



## Chapter I

### Lord of the Flies

On the surface "Lord of the Flies" is simply an adventure story about a number of schoolboys stranded on an uninhabited tropical island after a plane wreck from which no adults survive; on a deeper level, the book is a study of human nature. The writer's purpose is made clear in his notes on the book in which he states:

"The theme is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable. The whole book is symbolic in nature, except the rescue in the end where adult life appears, dignified and capable, but in reality enmeshed in the same evil as the symbolic life of the children on the island. The officer, having interrupted a man-hunt, prepares to take the children off the island in a cruiser which will presently be hunting its enemy in the same implacable way."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the book focuses on the analysis of the moral disintegration of the boys, who represent the whole human race. Many symbols are used in order to dramatize their decline caused by their own inner darkness. "Lord of the Flies" is a story of the evolution of man in reverse. The story begins with civilization and develops backwards to primitivism.

At first, when the boys realize that they are all alone on an island, they do not worry much about being far from rescue because adults have all been killed in the atomic war, as Piggy reminds Ralph, who consoles himself that his father will come to rescue them. "Let them. Let them. Let them. What's the pilot going to do about the atom bomb? They're all dead." (Golding, "Notes on Lord of the Flies," Lord of the Flies, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1959), p. 189.

all dead."<sup>12</sup> In fact they are glad and cheerful at the thought of being free from grown-ups and enjoy the beautiful, fantastic panorama of the island: "Ralph looked through him. Here at last was the imagined but never fully realized place leaping into real life. Ralph's lips parted in a delighted smile and Piggy, taking this smile to himself as a mark of recognition, laughed with pleasure."<sup>13</sup> Only Piggy, a fat, funny boy, feels uneasy, recognizing that rescue is beyond hope. He seems to be aware of what is going to happen; with his lips quivering and the spectacles dimmed with mist he murmurs, "We may stay here till we die." Here he prophesies his own fate, because he meets his tragic death on the island.

Responsibility and common sense warn them that they must do something in order to make the situation better. Piggy suggests to Ralph, "We got to find the others. We got to do something."<sup>14</sup> But the best they can do is to imitate the adult world in which civilization has taught them that only unity and ordered society will bring happiness and success. They therefore begin to form their own society. Ralph, aged twelve, calls a meeting by blowing the conch which they have just found. The youngest boys are six, the oldest twelve; their names are listed, yet the total number remains unknown to the reader. In their voting for a chief, Ralph is selected despite the obvious fact that "what intelligence had been shown was traceable to Piggy, while the most

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Ibid., p. 11.

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Ibid., p. 12.

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Ibid.

obvious leader was Jack. But there was a stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out: there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch."<sup>15</sup>

Ralph is chosen because of his personality and rationality, and because he has the conch. The conch here is the symbol of authority, civilization and high culture. Like civilization, it is valuable, beautiful and delicate. "In color the shell was deep cream, touched here and there with fading pink. Between the point, worn away into a little hole, and the pink of the mouth, lay eighteen inches of shell with a slight spiral twist and covered with a delicate, embossed pattern."<sup>16</sup> Despite his physical inferiority as a fat, short-sighted and asthmatic boy, who is consequently incapable of any laborious work or strenuous physical exercise, Piggy is a more intelligent boy who stands behind Ralph's success.

Jack, known at first as the domineering leader of the choir, tramps into the assembly declaring that he should be the chief "because I'm chapter chorister and head boy."<sup>17</sup> Through Jack Merridew's appearance, with his choir boys, Golding gives us a hint of their nature. When Ralph first notices them, he sees them as "something dark."<sup>18</sup> Then they come nearer and Ralph can see that they are all "dressed in strangely eccentric clothing.... Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden

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Ibid., p. 19.

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Ibid., p. 13.

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Ibid., p. 19.

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Ibid., p. 16.

by black cloaks."<sup>19</sup> Jack himself is tall, bony and thin with red hair and freckled, crumpled ugly face out of which stare "two light blue eyes, frustrated now, and burning, or ready to turn, to anger."<sup>20</sup> His appearance Jack is contrasted with Ralph who is fair haired, golden complexioned, and attractive; "but there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil."<sup>21</sup> Golding seems to use the physical contrast between the two boys to mirror their different inner natures.

