



## Chapter XI

### Lord of the Flies and Related Literature

"What I'm saying to myself is 'don't be such a fool, you remember when you were a boy, a small, boy, how you lived on that island with Ralph and Jack and Peterkin.' ... I said to myself finally, 'Now you are grown up, you are adult; it's taken you a long time to become adult, but now you've got there you can see that people are not like that; they would not behave like that if they were God-fearing English gentlemen, and they went to an island like that.' There savagery would not be found in natives on an island. As like as not they would find savages who were kindly and uncomplicated and that the devil would rise out of the intellectual complications of the three white men on the island itself."<sup>65</sup>

Golding is speaking here about his use of Ballantyne's The Coral Island as the source of Lord of the Flies. First published in 1858 The Coral Island has been a popular boys' book for the last hundred years. The story is about a group of three British boys and their adventures among the coral islands of the South Seas in the Pacific Ocean. Yet it must be added that The Coral Island is no more than a source; Golding's novel is original in theme and technique.

Golding has used Ballantyne's The Coral Island as the starting point from which he has worked out a completely different theme, because he considers the moral in The Coral Island as unrealistic and therefore not truly moral.<sup>66</sup> He has written what he thinks would happen in such conditions, what the boys would become in such an environment. Lord of the Flies is in a way a critical comment on

<sup>65</sup> William Golding, Samuel Hynes, William Golding (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 7-8.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

The Coral Island; yet it cannot be called a refutation of the latter since the method of each writer is suited to his particular purpose. In The Coral Island, Ballantyne was tender and sympathetic enough to distract the Victorian readers from their disillusionment with contemporary society. His coral island is a place for such escapists. They go there consoling themselves with all kinds of ideal fantasy in which everything ends well. His main purpose is to entertain; through Ralph Rover, the narrator of the story, the writer tells the readers that the story is "especially for boys, in the earnest hope that they may derive valuable information, much pleasure, great profit and unbounded amusement from its pages; if there is any boy or man who loves to be melancholy and morose, and who cannot enter with kindly sympathy into the regions of fun, let me seriously advise him to shut my book and put it away."<sup>67</sup>

The Coral Island is a story about children and purely for children while Lord of the Flies, though also about a group of children on a desert island, is not for children at all. "The Coral Island is a romance, and in Lord of the Flies Mr. Golding reconceives Ballantyne's story in remorselessly unromantic terms."<sup>68</sup>

The Coral Island is a story about three teen-age boys who survive, after a shipwreck, among the Coral Islands in the South Seas, and find themselves all alone on a desert island. They are Jack, aged

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R.M. Ballantyne, The Coral Island (London and Glasgow: Collins, Ltd.; New York: W.W. Norton, 1958), p. 1.

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Philip Drew, "Second Reading," The Cambridge Review (October 27, 1956), p. 79.

his own primitive instinct - his own inner evil will be let loose. This point of view of human nature is well dramatized in Lord of the Flies when Jack gradually breaks away from civilization and social laws, and, once he is free from these things, his own primitive instinct is given full rein. Being the leader of the choir he is superficially very close to religion-to Christ. His true self emerges when, on the island, he becomes the leader of the hunters. He is beyond salvation; completely imbued with savagery and brutality, he becomes the blood-thirsty tyrant of his anarchical tribe. The scene in which Simon confronts Lord of the Flies also elucidates Golding's opinion of mankind; during the silent talk with Lord of the Flies, which is symbolized by the pig's head on the stick, Simon realizes that evil is part of man and is in man himself.

