

A Moral Lesson of William Golding: A Study of *Lord of the Flies*.

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Abstracts:

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is a modern fable. Golding revealed the dark side of human nature in his novel. The aim of this paper is to clarify Golding's message to the modern world.

Introduction

William Golding built up a lasting reputation with the first novel, *Lord of the Flies*. The novel, published in 1954, has been widely read ever since. The story takes place on a desert island in the South Seas, and the characters in the novel are a group of boys abandoned on the island. *Lord of the Flies* is in the manner of a boy's adventure story. In fact, as his immediate novel, Golding takes R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), one of traditional island adventure novels for children's entertainment. But *Lord of the Flies* is a narrative not about an exiting, adventurous life on a tropical island but about a horrible, atrocious struggle of boys. In contrast to Ballantyne's boys, who keep up their fellowship to the end, Golding's boys do cruel massacre in the story.

We cannot help feeling Golding's contention which the tragic story declares. *Lord of the Flies* has therefore been called a fable. The explanation of the term by John Peter may help us to understand the meaning:

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 conclusion which it is their function to draw...¹⁾

In the form of a fable, the story is led by the author's contention. According to Golding's remarks, the contention is a 'moral lesson'.²⁾ What is then Golding's 'moral lesson'?

Golding, born in 1911, took part in the Second World War. During the war, the genocide of Jews was done by Nazis, and the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These experiences had great influence on him.

When the war was over, he had entirely lost reliance on human nature. He relates it like this:

Before the second world war I believed in the perfectibility of social man...but after the war I did not because I was unable to. I had discovered what one man could do to another.³⁾

His doubts about human nature have a close relation with his 'moral lesson'. They form the basis of *Lord of the Flies* without doubt. What happens in the novel is not imaginary events on an imaginary island but possible ones in the real world.

Golding's intention is to show his contention and drive it home to the reader. An important point for valuation on a fable may be found in the lucidity of the author's contention which the novel expresses. Golding takes diverse devices so that he may accomplish his intention. It seems to me that the inquiry into the author's contention is important in the study of a novel like *Lord of the Flies*, a fable. This thesis is intended to make clear Golding's contention in *Lord of the Flies* and to consider his attitude to man.

I. Shadow on the Coral Island

During a future nuclear war, a pack of boys, the evacuees from England, attacked, are marooned on an uninhabited island. Golding's island, like Ballantyne's one, is a tropical solitary island. The island in *The Coral Island* is hopefully described through a protagonist boy's eyes. The narrator in this story is 'I', one of the protagonists:

My heart was filled with more delight than I can express at the sight of so many glorious objects, and my thoughts

turned suddenly this the contemplation of the Creator of them all I mention this the more gladly, because, at that time, I am ashamed to say, I very seldom thought of my Creator, although I was constantly surrounded by the most beautiful and wonderful of his works.⁴⁾

By contrast, the island in *Lord of the Flies* is realistically and objectively described in detail through the author's eyes with no emotion:

The shore was fledged with palm trees. These stood or leaned or reclined against the light and their green feathers were a hundred feet up in the air. The ground beneath them was a bank covered with coarse grass, torn everywhere by the upheavals of fallen trees, scattered with decaying coco-nuts and palm saplings. Behind this was the darkness of the forest proper and the open space of the scar. Ralph stood, one hand against a grey trunk, and screwed up his eyes against the shimmering water. Out there, perhaps a mile away, the white surf flinked on a coral reef, and beyond that the open sea was dark blue. Within the irregular arc of coral the lagoon was still as a mountain lake — blue of all shades and shadowy green and purple. The beach between the palm terrace and the water was a thin bow-stave, endless apparently, for to Ralph's left the perspectives of palm and beach and water drew to a point at infinity; and always, almost visible, was the heat.⁵⁾

This description makes on the reader the impression that the island exists having no connection with man. The author intimates, by consistently giving objectivity to the island, that the island has no relation with the boy's actions. It is the boys, that determine whether the island is the dream world. Besides, the realistic depiction lets the island have verisimilitude and makes the reader believe the island as a real island. The reason why the author gives such description to the island is that he attempts this work as a possible story, not as a fanciful one.

