

Call for Papers

Intertextual Stevenson

Ruhr University Bochum, 27 June – 29 June 2024

Organisers: Lena Linne & Burkhard Niederhoff

In “A College Magazine”, Robert Louis Stevenson famously described his literary apprenticeship as an exercise in imitation: “I have thus played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Baudelaire, and to Obermann.” The works that were eventually published are hardly less indebted to previous texts than his earlier attempts at literary pastiche. “No doubt the parrot once belonged to Robinson Crusoe. No doubt the skeleton is conveyed from Poe”, Stevenson admits in “My First Book”, an essay on the genesis and the sources of *Treasure Island*. Some critics have used these self-deprecating comments, in particular the “sedulous ape”, to support their claim that Stevenson was a derivative writer lacking in originality. Others, by contrast, have praised him as a precursor of postmodernism who was aware of, and brilliantly exploited, the inevitable intertextuality of all writing.

Many of the papers given at this conference will explore the way Stevenson used, adopted and responded to texts by other writers, and the way other writers used, adopted and responded to texts by him. The term *text* will be interpreted broadly and papers on film, graphic novels etc. will be welcome. We also invite comparative papers that engage with analogues or parallels rather than sources and influences, situating Stevenson’s works within a genre or within their nineteenth-century context (e.g. “Stevenson and Wilkie Collins as Writers of Sensation Novels”). Moreover, there is room for theoretical investigations that take their cue from essays such as “A College Magazine” or “My First Book” and analyse Stevenson’s ideas about the genesis and structure of literary texts. Finally, we will welcome papers that engage with the multiple texts that often lurk behind what is considered a single text; those who are interested in editing Stevenson’s writings could compare different layers or versions of a text and the editorial problems resulting from them. Further creative interpretations of the conference theme are possible and welcome.

Proposals (200-300 words) for twenty-minute papers are warmly invited and should be sent to one of the organisers by **November 30, 2023** (burkhard.niederhoff@rub.de, lena.linne@rub.de). If you have any questions, please contact the organisers.