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The Disruption of Victorian Moral Order: A Todorovian Analysis of Ethical Ambiguity and Unresolved Morality in *Treasure Island*

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Abstract
Victorian literature often promotes moral clarity, yet Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* complicates this convention by presenting a world where ethical boundaries blur. Despite being framed as a children's adventure tale, the novel raises unresolved moral questions that challenge Victorian ideals of virtue and vice. The problem this study addresses is the novel's refusal to restore the moral order expected in Victorian narratives, leaving readers with an ethically unstable conclusion. This research is significant as it demonstrates how Stevenson anticipates modernist scepticism about universal moral truths. Using a qualitative textual approach, the study applies Todorov's three-stage narrative model: equilibrium, disruption, and new equilibrium to examine how the novel structurally produces moral ambiguity. Findings reveal that the work deliberately disrupts narrative restoration, allowing ethical uncertainty, pragmatic survival, and unpunished wrongdoing to dominate the conclusion. The study recommends further exploration of moral ambiguity in Victorian adventure fiction and the application of Todorovian analysis to other canonical texts.
Keywords: Treasure Island; Todorov; Moral Ambiguity; Victorian Literature; Narrative Structure

Introduction

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) occupies a paradoxical position within Victorian literature, functioning simultaneously as a children's adventure tale and a subversive interrogation of the moral certainties that defined the era. Published during the height of Queen Victoria's reign, a period characterised by rigid moral absolutism, imperial confidence, and clear demarcations between virtue and vice (Buckley, 1981), Stevenson's novel instead presents readers with a narrative landscape in which ethical boundaries dissolve and conventional Victorian values are systematically destabilised. This study employs Todorov's structural narrative theory to examine how *Treasure Island* disrupts traditional moral equilibrium and refuses to restore it, thereby challenging the foundational assumptions of Victorian moral order.

Todorov's narrative theory, first articulated in his works "Structural Analysis of

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Narrative" (1969) and "The Two Principles of Narrative" (1971), presents that narratives follow a fundamental structure moving from equilibrium through disruption to a new equilibrium. Todorov argued that stories should begin with a stable situation disturbed by some force, resulting in a state of imbalance, after which characters must search for a new equilibrium (Todorov, 1971). This three-stage framework, equilibrium, disequilibrium, and restoration, provides a productive lens for analysing how *Treasure Island* systematically undermines Victorian moral expectations. However, while Todorov's model anticipates narrative resolution, Stevenson's novel persistently resists such closure, particularly in its ethical dimensions. The narrative concludes with ambiguity and no direction for moral clarification, as the duplicitous Long John Silver escapes unpunished and the apparently virtuous protagonists claim treasure obtained through piracy and murder (Jia, 2017).

Todorov's theoretical framework extended beyond simple plot mechanics to encompass broader questions of narrative transformation and ethical representation. Todorov explored the concept of narrative transformation, analysing how stories evolve through a series of equilibria and disequilibria. He paid greater attention to the ethical and political implications of literature than many of his structuralist contemporaries (de Berg & Zbinden, 2020). This ethical dimension of Todorov's work proves particularly siginificant when applied to *Treasure Island*, a text that scholars have long recognised as morally ambiguous. Through discussion of the moral ambiguity in Stevenson's characterisation and plot-setting, scholars have argued that the author was not only occupied with romantic storytelling but also concerned with morality (Hall, 2025).

Recent scholarship has increasingly recognised the significance of this moral complexity in Stevenson's canon. After the success of *Treasure Island* in 1883, representations of perpetual boyhood fascinated the late Victorians as such images could naturalise a new spirit of imperial aggression and new policies of preserving power through a morally flexible ethic of competitive play (Deane, 2011). By refusing to promote a strong sense of religious and racial superiority in his adventure story, Stevenson takes away the primary reason the victrorians use to claim their moral legitimacy (Treagus, 2025). This systematic undermining of Victorian moral certainties extends to the novel's treatment of class, criminality, and civilisation itself. Silver's violence and greed are presented as the ailments of an imperialistic society that condones stealing the treasures of others in the name of God, Gold, and Glory (Noimann, 2012).

