1874 Seeley asked Stevenson to 'propose' something, Stevenson consulted with Colvin about whether it would be appropriate to tell Seeley about his plan for a 'little budget of little papers' on the topic of 'aesthetic sentiment' and a hint to the careless to look around them for disregarded pleasures [...]. call it ethical or aesthetic as you will. It would take the form of twelve or twenty such Essays, some of them purely ethical and expository, put together in a little book with narrow print in each page, antique, vine leaves about, and the following title: XII (or XX) ESSAYS ON THE ENJOYMENT OF THE WORLD: BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON. Although he was clear about the title and design of the book, he refused to commit himself more fully to its content, which would make itself known, as each piece 'slowly came forth, as an unity in its own small way' (Letters 21: 43).

Although the theme of enjoying the world continued to be a strong presence in his essays over the following years, Stevenson abandoned the 'aesthetic' in favour of the 'ethical' focus. He was able to do this largely because, after his fourth Portfolio essay, 'An Autumn Effect' (April 1875), he left The Portfolio and found a new (and better...
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paid) home at the Cornhill Magazine, where he did not feel, as he had at The Portfolio, ‘bound to drag in a tag about Art every time to make it suitable’ (Letters 3: 32).

Through Colvin’s good offices Stevenson had already contributed a literary study to the Cornhill (Victor Hugo’s Romances, August 1874), but it was not until almost two years later that he published there ‘Forest Notes’ (May 1876), after which he sent the magazine a fairly regular stream of essays until 1881. ‘Forest Notes’ was a more discursive essay than the ones he had been writing for The Portfolio, but it still continued the focus on art, with its description of the artist’s colony in Fontainebleau and its recreation in words (as in ‘An Autumn Effect’) of landscapes and other painterly subjects. This essay, like the Portfolio essays, spoke about the enjoyment of the world, but also gave hints of a new direction in its celebration of breaking free from social conditioning.

Stevenson’s next Cornhill essay (‘Walking Tours’, June 1876), although ostensibly describing walks through paintable landscapes, abandoned almost entirely the Portfolio themes, and instead of descriptions of scenery, it picked up the new direction from ‘Forest Notes’ and promoted the joy of escaping from social pressures in order to wander at one’s own will. The balance had swung from ‘aesthetic’ to ‘ethical’, with the essay’s defiant (not to say outrageous) challenge to Cornhill readers to join the author in the ‘social heresy’ that comes upon one sitting ‘happy thinking’ after a tiring day walking alone, which leads one

back into that kingdom of light imaginations, which seems so vain in the eyes of Philistines perspiring after wealth, and so momentous to those who are stricken with the disproportions of the world, and, in the face of the gigantic stars, cannot stop to split differences between two degrees of the infinitely small, such as a tobacco pipe or the Roman Empire, a million of money or a fiddle-stick’s end. (104)

Stevenson had found a new voice, as the playful bohemian rebel against respectability, attaining inner peace not through adhering to comfortable Victorian values, but by enjoying the moment for its own sake. The new voice brought a new style, with startling diction (Philistines ‘perspiring’ after wealth) and unexpected juxtapositions (a tobacco pipe on the same scale as the Roman Empire, a million pounds on the same scale as a fiddle-stick’s end).
Appendices

1. Life at Twenty-Five

This list is from a transcript of an untraced MS made by Graham Balfour (NLS MS 3900, Noteboook 1875, L. 13). *Virginibus Puereisque and Other Papers*, as its Dedication tells us, started as a planned volume to be called *Life at Twenty-Five*, and this list gives an idea of what was intended. It probably dates between late autumn 1876 when 'Falling in Love' was written (items IV, XI and 'Walking Tours' were all written before them) and 1 March 1877 when Leslie Stephen advised Stevenson not to prepare a book of essays (and certainly before August 1877 when 'Crabbed Age and Youth' was written; for a full discussion, see lxxi-lxxiii). In Balfour's transcription the first item is 'Opinions of Youth and Age. Opinions generally, my opinions', with the first five words deleted. The unnumbered items at the bottom are written in different ink so may have been added later by Balfour from another list.

Life at Twenty Five

'Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself'

I. Opinions generally, my opinions
II. Way of life. Why to be chosen
III. Money
IV. An Apology for Idlers
V. Per contra. The Artistic Character
VI. Society
VII. Bohemianism
VIII. Friends
IX. Men and Women
X. Falling in Love
XI. Virginibus Puereisque
XII. Old Age and death

Tobacco
Walking Tours
Explanatory Notes

Headnotes and Explanatory Notes

The following notes attempt to identify Stevenson's sources, quotations, proverbial phrases and references to historical events and personages, and also explain obscure or specialist language. Unidentified quotations and allusions are noted, and information on these from readers will be welcomed. The headnote to each essay outlines the history of composition, publication and reception. Reference is by page and line number; line numbering includes essay titles and subtitles.

