

“2000: Stevenson Doyle” Conference Report: by Richard Dury

CERISY: STEVENSON AT A FRENCH INSTITUTION

‘Robert Louis Stevenson et Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Aventures de la Fiction’,

11-17 September 2000, [Cerisy-la-Salle](#) (Normandy)

conference notes (on the Stevenson papers) by Richard Dury

"I have been in France, sir," (*Kidnapped*, Ch. 9)

A local train of this type, Jean-Pierre Naugrette explained, as we swayed, at the carriage end, our feet among assorted luggage, is known as *un tortillard*. And it was appropriate that such a ‘slow meanderer’ should carry us the last half hour of the journey from Paris and the busy workaday world into *la France profonde*. It even stopped specially for conference guests at the tiny station, where we were met by Philippe, friendly employee of the Château, and minibus (though in the circumstances, one half expected a horse and trap). A short drive (through green hilly countryside reminiscent of the more remote and hilly parts of England: Herefordshire or the interior parts of Devon) brought us to the Château. This is a slightly austere building (fortified by its 17th-century Protestant owners with dry moat and salient corners) in lichen-patterned grey and dark red stone, with a steep, many-chimneyed roof.

Inside you are to imagine a stone-flagged ground floor, creaking wooden corridors above, a predictable degree of inconvenience in the distribution of bathrooms, stairs here and there, and unexpected drawing rooms.

The ‘Centre Culturel de Cerisy’ is unique: a family-run conference centre and a national institution, successor to a similar pre-war centre at Pontigny in Burgundy (photos of Gide, Sartre, Valéry, Mauriac and others in the hall), run by Paul

Desjardins. His daughter took up the family tradition at Cerisy in 1952, and her daughters now continue the work, attracting Eco, Barthes, Queneau, Tournier, Derrida and, err..., me. There is an institutional air of a private college about the place, with its rules and rituals, but one could see that the family and helpers were proud of the Centre and that a large part of their lives revolved around it.

The daughter looking after our Conference, Catherine Peyrou, puts on an aristocratic performance that is quite amusing if you are not personally involved: as we were assembling in one of the drawing rooms for the welcoming session after the first dinner, she gave an actress's disdainful glance from the window at the low orange moon and said 'Cette lune est ridicule!' Also present was her husband, Jacques, a simple sincere man, who seems in no way subject to his wife, and Catherine De Gondillac, the sad but affectionate secretary who grew up with the two sisters in the Château.

Evenings were generally passed in looking at rare videos in the spacious housetop *grenier*, with blankets available if it got a bit chilly. The first evening, a *sympatique* Cerisy regular, Antoine Faivre, showed us some of his collection of silent Sherlock Holmes short films and the 1929 short in which Conan Doyle, accompanied by his dog, talks, with moustacheful deliberation, of the origin of the Sherlock Holmes stories and his interest in Spiritualism.

Tuesday. After a grey dawn with scarves of mist over the fields, a warm autumn sun kept us company for the rest of the day. The conference proper began with a magnificent two-hour scene-setting talk by Jean-Pierre Naugrette, presenting our two authors, who wrote works in the same genre traditions and were influenced by the same authors. Doyle, of course, was also influenced by Stevenson (the Holmes stories owe much to the labyrinthine London crossed by hansom cabs of the *New Arabian Nights*, and Watson in 'Scarlet' is a military man very like Brackenbury, returning to London and not feeling quite at

home). Indeed, a short story by Doyle, 'J. Habakuk Jeffson's Statement', published anonymously in the *Cornhill* in 1884, was taken by many to be by Stevenson - probably on account of the ship mutiny scenes that recalled *Treasure Island*. We can see differences here, however: Doyle more influenced by the Poe of 'Pym', Stevenson by 'The Gold Bug', and Doyle portrays a repugnant half-caste (as he does too in the Holmes story 'The Yellow Face'), while Stevenson has advanced views of tolerance and understanding on racial matters (a similar point was made by Douglas Mack at the Stirling conference).