The initial equilibrium of young Jim Hawkins's secure existence at the Admiral Benbow Inn is disrupted not merely by external piratical forces but by an internal moral crisis that the narrative never fully resolves. Painful decisions, such as abandoning mutineers on the island, must be made for pragmatic reasons, so that what may at first seem immoral is accounted for by logic (Norquay, 2024). This pragmatic morality, divorced from the absolute Victorian ethical standards expected of children's literature in the 1880s, represents a radical departure from the didactic certainty expected of children's literature in the 1880s. *Treasure Island* marks a pivotal moment in the late-Victorian representation of piracy, offering an integrative play ethic through which the boy and his piratical antagonist could easily fit together, collapsing traditional moral binaries (Deane, 2011).

Stevenson skillfully set the stage for the novel, where people are not confined to social moral codes and their behaviour is freed from the judgment of moral and

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judicial yardsticks (Macura, 2009). The geography of *Treasure Island* becomes a moral terrain in which traditional Victorian values prove inadequate for survival. This study argues that Stevenson deploys Todorov's narrative structure not to reinforce but to interrogate Victorian moral assumptions, creating what might be termed an "anti-resolution" that leaves fundamental ethical questions deliberately unanswered. The moral ambiguity in Treasure Island is underscored by Jim's interactions with Long John Silver, whose complex, equivocal personality makes him at times both villain and hero (Clawson, 2017). By examining the novel's refusal to restore moral equilibrium, this analysis demonstrates how *Treasure Island* functions as a radical critique of Victorian moral absolutism, anticipating modernist scepticism about universal ethical truths while remaining embedded in ostensibly conventional adventure-narrative structures.

Literature Review

The scholarly discourse surrounding Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) reveals sustained critical engagement with the novel's moral complexity and its subversive relationship to Victorian literary and cultural conventions. This literature review synthesises key academic contributions examining the text's ethical ambiguity, its interrogation of imperial ideology, and its manipulation of narrative structures, providing a foundation for understanding how *Treasure Island* disrupts traditional moral frameworks.

Jia (2017) conducted a comprehensive analysis of moral ambiguity in Stevenson's characterisation and plot construction, arguing that the author was fundamentally concerned with man's morality rather than merely producing romantic entertainment. Through qualitative examination of textual passages, Jia established that Stevenson emphasised the dual nature of Victorian morality rather than following critical realists who severely criticised late Victorian decadence. The study's most significant contribution lies in demonstrating how Stevenson's ambivalence toward rendering definitive moral verdicts on characters like Long John Silver creates a deliberately unresolved ethical landscape. Stevenson set a narrative background in which characters are freed from conventional social and moral codes and judicial yardsticks, allowing them to function simultaneously as litigants and judges of moral issues. Furthermore, Stevenson gave Silver an equivocal ending that exempted the author from making a right-or-wrong judgment on Silver's deeds, with the character's sudden disappearance and a portion of treasure artistically solving the technical problem of his removal while leaving readers to surmise his future fortune.

Nabaskues (2018) advanced the discourse through an iusphilosophical approach, examining legal, ethical, and moral complications in *Treasure Island*, published in the *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*. The research employed qualitative observation to analyse the novel's shifting moral landscape, in which characters make ethical choices outside conventional social and moral frameworks. Despite the absence of legal institutions on the island, the rule of law remains evident throughout the narrative, creating a paradoxical tension. The study revealed that Stevenson uses this scenario to express a distinctive, suggestive moral code in which ambiguity, paradox, and contradiction constitute the dominant pattern. Critically, the research established that no character in the novel possesses greater moral legitimacy to claim Flint's treasure than any other: the British gentlemen represent the establishment yet attempt to seize riches that do not

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belong to them. At the same time, pirates aspire to appropriate something that is already part of their universe. This contribution significantly extends the understanding of how *Treasure Island* challenges fundamental assumptions about property, law, and moral authority.

The critical conversation shifted significantly with Deane's (2011) groundbreaking article in *Victorian Studies*, which situated *Treasure Island* within the broader context of late Victorian imperial discourse. Deane demonstrated that representations of perpetual boyhood fascinated late Victorians partly because such images could naturalise a new spirit of imperial aggression and new policies of preserving power. The research traced how mid-Victorian literature employed the opposition between boy and pirate to articulate the moral legitimacy of colonialism. However, in later novels like *Treasure Island*, these figures became doubles rather than antitheses. Deane's most significant contribution was theorising the "imperial play ethic," whereby masculine worth no longer required measurement by transcendent, universal laws but rather by a morally flexible ethic of competitive play that bound together boyishness and piracy in satisfying international adventure. This scholarship fundamentally reoriented understanding of how *Treasure Island* participates in—and subverts—imperial ideology.

