WILLIAM GOLDING'S LORD OF THE FLIES: A NEW SECULAR THEOLOGY

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MARGARET RUTH SYME

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ABSTRACT

Lord of the Flies is examined as a comment on the romantic fiction of the eighteen hundreds, particularly Ballantyne's The Coral Island; as a modern statement of the tragic vision of Euripides' The Bacchae; as a psychological study of human nature; as a quest myth and as an allegorical restatement of the sacrifice of Christ. The thesis concludes that while Lord of the Flies is all these things, it is, most importantly, a theological statement which attempts to speak to modern, secular man by means of a symbolism which is free of the old, misleading connotations of religious symbolism of the past. Golding's Theology develops out of human experience and speaks to the human condition in the second half of the twentieth century.

Le Lord of the Flies de William Golding: Une Nouvelle Théologie Séculière

ABREGE

Le Lord of the Flies est étudié en tant que:

- commentaire sur la fiction romantique de l'époque 1800 et en particulier sur le Coral Island de Ballantyne,

- exposé moderne sur la vision des Baccantes d'Euripide,

-étude psychologique de la nature humaine,

- recherche mythique sur le sacrifice du Christ et nouvel énoncé allégorique de ce sacrifice.

La thèse conclue que le Lord of the Flies, bien qu'étant tout cela à la fois, est surtout un exposé théologique qui tente de parler à l'homme moderne et séculier au moyen d'un symbolisme religieux d'autrefois. La théologie de Golding qui se développe à partir de l'expérience personnelle est significative de la condition humaine de la deuxième moitié du vingtième siècle.

Preface

Although this paper takes into account the rich variety of critical material on William Golding in general and Lord of the Flies in particular, its main purpose is a re-examination of the primary text itself.

Because of the depth and texture of the novel no one paper can hope to exhaust all its possible significance; Golding's craftsmanship will be considered only when style is instrumental in developing meaning. Yet since Lord of the Flies is the most contrived of Golding's novels and the one which has attracted at once the most excited approval and the most critical disdain, it seems important to understand just what the novel is about. This is not to suggest that the "truth" in Lord of the Flies is to be found exclusively in some esoteric scheme of symbolism or allegory. In an important sense the Novel is "true" simply as a story about a group of children marooned on an island.

As the English teacher of a group of gifted grade seven pupils, some of them no older than Jack and Ralph, I was mildly disturbed to find that one of the most popular

choices for optional reading was Lord of the Flies. Although they were blissfully unaware that the conch was anything more than a seashell, or the pig's head more than an unpleasant object, they read the book avidly and understood it perfectly. The idea that boys could turn into savages was utterly real to them and quite within their understanding. If Simon's death was disquieting, it struck a responsive chord that made them glad to talk about it in the security of a sunlit classroom. They knew what the littleuns cried about at night, and most of them vividly recalled similar terrors in the dark.

Most of Golding's critics agree on the symbolism of the conch, Simon is commonly regarded as a prophet or Christ figure and allusions to the Garden of Eden and the origins of human sinfulness are universally noted. But the usual error in dealing with a Golding novel is to insist on attempting to weave all the threads into a single fabric; to discover a single "meaning".

In The Anatomy of Criticism Northrop Frye notes that:

The criticism of literature can hardly be a simple or one-level activity. The more familiar one is with a great work of lit-

erature, the more one's understanding of it grows.

The conclusion that a work of literary art contains a variety or sequence of meanings seems inescapable.

> The principle of manifold or "polysemous" meaning, as Dante calls it, is not a theory any more, still less an exploded superstition, but an established fact. The thing that has established it is the simultaneous development of several schools of modern criticism, each making a distinctive choice of symbols in its analysis.
>
> The student must either admit the principle of polysemous meaning, or choose one of these groups and try to prove that all the others are less legitimate. 1.

It is not the purpose of this paper to discount the value of various critical views of Lord of the Flies; indeed, I have attempted to develop and expand the insights of several previous studies. Yet the one area which has received the most critical attention is the one in which criticism remains the weakest. Lord of the Flies is an essentially theological novel, not in the narrowly moralistic sense that it is an allegory of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden or of a Christ figure who is sacrificed for the sin of mankind, but in the broader sense that it is an attempt to understand the nature of man in relation to himself and his world, and to define both his limitations and his potentialities.

1. [Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1957], pp. 71-72.

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Introduction

In Irrational Man, a Study in Existential Philosophy William Barrett calls August 1914 the "Axial date in Modern Western History!"

> the sense of power over the material universe with which modern man emerged...from the middle ages, changed on that date into its opposite; a sense of weakness before the whirlwind that man is able to release but not to control. [2.]

If the First World War began the process of disillusionment, August 6th, 1945, completed it. The mushroom cloud over Hiroshima made impossible the optimism which had characterized Philosophic Humanism. In less than a decade the world had seen the systematic extermination of German Jews, a war which revealed unnumbered atrocities of man's inhumanity to his fellows, and finally the shadow of total annihilation, a shadow which would darken the next twenty years.

The 1950's was a decade of fear. Popular literature was frequently set against a background of atomic warfare; Dracula gave way, in the horror movies, to atomic mutants like the Giant Ant; and small towns organized civil defense

2. (Doubleday Anchor Ltd., N.Y., 1962) p.32.

leagues and observation corps to watch the skies. The Canadian Department of Defense occupied itself in disseminating literature outlining emergency precautions and procedures, and weekend sections of local newspapers carried detailed plans for the construction and equipping of basement bomb shelters.

The public concern was mirrored by political institutions all over the Western world. By the end of the 1950's complete facilities existed in Kemptville and in Arnprior, Ontario, for the relocation and continued operation of the Canadian Federal Civil Service in the event of nuclear war. As the arms race escalated, so did the cold war. Worldwide espionage activity proliferated and Soviet Russia, the "other" major atomic power, became the object of a bitter propaganda campaign. "Communism" became a word loaded with such pathological terror that to be branded "communist" was instant political annihilation. The communist witch hunt typified by the excesses of the McCarthy Era resulted in vigilance of campus protest groups, university political science classes, foreign consulates and embassies, and even the film making industry of Hollywood.

William Golding was a teacher of English and Philosophy at Bishop Wordsworth's School when the Second World War broke

out. He joined the Royal Navy and during the next five years was involved in combat which included the sinking of the Bismark and the D-Day landings. The experience was decisive for him. Before the war he had been, on the whole, optimistic about mankind; philosophically heir to Locke, Hume and Rousseau, he believed in humanitarian social progress by a rational process of enlightenment. Of his wartime experience he has said, "World War II was a turning point for me. I began to see what people were capable of doing." [3]

The other major influence on Golding's view of man, and the influence which he himself stresses, is his study of the Greek Classics. In an interview in May 1962, he stated, "If I really had to adopt literary parentage - I don't see why I should - but if I really had to adopt it, I should name thunderous great names like Euripides and Sophocles, and perhaps even Herodotus."[4] Golding's views of man and fate make this influence clear.

It is not surprising, then, that his first novel, coming as it did into a profoundly disillusioned world, should reflect an obsession with the sinful nature of man.

3. James C. Livingstone, William Golding's The Spire, The Seabury Reading Program (Seabury Press, N.Y., 1967), p. 7.

4. James R. Baker, William Golding, a Critical Study (St. Martin's Press, N.Y., 1965), p. XVII.

It is rather unfortunate that in his 1957 essay in the Kenyon Review, John Peter attached to Golding's novels the term "fable". His classification has influenced critical commentary ever since. In a more detailed analysis by Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weeks in the introduction to the Faber Educational Edition (1962), a more satisfactory conclusion is reached: the writers conclude that Lord of the Flies is as much a fiction as it is a fable; but the terms are still too narrow.

Inasmuch as Golding begins with an abstract idea - the evil lurking just below the surface in civilized man - and creates a story to embody his idea, he is writing a fable. But fable seeks to reduce the complexity of life in order to clarify the author's central theme. It imposes simplistic answers on life's most complex problems, and its symbols are conventional even to their names; Reynard is a fox with all the conventional attributes of foxiness, and Chanticleer is a rooster with all of a rooster's cockiness.

In London Magazine, May 1957, Golding defended his Aeschylean preoccupation with the human tragedy:

> I can't help feeling that critics of this Aeschylean outlook are those who think they have an easy answer to all the problems simply because they have never looked further than the rash appearing on the skin. 5.

Surely Golding himself is not guilty of looking for simple answers.

"What I would regard as a tremendous compliment to myself," he told an interviewer on a B.B.C. program, "would be if someone would substitute the word 'myth'...I do feel fable as being an invented thing on the surface, whereas myth is something which comes from the roots of things in the ancient sense of being the key to existence, the whole meaning of life, and experience as a whole." 6.

Northrop Frye has defined Myth as a literary work which is distinctive in two ways:

First, myths stick together to form a mythology, a large interconnected body of narrative that covers all the religious and historical revelation that its society is concerned with, or concerned about. Second, as part of this sticking-together process, myths take root in a specific culture, and it is one of their functions to tell that culture what it is and how it came to be, in their own mythical terms. 7.

This is essentially what William Golding seeks to accomplish through his novels. "The function of a writer," he said, "is simply to get people to understand their own humanity."

He should be free enough of society to be able to see it. His place is either understanding what men are or, if he can't, trying to put before other men a recognizable picture of the mystery.

The second thing a writer must have is intransigence in the face of accepted belief - political, religious, moral - any accepted belief. If he takes one for granted, then he ceases to have any use in society at all. He should always be able to say, "Well, that's all very well for you, but this is the picture as I see it." 8.

5. Paul Elmen, William Golding, A Critical Essay (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1967), p. 9.

6. Baker, p. XiX.

7. Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1976), p. 9.

For all Golding's work, but most particularly for Lord of the Flies, the problem of classification is complicated by the scope of the novelist. If he is creating myth, he is also creating the kind of symbols and motifs to which Coleridge attaches the term "Allegory". He begins with traditional archetypes and translates them into immediately recognizable elements of ordinary life. The snake becomes creepers, the snake-thing, the beastie, a pig's head on a stick, and finally Beelzebub himself. Then the motif is attached to the corruption of modern society [the cadaver on the mountain] and human sacrifice. By the end of the novel, even a twelve-year-old is forced to recognize the meaning of what was originally an archaic symbol of the fall of man. 9.

On yet another level, Lord of the Flies may be seen as an allegory in the same way that Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory.

> We have actual allegory when a poet explicitly indicates the relationship of his images to examples and precepts, and so tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed. A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear that he is saying "by this I also [allos] mean that." If this seems to be done continuously, we may say, cautiously, that what he is writing "is" an allegory. 10.

8. Baker, p. XIX.

9. This is more fully explained in chapter seven of the present essay.

10. Anatomy of Criticism, p. 90.

One of the central themes running through the book is what James Joyce calls "the Monomyth". In the fourth chapter of the present paper I have attempted to show how Ralph, the hero, sets out on his perilous journey through illusion and ignorance towards despair and eventual enlightenment. It is because of its allegorical weight that what appears on the surface to be a trick ending, a breach of artistic integrity, becomes justified.

Part One - Some Critical Approaches

1. The Coral Island Repudiated

One of the favorite children's classics of the nineteenth century was a book called The Coral Island by R. S. Ballantyne. In the tradition of Robinson Crusoe, The Coral Island describes how three plucky and resourceful English boys marooned on a tropical island acquit themselves to everybody's credit and return home covered in glory.

To a teacher of a boys' school, newly returned from fighting in World War II, such behavior on the part of young boys must have appeared, to say the least, incredible. On its simplest level, Lord of the Flies is a repudiation of the shining, idyllic world of The Coral Island. In an article entitled "The Coral Island Revisited" Carl Niemeyer traces the use of the earlier novel as a source of Lord of the Flies.[11] Not only in setting and circumstance does Golding recall The Coral Island, but in the names of his principal characters as well. Ballantyne's three boys are an eighteen-year-old natural leader described as "tall, strong and manly for his age and might easily be taken

11. College English, XXII[January, 1961], pp. 241-45.

for twenty,"[12] named Jack; a fifteen-year-old, rather bookish but filled with common sense and practical knowledge, named Ralph; and thirteen-year-old Peterkin Gay, a funny, jaunty little fellow who nevertheless shows extraordinary skill and perhaps a little too much enjoyment in killing pigs.

Golding has used Jack as the name for his natural leader, Ralph as his practical, sensible hero, but Peterkin has been translated into Simon in a reversal of the renaming of Simon Peter.

Lord of the Flies is neither an imitation nor simply a parody of The Coral Island. Golding is attempting a task at once more subtle and more profound.

