Robert Louis Stevenson

Treasure Island

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

TREASURE ISLAND

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON was born in 1850 in Edinburgh, son, grandson, and nephew of distinguished civil engineers and lighthouse-builders. Although trained as an engineer and for the law, he chose to become a writer. His first books included *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and *Travels with a Donkey* (1879); the first of many collections of essays was *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881). In 1879, despite intermittent ill health, he travelled to California where he married Fanny Osbourne, a divorcee with a son, Samuel Lloyd, in 1880. *The Silverado Squatters* (1883) is an account of their early life together. His first commercial and critical success was *Treasure Island* (1883), and with *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and *Kidnapped* (1886) his fame and financial security were assured. He published around forty books, including *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885). He travelled widely for health reasons, finally settling in Samoa, where he became involved in politics. He died there in December 1894, leaving two unfinished novels, *St Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston*. His literary reputation declined rapidly after his death, but he is now regarded as an innovator in several genres, a distinctive stylist, and a major figure in both children's and adult literature.

PETER HUNT is Professor Emeritus in Children's Literature at Cardiff University. He has written or edited sixteen books on the subject, including *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (OUP, 1994) and *Children's Literature: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* (4 vols., 2006). He has also written novels for children, including *Backtrack* (1986), and has edited *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wind in the Willows* for Oxford World's Classics.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics have brought readers closer to the world's great literature. Now with over 700 titles—from the 4,000-year-old myths of Mesopotamia to the twentieth century's greatest novels—the series makes available lesser-known as well as celebrated writing.

The pocket-sized hardbacks of the early years contained introductions by Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and other literary figures which enriched the experience of reading. Today the series is recognized for its fine scholarship and reliability in texts that span world literature, drama and poetry, religion, philosophy, and politics. Each edition includes perceptive commentary and essential background information to meet the changing needs of readers.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Treasure Island

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

PETER HUNT

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

Editorial material © Peter Hunt 2011

The moral rights of the author have been asserted
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published as a World's Classics paperback 1985
Reissued 1998, 2008.
New edition 2011

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by Glyph International, Bangalore, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

ISBN 978-0-19-956035-6

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Note on the Text xxxii

Select Bibliography xxxv

A Chronology of Robert Louis Stevenson xxxix

TREASURE ISLAND 1

Appendix 1: *'My First Book'* 185

Appendix 2: *'A Fable. The Persons of the Tale'* 192

Appendix 3: *Sources and Analogues* 195

Explanatory Notes 203

Glossary of Nautical Terms 221

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

Treasure Island is a rarity: a classic that has high status in both the children's and the adults' canons. George Meredith described it as 'The best of boys' books, and a book to make one feel a boy again', while Henry James thought it was 'unique' in that we see in it the young reader himself: 'we seem to read it over his shoulder, with an arm around his neck'.[1]

In the history of children's literature it is a landmark, a turning point: just as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) redefined the book for girls, siding with its readers against the didactic and moralistic, so *Treasure Island* (1883) challenged, satirized, and subverted the dominant boys' genre that combined adventure, sea, island, and empire-building stories. The story of an expedition 'launched by greed and decorated with murder and treachery, and concluded by luck rather than righteousness',[2] it permanently changed the possibilities of children's literature, and challenged received wisdom about what a book for a child is and what a book for an adult is. It is often assumed that child readers see only an exciting story, while adults detect the ironic anti-romance and the startling ambiguities of character and motive. But it could also be argued, as with other books that are routinely underestimated by adults, such as *The Wind in the Willows*, that the opposite is the case. It seems probable that many adults go to *Treasure Island* to create, rather than recreate, an imaginary childhood reading experience—to read a straightforward, simple adventure of vicarious thrills and uncomplicated morality, where you can kill the pirates with impunity, and take the treasure home to 'play ducks and drakes' with. And it may be that it is the developing reader who is brought up short by (and intellectually nurtured by) the dark and unsettling side of the book which questions accepted attitudes to good and evil. How Stevenson went about playing with the materials of the genre and the idea of the romance, while balancing an ironic mindset, religious and political tensions, and the immediate

[1] *The Letters of George Meredith*, ed. C. L. Cline (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), ii. 730; Henry James, *Partial Portraits* (London: Macmillan, 1894), 68.

[2] F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England,* 3rd edn., rev. Brian Alderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 295.

exigencies of a very local audience and the need to earn money, is one of the most fascinating tales in literature.

Culturally, *Treasure Island* has come almost to define the adventure story, and its image of pirates and buccaneers resonates in popular culture to this day. As one of Stevenson's biographers puts it: '*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Treasure Island* are so well-known that they hardly require to be read at all. We all understand what "Jekyll-and-Hyde" signifies, and Long John Silver is more real to most people than any historical buccaneer.'[3] Certainly, Long John Silver, '[t]hat formidable seafaring man with one leg' (p. 182) has acquired a mythic status: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle described him as 'not a creation of fiction, but an organic living reality with whom we have come into contact; such is the effect of the fine suggestive strokes with which he is drawn'.[4] *Treasure Island* was the immediate stimulus for H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885)—Haggard's brother bet him a shilling that he couldn't 'write anything half so good'—and directly influenced J. M. Barrie, Rafael Sabatini, and Arthur Ransome. It has inspired writers from Jorge Luis Borges to John Mortimer, and lies behind such twenty-first-century phenomena as *Pirates of the Caribbean*. There are translations into languages across the world, and adaptations for film and television (around fifty versions), musicals, pantomime, graphic novels, and video games. Prequels, sequels, and elaborations (often centring on Long John Silver) range from R. F. Delderfield's *The Adventures of Ben Gunn* (1956) and Robert Leeson's *Silver's Revenge* (1978) to the surreal *Pussy, King of the Pirates* (1996) by experimental novelist Kathy Acker.