Valint (2015) provided a crucial counterargument to traditional readings of the novel in her article published in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, examining how Jim Hawkins resists adult models of behaviour. Through analysis of the novel's multnarrator structure, Valint interpreted Jim's emotional and empathetic character as actively resisting and critiquing the version of adulthood modelled by Dr Livesey, whom she characterised as cruel, greedy, emotionless, and quick to punish those deemed inferior. The research demonstrated that Jim's youth marked him as uninterested in and opposed to the avaricious schemes pursued by all the adults around him, whether gentlemen or pirates. Rather than following Dr Livesey's example of cold rationality and imperial efficiency, Jim takes refuge in an eternal and haunted childhood that rejects adult authority. This interpretation directly challenges readings that position Jim as successfully transitioning to proper Victorian masculinity, instead revealing his narrative as one of resistance to hegemonic adult power structures.

McGillis (2009) extended this analysis in a chapter from *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, published by Oxford University Press, positioning *Treasure Island* as an anti-adventure story. The research demonstrated that Stevenson refused to promote a strong sense of religious and racial superiority in his adventure narrative, thereby draining imperialist roving of its primary claim to moral legitimacy. This interpretation directly challenges conventional readings of *Treasure Island* as straightforward imperial adventure, instead revealing the text's critique of the very genre it appears to exemplify. McGillis argued that Stevenson collaborates with supposed enemies, pirates, and moral ambiguity, to expose the flattery and seductive propaganda that adult storytellers employ to recruit children into empire-building projects. The study established that the project of draining foreign lands of riches is presented as traumatising and morally problematic rather than heroic, with Stevenson exposing how duplicitous Long John Silver flatters Jim Hawkins using the same techniques employed by imperialist children's writers.

Hermeston (2023) contributed an important piece of disability studies

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scholarship in his article published in Language and Literature, examining the linguistic construction of disability stereotypes through an analysis of the blind pirate Pew. This research represented the first illustration of disability stylistics tools applied to a literary text, demonstrating how Stevenson employs negative markers of social esteem to construct Pew as an eyeless, subhuman creature who provokes fear in Jim. Through detailed analysis of noun phrases, transitivity patterns, and language of appraisal, Hermeston revealed how both the pitiable and sinister stereotypes of disability are simultaneously activated and constructed in the text. The article established that Pew is devalued as other through linguistic structures that encode harmful ideologies surrounding disabled people, contributing to broader understandings of how Victorian literature perpetuated disability stereotypes that persist in contemporary media.

Riser (2023) offered a groundbreaking queer theoretical analysis in his West Virginia University thesis, examining anormative masculinities and proto-queer transgender experiences in *Treasure Island*. The research analysed affective responses of disgust and desire toward constructions of queer masculinity, particularly as embodied in the character of Long John Silver. Riser demonstrated that affects in the novel reveal anxieties about reproductive futurity in queer masculinity while simultaneously producing narratives that make historical queer and transgender experiences legible. The thesis established that Jim and Stevenson's stepson, for whom the novel was initially written, occupies a similar position as a boy estranged from his birth fathers and seeking narratives of masculinity and gender transition. Despite Stevenson's claim that his novel is amoral, the research revealed that the text is profoundly concerned with navigating the ethical and moral considerations of masculine transition, particularly how characters negotiate anormative masculinities when hegemonic masculinity has caused harm.

Noimann (2012) contributed an interesting analysis of masculinity and imperialism, examining how *Treasure Island* redefines Victorian conceptions of the gentleman. Both Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver challenged traditional ideas of masculinity, emphasising contemporary goals of a safe home and economic security rather than marriage and duty to the nation. The research established that Silver's violence and greed represent ailments of an imperialistic society that condones stealing the treasures of others in the name of God, Gold, and Glory. By portraying Silver as a self-proclaimed gentleman o' fortune with domestic skills not associated with Victorian masculinity, Stevenson challenged traditional gentlemanly traits, diminished the importance of romance, and de-emphasised fatherhood.

