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The Image of the Frustrated Humanity in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

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March 2018

Abstract

This research focuses on the frustrated image of humanity, in all its various aspects, in William Golding's novel "Lord of the Flies". Golding presents different aspects of human nature as themes in this novel. It alerts us to our potential to descend from good to evil, civilization to savagery and democracy to dictatorship. They are explored through how innate evil can be brought out in certain situations; the danger is not addressing our own fears and the battle between civilization and savagery.

The research is divided into two chapters: In chapter one, the researcher reviews the life and work of the writer William Golding and the plot overview of the Lord of the Flies.

In chapter two, the researcher explores the diverse forms of the encounter with humanity which are good vs. evil, civilization vs. savagery, democracy vs. dictatorship and humanity vs. inhumanity. At the end, the conclusion of what has been analyzed in the earlier chapters.

Introduction

Humanity is defined as the quality of being human; human nature or the quality of being human, kindness, benevolence, good will. Humanity is a term which commonly refers to the human species, mankind as a whole, or sets of qualities which are used to define human nature, the human condition.

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* deals with humanity and its aspects. By writing this novel, Golding aimed to trace society's flaws. In order to prove his own scheme, Golding puts a group of English school boys to defend their own lives on an isolated island. Golding creates a kind of human nature laboratory in order to examine what happens when the constraints of civilization vanish and primitive human nature takes over. In this novel, Golding argues that human nature is free from the constraints of society, draws people away from going towards savagery.

The researcher sheds light on the encounter with humanity; the extent of success and failure in this encounter that the characters experience.

CHAPTER ONE

1-1 William Golding's Life and Career

William Golding was born on 19 September 1911, in Saint Columb Minor, Cornwall, England. William received his early education at the school his father ran, Marlborough Grammar School. When William was just 12 years old, he attempted, unsuccessfully, to write a novel. A frustrated child, he found an outlet in bullying his peers. Later in life, William would describe his childhood self as a brat, even going so far as to say, "I enjoyed hurting people."¹

After primary school, William went on to attend Brasenose College at Oxford University. His father hoped he would become a scientist, but William opted to study English literature instead. In 1934, a year before he graduated, William published his first work, a book of poetry aptly entitled *Poems*. The collection was largely overlooked by critics.²

In his undergraduate days, he dabbled in poetry and succeeded in writing his first book, a collection of twenty-nine short poems. At the age of twenty-one, he was the author of his first literary effort, *Poems* that was part of Macmillan's Contemporary Poets Series in 1934. This work reflected the author's first love with literature. Such a poetical attempt foreshadowed his apprentice literary inclination, which later on led to the emergence, in his literary career, of a new genre of writing (i.e., fiction). Feeling regretful, Golding abandoned poetry, as poetry was not his metier. He attended college at Oxford and graduated in 1935. Then, he left to London where he practiced different talents, which demonstrate his artistic personality. He worked in small theatre companies like the Little Theatre at Hampstead.³

Although he was passionate about teaching from day one, in 1940 Golding, Golding temporarily abandoned the profession to join the Royal Navy and fight in World War Two. Golding spent the better part of the next six years on a boat, except for a seven-month stint in New York, where he assisted Lord Cherwell at the Naval Research Establishment. While in the Royal Navy, Golding developed a lifelong romance with sailing and the sea.⁴

During World War II, he fought battleships at the sinking of the *Bismarck*, and also fended off submarines and planes. Lieutenant Golding was even placed in command of a rocket-launching craft. About his World War II experiences, Golding has said, "I began to see what people were capable of doing. Anyone who moved through those years without understanding that man produces evil as a bee produces honey, must have been blind or wrong in the head." Like his teaching experience, Golding's participation in the war would prove to be fruitful material for his fiction.⁵

In 1945, after World War II had ended, Golding went back to teaching and writing. In 1954, after 21 rejections, Golding published his first and most acclaimed novel, *Lord of the Flies*. The novel told the gripping story of a group of adolescent boys stranded on a deserted island after a plane wreck. *Lord of the Flies* explored the savage side of human nature as the boys, let loose from the constraints of society, brutally turned against one another in the face of an imagined enemy. Riddled with symbolism, the book set the tone for Golding's future work, in which he continued to examine man's internal struggle between good and evil. Since its publication, the novel has been widely regarded as a classic, worthy of in-depth analysis and discussion in classrooms around the world.⁶