But despite, or perhaps because of, its popularity, *Treasure Island* has until recently been neglected by the critics: not only was it for children, a fact that almost axiomatically removed it from the critical radar—but it was (at least at first glance) a 'romance'. As Stevenson wryly observed in 'A Gossip on Romance' (*Longman's Magazine*, November 1882): 'English people of the present day are apt, I know not why, to look somewhat down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate.

[3] Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), xvi.

[4] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 'Mr Stevenson's Methods in Fiction' (*National Review*, Jan. 1890), in Lance Salway (ed.), *A Peculiar Gift: Nineteenth Century Writings on Books for Children* (Harmondsworth: Kestrel, 1976), 396.

It is thought clever to write a novel with no story at all, or at least with a very dull one.'[5]

The contemporary reviewers could not square this circle. A review, probably by Andrew Lang, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (15 December 1883), described *Treasure Island* as 'a book for boys which can keep hardened and elderly reviewers in a state of pleasing excitement and attention', but concluded that 'after this romance for boys he must give us a novel for men and women'. On the same day, a review in the *Graphic* agreed on the book's excellence, but added: 'Yet we want no more boys' books from Mr Stevenson. We want him to employ his unique gifts in the highest department of literature now open to him—contemporary fiction.'[6] Even J. M. Barrie had his reservations. In his portrait of his mother, *Margaret Ogilvy*, he reported: 'I remember how she read "Treasure Island", holding it close to the ribs of the fire (because she could not spare a moment to rise and light the gas) and how, when bedtime came, and we coaxed, remonstrated, scolded, she said quite fiercely, clinging to the book, "I dinna lay my head on a pillow this night till I see how that laddie got out of the barrel." ' He admitted himself that 'Over "Treasure Island" I let my fire die in winter without knowing I was freezing'; but his verdict on Stevenson was that 'it is so much easier to finish the little works than to begin the great one . . . He experiments too long; he is still a boy wondering what he is going to be.'[7]

Stevenson's reputation suffered through much of the twentieth century: he was seen as an empty stylist, a lightweight in inferior genres: 'because he chose to work in kinds thought low, he has been fired from the canon'.[8] His fame rested on two boys' books, *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* (1886), and a literary curiosity, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) which (equally curiously) often appears on publishers' children's lists. There are some parallels

[5] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits*, in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Tusitala Edition (London: Heinemann in association with Chatto and Windus, Cassell, and Longmans Green, 1924), xxix. 124.

[6] Paul Maixner (ed.), *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 139, 141.

[7] J. M. Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvy* (New York: Scribner, 1896), 145; *An Edinburgh Eleven: Pencil Portraits from College Life* (1889) (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), 98, 99.

[8] Alastair Fowler, 'Parables of Adventure: The Debatable Novels of Robert Louis Stevenson', in Ian Campbell (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1979), 107.

between Stevenson's recent critical reinstatement and the admission of children's literature to serious literary study, and critics have come to appreciate Northrop Frye's dictum that 'romance is older than the novel, a fact which has developed the historical illusion that it is something to be outgrown, a juvenile and undeveloped form'.[9] It is no longer tenable to suggest that *Treasure Island* is valuable only in proportion to the extent that it transcended and transformed its generic origins and that it can only be genuinely valuable in so far as it appeals to 'sophisticated' adults. Equally, to regard it as a children's book is no longer to denigrate it, or to denigrate the acuity of child readers. *Treasure Island* transcends the boundaries between children's books and adults' books just as it transcends the boundaries between the novel and the romance. It may be a *jeu d'esprit*, but at no point is the author's critical and personal intelligence asleep; as one biographer argues: 'Louis brought so much of himself to *Treasure Island* that it is hard to speak of the book except in terms of his life . . . It was the world as Stevenson's imagination understood it.'[10]

Biography and Background

In an article, 'My First Book', written at the request of Jerome K. Jerome for his magazine *The Idler* (August 1894; reprinted here as Appendix 1), Stevenson described his situation when he began to write *Treasure Island*: 'I was thirty-one; I was the head of a family; I had lost my health; I had never yet paid my way, never yet made £200 a year . . . I was indeed very close on despair' (p. 189). *Treasure Island* was both the distillation of and the turning point of his career.

Stevenson was born in 1850, into a famous family: his grandfather was the engineer and lighthouse builder Robert Stevenson, and his father Thomas, and his uncles Alan and David followed that profession. Robert Louis (christened Lewis) was a sickly child, and his upbringing was sheltered. It was (notoriously) governed by his nanny, Alison Cunningham ('Cummy'), whose extreme Free Church views had a lasting (and morbid) effect on Stevenson's imagination, and which may have sown the seeds of his lifelong

[9] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 306.

[10] Ian Bell, *Robert Louis Stevenson: Dreams of Exile, A Biography* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1992), 165.

religious rebelliousness. His stepson, Lloyd Osbourne (although not always the most reliable biographer), reported on Stevenson's consequent views on child-rearing:

> A child should early gain some perception of what the world really is like—its baseness, its treacheries, its thinly veneered brutalities; he should learn to judge people, and discount human frailty and weakness, and be in some degree prepared and armed for taking his part later in the battle of life. I have no patience with this fairy-tale training that makes ignorance a virtue. That was how I was brought up, and no one will ever know except myself the bitter misery it cost me.[11]

There was another long-lasting childhood influence, which certainly surfaces in *Treasure Island*: the cardboard toy theatre. Stevenson, who shared an enthusiasm for these with the likes of Charles Dickens, Aubrey Beardsley, and Ellen Terry, wrote enthusiastically in 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured' (*The Magazine of Art*, April 1884) about the 'stagey and piratic Skelt', publisher of 'Skelt's Juvenile Drama'. 'Every sheet we fingered was another lightning glance into obscure, delicious story; it was like wallowing in the raw stuff of story-books . . . here is the inn (the drama must be nautical, I foresee Captain Luff and Bold Bob Bowsprit) with the red curtains, pipes, spittoons and eight-day clock.' G. K. Chesterton felt that for many years Skelt's 'peepshow' remained for Stevenson 'the true window of the world'.[12]

A third major factor in Stevenson's life was his complex relationship with his father; he was at once rebellious, unwillingly dependent, and affectionate. Several critics have seen *Treasure Island*, and Jim Hawkins's tortuous relationship with Long John Silver, as an extended meditation on this. For example, the scene in which Jim is surrounded by the pirates, and shows the kind of pluck so conspicuous in his fictional forebears in facing down Long John, has been read as part of a classic Freudian scenario: 'the representation of the adolescent confronted by a castrating father-figure who, however, already bears the marks of a son's desire to turn the tables on him by being himself maimed, that is symbolically emasculated'.[13]

[11] Lloyd Osbourne, 'Stevenson at Thirty-Two', *Works* (1923), vol. ii, pp. xv–xvi.