One major similarity between the two writers is the 'irruption of troubling strangeness' (exotic, like Secundra Dass in *Ballantrae* or Tonga in 'The Sign of Four'; or trogloditic, like Hyde or 'The Terror of the Blue John Gap'). For both writers, danger is indicated by clues (Stevenson's 'Black Spot'; Doyle's 'Five Orange Pips') - grotesque and anonymous signifiers that provoke a strong reaction of fear. As far as 'the fantastic' is concerned, for Stevenson it is always interiorized (Markheim sees imaginary things) and restricted to the individual (Hyde dies with Jekyll), while Doyle sees horror as cosmic and containing a threat of universal proliferation (his 'Creeping Man' rewrites *Jekyll and Hyde*, but in terms of generalized danger).

Both writers highlight incongruous details - 'tell-tale images', as Naugrette felicitously called them - from which a story begins ('cream tarts', 'the engineer's thumb'), and Doyle also learns from Stevenson the art of producing a memorable image with a few details (for example his description of the dead Bartholomew seen through the keyhole in *The Sign of Four*).

Doyle's views on Stevenson are partly available in his essay of 1890, while Stevenson on Doyle can be found in a few letters to the latter and in the mention of Sherlock Holmes's methods in chapter 7 of *Weir* and the clue-based deductions about the covered cart in chapter 12 of *St. Ives*.

This fruitful start to proceedings was followed by lunch, at long tables in the stone-flagged dining room: one eats well at Cerisy - good, varied French home cooking with occasional flights of fancy in the desserts, impeccably served, washed down with wine or foaming golden Normandy cider. After-lunch coffee was served outside at a large circular table: in front of us the fields and hedgerows (hardly hedgerows - little lines of sportive wood run wild), one long stonebuilt farm (green to the very door) in a fold of the hillside, and here and there a Normandy cow occasionally swishing a tail.

The afternoon session began with tall, bearded Claude Lepaludier on 'Olalla, or: the uncertainty of human nature'. For Lapaludier, Stevenson's story is an investigation of what is 'human' (its limits, its troubling aspects). Felipe and his mother at first represent the non-human: childlike, animal-like, irrational and living through their senses. Yet through love and passion, the narrator discovers the non-human side of himself and himself becomes fascinated by simple perception, is attracted to Olalla 'as stones fall to earth', and as a consequence begins to respect and understand the mother. There is thus an enlargement of what can be considered 'human' and a uniting of the divine and animality. However, the portrait gallery scene seems to show that the human is transitory and much is determined for the individual by racial transmission, perhaps accompanied by degeneration. At the end of the story, Olalla's deliberate choice works an original synthesis of Darwinism and Christianity.

All these normal sessions were 45 minutes: apparently in France the 20-minute conference paper is unknown - and I appreciated the more relaxed pace that the extra time allowance gives. The second speaker of the afternoon was stocky, bearded Roger Bozzetto, director of a centre of studies on fantasy literature at Aix-en-Provence. His title was 'The impossible portrait of the monster', a study of two rewritings of *Jekyll and Hyde*: Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* (1990) and Jean-Pierre Naugrette's *Le crime étrange de Mr Hyde* (1998) (the latter bringing together

our two authors, since Sherlock Holmes prevents Hyde's escape on the Thames). He started with the real and fictional monsters of late 19th-century England and their double natures, before moving on to the regressive monster in *Jekyll and Hyde*. In *Mary Reilly* the protagonist does not reject the monster, accepting Hyde as another aspect of Jekyll. Naugrette gives Hyde a voice (to explain, for example, that he was trying to save, not to trample the child) and makes him less exceptional, since he is surrounded by others with base motives and shares his nightly pleasures with members of good society. Hyde is a monster for neither Martin nor Naugrette, for the former he retains a certain humanity, while for the latter he is more of a victim in a society of notables and hypocrites.

