

Representing Characters' Speech and Thought in R. M. Ballantyne's *the Coral Island*

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the representation of characters' speech and thought in R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*. The Victorian novel belongs to the Robinsonade, island, adventure and children's literature tradition. Three boys, are shipwrecked to a coral island of the South Seas. They have enjoyed the beauty of the paradise-like coral islands and had amazing experiences. On the other hand, they have encountered conflicts from different sources: nature, pirates and the natives who are savages, cannibals and bloodthirsty. United against all sources of antagonism, they have returned back home to set a victorious/adventurous example/model to young English teenagers. The analysis, here, adopts an integrated approach of language and literature. For the purposes of linguistic analysis, the researcher adopts a modified stylistic speech and thought presentation model (Short 1996: 286-311). The check-list of linguistic indicators of point of view, with some modification, is from Short (1996): given vs. new information/definite and indefinite articles, schema-oriented language and deixis/value-laden expressions. The discussion and results in this research show how speech and thought presentation is utilized in away to reveal how Ballantyne uses the "*The Coral Island*" as a carrier of ideology to represent colonial and imperial values that are characteristic of the Victorian age.

Keywords: Stylistics, Speech and Thought Presentation, Coral Island, Victorian Age, Colonial and imperial values

Introduction

The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean is Ballantyne's most famous novel. "Never out of print since 1858, it has an undoubted right to the status of a children's classic" Bratton (1990: vii). The story is an adventure story. It belongs to the Robinsonade tradition where the writer is inspired by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Siegl (1996: 3).

The novel is a first-person-narrative where Ballantyne uses Ralph, one of the protagonists, as a narrator:

Roving has always been, and still is, my ruling passion, the joy of my heart, the very sunshine of my existence. In childhood, in boyhood, and in man's estate I have been a rover; not a mere Rambler among the woody glens and upon the hill-tops of my own native land, but an enthusiastic rover throughout the length and breadth of the wide, wide world, Ballantyne (1858: 1).

Three boys—Jack, eighteen; Ralph, fifteen; and Peterkin Gay, thirteen—are shipwrecked to a coral island in the South Seas. Throughout the novel, they lead an ideal cooperative life. They have enjoyed their earthly paradise: beauty, food and drink. Also, they love each other and the events moved towards a romantic happy end.

The novel can be divided into three parts. The first part describes the happy beginning and how the boys have enjoyed a wonderful experience on an earthly paradise. They are united, adventurers and explorers. The middle part illustrates the rising action and development of the conflict. It is an external conflict with nature, savage natives and later English pirates. The third part portrays how the boys, with the help of the missionaries, are able to overcome their problems and lead to a happy ending. They are successful basically because they are: English, Whites and Christians. Through adopting a stylistic approach and applying a modified framework based on Short's (1996) model (Sections 2, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3), this paper exemplifies how *The Coral Island's* status as a children's classic can be questioned. The narrator/author seems to use the character's speech and thought as a carrier of ideology representing imperial and colonial values. The next section addresses Short's model and ends up with a modified framework that is utilized for the purposes of this study.

1. Speech and thought presentation strategies

Stylistics involves an in-depth analysis of individual literary works or extracts, in order to relate specific linguistic choices to potential meaning and effect, Semino (2004: 429). This

approach represents a major strength of the stylistic practice. She asserts:

[F]or all the controversy that sometimes surrounds the linguistic study of literature, explicit, rigorous, and sensitive linguistic analysis provide invaluable insights into the working of texts and language generally, as well as useful hypotheses and explanations with respect to readers' interpretations.

Speech and thought presentation is a crucial aspect of narratives. It has received the attention of many scholars in the field of stylistics: Banfield (1973), Mchale (1978), Leech and Short (1981) Fludernik (1993), and Short (1996).

Novelists utilize a range of strategies for the presentation of characters' speech and thought to enable readers understand "the motivation for the action and attitudes of characters," Leech and Short (1981: 337). It also indicates that "the narrator was taking on that character's view point" (288). Simpson (1993: 211-218) stresses the value of selecting one mode of speech and thought presentation in favor of another. It may affect the distance between the narrator and a particular character—degree of empathy or ironic distance. In addition, it is:

[A]n opportunity to explore relatively systematically narrative techniques such as "stream of consciousness" and "interior monologue" and to provide explanations of these terms with much greater degree of descriptive rigor than that found in the corresponding hand-me-down definitions in dictionaries of literary terms.