In the beginning of the story, the boys are filled with a hope that pleasant adventure stories which they would formerly read may come true. The island is 'the imagined but never fully realized place'⁶⁾ to the boys. Ralph, who is the chief of the boys, proposes to explore the island. He sets out with Jack, the leader of choir, and Simon, a member of it:⁷⁾

The three boys walked briskly on the sand. The tide was low and there was a strip of weed-strewn beach that was

almost as firm as a road. A kind of glamour was spread over them and the scene and they were conscious of the glamour and made happy by it. They turned to each other, laughing excitedly, talking, not listening. The air was bright. Ralph, faced by the task of translating all this into an explanation, stood on his head and fell over. When they had done laughing, Simon stroked Ralph's arm shyly; and they had to laugh again. "Come on," said Jack presently, "we're explorers." (p.27)

The boys are filled with a feeling of happiness. This happy exploration invests the novel with the appearance of conventional island adventure novels. There is a reference to some island adventure novels by the boys. It indicates the boys' expectation of the world:

"It's like in a book." At once there was a clamour. "Treasure Island-" "Swallows and Amazons-" "Coral Island" (p.38)

The readers also expect that the boys will lead delightful, exciting lives. The narrative is thus proceeding within the framework of island adventure novels. But this happy feeling of the boys is only a preparation for the subsequent tragedy.

A turning point in the story begins with the emergence of the 'beast'. The 'beast' is introduced into a story as a 'snake-thing' by the boy with mulberry-coloured birthmark. The invisible, dreadful 'beast' scares the boys extremely. A dark shadow commences to slightly fall on their dream world.⁸⁾ The boy with the birthmark is the first dead person in the novel. The flame which was kindled by Piggy's spectacles turns into a great fire. The fire spreads rapidly from woods to woods. The boy with birthmark, involved in the fire, is burnt alive. The boys' reaction to his death is noteworthy. They refuse to admit his death and disclaim all responsibility for the cause; Ralph says, 'Perhaps he went back to the, the-'(p.51) After this the death of the boy with the birthmark becomes 'the unmentionable' to the boys.⁹⁾

The horror and the irresponsibility which the death suggests never vanish out of our minds. The reader cannot feel any longer that this novel is a narrative only about the pleasant, happy life of the boys. The author creates the keynote of the novel with the death of the boy with mulberry-coloured birthmark. Consequently, it can be said that he is the foreshadower in *Lord of the Flies*. The boy with the mulberry-coloured birthmark suggests a remove from other island adventure novels.

II. Conch and Painted Faces

Hereafter the dream world of the boys rapidly dies away. Instead savagery comes to the surface of the story. The opposition between civilization and savagery is a common subject matter of island adventure novels. In those narratives, the superiority of civilization to savagery is generally described, or the goodness of civilized men and wickedness of uncivilized savages are emphasized. For example, in *Coral Island*, Christianity thoroughly changes the brutal nature of savages which once horrified the marooned boys extremely.¹⁰⁾ But in *Lord of the Flies* this common subject matter assumes quite different aspects. The 'savage' of this story are the British, civilized boys.

At first the boys conform to the ways of civilized world. They make some rules, light a signal fire to be rescued, and have a talk in democratic way. In the assembly they must hold the conch when they speak. The conch, by which Ralph called the boys together in the opening chapter, represents the right to speak in the assembly. The conch is put into the story as a symbol of order in civilized world. But the conch itself has no meaning. The initial description of the conch makes the inorganic impression on the reader:

In colour the shell was deep cream, touched here and there with fading pink. Between the point, worn away into a little hole, and the pink lips of the mouth, lay eighteen inches of shell with a slight spiral twist and covered with a delicate, embossed pattern. Ralph shook sand out of the deep tube.(p.17)

It is the boys that give the inorganic matter a social meaning. Consequently, the authority of the conch undergoes gradual changes in proportion to the state of the boys' society.¹¹⁾

The boys gradually accustomed to the life on the island. It is not a paradisaical life but the dirty tangled hair, the grimy unclean bodies, the clothes tattered, smudged with sweat that the tropical island gives to them:

With the memory of his sometime clean self as a standard, Ralph looked them over. They were dirty, not with the spectacular dirt of boys who have fallen into mud or been brought down hard on a rainy day. Not one of them was an obvious subject for a shower, and yet — hair, much too long, tangled here and there, knotted round a dead leaf or a twig; faces cleaned fairly well by the process of eating and sweating but marked in the less

accessible angles with a kind of shadow; clothes, worn away, stiff like his own with sweat, put on, not for decorum or comfort but out of custom; the skin of the body, scurfy with brine —(p.121)

The appearance of the boys is no longer that of civilized men. The tattered clothes and the long hair evidently testify to the retreat of civilized world.