In the following discussion, Naugrette praised the general approach, but - being the author - he was able to say that one of the interpretations was wrong: only a minor matter (a wrong reading of Hyde's comma-less monologue: taking a long list of alternative names as one long name). It was, however, an unusual occurrence, a little like an actor stepping out of a cinema screen.

Wednesday. The day began with Maryse Ducreu-Petit (shoulder-length red hair, reading her text in a rhythmical style) on 'Challenger/Jekyll: soul investigators'. Both characters challenge the limitations of the human but Jekyll is involved in an additional semantic area of identity and difference and the psychoanalytic area of the non-unity of the personality. Jekyll thinks he has discovered an accurate formula for his potion, divided his personality and also conquered time (Hyde is younger), but none of these turns out to be true. He is not really a 19th-century scientist (as the chemistry-lab bric-à-brac of film versions shows) and has more of a metaphysical approach. Jekyll in the end is more like Faust, while Challenger is the more Promethian.

Next came Nathalie Jaëck from Bordeaux (curly black hair; white blouse and jeans; nice smile), who gave a fascinating talk

on the similarities of Jekyll and Holmes in 'Pathologies of dissolution: chemical and musical escape for Jekyll and Holmes'. Both characters take transforming chemical substances and see a problematic relation between the self and the non-self, contrary to the realist expectations of Watson and of Stevenson's third-person narrator (in many ways equivalent to Utterson). At the same time we see the progressive dissolution of the realist text in continual change. Stevenson's text emphasizes unstable forms (the melting of crystals and facial features; the 'solution of the bonds of obligation'); in Ch. 1 of 'A Study in Scarlet' there is a molecular exchange as Holmes dissolves a sample of his own blood in water and then reconstitutes it (by means of a chemical additive) as a brownish precipitate. This extraction of blood is balanced by the injection of the 'seven per cent solution' at the beginning of 'The Sign of Four' to suggest a lack of firm boundary between body and world.

Jekyll's famous hypothesis of the personality as 'a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens' can be seen reflected in the protean identity of Holmes: he is such a master of disguises that he fluidly alters the form and height of his body and even 'changed... his very soul with every role he assumed' in a way that seems very close to Jekyll's 'power to shake and pluck back that fleshy vestment'.

The narrators in both cases seem to be stable, impersonal, clearly conforming to social norms. But when Jekyll takes over the narration in his 'Statement', we see the progressive dissolution of a clear picture of the self. When Holmes occasionally takes control of the narration we see his interest in variant explanations, improvisation, and the unexpected. Jaëck sees the narrative structure of *Jekyll and Hyde* and the Holmes stories as 'musical': fragmentary with suggestions of symmetry, new starts and a sense of perpetual 'becoming'.

After lunch we went up to one of the first-floor drawing rooms: a comfortable white panelled room with a fine chimney, carpets

over parquet flooring and sofas with velvet cushions. The room also contained a television and video recorder, required for Francis Bordat's talk on '*Treasure Island* at the cinema'. The typical approach (of Nolan, for example) towards the various film adaptations (1920, 1934, 1950, 1972 and 1990) is to take 'fidelity' as the only criterion, but Bordat (curly hair, round glasses, speaking with enthusiasm) thinks that the least respectful of the original are the most interesting, since adventure, not philological accuracy, has to be present in the image. Stevenson himself, in Jim's imaginary versions of the one-legged pirate, shows the inadequacy of linguistic representation and makes much use of non-visual elements (noises, voices and music), elements that are effectively exploited by Orson Welles in his interesting 1938 radio version.

The 1911 Wyeth illustrations are interesting in themselves and also because they seem to have directly inspired the costumes of Tourneur's film of 1920 and the interpretation of a feminized Jim (played by Shirley Mason). The only two Wyeth illustrations of Silver show him passive in one and active in the other, yet are similar in the tension of the composition and implied sexuality of the Silver-Jim relationship: Silver gazes at Jim in one, pulls him by a rope in the other, while the bird fascinates the boy in both.