One of the most broadly acknowledged frameworks for speech and thought presentation is Leech and short's (1981) model and a later account appears in Short (1996).

Short (1996: 288-325) proposes six parallel categories of speech and thought presentation which show different degrees of narrators' interference and can be distinguished from the levels of their linguistic form, their effects and functions.

Short's speech presentation model:

1. Direct Speech (DS)

2. Free Direct Speech (FDS)
3. Indirect Speech (IS)
4. Free Indirect Speech (FIS)
5. Narrator's Representation of Speech Acts (NRSA)
6. Narrator's Representation of Speech (NRS)
7. Narrator's Representation of Actions (NRA)

The above modes are expected to allow the reader to determine in what way she or he is close to the character as in (FDS, DS and FIS) or distant from the character towards the narrator/author's end as in (NRA).

Short's thought presentation model:

1. Direct Thought (DT)
2. Free Direct Thought (FDT)
3. Indirect Thought (IT)
4. Free Indirect Thought (FIT)
5. Narrator's Representation of Thought Acts (NRTA)
6. Narrator's Representation of Thought (NRT)
7. Narrator's Representation of Actions (NRA)

These different degrees indicate how far or close readers are to the thoughts of characters as in (FDT) or to the narrator as in (NRT).

Modified framework based on Short's model

For the purposes of this research, Short's model will serve as part of a modified framework for the analysis of characters' speech and thought presentation in Ballantyn's *the Coral Island*. It consists of three stages:

1. Critical reflections about the novel
2. Speech and thought presentation analysis (Short's model)

3. Linguistic indicators of point of view (Short 1996) combined with the stylistic effect on interpreting and understanding *The Coral Island*.

The first stage serves as an introduction to the analysis. It provides background information including a plot summary, themes, setting and critical comments on the text. The second stage describes different techniques used by Ballantyne to present his characters' speech and thought and this will be followed by the stylistic effect of such use on enhancing readers' interpretation and understanding. The third stage offers further linguistic support to initial interpretive impressions in stages 1 and 2. This stage shows how Ballantyne chooses particular words and expressions in a way that allows the reader to construct a view point about the story and come up with conclusions that are supported by linguistic evidence. Linguistic indicators of point of view in this study are derived—with some modification—from Short (1996: 286-7): given vs. new information/definite vs. indefinite reference, schema-oriented language, deixis/value-laden expressions.

Extracts for Analysis

Part One

(1) ROVING has always been, and still is, my ruling passion, the joy of my heart, the very sunshine of my existence. (2) In childhood, in boyhood, and in man's estate, I have been a rover; not a mere rambler among the woody glens and upon the hill-tops of my own native land, but an enthusiastic rover throughout the length and breadth of the wide wide world (*Coral Island*: 1).

.....
(3) They told me of thousands of beautiful fertile islands that had been formed by a small creature called the coral insect, where summer reigned nearly all the year round,—where the trees were laden with a constant harvest of luxuriant fruit,—where the climate was almost perpetually delightful,—yet where, strange to say, men were wild, bloodthirsty savages, excepting in those favored isles to which the gospel of our Savior had been conveyed. (4) These exciting accounts had so great an effect

upon my mind, that, when I reached the age of fifteen, I resolved to make a voyage to the South Seas (CI: 3)

.....
(5) My mother gave me her blessing and a small Bible; and her last request was, that I would never forget to read a chapter every day, and say my prayers; which I promised, with tears in my eyes, that I would certainly do (CI: 5)

.....
(6) My heart sank within me; but at that moment my thoughts turned to my beloved mother, and I remembered those words, which were among the last that she said to me--"Ralph, my dearest child, always remember in the hour of danger to look to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (7) He alone is both able and willing to save your body and your soul." (8) So I felt much comforted when I thought thereon (CI: 10).

.....
(9) I knew that we were on an island, for Jack had said so, but whether it was inhabited or not [,] I did not know. (10) If it should be inhabited, I felt certain, from all I had heard of South Sea Islanders, that we should be roasted alive and eaten. (11) If it should turn out to be uninhabited, I fancied that we should be starved to death (CI: 16).