Golding spent the last few years of his life quietly living with his wife, Ann Brookfield, at their house near Falmouth, Cornwall, where he continued to toil at his writing. The couple had married in 1939 and had two children, David (born in 1940) and Judith (born in 1945). In 1967, *The Pyramid* was published. It is a novel based on music and the English society shown through a narrow point of view of an imaginary village in England named as Stilbourne. His next book was called *The Scorpion God: Three Short Novels*.⁷

In 1979, *Darkness Visible* was published. Golding explored the interdependence of the good and evil in this work of fiction. Next came *The Paper Men* which was famously called out to be the worst work of his literary career. From 1980-1989, *The Sea Trilogy* was published. It comprised of three full length novels, *Rites of Passage*, *Close Quarters* and *Fire Down Below*, in which emotional growth and moral enlightenment of a young voyager is portrayed.⁸

In the 1980s Golding was recognized for his classical and critically acclaimed work *Lord of the Flies* and was awarded with a Nobel Prize at the age of 73, nearly 2 decades after the novel was first written. In 1984, William Golding released his eleventh novel, *The Paper Men*. The story, set in the present, is told from a first person perspective. In a style full of humor and sarcasm, the events of *The Paper Men* circle around an aging, callous and alcoholic English writer named Wilfred Barclay.⁹

1-2 Golding's Modernistic Views

Generally, Golding's novels frequently involve a great change of perspective. Still, his *Lord of the Flies* considers as the most popular piece of art, due to what it shows; why a human being may enjoy violence. To Golding, nature is opposed to culture; it suggests instincts, animalistic, drives, and anarchic forces. While culture suggests civilization, control of one's instincts and disciplined behavior. Therefore, Golding believed that society was the only true environment for men.¹⁰

In terms of form, Golding was not modernist himself, but his pessimism and skepticism made him close to modernists. He wanted to show that aggression and violence were particularly appealing to the human kind.¹¹

1-3 Plot Overview

A plane carrying a group of English school boys shots down over the pacific in nameless time of war. The boys find themselves alone without adults on an empty island. Ralph, Piggy (as he is derisively called), and Jack are the main characters of the story. Ralph and Piggy discover a seashell then Ralph uses it like a horn to collect the boys together. Jack is an offensive boy, he wants to be the chief of the group, but the boys chose Ralph instead. Ralph advertises Jack the leader of the group's hunters. The boys try to discover the island and to find food at the same time. They find a wild pig and try to hunt it, but they failed. The boys gather and setup rules in order to govern themselves. Ralph suggests that they should build a fire on the mountains so that any passing ship will see the fume and redeem them. They used Piggy's glasses to light the fire. They managed to do that but because of their negligence, the fire came out of their control and one of the boys, Simon, disappeared in that fire.¹²

Time was running, the boys became very lazy and they didn't help Ralph to build havens. Fortunately, Simon is alive but he spends his time walking around the forest. Jack thinks of hunting only, and he managed with the other boys to kill their first pig. The boys were talking about a beast; they were afraid. At the same time, a dead parachutist landed at the top of the mountain and the boys thought that it was the beast. The conflict between Ralph and Jack increased so Jack left the group. Most of the boys joined Jack's group and they painted their faces, hunted and killed pigs. Jack's tribe left the pig's head as an offering to the beast and that is the "Lord of the Flies". The beast is inside all mankind. Simon discovered that there is no beast and is just a dead parachutist. When he returned to the boys he told them the truth, but they didn't believe him and they thought he is the beast and they killed him.¹³

Jack's tribe stole Piggy's glasses in order to make fire. When Ralph and Piggy got to talk with Jack's tribe about the glasses, one of the boys named Roger kills Piggy then Jack and his followers tried to kill Ralph too but Ralph managed to escape from them. The boys continued on setting fire in the forest as they do every day and they didn't stop looking for Ralph. Finally they cornered him at the beach. The burning forest attracts an English Naval ship; an officer was standing on the beach. The boys saw him; they stopped, astonished and peer at the officer. He asked them if there are any casualties. Ralph says 'yes' and begins to cry. The other boys began to cry too.¹⁴

1-4 Lord of the Flies as a Modern Novel

Lord of the Flies is the first and the most famous novel written by William Golding. It has a glorious position in the history of the modern British literature. It is a fable with the idea of unclear war in future. The two world wars, especially the second one, had brought great suffering and misery to people. In the same time, it had inspired Golding to create his masterpiece.¹⁵

