

# ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON BIOGRAPHY

## Life

### [\[edit\]](#) Childhood



[Daguerreotype](#) portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson as a young child

Stevenson was born Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson<sup>[7]</sup> at 8 Howard Place, [Edinburgh](#), Scotland, on 13 November 1850, to [Thomas Stevenson](#) (1818–1887), a leading [lighthouse engineer](#), and his wife, the former Margaret Isabella Balfour (1829–1897).<sup>[8]</sup> Lighthouse design was the family profession: Thomas's own father (Robert's grandfather) was the famous [Robert Stevenson](#), and his maternal grandfather, [Thomas Smith](#), and brothers [Alan](#) and [David](#) were also among those in the business.<sup>[9]</sup> On Margaret's side, the family were gentry, tracing their name back to an Alexander Balfour, who held the lands of Inchrye in [Fife](#) in the fifteenth century. Her father, Lewis Balfour (1777–1860), was a [minister](#) of the [Church of Scotland](#) at nearby [Colinton](#),<sup>[10]</sup> and Stevenson spent the greater part of his boyhood holidays in his house. "Now I often wonder", wrote Stevenson, "what I inherited from this old minister. I must suppose, indeed, that he was fond of preaching [sermons](#), and so am I, though I never heard it maintained that either of us loved to hear them."<sup>[11]</sup>



Stevenson's childhood home in Heriot Row

Lewis Balfour and his daughter both had a "weak chest" and often needed to stay in warmer climates for their health. Stevenson inherited a tendency to coughs and fevers, exacerbated when the family moved to a damp and chilly house at 1 Inverleith Terrace in 1851.<sup>[12]</sup> The family moved again to the sunnier 17 Heriot Row when Stevenson was six, but the tendency to extreme sickness in winter remained with him until he was eleven. Illness would be a recurrent feature of his adult life and left him extraordinarily thin.<sup>[13]</sup> Contemporary views were that he had [tuberculosis](#), but more recent views are that it was [bronchiectasis](#)<sup>[14]</sup> or even [sarcoidosis](#).<sup>[15]</sup>

Stevenson's parents were both devout and serious [Presbyterians](#), but the household was not strict in its adherence to Calvinist principles. His nurse, Alison Cunningham (known as Cummy),<sup>[16]</sup> was more fervently religious. Her [Calvinism](#) and folk beliefs were an early source of nightmares for the child, and he showed a precocious concern for religion.<sup>[17]</sup> But she also cared for him tenderly in illness, reading to him from [Bunyan](#) and the [Bible](#) as he lay sick in bed and telling tales of the [Covenanters](#). Stevenson recalled this time of sickness in "The Land of Counterpane" in *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885),<sup>[18]</sup> and dedicated the book to his nurse.<sup>[19]</sup>



Robert Louis Stevenson at the age of seven

An only child, strange-looking and eccentric, Stevenson found it hard to fit in when he was sent to a nearby school at age six, a problem repeated at age eleven when he went on to the [Edinburgh Academy](#); but he mixed well in lively games with his cousins in summer holidays at [Colinton](#).<sup>[20]</sup> In any case, his frequent illnesses often kept him away from his first school, and he was taught for long stretches by private tutors. He was a late reader, first learning at age seven or eight, but even before this he dictated stories to his mother and nurse.<sup>[21]</sup> He compulsively wrote stories throughout his childhood. His father was proud of this interest; he had also written stories in his spare time until his own father found them and told him to "give up such nonsense and mind your business."<sup>[9]</sup> He paid for the printing of Robert's first publication at sixteen, an account of the [covenanters' rebellion](#) which was published on its two hundredth anniversary, *The Pentland Rising: a Page of History, 1666* (1866).<sup>[22]</sup>

In November 1867 Stevenson entered the [University of Edinburgh](#) to study engineering. He showed from the start no enthusiasm for his studies and devoted much energy to avoiding lectures. This time was more important for the friendships he made with other students in the [Speculative Society](#) (an exclusive debating club), particularly with Charles