.....
(12) "Do you know what conclusion I have come to?" said Peterkin. (13) "I have made up my mind that it's capital,--first rate,--the best thing that ever happened to us, and the most splendid prospect that ever lay before three jolly young tars. (14) We've got an island all to ourselves. (15) We'll take possession in the name of the king; we'll go and enter the service of its black inhabitants. (16) Of course we'll rise, naturally, to the top of affairs. (17) White men always do in savage countries. (18) You shall be king, Jack; Ralph, prime minister, and I shall be--" "The court-Jester," interrupted Jack (CI: 16).

Part Two

(19) From all these things I came at length to understand that things very opposite and dissimilar in themselves, when united, do make an agreeable whole; as, for example, we three on this our island, although most unlike in many things, when united, made a trio so harmonious that I question if there ever met

before such an agreeable triumvirate. (20) There was, indeed, no note of discord whatever in the symphony we played together on that sweet Coral Island; and I am now persuaded that this was owing to our having been all tuned to the same key, namely, that of love! (CI: 124).

.....
(21) "For my part I don't know, an' I don't care, what the gospel does to them; but I know that when any o' the islands chance to get it, trade goes all smooth an' easy; but where they ha'nt got it, Beelzebub himself could hardly desire better company" (CI: 213).

.....
(22) "As for the missionaries, the captain favors them because they are useful to him. (23) The South-Sea islanders are such incarnate fiends that they are the better of being tamed, and the missionaries are the only men who can do it" (CI: 214).

Part Three

(24) "Oh! My dear young friend, through the great goodness of God you are free!"

(25) "Free!" cried Jack.

(26) "Ay, free," repeated the teacher, shaking us warmly by the hands again and again; "free to go and come as you will. (27) The Lord has unloosed the bands of the captive and set the prisoners free. (28) A missionary has been sent to us, and Tararo has embraced the Christian religion! (29) The people are even now burning their gods of wood! (30) Come, my dear friends, and see the glorious sight" (CI: 332).

.....
(31) In the conversation that immediately followed between us and Tararo, the latter said that the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ had been sent to the island and that to it we were indebted for our freedom (CI: 333-334).

.....
(32) During the short time that we remained at the island, repairing our vessel and getting her ready for sea, the natives had commenced building a large and commodious church, under the superintendence of the missionary, and several rows of new cottages were marked out; so that the place bid fair to become,

in a few months, as prosperous and beautiful as the Christian village at the other end of the island (CI: 337).

Position of extracts in relation to text

The Coral Island is about different widespread themes such as: children's adventure without adult's supervision, English vs. savagery, white vs. black, civilizing influence of missionaries, spreading Christianity, importance of hierarchy and leadership. Modern critics point out darker undertones such as: British imperialism, colonial domination, superiority of the white race, and the civilized good white Christian English vs. the 'other' primitive bloodthirsty cannibal savage (Siegl: 1996) and Bengtsson (2012).

For the purposes of this research, the researcher have chosen three extracts, one from each part (See section 1) of the novel and each extract consists of a number of excerpts.

Critical reflections on *The Coral Island*

The Coral Island is an adventure story. It reflects the values of its time, the Victorian Age. The novel is published towards mid-nineteenth century during the expansion of the British Empire. Bratton (1990), Siegl (1996) and Bengtsson (2012) declare the story a product of its time entailing didactic and colonial/imperial values.

Ballantyne's heroes are all boys. The text is intended to be read by a masculine reading community. In his preface, the first person narrator Ralph Rover states:

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 (*The Coral Island*: xxx).

The choice of male characters reflects male-domination in the Victorian Age. The boy/man reader is invited to take the characters in the fictional world as an ideal example in order to identify with their mind-set, discover and enjoy the attributes Ballantyne admires in them. They are perceived as: English, Whites, Christians, united, courageous, energetic, brave and lovers of adventure in faraway countries. Women on the other hand have a very minor role in the narrative and masculinity is reinforced through its heroes only. This situation seems an implicit invitation for teenage readers to leave their home land and go outward to join colonial and imperial activities anywhere in the world.