Not only apparently but also internally the boys degenerate from civilized world. The forerunner of reversion to savagery is Jack. He failed to become a chief because Ralph was elected by the majority over Jack. After that, Jack persistently pursues pigs with his lust to kill them as a hunter. His movements in the forest seem as if he is an animal.¹²⁾ At last he smears his face with clay to deceive pigs. The dazzle paint, 'disguise' is effective not only against pigs but also against Jack himself:

Jack planned his new face. He made one cheek and one eye-socket white, then rubbed red over the other half of his face left jaw...He looked in astonishment, no longer at himself his feet, laughing excitedly. Beside the mere, his sinewy body held up a mask that drew their appalled them. He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling. He capered towards Bill and the mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness. (p.69)

Jack, liberated from the restraint of civilized world, are certainly reverting to savagery. Most boys as well as Jack paint their faces and begin to feel a pleasure in killing pigs. In due time they come to chant a ritual formula: 'Kill the pig! Cut her throat! Spill her blood!' Thus they turn into 'savages'. The dazzle paint is the most obvious indication of the boys' retreat from civilization, reversion to savagery.¹³⁾

When a ship passes by the island, no smoke for rescue rises, because Jack has taken fire watchers out as the helpers of hunt. Ralph furiously reproaches Jack for the irresponsibility in public. An unbridgeable gulf is created between them:

The two boys faced each other. There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled common-sense.(p.77)

Jack turns his humiliated rage to Piggy, and one of the lenses of Piggy's spectacles is broken by Jack's blow to Piggy. This

break is clearly a suggestion of the fall of civilization. Henceforth the antagonism between Ralph and Jack increases, and in the latter part of the story they fight a fierce battle with spears.

Their antagonism causes the other boys to split into two parties. This forms a striking contrast to the unshakable comradeship of the boys in *The Coral Island*

There was, indeed, no more 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.¹⁴⁾

Unlike *The Coral Island*, in *Lord of the Flies* the opposition between the boys is emphasized. Here the reader can understand the reason why the author parodies *The Coral Island* Ralph and Piggy adhere to common sense, the way of civilized world, while Jack breaks the rules and retrogresses to savagery; Jack cries, 'Bollocks to the rules! We're strong — we hunt!'(p.100) In quite different sense from other island adventure novels, the opposition between civilization and savagery is taken up.

With the progress of the atavism of the boys, the conch is losing its prestige more and more. They come to speak, as they like, without holding conch. But Piggy, who is always received with contempts by the other boys, attaches great importance to the conch. He is an outsider in the boys' society 'by fat, and ass-mar, and specs, and a certain disinclination for manual labour'.(p.70) He speaks about the other boys', disorderly actions scornfully, like a grown-up; 'Acting like a crowd of kids!'(p.42) He also has a strong hatred for the atavism of the boys. Till the moment of his death, he adheres to the authority of the conch. It is a symbol of order in civilization; the antithesis of painted faces which is a symbol of savagery. He cries over and over again when his speech is interrupted, 'I got the conch!'. He has strong faith in reason of man. When he goes to take back his spectacles which were stolen by 'savages', he makes a pathetic speech:

"But I don't ask for my glasses back, not as a favour. I don't ask you [Jack] to be a sport, I'll say, not because you're strong, but because what's right's right. Give me my glasses, I'm going to say-you got to!"(p.189)

For Piggy, everything can be solved with reason of man, and 'Life is scientific'.(p.92) The author portrays Piggy as a typical rationalist.

But this rationality is hypocritical. In spite of being concerned in the murder of Simon, Piggy refuses to acknowledge it as a murder with quibbling excuses:

"It was an accident," said Piggy suddenly, "that's what it was. An accident." His voice shrilled again. "Coming in the dark — he had no business crawling like that out of the dark. He was batty. He asked for it." He gesticulated widely again. "It was an accident."(p.173)

Piggy's attitude is self-deceptive with no sense of sin. Therefore it can be said that the destruction of the conch accompanied by the death of Piggy means the fall of order in civilized world and of hypocritical rationality in civilized men.

The author takes up the opposition between civilization and savagery in the different framework from conventional island adventure novels. It is savagery in civilized men that is depicted in *Lord of the Flies*. The confidence in civilization, the superiority of civilization to savagery are brought into question.