[12] *Memories and Portraits*, xxix. 104, 107, 108; 18. G. K. Chesterton, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), 95. See also George Speaight, *The History of the English Toy Theatre*, 2nd edn. (London: Studio Vista, 1969).

[13] Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism: A Future Feeling* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 52.

Be that as it may, Thomas Stevenson tried to persuade his son to become an engineer, and when that failed, to become an advocate. Stevenson, however, chose to train himself as a writer, acquiring a reputation as an essayist, notably in the *Cornhill Magazine*; its editor, Leslie Stephen, introduced him to W. E. Henley. A collection, *Virginibus Puerisque*, was published in 1881. Such was Stevenson's reputation for this lightly philosophical kind of writing that when, in 1893, Kenneth Grahame published a not dissimilar collection of essays, *Pagan Papers* (many of which had first appeared in Henley's *National Observer*), a reviewer noted that he was 'only one in a crowd, only one in a generation who turns out a "Stevensonette" as easily and as lightly as it rolls a cigarette'.[14] Despite the *succès d'estime* of two travel books, *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), Stevenson remained reliant on his father for money.

The Writing and Publication of Treasure Island

In 1879, despite very poor health, Stevenson travelled to California, where he married Fanny Osbourne; August 1881 found them, with Fanny's son Samuel Lloyd Osbourne (then known as Sam) and Stevenson's parents, staying at a cottage in Braemar. It was here that *Treasure Island* (and the myth of *Treasure Island*) was begun. Just as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wind in the Willows* have accumulated a certain romance about their beginnings, so *Treasure Island*'s beginnings have been embroidered. It certainly seems to have begun with a map, but whether it was one drawn by Lloyd (as Lloyd claimed) or by Stevenson (as Stevenson claimed) has been debated. What is clear is that the book was under way by 25 August, when Stevenson wrote to Henley (using some phrases that have become bywords in the study of children's books):

> I am now on another lay for the moment, purely owing to Sam; but I do believe there is more coin in it than in any amount of crawlers [horror stories]: now, see here
>
> The Sea Cook
> Or Treasure Island:
> A Story for Boys.

[14] Patrick R. Chalmers, *Kenneth Grahame: Life, Letters and Unpublished Work* (London: Methuen, 1933), 48.

If this don't fetch the kids, why, they have gone rotten since my day. Will you be surprised to learn that it is about Buccaneers, that it begins in the Admiral Benbow public house on [the] Devon coast, that it's all about a map and a treasure and a mutiny and a derelict ship and a current and a fine old Squire Trelawney . . . and a doctor and another doctor, and a Sea Cook with one leg, and a sea song with the chorus 'Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of Rum'. . . . No women in the story: Sam's orders and who so blythe to obey? It's awful fun boy's stories; you just indulge the pleasure of your heart; that's all. No trouble. No stress. No writing, just drive along as the words come and the pen will scratch! The only stiff thing is to get it ended; that I don't see, but I look to a volcano . . . It's quite silly and horrid fun—and what I want is the *best* book about Buccaneers that can be had—the later B's above all, Blackbeard and sich.[15]

Henley seems to have obliged by sending Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates, and also their Policies, Discipline and Government, from their First Rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence, in 1717, to the Present Year 1724.* For many years attributed to Daniel Defoe, this book lies behind many of the ideas about pirates that exist today; it provided Stevenson with not only names for characters (Morgan, Israel Hands), but references to real pirates (Blackbeard, Edwards) and incidents ('the fishing up of the wrecked plate ships') which lend his book an air of authenticity. Perhaps most importantly, Stevenson found the material on the 'Articles' or codes of behaviour of the pirates, the curiously inverted set of 'laws' and customs that chime so well with the ironies of the novel. They appear to provide a subcultural parody of the normative middle-class codes of behaviour, and yet those middle-class codes are slowly revealed as both self-serving and selective. Silver says to the pirates: 'I know the rules, I do; I won't hurt a depytation' (p. 152), but Captain Smollett and his respectable followers won't help Silver to get up when he comes to them under the flag of truce, and let him crawl (p. 108).

At Braemar, Stevenson wrote the first nineteen chapters (according to a letter to Henley in September[16]) or fifteen (according to 'My First Book') at great speed, if not actually a chapter a day. He confessed to Henley: 'I have all my work cut out to write my daily

[15] *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994–5), iii. 225.