The two novels present radically different views of human nature and society. Ballantyne's is the world of nineteenth century optimism, a world in which men are unfailingly reasonable, co-operative, loving and lovable. It is based on the concept of the perfectibility of man, which includes the idea that evil is not inherent in man's nature but stems from the society which forms him. In his Discourse on the Origin of Inequality Rousseau postulates:

12. R. S. Ballantyne, The Coral Island (Norton, N.Y.), p. 168.

That men are actually wicked, a sad and continual experience of them proves beyond doubt: but all the same, I think I have shown that man is naturally good. What then can have depraved him to such an extent, except the changes that have happened in his constitution, the advances he has made, and the knowledge he has acquired? We may admire human society as much as we please; it will be none the less true that it necessarily leads men to hate each other in proportion as their interests clash.... [13]

A natural corollary is the idea of the noble savage. If man is by nature good, then whenever he is found closest to nature he is at his best. Human beings in a natural state - or in childhood - come nearest to the ideal of the uncorrupted. This is the philosophic concept behind much of the Romantic literature of the eighteen hundreds. Wordswdrth when he refers to children who come "trailing clouds of glory" is referring to the purity of new-created man and the corrupting influence of human society.

This is where Lord of the Flies begins. The island upon which the boys find themselves has the appearance of a perfect Eden.

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...

Out there, perhaps a mile away, the white surf flinked on the coral reef, and beyond that the open sea was dark blue. Within the irregular arc of coral the lagoon was as still as a mountain lake - blue of all shades and shadowy green and purple. (p. 14)

13. Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract and Discourses (Everyman's Library, E. O. Dutton, New York, 1950), pp. 273-4.

The island is covered with exotic and beautiful life, birds of paradise "a vision of red and yellow", fruit trees and coconuts of every description, even wild pigs which provide easy access to meat. Fresh water abounds and there is ample firewood and building material. A great platform of pink granite provides a natural meeting place, and

> beyond the platform there was more enchantment. Some act of God - a typhoon, perhaps, or the storm that had accompanied his own arrival - had banked the sand inside the lagoon so that there was a long, deep pool in the beach with a high ledge of pink granite at the further end... The water was warmer than his blood and he might have been swimming in a huge bath. (p. 18)

Surely this is a special creation of God, expressly provided for the idyllic escape of these innocent refugees?

The boys, it would appear, might be expected to manage very well. They are products of the British grammar school system which, everyone knows, represents the finest institution of the most civilized race on earth. They are members of the upper class, except for Piggy, and even Piggy, an orphan who lives with his Auntie and helps in her candy shop, can be forgiven his birth because of his obvious intelligance.

The "Fair boy" to whom we are introduced first, is exactly the right sort of hero. At twelve years and a few months old,

> you could see now that he might make a boxer as far as width and heaviness of shoulders went, but there was a mild-

ness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil. [p.15]

Well co-ordinated, attractive and pleasing in personality, Ralph strongly resembles his counterpart in The Coral Island.

The other twelve-year-old in the group appears equally to justify optimism. Although Jack is neither handsome nor possessed of the personal charm of Ralph, he is chapter chorister of the choir school he attends, can sing C sharp and is the choir leader. He carries himself with obvious authority and is clearly an example of superior breeding and education.

But so far we are dealing with surface values only. Golding first of all is a master of the craft of writing fiction and it is a mark of the well-constructed novel that nothing occurs in its development for which the way has not been prepared early in the story. One has only to read a little more deeply to realize that each and every optimistic detail is balanced by an equal and opposite shadow.

The quotation given on page 10 referring to palm trees continues,

...the ground beneath them was a bank covered with coarse grass torn everywhere by the upheavals of fallen trees, scattered and decaying coconuts and palm saplings. [p.14]

The sea and the beach are beautiful but, "always,

almost visible, was the heat;" the birds of paradise, gorgeous of plumage, fill the air with witchlike cries; the abundant fruit causes diarrhea; the coconuts lie rotting and skull-like under the trees; and blood must be spilled before pigs can be eaten.

The granite platform which provides the meeting place is shaded with young palm trees, but "there was not enough soil for them to grow to any height and when they had reached perhaps twenty feet, they fell and dried." The reader wonders whether the parable of the seeds which fell on shallow ground is being applied to the human inhabitants of the island.

So far there is nothing specifically evil about the island; it is perfectly natural for fruit and coconuts to ripen and decay, indeed, this is the process by which the soil is nourished and the reproductive cycle goes on; oppressive heat is only to be expected in the tropics, and the fact that boys get sick from overeating fruit reflects on their own gluttony rather than anything inherently wrong with the fruit. However, the dark signs are not confined to the natural order.

The first mark of man on the island is a giant gash smashed into the jungle - "the scar" (weighted language, this. Scars occur as the result of injury.)

The fair boy is accompanied by a singulary unattractive fat boy in a greasy windbreaker. "The naked crooks of his knees

[are] plump, caught and scratched by thorns." He peers through thick spectacles and comments constantly, irritatingly, in the idiom of the lower class. As if the naked knees were not sufficiently repulsive, Piggy - for that is the only name he is given - suffers from "ass-mar" and his skin is an unwholesome fish-belly white.

This is the intelligent member of the party and Ralph, good looking and appealing, tries to ignore him. He "began to pick his way as casually as possible towards the water. He tried to be off-hand and not too obviously interested, but the fat boy hurried after him." The moment Piggy, overtaken by diarrhea, has to slip back into the forest, "Ralph disengaged himself cautiously and stole away through the branches." Piggy refuses to be left behind so Ralph resorts to schoolboy cruelty. When he is finally forced to acknowledge Piggy he laughs uproariously at Piggy's unflattering nickname:

"Piggy! Piggy!
"Ralph - Please!" Piggy clasped his hands in apprehension. "I said I didn't want --"
"Piggy! Piggy! " [p.17]

Clearly these are not the sort of young English Gentlemen Ballantyne had in mind. There are no simple answers on this island. Things are not the way they seem.

If Ballantyne's philosophic view goes back to the age

of enlightenment, Golding's is more traditional. Thomas Hobbes in Leviathan suggests that there is in man no natural tendency to order:

> If any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation and sometimes their delection only, endeavour to destroy or subdue one another.
>
> Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, as is every man, against every man.

The natural state of man, then, endangered on every side by his enemies is "continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

> The passions that incline men to peace are fear of death, desire for such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. 14.

If the structures which society has evolved to control man's natural destructive tendencies break down, what can be expected is complete return to the savage world Hobbes describes.

Of Lord of the Flies Golding has commented that his purpose is to trace the defects of society back to the defects

14. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Everyman's Library, E.P.Dutton, New York, 1937), pp. 81-84.

of human nature.[15] The world from which his adventurers have dropped is not England in the pride of Colonial Empire, the playing fields of whose schools shape the statesmen of tomorrow's world; it is a nation devastated by two world wars within fifty years, torn by economic crisis and labour unrest, and in the process of destroying itself in global atomic war. Britannia no longer rules the waves - indeed, the waves are irrelevant in the age of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

When Golding alludes to the British national sense of superiority "...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. 55) and when the officer plaintively remarks, "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 -" he is not merely parodying Ballantyne. He is repudiating the simplistic world view of a man who, faced with a pack of dirty little savages, must resort to clichés - "Jolly good show. Like Coral Island." When embarrassed by the noise of children crying he turns away "to give them time to pull themselves together, allowing his eyes to rest on the trim

15. " The Writer and his Age," London Magazine, IV [May, 1957], pp.45-46.

cruiser in the distance" rather than risk the dreadful possibility that his illusions might be damaged or destroyed by the scene before him. The juxtaposition of the two radically different world views serves to underline the stark reality of Golding's.

2. Beelzebub = Dionysus ?

The one influence which Golding himself has stressed is the Greek drama. The effects on Golding's world of this preoccupation must be obvious even to the most casual reader. Life, in his novels, is governed by an often incomprehensible fate which does not function according to the orderly and just laws of literary Classicism and orthodox Christianity. In no sense could Piggy or Simon be said to deserve their fate any more than Neanderthal man deserved to be wiped out by the

Inheritors. Any attempt to read these as conventional moral fables must distort much that is central to Golding's thought.

A clear evidence of Classical influence at work in Golding's novels is his interest in metamorphosis. The characters tend to turn into the creatures which are most representative of their natures. The most overt example of this is Pincher Martin, who turns into a pair of claws at the end of his story.

The animal imagery associated with Piggy is almost overwhelming, which raises the question of what Golding is trying to suggest about him.

One literary example of highly intelligent swine occurs in Animal Farm, which may provide a degree of insight into Golding's intentions. Orwell's pigs are similar to Piggy in that they attempt to control their world by rational, democratic rule. Unlike them, however, Piggy never achieves enough power to reveal what kind of world he would rule. The suggestion implicit in his name is that power, even intellectual power, corrupts.

Yet from his first appearance, grunting as he pushes himself through the creepers, Piggy is powerfully identified with the pig-victims of Jack's hunt. He will be made into a

victim, a sacrifice to something stronger than himself.

The descriptive language employed in the introduction of most of the characters is highly suggestive of animal attributes. Sam'n Eric resemble a pair of friendly puppy-dogs and Jack very quickly becomes a predatory animal.

The one example of poetic prose in the whole novel occurs after the sacrifice of Simon, when the storm has washed away the gore.

> ...Here and there a large 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. now it touched the first of the stains that seeped from the broken body and the creatures made a moving patch of light as they gathered at the edge. The water moved closer 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 vapours busied themselves around his head. (p. 190)

Critics tend to read this as the transfiguring of the Christ-figure, but while such symbolism is undoubtedly present, a metamorphosis has also taken place. Simon has been changed into marble, like Niobe, beautified and rendered immortal.

In his 1965 book, William Golding, James R. Baker attempts to discover specific classical sources for all of Golding's novels. Lord of The Flies, he believes, was directly inspired by Euripides' The Bacchae. There is considerable evidence to support his contention.

The one work of Golding which critics seem unable to reconcile with the popular conception of a Christian Moralist obsessed with sin, is his brilliantly satirical play, The Brass Butterfly (1958). Although the mode of the play is comedy and the novel reaches a point very near tragedy, the themes of the two works have much in common.

Once again Golding has chosen an island microcosm in which to work out his controlled experiment, and once again the tension revolves around the clash between the rational scientific point of view and the irrational, characterized by religious fanaticism and military might. Neither Phanocles, the scientist who believes he can control the world through the power of science, nor Postumus who tries to structure the world by force of arms, gets the upper hand. Human history is illogical because human nature is irrational. The Emperor, trying to tell Phanocles why order has broken down, explains:

> "Man. A steamship, or anything powerful in the hands of man, Phanocles, is like a sharp knife in the hands of a child. There is nothing wrong with the knife. There is nothing wrong with the steamship. There is nothing wrong with man's intelligence. His trouble is his nature." (p. 58)

It is revealing that Maxmillius, who becomes emperor, is a scholar of the classics and a poet. The classical work which

seems to bear the most relation to both The Brass Butterfly and Lord of the Flies is Euripides' The Bacchae.

The Bacchae is a play about the basic conflict in human nature. Pentheus, the tyrant of Thebes, has outlawed the rites of Dionysus, who is incidentally the child of his mother's sister, conceived when she was ravished by Zeus, and thus his cousin. The polarities are represented by the cousins.

Pentheus is a rationalist who seeks to control the city and his own nature by denying anything which does not conform with his notions of correctness. Yet in his rage, Pentheus becomes a mirror-image of the angry god, and in a peculiar way the two are twinned like opposite sides of the same coin. Pentheus is an obsessive character who, because of his denial, becomes what he most wishes to deny. He passionately asserts his maleness yet dresses in female clothing; he insists on a civilized moral code, yet he seeks to spy on his mother in prohibited sexual embrace; he attempts to affirm his identity by rejecting the god, yet ends up literally dismembered by his own mother.

Dionysus is also a contradictory figure, both man and god. In his human form he is male, yet effeminate, beautiful and smooth-skinned; he is associated with nature and appears in various animal forms. He brings together opposites, male and

female, love and lust, pleasure and oblivion, sleep and nightmares, fertility and death. He is

> The principle of animal life, the hunted and the hunter - the unrestrained potency which man envies in the beasts and seeks to assimilate, [The purpose of the rites in his honour is] to liberate the instinctive life in man from the bondage imposed upon it by reason and social custom...[and]a merging of individual consciousness in a group consciousness [in which] the participant is at one not only whith the Master of Life but his fellow worshippers... and with the life of the earth. 15.

Pentheus tried to deny all that the god stood for, including the "natural" in himself. In punishment he was humiliated, driven mad and dismembered.

> To resist Dionysus is to repress the elemental in one's own nature; the punishment is the sudden collapse of the elemental dykes when the elemental breaks through perforce and civilization vanishes. 16.

The basic psychological veracity of this Greek concept can be attested by any psychiatric hospital in the country. It would seem very clear that the conflict that Euripides described is a recurring theme in Golding's work, both in the drama and his novels; for example, near the end of Free Fall Nick Mountjoy returns to visit the two teachers who most influenced his youth. His response to these visits sums up the insight he has gained in his travels:

15. E.R. Dodds, Euripides Bacchae, 2nd ed., [Oxford, 1960], pp. XII-XX.

16. ibid. p. XII.

