

Long-Lost Study of Robert Louis Stevenson, and its editor Kirsty Nichol Findlay). Maps locate a story; they make it seem more real, as well as easier to follow.

The Salt-Stained Book had one map. *A Ravelled Flag* has two: that one again, plus 'Donny's chart of the Suffolk coast', from the Walton Backwaters right up to Lowestoft, with all the rivers including their heads of navigation. They sail pretty well all of it (I would go back to check, but, as Ransome said of *Treasure Island*, 'I open it to remind myself of some detail, and from that page, I read willy-nilly to the end . . . not once but many times.' They certainly get as far as Lowestoft, which comes across as surprisingly exotic, complete with a Chinese restaurant with a one-legged cook (a reference to *Treasure Island*?). It's a sailing area rich in character, well known to Jones, who has been sailing it since she was three, and who does it full justice.

The story picks up where *The Salt-Stained Book* left it; in Shotley Marina, with Donny aboard his great-aunt's junk and reunited with his mother. The author describes it as a 'winter story' – it was published last autumn – and it is certainly a shade or two darker than its predecessor. But with Donny and Anna's grit and determination, and some unlikely new allies in the shape of the Rev Wendy and her husband Gerald, wrapped up in ingenious plotting, suspense-filled writing and a rare warmth towards its characters, it delivers its rewards.

The third volume, *Ghosting Home*, is due out this summer.

Peter Willis

horned in. The two cities fought on and off for the best part of two centuries. Finally, though, the news arrived that the Portuguese had arrived by ship in India. Direct trade with the Far East meant that spices no longer had to be carried overland from the Red Sea to the souks of Egypt and Syria. The Mediterranean was suddenly a landlocked lake, its galleys frail and vulnerable to the big guns of ocean-going navies; and Venice fell into a beautiful if rebarbative decline.

At worst, this book is yet another chunk of the history of a sea into which so much blood has been spilled that it is surprising there is any room left for the water. At best, it is a sweeping historical epic of medium depth, written in a fine springy style, crystal-clear and exciting. It would have been good to hear more about the development of ship design and navigation systems, and as much about sea battle tactics as about siege tactics. These are mere niggles. This book opens a window on a mysterious world, and explains it without destroying its intense strangeness.

David Palmer

A Ravelled Flag

JULIA JONES

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There really aren't enough sailing novels, for children or adults – certainly not enough good ones. So this new trilogy by Julia Jones is very welcome indeed. I've already reviewed the first volume, *The Salt-Stained Book*, in the Autumn 2011 Marine Quarterly; hot on its heels comes the second part, *A Ravelled Flag*, in which the focus switches to Anna's quest for her mother, and the whole adventure broadens out to include that most modern type of seafaring criminality, people-trafficking.

The sailing broadens out, too. Both Arthur Ransome, who remains the inspiration behind this series, and Robert Louis Stevenson were agreed on 'the power of maps to lead young readers into adventure' (an insight for which I have to thank the newly-published, because recently-discovered, *Arthur Ransome's*