[16] *Ibid.* 231.

chapter of *The Sea Cook*. We are away at sea now, which vilely bores me.'[17] His wife, Fanny, did not like it: she wrote to Mrs Edmund Gosse: 'I'm glad Mr Gosse liked "Treasure Island" . . . I don't. I liked the beginning but after that the life seemed to go out of it and it became tedious.'[18] The manuscript was taken away by a visitor, Alexander Japp, who showed it to James Henderson, publisher of the magazine *Young Folks*, which had begun life in 1871 as *Our Young Folks' Weekly Budget*, and sold at ½*d*. When Stevenson saw a copy of it he was not impressed: 'What bosh the stories are—I mean the two I have looked at! 'cré nom! Surely mine should do in such company.' Henderson bought the serial rights, and Stevenson, despite his habit of not finishing books that he was writing, optimistically allowed the serial to begin publication before the book was complete. He wrote to Japp on 6 September: 'I do not think there will be any difficulty in letting him go ahead whenever he likes.'[19]

Inspiration, or concentration, lapsed (Stevenson much preferred to paint a toy theatre for Sam), and it was not until the family arrived at Davros in Switzerland, where they were staying for the winter for Stevenson's health, that the book was finished. Even then, as Fanny remarked, 'the work was taken up, but intermittently. Had it not been appearing as a serial, I doubt if it would have been finished.'[20] Stevenson was paid £34 7*s*. 6*d*., and the serial, under the title *Treasure Island* (by Captain George North), duly appeared, with moderate success. (A Captain Nathaniel North appears in *The History of the Pyrates*: son of a sawyer, he was first a ship's cook, then buccaneer.[21]) Stevenson, although in need of money, made no attempt to publish it in book form, and it was W. E. Henley, then editor of Cassell's *The Magazine of Art*, who (according to Sir Newman Flower, later director of Cassell) 'entered the room of the chief editor, threw the cuttings of "The Sea Cook" . . . on to his desk, and exclaimed in his

[17] *Letters*, 226.

[18] Quoted by James Pope Hennessey, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Cape, 1974), 154; and see Frank McLynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), 197.

[19] *Letters*, iii. 228.

[20] 'Prefatory Note [to *Treasure Island*] by Mrs R. L. Stevenson', *Works* (1923), vol. ii, p. xxi; and compare Stevenson's account, p. 189.

[21] [Daniel Defoe], *A General History of the Pyrates*, ed. Manuel Schonhorn (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), 511.

usual abrupt manner, "There's a book for you!" '[22] Henley negotiated a fee of £100 plus royalties of £20 per thousand copies sold (which were paid until 1944) and Stevenson wrote in delight to his parents on 5 May 1883: 'A hundred pounds, all alive, oh! A hundred jingling, tingling, golden, minted quid. Is this not wonderful?'[23]

On 26 January 1882, he wrote to his father, 'You may be pleased to hear that I mean to re-write *Treasure Island* in the whole latter part, lightening and *siccating* throughout . . . I mean to cut down like a fiend.'[24] He made some effort to revise the novel for book publication (see Note on the Text), but generally resisted his father's suggestions that a little more piety would be in order. Stevenson's ambivalent feelings about his father, and his rebellion against his religious upbringing, are deeply embedded in the book; he wanted to please his father, but could only compromise so far on his own beliefs.

Treasure Island was well, if occasionally patronizingly, received, although the Chicago *Dial* observed that 'the effort to recover a pirate's buried treasure . . . is neither dignified nor edifying. It will be relished by adventure-loving boys, but whether it will be wholesome reading for them is more than doubtful'.[25] An early biographer noted that 'Statesmen and judges and all sorts of staid and sober men became boys once more, sitting up long after bedtime to read their new book'. These included Gladstone, of whom Stevenson did not approve, and he wrote to his mother in December 1884: 'It appears Gladstone talks all the time about *Treasure Island*; he would do better to attend to the imperial affairs of England.' W. B. Yeats wrote that his seafaring grandfather read *Treasure Island* 'upon his death-bed with infinite satisfaction'.[26]

Treasure Island sold only 5,600 copies in the first year and averaged around 4,500 a year until 1897[27] but it was Stevenson's first step

[22] Quoted in Roger G. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 67.

[23] *Letters*, iv. 119–20.

[24] *Ibid.* iii. 276.

[25] Maixner (ed.), *Critical Heritage*, 42.

[26] Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Methuen, 1913), 211; *Letters*, v. 33 n. 2; 49; J. C. Furnas, *Voyage to Windward: The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 181.

[27] Stephen Gwynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Macmillan, 1939), 105; Christopher Harvie, 'The Politics of Stevenson', in Jenni Calder (ed.), *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 108.

towards financial independence and genuine literary fame, and when *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was published his reputation and financial stability were assured.

Treasure Island *and the History of Children's Literature*

In the introductory verse to *Treasure Island*, 'To the Hesitating Purchaser', Stevenson claims that his is a traditional sea story, 'all the old romance, retold | Exactly in the ancient way', placing himself in the tradition of Kingston, Ballantyne, and Cooper. In 'My First Book' he admits to plagiarizing Defoe, Poe, Marryat, and Washington Irving (although, as with almost all Stevenson's pronouncements on the book, both of these statements need to be approached with some care). *Treasure Island* is clearly a source-hunter's paradise, a densely layered texture of borrowings and echoes, but the genre Stevenson was working with was not as monolithic as is often supposed. To claim that he 'jettisoned, without a thought, all the moral attitudes which previous writers for children had thought it proper to maintain . . . blurring . . . the usual black-and-white of right and wrong' is to over-simplify.[28]

The history of children's literature in the nineteenth century was characterized by two overlapping trends. The first was the move away from didacticism and religion towards fantasy and secularism; the second was the development of the distinction between books for girls and books for boys (given that both were widely read by adults). Broadly speaking, girls' books looked inwards, either to social benevolence or the life of the imagination, embracing folk- and fairy-tales; boys' books looked outward to conquest and active adventure, developing a symbiotic relationship with nationalism, capitalism, and codes of behaviour rooted in a combination of religion and commercialism.