The synthesis of these scholarly contributions reveals *Treasure Island* as a text of remarkable complexity that actively resists the moral certainties expected of Victorian children's literature while simultaneously interrogating imperial ideology, conventional masculine ideals, and normative bodily standards.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology to explore how *Treasure Island* disrupts the Victorian moral order through ethical ambiguity, using Tzvetan Todorov's three-stage narrative model: equilibrium, disruption, and new equilibrium as the primary analytical framework. The qualitative nature of this research is essential because the phenomenon under examination is not measurable but interpretive: moral instability, ethical ambiguity, and unresolved

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endings must be understood through textual meaning rather than numerical analysis. The novel serves as the primary data source, and the research examines how Stevenson's structural choices shape the narrative's moral dynamics.

The data consist of selected passages, narrative sequences, and character interactions that correspond to Todorov's three structural stages. The analysis begins by identifying the novel's initial equilibrium, represented by Jim Hawkins's early life at the Admiral Benbow Inn, which embodies an ordered and morally coherent Victorian world. These passages are examined for their symbolic construction of stability and normative values. The next stage involves isolating and interpreting key disruptive events, characters, and moral challenges that break the established equilibrium. These include the arrival of the pirates, Long John Silver's moral duplicity, shifting loyalties, and Jim's ethically ambiguous decisions. Each disruptive episode is analysed to determine how it destabilises Victorian ideals of virtue, law, and moral certainty. Finally, the study examines the narrative's concluding stage, where Todorov's model anticipates a restoration of equilibrium. Instead, the analysis highlights how Stevenson refuses to restore moral clarity, creating a "new equilibrium" that remains ethically unresolved. Jim's trauma, the unpunished escape of Long John Silver, and the morally compromised acquisition of the treasure expose a structural anti-resolution that subverts the traditional third stage of Todorov's narrative sequence.

The analytical technique combines structural narratology with thematic moral interpretation. Each identified narrative stage is coded for moral indicators justice, legitimacy, authority, guilt, and ambiguity and interpreted in relation to Victorian ethical norms. Secondary scholarship is used to contextualise these findings within broader discussions of imperial ideology, Victorian masculinity, childhood, and moral duality. Through this integrated qualitative approach, the study demonstrates how *Treasure Island* adopts Todorov's narrative structure only to deliberately subvert its final stage, thereby challenging the Victorian expectation of restored moral order.

Data Analysis

The application of Tzvetan Todorov's three-stage narrative model to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* reveals a systematic disruption of Victorian moral order through the novel's deliberate refusal to restore ethical equilibrium. Todorov's framework of equilibrium, disequilibrium, and restoration anticipates that narratives will ultimately return to stability, yet Stevenson's text subverts this expectation at every structural turn. Through close examination of key textual moments, this analysis demonstrates how the work deploys narrative structure not to affirm but to interrogate Victorian moral certainties, creating what might be termed an "anti-resolution.

The novel's initial equilibrium is established through Jim Hawkins's narration of his life at the Admiral Benbow Inn, a setting that represents ordered domesticity and clear moral boundaries. Jim begins by explaining that.

> *"Squire Trelawney, Dr Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 2).

This opening frames the narrative within Victorian expectations of truth-telling and moral Accountability to authority figures. The inn itself functions as a

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microcosm of proper Victorian society, with Jim's father maintaining respectable hospitality. When Dr Livesey confronts the drunken captain, he embodies Victorian authority:

> *"If you keep on drinking rum, the world will soon be quit of a very dirty scoundrel!"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 6).

This interaction establishes clear binaries between respectable society and moral degeneracy. Todorov's equilibrium stage thus appears firmly rooted in Victorian values of temperance, professional authority, and social hierarchy.

However, Stevenson begins undermining this moral certainty even within the equilibrium stage. When Blind Pew grips Jim's hand and forces him to the captain, Jim observes,

> *"I never heard a voice so cruel, and cold, and ugly as that blind man's. It cowed me more than the pain"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 14).

This moment destabilizes the Victorian assumption that physical disability correlates with powerlessness or that moral virtue provides protection. The equilibrium contains the seeds of its own dissolution, suggesting that Victorian moral order was always more fragile than its ideological pronouncements claimed.