Jack is rather strict and almost cruel leader of the choir; his relationship with the choir boys is no other than that of a dictator towards his followers. There is no animated friendship between them. They are separated by Jack's authority. The choir boys dare not even call him by his first name. Despite the heat, hunger and exhaustion the choir must keep in order and march or even stand in rows. Not until one of the boys in the line faints and falls on his face does he reluctantly let them rest. Suddenly when Ralph assures him that there are no grown-ups, Jack becomes prematurely more authoritative and takes the adult role. When the other boys introduce themselves by name such as Johnny, Sam and Eric, or Ralph, Jack says with contempt that they are just "kids" names". And for himself he proclaims, not without vanity, "Why should I be Jack? I'm Merridew."<sup>22</sup> Without their awareness, the opposite natures of Jack and Piggy clash and unconsciously Piggy shrinks

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Ibid., p. 16

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Ibid., p. 17.

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Ibid., p. 8.

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Ibid., p. 12.

back when he first sees Jack and dares not ask the newcomer's name. Because of his superior physical strength and authority, Jack always mocks and bullies Piggy.

Although Jack is not satisfied with the election, yet he submits, for the time being, to the majority who prefer Ralph. This indicates that the social tradition is still strong in him and can overcome his jealousy and self-will. Ralph, noticing this, insists that Jack remain the leader of the choir. They explore the place in order to make sure that it is an island and find that it is an island "roughly boat-shaped." Perhaps the author wants to suggest that the boys are put in a ship. It is not, in fact, a ship of fools but of savages, that is sailing in the vast ocean of life. This is a kind of no-exit; the boys of various natures, having no choice, are forced to live together in this ship. The ship does not sail forwards but backwards and no one knows where its voyage will meet its end.

The discovery makes them aware that they are far from being rescued. They then plan for both rescue and better living and security. To maintain order, they apply the rules they had at school. During assemblies, only the person who holds the conch can speak and must be listened to. Only one boy may speak at a time. Using Piggy's glasses, they make a fire in order to attract the ship that might sail by. Duty is divided into two main sections: civil service and hunting. This is an imitation of the adult world in which power is divided into civil service and active service. Ralph and Piggy are responsible for civil service; they manage to build shelters and look after the little ones. Jack and his choir, elected hunters, go to hunt because fruit alone is not

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sufficient for them. The civil man's duty is to preserve peace while the hunter's is to fight, to kill and to destroy. The civil man uses his brain while the other uses strength and weapons. These two opposite functions are dramatized through these two groups of boys.

For a short period, civilization and social rules and laws are strong and binding. The boys feel guilty when they have done something wrong. Roger and Maurice, after being relieved from duty at the fire, destroy the sand castles made by the little boys. "Now though there was no parent to let fall a heavy hand, Maurice still felt the uneasiness of wrongdoing."<sup>23</sup> But Roger's heart is too hard for him to feel like Maurice; he is basically a sadist, anxious to hurt people. With his secret excitement, he throws stones at Henry, but deliberately throws wide because he dares not hit him. "Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins!"<sup>24</sup>

It is this same taboo of civilization, of the old life that holds Jack's arm from killing a piglet in his first expedition round the island with Ralph and Simon. Here again the feeling of guilt is still strong in them. Goaded by hunger, the boys rush for the prey. Seeing that the piglet is caught up by creepers, Jack suddenly draws his knife and raises his arm high in the air. His friends wait breathlessly for a full-blooded stroke, but "there came a pause, a

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Ibid., p. 55.

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Ibid., p. 57.

hiatus; the pig continued to scream and the creepers to jerk, and the blade continued to flash at the end of a bony arm. The pause was only long enough for them to understand what an enormity the downward stroke would be. Then the piglet tore loose from the creepers and scurried into the undergrowth. They were left looking at each other and the place of terror."<sup>25</sup> They all feel ashamed of their hesitation. Jack's excuse is that he was considering where to stab it. But the real reason is that killing and blood are still too much for them. However, in his irritation, Jack promises, "Next time - !" He really means it and can do it. He can spill not only the pigs' blood but also human blood.