All day long the trains run on rails. Eclipses are predictable. Penicillin cures pneumonia and the atom splits to order. All day long, year in, year out, the daylight explanation drives back the mystery and reveals a reality usable, understandable and detached. The scalpel and the microscope fail, the oscilloscope moves closer to behavior. The gorgeous dance is self-contained then; does not need the music which in my mad moments I have heard. Nick's universe is real.

All day long action is weighed in the balance and found not opportune nor fortunate or ill-advised, but good or evil. For this mode which we must call the spirit breathes through the universe and does not touch it; touches only dark things held prisoner, incommunicado, touches, judges, sentences and passes on.

Her world was real, both worlds were real. There is no bridge. [pp. 252-3]

It is not within the power of man to control the diversity of the universe. Piggy and Ralph cannot turn the island into a democracy governed by grown-up reason because there is a beastie, a snake-thing that is giving the littleuns nightmares. The development of the Beastie is examined in the chapter on Symbols and Motifs, but it is of interest to note that the attributes associated with it are all Dionysian attributes; the hair of Bacchanants is turned into snakes, as are the two old men who serve the God. Ivy vines [creepers] crown his head and death is the penalty for scorning him. The head of Pentheus becomes his symbol, and the dance, a ritual of purging and release.

Beelzebub is a god of the Philistines. In <u>The New Testament</u> he is the demon in whose name the Pharisees claimed

that Jesus expelled demons (Mt. 10:25). Yet it is rather unlikely that the Philistines would have called their god by a name that translates, "lord of the flies." John L. McKenzie in Dictionary of the Bible[17] notes that Beelzebub is probably a contemptuous Hebrew corruption of the God's name; perhaps Baal, the fertility god of Ugarit - Zbl, prince; in other words, "Prince of Lords" or "Prince, King."

The Lord of the Flies immediately begins to look more like Dionysus the fertility god, and the enormous fecundity of his garden bears this out. It is "filled with the scent of ripeness and the booming of a million bees at pasture." Life is "clamorous" and the colours are "riotous.." "Creepers droop like the rigging of foundered ships." This is a little excessive for Eden.

It is tempting to look for equivalents; by this reading the choir becomes a chorus of Bacchanants, which, in fact, is a possible interpretation, particularly when they are masked; and Ralph becomes Pentheus who would deny the irrational and unspeakable qualities the beastie has released in Jack and his followers.

But the analogy breaks down. Golding's novel is infin-

17. [Macmillan Publishing Company, N.Y., 1965], p. 85.

itely more complex than The Bacchae and the attempt to force the two works together mutilates both. Although, like Pentheus and Dionysus, the characters of Jack and Ralph mesh in all of us, to reduce Dionysus to a pig's head on a stick is to deny half of his nature. For Dionysus is the god of boundaries. Every negative aspect is balanced by a positive gift. If he is the god of drunkenness, he is also the god of merriment; if he brings nightmares, he also presides over sleep; though he punishes with death, he rewards with fertility.

The Bacchae is an absolute tragedy. There is no escape; the game is rigged from the beginning. If you submit to the god you are possessed by his madness and lose your identity. If you resist, you are consumed. Yet Ralph does escape, and the reasons for his escape are examined in chapter Four.

3. Man under a Microscope

The characters in Lord of the Flies are flat, each revealing only one side of his character and none, apart from Ralph, showing any development in the course of the novel. Their personalities, however, contain the basic traits which exist to a larger or smaller extent in everyone. If all of the characters are taken together, they make up a personality in which some traits predominate under certain circumstances and some under others.

Jack, one of the oldest boys on the island and certainly the strongest personality, represents that aspect of the human character which tends toward the primitive and savage. In society such traits can be expressed in a socially acceptable manner through active participation in sports, hunting or physical competition. In a world without restraints, they are easily corrupted by sadism and bloodlust.

> He was tall, thin and bony...his face was crumpled and freckled and ugly without silliness. (p. 27)

Jack is authoritative, self-assured and intolerant of weakness. He regards Simon, who faints, as batty; and Piggy, who

is fat and asthmatic, as a pest. When Jack is introduced he is clothed in a black gown and hat, and presents the appearance of a huge vulture.(p. 28) He objects to the loss of the maturity and social position that the use of his surname confers on him, and he automatically assumes he will be made leader. He accepts the role of head of the army and the hunters, but he does so with poor grace and with the conviction that he has been cheated out of his proper place. Before the end of the first chapter, Golding has placed Jack in proper perspective. On their return from the exploration trip, the three boys stumble upon a bush the buds of which resemble waxen candles. Jack's response is typical. He slashes at them with his knife. A little while later they come across a pig caught in the creepers. It is a source of shame to Jack that he is unable to kill it.

> They knew very well why he hadn't! because of the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood....He snatched his knife out of the sheath and slammed it into a tree trunk. Next time there would be no mercy. [p. 41]

By the third chapter Jack is as natural a hunter as any primitive indian tribesman. He notices the rubbed underside of the vines, the partially obscured hoofprint and the cracked twig. "He closed his eyes, raised his head and breathed in gently with flared nostrils, assessing the current of warm air

for information. The forest and he were very still." Jack has become a part of the forest. "But his eyes, in frustration, seem bolting and nearly mad." Jack has not been taught at school to hunt. He does so instinctively, tapping a resource that remains in man since his earliest beginnings. The hunt has assumed obsessive proportions in his life.

Jack is one of the earliest to become conscious of the fear which grips the island. "It's like," he says, "You're not hunting, but - being hunted; as if something's behind you all the time in the jungle."

By this time Jack has made an unconscious choice in favour of the island. "...Rescue? Yes, of course! All the same, I'd like to catch a pig first --." It comes as no surprise, then, that on the day the first ship goes by, Jack and his hunters have let the fire go out and gone off to kill a pig. "I cut the pig's throat...There was lashings of blood! ...You should have seen it!"

Charged with his responsibility for letting the ship go by with no signal fire going, Jack responds,

> "We needed meat."
> Jack stood up as he said this, the bloodied knife in his hand. The two boys faced each other. There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhileration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled common sense. Jack transferred the knife to his left hand and smudged blood all over his forehead.
> [p. 89]

In his fury over having to accept responsibility he lashes out viciously at Piggy and breaks the glasses which permit Piggy to communicate with the world. Numberless and inexpressible frustrations combine to make his rage elemental and awe-inspiring.

"I painted my face - I stole up. Now you eat - all of you - and I --" (p. 93)

With this first kill the savage element becomes disproportionately powerful on the island. The dance and the blood-chant are instituted and the group is united in mob hysteria. Jack becomes less able to accept Ralph's authority, more disrespectful of the conch and more contemptuous of Piggy. He acts like any primitive in externalizing his fear of the unknown, turning it into a God to be propitiated with sacrifices. As the evil on the island becomes stronger, Jack's god develops the capacity to assume different shapes. It is the Beastie in the shape of Simon that the boys kill on the beach and the Beastie will never be satisfied until Ralph's head hangs from a stick along with the Lord of the Flies.

Individuality is merged in role as Jack loses his name. He becomes "The Chief," his loss symbolizing a terrifying loss of identity. He begins to talk always in the same way, to move always with the same intent, to lose his ability to do anything

that is not immediately and instinctively gratifying. He sits enthroned like an idol, served by priests, and "power lay in the brown swell of his forearms: authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape."

Instrumental in the breakdown of civilized authority and the rise to power of savagery, is Roger. Whereas Jack represents the primitive, Roger is the cruel and sadistic aspect of human nature which expresses itself in small children pulling the wings off flies, but which in adult society generally remains carefully concealed.

Roger is introduced as "a slight furtive boy whom no one knew, who kept to himself with an inner intensity of avoidance and secrecy." He is "the dark boy;" the only one who doesn't become any darker during his stay on the island. He was dark at his arrival, both morally and physically, and the others never quite catch up with him.

Everything Roger does or says in the novel creates dissension. The first active part he takes is to call for a vote -- a vote in which the natural leader is replaced by the popular choice and which sets the stage for the violence which is to follow. The first good look we get at Roger is several weeks

after his arrival when "the shock of black hair down his nape and low on his forehead seemed to suit his gloomy face and make what had seemed at first an unsociable remoteness into something forbidding." He is sulking under the palm trees watching three little boys on the beach. He begins throwing stones at Henry, but like Jack, he still carries the conditioning of his civilized upbringing and he cannot throw to hit -- yet. He can, however, express his sadism in other ways. When a sow is killed Roger spears one of the piglets -- not for meat but for the sheer joy of it. When the pig is finally run to the ground

> ...and the air full of sweat, noise and blood and terror, Roger ran around the heap, prodding with his spear whenever pigflesh appeared... Roger found a lodgement for his point and began to push till he was leaning with his whole weight. The spear moved forward inch by inch and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream." [p.157]

Roger has forced his spear into the pig's anus.

Roger does not share the fear which infects most of the other boys. It is a fear of evil, and since Roger is himself totally evil, it holds no terror for him. When the older boys decide to go up the mountain to face the Beastie, it is Roger who volunteers to go with them. This is highly significant. On the first trip up the mountain they elected to take Simon, representative of intuitive knowledge. This time knowledge has been sup-

planted by evil.

Roger remains, to some extent, hidden until Jack has gained clear leadership of the island. Then on the day Ralph and company come to demand the return of Piggy's glasses, he stands on the cliff above them holding a lever which is wedged under a great rock, poised to fall and crush everything in its path. As Jack's group charge,"Roger with a sense of delirious abandonment, leans all his weight on the lever."

"The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from knee to chin; Piggy, saying nothing, with no time for even a grunt, travelled through the air sideways from the rock, turning as he went. (He) 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..." (p. 222)

From this time forward, Roger has a hangman's horror about him. So powerful is his authority that he is able to edge Jack aside almost rudely and take over the role of chief torturer and executioner. It is Roger who decides that the proper fate for Ralph is a stick sharpened at both ends; a stick like the one used for the pig's head.

Such intelligence as appears on the island is shown by Piggy. He is scientific, sometimes to the point of absurdity, but as an advisor to Ralph, invaluable. The scientist is uniquely a product of civilization and its protections. Piggy, too, could

have survived only in civilization. He is fat, asthmatic, almost blind and physically lazy. He has no name, no parents and no class. His accent is vulgar, suggesting that he must have been a scholarship boy at one of the fancy schools from which the children were evacuated. Very early in the novel Piggy discovers the conch shell and shows Ralph how to use it. Thus he is partly responsible for Ralph's leadership and his fate is uniquely bound up with the shell and the civilized authority it represents.

On the day the fire on the mountain goes out and Jack declares, "This is the mountain. The conch doesn't count here!" he attacks Piggy and breaks one lens of his glasses, cutting down Piggy's already limited horizons.

Piggy is a realist who insists on facing unpleasant truths. It is Piggy who, from the very beginning, insists,

" Nobody knows where we are. Perhaps they know where we were going to; and perhaps not. But they don't know where we are 'cos we never got there." (p. 44)

Like many scientists, Piggy is bound by the rules of empirical evidence. Discussion of a Beastie infuriates him because he knows in his logical soul that there is no beast yet he cannot dismiss the evidence that there is fear among the boys. Piggy constantly struggles to reduce life on the island to the civilized boundaries he can cope with. As the children race up the mountain

to light the fire:

"Like kids! he said scornfully, "acting like a crowd of kids! ...I bet it's gone tea-time. What do they think they're going to do on that mountain?"

He sighed, bent, laced up his shoes. The noise of the arrant assembly faded up the mountain. Then, with the martyred expression of a parent who has to keep up with the senseless ebullience of the children, he picked up the conch, turned toward the forest, and began to pick his way over the tumbled scar. (p. 50)

The lack of order in the passage of time on the island bothers Piggy. In his former life his day used to be scheduled around meal times, and it is difficult for him to accept the casual "eat when you're hungry, sleep when you're tired" attitude of the boys. At one point he becomes quite excited by the notion that they could each build a sundial so that they would always know the time.

Piggy's blind insistence that any deviation from the adult way of doing things is a fault and must be pointed out, naturally wins him enemies. He scolds like the proverbial old-maid aunt:

"What are we? Humans? or animals? or savages? What's grownups going to think? Going off -- hunting pigs -- letting fires go out..." And he is wise enough to realize that Jack is his enemy.

"I'm scared of him and that's why I know him. If you're scared of someone you hate him but you can't stop thinking about him. You kid yourself he's all right really, an' then when you see him again; it's like asthsma an' you can't breathe.

"I been in bed so much I done some thinking. I know about people. I know about me, and him. He can't hurt you; but if you stand out of the way he'd hurt the next thing. And That's me. [p. 116]

When Piggy is called upon to face his responsibility in Simon's death he does what most intelligent people do; he rationalizes and makes excuses for himself.

"It was an accident; that's what it was...coming in the dark--he hadn't no business crawling like that out of the dark. He was batty. He asked for it." [pp. 93-94]

He recognizes evil but places all responsibility for that evil on Jack and company.

