

Evil in Disguise of Power: Interpreting William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* through the Represented Culture

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Abstract

Lord of the Flies is the first and the most acknowledged novel written by the Nobel Prize laureate and author William Golding. It is an allegorical novel published in 1954. It discusses how culture created by man fails, as evil becomes the dominant force using an example of a group of British school-boys stuck on a deserted island who try to govern themselves with disastrous results. *The Lord of the Flies* was written succeeding two fearsome, and dreadful world wars, demonstrating the extent to which the humans can go for power. In a world in which power is considered the ultimatum, he could rationalise any way paves him to it. Evil or good, matters him not. No societal law or human law could limit human in his journey to limitlessness. As he banishes such conventional codes, he slips to the abyss of evil, intentionally. The novel contemplates the problem of evil in disguise of power and its threats to individual and social existence.

Key words: Power, Evil, Culture, Leadership, Survival, Savagery

Lord of the Flies recounts the story of a group of boys marooned on an island after their plane crashes. With no adult survivors, they create their own 'micro-society'. Ralph is elected 'chief', and he organises shelter and fire. Jack, the head of the choir takes his boys hunting for food (wild pigs). A bitter rivalry develops between Jack and Ralph as both want to be in charge. The 'hunters' become savage and primal, under Jack's rule, while Ralph tries to keep his group

civilised. The growing hostility between them leads to a bloody and frightening climax. The horrible and primitive violence of the boys is a central theme. The term 'Lord' has a lot to do with power, and it is, of course, the desire for power that drives the boys further. On the other hand, the term 'flies' connotes death and decay. Put them together we get the idea of death and decay tied up with power and corruption. The title *The Lord of the Flies* can also be interpreted as the name of Beelzebub, a mythological demon.

The symbols of 'Lord of the Flies' and 'the Beast' are imaginary characters representing the Evil that lies in every human being. As the story is told through the eyes of Ralph and Piggy, the novel portrays how different people behave under certain circumstances. Ralph and Piggy are innocent to the extent of lacking a savage instinct, although they are temporarily tempted by the savages; Jack and Roger feel surprised seeing the other group trying to preserve their civilization; and in the middle stands Simon, who is the only character projected pure, because of his natural moral code and not of societal force. Simon is the first one to realize that 'the Beast' is not a physical character, but it's the boys' inner instincts that drives their minds and manipulates their actions. On the other hand, Jack uses the fear of 'the Beast' to scare everybody on the island and make people follow his will suggesting how superstitions and religion can be used to manipulate people in the aim of gaining power and control.

Each character can be interpreted as archetype of human behavior in general. Piggy is that intellectual every civilization needs. His death signifies that savagery can take control over civilization and science, if given a chance. Simon represents morality, but his death only shows that inherent morality cannot survive because savagery is almost always stronger than civilization. The fact that savagery stops as soon as the naval man comes on the picture

symbolizes that civilization can prevail but with multiple efforts as the man has to leave and return. Ralph represents civilization and headship where Jack represents the savagery within the human soul. Ralph and Jack are shown binary opposites. Ralph portrays a true leader who wish to see his subjects unified like a democratic ruler, on the contrary Jack has been depicted selfish and arrogant, the one who craves to reign everyone to satisfy his own interests, like an oppressor. He is confident while he says, "I ought to be the chief...because I'm chapter chorister and head boy" (20). He claims as leader of the boys based on somewhat random perquisites.

Now and then *Lord of the Flies* sounds reciting episodes from the Bible. Although this may seem as an over generalisation, the novel does reflect certain Christian images and themes. Golding does not refer explicitly to Christian symbolism. Yet, there are biblical parallels that function as a sort of fine motif in the novel, adding thematic importance to the main ideas of the story. The island itself calls to mind the Garden of Eden in its status as an originally immaculate place that is corrupted by the introduction of evil. Similarly, one may regard the Lord of the flies as a symbol of the devil, for it works to endorse evil among humankind. Besides, there are strong parallels between Simon and Jesus. Among the boys, Simon is the one who reaches a higher moral truth and he gets killed by the other boys as a consequence of having being exposed to this truth. Simon's conversation with the Lord of the flies also allegorizes the confrontation between Jesus and the devil during Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. 'The Beast' is the irrational fear of the boys portrayed in several physical forms throughout the novel. Moreover, the novel's biblical parallels enhance its moral ideas, and although they are not complete, there are grounds to suggest *Lord of the Flies* as a Christian allegory.

Throughout the novel, it's possible to trace the elements of primary human struggle between the instinct to be obedient, morale and lawful and the instinct to overpower others and urge to be selfish, disrespectful, immoral, and violent. There is an incident of Roger beginning his cruel deeds, a very early step in the children's decline into savagery. Even while they seek to build a new civilization, a new culture of their own, savage instincts prevail.

Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, in to which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, as the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. (40)

This novel is truly a glimpse into human nature. At the end, human beings depicted thirsty for power, who has no true reverence for the rules that were made for order. In that island, they had no system of punishment if they break the rules. The children were actually losing every bit of sense in restructuring a society of their own.

There is an instant which depicts Jack's mental state after killing a pig for the first time, when they falls to the realm of savagery. Jack seemed to be exulted and in the hunt and so obsessed as if nothing else could pierce his thoughts.

His mind was crowded with memories; memories of the knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink. (60)

The novel also questions the notion that children are immune to evil. Children are usually represented in literature as innocent, pure, and serene beings. They are even attributed to be Gods

in disguise. But, in this novel, we can see children killing his companions. With their barbaric and animalistic conducts, they transforms the green, heavenly landscape of the island to a destructive wasteland. Children never dream power, they never wish to control others. Here, overvaulting quest for power becomes the spine of most actions and aspiration to control others drives them.

Man's innate nature of being ignorant of his evil deeds at times and feeling repentance afterwards has been hinted at the end. Towards the close of the novel, Ralph and other boys realise the horror of their actions:

The tears began to flow and shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time in the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)

Lord of the Flies explore moral dilemmas at the centre of human existence. Each character has frequently placed in extreme situation suggesting a primordial dispositions to their life profoundly obsessed with the subject of evil, transcends the boundaries of civilisation, culture, and social order. This novel deals with man's instinct to destroy what is good, whether it is material or spiritual. Evil prevails, everywhere, and goodness is almost impossible to achieve. Treating of cruelty, selfishness and the yearning after power, all the characters seem convincingly realistic, and relevant, even though they are forced by unnatural circumstances into unnatural situations.

Works Cited

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