The Coral island is clearly informative and didactic. It lends itself to historical and cultural instruction. The boys return to the state of nature leaving their parents, schools and society to pursue an adventure where they become closely related to nature. They are shipwrecked to a tropical island which is an excellent setting for instruction. Jack, Ralph and Peterkin have arrived to the island empty-handed. Like the first human beings, they provide their own food, drink, and shelter. In addition, they protect themselves against various dangers: nature, blood-thirsty natives and merciless European pirates. In this context, the boys are dependent on themselves and there is no need for mothers and fathers to provide a living for them. Consequently, Ballantyne encourages his characters and readers to be ready and leave home to the colonies.

Scientific instruction has significant space in *The Coral Island* where it includes a great deal of geographical, biological, geological and zoological information. For example, Jack points out the importance of reading:

I'm not up to everything, Peterkin, as you'll find out ere long," replied Jack with a smile; "but I have been a great reader of books of travel and adventure all my life, and that has put me up to a good many things that you are, perhaps, not acquainted with (CI: 25).

Moreover, learning through observation is successfully employed in *The Coral Island*. The three boys have learned a lot

through observation. They have dived to the bottom of the lagoon where they have seen wonderful creatures such as coral formation and unusual marine plants: "Our burning-glass, also, now became a great treasure to me, as it enabled me to magnify, and so to perceive more clearly, the forms and actions of these curious creatures of the deep" (CI: 61).

Through Ralph, Ballantyne presents advice to his young readers:

[A]course of conduct which I have now for a long time myself adopted—namely, the habit of forcing my attention upon all things that go on around me, and of taking some degree of interest in them whether I feel it naturally or not. I suggest this the more earnestly, though humbly, because I have very frequently come to know that my indifference to a thing has generally been caused by my ignorance in regard to it (CI: 123).

Scientific thinking and instruction are significant aspects of the novel and Victorian England. Ralph encourages the young readers to learn and achieve knowledge by noticing and seeing through nature.

Religion has a central position in *The Coral Island*. Of the three boys, Ralph symbolizes the good Christian. Throughout the novel, he functions as a religious instructor inviting his readers to be good believers. At times of trouble, Ralph always remembers his mother's words: "Ralph, my dearest child, always remember, in the hour of danger, to look to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He alone is both able and willing to save your body and your soul" (CI: 10). Furthermore, when Jack, Ralph and Peterkin are set free from their prison, the native teacher cries out:

The Lord has unloosed the bands of the captive and set the prisoners free. A missionary has been sent to us, and Tararo has embraced the Christian religion! The people are even now burning their gods of wood! Come, my dear friends, and see the glorious sight (CI: 332).

Missionary activities are a key characteristic of *The Coral Island*. Converting the savages to Christianity has a taming effect on them. At the right moment, the light of the gospel arrives to the savages of the Mango Island:

The natives had commenced building a large and commodious church, under the superintendence of the missionary, and several rows of new cottages were marked out; so that the place bid fair to become, in a few months, as prosperous and beautiful as the Christian village at the other end of the island (CI: 337).

Ballantyne points out the benefits of Christianity to his young readers. Ralph serves as the author's choice as a model for a true believer. Thus, the novel seems to be a carrier of ideology where the author propagates for Christianity: a principal purpose of colonialism.

The Coral Island is Eden-like:

Meat and drink on the same tree!" cried Peterkin; "washing in the sea, lodging on the ground—and all for nothing! My dear boys, we're set up for life! It must be the ancient Paradise—hurrah!" and Peterkin tossed his straw hat in the air and ran along the beach, hallooing like a madman with delight (CI: 27).

Almost two thirds of the book is descriptive. It illustrates the beauty of the coral islands and the boys' happy life. The boys are good and cooperation among them is perfect. Their relationship is musically described by Ralph:

...We three on this our island, although most unlike in many things, when united, made a trio so harmonious that I question if there ever met before such an agreeable triumvirate. There was, indeed, no note of discord whatever in the symphony we played together on that sweet Coral Island; and I am now persuaded that this was owing to our having been all tuned to the same key—namely, that of love! Yes, we loved one another with much fervency while we lived on that

island; and, for the matter of that, we love each other still (CI: 124-125).