Soon this relatively ordered and just society gradually decays through irrational fear. After the exploration is finished, Ralph calls an assembly in order to report to them that they are on an island and concludes, "This is our island. It's a good island. Until the grownups come to fetch us we'll have fun."<sup>26</sup> But this pride of domination and enjoyment begins to fade when fear arises. A little boy sees a snake-thing, a beasty in the darkness. "It came and went away again and came back and wanted to eat him..." reports Piggy. Ralph, rather nervous, tries to console him and the other little ones that there is no such thing on the island and the boy must have had a nightmare. The sense of something mysteriously wrong spreads, gradually, from the little ones to the big ones. The bliss at their right of possession of the island is reduced to uneasiness and discomfort.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

Conflict between Jack and Ralph is caused by the argument on hunting and building of shelters. Because Ralph's knowledge about building is insufficient and because he is under-staffed, his work turns out to be a failure. Irritated, he accuses Jack and his hunters of being no help. Ralph insists, "We need shelters!" while Jack, with equally strong passion, retorts, "We want meat." Jack is frustrated because his hunting is also a failure. Ralph always clings to the idea of being rescued, of shelters and fire and of what annoys him - the unknown beastie; while Jack's thought is always of hunting. They talk together but each on different topics. When Ralph talks about being rescued; "Jack had to think for a moment before he could remember what rescue was."<sup>27</sup> While Ralph is talking about the fire and ships, Jack shouts, "Got it!" Ralph jumps gladly and asks, "What? Where! Is it a ship?" The fact is that Jack is thinking about pigs and has just thought of the place where they should be. Ralph is so angry that he shouts at Jack, "I was talking about smoke! Don't you want to be rescued? All you can talk about is pig, pig, pig!" They can never understand each other. "They walked along, two continents of experience and feeling, unable to communicate, 'If I could only get a pig!' (Jack murmurs) 'I'll come back and go on with the shelter.'" (Ralph says to himself) They looked at each other, baffled, in love and hate."<sup>28</sup> They cannot communicate with each other because they belong to different natures. Ralph is rational and wants security, while Jack prefers hunting



and is bewitched by a mysterious excitement.

Jack's hunting instinct becomes stronger and stronger. He and his hunters smear and paint their faces with colored clay and charcoal. "For hunting. Like in the war. You know dazzle paint. Like things trying to look like something else." He twisted in the urgency of telling, 'Like moths on a tree trunk.'<sup>29</sup> Jack explains to the other boys who look at him in surprise. In fact Jack knows what he will look like by painting his face; he knows that he will look like the animal itself -- like the beast. This is the beginning of the return to a primitive way of living. The paint is a kind of mask that will make them lose their identity and responsibility. Behind these masks they feel no shame for what they have done, because they feel that they are strangers, not themselves. Nor do they feel responsible for what happens. Painting makes Jack's inclination to primitive savagery more evident. After having finished painting "he began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling."<sup>30</sup> He even scares the other boys and with the spell of his authoritative mask he forces the boys to go to hunt with him.

The ritualistic chant for dancing which arouses strong, brutal emotion is another step forward in the direction of primitivism: "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood."<sup>31</sup> The only thing in their mind is hunting and killing. They are so occupied with hunting that

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Ibid., p. 57.

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Ibid., p. 58.

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Ibid., p. 63.

they forget their duty towards the fire. They let the fire go out and consequently miss a chance to be rescued when a ship passes by. After his successful hunting, Jack is not greeted by any congratulation but by accusation of deserting his fire duty. Everybody is enraged at him; even Piggy, out of "the agony of his loss", cries out at him: "You and your blood, Jack Merridew! You and your hunting! We might have gone home."<sup>32</sup> Jack is irritated because no one appreciates his success; all blame him. Again there is conflict between him and Ralph:

"Jack stood up as he said this ("We want meat."), the bloody knife in his hand. The two boys faced each other. There was brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill, and there was the world of longing and baffled common-sense."<sup>33</sup>

Again Piggy is the target of Jack's rage. He hurts Piggy and breaks one side of the latter's glasses when Piggy reminds him of his duty. Yet Jack apologizes because even his hunters are upset by the agonizing truth about the ship.