The headnotes tell the story of genesis, composition and first publication of the individual essays, and where possible give an idea of their reception and afterlife. For a list of abbreviations of frequently cited works, see xv–xvii in this volume. Place of publication of cited works is London unless otherwise stated. Biblical references are to the Authorized Version, and references to plays by Shakespeare are to The Norton Shakespeare, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York and London, 1997).

Dedication

Stevenson had been planning a dedication as early as August 1880 when he jestingly sent Colvin a poem he proposed as 'my dedication for my essays; it was occasioned by that delicious article in which the Spectator (in a review of Travels with a Donkey from September 1879) represented me as going about the Cevennes roaring for women, and only disquieted at the monastery because it was not a bawdy house' (Letters 31:196). The poem ('To her; for I must still regard her', titled 'Dedictory Poem', Tustals 32: 95–6) merely taunts 'the Right Reverend the Spectator' and makes no reference to the essays in Virginibus Puerisque. In fact, although the Spectator had reservations about Travels with a Donkey, the magazine had printed complimentary notices of several essays included in Virginibus Puerisque (see headnotes below to 'Virginibus Puerisque', 'Truth of Intercourse' and 'Apology for Idlers'). For a fuller discussion of this poet's dedication, see Stevenson's Collected Poems, ed. Janet Adam Smith, 2nd edn (London, 1974), 540–2.
3.1 **William Ernest Henley** W.E. Henley (1849–1903) played the part of Stevenson’s brother-in-letters throughout the period when most of the essays in *Virginius Puérisque* were written. Henley served as literary agent when Stevenson was in California, negotiating with Kegan Paul & Co. for the publication of *Virginius Puérisque* (see lxxiii–lxxxiv). "The dedication was always destined for you," Stevenson wrote Henley: "I don’t see who else was entitled to it" (Letters 3:146; 21 Dec 1880).

3.2 **building Towers of Babel** in other words, trying to achieve over-ambitious goals that are doomed to failure—possibly with the idea that we fail because we all speak different languages (see Genesis 11:1–9).

3.6–7 **Advocatus ... Diaboli ... Juventutis** (Latin) Devil’s Advocate ... Advocate for Youth. The Devil’s Advocate is the person appointed by the Roman Catholic Church to make the case against the claims of a candidate for canonization.

3.10 **Life at Twenty-Five** See Introduction, lxxii.

3.16–17 **shadows of the prison-house** the constrictions of society, dampening the sparks of joy as a child grows up an allusion to ‘Shades of the prison-house begin to close’ | Upon the growing boy”—William Wordsworth, ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality’ (1807), ll. 67–8.

3.25 **R. L. S.** The Chatto edition and all subsequent editions follow the initials with ‘Davos Platz, 1888’. Stevenson was at Davos from November 1880 to April 1881, during the final stages of preparing *Virginius Puérisque* for publication.

**‘VIRGINIUS PUÉRISQUE’**

‘Virginius Puérisque’ was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, 34 (Aug 1876), 168–76, signed ‘R. L. S.’ The essay was composed in Edinburgh and London in April–May 1876 (NLS VP, Diary Notes, 539), and was in proof in July 1876 (Letters 3:176). The fair-copy manuscript of this essay is held as part of the Robert Louis Stevenson Collection at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin (box 1, folder 9).

‘Virginius Puérisque’ belongs to a period when Stevenson was establishing his claim as a regular contributor to the Cornhill, with ‘Forest Notes’ in May 1876 and ‘Walking Tours’ in June. During this
time he was also working on 'Charles of Orleans', which was published in the Cornhill in December. Though the essay was written a few months before he met his future wife, Fanny Osbourne, in September 1876, Stevenson was clearly already thinking about marriage at this time (see note to 8.17–19).

The essay received more attention than any of Stevenson’s previous pieces. Henley reported that someone commented that ‘the thought ‘Virginibus Puerisque’ was ‘a charming article’; but he couldn’t help laughing at all this sage advice from a boy of eighteen’ (Letters 21:191, 7 Aug 1876, to his mother). The essay was given a notice in the Daily Review (1 Aug), praising the piece as a social essay... wherein the great marriage question is discussed with admirable sense, frankness, and piquancy. The Guardian (1 Aug) called ‘this amusing essay [...] a bright spot among the number of dreary articles on marriage and kindred topics to which we are treated month by month’. The Spectator (7 Aug) expected readers of this ‘humouristic pudding’ to be puzzled over whether the author is writing seriously, or only indulging in a burst of cynical humour.’ The following week, the Spectator devoted an entire article to a serious dispute of the ideas presented by the ‘clever and rather cynical author of the paper, “Virginibus Puerisque”. The Graphic (12 Aug) assumed the author was Leslie Stephen (editor of the Cornhill). Other notices appeared in the Bailie (5 Aug), the Edinburgh Courant (5 Aug) and the Illustrated London News (12 Aug).