This is a message and an invitation to young Victorian readers to leave home and go to distant colonies where paradise is waiting for them. However, evil does exist on the coral islands as well. And, the source of evil is from outside the boy's community. It is either a natural phenomena like storms, the savages who are bloodthirsty, cannibals and bloodthirsty, and white European pirates who are evil and untrue Christians. Consequently, Ballantyne's negative portrayal of the natives and by contrasting their behavior, appearance, actions and food with that of the three boys, he creates an evil image of the native inhabitants as 'The Other'. Siegl (1996:55) explains:

In the story, 'the mixture of good and evil' is not found within the nature of an individual, but within society and between different cultures. Ballantyne attributes 'good' to his white boy-heroes and the British society in general and 'evil' to the white, yet uncivilized outcasts that is the British Pirate-traders, and the colored natives.

Furthermore, the three boys give the impression that they are representatives of the atrocities of the British Empire. They believe in the superiority of the white race over the blacks and colored people, "Of course, we'll rise naturally, to the top of affairs. White men always do in savage countries" (CI: 16).

In this regard, Ballantyne's focuses on missionary work and its positive effect on the social, cultural, religious, commercial and civilized transformation of the savages. English missionaries have served the imperial and colonial mission and brought the light of the gospel to the dark savages. They established a modern village where a white church is built in its centre. Ralph points out:

I could not help again in my heart praying to God to prosper those missionary societies that send such inestimable blessings to these islands of dark and bloody idolatry (CI: 296).

The next section offers an analysis of the character's speech and thought presentation in the selected extracts.

Speech and thought presentation

The Coral Island is a first person narrative where Ralph Rover, a participant character is the story-teller/ narrator. The story is told through his reliable perspective. The whole narrative is written in the form of FDS of the narrator's voice in addition to frequent use of DS by the characters. This can be recognized through an apparent use of punctuation, particularly, quotation marks. The effect of such use of this strategy is to let characters speak for themselves and achieve direct contact with the readers who are in this case are children.

DS appears in sentences 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, and 30. It gives a foregrounding effect to the reported utterances, since it gives the reader the impression that they are listening directly to the characters without the narrator's interference. Also, DS and first person narration offer a reliable source of information which is suitable for Ballantyne's young readers who tend to imagine that the reported words are actually spoken by the characters. DS seems to be suitable for Ballantyne's purposes in the novel which lends itself to didacticism/instruction of teenagers.

FDS is in sentences 1-6, 8-11, 19, 20, 31 and 32 and it is also dominant of in the whole novel and is characteristic of Ralph, the first person narrator. This form can be distinguished from DS of other characters through punctuation, in particular, quotation marks which are used with the later. The narrator's voice is clear throughout the text. He is the author's model to be followed by Victorian children.

DT appears in 6, 8 and 9. These are ascribed to the narrator, Ralph. They are presented in DS stretches and identified by quotation marks. FDT on the other hand is in 3, 10, 11, 13, 19, and 20. In 20, for example, Ralph uses musical terms when he thinks of unity, cooperation and harmony among the three of them. This manipulation of FDT allows a closer distance between the character/narrator's thoughts and his

readers, a suitable style in didactic literature where the narrator, Ralph, is used by Ballantyne as teacher.

NRA is also another major feature of sentences 1, 2, 4, 26, 31, and 32. These occurrences have a background effect- one of the purposes of narratives is to represent actions, events and states which happen in the fictional world, Short (1996: 292).

FIS or FIT which could serve ironic or sarcastic purposes is not present in the extracts. The novel is aimed to young readers who are better addressed by more direct modes such as: DS, FDS, DT and FDT.

Linguistic indicator's of point of view

On Reading the first extract, the three characters seem to have a number of shared characteristics. Ralph is a teenager who is a typical Victorian English explorer who is fond of adventures, in 1 'ROVING has always been, and still is, my ruling passion, the joy of my heart, the very sunshine of my existence.' The other two boys have the same interests in having an adventure, in 13 Peterkin has said, 'I have made up my mind that it's capital,--first rate,--the best thing that ever happened to us, and the most splendid prospect that ever lay before three jolly young tars.' In addition, the second extract illustrates the conflicts they face which are either from natural causes, savage natives or English pirates. The third extract shows the happy ending of the novel where the savages are tamed and civilized as an outcome of the missionary activity. The boys leave the coral islands with, "a thrill of joy, strangely mixed with sadness, passed through our hearts; for we were at length "homeward bound" and were gradually leaving far behind us the beautiful, bright green coral islands of the Pacific Ocean (CI: 339).