The powerful wild force caused by mysterious song and dance is so strong that even Ralph is now and then tempted to frenzied madness. The boys imitate a pig hunt in which Robert acts as the pig. The boys make a circle and dance around him to the rhythm of the ritualistic song. But being seized by some frenzied excitement they really hurt him and as they chant "Kill him! Kill him!" and "Kill the pig. Cut his throat! Kill the pig! Bash him in!", Robert struggles with real panic. He "squealed in mock terror, then in real pain." Even Ralph hurts Robert

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Ibid., p. 65

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Ibid.

because now "the desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering."<sup>34</sup> At the end of the game Robert suggests, "You want a real pig, because you've got to kill him." The mimic dance makes them desire a real kill; they thirst for real blood.

All the boys are horrified by the realization of the existence of "the Beast". "The Beast" is in the forest where a boy sees "something big and horrid moving in the trees."<sup>35</sup> And a little boy tells them that "the beast comes out of the sea,"<sup>36</sup> and then the beast on the mountain which confronts the boys as "something like a great ape sitting asleep with its head between its knees. Then the wind roared in the forest; there was confusion in the darkness and the creature lifted its head, holding toward them the ruin of a face."<sup>37</sup> The fear of the beast shakes the stability of Ralph's rational society. Jack, believing that irrational fear cannot be overcome and convinced not by reason but by strength and courage, is the first one who breaks the social rules and laws and turns down Ralph's authority. He yells at Ralph in spite of the conch and the assembly, "And you shut up! Who are you, anyway? Sitting there telling people what to do. You can't hunt, you can't sing."<sup>38</sup> "The rules!" Ralph shouts desperately at him, "You're breaking the rules!" But Jack retorts, "Who cares? Bollocks

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34 Ibid., p. 106.

35 Ibid., p. 78.

36 Ibid., p. 81.

37 Ibid., p. 114.

38 Ibid., p. 84.

to the rules! We're strong -- we hunt! If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat --!"<sup>39</sup> Jack then asks the assembly to choose a new leader since Ralph is incapable of doing anything himself except giving out orders; he is not a man of action and therefore is a coward like Piggy. But the boys still want Ralph to be their chief.

Ashamed, frustrated and irritated by his failure, Jack deliberately breaks away from the assembly and with all his hunters, except Simon, he forms his own tribe over which he wields full authority. "We'll hunt. I'm going to be chief," he tells his hunters. They decide that their only work should be hunting and they are not going to bother about the beast; they are going to forget it. "And about the beast, when we kill we'll leave some of the kill for it. Then it won't bother us, maybe."<sup>40</sup> They kill a sow while she is nursing her piglets. The hunting scene is exciting, bloodthirsty and terrifying:

"... the sow staggered her way ahead of them, bleeding and mad, and hunters followed, wedded to her in lust, excited by the long chase and the dropped blood .... Here, struck down by the heat, the sow fell and the hunters hurled themselves at her. This dreadful eruption from an unknown world made her frantic; she squealed and bucked and the air was full of sweat and noise and blood and terror. ... The spear moved forward inch by inch and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream. Then Jack found the throat and the hot blood spouted over his hands."<sup>41</sup>

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Ibid.

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Ibid., p. 123.

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Ibid., p. 125.

Jack, who on the former occasion hesitated to kill the piglet, is now the first one to spill blood. Also Roger, whose arm is now loosed from any taboos, hurls a spear into a piglet.

They give the sow's head to "the Beast" as a gift. They placate the Beast because of fear.<sup>42</sup> The Lord of the Flies is in fact the pig's head covered with "a black blob of flies that buzzed like a saw."<sup>43</sup> Its dim eyes and cynical expression assure Simon, a strange quiet boy, detached from the others, and the only one to suspect that it is themselves they should fear, "that everything was a bad business."<sup>44</sup> It mocks Simon and the whole human race, "Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!"<sup>44</sup> and tells him that evil is part of man. And Lord of the Flies - Beelzebub or the Devil himself is also in them: "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close!"

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Their way of pleasing the Beast is very similar to many tribes' ceremonial procedure after they have hunted and killed animals. The Ostiaks, being afraid of vengeance by the dead animal's soul or by its kin, cut off the bear's head, after having killed it, and hang it on a tree around which they dance and lament, and with great respect tell the beast that it is killed by others, not by them who have never done it wrong. And after celebrating their victory they stuff the bear's skin with hay and presents, with great veneration, for the guardian god. When a group of Koryak have killed a bear or a wolf, they dance around a man dressed in the dead animal's skin telling it that they did not kill it but other people did. The purpose of such ceremonies is to protect people from the slain bear's and his kinfolk's revenge. An American Indian tribe in North America, after having killed a bear, address its head, hung on a post, with great reverence saying that they have to kill it because of famine and starvation. Thus the boys are like savages who try to appease the Beast because of superstitious fear.