One of the earliest genres to be adopted by writers for boys was the island story, which from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) had crossed the exotic and the adventurous with strong mercantile, religious, and racial ideologies; merging with the travel book and the sea story, this was ideal material for the literature of empire. *Robinson Crusoe*, much imitated and soon adapted for

[28] John Rowe Townsend, *Written for Children* (Harmondsworth: Kestrel, 1974), 65–6.

children, transmuted into Johann Wyss's *The Swiss Family Robinson* (English translation by William Godwin 1816), and thence, via Captain Marryat, into a new genre. In the 'Preface' to his *Masterman Ready* (1841) Marryat objected to the inaccuracies in Wyss's book:

> I pass over the seamanship, or want of it . . . as that is not a matter of any consequence: as in the comedy, where, when people did not understand Greek, Irish did just as well, so it is with a large portion of the seamanship displayed in naval writing. But what compelled me to abandon the task [of writing a sequel, as his children had asked] was that much ignorance, or carelessness had been displayed in describing the vegetable and animal productions of the island on which the family had been wrecked. The island is supposed to be far to the southward, near to Van Dieman's land; yet in these temperate latitudes we have not only plants, but animals introduced, which could only be found in the interior of Africa or the torrid zone, mixed up with those really indigenous to the climate. This was an error that I could not persuade myself to follow up. It is true that it is a child's book; but I consider, for that very reason, it is necessary that the author should be particular in what may appear to be trifles, but which really are not, when it is remembered how strong the impressions are upon the juvenile mind. Fiction, when written for young children should, at all events, be *based* on truth.

He would not have approved of Stevenson's approach to the flora and fauna, which was at best anachronistic, and at worst (in Marryat's terms) cavalier. The vegetation of Treasure Island is not Caribbean (as it should be, to judge from clues about the island's whereabouts) but is loosely based on the Monterey peninsula: as Stevenson noted, 'the scenery is Californian in part, and part chic'.[29] But, bearing in mind Stevenson's playfulness, it may equally be a parody of the writing of Captain Mayne Reid, who said of his *The Boy Hunters* (1853) that it was written 'so as to create a taste for that most refining study, the study of nature'.[30] Stevenson *did* respect (so far as he was able) the necessity for accurate descriptions of seamanship that Marryat so despairs of—although, as he admits in 'My First Book': 'I was unable to handle a brig (which the *Hispaniola* should have been), but thought I could make shift to sail her as a schooner'. However, as he wrote to Henley (mid-December 1883): 'Of course my seamanship is Jimmy . . .

[29] *Letters*, iv. 300.

[30] Edward Salmon, *Juvenile Literature as It Is* (London: Henry J. Drane, 1888), 35.

I make these paper people to please myself, and Skelt, and God Almighty, and with no ulterior purpose.'[31]

Novels which deal with the sea (together with the terms 'swab' and 'lubber') have been traced back to Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748) although only thirteen of its sixty-nine chapters are set at sea. (The first mate of the ship that Random sails in, *Thunder*, is Mr Morgan, and they visit Hispaniola.) As Stevenson said in his essay 'The English Admirals': 'No reader can forget the description of the *Thunder* . . .: the disorderly tyranny; the cruelty and dirt of officers and men; deck after deck, each with some new object of offence . . . There are portions of this business on board the *Thunder* over which the reader passes lightly, and hurriedly, like a traveller in a malarious country.'[32] Not, perhaps, the stuff of romance, and so a more convincing candidate for the founder of the genre might be James Fenimore Cooper (who pointed out that he had taken a different course from Smollett). His *The Pilot* (1824) was based upon his own naval experiences—and features an old seaman called Long Tom Coffin. (Another candidate for the first sea story is Eugène Sue's 'Kernok, the Corsair', which appeared in *La Mode* in 1830, and in *Plik et Plok* in 1858.)

The island-sea-adventure genre was picked up by the producers of the 'penny dreadfuls': from the 1840s publishers like Edward Lloyd found that there was a 'spasmodic demand for tales of smugglers or buccaneers'. However, as E. S. Turner observes, 'There was precious little ozone or salt spray in the earlier stories . . . One of Lloyd's titles was *The Death Ship, or The Pirate's Bride and the Maniac of the Deep*. The seas were cluttered with spectral barks and gallows ships.'[33]

Religion was central to the work of writers in the genre at the respectable end of the market, such as W. H. G. Kingston and R. M. Ballantyne. However, as early as *Masterman Ready*, there was a move away from strict moralizing: Tommy, the spoiled little boy in Marryat's book who causes Ready's death because of his laziness at the fight at the stockade, is not made to feel guilty about it. This was not a steady progression—Kingston's later books reverted to an evangelical tone—and attitudes towards religion and empire were generally more

[31] *Letters*, iv. 217.

[32] *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), *Works* (1924), xxv. 87–8.

[33] E. S. Turner, *Boys Will Be Boys* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 25.

subtle and more variable than is often thought. Ballantyne, for example, was far from being a jingoist; his books are generally opposed to militarism, and his use of irony and masquerade have been seen as a starting point for Stevenson's writing, rather than as a convention to be challenged.[34] The one consistent trend in the genre was the move from adult to boy heroes, as the idea of the noble British Boy—with its ramifications of class and masculinity—became one of the central pillars of colonial ideology.[35]

It is clear that Stevenson was often very close to his predecessors, but almost always in matters—liberality, and freedom of thought, for example—with which they are *not* commonly credited, and further away from his predecessors in matters with which they *are* credited. In *Treasure Island*, Stevenson's efforts at piratical history (in the mode of G. A. Henty) or natural history (as in Mayne Reid) were cheerfully spurious. Perhaps most of all, his use of violence has been misread: Jan Needle suggests that *Treasure Island* deploys 'the classic ingredients of the adventure yarn [with] unremitting intensity', that it is 'the story of a child in a world not just of adults, but of totally ruthless, indeed mentally crippled adults', and that it is distinguished by the fact that Stevenson was 'prepared to stare this fact in the face'.[36] The idea, often repeated, that Stevenson's violence is more graphic than that of his predecessors is quite wrong. In a study of boys' periodicals Kirsten Drotner suggests that the 'new adulation of the victor marked an important ideological change from the earlier ideals of religious submission . . . Unlike the martyr or the missionary, the manly adventurer embodied a contemporary male norm, while performing norm-breaking actions such as manslaughter or rape.'[37] If this seems unlikely, a single page of chapter 9 of Marryat's *The Pirate* (1836)

[34] See Stuart Hannabus, 'Ballantyne's Message of Empire', in Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 53–71; Fiona McCulloch, *The Fictional Role of Childhood in Victorian and Early Twentieth Century Children's Literature* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 70.

