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### Robert Michael Ballantyne's *The Coral Island-A Tale Of The Pacific Ocean* As A Juvenile Adventurous Fiction

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William Golding was a most prominent writer in the mid twentieth century England. He was greatly influenced by the writings of an eminent Scottish author R.M.Ballantyne, as Golding adored and extolled him for his flawless literary style. Golding in one of his masterpiece which was entitled as *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) had a tinge of Ballantyne's juvenile adventurous theme of *The Coral Island: a Tale of the Pacific Ocean*. Based on Ballantyne's novel Golding imitated his literary style and theme in his novel *The Lord of the Flies*. *The Coral Island* has always been a great favorite with British school children and has become one of the classic adventure tales written in English. Golding mentions it twice in chapter-two of *The Lord of the Flies*, when one of the boys compares their situation with Ballantyne's story, and again at the end of the novel in chapter-twelve, when the naval officer believes he has the measure of what has happened to the children by saying 'Jolly good show. Like the Coral Island'. (5) In fact, life for Golding's children has been nothing like that the one enjoyed by Ballantyne's; the Scots novelist merely to write a good adventure yarn. Golding, though, wanted to use *The Coral Island* as a model for *Lord of the Flies*, making his own novel an ironic commentary on its predecessor. In Golding's novel there are many parallel incidents and characters like that of Ballantyne's novel. This even extends to the naming of the two central characters: Ralph and Jack are the names of Ballantyne's principles too. Piggy in Golding's novel has his counterpart in a lad called Peterkin in Ballantyne's novel.

Ballantyne's story hardly touches on the philosophical depths of Golding's, nor does it have the brutality of *Lord of the Flies*. Ballantyne, disguising himself as the hero Ralph Rover, says in the Preface to *The Coral Island* that he wants his readers to enter with kindly sympathy into the regions of fun.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) was another accomplished writer in the nineteenth century. He was so impressed with the story of *The Coral Island* (1857) that he based portions of his famous book *Treasure Island* (1881) on themes found in Ballantyne in the introduction to *Treasure Island* with the following poem:

“To the Hesitating Purchaser

If sailor tales to sailor tunes,

Storm and adventure, heat and cold,  
If schooners, islands, and maroons,  
And buccaneers, and buried gold,  
And all the old romance, retold  
Exactly in the ancient way,  
Can please, as me they pleased of old,  
The wiser youngsters of today:  
So be it, and fall on! If not,  
If studious youth no longer crave,

His ancient appetites forgot,  
Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave,  
Or Cooper of the wood and wave:  
So be it, also! And may I  
And all my pirates share the grave  
Where these and their creations lie!"

-*Treasure Island* (P 1)

Ballantyne never visited the Coral islands of the South Pacific, relying instead on the accounts of others that were then beginning to emerge in Britain, which he exaggerated for theatrical effect by including plenty of gore and violence meant to titillate his juvenile readership. His ignorance of the South Pacific caused him to erroneously describe coconuts as being soft and easily opened; a stickler for accuracy he resolved that in future, whenever possible, he would write only about things he had personal experience of.

Ballantyne wrote *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858) while staying in a house on the Burnt island seafront opposite Edinburgh on the Firth of Forth in Fife. *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* is Ballantyne's second novel, and one of the first works of juvenile fiction to feature exclusively juvenile heroes, the story relates the adventures of three boys marooned on a South Pacific island, the only survivors of a shipwreck. He was an exceedingly prolific author who wrote more than hundred books in his career. This novel is a typical Robinsonade which is a genre of fiction inspired by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and one of the most popular of this type, the book first went on sale in late 1857 and later it gained immense popular among its readers. It was the inspiration for William Golding's dystopian novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954), which inverted the morality of *The Coral Island*; in Ballantyne's story the children encounter evil, but in *Lord of the Flies* evil, is within them. *The Coral Island* by R.M. Ballantyne is a typical children's classic that presents the romantic adventures of a group of English schoolboys marooned on an Eden like South Sea Island. By mustering their wits and their British courage, the boys defeat the evil forces on the island: pirates and native savages. The description of the pleasant Coral Island fantasy world quickly dissolves into images of darkness, hostility and danger.

In the early twentieth century, the novel was considered a classic for primary school children in the UK, and in the United States it was a staple of high-school suggested reading lists. *The Coral Island* was adapted into a four-part children's television drama broadcasted by ITV in 2000.

Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, represents, an extremity of Victorian confidence and optimism in the civilized values of English schoolboy society. In Ballantyne's novel, the boys shipwrecked on the island, organize their skills and exercise their imaginations to duplicate the comforts and the values of the society they have temporarily lost. Working with discipline, they build shelters and a boat, make various utensils for their convenience, and find a healthy and interesting variety of animal and vegetable food. Evil in the novel is externalized, and also it is represented by cannibals on the island whom the English boys defeat because they work together and excel in both wit and virtue. Their rescue almost does not matter, for they have essentially recreated the world they can from. Ballantyne draws on a concept of the child that reaches back through the nineteenth century, at least as far as Rousseau and Locke, the child as inherently either good or neutral, manifesting his goodness if left alone and uncorrupted by the adult world or reflecting and recreating the healthy and civilized environment of this initial consciousness.

The story is written as a first person narrative from the perspective of fifteen year old Ralph Rover, one of the three boys shipwrecked on the coral reef of a large but uninhabited Polynesian island. Ralph tells the story retrospectively, looking back on his boyhood adventure:

I was a boy when I went through the wonderful adventures herein set down. With the memory of my boyish feelings strong upon me, I present my book specially to boys, in the earnest hope that they may derive valuable information, much pleasure, great profit, and unbounded amusement from its pages.