Piggy is oddly unrealistic. On the night Jack's raiders come to steal his glasses he clutches the conch to his chest with grim determination. Because of his obsession with civilization he feels sure they have come to steal this symbol. After his glasses are stolen he decides to go and "tell him what's what. What more can he do than he has?"

"But I don't ask for my glasses back, not as a favour. I don't ask you 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've got to!" [p. 211]

Not only does Jack not have to, but he is in a position of such security by this time that he no longer has to listen to Piggy trying to make him feel guilty. He destroys the guilt by destroying the conscience, and Piggy dies still clutching the conch. With him die the remaining forces of civilization and order.

It is significant that to examine the human desire for conformity, Golding has chosen a pair of identical twins. "Sam'n Eric" are pictured as doglike in their eagerness to belong. Neither is able to exist without the other; indeed they often share sentences word for word.

> The two boys, bullet-headed and with hair like tow flung themselves down and lay grinning and panting at Ralph like dogs. They breathed together, they grinned together, they were chunky and vital. They raised wet lips at Ralph for they seemed provided with not quite enough skin, so that their profiles were blurred and their mouths were pulled open. (pp. 25-6)

Sam'n Eric are willing followers. They are friendly, popular and anxious to do what they are told, whether it be to help with the building of shelters or to leave the fire and run off hunting with Jack. Like most people, they avoid unpleasantness by not seeing it. Rather than talk about the death of Simon, Sam'n Eric claim to have "left early."

"Yes, we were very tired," repeated Sam, "so we left early. Was it a good --" The air was heavy with unspoken knowledge. Sam twisted and the obscene word shot out of him. "-- dance?"

Memory of the dance that none of them had attended shook the four boys convulsively. (p. 196)

One of the more alarming bits of evidence that civilization is breaking down on the island is when Sam'n Eric are fighting each other in the night. This impossibility prompts Piggy to whisper, "We've got to get out of this...I mean it... If we don't get home soon we'll be barmy."

When the decision is made that they must pay Jack a visit to demand the return of Piggy's glasses, Sam'n Eric are very anxious to cover their faces with mud as Jack's boys have done; "But they'll be painted! You know how it is -- the others nodded. They knew too well the liberation into savagery that the concealing paint brought."

"Well, we won't be painted," said Ralph,"because we aren't savages."

Sam'n Eric are well intentioned but anxious to conform. When Jack and his boys become the tribe on the island it is only a matter of time until they join him. In fact, their desertion of Ralph is forced by their being captured and tortured, but once converted, they try to do their duty to

the tribe. It is the twins who tell Jack where to find Ralph ultimately.

One other human manifestation which should be considered is the Pavlovian conditioning shown by Percival Wyms Madison. Percival is a small child whose parents have carefully taught him to repeat his name, address and telephone number any time he runs into trouble. When he gets into a situation in which the incantation cannot help him, he howls. As a character Percival is unimportant; as a symbol of the ascendancy of the savage elements of man over the rational, he is crucial. By the end of the novel Percival has forgotten his own name.

Other important aspects of human nature will be dealt with in some detail in the following chapters. Ralph as the personification of common sense is examined in "The Archetypal Journey." Simon, who personifies the intuitive, the reverent, the religious aspect of the human personality is considered in the chapter on "The Allegory."

Analyze any individual and you will find in him Ralph's love for adventure and his basic common sense, Piggy's intellectual humanism, Simon's intuition and awe, Roger's sadistic tendencies, Sam'n Eric's desire to please everybody and Jack's

brute savagery. The human personality is made up of all these impulses in greater or lesser degree, and the particular combination in which they are found determines the moral outlook of the individual. Lord of the Flies is a study of the moral identity of man.

Yet just as all the characteristics Golding has personified are found in the individual, they are present in man's society. Which predominates will depend on the circumstances of the society.

Golding's novel is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the individual. Inasmuch as his novel deals with the problems of society in microcosm it deals with the basic flaw in human nature. Just as the island community has been plunged into disorder by the evil in mankind, the world from which the boys escaped was in the process of destroying itself in atomic warfare. The conflicts on the island merely reflect those of the larger world.

When Ralph agonizes, "If only they could get a message to us. If only they could send us something grownup," he gets his sign, though he isn't awake to read it. From three miles up the corpse of a jet pilot drifts to the island to rot and be eaten by the flies.

Although the actual characters in the novel are all

children, Golding is obviously talking about man in general. The reader quickly becomes involved in the reality of this world and identifies with the boys, forgetting that they are mere twelve-year-olds. It is not until the closing paragraphs, when Golding switches to the point of view of the naval officer, that we remember we are dealing with a motley collection of dirty little boys.

The intentions of the boys as they begin their experiment are excellent. They will have rules, democratic assemblies for decision making and an orderly procedure for discussing any problem. However, they do not have any tools to enforce their rules, and very soon indolence and jealousy supplant their good intentions. Any group of people has a few individuals who must be made to conform to the rules, for they will not obey without enforcement.

Golding does not suffer under any romantic illusions about human nature. People are selfish and destructive, but as long as we fear the selfish and destructive influences of those stronger than we are, we will band together to protect ourselves against them. We mutually agree to curb our selfishness and set up systems of enforcers to regulate each other. In some societies the enforcers are police and law courts, in others

they are more subtle influences such as social expectations and taboos. Thus a society exerts a positive influence on the individual, rather than the negative one suggested by some nineteenth century humanists and poets. In a world without taboos or policemen, social conditioning would quickly break down just as in this society of children unrestrained by parental control, civilization quickly disappears.

In the mini-society the boys have built, there are many elements found in adult society. There is, for example, a clear tension between the military and the state. When the army takes over the state, the conch is destroyed and an absolute dictatorship is formed, complete with torture and murder of anyone who opposed the regime.

The island society has its own religion complete with ritual dances, chants and sacrifices. The religious observance evolves to reflect the moral development of its members; the god is that which his followers deserve and are prepared to obey.

The problems the boys have are problems found in any society; people neglect their responsibilities and allow the most important jobs to be left undone while they rush off to involve themselves in glamorous or exciting projects; they are

thoughtless about the effects of their actions, lighting fires all over the island, for example, and endangering the entire society; they don't bother to take the necessary precautions to keep their environment clean and healthy.

The intended comparison between the island and the adult world is finally and clearly understood in the last paragraphs of the novel. As Ralph stares up at the hat and the immaculate white uniform of the officer standing on the beach he recognizes yet another mask, for the officer hides behind his uniform as surely as the children hide behind coloured clay they have smeared on their faces; and, standing with his hand on his revolver, a rating aiming a sub-machine gun behind him, this is a hunter as surely as Jack is a hunter. Overcome with the weight of his knowledge, Ralph weeps.

4. The Archetypal Journey

As The Iliad describes the quest of a race and The Odyssey the quest of a man, the key concern of all serious literature is to record the human journey, the "way":

> The journey to hell is one kind of universal quest myth. A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a fabulous victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.
>
> The hero's adventure has three stages, departure, initiation, and return; the first two comprise his journey to hell. He is singled out to be a hero, called to undertake the quest, given a choice to accept or refuse which at the same time is a test of whether he really qualifies. He then undergoes a series of further trials, wins through by supernatural aid, enters into the final death-like struggle, and eventually emerges victorious. For all this the hero receives no assurances, only the challenge to accept the call and at most a suggestion of the good that may result. 17.

The search is variously called growing up, moving from innocence to experience, from illusion to reality, from blindness to self-knowledge, or from earthly to heavenly awareness.

17. Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Bollingen ser. 17, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1968), pp. 40-45.

Just as Christian sets out on a perilous journey, faces many obstacles, and emerges from his adventures as a tried and true hero, Othello begins his drama as a magnificent but blind adventurer, blunders into murder, and at the moment of despair, shows once more his manhood and dies realizing his weakness but recalling his former glory. The young hero of a Dickens novel achieves his heroic status only after he has like Pip, blindly fallen into evil paths, suffered bitter retribution and emerged a sadder but wiser man; indeed, the clichés prove the journey to be part of universal human experience. It is the basic archetype upon which the tension of a literary work is built.

The archetypal journey is also the concern of religions, for inasmuch as it describes man's journey while he is on earth, the task of religion is to provide a roadmap. Expressions like "walk the straight and narrow path" acknowledge the archetypal nature of the journey which man must undertake.

Lord of the Flies records the journey of its hero, Ralph, but the hell which he must pass through and the obstacles which he must overcome in doing so are within his own soul.

Ralph is the character with whom the reader identifies and the one who controls the boys while they remain civilized. He characterizes the well-intentioned common sense which governs most day-to-day human affairs. Ralph is neither over-bright nor over-articulate. He is cruel in small ways - for example, he teases Piggy about his name immediately; but he takes his responsibilities seriously, does the best he can, is practical and capable of learning from his mistakes.

When he first appears, Ralph is a very normal twelve-year-old, no better nor worse than most others. He is a product of his training, and at a moment of exceptional excitement he expresses himself by playing "mock bomber" and gunning down imaginary enemies. He obviously idolizes his father, a naval officer, and his treatment of Piggy suggests the self-confidence and snobbery normal to a member of his class. His exceptional ability and personal attractiveness are reminiscent of his namesake in the Ballantyne novel. He immediately becomes the chief on the island as the result of a general election:

> None of the boys could have found a reason for this; what intelligence had been shown was traceable to Piggy while the most 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. The being that had blown that, had sat

waiting for them on the platform with the delicate thing balanced on his knees, was set apart. [p.30]

The children identify Ralph with the world of adult authority, the man with the megaphone who organized them at the airport. Ralph's faith in the adult world and the adult way of doing things is touching. He is confident that his Dad will come and rescue them on his day off. The Queen has a roomful of charts and it ought to be a simple matter to locate the island and come to take the children off. Ralph completely fails to realize that they are on the island as a result of global warfare which his father, the Queen, or even England herself may not survive.

One of the first things Ralph learns about adult life is that grownups must compromise. In the moment of His victory at being named chief, Ralph must turn a sizable portion of the island's population over to Jack in order to retain peaceful control. For the moment, his compromise makes co-existence possible.

Ralph is of a very practical nature. His attitude toward the candle buds which Jack attacked with his knife was, "you couldn't light them....let's go." He is able to digest the wisdom of Piggy, sort out Piggy's creative suggestions

and discard those which are impractical (for example, sundials for everyone). He is well versed in adventure literature and feels quite confident of his ability to cope. "This is our island. It's a good island. Until the grownups come to fetch us we'll have fun".

Ralph, like most of us, is a combination of Prometheus and Epimetheus. He plans and schemes and all too often discovers that he has left out important considerations which have destroyed what he intended to do. Like Prometheus, Ralph is obsessed with the idea of bringing fire to the island, but he allows the boys to run off helter-skelter, piling the fire so high that it burns down the mountain, destroying the most readily available source of dry wood and causing the first death on the island. It is Ralph's obsession with the fire and Jack's with the hunt that act as a barrier between them. They cannot communicate their separate passions and they live in a love-hate relationship which finally breaks down on the day Jack lets the fire go out in order to kill his first pig. This is the culmination of Ralph's bafflement over the lack of ability of the children to do the few things necessary for survival. When something is new and exciting everyone is eager to participate. The moment it begins to look like work, however, the children all drift away to go swimming. They haven't managed to build adequate shelters, they can't keep a signal fire lit, and they are not even trying to keep clean and keep the island unpolluted. They simply squat where and when they feel like it.

Ralph, alone, is conscious of his own deplorable condition. As he looks at this pack of British schoolboys, he notes that:

They were dirty, not with the spectacular dirt of boys who had 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... the skin of the body, scurfy with brine--

He discovered with a little fall of the heart that these were the conditions he took as normal now and that he did not mind. (p. 136]

As his problems begin to crystallize, Ralph's insight is limited. "It's as if this weren't a good island," he says, and he blames Jack's hunting and chanting and war paint. On the hostile side of the island numbed to despair by the infinite size of the water, the barrier, he like Prometheus, is punished for trying to bring fire and civilization to man. "Faced by the brute obtuseness of the ocean, the miles of division, (he is) clamped down, helpless, condemned..."

It is significant that Ralph's first taste of the hunt comes immediately after this moment of despair. He emerges on a pig run in the path of a charging boar, throws his spear at it and:

Ralph was full of fright, apprehension and pride.
"I hit him! and the spear stuck in —"
He felt the need of witnesses.
"Didn't you see me? I hit him all right. The spear stuck in. I wounded him!"
He sunned himself in their new respect and felt that hunting was good after all. (p. 140]

That pig escapes, but the boys perform a ritual dance, the first Ralph has participated in. Robert imitates the pig while the others circle around him pretending to stab.

"Hold him!"
They got his arms and legs. Ralph, carried away by a sudden, thick excitement, grabbed Eric's spear and jabbed at Robert with it.
"Kill him! Kill him!"
Ralph was struggling to get nearer, to get a handful of that brown, vulnerable flesh. The desire to squeeze and hurt was overmastering. (p. 142)

This time he manages to avoid the unpleasant truth about his experience but it is interesting that Robert realizes that the dance must culminate in the killing of the pig, and jokingly suggests that they use a littleun next time.