Lord of the Flies is the first novel that shows the writer's thoughts of post modernism, in which Golding expresses his subverted idea towards the traditional structures of those novels which deconstructs the leading position of the meta-narrative. His thoughts are similar to those of the post modernists. Therefore, this novel has a typical post modernity.¹⁶

The first that shows the postmodern narrative is the structure of this novel; the characters which are fully show their uncertainty. The uncertainty in children's characters embodies the writer's applying to postmodern concepts. The second thing is the writer's skills of postmodern narrative; Golding's use of various writing style, parody and non-linear narrative. All has supported the idea that this novel is a postmodern-masterpiece.¹⁷

Throughout ages, literature has mirrored each single crisis the human-kind had faced. One of the most deeply influential crises is the human frustration. Due to wars circumstances, the frustration issue has been growing to the extent that man-kind has seriously been looked at as a lab-rat; a group of people placed in a desolate seclusion can progressively turn into a bunch of barbaric.¹⁸

The Lord of Flies relates strongly to events from World War II. 17 September 1954 is the date in which the novel was released, that's exactly nine-years after the end of World War Two; a war in which the Western democracies triumphed over the fascist countries of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Furthermore, a war that created an unimaginable repulsive emotional tension. However, in the novel, we see how the war influences the boys' behavior. Even more, their exclamations reflect their knowledge of the war; Jack's seizure of power which was a Hitler-like act, the death of Simon and the character of Roger. All has been nothing but a rehearsal for World War Two.¹⁹

By understanding what frustration means; the relation between the normal and the abnormal will get clearer. Since human frustration involves the blocking of a person's motives, needs, drives, purposes or goals, it's a very critical phenomenon.²⁰

Notes

- ¹ Anthony Storr, "Intimations of Mystery." In William Golding, the Man and His Books: A Tribute on His 75th Birthday, ed. John Carey. London: Faber and Faber, 1986, p.7.
- ² John Carey, William Golding: The Man Who Wrote Lord of the Flies: a Life. London: Faber and Faber, 2009, p.31.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ V. V. Subbarao, William Golding: A Study. London: Oriental University Press, 1987, p.15.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Kevin McCarron, 'Golding, Sir William Gerald (1911–1993)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Oxford :Oxford University Press.
- ⁷ David B. Gray, "The Novels Of William Golding (Book)." Modern Language Quarterly. 32.3 (1971), p. 335.
- ⁸ James R. Baker, "An Interview With William Golding." Twentieth Century Media. 28.2 (1982), p.64.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ <http://newenglishliterature.blogspot.com/2012/02/william-golding.html>
Accessed 7 April 2018
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Florman, Ben. 'Lord of the flies Plot Summary'. Litcharts . Litcharts LLC, 22 Jul. 2013. Web. 9 Dec. 2017.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ ibid.
- ¹⁵ <https://www.globethesis.com/?t=2235330398454608> Accessed 8 April 2018.
- ¹⁶ Ibid .
- ¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Lord of the Flies and WW2. SecretNonConformist, Marblehead, MA
September 11, 2010.

¹⁹ Ibid .

²⁰ Ibid.

Chapter Two

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is about young English boys who find themselves on an uninhabited island after the crash of their plane. All the adults are killed in the crash and only a few boys survived and gathered together to decide how they will deal with their new challenging situation. All the boys are adolescents; the oldest ones are only twelve years old. In total seclusion, the civilized boys will be facing their own conflicted human impulses.

In order to govern themselves, the boys split into two groups. The conflict between the two human instincts is the driving force of this allegorical novel; the instinct to live by rules, act behaviorally, follow morals and value the good of the group against the instinct to gratify one's desires, act violently to obtain supremacy over others, and enforce one's will. This conflict might be expressed in a number of ways: civilization vs. savagery, order vs. chaos, reason vs. impulse, law vs. anarchy, or the broader heading of good vs. evil. Throughout the novel, Golding associates the instinct of civilization with good and the instinct of savagery with evil.¹

As the story progresses, the boys' urbanization diminishes while their brutality increases. Unsurprisingly, at the end of the novel, the civilized English boys become nothing but savages.

HUMANITY IN FRUSTRATION

2-1 Good vs. Evil

The definition of good in dictionary is a man-made conformity based on rules which society has created and modernized, on the other hand the definition of evil is profound corruption and iniquity. In the novel *Lord of the Flies*, Golding uses a story of English boys stranded on an uninhabited island to show that these boys are having many conflicts between good vs. evil and civilization vs. savagery. *Lord of the Flies* demonstrates that inside every individual there is a beast.