Baxter, who would become Stevenson's financial agent, and with a professor, [Fleeming Jenkin](#), whose house staged amateur drama in which Stevenson took part, and whose biography he would later write.<sup>[23]</sup> Perhaps most important at this point in his life was a cousin, Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson (known as "Bob"), a lively and light-hearted young man who instead of the family profession had chosen to study art.<sup>[24]</sup> Each year during vacations, Stevenson travelled to inspect the family's engineering works—to [Anstruther](#) and [Wick](#) in 1868, with his father on his official tour of [Orkney](#) and [Shetland](#) islands lighthouses in 1869, and for three weeks to the island of [Erraid](#) in 1870. He enjoyed the travels more for the material they gave for his writing than for any engineering interest. The voyage with his father pleased him because a similar journey of [Walter Scott](#) with Robert Stevenson had provided the inspiration for Scott's 1821 novel [The Pirate](#).<sup>[25]</sup> In April 1871 Stevenson notified his father of his decision to pursue a life of letters. Though the elder Stevenson was naturally disappointed, the surprise cannot have been great, and Stevenson's mother reported that he was "wonderfully resigned" to his son's choice. To provide some security, it was agreed that Stevenson should read [Law](#) (again at Edinburgh University) and [be called to the Scottish bar](#).<sup>[26]</sup> In his 1887 poetry collection *Underwoods*, Stevenson muses his turning from the Family Profession:<sup>[27]</sup>

Say not of me that weakly I declined  
The labours of my sires, and fled the sea,  
The towers we founded and the lamps we lit,  
But rather say: In the afternoon of time  
A strenuous family dusted from its hands  
The sand of granite, and beholding far  
Along the sounding coast its pyramids  
And tall memorials catch the dying sun,  
Smiled well content, and to this childish task  
Around the fire addressed its evening hours.

In other respects too, Stevenson was moving away from his upbringing. His dress became more [Bohemian](#); he already wore his hair long, but he now took to wearing a velveteen jacket and rarely attended parties in conventional evening dress.<sup>[28]</sup> Within the limits of a strict allowance, he visited cheap pubs and brothels.<sup>[29]</sup> More importantly, he had come to reject Christianity. In January 1873 his father came across the constitution of the LJR (Liberty, Justice, Reverence) Club, of which Stevenson and his cousin Bob were members, which began: "Disregard everything our parents have taught us." Questioning his son about his beliefs, he discovered the truth, leading to a long period of dissension with both parents.<sup>[30]</sup>

What a *damned* curse I am to my parents! As my father said "You have rendered my whole life a failure". As my mother said "This is the heaviest affliction that has ever befallen me". O Lord, what a pleasant thing it is to have damned the happiness of (probably) the only two people who care a damn about you in the world.

**[[edit](#)] Early writing and travels**



The author, c. 1877

In late 1873, on a visit to a cousin in England, Stevenson met two people who were to be of great importance to him, [Sidney Colvin](#) and Fanny (Frances Jane) Sitwell. Sitwell was a 34-year-old woman with a son, separated from her husband. She attracted the devotion of many who met her, including Colvin, who eventually married her in 1901. Stevenson was also drawn to her, and over several years they kept up a heated correspondence in which Stevenson wavered between the role of a suitor and a son (he came to address her as "Madonna").<sup>[31]</sup> Colvin became Stevenson's literary adviser and after his death was the first editor of Stevenson's letters. Soon after their first meeting, he had placed Stevenson's first paid contribution, an essay entitled "Roads," in *The Portfolio*.<sup>[32]</sup> Stevenson was soon active in London literary life, becoming acquainted with many of the writers of the time, including [Andrew Lang](#), [Edmund Gosse](#),<sup>[33]</sup> and [Leslie Stephen](#), the editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, who took an interest in Stevenson's work. Stephen in turn would introduce him to a more important friend. Visiting Edinburgh in 1875, he took Stevenson with him to visit a patient at the [Edinburgh Infirmary](#), [William Ernest Henley](#). Henley, an energetic and talkative man with a wooden leg, became a close friend and occasional literary collaborator, until a quarrel broke up the friendship in 1888. Henley is often seen as the model for Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*.<sup>[34]</sup>