Ralph makes the decisive step in his journey from childhood to maturity when he is involved in the dance which results in Simon's death. Afterwards Piggy rationalizes their participation by saying that it was dark and they couldn't see what was going on, Sam 'n Eric say they left the party early and didn't see the dance, Jack's group insists that it was the beast they killed, but Ralph faces his guilt and takes the responsibility squarely on his own shoulders.

"That was Simon."
"That was Murder."
"Don't you understand, Piggy? the things we did —" (pp. 192-193)

Ralph is growing up. He knows, now, that the trouble on the island is not Jack's trouble alone. He shares in the disease of humanity, and indeed, at the end of the novel when he is being hunted, he becomes little more than a fugitive beast. But it is not until the final scene on the beach as Ralph stands before the naval officer in his spotless whites, that he recognizes that even adults, even his own father, shares in the experience of the children on

the island. For the officer is a hunter exactly as Jack is a hunter - but his war paint is a uniform and his spear is a submachine gun.

Ralph weeps for the end of an illusion. Men are neither innocent nor rational, and true, wise friends like Piggy must, ultimately, fall through the air.

5. The Saving Sacrifice

The most controversial aspect of Lord of the Flies has always been its "Christian message". Fredrick Karl and John Wain both criticise its allegorical didacticism while E. M. Forster and Kinkead-Weeks praise it on much the same grounds.[18] Various methods have been employed to prove that Golding's intention was to write a conventional moral fable about fallen man. Although none of these interpretations has proven entirely satisfactory, there seems ample evidence that Simon is intended as a Christ figure.

18. Fredrick R. Karl., "The Novel as a Moral Allegory; The Fiction of William Golding, Iris Murdoch, Rex Warner, and P. H. Newby," The Contemporary English Novel (N. Y., The Noonday Press, 1962); John Wain, "Lord of the Agonies," Aspect, 1 (April, 1963), pp 53-57; E. M. Forster, "Introduction," in Lord of the Flies (Coward-McCann, Inc., 1962) ppix-xii; Mark Kinkead-Weeks and Ian Gregor, William Golding, a Critical Study (Faber and Faber, Lon., 1967), pp. 43-44.

Like the other characters, Simon is stereotyped from the moment he is introducted. He is different, "batty" and he is "always throwing faints." The fact that he accompanies Jack and Ralph on the first exploration of the mountain and is rejected in favour of Roger the second time, appears to be a manipulation of symbols rather than a necessary part of the plot. It is on the return from that exploratory trip that Simon associates himself with the candle buds which continue to function as his symbol; Ralph's response to the strange flowers is strictly practical, Jack's is violent, but for Simon the buds have an almost religious significance, both in their association with worship and in the "scent which spilled out into the air" anointing Simon with their perfume.

As he meditates in his secret retreat "he knelt down and a single arrow of sun fell on him." Unlike the others, Simon has no fear of the forest. He walks "with accustomed tread through the acres of fruit trees." As he prepares to slip away into solitude the scene is curiously reminiscent of Christ's feeding the multitude:

> Here the littluns who had run after him caught up with him. They talked, cried out unintelligibly, lugged him towards the trees. Then, amid the roar of bees in the afternoon

> sunlight Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach, pulled the choicest from up in the foliage, passed them back down to the endless, outstrechedhands. When he had satisfied them he paused and looked around...[p. 71]

Aside from the echoes in descriptive language, Simon is far more aware than any ordinary child. At the meeting when the group attempts to come to terms with fear, Simon makes an inarticulate effort to explain that the source of greatest corruption is man himself. Faced with Sam'n Eric's account of the monster on the mountaintop

> Simon felt a flicker of incredulity....However he thought of the beast there rose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick. [p. 128]

He also seems to have at least some awareness of what will happen in the future. When Jack and Ralph fall out over the neglect which has allowed the signal fire to go out and the ship to pass unhailed, Simon is visibly distressed. When Ralph is suddenly struck by the hopelessness of the situation, Simon comforts him by three times repeating "You'll get back all right". By using the second person pronoun and excluding himself, he appears to be predicting his own death.

As Simon's insights deepen, the images become heavier.

He must fast in the wilderness, fighting the temptation of the devil, Beelzebub, the Lord of the Flies. The boys don't want to know the source of evil on the island. They prefer to externalize their problem so that they need not take responsibility. If he forces them to face their guilt, Simon will have to be eliminated.

The temptations are in three groups. Some diminish the importance of Simon's task:

> You are a silly little boy...you'd better run off and play with the others. They think you're batty. Get back to the others and we'll forget the whole thing. [p. 177]

Others appeal to the voice of authority, the schoolmaster addressing the recalcitrant pupil:

> This has gone far enough. My poor, misguided child, do you think you know better than I do? [p. 178]

Still others are outright threats:

> I'm warning you. I'm going to get waxy....Don't try it on, my poor misguided boy, or else...we shall do you. See? [p. 178]

Golding addresses the theological question of Christ's sinlessness in his treatment of Simon. Although Simon is obviously not a member of Jack's tribe although he has no part in

the deterioration of civilization, he shares the sin of mankind. When Simon confronts the Lord of the Flies, he is faced with "that ancient, inescapable recognition."

> Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! ....You knew didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! ....This is ridiculous. You know perfectly well you'll only meet me down there - so don't try to escape. (pp.177-178)

Simon too, is one with the Lord of the Flies; although the flies are not in themselves evil, they congregate on carrion, and their presence indicates dirt and corruption.

> After a while these flies found Simon. Gorged, they alighted by his runnels of sweat and drank. They tickled under his nostrils and played leaf-frog on his thighs. They were black and irridescent green and without number; and in front of Simon, the Lord of the Flies hung on his stick and grinned. (p. 171)

When he has rejected the temptations, Simon must climb his own personal Golgotha.

> "What else is there to do?"
> He walked drearily between the trunks, his face empty of expression, and the blood was dry round his mouth and chin....He pushed on, staggering sometimes with his weariness but never stopping...
> A buffet of wind made him stagger and he saw that he was out in the open, on rock, under a brassy sky. He found his legs were weak and his tongue gave him pain all the time. (p. 180)

Even after Simon has discovered the cause of fear and released men from his bondage, he must deliver the message

and even though it is good news that he brings and the journey is down hill, Simon is still bearing his cross.

He started down the mountain and his legs gave beneath him. Even with great care the best he could do was stagger. (p 181)

Simon is received as Christ was, and as the man in Plato's cave myth is received. Man doesn't want this particular good news and he will stone the messenger rather than face its truth.

Although Golding disclaims the influence of The Golden Bough,[19] the ritual sacrifice of Simon as a scapegoat is obvious. He, like Christ, becomes the beast and takes the guilt of the island-world upon his shoulders in a ritual purging of sin.

The sticks fell and the mouth of the new circle crunched and screamed. The beast was on its knees in the centre, its arms folded over its face....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, leapt onto the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws.

Then the clouds opened and let down the rain like a waterfall. (p. 188)

19. Golding's reply to Professor Kermode, "The meaning of it all," Books and Bookmen, Oct., 1959, p.9.

The tradition of pathetic fallacy in the storm and unnatural darkness which accompany Simon's death has its roots not only in the biblical account of Christ's death but throughout literature. The moral condition of man is reflected on the external world.

Simon's body is cleansed and removed by "strange attendant creatures with their fiery eyes and trailing vapours." The imagery is of a savior being carried off to glory, and the "broken body" and blood are in fact reminders of Christ's sacrifice of himself. What is of greater importance, however, is the effect of Simon's death on Ralph. This is the point at which previous criticism falls down, yet it is the point on which the allegory, if indeed there is an allegory, must rest.

Simon's death is the beginning of the end of Ralph's illusions about himself. Till now he has managed to preserve the illusion that he is innocent and that Jack and Roger have caused the failure of his dream democracy. He is unable to deceive himself any longer after he participates in the murder, and when he recognizes the beast as part of himself, he accepts Simon's place as scapegoat. Ralph's enlightenment is total at the moment that he realises that not even adults can escape

man's guilt. This, it seems to me, is the justification for an ending which in any other terms is unfairly manipulative.

The officer in the white uniform summarizes the frivolities Ralph has most admired in the adult world: authority, neatness, a sense of purpose - but he is also a hunter.

The world is not a veritable Garden of Eden. Fruit rots and food creates excrement. Men, even grownup men, are diseased and corrupt, but Golding is not a pessimist. There is still hope. Ralph is rescued because he must survive. There must always remain a few who are enlightened, who bear Simon's message. When Ralph cries for the fall through the air of a true wise friend called Piggy, he is crying for the end of the rationalist illusion. There is no logical order that will save man from himself, and scientific advance cannot be equated with moral progress. Man is not marching up a spiral stairway to the clouds, he can only accept himself and make the best of it.

If sin is a social problem, the result of defects in society which warp human nature, as long as society exists, sin cannot be cured. By "tracing the defects of society back to the defects in human nature" Golding provides a measure of hope.

20. "The Writer and his Age," London Magazine, IV(May, 1957), pp. 45-46.

You can work with failings in your own nature, if you are aware of them. Individual responsibility for sin also assumes the possibility of individual salvation from sin.

In expressing his creed as a novelist Golding stated that " the true business of the novelist is a serious, an Aeschylean preoccupation with the human tragedy, that is to say he is committed to looking for the root of the disease instead of the symptoms." The root of the disease, as Golding sees it is Man's "appalling ignorance of his own nature." 21.

21. "The Writer and his Age," pp. 45-46.

Part Two

6. Man and his World

The five critical approaches which have been used to examine Lord of the Flies are all interesting and informative, but it is the contention of this paper that none of them really reaches the heart of what Golding is trying to say.

In a singularly unperceptive article entitled "The Novel as Moral Allegory," Fredrick P. Karl classes Golding as an amateur Existentialist whose allegories suffer because of his heavy-handed moralizing. Karl is correct in placing Golding among the Existentialists, but his understanding of the novel never extends beyond the obvious allegorical treatment of a snake in the Garden of Eden and a Christ figure who is sacrificed.

When Golding uses these and other symbols, he is employing conventional tools to approach the basic questions of human existence. Lord of the Flies is an attempt to define the nature of man and his relationship with the world, and as such it is a profoundly theological study. But in spite of his use of Christian mythology, the theology which Golding proposes is

a secular one. The only given or revealed truths on the island are those which spring directly from human experience. God does not appear, nor is he sought, even by Simon.

In Systematic Theology Paul Tillich describes God as:

> ...the answer to the question implied in man's finitude; he is the name for that which concerns man ultimately. This does not mean that first there was a being called God and then a demand that men should be ultimately concerned about him, it means that whatever concerns man ultimately becomes God for him, and conversely, it means that a man can be concerned ultimately only about that which is God for him. 22.

A theological question, then, is a question about man's ultimate concern. "Whatever is a matter of ultimate concern to a man, becomes, for him, God."[23] Thus the attributes of God will be those which reflect the nature of those who worship him.

Lord of the Flies describes the dialectic between two sets of ultimate concerns, and thus between two gods. The entire myth is structured in such a way as to delineate this cosmic struggle. Jack and his group worship a god of power and fear,

22. Vol.1., (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2nd Printing, 1971) p. 211.

23. Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (Harper and Row, N. Y., 1957), p. 44.

a god who demands obedience and sacrifice of self. Ralph's god, on the other hand, is a god of relationship and concern, one whose followers enjoy freedom of choice but are called upon to make moral decisions.

In defining the role of theology, Tillich states that it

> must emphasize the positive valuation of man in his essential nature. It must join classical humanism in protecting man's created goodness against naturalistic and existentialistic denials of his greatness and dignity. At the same time, theology should reinterpret the doctrine of original sin by showing man's existential self-estrangement and by using the helpful existential analyses of the human predicament. In doing so, it must develop a realistic doctrine of man, in which the ethical and tragic elements in his self-estrangement are balanced. It may well be that such a task demands the definite removal from the theological vocabulary of terms like "original sin" or "hereditary sin" and their replacement by a description of the interpretation of the moral and tragic elements in the human situation. 24.

This task of definition is the purpose of myth. Attempting to classify myths of evil, Paul Ricoeur notes:

> ...the myth tries to get at the enigma of human existence, namely the discordance between the fundamental reality - state of innocence, status of a creature, essential being - and the actual modality of man, as defiled, sinful, guilty. The myth accounts for this transition by means of a narration. 25.

24. Systematic Theology, vol. II, pp 38-9.

25. The Symbolism of Evil, Emerson Buchanan (trans.) Religious Perspective Series, Vol. XVII (Beacon Press, Boston, 1967), p. 163.

In attemping to define the nature of man and the world he inhabits, Golding does not oversimplify. His novel contrives a world in which ordinary rules do not apply, in order that human nature may express itself free of the restrictions which society normally places on it. In this respect, it resembles a fable. A certain amount of manipulation is readily evident both in getting the boys on the island and in taking them off again. The spectacular disintegration of such civilized graces as the children originally possessed makes the theme of human sinfulness rather didactic.