In William Golding's novel *The Lord of the Flies* there is a notable theme of good versus evil which displays that humans are not the civilized human being that they should be. Golding netted this theme by using literary device such as symbolism.²

William Golding took part in world war two, so we as readers can understand why he wrote this novel and other survival-fiction novels. Golding described his book *Lord of the Flies* as an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. When we read this novel we realize that Golding tries to overdraw the good and evil in the boys on the island and we learn that the people, including the boys, are not pure goodness. Deep inside of everyone there is an evil always trying to rise to the surface of our minds. Golding manifests that eventually the evil within us will destroy us.

Golding saw in the world war two what evil human can do and he tries to illustrate that in his novel. He ensures allusions and imagery to give characterization to the main characters, Ralph and Jack. Ralph is smart and cultured. He has the asset

of his superior height, beauty and strength originating him as the leader of the boys. If there is a problem Ralph is calm and usually solves it. Ralph represents the good.³

On the other hand, Jack represents the evil in this novel. He is the novel's prime representative of the instinct of violence and savagery. From the beginning of this novel, Jack demands to hunt for meat. His argument is subterfuge for the fact that he needs blood. Jack wants to share the pleasure of killing more than eating meat. Jack in *Lord of the Flies* represents what dictator would have done when he is driven by his evil power.⁴

2-2 Humanity vs. Savagery

Lord of the Flies took its popularity because of its ability to deal with issues that are at the core of humanity. William Golding delves into human nature and discovers its true gist. Golding tries to answer the question if man is inherently good or evil. He attempts to introduce human characteristics at the end of the battle of the two forces inside every human being. Golding describes evil as something that feeds on jealousy, hunger for power, and pride. This kind of evil transforms people into cruel creatures that will not stop until their enemies disappear from the surface of the earth. Golding views evil as an inherent part of our humanity because our faults are what make us human. He warns that the real risk lies in man's negation to admit the nature of evil. In this novel both the writer and we as readers become involved in a discussion on the nature of evil in human beings.

In this novel, Golding presents the monster, underlying in the forest of the island, which stands for our fear to face our evil. The boys are very afraid of the beast. When Simon comes out of the dark forest to display the truth about the nature of the beast, the boys (hunters) attacked and killed him. They know that Simon is not the beast, but his appearance out of the darkness makes them afraid of him. The boys are unable to see their latent evilness and they considered Simon's death as a fatal error. Piggy is killed also by Roger in cold blood. Piggy's death is considered as another blow to the force of good and even nature pathos the loss of humanity.

In the *lord of the Flies*, there is a facing between good and evil and the same extent of civilization and savagery. This is amplification in the last chapter at the conflict between Jack and Ralph aggravates, it acquires a deep symbolic meaning. The two boys in the final scenes represent the two main opposing forces inside human soul. Ralph represents the human necessity for moral stability and social system, while Jack represents the human raw emotions. In the final facing between Ralph and Jack, Golding provides the answer on who wins the timeless battle between order and mess, good and evil.

The events of the final chapter refer to the hold of evil. The breaking down of the conch, then Piggy's death and the moment of peak when Jack hunted Ralph down like an animal indicate the aggregate victory of savagery and chaos in the island community.⁵

2.3 Democracy vs. Dictatorship

Democracy has been defined as government of the people elected by people's votes. It means the rule of the people. Since the boys attempt to govern themselves without the supervision of adults, so the democracy is a better way for ruling than dictatorship since.

In the novel, Ralph pursues the idea of democracy by his way of ruling the boys in the island. Ralph tries to give everyone a responsibility and an equal voice. He uses a conch as a way of collecting all of the boys and as a talking stick. So by these behaviors, Ralph shows that he wants the society to be disciplined. He wants things stabilized in an organized way. In this novel, Golding shows democracy rather than dictatorship, as a typical form of government. Ralph allows the boys to say their opinions and ideas. So it's clear that Golding supports Ralph because under Jack's driving all of the savage acts happened.

In *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding uses Jack as a dictator; we see that by his way of ruling and wanting full control over the island. He likes to have total power over the boys. Jack is not organized, but he has full control on the people who follow him. Jack represents evil and violence because of his rebellious personality; that makes him a fierce leader.