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Op.cit. p. 128.

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Ibid. p. 133.

I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?"<sup>45</sup>

Through Beelzebub, Golding emphasizes that evil, darkness exist in all human hearts. Being afraid of "the Beast" the boys are unconsciously afraid of themselves - of their own beastiality. The Lord of the Flies also warns Simon that he is "not wanted" and must stay aparted from the game that is going to take place on the island. It tells him not to interfere with their fun or else he shall "be done", "See? Jack and Roger and Maurice and Robert and Bill and Piggy and Ralph. Do you. See?"<sup>46</sup> Simon then falls unconscious, feeling that he is being swallowed by the pig's vast, dark mouth - that he is devoured by "the Beast."

The pig's head is not only an offering to "the Beast", it is also the totem of their tribe. According to Freud, "the clan is celebrating the ceremonial occasion by the cruel slaughter of its totem animal and is devouring its raw blood, flesh and bones. The clansmen are there, dressed in the likeness of the totem and imitating it in sound and movement, as though they are seeking to stress their identity with it."<sup>47</sup> The boys therefore unconsciously identify themselves with the Beast - the Devil since they eat its flesh at the feast in which Ralph, Piggy and their boys participate. They perform a ritualistic song and dance imitating the pig hunt. One of the boys is in the middle of the dancing circle acting the beast's part. The song, "Kill the beast!

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Ibid.

46

Ibid.

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Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," The Standard Edition of the

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Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" out of which arises "another desire, thick, urgent, blind," the dance, the threatening weather and the mysterious darkness arouse the violent and hysterical atmosphere to its highest point and rush them to commit a horrifying murder.

Simon, after having recovered from his fit, has discovered that "the Beast" is in fact the dead body of a parachutist. This is the first appearance of the adult in their world. Golding seems to suggest ironically that even an adult cannot help them because he is dead. Even the adult decays, hence cannot solve the fundamental problem rooted in the world since its beginning. Simon rushes down the hill to the party in order to help them out of irrational fear. But the boys, in their hysterical madness kill him, thereby symbolically killing their helper, their redeemer, their knowledge. In the crisis of their agonizing chant: "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!" they have done Simon to pieces: 70

"The sticks fell and the mouth of the new circle crunched and screamed. The beast was on its knees in the center, its arms folded over its face. It was crying out against the abominable noise something about a body on the hill. The beast struggled forward, broke the ring and fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws."<sup>48</sup>

Like Christ who was murdered in his efforts to bring mankind salvation, Simon is cruelly killed by the mad mob when he attempts to save them from chaotic superstition. By doing so he has challenged the Beast's taboo and is punished. The contrast between the murderers and

the dead body of Simon is obvious. Although the boys take Simon as the Beast and kill him, they themselves are described as dirty, bloodlustful creatures while Simon's body is white and pure and beautiful:

"The water rose further and dressed Simon's coarse hair with brightness. The line of his cheek silvered and the turn of his shoulder became sculptured marble. The strange attendant creatures, with their fiery eyes and trailing vapors, busied themselves round his head. The body lifted a fraction of an inch from the sand and a bubble of air escaped from the mouth with a wet plop. Then it turned gently in the water."

Simon is a martyr who will never be appreciated or recognized by his fellows. Only nature and the universe recognize his martyrdom and accept him with great tenderness.

"Somewhere over the darkened curve of the world the sun and moon were pulling, and the film of water on the earth planet was held, bulging slightly on one side while the solid core turned. The great wave of the tide moved farther along the island and the water lifted. Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out toward the open sea."<sup>49</sup>

The boys take Simon as "the Beast", but they themselves are the beast. This scene of Simon's death also states the precarious condition of rationality. It tests rational and intelligent boys. Even Ralph and Piggy are also seized by irrational fear and frenzied madness of the moment and participate in the crime. In society one can do what is forbidden for an individual. Both Ralph and Piggy later feel ashamed and try to find excuses. Not so Jack, who is now completely devoured by savagery. He forms his own anarchical tribe at the Castle Rock. The other boys are reduced to mere subjects. He is a merciless





tyrant who on account of his cruel savagery, can now spill not only animals' blood but also human blood. Simon's blood, instead of quenching his thirst, arouses in him a greedy and thirsty desire for more human blood.