The disequilibrium stage begins with the discovery of the treasure map, but Todorov's model proves inadequate to capture the moral complexity that follows. Conventionally, the disruption stage should feature clear antagonists whose defeat will restore order. Instead, Stevenson introduces Long John Silver, whose moral ambiguity fundamentally destabilises ethical clarity. Upon first meeting Silver, Jim describes him as *"very tall and strong, with a face as big as a ham—plain and pale, but intelligent and smiling"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 32). This contradicts everything Jim has been taught to fear about pirates. Silver moves *"with wonderful dexterity, hopping about upon it like a bird"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 32). The disjunction between expected monstrosity and observed humanity creates an ethical crisis the narrative never resolves. The apple barrel scene represents the pivotal moment of disequilibrium. Silver's speech reveals a pragmatic philosophy rejecting Victorian moral absolutes:

> *"Gentlemen of fortune usually trust little among themselves, and right they are, you may lay to it. But I have a way with me, I have"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 44).

This articulates an alternative ethical system based on practical self-interest rather than transcendent principles. More disturbingly, Silver's philosophy proves remarkably effective throughout the narrative. His ability to maintain dual loyalties and ultimately escape with treasure and life intact suggests that Victorian moral rigidity is strategically inferior to ethical flexibility. Todorov's model anticipates such villainy will be punished in the restoration stage, but Stevenson systematically undermines this expectation.

The moral ambiguity deepens as Jim himself becomes implicated in ethically questionable actions. His decision to abandon his post represents a significant violation of duty, and Dr. Livesey condemns this explicitly:

> *"When Captain Smollett was well, you dared not have gone off; and when he was ill and could not help it, by George, it was downright cowardly!"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 124).

Yet the narrative rewards Jim's disobedience. His unauthorised adventures lead directly to crucial victories: meeting Ben Gunn, cutting the *Hispaniola* adrift, and retaking the ship. Each act of insubordination produces practical benefits

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that complicate straightforward moral assessment. When Jim kills Israel Hands, the text presents disturbing ambivalence:

> *"Both my pistols went off, and both escaped out of my hands. They did not fall alone; with a choked cry, the coxswain loosed his grasp upon the shrouds and plunged headfirst into the water"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 106).

The passive construction obscures agency, suggesting Victorian moral categories cannot adequately account for pragmatic violence required for survival. The systematic murder of Tom by Silver provides another crucial moment where Todorov's model fails. Jim witnesses Silver's brutal efficiency:

> *"Silver, agile as a monkey even without leg or crutch, was on the top of him next moment and had twice buried his knife up to the hilt in that defenceless body"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 57).

This scene should unambiguously establish Silver as the villain and Tom as the martyr, yet subsequent treatment destabilises such clarity. Tom's loyalty proves fatal, while Silver's treachery ensures survival. More troublingly, Jim continues to feel conflicted sympathy for Silver, reflecting on that.

> *"My heart was sore for him, wicked as he was, to think on the dark perils that environed and the shameful gibbet that awaited him"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 120).

This reveals emotional complexity, refusing simple moral categorisation. The treasure hunt sequence systematically dismantles Victorian assumptions about property and moral desert. When pirates discover the excavation, they find only emptiness:

> *"Before us was a great excavation, not very recent, for the sides had fallen in and grass had sprouted on the bottom"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 134).

This moment should represent poetic justice, but Stevenson undercuts this reading by revealing Ben Gunn has already claimed the treasure. The revelation raises profound questions about legitimacy: Flint stole the treasure through piracy; the gentlemen seek to claim it through a dead pirate's map; surviving pirates assert possession through association with Flint; and Ben Gunn has physical control through discovery. No party has a legitimate title, yet all claim moral authority.

The novel's conclusion represents the most significant departure from Todorov's restoration stage. Rather than re-establishing moral equilibrium through the punishment of vice and the reward of virtue, Stevenson creates an ending saturated with ethical ambiguity. Silver's escape with *"one of the sacks of coin, worth perhaps three or four hundred guineas"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 142) directly contradicts Victorian expectations of justice. The narrator's response—*"I think we were all pleased to be so cheaply quit of him"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 142)—suggests pragmatic relief supersedes moral satisfaction. The supposedly virtuous protagonists choose expedience over principle, valuing safety above abstract justice. This represents a fundamental rejection of the Victorian moral universe.