III. Beast on the Mountain

The 'beast' introduced by one of the boys comes to the front of the story by degrees as the boys retreat from civilization. The 'beast' frightens them terribly. In conventional island adventure novels, too, the menacers to the boys make their appearances on the island; for example, cannibals; pirates.¹⁵⁾ They come from the outside of the boys and the fears of menacers strengthen the solidarity of the boys. But in *Lord of the Flies* the increase of the fears of the 'beast' involves the antagonism among the boys and hastens their atavism to savagery. A great mistake of the boys is that they try to find the 'beast' outside them. The truly fearful 'beast' is not something outside but the boys themselves.

There are some suggestions of the latent bestiality of the boys. When some boys are playing on the beach, Henry, one of the 'littluns', is absorbed in observing the tiny transparencies:

This was fascinating to Henry. He poked about with a bit of stick, that itself was wave-worn and whitened and a vagrant, and tried to control the motions of the scavengers. He made little runnels that the tide filled and tried to crowd them with creatures. He became absorbed

beyond mere happiness as he felt himself exercising control over living things. He talked to them, urging them, ordering them. Driven back by the tide, his footprints became bays in which they were trapped and gave him the illusion of mastery.(p.66)

And Roger, who later becomes the subchief of Jack's tribe, throws stones at Henry to miss:

Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. 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.(p.67)

The potential cruelty in the boys is disclosed. It is the 'taboo' of civilized world, not Roger's inherent nature that prevents him from throwing stones at Henry.¹⁶⁾ The latent bestiality can be found not only in the boys who are obsessed with the charm of hunting but also in the boys who try to be civilized. Ralph is also forced to revert to savagery despite his hatred for Jack's atavism. Ralph's reversion appears in the obstruction of the clarity of his thought processes. It is ingeniously expressed with the images of 'shutter' or 'curtain':

Ralph was puzzled by the shutter that flickered in his brain. There was something he wanted to say; then the shutter had come down.(p.156)

He looked from face to face. Then, at the moment of greatest passion and conviction, that curtain flapped in his head and he forgot what he had been driving at.(p.180)

With his atavism, his cruel nature begins to show itself. When the boys make as if to kill Robert, who is a mock pig, Ralph as well as the other boys really strikes Robert:

They got his arms and legs. Ralph, carried away by a sudden thick excitement, grabbed Eric's spear and jabbed at Robert with it. ... Ralph too was fighting to get near, to get a handful of that brown, vulnerable flesh. The desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering.(p.126)

The bestiality which lurks in Ralph is represented. Though his moral sense survives longer than any other boy, he is not the incarnation of goodness. The decline of the boys' moral state manifests itself visually.

The boys who believe the 'beast' to exist outside themselves mistake a parachutist, a dead airman fallen on the mountain for the 'beast'.¹⁷⁾ They are scared at the emergence of the visible 'beast', but only Simon suspects the being on the mountain to be man, not the 'beast'. Simon is at once a heroic and mysterious boy; he is kind enough to pick fruits for the 'littluns'; he has the courage to go to ascertain alone whether the being on the mountain is the 'beast'; he loves solitude and has his own secret place in the woods; he intuitively perceives that the 'beast' is the boys themselves: 'What I mean is ...maybe it's only us.'(p.97); he tells a mysterious prophecy to Ralph: 'You'll get back to where you came from.'(p.122) The author describes Simon as 'a Christ-figure'.¹⁸⁾ Owing to his mysteriousness he is regarded as 'batty' by the other boys.

Simon tries to give the boys a message that the 'beast' they fear is only a harmless rotting corpse. The storm breaking, the other boys, who have made a feast of a pig, get excited and begin to dance. Chanting and movement drive them into frenzy. Savagery of the boys comes to a climax. At the height of their excitement, Simon emerges from the woods, to stumble into the circle of the dance. Being taken for the 'beast', he is cruelly killed by the boys:

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, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws. (p.168)

The description filled with the images of 'beast' declares that the 'beast' is the boys themselves.¹⁹⁾ The bestiality lurks in Ralph, Piggy as well as Jack, Roger. The death of Simon testifies to the truthfulness of his intuition about the 'beast'²⁰⁾ and the words of *Lord of the Flies*,²¹⁾ which is a pig's head swarming with flies, stabbed on a stick by the boys as the propitiation to the 'beast' and a symbol of 'evil':

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill" said the head. ..."You knew, didn't you? I'm part

of you? Close, close, close!...You know perfectly well you'll only meet down there — ... (p.158)

The murder of the Simon is a manifestation of 'evil' in the boys. Thus the author puts the 'beast' into the story as an embodiment of 'evil' and lets Simon have the role as the revealer of 'evil' in man. The mysteriousness given to Simon seems to be due to his special role in the novel.