One by one, the big boys go to join Jack's tribe because of both the exciting, mysterious, demanding spell and fear. Their spontaneous manifestation of an unconscious process which is merely assisted by the outer powerful primitive forces are witnessed by Ralph and Piggy with horror. One night they come to steal Piggy's broken specs in their shelters. Now Ralph is robbed of his fire which he hopes will bring rescue. Without his glasses Piggy is blind and therefore unable to do anything, so he and Ralph and the twin brothers, Sam and Eric, go to Jack's Castle Rock. There Sam and Eric are captured by force despite their protest "out of the heart of civilization."<sup>50</sup> Piggy pleads in vain for his glasses. And this unconvincing speech brings about his tragic death; Roger, the sadist who is unable to stand Piggy's speech, pushes a large rock from the cliff edge above Piggy and Ralph:

"The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist. Piggy, saying nothing, with no time for even a grunt, traveled through the air sideways from the rock, turning over as he went. The rock bounded twice and was lost in the forest. Piggy fell forty feet and landed on his back across that square red rock in the sea. His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed. Then the sea breathed again in a long, slow sigh, the water boiled white and pink over the rock; and when it went, sucking back again, the body of Piggy was gone."<sup>51</sup>

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Ibid., p. 165.

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Ibid., p. 167.

Piggy's death and the ruin of the conch symbolize the complete control of barbarism. Intelligence and civilization have gone from them. Jack is quite relieved because he and his hunters are now free from Piggy's intellectual influence and the conch's authority, since his subjects, despite his totalitarianism, are still submissive to the conch when Piggy blows it. They are also stirred by Piggy's suggestion of choices: "Which is better - to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill."<sup>52</sup>

Suddenly, after Piggy's death, Jack threatens to kill Ralph, the only remaining rational person, left to fight alone against the whole group of savages. He is to be the last victim hunted like a pig. Caused by hunger and weariness, the thought of joining them comes into his mind many times. "Might it not be possible to walk boldly into the fort, say - 'I've got pax,' laugh lightly and sleep among the others? Pretend they were still boys, schoolboys who had said, 'Sir, yes, Sir' - and worn caps? Daylight might have answered yes; but darkness and the horrors of death said no. Lying there in the darkness, he knew he was an outcast."<sup>53</sup> And he knows well that they are no longer simple British schoolboys. How can he trust the boy who once said "We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English, and the English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right things,"<sup>54</sup> the boy who has now become the savag himself - almost more brutal and bloodthirsty than other primitive savages?

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Ibid., p. 166.

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Ibid., pp. 171-172.

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Ibid., p. 38.

Jack would never compromise. He determines that hunting must end only with Ralph's death; they will either pierce him with a sharpened stick, or roast him like a pig. In their search for Ralph they set fire to the island which was once their Treasure Island. Ralph tries desperately to use his intelligence and sensibility to save himself. He keeps telling himself, "Think. What was the sensible thing to do?"<sup>55</sup> He is ultimately rescued, not by his own intelligence, but by a naval officer who has perceived the smoke, and steers his cruiser, which is well armed with a sub-machine gun, towards the island. The abrupt appearance of an adult from "civilization," suddenly brings back Ralph's authority and when the officer asks "Who's boss here?" he answers proudly and loudly, "I am," whereas Jack retreats quietly to his childhood - to a state of insignificance. At the end, Ralph weeps "for the end of innocence, the darkness of men's heart, and the fall through the air of the true wise friend called Piggy."<sup>56</sup> The naval officer who comes to rescue the boys in fact cannot really help them. Nor can he save himself. The rescue he gives to the children is a false, a superficial one. He comes too late, when the boys' condition is beyond any help. His appearance can never restore their innocence. Ralph weeps because of his realization that their innocence is completely destroyed and that in its place coils quietly evil, the total darkness, ready for its chance to take control. Jack's retreat does not mean the annihilation of evil but its submission for the moment; the expression

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Ibid., p. 181.