[35] See Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855–1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 47, 51; C. C. Eldridge, *The Imperial Experience: From Carlyle to Forster* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 68–9; Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes, British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 55.

[36] Jan Needle, 'Needle on Treasure Island', in Chris Powling (ed.), *The Best of* Books for Keeps (London: The Bodley Head, 1994), 3–7.

[37] Kirsten Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines 1751–1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 100; and see Kevin Carpenter, *Desert Isles and*

sees Captain Cain break the wrist of his captive, and then throw him and his betrothed overboard; then the Bishop's daughter throws herself to the sharks, rather than be 'turned over to the crew'—and things were worse down among the 'penny dreadfuls'. One problem, as F. J. Harvey Darton has pointed out, was that 'lawless adventure was the feat that haunted the advocates of manliness. As Satan was sometimes considered the hero of *Paradise Lost*, so the Pirate King might almost be given a romantic halo.'[38]

The pervasiveness of the genre can be seen in Lieut.-Col. Robin Redforth (aged 9) in Charles Dickens's *A Holiday Romance* (1868), or the children of the 1860s at play, cutting down the pirate captain in 'A Saga of the Seas' as portrayed in Kenneth Grahame's *Dream Days* (1898). But times were changing, and the faltering of confidence of the high Victorian era, and the liberalization of attitudes to childhood meant that the established genres were becoming ripe for overhaul. In an increasingly godless universe, issues of faith and doubt, and fantasy and realism became part of the matrix of the children's book, notably with writers such as Lewis Carroll, Richard Jefferies—and Robert Louis Stevenson.

How Treasure Island *Reimagined the Genre*

'I know of no more striking example', wrote one of Stevenson's biographers, 'of an artist's taking a cheap, artificial set of commercialised values—which is fair enough to the Victorian "boys' story"—and doing work of everlasting quality by changing nothing, transmuting everything, as if Jane Austen had ennobled soap-opera.'[39] Stevenson's relationship with his models was, as we have seen, far from straightforwardly oppositional; but in his hands a genre that was largely self-righteous and self-confident, politically and religiously conservative, artificial and brutal became ambiguous and questioning, subversive of conventional politics and religion, and authentic and thoughtful about its violence. The great achievement (or paradox) is that this was carried off with such a zestful adherence to the surface characteristics of the genre that *Treasure Island*'s true character has been masked

Pirate Islands: The Island Theme in Nineteenth-Century English Juvenile Fiction, A Survey and Bibliography (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), 89.

[38] Darton, *Children's Books*, 294.

[39] Furnas, *Voyage to Windward*, 182.

from the outset. A review in the *Daily News* admired it as one of 'the stirring, wholesome narratives of adventure' which helped to 'make boys manly, inventive and independent' and encouraged 'the spirit of enterprise which drives our race all over the world'.[40]

At first sight, *Treasure Island* might seem to be the apotheosis of generic convention. What happens? A treasure map comes into the hands of our young hero; he becomes part of an expedition to recover the treasure from an exotic island; he encounters a devious villain and a marooned seaman; by good luck he saves his colleagues from treachery; there is a pitched battle with pirates; the treasure is recovered, and our hero arrives home safely.

From Ballantyne through G. A. Henty, and into the 1920s with writers like Percy F. Westerman, the archetypal island-sea-adventure story is a circular quest, closely related to folk-tale patterns and based on individual and cultural wish-fulfilment. The hero, generally middle class, is often the narrator: he is frank, upstanding, straightforward, and unreflective. Jack Martin, of Ballantyne's *The Coral Island,* is characteristic:

> Jack Martin was a tall, strapping, broad-shouldered youth of eighteen, with a handsome, good-humoured, firm face. He had had a good education, was clever and hearty and lion-like in his actions, but mild and quiet in disposition. Jack was a general favourite. (chapter 2)

The hero, sometimes in straitened circumstances, has a father (or the memory of a father) he can look up to, and a mother of whom he can think fondly—otherwise, female characters are rare. He often has special skills, and/or acquires a talisman to help him on his quest.

Jim Hawkins, as the admirable Captain Smollett—possibly the only genuinely grown-up character in the book—observes, is not someone he would wish to sail with again (p. 178). He is a 'real' boy, with boyish impulses (on which the plot turns) and weaknesses (such as bullying the boy who takes his place at the inn). As a narrator, his sense of disillusionment can make him an uneasy companion for the reader. Jim's father is weak and no match even for such a broken-down pirate as Billy Bones. His attitude to his mother is ambiguous: 'how I blamed my poor mother for her honesty and her greed, for her past foolhardiness and present weakness!' (p. 29). She is not mentioned on his return. Nor is Jim an upstanding British boy: he is no fighter,

[40] *Letters*, iv. 216.

and rather than growing into a man through his experiences, he remains boyish—even when being pursued around the deck of the *Hispaniola* by a homicidal pirate, he sees it as 'such a game as I had often played at home about the rocks of Black Hill Cove' (p. 137). Nor does he take responsibility for his actions: when he shoots Israel Hands, he does not even claim self-defence: 'I scarce can say it was by my own volition, and I am sure it was without a conscious aim' (p. 139). And even the talisman, the map, is stolen.

Our hero now sets out on his adventure, and the genre usually equips him with reliable friends (like himself), and/or an older guide or mentor whom he can respect. After a bracing voyage (complete with extensive, if perhaps bewildering sailing instructions) he arrives in exciting foreign parts, whose flora and fauna are meticulously described.