The death of Simon is quite accidental. Piggy is mercilessly killed with the huge rock which Roger deliberately, not accidentally, has dropped on him. Both Simon and Piggy are the victims of the brutal nature of man. But the author gives quite different depictions on the scenes of their deaths. Simon's sea burial is poetically, beautifully expressed:

Along the shoreward edge of the shallowa the advancing clearness was full of strange, moonbeam-bodied creatures with fiery eyes. Here and there a larger pebble clung to its own air and was covered with a coat of pearls. The tide swelled in over the rain-pitted sand and smoothed everything with a layer of silver. ...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. ...Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea.

By contrast, the description of the murder of Piggy is concise, vivid, and grotesque:

The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from 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. (p.200)

It seems to me that this remarkable contrast is caused by the difference of the role of Simon from that of Piggy in the novel.

It is the problem of 'evil' in man that is taken up in *Lord of the Flies*. Their roles have a relation with this problem. Simon recognizes the dark side of human nature and his role is to reveal 'evil' in man. Therefore Simon may be said to be a mouthpiece of the author.²²⁾ In contrast to Simon, Piggy consistently refuses to admit 'evil' in man; for instance, he denies his involvement in the murder of Simon. Piggy is ignorant of human nature.²³⁾ In this sense, he is an antithesis of Simon who is a recognizer of the defects of human nature.

The 'beast' is the boys themselves, not something in the outside world. As they turn into the 'beast', 'evil' in them manifests itself by degrees. Consequently, the 'beast' is a symbol of 'evil' which lurks in all human beings. The identification of the boys with the 'beast' is the device of the author for visualizing the abstract concept, 'evil'.

IV. Innocence and Knowledge

Ralph appears from the first page to the last page of novel; he is protagonist.²⁴⁾ The reader often sees the narrative through Ralph's eyes and shares his feelings. Ralph's function is as a mediator for the reader. The author portrays Ralph as an ordinary boy with no special faculty. His ordinariness enables the reader to sympathize with Ralph, and his experiences have a meaning to the reader on account of the sympathy of the reader with Ralph. Though Ralph is innocent of human nature at first, he recognizes the dark side of human nature at the end. He grows up through his painful experiences; he is the learner in the novel. What he has learned by his experiences is what the reader must learn from the novel.

The horrifying cry of hunters dominates the final chapter of the novel. Jack does not allow the boys who are opposed to his tribe to live on the island. The 'savages', who are no longer boys, put Piggy to death brutally and make an attempt on Ralph's life. Ralph is chased by the line of the 'savages' and by the fire which is consuming the forest. He runs about desperately from place to place trying to escape from the fire and the spears of the 'savages'.

The author mirrors Ralph's thought or consciousness, as they are, in order to convey the fear and the confusion of his mind:

He knew he had heard it before somewhere, but had no time to remember. Break the line. A tree. Hide, let them pass. (p.217)

The seconds lengthened. Ralph was looking straight into the savage's eyes. Don't scream. You'll get back. Now he

's seen you, he making sure. A stick sharpened.(p.220)

Because in all the previous chapters the author nearly narrates the narrative as the omniscient narrator, the change of the narration in the final chapter has an effect on heightening the tension. The following detailed descriptions of the chase and the escape have tremendous impact:

Ralph screamed, a scream of fright and anger and desperation. His legs straightened, the screams became continuous and foaming. He shot forward, burst the thicket, was in the open screaming, snarling, bloody. ... the roar of the forest rose to thunder and a tall bush directly in his path burst into a great fan-shaped flame. He swung to the right, running desperately fast, with the heat beating on his left side and the fire racing forward like a tide. The ululation rose behind him and spread along, a series of short sharp cries, the sighting call. ... They were all running, all crying out madly. He could hear them crashing in the undergrowth and on the left was the hot, bright thunder of the fire. He forgot his wounds, his hunger and thirst, and became fear; hopeless fear on flying feet, rushing through the forest towards the open beach. ... Below him, someone's legs were getting tired and the desperate ululation advanced like a jagged fringe of menace and was almost overhead. He stumbled over a root and the cry that pursued him rose even higher. He saw a shelter burst into flames and the fire flapped at his right shoulder and there was the glitter of water. Then he was down, rolling over and over in the warm sand, crouching with arm up to ward off, trying to cry for mercy.(p.220)

The reader is forced to feel Ralph's fear as the reader's own. The author does not allow the reader to be a spectator, and intends the reader to be an expert to experience what Ralph experiences. The reader is sickeningly shown the true nature of man which conceals itself in civilized world.