In November 1873 Stevenson's health failed, and he was sent to [Menton](#) on the [French Riviera](#) to recuperate. He returned in better health in April 1874 and settled down to his studies, but he returned to France several times after that.<sup>[35]</sup> He made long and frequent trips to the neighbourhood of the [Forest of Fontainebleau](#), staying at [Barbizon](#), [Grez-sur-Loing](#), and [Nemours](#) and becoming a member of the artists' colonies there, as well as to Paris to visit galleries and the theatres.<sup>[36]</sup> He did qualify for the Scottish bar in July 1875, and his father added a brass plate with "R.L. Stevenson, Advocate" to the Heriot Row house. But although his law studies would influence his books, he never practised law.<sup>[37]</sup> All his energies were now spent in travel and writing. One of his journeys, a canoe voyage in Belgium and France with Sir Walter Simpson,<sup>[38]</sup> a friend from the Speculative Society and frequent travel companion, was the basis of his first real book, *An Inland Voyage* (1878).<sup>[39]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Marriage



Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, c. 1876

The canoe voyage with Simpson brought Stevenson to Grez in September 1876, and here he first met [Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne](#) (1840–1914). Born in [Indianapolis](#), she had married at age seventeen and moved to Nevada to rejoin husband Samuel after his participation in the [American Civil War](#). That marriage produced three children: [Isobel](#) (or "Belle"); [Lloyd](#); and Hervey (who died in 1875). But anger over her husband's infidelities led to a number of separations and in 1875 she had taken her children to France, where she and Isobel studied art.<sup>[40]</sup> Although Stevenson returned to Britain shortly after this first meeting, Fanny apparently remained in his thoughts, and he wrote an essay, "On falling in love," for the *Cornhill Magazine*.<sup>[41]</sup> They met again early in 1877 and became lovers. Stevenson spent much of the following year with her and her children in France.<sup>[42]</sup> In August 1878 Fanny returned to [San Francisco](#), California. Stevenson at first remained in Europe, making the walking trip that would form the basis for *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879). But in August 1879 he set off to join her, against the advice of his friends and without notifying his parents. He took second-class passage on the steamship *Devonia*, in part to save money but also to learn how others travelled and to increase the adventure of the journey.<sup>[43]</sup> From New York City he travelled overland by train to California. He later wrote about the experience in *The Amateur Emigrant*. Although it was good experience for his literature, it broke his health, and he was near death when he arrived in [Monterey, California](#), where some local [ranchers](#) nursed him back to health.

By December 1879 Stevenson had recovered his health enough to continue to San Francisco, where for several months he struggled "all alone on forty-five cents a day, and sometimes less, with quantities of hard work and many heavy thoughts,"<sup>[44]</sup> in an effort to support himself through his writing, but by the end of the winter his health was broken again and he found himself at death's door. Fanny, now divorced and recovered from her own illness, came to Stevenson's bedside and nursed him to recovery. "After a while," he wrote, "my spirit got up again in a divine frenzy, and has since kicked and spurred my

vile body forward with great emphasis and success."<sup>[45]</sup> When his father heard of his condition, he cabled him money to help him through this period.

Fanny and Robert were married in May 1880, although, as he said, he was "a mere complication of cough and bones, much fitter for an emblem of mortality than a bridegroom."<sup>[46]</sup> With his new wife and her son, Lloyd,<sup>[47]</sup> he travelled north of San Francisco to [Napa Valley](#), and spent a summer [honeymoon](#) at an abandoned mining camp on [Mount Saint Helena](#). He wrote about this experience in *The Silverado Squatters*. He met [Charles Warren Stoddard](#), co-editor of the *Overland Monthly* and author of *South Sea Idylls*, who urged Stevenson to travel to the South Pacific, an idea which would return to him many years later. In August 1880 he sailed with Fanny and Lloyd from New York to Britain and found his parents and his friend [Sidney Colvin](#) on the wharf at [Liverpool](#), happy to see him return home. Gradually, his new wife was able to patch up differences between father and son and make herself a part of the new family through her charm and wit.