But Lord of the Flies is neither as simple nor as clear as such an interpretation would suggest. As already noted, [ch. 1] there is nothing inherently evil about the decay and corruption in this Garden of Eden. In the same way the characteristics in Jack and his tribe are not unambiguous. In chapter three we examined Golding's view of man as expressed through the differences in character which are found in all of us. With the single exception of Roger, the sadist, the principal characteristics of all the boys are the basis of both their strengths and their weaknesses. If the novel owes anything to The Bacchae it is Golding's vision of the ambiguity of human nature which combines reason and the impulse to savagery within the same

body and causes them to be forever in conflict. If Beelzebub can be equated with Dionysus, it is his dark side that he reveals and the dark side of human nature which is called forth in response to him.

In spite of the apparent allusion in the final paragraphs, Golding disclaims personal acquaintance with Conrad's Heart of Darkness.[26] Yet the darkness he portrays is powerfully reminiscent of that which Africa reveals in Conrad's hero. Both novelists are describing that tendency to chaos and madness which reduces man to an organism responsive only to the instincts and lusts of his animal nature. Ralph struggles against the shutter which threatens to click over the cognitive power of his brain and which leaves him helplessly victim to his terror:

> 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. (P.245)

At this juncture he is neither more nor less than an animal at bay. Jack, on the other hand, surrenders to the power of darkness as to an extension of himself. Reason has never

26. In an unpublished interview at Purdue University by James Keating, quoted in Baker, p. 6.

been natural to him and he sheds its influence to assume his natural authority.

Explaining the use of the serpent in the Genesis myth Paul Ricoeur suggests:

> In the figure of the serpent the Yahwist may have been dramatizing an important aspect of the experience of temptation - the experience of quasi-externality. Temptation would be a sort of seduction from without; it would develop into compliance with the apparition that lays siege to the "heart"; and, finally; to sin would be to yield. The serpent, then, would be a part of ourselves which we do not recognize; He would be the seduction of ourselves, projected into the seductive object. The interpretation is so much the less irrelevant as it has already been invoked by the apostle James: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed " (1:23-14).
>
> We might even say, following St James's line of thought, that this pseudo-outer becomes an alien reality only through bad faith; arguing from the fact that our freedom is beset by desire, we seek to exculpate ourselves and make ourselves appear innocent by accusing an Other. Thus we allege the irresistibility of our passions in order to justify ourselves. 27

In Lord of the Flies Golding is working through the same concepts. Early in the novel, evil is seen as external to man. It is "the Beastie", the demon which is feared but not known. As the novel progresses, evil becomes human in shape, but still "other". It belongs to the savage tribe, not to reasoning man. In the end, however, no human being can escape the stigma

27. The Symbolism of Evil, p. 256.

of sin. That darkness is all-pervasive is demonstrated by the "ancient, inescapable recognition" between Simon and the Lord of the Flies. Even the most intuitive and religious-natured of the children recognizes the authority of this lord.

If darkness is meant to be equated with original sin, the question of origin presents itself. In The Inheritors Golding seems to place the beginning of sinfulness at the moment of self-conciousness. The Neanderthal man is pre-cogn tive. He can neither deduce nor reason, but lives within the data of his senses. He is thus incapable of harbouring either suspicion or hostility and his nature is open and loving. Homo Sapiens, on the other hand, views the unknown as necessarily threatening. He expects "the other" to behave as he would; therefore he destroys what he does not know. With self-conciousness has come the capacity to sin.

In Lord of the Flies a distinction is drawn between sin and guilt. Golding takes particular pains to point out that evil precedes and is contrary to the forces of civilization, rather than resulting from civilization as the Romantic world believed. In the fourth chapter, when he describes the passionately emotional and corporate life of the littleuns he is positing a

theory that guilt grows out of awareness of the law but "innocence" does not free man from human nature.

As Roger and Maurice race through the sandcastles and earthworks which Percival and Johnny have so lovingly contrived, rendering as much destruction as they can and filling Percival's eyes with sand:

> Percival began to whimper...and Maurice hurried away. In his other life Maurice had received chastisement for filling a younger eye with sand. Now, though there was no parent to let fall a heavy hand, Maurice still felt the unease of wrongdoing. At the back of his mind formed the uncertain outlines of an excuse. (P.75)

It can be only a matter of time before such conditioning will break down. In the case of Johnny, there is no conditioning. He is the tiniest boy on the island, the first to obey the summons of the conch, and the only child who is described as "innocent", yet:

> Percival finished his whimpering and went on playing, for the tears had washed the sand away. Johnny watched him with China-blue eyes; then began to fling up sand in a shower, and presently Percival was crying again. (p.76)

Johnny is simply exhibiting intellectual curiosity. He is unaware of having sinned, but the tendency to "natural belligerence," wanton cruelty, in fact, has been present from

the moment of his first act. "Natural belligerence" makes him enjoy his power to make another boy cry, just as Henry is "absorbed beyond mere happiness" when he is able to control the motions of the tiny beach scavangers; to feel himself "exercising control over living things."

This desire to control the environment is a recurring symptom of the dark side of human nature. What appears at first to be a completely innocent and boyish joy in dislodging a huge rock and watching it explode into the undergrowth "like a bomb" leaving a path of destruction "like an enraged monster," prefigures much more sinister attempts to control the natural world. Human pride is the enraged monster the boys have set free, and the voice of reason must bow before it or be destroyed.

When a pig is killed, it is not the prospect of meat nor even the vindication of his skill as a hunter which most impresses Jack, but the knowledge that they have "outwitted a living thing, imposed their will on it, taken away its life like a long, satisfying drink".

The theme is carried to its logical extremity in the ritual hunt after "the beast" has been discovered on the mountain. The choice of quarry is deliberate:

> A little apart from the rest, sunk in deep maternal bliss, lay the largest sow of the lot. She was black and pink; and the great bladder of her belly was fringed with a row of piglets that slept or burrowed and squeaked. (p. 166)

As the boys chase the sow through the heat of the afternoon the imagery is unmistakably sexual. The boys are "wedded to her in lust" and when finally "the sow collapsed under them and they were heavy and fulfilled upon her," the fulfillment carries the weight of rape and incest. To have forced one's will on another, to have obliterated the other in an assertion of savage power is to have expressed what is most evil in the human personality.

The boys are conscious that an unholy union has occurred. They create in that place a shrine to the god they have now affirmed, and they flee from its presence in terror of the power they have evoked. The erection of the Dark God points the reader to Golding's theological intention. These are not simply boys who have been carried away with childish enthusiasm, they are carriers of the disease which makes humanity at once heroic and sick.

Lord of the Flies is a highly contrived novel. Both structure and symbolism are designed to show the tension which exists between good and evil at all levels of human endeavour

One interesting example of contrivance is in the structural symmetry of the novel. It is a testimony to Golding's skill that this rather didactic device has been largely ignored by the critics. [28]

The novel has twelve chapters and the major events of the last six are used to parallel and comment on those of the first six.

A plane flying over the pacific is attacked and shot down. Its passengers are dropped on the island while the carcass of the plane is picked up by a storm any dragged out into the ocean. A few weeks later another battle is "fought at a ten mile height," another "sudden bright explosion and a corkscrew trail across the sky" and once again an aircraft disgorges its human cargo on the island. But this time the plane is a jet fighter and the cargo a burnt and disfigured cadaver. This is an ironic response to Ralph's impassioned plea for a sign from the adult world, and it is a response which leaves no doubt of the parallel between the island and the "real" world, a parallel which lurks always just below the surface until it is once

28. In my research I found it remarked on only in Kinkead-Weeks and Gregor.

again made explicit in the final chapter.

The search for the Beastie provides a direct contrast to Ralph's ecstatic idealism on the day he first crawled out of the jungle. The calm green and purple of the lagoon, the shore fledged with palm trees and the white surf which flinks on a coral reef perhaps a mile out, are only half of the picture. The second exploration of the island reveals that it has an unfriendly side as well, a side where "the filmy enchantments of mirage could not endure the cold ocean, and the horizon was hard, clipped and blue....the deep sea waves were miles wide.... They traveled the length of the island with an air of disregarding it, of being bent on other business." On this unprotected side the remoteness of the sea forces itself on Ralph's attention and he must face the unlikelihood that he will ever get off the island.

The journey up the mountain in the first chapter is accomplished by three boys, as is the journey is chapter seven, but while in the first, the boys are exploring to discover what new wonders the island may hold, in the second they are seeking the source of the evil which is disturbing their harmony. On the first trip up the mountain, the third boy was Simon, the

light-hearted, happy representative of intuition and acceptance. This time it is Roger, who is dark, secretive and sadistic.

At the end of the first chapter the boys find

> a piglet caught in a curtain of creepers, throwing itself at the elastic traces in all the madness of extreme terror. Its voice was thin, needle-sharp and insistent. The three boys rushed forward and Jack drew his knife again with a flourish. He raised his arm in the air. There came a 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. [p.40]

By the second half of the novel the pigs are actively hunted rather than stumbled upon inadvertently, and the boys suffer no qualms about killing them. The blood is no longer a deterrent; now the spilling of blood excites and stimulates them.

During the first meeting which the boys hold Ralph is elected leader by democratic process. During the meeting in the second cycle Jack declares himself leader by right of power. The rolling of the first rock prefigures the release of the rock which had been poised over the causeway to strike and kill whomever tries to enter uninvited. The first was just for fun, but this one is the means by which Piggy

is murdered. The accidental lighting on fire of the island is repeated, this time not to provide a signal fire which might enable them to return them to civilization, but to smoke Ralph out and dispose of the only person holding them back from total savagery. It is ironic that it is the smoke from this fire rather than from a signal fire which results in rescue.

There is nothing new under the sun. Life moves in concentric circles, each cycle describing the path of the cycle before it. But as man becomes more sophistocated he attains higher destructive potential, so each cycle is more violent than the previous one. In the grown-up world the pattern will not be interrupted by the intervention of a rescue ship.

Lord of the Flies is a myth of the type which Paul Ricoeur calls the "Adamic" or "Anthropomorphic" myth, or rather it is the first half of such a myth pattern, since there is no Eschatological vision in Golding. Evil originates with man and as long as man is, the struggle must continue. The vision of Simon is not of salvation and redemption in a better world. The only other world the boys will know has all the problems they have encountered, on a horrifyingly larger scale. The "majesty of adult life" has turned out to be a delusion.

Simon's vision is one of self-knowledge and acceptance,

what Tillich calls "the courage of despair."

> He who is in the grip of doubt and meaninglessness cannot liberate himself from this grip; He asks for an answer which is valid within and not outside the situation of his despair.... There is only one possible answer, namely that the acceptance of despair is in itself faith and on the boundary line of the courage to be....One accepts oneself as accepted in spite of one's despair about the meaning of this acceptance.
>
> The faith which makes the courage of despair possible is the acceptance of the power of being, even in the grip of non-being. Even in the despair about meaning being affirms itself through us. The act of accepting meaninglessness is in itself a meaningful act.
>
> ....is the courage to be possible if all the ways to create it are barred by the experience of their ultimate insufficiency. If life is as meaningless as death, if guilt is as questionable as perfection, if being is no more meaningful than non-being? 28.

For both Tillich and Golding, the answer is a resounding affirmative.

7. The Function of Symbol and Motif

In Dynamics of Faith Paul Tillich observes that Man's ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically:

28. The Courage to Be [The Fontana Library, Collins, London, 1962], pp. 170-171.

> The reason for this transformation of concepts into symbols is the character of ultimacy and the nature of faith. That which is the true ultimate transcends the realm of finite reality infinitely. Therefore, no finite reality can express it directly and properly. Religiously speaking, God transcends his own name. This is why the use of his name easily becomes an abuse or blasphemy. Whatever we say about that which concerns us ultimately, whether or not we call it God, has a symbolic meaning. It points beyond itself while participating in that to which it points. In no other way can faith express itself adequately. The language of faith is the language of symbols. 29

Golding would agree. However, like all postwar novelists Golding is handicapped by the nature of the religious mythology from which he works.

> The language of imaginative literature ...is...a language which, if it is to do its proper work, needs to be heavily weighted with the beliefs, the sentiments and valuations that are the deep source in the culture of its "hum and buzz of implication" and that bind the people together with ties that separate them from the people of other cultures. 30.

> But when the traditional premises regarding the radical significance of things have collapsed and there is no longer any robust common faith to orient the imaginative faculties of men with respect to the ultimate mysteries of existence - when, in other words, the basic presuppositions of a culture have become just yawning question marks, then the literary artist is thrust upon a desolate frontier indeed. 31

29. Dynamics of Faith, pp. 44-5.

30. Nathan A.Scott Jr., "The Broken Center: A Definition of the Crisis of Values in Modern Literature," in Symbolism in Religion and Literature, Rollo May (ed.)(George Braziller, Inc. New York, 1960), p. 181.

31. ibid. p. 180.