When Ralph is almost killed, the grown-ups whom Ralph has been waiting come to the 'rescue' of the boys. The neat sophisticated naval officer,²⁵⁾ who is antithetical to the grimy, nearly naked boys, makes his appearance on the island. He cannot guess what has happened on the island at all: 'Fun and games'(p.221). Almost every remarks of the officer carries the irony of the author. Partly understanding the present situation, he says to the boys reproachfully:

"I should have thought," said the officer as he visualized the search before him, "I should have thought that a pack of British boys — you're all British aren't you? — would have been able to put up a better show than that — I mean —"(p.222)

This is an intentional contrast with the early statement of Jack who has reduced to savagery first of all:

"... 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."(p.47)

These horridly ironical remarks are the author's accusation not only at the Englishmen who 'believe that evil is somewhere else and inherent in another nation'²⁶⁾ but also at all civilized men who believe that they are always rational and good men.

The words of the officer, 'Jolly good show. Like *the Coral Island*.²⁷⁾ remind us of the reference of the boys to this book.²⁸⁾ Here the parody of *The Coral Island* is completed. Ralph can be no longer convinced, like the boys in *The Coral Island*, of the goodness of man. He learns, through his painful experiences, the true nature of man of which the officer is ignorant. The process of the story of *Lord of the Flies* is that of the growth from innocence to a bitter knowledge of 'evil' in man.

Though Golding's ending may be called 'tagged-on'²⁹⁾, I think that the ending is indispensable for this work as his view of man is contained in the ending. The horrible events on the island make Ralph realize 'the darkness of Man's heart, the dark side of human nature:

Simon was dead — and Jack had. ...The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on 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. And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.(p.223)

The reader cannot help feeling a stab of pathos. Ralph's tears indicate the bitterness of the knowledge which he has learned, and the depth of the meaning which the knowledge has. The

boys are rescued, but we cannot be simply delighted by their 'rescue' as we have been in conventional island adventure novels until now. The last lines of the novel slightly include the ominous suggestiveness:

The officer, surrounded by these noises, was moved and a little embarrassed. He turned away to give them time to pull themselves together; and waited, allowing his eyes to rest on the trim cruiser in the distance.(p.223)

It is true that the boys are rescued, but the world where they return is the ruined one which the naval officer and the cruiser suggest. Accordingly the naval officer may not be the rescuer in the strict sense of the word. The important factor of the 'rescue' in *Lord of the Flies* is not the officer's arrival on the island but Ralph's survival. Ralph survives and returns to the ruined world with the knowledge of 'evil' in man as the learner. The author takes a considerably pessimistic view of man as the whole narrative conveys. But Ralph's survival with the bitter knowledge implies that the author does not entirely despair of man. I think that the 'rescue' of Ralph is a touch of hope to man of the author.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to clarify Golding's contention in *Lord of the Flies*. Golding manifests it without diverting the attention of the reader. We have seen the dark side of human nature through the boys' horrid actions. Golding emphasizes it by parodying *The Coral Island*, 'published a century ago, at the height of Victorian smugness, ignorance, and prosperity'.³⁰⁾ Golding's contention in *Lord of the Flies* is that there is 'evil' in all human beings, even civilized men. He writes about the atrocities by civilized men:

It is bad enough to say that so many Jews were exterminated in this way and that, so many people liquidated—... They were not done by the headhunters of New Guinea, or by some primitive tribe in the Amazon. They were done, skillfully, coldly, by educated men, doctors, lawyers, by men with a tradition of civilization behind them, to beings of their own kind.³¹⁾

Golding is forced to lose reliance on civilized men and realize 'evil' concealed behind the mask of civilization by his experiences of war. His pessimistic view of man forms the basis of this work. 'Evil' exists within every man. It is the

central idea of the novel. Golding reveals it indifferently, not emotionally. *Lord of the Flies* is the novel of revelation of 'evil' in man.³²⁾