### [\[edit\]](#) Attempted settlement in Europe and the U.S.



Stevenson's "[Cure Cottage](#)" in [Saranac Lake](#)

For the next seven years, between 1880 and 1887, Stevenson searched in vain for a place of residence suitable to his state of health. He spent his summers at various places in Scotland and England, including [Westbourne, Dorset](#), a residential area in [Bournemouth](#). In Westbourne he named his house [Skerryvore](#) after the tallest lighthouse in Scotland, which his uncle [Alan](#) had built (1838-1844). In the wintertime Stevenson traveled to France and lived at [Davos-Platz](#)<sup>[48]</sup> and the Chalet de Solitude at [Hyères](#), where, for a time, he enjoyed almost complete happiness. "I have so many things to make life sweet for me," he wrote, "it seems a pity I cannot have that other one thing—health. But though you will be angry to hear it, I believe, for myself at least, what is is best. I believed it all through my worst days, and I am not ashamed to profess it now."<sup>[49]</sup> In spite of his ill health, he produced the bulk of his best-known work during these years: *Treasure Island*, his first widely popular book; *Kidnapped*; *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the story which established his wider reputation; *The Black Arrow*; and two volumes of verse, *A Child's Garden of Verses* and *Underwoods*. At Skerryvore he gave a copy of *Kidnapped* to his friend and frequent visitor [Henry James](#).<sup>[50]</sup>

When his father died in 1887, Stevenson felt free to follow the advice of his physician to try a complete change of climate, and he started with his mother and family for [Colorado](#). But after landing in New York, they decided to spend the winter at [Saranac Lake, New York](#), in the [Adirondacks](#) at a cure cottage now known as [Stevenson Cottage](#). During the intensely cold winter Stevenson wrote some of his best essays, including *Pulvis et Umbra*, began *The Master of Ballantrae*, and lightheartedly planned, for the following summer, a cruise to the southern Pacific Ocean. "The proudest moments of my life," he

wrote, "have been passed in the stern-sheets of a boat with that romantic garment over my shoulders."<sup>[51]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Politics

Much like his father, Stevenson remained a staunch [Tory](#) for most of his life. His cousin and biographer, [Sir Graham Balfour](#), said that "he probably throughout life would, if compelled to vote, have always supported the [Conservative](#) candidate."<sup>[52]</sup> During his college years he briefly identified himself as a "red-hot Socialist." However, by the year 1877, at only twenty-six years of age and before having written most of his major fictional works, Stevenson reflected: "For my part, I look back to the time when I was a Socialist with something like regret. I have convinced myself (for the moment) that we had better leave these great changes to what we call great blind forces: their blindness being so much more perspicacious than the little, peering, partial eyesight of men [...] Now I know that in thus turning Conservative with years, I am going through the normal cycle of change and travelling in the common orbit of men's opinions. I submit to this, as I would submit to gout or gray hair, as a concomitant of growing age or else of failing animal heat; but I do not acknowledge that it is necessarily a change for the better—I dare say it is deplorably for the worse."<sup>[53]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Journey to the Pacific



The author with King Kalākaua. [Honolulu](#), Hawaii, 1889

In June 1888 Stevenson chartered the yacht *Casco* and set sail with his family from San Francisco. The vessel "plowed her path of snow across the empty deep, far from all track of commerce, far from any hand of help."<sup>[54]</sup> The sea air and thrill of adventure for a time restored his health, and for nearly three years he wandered the eastern and central Pacific, stopping for extended stays at the [Hawaiian Islands](#), where he spent much time with and became a good friend of King [Kalākaua](#). He befriended the king's niece, Princess [Victoria Kaiulani](#), who also had a link to [Scottish heritage](#). He spent time at the [Gilbert Islands](#), [Tahiti](#), New Zealand and the [Samoan Islands](#). During this period he completed *The Master of Ballantrae*, composed two ballads based on the legends of the islanders, and wrote *The Bottle Imp*. He witnessed the [Samoan crisis](#). He preserved the experience of these years in his various letters and in his *In the South Seas* (which was published posthumously)<sup>[55]</sup>, an account of the 1888 cruise which Stevenson and Fanny undertook

on the *Casco* from the [Hawaiian Islands](#) to the [Marquesas](#) and [Tuamotu](#) islands. An 1889 voyage, this time with Lloyd, on the trading schooner *Equator*, visiting [Butaritari](#), Mariki, Apaiang and [Abemama](#) in the [Gilbert Islands](#), (also known as the Kingsmills) now [Kiribati](#).<sup>[56]</sup> During the 1889 voyage they spent several months on [Abemama](#) with the tyrant-chief [Tem Binoka](#), of [Abemama](#), [Aranuka](#) and [Kuria](#). Stevenson extensively described Binoka in *In the South Seas*.<sup>[56]</sup>