While Ballantyne wants to present the innocence of youth, for whom life is amiable and enjoyable, Golding wants to show the easy corruption of innocence. Ballantyne intends to dramatize the great use of civilization in all situations-to say that civilization can help man to control his situation no matter what the circumstances; civilization and intelligence will always bring him safety and happiness. This is also the theme of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe; Crusoe spends all the time on his desert island trying to recreate in miniature the civilization he has left behind, and he succeeds. Golding's reaction towards Ballantyne's point of view is that civilization is just a fragile enamel which is of no avail for man when he is cast out of society; civilization can easily be stripped off. It is pale, helpless,

eighteen, Ralph - fifteen and Peterkin - fourteen. Jack is well educated, clever, lion-like in action but mild in disposition; he is the strongest and the leader of the group. Ralph, the narrator of the story, is rational, humble and good-natured. Peterkin, a little funny boy, is quick and humorous. They like one another and try to make the best of bad conditions.

There is never any conflict among them. They observe the order of seniority. Ralph and Peterkin always obediently follow Jack's advice. They are proud of him and believe in his intelligence and capacity to overcome all obstacles. Despite all the hard work and the uncertain, dangerous situation, they "continued to live on our island in uninterrupted harmony and happiness."<sup>69</sup> They are well educated and civilized boys; they are also good Christians who try their best to help the savages to acquire higher moral standards. They are innocent and therefore incapable of committing any sin.

This is unconvincing and incredible to William Golding. His experience as a schoolmaster does not allow him to expect that boys thrown together far from civilization and society, living in such an environment .. among wild, instinctive, primitive nature, will remain good, humble and humorous like these three boys. According to Golding's view of life, man is sinful. Evil stems from the inner nature of man not from the outer environment. Golding deliberately names his two leading boys Ralph and Jack after the heroes of The Coral Island; Piggy obviously corresponds to Ballantyne's Peterkin. Golding's boys

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<sup>69</sup> Op. cit., p. 168.

are also stranded on an uninhabited island after a plane crash. There on the isolated island, without adult supervision, the boys develop with terrifying rapidity into the state of barbarism and bestiality, despite the resistance of rationality, intelligence and civilization.

According to Frank Kermode, "The Coral Island (1858) could be used as a document in the history of ideas; it belongs inseparably to the period when boys were sent out of Arnoldian schools<sup>70</sup> certified free of Original Sin. Golding takes Ralph, Jack and Peterkin ... and studies them against an altered moral landscape. He knows boys well enough to make their collapse into savagery plausible, to see them as the cannibals."<sup>71</sup> This means that only the civilized, the intellectual are corrupt. The savages in fact lead primitive lives without any knowledge and therefore are innocent, not dangerous.

Like the boys at the beginning of Lord of the Flies, Ballantyne's three boys, instead of being worried after the shipwreck, enjoy themselves because they are now free from the adult world and can do whatever they want. The island is "the ancient paradise" for them. Ralph, who is seized by wanderlust, has been very interested in the Coral Islands and has always longed to visit them. Despite the fact that theirs is an isolated island, everything is available and the boys

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Arnoldian schools : those organized according to the ideas of Thomas Arnold the nineteenth century educationalist and headmaster of Rugby school.

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Frank Kermode, "The Novels of William Golding," International Literary Annual III (1961), p. 17.

lead their daily lives with ease, contentment and enjoyment as Ralph tells us:

"Sometimes we went out a-fishing in the lagoon, and sometimes went a-hunting in the woods, ... The climate was so beautiful that it seemed to be a perpetual summer, and as many of the fruit-trees continued to bear fruit and blossom all the year round, we never wanted for a plentiful supply of food."<sup>72</sup>

None of them miss their families, schools, civilized society and prosperous country. Nor do they want to be rescued from the island since they are "extremely happy."

Ballantyne's Ralph, like Golding's, the most rational one, thinks first about provision and shelter. The three boys then begin to imitate the adult world. Peterkin suggests a form of constitutional monarchy, "You shall be king, Jack; Ralph, prime minister."<sup>73</sup> Golding's Piggy suggests imitation of democratic society in Lord of the Flies. The boys build the fire from Peterkin's spy-glass; the fire in Lord of the Flies is lit by Piggy's glasses. When the three boys become familiar with the island, they begin to feel the primitive forces of nature "... where was a bare and rocky place of a broken and savage character."<sup>74</sup> Yet their own nature remains unchanged. This does not convince Golding whose concept of mankind is rather pessimistic.