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Ibid., pp. 186-187.

on his own and the little boys' faces indicates cunning evil which is timeless and as old as the age of human race.

It is obvious that the moral of Lord of the Flies was quite clear in Golding's mind before he began writing the novel. He knew before he put pen to paper what truth about human nature he wanted to proclaim to his readers. In the sense that the moral standpoint precedes the actual story, Lord of the Flies is a fable. In the last few years, many critics have agreed upon the helpful distinction in novels between fables and fictions. John Peters explains the distinction as follows:

"Fables are those narratives which leave the impression that their purpose was anterior, some initial thesis or contention which they are apparently concerned to embody and express in concrete terms. Fables always give the impression that they were preceded by the conclusions which it is their function to draw. ... The effect of a fiction is very different. Here the author's aim, as it appears from what he has written, is evidently to present a more or less faithful reflection of the complexities, and often of the irrelevancies, of life as it is actually experienced. ... Fictions make only a limited attempt to generalize and explain the experience with which they deal, since their concern is normally with the uniqueness of this experience. Fables starting from a skeletal abstract, must flesh out that abstract with the appearances of 'real life' in order to render it interesting and cogent."<sup>57</sup>

It is very difficult for a writer to write a successful and convincing fable since sometimes the writer's anxiety to make clear his moral obtrudes and interferes to such an extent that the story is limited and becomes unconvincing. And Golding does not avoid this danger. In the scene in which a little boy cries because of his fear of the beast

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Jon Peter, "The Fables of William Golding," Kenyon Review XXI (Autumn, 1957), pp. 577-578.

and makes other little boys cry with him; Golding says, "For now the littleuns were no longer silent. They were reminded of their personal sorrows; and perhaps felt themselves to share in a sorrow that was universal. They began to cry in sympathy."<sup>58</sup> He is so obsessed by the idea of suggesting the universal tragedy of mankind that he makes those little boys, aged six, responsible for what is too much for them and the comment is unconvincing. At the end of the book where Ralph cries for the end of innocence and darkness of the human heart, the language is beautiful, the meaning is noble and cosmic, but it is too deep and too exaggerated for a twelve-year old boy.

Golding's desire to preach to the reader is too great to present only the experience. His use of symbolism is so evident that all his characters are reduced from completely convincing human beings and in some cases become over-simplified representations. Consequently his characterisation turns out to be the weakest part of the book, despite the fact that the dialogue is authentic.

In his anxiety to create characters which will forcefully illuminate his point of view, he falls into the trap of creating characters which are not always convincing as human beings; they are too extreme perhaps; too evil, too much like little Hitlers to be true, not nearly so convincing as the children of Hughes' A High Wind in Jamaica which will be discussed in a following chapter. Thus Lord of the Flies also becomes a kind of allegory - a modern allegory in which good is called Ralph instead of Good and evil is called Jack instead of Evil. The main

protagonists are all symbols of various qualities of human nature; each stands for a single quality.

Ralph is the symbol of common-sense and rationality who wins the votes because of his superior personality and who tries his best to keep society in order by imitating adults, and by rules, in order to bring rescue. The fire that brings them rescue at the end is first built by him. Piggy is the symbol of intelligence, knowledge and civilization who acts and thinks the way he thinks an adult should. He is the model of the adult world who considers the other children "a crowd of kids" or "a pack of kids." When the boys first build the fire and then burn the forest he says to them, "but the first time Ralph says 'fire' you goes howling and screaming up here mountain, like a pack of kids!"<sup>59</sup> Even Ralph is not aware of the damage the fire might cause. Only Piggy knows what will happen; they will have to eat cooked fruits and roast pork if the whole forest is burnt. Although he is intelligent, Piggy is a most awkward and funny boy who deliberately throws away the grammatical rules when he speaks and who is incapable of physical labour or exercise. He is fat and asthmatic, short-sighted and is the only boy whose hair never seems to grow. These things indicate his physical abnormality. And on such an island only brain is not enough; he therefore becomes insufficient. A boy like Piggy is well fitted only in a civilized and intellectual world. Being cast away from this kind of world Piggy is helpless and can be easily destroyed.