One particular [open letter](#) from this period stands as testimony to his activism and indignation at the pettiness of the "powers that be", in the person of a Presbyterian minister in Honolulu named Rev. Dr. Hyde. During his time in the Hawaiian Islands, Stevenson had visited [Molokai](#) and the leper colony there, shortly after the demise of [Father Damien](#). When Dr. Hyde wrote a letter to a fellow clergyman speaking ill of Father Damien, Stevenson wrote a scathing open letter of rebuke to Dr. Hyde.<sup>[57]</sup> Soon afterwards, in April 1890, Stevenson left [Sydney](#) on the *Janet Nicoll* for his third and final voyage among the South Seas islands.<sup>[58]</sup>

While Stevenson intended to write another book of travel writing to follow his earlier book *In the South Seas*, it was his wife who eventually published her journal of their third voyage. (Fanny misnames the ship as the *Janet Nicol* in her account of the 1890 voyage, *The Cruise of the Janet Nichol*.)<sup>[59]</sup> A fellow passenger was [Jack Buckland](#), whose stories of life as an island trader became the inspiration for the character of Tommy Hadden in *The Wrecker* (1892), which Stevenson and [Lloyd Osbourne](#) wrote together.<sup>[60][61]</sup> Buckland visited the Stevensons at [Vailima](#) in 1894.<sup>[62]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Last years



The author with his wife and their household in [Vailima, Samoa](#), c. 1890





STEVENSON'S BIRTHDAY FETE. (1891 ENCL.)



### Stevenson's birthday fete at Vailima

In 1890 Stevenson purchased a tract of about 400 acres (1.6 km<sup>2</sup>) in [Upolu](#), an island in [Samoa](#). Here, after two aborted attempts to visit Scotland, he established himself, after much work, upon his estate in the village of [Vailima](#). He took the native name Tusitala ([Samoan](#) for "Teller of Tales", i.e. a storyteller). His influence spread to the Samoans, who consulted him for advice, and he soon became involved in local politics. He was convinced the European officials appointed to rule the Samoans were incompetent, and after many futile attempts to resolve the matter, he published [A Footnote to History](#). This was such a stinging protest against existing conditions that it resulted in the recall of two officials, and Stevenson feared for a time it would result in his own deportation. When things had finally blown over he wrote to Colvin, who came from a family of distinguished colonial administrators, "I used to think meanly of the plumber; but how he shines beside the politician!"<sup>[63]</sup>

The Stevensons were on friendly terms with some of the colonial leaders and their families. At one point he formally donated, by [deed](#) of gift, his birthday to the daughter of the American Land Commissioner [Henry Clay Ide](#), since she was born on [Christmas Day](#) and had no birthday celebration separate from the family's Christmas celebrations. This led to a strong bond between the Stevenson and Ide families.<sup>[64][65]</sup>

In addition to building his house and clearing his land and helping the Samoans in many ways, he found time to work at his writing. He felt that "there was never any man had so many irons in the fire."<sup>[66]</sup> He wrote [The Beach of Falesa](#), [Catriona](#) (titled *David Balfour* in the USA),<sup>[67]</sup> [The Ebb-Tide](#), and the [Vailima Letters](#), during this period.

For a time during 1894 Stevenson felt depressed; he wondered if he had exhausted his creative vein and completely worked himself out. He wrote that he had "overworked bitterly"<sup>[68]</sup> He felt that with each fresh attempt, the best he could write was "ditch-water".<sup>[69]</sup> He even feared that he might again become a helpless invalid. He rebelled against this idea: "I wish to die in my boots; no more Land of Counterpane for me. To be drowned, to be shot, to be thrown from a horse — ay, to be hanged, rather than pass again through that slow dissolution."<sup>[70]</sup> He then suddenly had a return of his old energy and he began work on [Weir of Hermiston](#). "It's so good that it frightens me," he is reported to

have exclaimed.<sup>[71]</sup> He felt that this was the best work he had done. He was convinced, "sick and well, I have had splendid life of it, grudge nothing, regret very little ... take it all over, damnation and all, would hardly change with any man of my time."<sup>[72]</sup>