According to Golding, man has the primitive instinct within himself and can control it only with the help of civilization and certain conventional values, but once he is free from these boundaries

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Ballantyne, op. cit., p. 168.

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Ibid., p. 22.

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Ibid., p. 14.

his own primitive instinct -- his own inner evil will be let loose. This point of view of human nature is well dramatized in Lord of the Flies when Jack gradually breaks away from civilization and social laws, and, once he is free from these things, his own primitive instinct is given full rein. Being the leader of the choir he is superficially very close to religion to Christ. His true self emerges when, on the island, he becomes the leader of the hunters. He is beyond salvation; completely imbued with savagery and brutality, he becomes the blood-thirsty tyrant of his anarchical tribe. The scene in which Simon confronts <sup>the</sup> Lord of the Flies also elucidates Golding's opinion of mankind; during the silent talk with <sup>the</sup> Lord of the Flies, which is symbolized by the pig's head on the stick, Simon realizes that evil is part of man and is in man himself.

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and rapidly decays when confronted with primitive, instinctive forces which are stronger and more powerful than itself.

At the moment the three boys are exploring the island, an enormous rock falls crashing down towards them but none is injured. The parallel scene in Lord of the Flies is the death of Piggy who is struck by a large rock pushed over by Roger. The difference is that the savagery of nature in The Coral Island is embodied in the boys themselves in Lord of the Flies, since Golding wants to emphasize the idea that savagery, evil are in man, not in nature. Roger is the embodiment par excellence of brutality and savagery. In The Coral Island Ballantyne also presents evil in his treatment of the savages and the cruel, greedy pirates who kill a lot of the natives in order to possess their sandal wood. To the boys the savages look "more like demons than human beings" because of their ugly nakedness, their charcoal-black bodies tattooed all over and their faces painted with red-coloured clay.

Their brutality in the bloody battle between two tiny tribes on the island where the boys hide themselves horrifies them and makes them sick. The chief of the victorious group pulls the enemy's child from his mother's breast and tosses him into the sea. "The rippling waves rolled the child on the beach, as if they refused to be a part in such a foul murder."<sup>75</sup> This is very similar to Simon's death scene in Lord of the Flies. The difference lies in the fact that Simon is not killed by any savage nor monster, nor demon, but cruelly murdered

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Ibid., p. 10.



by his own friends whom he intends to save from irrational fear and superstitious influences. It is not unusual for enemies to kill one another like those two tribes of savages on the coral island, but it is more brutal, tragic for a friend to be killed by his own friends, as Simon is. Golding seems to suggest that the boys are more cruel and bloodthirsty than the savages in The Coral Island. Golding's hunters, led by Jack, also paint their faces with coloured clay. The parallel is obvious.

Jack, Ralph and Peterkin feel sick and disgusted at the sight of the savages' cannibalism. The cannibals fracture one of their enemies' skulls and "scarcely had his limbs ceased to quiver when the monsters cut slices of flesh from his body, and, after roasting slightly over the fire, devoured them."<sup>76</sup> This is unbearable to them and later the boys try to get rid of cannibalism by giving the savages six piglets, telling them how silly they are to eat their own fellowmen. The boys go out fishing in the sea and are threatened by a shark; they make bows, arrows, and spears for hunting and fishing. They hunt pigs and piglets for food. Their hunting scene is not so exciting, lustful and bloodthirsty as the sow hunting scene in Lord of the Flies since Jack and his hunters kill pigs not only for food but also for fun.