Stevenson, approaching his task with considerable enthusiasm ('gleeful' crops up quite often in critical commentaries), consciously or unconsciously demolished most of these conventions. Jim's 'friends', the Squire and the Doctor, are as driven by greed as the pirates; and his 'mentor' is that master of duplicity, Long John Silver: and Silver and Jim become, by a great irony, like father and son. Trelawney, Smollett, and the Doctor, the 'good' characters and the more obvious father-figures, are simply inadequate. Perhaps only the unbending Captain Smollett, or Grey, the reformed mutineer, can be described as virtuous: Trelawney is, at least initially, portrayed as a buffoon, and the Doctor's veneer of honesty and competence is not without its cracks (as Smollett says to him: 'If that was how you served at Fontenoy, sir, you'd have been better in your berth'). But it is Long John, the antithesis of Masterman Ready and his stolid and trustworthy successors, who is at the heart of Stevenson's subversion. Reflected through the unreliable prism of Jim the narrator, he epitomizes the frisson generated by the romance, of realistic evil made safe by existing, as Sir Walter Scott put it, in a world of 'marvellous and uncommon incidents'.[41] In Stevenson's surreal, not to say postmodern fable, 'The Persons of the Tale' (reprinted here as Appendix 2), Silver, taking a break with Captain Smollett from the plot, reveals the secret:

'What I know is this: if there is sich a thing as a Author, I'm his favourite chara'ter. He does me fathoms better'n he does you—fathoms, he does.

[41] Sir Walter Scott, 'Essay on Romance' (1824), in Miriam Allott, *Novelists on the Novel* (London: Routledge, 1965), 49.

And he likes doing me. He keeps me on deck mostly all the time, crutch and all . . . he's on my side, and you may lay to it!' (pp. 192–3)

Silver, quick-witted and quick-tongued (as his name suggests), moves between the two worlds of the gentry and the seamen relying on his linguistic dexterity: as Israel Hands says, 'He had good schooling in his young days, and can speak like a book when so minded' (p. 58). He can, of course, also speak like a sailor, and when he first encounters Jim, as the caricature of a sailor: 'When I was an A B master mariner I'd have come up alongside of him, hand over hand, and broached him to in a brace of old shakes, I would' (pp. 48–9). Stevenson's success in making such scenes plausible hinges simultaneously on the flawed character of Jim, and on the fact that, as narrator, Jim has a dual identity—the boy in the story, and the older boy (or man) telling the story. The storyteller is analytic enough to maintain the interest of the readers—he describes Silver as 'too deep, and too ready, and too clever for me' (p. 48)—while carefully and unanalytically showing his younger self in a good light. Thus, when Jim takes 'French leave' from the stockade, the narrator observes 'that was so bad a way of doing it as made the thing itself wrong. But I was only a boy, and I had made my mind up' (p. 117). We are not simply watching a story; we are watching the narrator watching the story. And so, when Jim interacts with John Silver, he can at one moment wish to kill him through the barrel (p. 59), call him 'John' throughout the scene when Tom is murdered (pp. 78–9), describe Silver's abject fear of the gallows (p. 160), and casually note, as he stands with him beside the excavation, 'He was brave, and no mistake' (p. 175). It is not only Silver who shifts his character, and not only the boy who responds, but Jim the narrator who colludes or judges. The Silver–Jim relationship is not one of an obvious villain playing with a gullible boy; it is one of a complex human contemplated by a confused human: the narrator-Jim does not, for all his piousness, know how to judge Silver. Thus, the reader is often left to make a judgement on both Jim the boy and Jim the narrator, as when, surrounded by pirates, Jim appeals to Silver:

'I believe you're the best man here, and if things go to the worst, I'll take it kind of you to let the doctor know the way I took it.'

'I'll bear it in mind,' said Silver, with an accent so curious that I could not, for the life of me, decide whether he were laughing at my request, or had been favourably affected by my courage. (p. 148)

The mechanics of the voyage itself are dismissed in two sentences: 'It was fairly prosperous. The ship proved to be a good ship, the crew were capable seamen, and the captain thoroughly understood his business' (p. 56). But if the sailing does not seem to interest Stevenson, the language of the sea does: the speeches of Long John Silver and Israel Hands, especially, are so densely spattered with sea terms, and the sailing of the schooner described without a glossary (although one is provided in this edition) that it is tempting to see the arcane language as an elaborate joke. This perhaps reaches its peak with Silver's challenge: 'Have I lived this many years, and a son of a rum puncheon cock his hat athwart my hawse at the latter end of it?' (pp. 148–9).

But despite these touches, and the verve of the telling, *Treasure Island* is not a light-hearted or optimistic book. The contrast with R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858) could not be more stark. For example, when Ballantyne's boys are surveying the island on which they have been wrecked, Ralph Rover rhapsodizes on what he sees:

> I cast my eyes about, and truly my heart glowed within me and my spirits rose at the beautiful prospect which I beheld on every side . . . A sandy beach of dazzling whiteness lined this bright green shore, and upon it there fell a gentle ripple of the sea . . . My heart was filled with more delight than I can express at sight of so many glorious objects, and my thoughts turned suddenly to the contemplation of the Creator of them all. (chapter 4)

And here is the seasick Jim, contemplating Treasure Island for the first time:

> Perhaps it was this—perhaps it was the look of the island, with its grey, melancholy woods, and wild stone spires, and the surf that we could both see and hear foaming and thundering on the steep beach . . . and from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island. (p. 71)

As Stevenson wrote to J. M. Barrie (1 November 1892), 'If you are going to make a book end badly, it must end badly from the beginning', and he certainly applies his rule to the episodes on Treasure Island itself.[42]

Once on the island, our conventional hero would battle natives and pirates, but always honourably, with British pluck, and with an innate knowledge of his own superiority. The villains come to a bloody, or wet, end. There are occasional homilies, based upon a moral code

[42] *Letters*, vii. 413.

directed at boys by men. Finally, our hero returns home to his family, covered with glory and/or wealth, validated by the conservative values of a stable society.