Burial on [Mount Vaea](#) in Samoa, 1894

Without knowing it, he was to have his wish fulfilled. During the morning of 3 December 1894, he had worked hard as usual on *Weir of Hermiston*. During the evening, while conversing with his wife and straining to open a bottle of wine, he suddenly exclaimed, "What's that!" He then asked his wife, "Does my face look strange?" and collapsed beside her.<sup>[73]</sup> He died within a few hours, probably of a [cerebral hemorrhage](#), at the age of 44. The Samoans insisted on surrounding his body with a watch-guard during the night and on bearing their Tusitala upon their shoulders to nearby [Mount Vaea](#), where they buried him on a spot overlooking the sea.<sup>[74]</sup> Stevenson had always wanted his 'Requiem' inscribed on his tomb:



Stevenson's tomb on Mt. Vaea c.1909

*Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me lie.  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will.  
This be the verse you grave for me:  
Here he lies where he longed to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.*

However, the piece is misquoted in many places, including his tomb:

*Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.*

Stevenson was loved by the Samoans, and his tombstone epigraph was translated to a Samoan song of grief<sup>[75]</sup> which is well-known and still sung in Samoa.

## **[[edit](#)] Monuments and commemoration**

A bronze relief memorial to Stevenson, designed by American sculptor [Augustus Saint-Gaudens](#) in 1904, is mounted in the Moray Aisle of [St Giles' Cathedral](#), Edinburgh.<sup>[76]</sup> Another memorial in Edinburgh stands in West Princes Street Gardens below [Edinburgh Castle](#); it is a simple upright stone inscribed with "RLS - A Man of Letters 1850 -1894" by sculptor [Jain Hamilton Finlay](#) in 1987.<sup>[77]</sup>

A plaque above the door of a house in Castleton of Braemar asserts 'Here R.L.Stevenson spent the Summer of 1881 and wrote Treasure Island, his first great work'.

A garden was designed by the Bournemouth Corporation in 1957 as a memorial to Stevenson, on the site of his Westbourne house "Skerryvore" which he occupied from 1885 to 1887. A statue of the Skerryvore lighthouse is present on the site.

In 1994, to mark the 100th Anniversary of Stevenson's death, the [Royal Bank of Scotland](#) issued a series of commemorative [£1 notes](#) which featured a quill pen and Stevenson's signature on the obverse, and Stevenson's face on the reverse side. Alongside Stevenson's portrait are scenes from some of his books and his house in Western Samoa.<sup>[78]</sup> Two million notes were issued, each with a serial number beginning "RLS". The first note to be printed was sent to Samoa in time for their centenary celebrations on 3 December 1994.<sup>[79]</sup>

## **[[edit](#)] Modern reception**

Stevenson was a celebrity in his own time, but with the rise of [modern literature](#) after [World War I](#), he was seen for much of the 20th century as a writer of the second class, relegated to [children's literature](#) and [horror genres](#).<sup>[80]</sup> Condemned by literary figures such as [Virginia Woolf](#) (daughter of his early mentor [Leslie Stephen](#)) and her husband [Leonard](#), he was gradually excluded from the canon of literature taught in schools.<sup>[80]</sup> His exclusion reached a height when in the 1973 2,000-page *[Oxford Anthology of English Literature](#)* Stevenson was entirely unmentioned; and *[The Norton Anthology of English Literature](#)* excluded him from 1968 to 2000 (1st–7th editions), including him only in the 8th edition (2006).<sup>[80]</sup> The late 20th century saw the start of a re-evaluation of Stevenson as an artist of great range and insight, a [literary theorist](#), an essayist and [social critic](#), a witness to the colonial [history of the Pacific Islands](#), and a [humanist](#).<sup>[80]</sup> Even as

early as 1965 the pendulum had begun to swing: he was praised by [Roger Lancelyn Green](#), one of the [Oxford Inklings](#), as a writer of a consistently high level of "literary skill or sheer imaginative power" and a co-originator with [H. Rider Haggard](#) of the [Age of the Story Tellers](#).<sup>[81]</sup> He is now being re-evaluated as a peer of authors such as [Joseph Conrad](#) (whom Stevenson influenced with his South Seas fiction), and [Henry James](#), with new scholarly studies and organisations devoted to Stevenson.<sup>[80]</sup> No matter what the scholarly reception, Stevenson remains popular worldwide. According to the [Index Translationum](#), Stevenson is ranked the 26th most translated author in the world, ahead of fellow nineteenth-century writers [Oscar Wilde](#) and [Edgar Allan Poe](#).<sup>[3]</sup>