An eighteenth or nineteenth century novelist would have been safe in assuming that certain terms and symbols had common significance and evoked common associations for most of his readers. No postwar novelist is able to make that assumption.

Lord of the Flies is an experiment in communication by means of a set of symbols which evolve as the novel progresses. The function of of these symbols is to delineate the cosmic struggle between good and evil in human nature and as it is reflected in the world man inhabits. Just as the structure of the novel is carefully balanced so that the second half repeats the cycle of the first, the symbols are paired in such a way that the reader is constantly reminded of a dialectical tension. Every symbol and motif in the novel has an opposite which is used to comment on and qualify it.

The shell, one of the two major motifs, is not simply a symbolic object, it is a real shell. It is described as "something creamy" which "lay among the ferny weeds." When Ralph has brought it to the surface we note that it is an unusual object indeed. "...Deep cream touched here and there with fading pink...eighteen inches of shell with a slight spiral twist and covered with a delicate embossed pattern."

Piggy, as he will so many times in the future, puts

the idea into Ralph's head:

"We can use this to call the others. Have a meeting. That was what you meant, didn't you? That's why you got the conch out of the water?"

The chapter is entitled "The Sound of the Shell" and it is the shell's sound rather than any inherent symbolic meaning which makes it a valid scepter of office. "The deep, harsh note boomed out under the palms, spread through the intricacies of the forest and echoed back from the pink granite of the mountain" starting up clouds of birds and calling the first assembly. "The being that had blown that...was set apart."

The boys themselves endow the shell with signifigance when they make it the mark of the speaker, yet only for Piggy does it become more than a useful object. Jack is quite ready to discard it immediately after the first assembly.

"This is the mountain. The shell doesn't count here." Yet even Jack respects the need for orderly assemblies and observes the rule that the holder of the conch occupies the floor.

For Piggy the conch has existential importance. It is he who first discovers it and shows Ralph how to use it. He associates the object with the authority of law and tradition and he assumes that when Jack's tribe raids the shelter, the

purpose of the raid must have been to steal the conch. With touching faith in the efficacy of a symbol he allows himself to be led to castle rock to show the tribe "the one thing they haven't got."

That Piggy and the conch should suffer the same fate is expressive of the degree to which Piggy depends for his existence on civilization. A weakling such as Piggy would never have survived infancy in a primitive culture. Here, vainly trying to hold back the rush to savagery, Piggy stands in Jack's way. Jack has no use for the rational intellect; no more is he interested in any law other than his own. Now that he has established himself chief, both are irrelevant and irritating. The conch has no more meaning than he chooses to bestow on it, and Piggy, without his glasses, is worse than useless. It is somehow appropriate that when he dies his brain is spread out on the sacrificial altar before it is snatched away by the sea. The mythological Triton, son of the sea god Neptune, had controlled the sea by blowing his conch. When Piggy's conch is smashed, the sea takes him back.

The other major motif and the one which is the most complex is the snake-thing. The snake, archetypal symbol for

evil, is oddly missing in this garden, but from the first page a snake-like presence is suggested by the creepers which entangle Piggy. These are never referred to as vines or climbers, relatively neutral terms; always the more suggestive word is used. Every descriptive expression in the novel is the considered choice of a skilled craftsman.

The relationship between snakes and creepers is underlined when the boy with the strawberry birthmark describes his sighting of a snake-thing. "In the morning it turned into them things like ropes in the trees, and hung in the branches." The imagery becomes blatant when the boys light the island on fire, a tree explodes, and creepers shoot into the air. Snakes rain down on the burning forest as debris had rained from the burning aircraft and scarred the island, just a few days previously.

Apart from the smallest boys, the children know there isn't a large animal on the island, "but if there was, we'd hunt and kill it." Yet they are unable to dismiss the sensation that a malevolent force is waiting to spring on them. They wonder whether giant squid can crawl out of the sea; and even Ralph finds certain words uncomfortable to verbalize.

"We need shelters because of the - ." ...Snakes were not mentioned now, were not mentionable.

"If you're hunting sometimes you catch yourself feeling as if - " Jack flushed suddenly.
"There's nothing in it, of course, just a feeling. But you feel as if you're not hunting, but - being hunted: as if something's behind you all the time in the jungle. " (p. 87)

All are afraid. Jack has heard his hunters talking about "a dark thing, a beast, some sort of animal," and he can only offer as reassurance,

"Be frightened because you're like that - but there is no beast in the forest."

Only Simon is able to isolate the fear. For him there are no taboo words and he isn't afraid of the jungle at night because he is intuitively aware that the beast is neither animal nor ghost. Even when he hears the account of what Sam'n Eric have seen on the mountain he feels "a flicker of incredulity" at a "beast with claws that scratched, that sat on a mountaintop, that left no tracks and yet was not fast enough to catch Sam'n Eric."

With the replacement of the signal fire on the mountain by the body, the boy's fears are focused.

This is one of the most manipulative incidents in the novel. Ralph has just concluded the previous chapter wishing

plaintively, "If only they could get a message to us....If only they could send something grownup...a sign or something." A few lines into chapter six, "a sign came down from the world of grown-ups, though at the time there was no child awake to read it..." Several points of view are superimposed here. The moon and the curve of the earth's surface reduce the winking lights of the air battle to the proportions of a mere sporting of insects. "Not even a faint popping came down from the battle fought at ten miles' height." The apex of human technological achievement is the killer aircraft which allows men to destroy anything within ten miles' distance of the earth's surface. The adult world is significantly different from the children's world only in the power of its destuctive instruments. The only sign grownups have for the children is the stink and corruption of a rotting corpse. Like every other beast outside the boys themselves, it is harmless; yet in its eternal mock-Resurrection at the mercy of the wind which pulls the head up to stare at them out of empty eye-sockets, it reenacts the human bondage to evil.

The decaying skull serves as a link between the beginning of the novel when Golding pointed out the skull-like appearance of the decaying coconuts which litter the ground, and the pig sacrifice which is soon to occur. That the pig's

head is meant to epitomize human evil is unquestionable because of the particularly repulsive nature of the hunt which led to its erection. Intended for a sacrifice, it quickly becomes the lord of the flies and of the island. Like the dead pilot, it is a harmless if unpleasant object. It typifies the evil not so much of sin as of unreason. The flies which swarm over it are mere instinctive beings attracted by corruption.

Simon, on the brink of an epileptic fit, finds "he was looking into a vast mouth. There was blackness within, a blackness that spread. Blackness threatened to engulf all human life." Later, when Ralph charges into the clearing to discover "the shell which gleamed as whitely as ever the conch had done" he is sickened by the obscene thing. He lashes out at it and the skull flies off its stick and smashes, as the conch has already smashed. But the skull is not like a conch. When order and tradition are destroyed they vanish without a trace, but evil can never be obliterated that way. Like the broomsticks which multiply as the Sorcerer's Apprentice splinters them apart with his axe, the more pieces the skull is broken into, the greater its range. When it lies in two pieces its grin is six feet across.

The beast on the mountain is freed and washed away

at precisely the moment the boys no longer need it. They have created their own cadaver now, this time Simon, the sacrificial lamb who, at least for the moment, carries away the sin of the world. But the ritual must be re-enacted. The boys know by now that the beast is a multiplicity which comes in many shapes and can never be killed. The next sacrifice is to be Piggy and after that will come Ralph.

As the conch and the Beastie, the two running symbols, function as paired but opposing motifs, less important symbols are also symmetrically opposed. Butterflies are invariably associated with Simon. They dance in his clearing every time he slips away to meditate alone. In their airy perfection the butterflies suggest pattern and design as well as peace and security. They hover near the flowers in Simon's clearing, and it is the heaviest of ironies that they are driven away when the same clearing becomes the shrine of the pig's head.

The flies are in themselves morally neutral as are the butterflies, but from the beginning they are associated with corruption. They hover over rotting fruit and settle on the boys to drink their sweat. They transform the spilled guts of the pig into an iridescent "heap of black coal" and they possess the skull, climbing in and out of the nostrils and eye

sockets as if some tender tidbit were hidden away in the secret recesses of the brain.

Christ is often depicted, as he hangs dead on the cross, with his head surrounded by a shining halo of light. Golding has given the dead airman a hovering cloud of black flies which rise and settle back as the corpse is pulled up and then released. The boys themselves are associated descriptively with the flies. As they break up the assembly and go down to the beach, " the distorted figures had come together on the sand and were a dense black mass that revolved."

The assembly and the dance are another pair of contrary symbols. The assembly is associated with the conch and the world of responsibility and hope. It is conducted on a raised platform which is protected from the sun by a leafy overhang of palm trees, and it is the one place which the boys have made an effort to plan for convenience and good order.

> It was roughly triangular but irregular and sketchy, like everything they made. First there was the log on which he himself sat. The two sides of the triangle of which the log was base were less evenly defined. On the right was a log polished by restless seats along the top, but not so large as the chief's seat and not so comfortable. On the left were four small logs, one of them - the furthest, lamentably springy. [p.96]

The assembly is conducted by copperative democratic

process - within the limitations of a group of normal children - under the leadership of an elected chief. Its function is to preserve order and provide for adequate living conditions as well as keeping the fire going so that they may have some hope of rescue.

The dance is exactly the opposite form of expression. While the assembly works for rational decision, even, sometimes, on irrational subjects such as whether there are actually ghosts, the dance creates a hysterical mob. Dances occur at the instigation of an absolute dictator who uses them as a way of uniting and controlling his tribe. They are celebrations of bloodlust and can be fully satisfactory only when blood is actually spilled. In the chanting, milling swarm of bodies the individual loses self-consciousness. With the loss of identity comes loss of personal responsibility. The furthest thing from the minds of the dancers is rescue. Going home would mean no more "fun."

Golding makes frequent use of the descriptive possibilities of sunlight and shadow. Although sun is also associated with heat and therefore fire, the morning sun shines on Simon and the butterflies and brings to life the riotously coloured birds and the luxuriant foliage. Light is used to describe "the

strange , invisible light of friendship," and sunlight is constantly being reflected from Piggy's glasses.

Shadow is always associated with the morally questionable. As Jack reverts to being a hunter he is able to "pass like a shadow among the trees," and when Roger is almost caught throwing stones at Henry, "a darker shadow crept beneath the swarthiness of his skin." When the boys first present themselves at the summons of the conch, it is their shadows which can can first be perceived moving along the white sand.

One of the unexpected characteristics of the place of assembly is the lighting effect of the sunlight bouncing off the water:

> Normally the underside of the green roof was lit by a tangle of golden reflections....But now (in the late afternoon) the sun was slanting in at one side so that the shadows were where they ought to be. (p.96)

Even before the meeting has been called we are warned that certain realities will have to be faced.

Like the shadows, the mirages create peculiar visual imagery. They are often fantastically beautiful but are no more trustworthy than other appearances:

> Strange things happened at mid-day. The glittering sea rose up, moved apart in planes of blatant impossibility. The coral reef and the few stunted palms that clung to the more elevated parts would float up into the sky, would quiver, be plucked apart, run like raindrops on a wire or be repeated in an odd succession of mirrors. Sometimes land loomed where there was no land and flicked out like a bubble as the children watched. [p. 73]

The children do not understand the mirages so they ignore them. Yet they continue to be deceived by the appearances in their daily lives. It is not until Ralph is faced with the "unfriendly side of the island, where the filmy enchantments of mirage could not endure the cold ocean" that he begins to come to terms with the size of the ocean and his own insignificance. Hope of rescue seems absolute folly from a more realistic perspective.

A list of contrary pairs of symbols could go on to much greater length. Piggy's glasses are opposed by Jack's knife and just as Piggy keeps cleaning his glasses to clear his vision, Jack keeps slamming his knife into trees in an assertion of a primitive nature which has no use for vision. The huts which represent an attempt at civilized life are opposed by Castle Rock, a habitation more suitable to a savage tribe which must defend itself against real or imagined enemies, than to a society of peaceful food gatherers. When the huts collapse it is a sign that civilization on the island has capitulated.

Just as human nature contains within itself elements

of both good and evil, certain of Golding's symbols demonstrate the dialectic within themselves; that is, they contain their own contraries. Most interesting of these is the choir. The choir of a boys' school calls to mind images of blue-eyed blond angels with rosebud lips opened wide in song and faces shining with health and enthusiasm. Their voices are pure and clear, and they go about life's daily tasks singing Gregorian chants in dulcet harmony. These boys, however, have obviously never heard of the Vienna Boy's Choir. They resemble nothing so much as a "black creature" when they appear on the beach for the first time, and they are "controlled" by a tall, thin, bony boy whose black cloak swirls about him when he moves. He is an absolute dictator and his choir responds as a military unit.

"Choir! Stand still!"

"Wearily obedient the choir huddle in line and stand there swaying in the sun." Released, they perch "like black birds" on the crisscross trunks. In their black uniforms the choir suggests a unit of Fascist soldiers and the resemblance increases as time goes on. We are never told of their singing a single note, but their hunting chant is horrible in its diversity from the normal material of a choir:

"Kill the pig, bash her in, cut her throat, spill her blood..."