The fate of the three marooned pirates further illustrates the novel's anti-resolution. Dr Livesey acknowledges the ethical problem:

> *"We could not risk another mutiny, and to take them home for the gibbet would have been a cruel sort of kindness"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 141).

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This reasoning reveals the bankruptcy of Victorian moral options both abandonment and execution constitute cruelty, yet no alternative appears within the ideological framework. The men's final desperate appeal, *"with their arms raised in supplication"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 141), haunts the narrative's conclusion. The text refuses to resolve whether this abandonment constitutes justified pragmatism or unconscionable atrocity.

Jim's psychological state confirms the absence of restored equilibrium. Rather than achieving the moral maturity promised by the Victorian bildungsroman, Jim remains traumatised:

> *"Oxen and wain-ropes would not bring me back again to that accursed island; and the worst dreams that ever I have are when I hear the surf booming"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 142).

This language of curse and nightmare signals profound psychic damage rather than growth. The closing image—Jim startling *"upright in bed with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: 'Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!'"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 142)—suggests disequilibrium persists long after the narrative's conclusion. Victorian moral order promised that right action produces peace of mind, yet Jim's wealth brings only recurring nightmares.

The distribution of treasure among survivors further undermines moral restoration. The text notes that *"all of us had an ample share of the treasure and used it wisely or foolishly, according to our natures"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 142). This presents material reward as morally neutral, distributed without regard to virtue. Most tellingly, Silver's fate remains deliberately ambiguous:

> *"Of Silver we have heard no more. That formidable seafaring man with one leg has at last gone clean out of my life; but I dare say he met his old Negress, and perhaps still lives in comfort"* (Stevenson, 1883, p. 142).

The conditional language refuses even the satisfaction of specific knowledge. Silver exists in narrative limbo, neither punished nor redeemed, embodying the novel's ultimate resistance to moral closure.

Through this systematic analysis across Todorov's three structural stages, *Treasure Island* emerges as a profoundly subversive text that weaponises narrative structure against Victorian moral certainties. The novel establishes equilibrium only to reveal its inherent fragility, introduces disequilibrium, exposing the inadequacy of binary moral thinking, and concludes with an anti-resolution that privileges pragmatism over principle, survival over justice, and ambiguity over clarity. Stevenson's deployment of Todorovian structure becomes an act of ideological critique, demonstrating that Victorian moral order cannot accommodate the complexities of actual human experience, imperial violence, or ethical decision-making under duress.

Conclusion

This analysis demonstrates how the novel systematically disrupts the Victorian moral order by deliberately refusing to restore ethical equilibrium. By applying Tzvetan Todorov's three-stage narrative framework, equilibrium, disequilibrium, and restoration to Stevenson's text, this study has revealed a fundamental subversion of the structural expectations that governed Victorian children's literature. While Todorov's model anticipates that narratives will ultimately return to stability and moral clarity, *Treasure Island* persistently resists such closure, creating what has been termed an "anti-resolution" that leaves profound

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ethical questions deliberately unanswered.

The analysis has traced how Stevenson establishes an initial equilibrium rooted in Victorian values at the Admiral Benbow Inn, only to systematically dismantle these moral certainties through the introduction of Long John Silver's ethical ambiguity, Jim Hawkins's morally compromised actions, and the novel's treatment of property, violence, and justice. The text's concluding refusal to punish villainy or reward virtue according to conventional Victorian standards represents a radical departure from the didactic certainty expected of 1880s children's literature. Silver's unpunished escape, the morally dubious acquisition of pirate treasure by ostensibly virtuous gentlemen, the traumatic abandonment of marooned mutineers, and Jim's persistent nightmares all signal the absence of restored moral equilibrium.

This study contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about Victorian literature's engagement with imperial ideology, moral complexity, and narrative subversion. *Treasure Island* emerges not as a straightforward adventure tale affirming Victorian values, but as a sophisticated critique of moral absolutism that anticipates modernist scepticism about universal ethical truths. Stevenson's deployment of Todorovian structure becomes an act of ideological resistance, demonstrating that rigid Victorian moral frameworks prove inadequate when confronted with the ambiguities of human experience, the violence of imperial enterprise, and the pragmatic demands of survival. The novel's enduring power lies precisely in its refusal to provide the moral comfort that Victorian readers expected and that Todorov's narrative model predicts.

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