Some people say that the theme of *Lord of the Flies* is original sin. That 'evil' exists within every man is a 'truism' as Golding himself says:

To many of you, this will seem trite, obvious and familiar in theological terms. Man is a fallen being. He is gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous. I accept the theology and admit the triteness; but what is trite is true; and a truism can become more than a truism when it is a belief passionately held.³³⁾

The theme of this work may be trite. But we are often apt to forget the truism, firstly because it is trite, secondly because averting our eyes from the truism. 'Evil' in man, is unpleasant for us. Golding drives the truism home to us by exposing human nature in the novel. He asks, as a fabulist, us to admit our hypocrisies and face up to the fallen nature of man.

Golding invests the story with reality which is not found much in fables, by describing the boys on the island realistically. Reality of the story is of use in making the reader feel that the tragic events in the novel may be really possible. This work does not have a meaning till the reader considers the problem taken up in the novel as the reader's own. *Lord of the Flies* is not a story about or for children. What happens in the narrative is not what happens on an imaginary island but what has happened in the real world or may happen in the future.³⁴⁾ The island in *Lord of the Flies* is nothing but a microcosm of the real world.

Golding's contention in *Lord of the Flies* is that 'evil' exists within every man, and it is his 'moral lesson'. He takes a considerably pessimistic view of human nature, but as Ralph's survival shows, Golding does not completely despair of man. The 'rescue' of Ralph is a touch of hope to man of the author. Therefore it can be said that Golding is a pessimistic optimist of man.

Notes

1. John Peter, 'The Fables of William Golding', *Kenyon Review*, XIX (1957); rpt in *William Golding: Novel, 1954-67*, Casebook Series, ed. Norman Page (London: Macmillan, 1985), p.33
2. Golding's remarks on fabulists in the essay, 'Fable': *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces* (London: Faber

- & Faber, 1965), p.85. All the subsequent references are quotations from the paperback edition (1970).
3. *Ibid.*, p.86
 4. R.M.Ballantyne, *The Coral Island* (Edinburgh, 1858; London: Collins Classics, 1953), p.40
 5. William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), p.10. All the subsequent references are quotations from the paperback edition (1958)
 6. *Ibid.*, p.16
 7. The similarity of names of the two major characters is a clear link between *The Coral Island* and *Lord of the Flies*. The marooned boys in *The Coral Island* are named Ralph Rover (he is the narrator), Jack Martin and Peterkin Gay.
 8. John S.Whitley, *Golding: Lord of the Flies*, Studies in English Literature, No.42 (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), p.32
 9. *Lord of the Flies*, p.94
 10. Carl Niemeyer, 'The Coral Island Revisited', *College English*, XXII (January, 1961); rpt. In *William Golding's Lord of the Flies; Text, Notes & Criticism*, ed. James R. Baker and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr. (New York: G.P.Putnam's Sons, 1964), p.218
 11. Mark Kinkeas-Weeks and Ian Gregor, *William Golging: A Critical Study* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967; the paperback edition, 1970; the paperback edition, 1970), p.21. All the subsequent references are quotations from the revised paperback edition (1984)
 12. *Lord of the Flies*, p.52
 13. Whitley, *op.cit.*, pp.35f.
 14. *The Coral Island*, p.130
 15. Cf. Note No.10
 16. Kinkead-Weeks and Gregor, *op. cit.*, p.32
 17. This may be a suggestion that the 'beast' is man himself.
 18. Golding says about Simon: 'Fable', pp.97f
 19. C.B.Cox, 'On *Lord of the Flies*' *Critical Quarterly*, II (1960); rpt. in Page, p.115
 20. *Lord of the Flies*, p.97.
 21. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, *op.cit.*, p.43
 22. Whitley, *op.,cit.*, p.37
 23. Jack I. Biles, *Talk: Conversatons with William Golding* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), pp.12f.
 24. Golding remarks on Ralph: 'Fable', p.89
 25. *Lord of the Flies*, p.221
 26. 'Fable', p.89.
 27. *Lord of the Flies*, p.223.
 28. *Ibid.*, p.38
 29. Whitley, *op.cit.*, p.53.
 30. 'Fable', p.88.
 31. *Ibid.*, p.87
 32. Kinkead-Weeks and Gregor, *op.cit.*, p.22
 33. 'Fable', p.88
 34. 'There is no essential difference between the island-world and the grown-up one.' Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, *op.cit.*, p.38.