Jack is the symbol of evil whose nature will reveal itself in its extreme as soon as it can find a chance; Jack also stands for totalitarianism which destroys all sensibility and rationality. Along with Jack is Roger, the symbol of sadism, who is referred to as "uncommunicative by nature."<sup>60</sup> He loves to torture, to destroy and to kill. While Ralph and Piggy carefully preserve the conch, Jack and Roger seek to destroy it and even its possessors. Only the destruction of Piggy and the conch makes Jack and Roger feel that they are completely released from the pull of civilization and intelligence.

The least satisfactory character of all is Simon, the visionary, the saint. With this character Golding found it too difficult to resist the fable writer's temptation to speak directly through the mouth of his creation, to preach to the reader. Simon is a saint who is sacrificed for man's salvation. Only Simon knows what the Beast is. When others say that there is no beast on the island he says, "As if, the beastie, or the snake thing was real. Remember?"<sup>61</sup> or "Maybe," he says, "maybe there is a beast ... what I mean is ... maybe it's only us ... We could be sort of ..." <sup>62</sup> He knows, long before he meets the Lord of the Flies, that evil is inherent in man, man is the beast himself. He is the only boy who says, "I don't believe in the beast,"<sup>63</sup> and can go alone to stay in his hiding place on the mountain where he

60

Ibid., p. 112.

61

Ibid., p. 47.

62

Ibid., p. 32.

63

Ibid.

confronts, before his approaching death, the Lord of the Flies. Here we view the too contrived and explicit scene where there is a dialogue between Simon and the Lord of the Flies who gives a sermon to Simon telling him directly, with cynical expression on its grinning face, that he is a part of man, he is in man and that is why "it's no go." This is unconvincing: Golding has interrupted his story in a very crude way in order to make an obvious point.

Yet Golding's treatment of Simon's body, being washed out to sea, is successful and impressive. His body, despite its fatal wounds that cause his terrible death, is described as a priceless, immortal piece of art, a "sculptured marble," wealthily decorated with silver and pearls. His body is gently carried away by water into the open sea, like a child, after having been lost for sometime, being brought safely back to his mother's warm breast. This is very effective dramatization of the feeling that Simon's sacrifice has not been in vain. It is at least recognized by nature.

Apart from this rather unsatisfactory use of symbolism in the characterisation, the rest of the symbolism is effective. Piggy's specs, the conch, the fire and the dead parachutist are all convincing as symbols because they are convincing as things. We are never in any doubt as to their actuality in the story. Piggy's glasses are so real they are almost a part of him; the conch is so accurately described and so constantly handled that its objectivity is a fact; the fire is so necessary for rescue and Ralph's pleas<sup>d</sup> to the others to keep it going so urgent, that we find no difficulty in believing it; Simon actually frees the parachutist's body from the harness in which it is strapped.



There is an unmistakable authenticity about all these things. Golding presents them as well as any naturalistic novelist. Having done this, he has no difficulty in persuading the reader to accept them as symbols. It is true that in some respects, the characters we have already discussed, are genuinely real (Piggy completely so), particularly in their manner of speaking; but in other respects, they are distinctly unreal. It is this unevenness of treatment that destroys the total effect.

The pig's head would have been the most successful symbol if only Golding had not forced it to preach. The head is the symbol of the decay, of the precarious and fragile nature of civilization. Lord of the Flies is a translation of the Hebrew Ba'alzevuv (Beelzebub in Greek) which is the name of the Devil "whose name suggests that he is devoted to decay, destruction, demoralization, hysteria and panic."<sup>64</sup> Golding does his best to dramatize the inscrutable darkness of the human heart. The boys in the book are not boys at all but small-sized adults. They return to their childhood state only at the appearance of the naval officer whose cruiser, with armament, is chasing enemies in order to kill. Golding himself poses the question, "And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?" since what the boys have done is a parallel to the adult's game of killing. Golding seems to suggest the perpetual universal damnation of mankind.

Golding is a religious man who takes a serious view of life. His heart aches when he witnesses the depravity and the demoralization

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Ibid., p. 190.

of man under the superficiality of civilization. He feels responsible for mankind and his concern for them urges him to warn them, to teach them. He is too serious to accept that the moral of The Coral Island is true. He considers The Coral Island as a show -- as a children's game and denies its moral, claiming that it is "unrealistic and therefore not truly moral." It might be said of Lord of the Flies that since the story is too moralistic, it therefore becomes unconvincing.