

The proper pirate: Robert Louis Stevenson's quest for identity

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Abstrak

The Proper Pirate: Robert Louis Stevensons Quest for Identity explores the nineteenth-century author Robert Louis Stevensons psychological journey from a constricted and religious family of Scottish engineers to a life of imagination and adventure that culminated in the South Seas island of Samoa. Drawing on contemporary theories of identity development, the author traces how Stevenson overcame Victorian dualities of piety versus passion in his personal life and artistic works, gradually edging toward a more modernist and complicated moral vision. This first full-length psychobiographical analysis of Stevenson follows the trajectory of his life, while highlighting how key memories and conflicts within his personality shaped the narrative structure and themes of his most celebrated works, Treasure Island, A Childs Garden of Verses, Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and Kidnapped. Stevensons relationships to his parents, wife, Fanny, and circle of intimate friends also play a prominent role in this investigation of his emerging identity and artistic work. Drawing on Stevensons extensive volumes of correspondence, personal memoirs, essays, novels, stories, and poems, as well as historical documents, multiple biographies, and critical studies, the author uses his background as a clinical psychologist and researcher in personality science to provide new insights into Stevensons psychological development. In doing so, he helps to unlock the mystery of how a sickly youth confined to the land of the counterpane grew up to become the author of some of the worlds most beloved and enduring works of adventure and fantasy.