Dictators are selfish people; they make bad decisions involving a large number of people based only on their ideas and opinions. Dictatorship means that the decisions lies within the hands of one person, so decisions are made faster and things are done quickly since there is no need for discussion. William Golding, in *Lord of the Flies*, proves that democracy is more ideal than dictatorship.⁶

2.4 Civilization vs. Savagery

In *Lord of the Flies*, there is a conflict between two instincts that exist within all human beings: the instinct to live by rules, follow moral commands and value what is good for the group against the instinct to satisfy one's desire, act violently to get the sovereign over others. This conflict maybe expressed in many ways: civilization vs. savagery and good vs. evil. Golding associates the instinct of savagery with evil and the instinct of civilization with good. Golding represents the conflict between the two main characters: Ralph, who represents leadership and order, and Jack who represents the desire for power and savagery.

In this novel, Golding foreshadows that the instinct of savagery is far more primitive and essential in the human nature than the instinct of civilization. When people are left to their own devices, Golding implies, people naturally return to savagery, barbarism and harshness.⁷

When *Lord of the Flies* begins, all of the boys started of civil but some of them ended up being savage. The word savage means the quality of being cruel or brutal. In this novel we find many examples of civilization. The first one is when Ralph and Piggy suggested that they should make a meeting. After that, Ralph suggests to use communication and regulation. Another example of civilization is when Ralph told the boys that they must have hands up, like what they do in school. Piggy takes the boys names and this represents civilization.

The perfect example of civilization is the conch as it kept order. The conch was like a system. They used it for talking in meetings in order not to talk over each other. So, this is a good example that the boys are being civilized and not wild. Later, the conch loses its power and the island's civilization manner is lost as the boys come down into savagery.⁸

There are many examples to prove that the boys in the island end up as savages. The first example is Jack, in the beginning of the story Jack was a civilized human being but then he became a savage one; he dresses like a savage and wears a mask. The second example is the pig hunt; Golding uses it to show that savagery comes within the human being. Another example is used by Golding in this novel is the beast. The beast is used in many ways throughout the novel to show savagery. Simon's death is also an example of the boy's savagery. When Simon tried to tell the boys that there is no beast they killed him in a savage way for no reason. *Lord of the flies* shows that, even in society, people who are civilized can be rudimentary, and that every person has an ability to be evil.⁹

Notes

¹ <http://www.sparknotes.com>. Accessed 25 Mar. 2018.

² <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Good-versus-Evil-in-Lord-of-the-PKM6SVC>. Accessed in November 22, 2017.

³ <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Good-vs-Evil-in-Lord-of-the-F3KDMUSTJ> . Accessed in November 22, 2017.

⁴ On symbolic significance of characters in Lord of the Flies.
www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/view/346. Accessed in November 22, 2017.

⁵ "The picture of man-at once heroic and sick". The Depiction of Evilness in Lord of the Flies.

⁶ www.asfmatech.org/16bueno4167/2013/05/19/lord-of-the-flies-democracy-vs-dictatorship. Accessed in November 20, 2017.

⁷ www.sparknotes.com/lit/flies/themes/?noredirect=true . Accessed in November 21, 2017

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⁹ <https://freebooksummary.com/lord-of-the-flies-savagery-6062>. Accessed November 21, 2017.

Conclusion

Throughout history, humanity has been abandoned over and over again; that is when a human being is ripped off from civilization. There are various negative psychological effects on that human; this idea is accurately portrayed in Golding's classic novel, *Lord of the Flies*.

In *Lord of the Flies*, the novelist embarks on journey inside the human soul in order to explore the darkness that lead people to selfish behaviors and evil acts. When man is left to his innate features, he turns dictatorship, blood-sucker, barbaric. This goes against man's title as a human. In other words, in certain situations when the primitive human nature is unleashed; the savage inside man released itself. Peace, mercy, sound interaction are supposed to be prevailing in the human nature. The disastrous results lead to think that salvation is quite unattainable when is left to his innate impulses.

At the same time, the novel is a message-like; it reminds us to retain humanity, care and love. Golding made his characters behave as the real people in the real world, that's why whoever reads the novel will be frustrated by the boys' inhuman acts. The entire melancholy is derived from the misery of the writer which is caused by the deadly wars. At the end, we can say that the Lord of the Flies is crucial evidence on human's cruelty and a lament on the loss of human goodness and innocence which leads us to the message behind Lord of the Flies; fear is the catalyst for violence and the destruction of civil societies. It is the major theme throughout the novel and is the reason behind the boys' loss of innocence. *Lord of the Flies* reveals how people can descend into barbarism and wickedness in an atmosphere of chaos, and this is the frustration in itself.

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