The 1934 Fleming film 'is the most unfaithful yet the most faithful': here there is no initiation but an escape from women, no murder of the father but the search for one. There is a kind of love story between Silver and Jim. In the book Jim cries at the death of Bones, but in the film, he cries over Silver: once when he learns of Silver's betrayal and then when Silver finally leaves the ship at the end. Both Jim and Silver are feminized, while Livesey's excessive display of masculinity makes him less attractive. There is in fact an irony in Fleming's film that we can see in the 'Shore Adventure' section, where the sequence of clear exotic detail is like a Hollywood version of a naïf Douanier Rousseau. The talk was illustrated by sections of the film, and ended with the memorable fall of Israel Hands seen

from above and his enormous splash in the sea: *plouff!*

Thursday. The second talk on Thursday morning (after Gaïd Girard on ‘The Fantastic in Doyle’) was dark-haired Hélène Crignon on ‘Florizel and Holmes: a Scandal on Bohemia’. Both authors share the same literary background and write about the modern city, its labyrinthine form, chance events and hidden world of crime. Both also see the theatricality of social life: for Holmes London is a vast theatre where he plays many roles, the satisfaction of spectacle often compensating for lack of knowledge. Stevenson’s Prince Florizel also acts out roles on the many stages provided by the city-theatre. In addition, the *New Arabian Nights* presents a ‘strange’ world, a universe that can open under our feet. In his emphasis on the unreal and fictional aspects of life, Stevenson is closer to the Symbolistes than the Realists (and here we may remember Mallarmé’s admiration for him): he takes pleasure in a back-and-forward movement in the imagination.

In the afternoon I was the only speaker - on the same topic as at Stirling (‘The campness of *The New Arabian Nights*’). Although I had twice the time as at Stirling, allowing me to add points and explain other things better, the summary of one is so close to the other that I will not repeat it (see [Stirling notes](#)). I had the impression that most people could understand me - despite my French - hence when it all ended I felt happier and decidedly more relaxed.

A group of us then went up into the *grenier*, where Jean-Pierre Naugrette read a chapter (‘La dernière nuit’) from his *Le crime étrange de Mr Hyde*. I then read some Stevenson poems that I had prepared, before playing Benjamin Luxon’s recording of Vaughan Williams’ ‘Songs of Travel’. Alas, one of the loudspeakers was giving a slight buzz, so we found ourselves in a politeness trap: me offering to abandon the idea, the others saying ‘No, no, don’t worry...’ Anyway, I hope they got an idea - despite the *slight* buzzing (and only on *certain* notes!) - of what for me is an excellent piece of music.

Back in the loft after dinner Antoine Faivre showed us some more Sherlock Holmes rarities and a replay of the 1929 interview for those who hadn't been there on the first evening. Unfortunately, thanks to the good food, the wine and the restful atmosphere of Cerisy, at a certain point I fell asleep...

Friday. After breakfast (comforting bowls of *café au lait*, with bread, jam and yellow Normandy butter) and a first paper by Antoine Faivre on 'Doyle and photographed spirits', we heard burly and friendly Lauric Guillard, a specialist on fantasy fiction, speaking about 'Stevenson, Doyle and the myth of the wilderness'. 'The vast and howling wilderness', a 17th-century Puritan symbolic place of spiritual trial, was used by Americans to contrast with their Civilization. The concept then marries with English gothic modes to give an equivalent of mental chaos and tempting sublime barbarity.

In Stevenson's direct experience of the West in 1879 he sees an unlyrical and ungrandiose 'spacious vacancy', 'not unfrequented by the devil'. In California he goes to Silverado - a ruin; not a place of the future but filled with 'ancient things'. This first American experience clearly influenced the 'miserable wilderness' of *Ballantrae*. The empty and terrible Utah of the *Dynamiter* story was of course to inspire Doyle's 'A Study in Scarlet', and both authors bring the threatening wilderness into London (Doyle actually referring to 'the howling desert of South London').