There are several intriguing possible interpretations of the choir, although none is more than suggested. It could be interpreted to describe the conflict between church and state, between the military and constitutional government; it could be taken as an attack on the corruption within the established church, or even as the church militant establishing her supremacy by means of inquisition.

One of the most insistent themes in the novel is the relative insignificance of the works of man. Before the "miraculously throbbing stars" which wheel in their eternal circles, remote and timeless, the activities of the boys are as unimportant as those of the woodlice which scurry hither and thither with frantic pointlessness when their rotten log is disturbed. When Simon has been murdered in the agonizing climax of the book, Golding carefully realigns the perspective:

> 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. (p. 190)

When, the following day, Ralph remarks,"We might get taken prisoner by the reds" his concern is utterly incongruous. The most momentous concerns of a world in the midst of a life and death

struggle are suddenly almost funny.

This dwarfing of humanity is reinforced by the use of the elements. Any adventure story draws on the conflict between man and the elements, but in this one the elements themselves symbolize some of the same ambiguities which exist in human nature. All have friendly, nurturing qualities, yet all are capable of threatening human survival if man's pride is allowed to get out of control.

The rock on the island is pink granite. Castle Rock, covered with nesting gulls, suggests a pink cake with white icing. The heights of the mountain provide security and an ideal place to light a signal fire where there is plenty of wood readily available. In the heat of the day even the pigs rest up high where the air is cooler.

But rocks are "tokens of preposterous time." It has been the work of millennia to "wrench and shatter these cubes" of granite and heave them up into stacks and chimneys. Man intervenes in nature at his own peril and it is no accident that the first rock the boys heave off the cliff edge falls "like a bomb" and crashes through the forest "like an enraged monster." Stones have become projectiles; weapons like the bomb which stranded them on the island in the first place. In

the end, when the island has been burned and life on it completely wiped out, only the rock will be left.

Like the rock, fire is both a friendly and a hostile element. Bestowed on man as a gift from the god Prometheus so that he might enjoy heat, light, cooked food and protection against his enemies, the fire is associated with warmth and companionship. Tension has already revealed itself between Jack and Ralph, but with the lighting of a cooking fire new flames spring up and "before such fantastically attractive flowers of violet and red and yellow, unkindness melted away." When the boys feel threatened by hostile forces the fire provides a degree of security, but most of all a fire must remain lit so that its smoke will warn any passing ship that the island is inhabited. Only by maintaining a fire have the boys any hope of rescue.

From the moment the first fire is built it is abused. Jack snatches Piggy's glasses from his face to ignite it and the flame so excites the children that they pile on more wood heedlessly. "The flame flapped higher and higher and the boys broke into a cheer."

> The boys were dancing. The pile was so rotten, and now so tinder-dry, that the limbs yielded passionately to the yellow flames that poured upwards and shook a great beard of flame twenty feet in the air. For yards round the fire the heat was like a blow and the breeze was a river of sparks. [p.52]

This is no "clean flag of flame flying on the mountain," it is a dangerous creature which expresses the same dark assertiveness as the boys must discover in themselves. They still refuse to be warned, though, and when it becomes obvious that they have lit the whole side of the mountain afire, their response is to break into shrill, excited cheering.

> The flames, as though they were a kind of wild life, crept as a jaguar creeps on its belly towards a line of birch-like saplings that fledged an outcrop of pink rock. They flapped at the first of the trees, and the branches grew a brief foliage of fire. The heart of flame leapt nimble across the gap between the trees and then went swinging and flaring along a whole row of them. Beneath the capering boys a quarter square mile of forest was savage with smoke and flame. The separate noises of the fire merged into a drum-roll that seemed to shake the mountain. (p. 55)

When the forces of nature are misused they respond by shaking the earth and bombarding the island with booming cannons. The rock which was supposed to kill Ralph falls with such an impact that he is thrown into the air. On the night of Simon's death the sky itself lashes out with volleys of cannon fire.

If the boys are a little awed by the power they have set free, only Piggy has the sense to recognize that they are capering on the brink of Hell. Only when they realize that the

fire has claimed its first sacrifice do they begin to think seriously about controlling the power they have unleashed; the power of destructive ingenuity, of bombs and rolling rocks.

The most developed of the elemental symbols is water. On the sheltered side of the island the lagoon is blue of all shades and shadowy green and purple. It seems to have been created expressly for their enjoyment.

The reef enclosed more than one side of the island, lying perhaps a mile out and parallel to what they thought of as their beach. The coral was scribbled in the sea as though a giant had bent down to reproduce the shape of the island in flowing chalk line but tired before he had finished. Inside was peacock water, rocks and weed showing as in an aquarium; outside was the dark blue of the sea.

On the beach the waves have obligingly created a deep bath of womb-like warmth.

However, it is not safe to trust appearances. On this boat-shaped island " the long streak of foam trailing away from the reef gives the illusion that the boat is moving steadily." It isn't the island that is moving backwards, it is the boys with their optimistic conviction that the human race is advancing step by step towards moral perfection. Human nature stands in the way of moral perfection, no matter what clever ways we may invent to create the illusion of progress.

The sea in a benign mood is "an unknown indigo of infinite possibility" which can perform magic tricks and create fantastically beautiful illusions for their entertainment; yet it is also that stretch of water where the snapping sharks wait, and the Beastie may hide by day. The remote distance of water is "the divider, the barrier" and "faced with the brute obtuseness of the ocean, the miles of division, one is clamped down; one is helpless."

Ralph has the feeling that he is being guarded by a sleeping Leviathan which waits to wake up and snatch him as it has already snatched the two who have been sacrificed to it.

8. Conclusion

From its first appearance in print, Lord of the Flies has excited controversy. Mr. Golding has been variously described as a determined moralist, a sadist, a nihilist and a sensationalist. In one of the earliest reviews to appear Walter Allen wrote:

"There's not a child so small and weak/ But has his little cross to take." These children's crosses, it seems to me, were altogether too unnaturally heavy for it to be possibe to draw conclusions from Mr. Golding's novel, and if that is so, it is, however skill-

fully told, only a rather unpleasant and too easily affecting story. 32

In a comparison between two novels of similar theme which came out about the same time, Louis J. Halle commented:

> One is impressed by the possibilities of his theme for an expression of the irony and tragedy of man's fate. Against his majority of little savages he places a remnant that convincingly represents the saving element of human heroism, thereby posing the eternal moral conflict. But he cannot quite find his meaning in his material. The heroes come to a bad end, having contributed nothing to such salvation as the society achieves. There is a great deal of commotion, but the last page is nothing more than a playwright's contrivance for bringing the curtain down. One is left asking, What was the point? 33.

In twenty years of literary criticism, Lord of the Flies has become respectable. It is studied in secondary schools and discussed at University Women's Club. However, it has been the subject of surprisingly little critical study , and what criticism there is tends to be one-sided.

The fundamental misconception is that the novel is a fable. This view rests on the assumpion that by placing his subjects in an imaginary setting and removing many of the complications of ordinary life Golding was setting out to clarify

32. Walter Allen,"New Novels," New Statesman, XLVIII [Sept. 25, 1954], p. 370.

33. Louis J. Halle, "Small Savages," Saturday Review,XXXVIII [Oct. 15, 1955], p. 16.

and simplify his vision of human nature. In this case the moral should be unmistakably obvious. The one meaning which is unmistakable is that man is corrupt; therefore, goes this line in reasoning, Lord of the Flies is a conventional moral fable about original sin.

It is quite true that realism of setting has been sacrificed for the sake of the theme and that the ending of the novel does not strictly conform with the rules of artistic integrity; in fact Golding has remarked that this ending is just a "gimmick" [34]. Certainly the novel explores the question of morality; clearly it examines the nature of fallen man, and there can be no doubt that it is filled with allegory and symbolism. Yet if one thing should be clear from the number of levels on which the novel can be read , it is that Golding does not provide simple formulae. The mistake in the traditional view of Lord of the Flies has been to view any one meaning as exclusive. If, for example, a reader assumes that Golding meant Simon to represent Christ, this has tended to rule out the possibility that Ralph could be Prometheus or that the Beastie could be Bacchus.

34. Books and Bookmen Interview.

The ruling out of alternatives is exactly what Golding does not do. A legitimate comparison might be made to the plays of Samuel Beckett. The Theatre of the Absurd can mean anything or nothing. There are no limits to the possible meanings of language and symbol; even the names of the characters - for example, Hamm and Clov in Endgame - are meant to suggest the infinite multiplicity of possible interpretations, both of the relationship and of the individual characters. Ham is the son of Abraham who is cursed because he broke the taboo of authority by observing his father naked. But Ham could be an actor or an edible (spiced with Clove). Ham suggests hammer (clov = nail in French) and his mother is a Peg, and so on. No one meaning rules out any other and all are correct.

I have pointed out several interpretations of the novel. There are others. Some of the chapter headings, for example, contain the intriguing suggestion of the Apocalyptic vision of John (Revelation, ch 13-14). In John a succession of demons will rule over the world, each holding sway for a thousand years before giving way to the next. The first devil falls from the heavens and spawns the line which follows him; the second crawls out of the sea to make war on the saints and overcome them; the third, which springs up from the ground, causes

man to build up an idol to "the Beast." It will speak to men and have dominion over them , and all who do not worship it will be destroyed.

In the end, the line will be interrupted by Christ's second coming. In Lord of the Flies it is the intervention of the captain of the cruiser which arrests the flow of history. But he is as different as he could be from the Risen Lord. In him the motive and drive of the hunter are sanctified by a uniform and the trimmings of civilization.

Kingsley Amis, in New Maps of Hell, calls Golding "an unusually serious and intelligent writer of the science fiction school," [35] and Epstein and Rosenfeld give Freudian interpretations of his work.[36] Yet all modes lead to the same point. Whether by analogy with a brighter, happier view of childhood, a vision of man at the mercy of fates he cannot control, or by a detailed examination of the human nature itself, either in psycological or in conventional religious terms, Golding forces us back to the recognition that the faults in the world spring inevitably from man himself.

35. [Ballantine Books, New York,] 1960

36. "Notes on Lord of the Flies" in Lord of the Flies[Capricorn Books, New York, 1960], pp. 249-55. and "Men of Smaller Growth, a Psychological analysis of William Golding's Lord of the Flies," Literature and Psychology, XI[Autumn, 1961], pp. 83-101.

The study of Theology in its traditional form, that is, the study of metaphysical truth is of more limited interest in this age than in previous, more religious periods of human history. The institutions of organized religion no longer seem relevant to the majority of Western men.

A powerful interdependency has always existed between Literature and Theology. The medieval morality play was influential in the shaping of the English drama and it is still almost impossible to speak of Satan without taking into account John Milton's conceptualization of the fall of man. A cultural common ground has always existed so that even for the non-religious, certain symbols and myths have embodied concepts and associations which would be understood by everyone.

This is no longer the case. Religion is no longer one of the shaping influences in our culture and a large segment of our population no longer understands religious language. The authority of the past is no longer held as universally valid and the answers people seek must relate to their own experience rather than to someone else's word, no matter how ancient that word might be.

The present questioning of former values and beliefs has left a void. If people are no longer willing to look at

religious answers, the problems Theology has always approached have not disappeared. The world has not become noticeably more moral as a response to tecnological innovation or the social sciences; evil continues to be a major problem and man continues to experience dim glimpses of some infinitely better state. Human life still prompts questions: Why is there anything rather than nothing? Why is there life? Why is there intelligent life? Why was I created? Surely there must be something better than Man?

These are theological questions. IF traditional theological answers are inaccessible or irrelevant to modern man; new ways of communicating have to be found.

Lord of the Flies is an important contribution in the attempt to talk Theology to secular man. Its Theology is one which works from that which is available to his direct experience; human nature itself. There is nothing overtly religious in Golding. His later novels drop even the conventional symbols he employs in Lord of the Flies. Instead a new structure and a new set of symbols are created. He writes not for the "Churched" but for the ordinary reader who knows there is something wrong with his world but can't identify what.

The theological understanding of Golding is rather out of fashion with the liberal optimism one still finds in many

Christian Churches. His vision is of a world filled with sin and suffering in which evil is an active force and human nature is tainted. There is no conviction of moral progress in Golding and technical sophistication simply increases man's destructive potential. Golding is taking us back to an older attitude, a self-definition which is closer to the Biblical understanding before truth became obscured behind myths of human mastery. In this way it breaks with the tradition of the Church Victorious from the Holy Roman Empire onward. There is no room in Golding's Theology for Christ crowned in Glory whose bride is the Church Universal; he is concerned with sick and suffering humanity who must grope toward self-understanding or die.

Lord of the Flies is a first experiment and one which has certain weaknesses. The glee with which it has been seized on by high school English teachers eager to demonstrate "literary concepts" points to a certain lack of subtlety in its conception; at the same time the almost universal failure to understand it speaks of an unbalance in its presentation. Yet the novel survives, and in the final analysis, its power rests not in the statement it makes but in the questions it poses about the nature of the human animal.

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