‘Virginibus Puerisque’ has occasionally been republished in slim volumes along with its three companion essays (1900, 1903, 1904; Italian translation 1905, French translation 1906), and was included in two collections of Stevenson’s essays, but never since 1947. The Roycrofters 1903 edition of Virgínibus Puerisque: An Essay in Four Parts gives this first part the title ‘As to Marrying’.

All early editions present the title of this essay in quotation marks, acknowledging that the phrase is a quotation from Horace, although the title ‘Es Tríplor’; also taken from Horace, is never presented in this way. Traditionally, references to the essay do not double the quotation marks; so, ‘Virginibus Puerisque’ not “Virginibus Puerisque”. Although the Table of Contents lists ‘Virginibus Puerisque’ as the title of a four-part section of essays, and names the original Cornhill essay simply the first of four parts, the Cornhill essay is always referred to as ‘Virginibus Puerisque’. Such a playful title resists normal bibliographical analysis, and we have adopted the following common practice: t ‘Virginibus Puerisque’ refers
EXPLANATORY NOTES

to the first essay. 2. 'Virginibus Puerisque' refers to the second essay. 3. Any reference to the whole section specifically identifies it as such—for instance, the four-part section "Virginibus Puerisque".

5.1 'Virginibus Puerisque' 'Virginibus puerisque canto': (Latin) 'I sing to maids and boys' (Horace, Odes, 1.1.1). This ode is also quoted in the essay 'Charles of Orleans', on which Stevenson was working at the same time.

5.3-7 Falstaff ... Lear characters in Shakespeare: Falstaff, 1 and 2 Henry IV and Merry Wives of Windsor; Mercutio, Romeo and Juliet; Benedick, Much Ado about Nothing; Biron, Love's Labour's Lost; Iago, Othello; Jacques, As You Like It (adapted into French by George Sand, 1856); the Fool, King Lear.

5.12-13 you will find Jacques marries Celia just as Orlando marries Rosalind deleted from the manuscript at this point: 'and the bells are rung, and red lights burned, and the happy couples go round in a jing-a-rang.'

5.17 Panurge character in Gargantua and Pantagruel (1533–64), a series of five novels by François Rabelais. The Third Book of Pantagruel is largely devoted to discussions about whether Panurge should marry, a question still unsettled at the end.

5-25 Maitre Guérin comedy by Émile Augier (1864).

5.30 Maxime de Trallles cynical aristocrat who appears in several of Balzac's Comédie Humaine novels; the French quotation ('It's terrible: every one of us is getting married!') comes from Le Député d'Avois (1844).

5.33 fair round belly 'the Justice, | In fair round belly with good capon lined' (Shakespeare, As You Like It, II, 7, 152–3).

6.7 crossed letter Crossing a letter was a way of economizing on postage (especially in expensive overseas letters) by turning the paper through ninety degrees after it had been written upon and overwriting the previous text at right angles.

6.13–5 Lydgate ... Rosamund Vincy ... Ladislaw ... Dorothea characters in George Eliot's Middlemarch (1871). Tertius Lydgate is a doctor, whose promising scientific career is ruined after he marries Rosamund Vincy, a vain, socially ambitious small-town beauty. Will Ladislaw, idealistic but impoverished, marries Dorothea Brooke.
The Express archive is a fully searchable database of the newspaper. Here you can view, download and print historic pages from Daily Express newspaper dating back to 1900. The Sunday Express is also available from 2000. The database is a spectacular resource for historians, publishers and the public – anyone who wants to explore history as seen by the reporters and commentators who were there. You can find a newspaper from an important date – which could be your birthday (if you want to know what happened on the day you were born, search the day after your birthday). Or search for all editions covering your chosen topic, team or personality’s greatest moments. Go To Express Archive. Newspapers PDF magazine online USA, UK, Australia, Canada, Italy, Germany, France and etc without registration - Newspapers magazines download for FREE now! Magazines category: Newspapers. Latest magazines. All, Auto & Moto, Newspapers, Sport, Motorsport News – November 05, 2020. 08.11.2020, 14:30. All, Australia, Auto & Moto, Newspapers, Australian Motorcycle News – November 05, 2020. 07.11.2020, 07:00. All, Fashion, Newspapers, The Sunday Times Style – 1 November 2020. 07.11.2020, 02:00. All, Hunting, Newspapers The newspapers in this collection have been scanned as part of a pilot project using microfilm and microfiche. After using a microfilm/fiche scanner to create a digital image of each page, we process the resulting images so that each reel is contained in a single item with easily navigable files. ... The newspapers in this collection have been scanned as part of a pilot project using microfilm and microfiche. In the News. September 3, 2020 | John Verdi. California's SB 980 Would Codify Strong Protections for Genetic Data. Author: John Verdi (Vice President of Policy) This week, SB 980 (the "Genetic Information Privacy Act") passed the California State Assembly and State Senate, with near unanimous support (54-10 and 39-0). If signed by the Governor before the Sept. Peter Swire published an op-ed for the French newspaper Le Monde that discusses the Court of Justice for the European Union's decision as to whether...