From the fanciful flora to Jim's progress, which is ruled by luck rather than pluck, and Silver's final escape, things on Treasure Island do not go by the book—or by the old books. The chess game of greed is not played between the good and the bad, but between two classes, the more-or-less disciplined gentry, and the undisciplined pirates ('I never in my life saw men so careless of the morrow', p. 163), one group with knowledge and one without ('We're all foc's'le hands . . . We can steer a course, but who's to set one?' p. 63). Long John Silver is caught between the two: as the Doctor says: 'Camp in a bog, would you? Silver, I'm surprised at you. You're less of a fool than many, take you all round; but you don't appear to me to have the rudiments of a notion of the rules of health' (p. 158). But even here Stevenson subverts obvious contrasts: it is only Captain Smollett who can maintain the necessary discipline in the stockade, and it is only Israel Hands, 'a careful, wily, old, experienced seaman, who could be trusted at a pinch with almost anything' (p. 57), who can instruct Jim how to sail the *Hispaniola*. And if the gentry feel their superiority over the sailors, it cannot be in terms of purity of motive, or wisdom of action, or any attempt to transcend class prejudices: Captain Smollett's belief is 'Spoil foc's'le hands, make devils' (p. 59) and of the £700,000 of treasure, Ben Gunn's 'ample share' is £1,000.

If there is a conspicuous lack of principle on the island, there is also a conspicuous lack of religion, a point not missed by Stevenson's otherwise supportive father, who particularly disapproved of the second half of the novel. His comments on what might be added when Ben Gunn is introduced to the tale sum up the conventional moralizing of the genre so comprehensively that they are worth quoting at length.

> I would interject a long passage . . . of a religious character. I would have him ask if Jim had ever been at some little . . . village say Mousehole . . . & whether he had ever heard of his father or mother. The want of such an enquiry strikes me as unnatural. Then I would have him regret the fatal day on which he had run away from his home and some pathetic passage should follow as to what he had lost and what troubles he had passed through and something about his misspending of Sundays and something about the Minister of the place and the sayings of his father or his mother and so forth. So far as I can see this is the only way of harking back to something

higher than incident. Perhaps some story of his going with a companion and netting or nutting in the woods on Sunday and his mother's objections. In short you might have here a striking and pathetic passage to relieve the more bloody work which goes after. . . . I want you to make a real point of his breaking away from home and this should be a kind of religious tract and should be fully done but all in the Defoe style. (Letter dated 26 February 1882)

Stevenson, the ambivalent rebel, initially seemed to agree—'I had meant to dwell on Benjamin later on, and never had room for him; but, as you say, we'll put a whole religious tract in that very place'[43]—but in fact he added only ten lines about Gunn's pious mother and (a device of great antiquity) the cause of his downfall: 'and it begun with chuck-farthen on the blessed grave-stones!' (p. 83). He stood firm, however, on the question of Long John Silver: 'I own I do not agree with you about the later chapters of *Treasure Island*. I think John Silver in his later developments about as good as anything in it. I should say about the best of it' (March 1882).[44]

Jim's grim departure from Treasure Island, with the cries of the marooned men in his ears ('to take them home for the gibbet would have been a cruel sort of kindness', p. 181), is diametrically opposed to the departure of Ralph Rover and his friends from the Coral Island:

It was a bright, clear morning when we hoisted the snow-white sails of the pirate schooner and . . . glided quickly over the lagoon under a cloud of canvas. Just as we passed through the channel in the reef the natives gave us a loud cheer; and as the missionary waved his hat, while he stood on a coral rock with his grey hairs floating in the wind, we heard the single word 'Farewell' borne faintly over the sea. (chapter 35)

Finally, there is no happy homecoming in *Treasure Island*, and scant joy in the treasure. We used it, the narrator reports wearily, 'wisely or foolishly, according to our natures' (p. 182). The point of the story is the adventure, the romance, not the rewards. Nor is there any spiritual resolution: 'Unlike Crusoe, Jim Hawkins is not justified by his works; material success does not resolve moral uncertainty.'[45] The ending spirals around to a grim rejection of the very place that

[43] Maixner (ed.), *Critical Heritage*, 127.

[44] *Letters*, iii. 294.

[45] William Blackburn, 'Mirror in the Sea: *Treasure Island* and the Internationalization of Juvenile Romance', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 8/3 (1983), 11.

at the beginning of the book seemed to hold out a vision of excitement and reward.

Stevenson and the Romance

In short, in Stevenson's hands the ambiguities inherent in the genre shift uneasily into the foreground. The fact that Stevenson could sustain the illusion of writing a hearty adventure was partly due to his chameleon-like nature as a writer (so detrimental to his reputation) which allowed him to produce so skilful and affectionate a pastiche of the adventure-thriller writer's mode. From the first paragraph, with its 'treasure not yet lifted', Stevenson provides the grace notes of hints and foreshadowings: 'but in all my fancies nothing occurred to me so strange and tragic as our actual adventures' (p. 41); 'But good did come of the apple barrel, as you shall hear' (p. 59). Tension is built slowly, as when Jim and his mother are searching the pirate's chest, and there are sudden shocks, as when Jim finds himself among the pirates in the stockade. Stevenson (perhaps notoriously) uses the maimed and the grotesque as villains—Black Dog, Billy Bones, Pew, the wounded Israel Hands (seen as the AntiChrist by one critic)[46]—and trims out any details which do not contribute directly to the action or the image.

These are the techniques of the romance, of stories that exist in a parallel universe, where emotions and reactions give a satisfying illusion of reality. As Stevenson observed:

> Character to the boy is a sealed book; for him, a pirate is a beard, a pair of wide trousers and a liberal complement of pistols. The author, for the sake of circumstantiation and because he was himself more or less grown up, admitted character, within certain limits, into his design; but only within certain limits . . . Danger is the matter with which this class of novel deals; fear, the passion with which it idly trifles . . . To add more traits, to be too clever, to start the hare of moral or intellectual interest while we are running the fox of material interest, is not to enrich but to stultify your tale.[47]

Those sentiments are from 'A Humble Remonstrance', written in

[46] Edwin M. Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 119–20.

[47] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Humble Remonstrance', *Memories and Portraits*, xxix. 138.