Ballantyne also suggests an apprehension of the inner darkness, although a very vague one, in the boys themselves. The boys go to hunt pigs for food at the pigs' place. They have agreed beforehand that they will take a piglet but when Peterkin sees "an enormous old sow" he

suddenly changes and forgets everything. When Ralph tells him to spear a fat piglet which passes him," ... Peterkin did not move; he allowed it to pass unharmed. I looked at him in surprise, and saw that his lips were compressed and his eyebrows knitted, as if he were about to fight with some awful enemy. "What is it?" I inquired, with some trepidation. Suddenly he levelled his spear, darted forward, and, with a yell that nearly froze the blood in my veins, stabbed the old sow to the heart. Nay, so vigorously was it done that the spear went in at one side and came out at the other!

'Oh, Peterkin!' said I, going up to him, 'what have you done?'

'Done? I've killed their great-great-grandmother, that's all,' said he, looking with a somewhat awestruck expression at the transfixed animal."<sup>77</sup> Then with great surprise Jack asks him, "What possessed you to stick her, Peterkin?"<sup>78</sup> The answer is that Peterkin wants a pair of shoes, a rather unconvincing answer both to his boyfriends and to the readers who suspect what is his real motive and what has possessed him at the moment. It seems that Ballantyne himself knows what has possessed the boy but dares not give the right answer.

When the pirates' ship comes ashore, the boys hide themselves in the cavern under the water. Ralph volunteers to go out and is captured by the pirates. Here we are given a hint about civilized man by Ralph: "Little did we imagine that the first savages who would drive us into it would be white savages, perhaps our own countrymen."<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

The inference is that white men are, in fact, civilized only on the surface; they are more dangerous than the primitive savages since they are more intelligent and consequently can cause more fatal destruction. These white men are as greedy and as brutal as the savages or sometimes even more. They kill a lot of the natives because they have superior weapons, guns. On an island called Eno people worship the eel as one of their gods and feed him with their own babies. They have a swimming contest in which some natives are eaten by sharks. The chief of a tribe can kill and eat anyone he wants to because he himself is the law. They kill their captives cruelly and when the captain of the pirates tries to cheat them, he and his crew are tortured to death; only Ralph escapes.

This tends to dramatize the cruelty, savagery and inherent evil of the natives. They are rather inhuman; they never mourn anyone's death. They view death as a kind of phenomena and can see their babies eaten by the eel in front of them. After the captain's death, Ralph sails back to his friends at the Coral Island. After a few more adventures, in one of which they are imprisoned by the cannibals and finally set free because the chief and most of his subjects are converted to Christianity, the three boys set sail for England in the pirates' ship.

"The Coral Island" is a popular adventure story for children. The author wants to entertain and to encourage the reader to make the best of bad conditions, so that everything will end well; unity will surely bring success. The boys belong to a heroic type because they are brave boys who, despite all mischief and desperate circumstances, remain good, virtuous and innocent. According to William Nelson these three boys reflect:

"the eighteenth century optimistic view of human nature - a view which has several facets. The first is 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. Another corollary idea is that of the noble savage. If man is by nature good, then it would seem that where he is found closest to the natural state he is at his most noble. Human beings in childhood or in a state of nature therefore presumably come closest to the ideal."<sup>80</sup>

This optimistic concept of mankind has basically underlined the period of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The writers of the period such as Rousseau "expressed a faith in the essential goodness of man's nature,"<sup>81</sup> that man was born good and innocent. Only closeness to nature can preserve these noble qualities of man. Man is spoiled and corrupted by society.

Golding's view is contrary to this; he believes that the defects of society are caused by defects in the individual. He believes in demoralization and decay of man caused by Original Sin. Man was born sinful and is, therefore, responsible for the corruption of society. "The Coral Island" sounds unrealistic and untruly moral to Golding because he looks at the situation from another point of view. Ballantynes's attitude towards mankind is rather optimistic, while Golding's is pessimistic. According to Golding these primitive evil forces are not in the savages but in the boys themselves. What is vaguely implied in one or two isolated passages of "The Coral Island" is dramatized and intensified by Golding.