Friday afternoon was free and a group of us met for a walk through the quiet surrounding lanes: Chatting as we went, we met no-one else and I remember no passing car; a series of paired and slightly deflating balloons leading to a somnolent roadside farmhouse suggested that the virtues of the Normans do not include spontaneous festiveness; one of the group gave an imitation of Conan Doyle in the filmed interview and then another of Barrymore's Hyde: conversation and walk alike followed lines of unplanned chance and were equally relaxing. We returned to hear a CD recording of Orson Welles' 1938

radio dramatization of *Treasure Island* on an audio system that no longer had a slight buzz... and in the evening after dinner we saw the Basil Rathbone *Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Saturday. The talks in Cerisy take place in the book-lined ground-floor Library with windows on the left: the speaker on a raised dais, the others sitting on sofas and armchairs. I liked to watch the way the soft and golden morning sun entered the room, first slanting across the window-recess panelling, then calmly moving to parts of the floor, a door-handle, touching - almost in a friendly way - the arms and shoulders of those intently listening. Then it illuminated an irregular patch of bookcase wire and the books behind the speaker before touching the very end of the speaker's table for half an hour in mid-morning. I became fascinated (it *is* possible to be fascinated by the sunlight and listen carefully to talks at the same time) to see if a ray of sun would ever touch the speaker's glass of water and what rainbow effect this might have. Before the first talk on Saturday (Henri Suhamy on the Brigadier Gerard stories) I noticed that the table was unfairly displaced from the centre of the dais and away from the windows, so I moved it to an exact central position to make the meeting of light and water more probable ('aiutavo il destino'). At the end of the talk, there was a good strip of sunlight on the window side of the table...; Henri Suhamy took the glass from just inside the shadow..., drank a sip... and - alas! - replaced it inside the shadow again.

After this came a fascinating talk on 'Fantastic and relic in Doyle and Stevenson' by Christian Chelebourg (tall, bespectacled, in a white summer jacket), who teaches at the University on the Indian Ocean island of Réunion. *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins (1868) influences both *The New Arabian Nights* and *The Sign of Four* with its detective-story elements, its fantastic realism and specifically in the central place given to the fabulous gemstone, a relic of Oriental marvels. The diamond has a regressive influence, causing a break with the Victorian order (it reduces Rolles to materialistic paganism). But more than anything else, the stone brings

disaster, a return of an ancestral curse, a suggestion of Satanic influence.

While Collins ends his story by suggesting unending adventures associated with the Moonstone, the Rajah's Diamond is thrown away, carrying with it the universe of the Thousand and One Nights, marking the beginning of the prosaic modern world.

Stevenson's diamond is a touchstone of Victorian morality and reveals rapacity in soldier, merchant, adventurer, lady and priest: "The purity of the diamond reveals the Puritans' own impurity" (nice one, Christian). It also leads to a disturbance of literary values: through Rolles' vain search for practical instruction in literature, Stevenson satirizes documentary realism and at the same time pays homage to the detective story, its fantasy and its exploration of the dark side of the personality.

Holmes seems to follow up Rolles' desire for sober exposition (and his inductive reasoning when examining the trampled flowerbeds), yet his realism also reveals the extraordinary and the fantastic. (Here Holmes' emphasis on "A certain selection and discretion" in narration and his emphasis on "details, which...contain the vital essence of the whole matter" also reminded me of Stevenson's view that "the artist...must...suppress much and omit more.")

For Florizel, the disquieting strangeness of the ordinary is the aim; for Holmes this is always present but needs to be set aside to elucidate cruelly real mysteries. Doyle de-mythifies the fantastic: the treasure of Agra is not itself evil - it is the moral weakness of the Four that causes the trouble.