One word more. If there is any boy or man who loves to be melancholy and morose, and who cannot enter with kindly sympathy into the regions of fun, let me seriously advise him to shut my book and put it away. It is not meant for him.

Ralph Rover (P 1)

The narrator of *The Coral Island* is named Ralph Rover, a sound and stable boy of fifteen; the strongest, oldest, tallest boy is named Jack; the third member of Ballantyne's principal triumvirate is Peterkin Gay, a quick, sprite-like, imaginative boy of fourteen. All these boys are the sole survivors of a shipwreck in a marooned island, Ralph Rover is a traveler at heart, and has always dreamed of shipping out to the South Seas islands. Ralph and his two companions, eighteen year old Jack Martin and thirteen year old Peterkin Gay are the sole survivors of the shipwreck. The narrative is in two parts. The first describes how the boys feed themselves, what they drink, the clothing and shelter they fashion, and how they cope with having to rely on their own resources. The second half of the novel is more action-packed, featuring conflicts with pirates, fighting between the native Polynesians, and the conversion efforts of Christian missionaries.

Ralph Rover with a leadership quality he has always longed for adventures so he decided to go on a voyage to the South Sea along with his friends Jack and Peterkin Gay. All the three boys are known for their wits and courage they have the ability to cope with any kind of critical situation in their life and they also have a good rapport with each other devoid of contradictory negative thoughts and ego. The narrative begins with the early life of Ralph where he has some desire and thirst for adventure in foreign lands, he also says that roving has always been and still in his ruling passion, the joy of his heart and the very sunshine of his existence. Ralph was born on a mysterious night which was wild, black night of howling storm on the foaming bosom of the broad Atlantic Ocean. His father and his grandfather was a sea-captain and his great-grandfather had been a marine. His mother always went to sea with his father on his long voyages, and so spent the greater part of her life upon the water. This is the reason that Ralph came to inherit a roving disposition. There were a number of boys in the ship, but two of them were his special favourites. Jack Martin was a tall, strapping, broad-shouldered youth of eighteen, with a handsome, good-humoured, firm face. He 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, and had a peculiar fondness for him. His other companion was Peterkin Gay. He was little, quick, funny, decidedly mischievous, and about fourteen years. But Peterkin's mischief was almost always harmless; else he could not have been so much beloved as he was.

Hallo! youngster," cried Jack Martin, giving me a slap on the shoulder, the day I joined the ship," come below and I'll show you your berth. You and I are to be mess-mates, and I think we shall be good friends, for I like the look o'you. (P 9)

The three triumvirates afterwards became the best and staunchest friends that ever tossed together on the stormy waves. In their first part of the voyage they had the usual amount of rough weather and calm; also they saw many strange fish rolling in the sea, and Ralph was greatly delighted one day by seeing a shoal of flying fishes dart out of the water and skim through the air about a foot above the surface.

The paper has examined how convincing R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* fits perfectly under the Juvenile adventurous fiction. An analytical study of Robert Michael Ballantyne has a good deal to project the political, social and cultural scene of the English country. The author had attempted to make an exposition of the moral depravity which has been made to appear conspicuously under three categories: innocence, regression and the irony of progress having their roots in their own contemporary cultural fields. He dealt with the aggressive nature of the degenerating English schoolboys in their preadolescence and also with the unique portrayal of their uncivilized deeds and their descent into savagery. The boys in Ballantyne's novel are civilized boys and they also conduct themselves by obliging to the laws of their leader. Ballantyne's prime concern in his novel is that leaders should be respected by those they lead, and govern with their consent. This educational message is especially appropriate considering Ballantyne's adolescent audience, the future rulers of the world. The boys in *The Coral Island* radiate a confidence in their sense of community and organization which would seem rather smug where they not also genuinely pious and aware of their luck. Evil in the novel is externalized, represented by cannibals on the island whom the English boys defeat because they work together and excel in both wit and virtue. Their rescue almost does not matter, for they have essentially recreated the world they can from. Ballantyne draws on a concept of the child that reaches back through the nineteenth century, at least as far as Rousseau and Locke, the child as inherently either good or neutral, manifesting his goodness if left alone and uncorrupted by the adult world or reflecting and recreating the healthy and civilized environment of this initial consciousness. This confidence in civilized Enlightenment, developed from a faith in human possibility in the eighteenth century particularly English social achievement in the nineteenth, is precisely what Golding, in *Lord of the Flies*, is determined to reverse.

The first chapter resounds with the deep bass strings of delight. The children gather to the casual summons of the Conch, they elect their leader, draw up laws, divide out function and prerogative; but the reader ought to be sharply aware of the inappropriateness of this kind of terminology. It is a wonderful game played under perfect conditions in perfect surroundings; and though it acts out memories of grown-up order, it can go on all day with no interference from grown-ups. There are the tensions that there are bound to be in any game, between Ralph, Jack and Piggy, but they are containable because the game is large and splendid enough to have acceptable parts for everyone. There is not only government but exploration. A specific reminiscence of *Coral Island* occurs as Ralph and Jack, talking over the top of Simon's head, set off to explore their domain, and the aura of glamour is strong. The glamour is set, however, as it was not in *Coral Island*, against a real jungle, dense, damply hot, scratching. This is not a stroll through a nineteenth-century English wood with different trees.

As a synthesis of the novel which investigates three key aspects of the human experience that form the basis of the authors wants to convey:

1. The desire for social and political order through parliaments, governments and legislatures in which these things were represented by the platform and the conch.

2. The natural inclination toward vices and violence in *The Lord of the Flies* and virtue and non-violence in *The Coral Island* in which all these manifested in every country's need for a military
3. The belief in supernatural or divine intervention in human destiny.

Hence, this paper will be helpful to people to analyze the principles of regenerative and degenerative aspects of societal values through the characterization of the English schoolboys in both the juvenile fictions.

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