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William Nelson, "Introduction", William Golding's Lord of the Flies (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1963., 1963), p. ix.

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Ibid.

The Coral Island is like Johann Wyss' The Swiss Family Robinson in subject and purpose. Like the Ballantyne boys who are abandoned on an island after a shipwreck, the Robinson family are cast adrift after a shipwreck near an uninhabited island not far from the Equator. Their condition is better than that of the three boys on the Coral Island because they have salvaged almost all necessary things from the wreck - foods, utensils, tools, clothes and even animals. There are six members: the father, the mother, and four boys aged from eight to fifteen. Each one, even the youngest boy - Franz, tries his best to help the others. There is also a desert island for escapists. They are a religious family and never neglect their prayers. They build shelters, stables, and grow plants. They kill animals only for food and never for pleasure.

Like the boys in 'The Coral Island', they give names to places on the island: the Promised Land, Lobster Bay, Tentholm, Prospect Hill and so on. This indicates the influence of civilization and man's ego - that he can dominate everything and control any kind of situation that may present itself. Like Ballantyne, Wyss also presents the primitive external forces that are unfriendly to man. When the family decide to leave the ship and they row towards the island, "... the nearer we approached the shore the less inviting it appeared; the barren rocks seemed to threaten us with misery and want."<sup>82</sup> With their intelligence,

the family leads a comfortable and peaceful life. They mean to settle there on the island and never to return to their country. They are disillusioned by society, by their fellowmen who have left them in the lurch in the shipwreck. But one thing they never forget and try to preserve is the influence of civilization. They try their best to restore a microcosmic civilization in their created society: "Hurrah!" cried Ernst, "we'll be able to afford duck and green peas someday soon, and imagine we're once more civilized mortals!"<sup>83</sup>

The author's purpose is expressed clearly through the father, the narrator of the story, who says that it is written for instruction and amusement. The four lads represent other children all over the world. He wants them "to observe how blessed are the results of patient continuance in well-doing, what benefits arise from the thoughtful application of knowledge and science, and how good and pleasant a thing it is when brethren dwell together in unity, under the eye of parental love."<sup>84</sup>

As far as the problems of the books are concerned, "Lord of the Flies" is very similar to Hughes' "A High Wind In Jamaica" which, although it is about children inadvertently kidnapped by pirates, is not an adventure story for children at all. It is a study of the psyche of a group of children during their period of stepping into the adolescent world. The author presents their mysterious and secret nature that can never be understood or suspected by grown-ups. It turns out that the

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Ibid., p. 146.

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Ibid., p. 382.

sophisticated adults are betrayed and corrupted by the children whom they think basically innocent and therefore incapable of any evil. The characters are the five Thornton children packed off from Jamaica with two Creole children in order to be properly educated in England. During the voyage, the ship is attacked by pirates and they are brought on the pirates' vessel and left there because of their former captain's misunderstanding that they were all killed.

Although the pirates are dissolute, raffish and crude, they try their best to treat the children with compassion and tenderness. In fact they are more at the mercy of the children than the children are of them. In the pirate vessel the children soon regard lust, violence and cruelty as commonplace. They are savages under the surface of innocence. The pirates' destruction is not caused by their own evil deeds but by the crime committed by Emily, one of the Thornton children. In a fit of terror, she murders, despite her severe wound in the leg, a Dutch hostage taken by the pirates. This is the first stain of blood ever shed on the ship. It is an unlucky omen for the superstitious crew. The captain finally succeeds in persuading the captain of another ship to deliver the children to England. Safely arrived in England, the children go to 'proper' English schools while their former captors go to the gallows charged with Emily's crime.