The afternoon was dedicated to film studies, starting with a talk on Mamoulian's version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* Alain Cohen (young-looking, considering he had been present at the historic 1968 Cerisy 'colloque'), who teaches cinema and semiotics at La Jolla. He started with a brief history of the concept of the Ego (15th-century perspective in art; Descartes' philosophy in

17th-century; 19th-century literary explorations; psychoanalysis in 20th century). The 1931 (or 1932) Mamoulian film is highly innovative and consciously poetic in its use of the subjective camera and travelling shots, chiaroscuro lighting, transformation scenes, and the in the rhythm and rhyme of dialogue. Cohen then showed us the seven transformations with a running commentary. The subjective camera creates moments of notable uncertainty of identity that mirror Stevenson's indeterminacy, as for example in the first transformation scene where we see 'our' reflection as Jekyll taking the potion in the mirror, followed by a rapid circular pan of the laboratory with superimposed memory images and snatches of dialogue before a return circular pan and Hyde's image. We cannot be sure if this is Jekyll looking at his Hyde form, or Hyde looking at himself. The equivalence between Hyde and the reader in the text is given a filmic translation in these scenes, and also in the scene where Lanyon points at the camera to accuse Jekyll. The talk ended with some considerations about Lacan's concept of the Ego as applied to Hyde.

Gilles Menegaldo (tall, bespectacled, co-director of the conference with Jean-Pierre Naugrette) then followed with a talk on two film versions of the Jekyll and Hyde story. Unlike other film versions Terence Fisher's Jekyll (*The Two Faces of Dr Jekyll*, 1960) is not the charming philanthropist, but is quite old and already socially marginalized, while his Hyde is suave, young and clean-shaven, not in the ape-man tradition. The acts of Hyde are mainly caused by vengeance, hence to 'restore order'. The mirror scene works a series of Jekyll/Hyde combinations of subject, reflection and voice-over. Mengaldo then showed us the interesting opening title sequence of Stephen Frears' *Mary Reilly* (1996), pointing out the oppositions of Mary:Jekyll, cloth:leather, hand:foot, flesh:metal, mud:shining name-plate. The space of course is an important component of the film: hierarchic interior space (which Mary disturbs), the circulation between interior and exterior, and of course the striking Piranesian laboratory created by Stuart Craig. In this 'literary' film there are many rapid 'mentions', similarities,

metonymies and indeterminacy (the strange shadows on the cabinet roof) - a point that was taken up in the following discussion, as some thought the film suffered from semiotic overloading, while others thought this gave it an interesting subtlety. Jean-Pierre Naugrette reminded us of the central figure of Mary, who, though she takes the place of Utterson as exploratory investigator, yet interacts in an interesting way with both Jekyll and Hyde.

In the evening we saw Jerry Lewis's *The Nutty Professor*, followed by a drink ('un pot amical') around the large entrance-hall table, where, among conversation with a glass of 'calvá' (calvados, Normandy cider-brandy), we were entertained by an imitation of Jerry Lewis giving an imitation of Conan Doyle (in the 1929 interview). And then to bed (I slept very well in Cerisy).

Sunday. Sunday opened with an interesting talk by slow-speaking, pause-taking, inscrutable (but surely playing a good ironic hand) Jacques Goimard on 'Stevenson and his doubles: *The Master of Ballantrae*'. In this powerful narrative divided into three chronological sections (with many points in common with a Greek tragic trilogy) there are three types of double: rival, faithful and generational. James and Henry are rivals in a paranoic space created (as Lacan says) by the Father's incapacity to represent the Law: the old Master does not decide on the crucial question of political legitimacy but leaves all to the toss of a coin. Events cause paranoia in both brothers. It is easy to reverse the roles of the brothers, as in the Eroll Flynn film (where James kills Henry in the duel), since they are symmetric. The 'faithful doubles' are McKellar, Burke, and Secundra Dass: the first two write narratives of Henry and James (McKellar doesn't believe Burke, but then the reader doesn't believe McKellar totally and even the 'Editor' censors his text at one point as implausible). Burke becomes a friend of James at the toss of a coin, but Secundra Dass, is faithful from gratitude and through free choice. The 'generational doubles' are father and son, with the father at fault not only for his