Given vs. new information/Definite vs. indefinite references appear in sentences 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 13, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 30, 31 and 32. The first word in the novel is 'ROVING' which possesses an indefinite reference. Also the word is capitalized. The effect seems to put the whole novel in focus to meet the expectations of the reader which is having an adventure story.

More space is given to definite references, for example, 'the joy of my heart', 'the woody glens...of my native land', 'the

wide...world', the coral insect', 'the gospel', 'the Christian religion' and 'the natives'. The writer assumes his readers familiarity with what is referred to. They are invited from the very beginning to be in the middle of actions *in medias res*.

Schema-oriented language is in 1-7, 10, 14-17, 19-22, 24, 27, 28, 31 and 32. The novel is a Victorian story. The narrator/author's choice of words reflects familiarity with the time, its values and ideological position- colonialism, imperialism, science and religion. Positive words are employed to describe the three protagonists, 'an island to ourselves', 'we'll rise naturally', 'to the top of affairs', 'white men always do in savage countries'. Also, their life, unity and cooperation are presented in musical terms, 'symphony we played together', and 'tuned to the same key'.

In contrast, negative words are employed to illustrate the natives of the coral islands, 'wild bloodthirsty savages', 'we should be roasted alive and eaten', 'black inhabitants', 'savage countries', 'Beelzebub', and 'incarnate fiends'. Such comparison reflects Ballantyne's colonial and imperial stance.

Moreover, religious schema is in, 'the gospel of our savior', 'bible', 'prayers', the missionaries', 'Tararo embraced the Christian Religion', 'church', and 'the Christian village'. Such use has a foregrounding effect of the role of Christianity in the novel in converting the natives of the coral island. Such conclusion supports the researcher's reflections (3.2 above) concerning the relationship between colonialism, imperialism and religion.

Deixis/value-laden words and expressions include: deictic/evaluative nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. This is evident in the 32 sentences of the three extracts.

Using the pronoun 'my' repeatedly suggests a suitable style used by the first person narrator. Ralph is the deictic center of the fictional world. Through his perspective, the text world is constructed.

The coral islands are portrayed as an earthy paradise, 'thousands of beautiful fertile islands that had been formed by a small creature called the coral insect', 'summer reigned nearly all the year round', 'the trees were laden with a constant harvest of luxuriant fruit', and the climate was almost perpetually delightful'. Ballantyne implicitly invites his young readers to leave home and go outward to join colonial and imperial activities.

Also, missionaries have positive effects in taming the native savages by converting them to Christianity. An English pirate captain has said, 'I don't know, an' I don't care, what the gospel does to them; but I know that when any o' the islands chance to get it, trade goes all smooth an' easy'. Trade is a key feature of colonialism. On the other hand, the civilizing effect of missionaries is evident at the end of the novel when 'Tararo has embraced the Christian religion', the natives 'are burning their gods of wood', a 'commodious church' is built in the center of a 'Christian' village following the western style. This explains the colonial/western mission in the Victorian times in civilizing and trading with "the other" savage countries.

Conclusions

This paper has shown how a detailed stylistic analysis reveals how different modes of speech and thought presentation are used in away to achieve a variety of significant effects and interpretations. In particular, the choice of speech and thought presentation in the extracts from *The Coral Island* contributes to conveying the characters' perceptions and attitudes of their adventure to the South Seas. In general, the analysis reveals the writer's ability to manipulate specific modes of speech and thought to achieve didactic, colonial and imperial purposes.

The analysis has attempted to question the novel's status as a children's classic and provided a textual/linguistic evidence to support this thesis. Through a comparison between the three young British boys and the coral islands' natives, Ballantyne advocates the values and ideology of the Victorian Age: superiority of the white and the civilizing mission of 'the other' savage, cannibal and primitive people through Christian

missionaries. Furthermore, the boys are portrayed as a perfect image of Victorian ideals: pure goodness, wise conduct, first-class leadership, patriotism and devotion to the Christian religion.

The natives on the hand are described negatively: savages, cannibals, bloodthirsty, black inhabitants and primitive. To sum up, the Coral Island is a children's adventure story which carries an ideological stance, that of colonialism and imperialism.

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