The irony is that the pirates are put on trial because of the crime committed by a pretty little girl not by them. These pirates are superficially sophisticated while the children who seem innocent are more evil and mysterious. The pirates are destroyed because they underestimate or never even suspect danger of the "innocents." In her new school at Blackheath, Emily looks again as innocent and graceful as

other schoolgirls. At the end Hughes remarks, "Looking at that gentle, happy throng of clean, innocent faces and soft, graceful limbs, listening to the ceaseless, artless babble of chatter rising, perhaps God could have picked out from among them which was Emily: but I am sure that I could not."<sup>85</sup>

At the end of chapter one, the reader views the scene of storm of high wind in Jamaica:

"The handkerchief, shutters, everything burst: the rain poured in like the sea into a sinking ship, the wind occupied the room, snatching pictures from the wall, sweeping the table bare. Through the gaping frames the lightning-lit scene without was visible. The creepers, which before had looked like cobwebs, now steaming up into the sky like new-combed hair. Bushes were lying flat, laid back on the ground as close as a rabbit lays back its ears. Branches were leaping about loose in the sky. The Negro huts were clean gone, and the Negroes crawling on their stomachs across the compound to gain shelter of the house.... One boy began to roll away: his mother, forgetting caution, rose to her feet: and immediately the fat old baldam was blown clean away..."<sup>86</sup>

And the Thornton children are from the land of storms and high wind.

The author seems to use this external natural phenomenon to mirror the inner nature of these children, which is equally or even more brutal, and fatal than threatening nature.

The book is also called, ironically, "The Innocent Voyage". We know that the children are not completely innocent during their voyage. They are a strange mixture of innocence and savagery, "and in their adventures they are closer to nature than to their parents. They represent

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Richard Hughes, A High Wind In Jamaica (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1695), p. 191.

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Ibid., p. 36.



a mutiny of the senses which no urban civilization can suppress... They are living in the Old Testament, before discovering the New."<sup>87</sup> Like the children in 'Lord of the Flies', they are victims of Original Sin. These children who seem innocent within the boundary of civilization and conventional society are not innocent at all when they are alone, isolated from society.

Thus Golding and Hughes share the same general theme. Yet their works are different in technique. As we have seen, Golding expresses his point of view through the fable form while Hughes uses the fictional form to dramatize his concept of humanism. Hughes' characterization is more convincing than that of Golding. Hughes' characters are human beings who are not completely good or bad but a convincing mixture. The children are not completely angelic and innocent because in a certain environment they are as wild, and cruel as adults. Nor are the pirates completely vicious. Their strong, rude, brutal nature is not entirely merciless and unsympathetic.

Hughes, in his 'A High Wind In Jamaica', never suggests any idea beforehand. He just presents the incident and relates experience. He shows the children from the outside. He interprets their thinking and feeling for us. He presents both their inner and outer complexities. Without the use of symbolism Hughes lets the children's brutality reveal itself. As an outsider, he watches the children, detached from them,

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Vernon Watkins, "Foreward", Hughes, 'A High Wind In Jamaica' (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1695), p.1.

then records their behaviour to the reader. He is "a literary artist who knew human nature from personal experience."<sup>88</sup>

The comparisons to be made between the four books discussed above are interesting. In "The Coral Island" we have the concept of the safe community produced by a society that had lived for a century without war, a society with a settled sense of the human personality. The same might be said of "The Swiss Family Robinson". In Richard Hughes' book, we see the first sign of disintegration; the psychologists have discovered that children are not in fact small fanciful adults. "Lord of the Flies", conceived after a second world war in an increasingly sceptical society, questions mercilessly the smug humanitarian bias of the first two books and more than corroborates the less optimistic outlook of the third. Although Hughes does not completely lose faith in good, since in his characters there is the mixture between good and evil, he, at least, suspects its stability and endurance and his hope for them is rather in despair. Both Golding and Hughes believe that the defect of society is in the individual. Man is depraved by his own wicked, brutal nature; he is the inheritor of Original Sin.

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Louis J. Halle, "Small Savages", Saturday Review xxxviii (October 15, 1955), p. 16.