weakness but also for sacrificing all in order to maintain the name of Father, land, arms and title. In response to a question, Goimard commented on the riddling concluding epitaph, pointing out how James's existence 'in the tents of savage hunters' shows how he contains both Jacob and Esau within himself; 'in the citadels of kings' cannot be those of the Pretender (who had no citadels) but must refer to the French king's fort and citadel, the Bastille. This 'inexhaustible' embedded text dictated by McKellar could show his admiration for James, or his conviction that the truth cannot be told (the perversity of the two brothers not being mentioned).

The last paper of the conference was given by a Jean-Pierre Picot, another Cerisy regular, on 'Maps, plans and diagrams: cartography of the imaginary in Doyle, Stevenson and others'. The *Treasure Island* map, compared by Stevenson to 'a fat dragon', is certainly animal-like: two legs and a suggestion of an arm or wing, a head to the north with a mountain like an eye, the swamp (where the Pirates set up camp) and narrow channel to the south seeming slightly anal, the narrow pointed 'leg' in the east reminiscent of Silver.

The afternoon was set aside for the 'Table Ronde', slimmer than planned, due to the absence of Michel Le Bris. For those who don't know, Michel Le Bris is a *forza della natura* who has translated and published an amazing number of Stevenson texts (including things not yet published in English), written a biography, translated the letters, as well as being a novelist himself and involved in national and international cultural events and organizations. Hence his original presence at the conference was first reduced to this final day and then, a couple of days before, we had learnt that he wouldn't be coming at all.

We did have Jean-Baptiste Para, however, who gave us a fascinating informal presentation of 'Stevenson in Italy'. Emilio Cecchi right from 1920 presented the South Seas writings as one of Stevenson's great achievements and was amazed at the lack of recognition for this poet in prose who he called 'una sorta di

Mozart del romanzo' (and Magris in 1994 talks of his 'leggerezza mozartiana'). Moving onto Cesare Pavese (and his essay on Stevenson of 1950), Para made the point that Italian anglophiles were antifascists and an interest in Anglo-American literature was a sign of resistance to the régime. Italo Calvino, another Italian estimator of Stevenson, saw him in relation to the romance and 18th-century novel as like Ariosto and Cervantes in relation to the chivalric epic. In a 1982 piece he comments on the extraordinary modernity of 'A Humble Remonstance' and on how, in 'Some Technical Elements of Style', he is a precursor of Roman Jakobson. The 'telling' judgements of these writer-critics (another was Giorgio Manganelli) impressed us all.

In his concluding remarks, Jean-Pierre Naugrette reminded us of the influence of Stevenson in France as is shown by appreciative comments of writers such as Schwob, Gide, Rivière, Proust, Mallarmé, Artaud, Prévert's 'rue Stevenson', Renoir's *Dr Cordelier*. he was happy to say that, in contrast to twenty years ago, Stevenson no longer has any need for rehabilitation.

It being Sunday evening there was no cooked meal (a Cerisy tradition), but the cooks did us proud with a fine plate of seafood and fresh mayonnaise, plus a variety of good things (including the usual selection of varied French cheeses) on a side table. After breakfast the following morning, we wrote our names and appreciations in the 'Livre d'Or' (another Cerisy tradition). I stepped out to take a last look at the green hillside, lit by the soft diffused light with occasional gleams of sun, and to watch again for ten minutes the progress of slow-moving clouds across the sky. Then Philippe took us in the minibus to the station, and a couple of hours later I was standing, slightly bewildered, on a street corner in Paris among flows of cars and pedestrians, my first step back to the busy workaday world once more.