

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Falling of Angels into Beasts: The Archetypal Study of Lord of the Flies by William Golding

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ABSTRACT

The impenetrable sound of the breaking conch spread everywhere, where the wind whisper forgotten prophecies and the waves carry the echoes of the first fear of civilisation, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* emerges as an evocative modern myth. Amidst the fragile cocoon of an emerald isolated island the innocence blooms only to wither beneath the constant struggle of instinct, which depicts the omnipresent wilderness of human heart. This discussion examines the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding through the archetypal perspectives of Carl Jung and Northrop Frye, presenting the timeless patterns, symbols and characters that surpass the unseen footprints of historical, geographical and cultural radix.

The unnamed island becomes an archetypal embodiment of the eternal battle between civilisation and savagery. Ralph symbolises the reluctant hero struggling to restore peace and hope amidst interminable darkness, while Jack personifies shadow; captured by the restless desire for power and primal instinct. All the characters embody the archetypal reflections and, human mind and depicts evil as the eternal inhabitant of the human heart.

Through the archetypal and psychological perspective, the paper presents the island both as paradise and dystopia. Moreover, from the Biblical lenses, the novel echoes the Judeo-Christian narratives of the fall, sin and redemption through the sacrifice of Simon that completely transformed the island from an Edenic realm into a site of devastation and the decay of human civilisation. Thus, the paper purports to emphasise the significance and space of islands in literature, the archetypal criticism of human civilisation and depicts the destruction of nature in the battle of human limitations and desire.

KEYWORDS Archetype, Civilisation, Island, Collective Unconscious, Modern myth

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INTRODUCTION

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,”

— Yeats, *The Second Coming*

Since time immemorial nature and literature have been bound in an inevitable companionship where nature has lent its voice to literature and literature has given nature its memory. This close relationship is evidenced from the works of the writers of all ages in almost all the cultures of the world. Nature has been portrayed both as a preserver and destroyer by many writers. Island is considered as a pivotal part of literary studies; it is depicted in an image of meditative separation from the human world. In literary imagination island occupies a more specific space of serene tranquility as well as evokes a sense of fear through its labyrinth like wild atmosphere. Thus, intertwined between isolation and possibility, the island becomes a testing ground for the whole civilisation, resembling a place where the thirst for inner peace and threat of existence lives together. The archetypal reading of the novel *Lord of the Flies* transforms a narrative of survival into a modern myth of the gradual decline of civilisation into savagery.

The aftermath of the two world wars had concurred with the period of transition when intellectual and artistic world had undergone through huge change. By the early 1950s the United States and Soviet Union had tested the hydrogen bombs which was the next phase of the nuclear weapons. When the atom bombs were dropped in the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it signaled the end of the World War II, it also heralded the beginning of the cold war. Written with the ink of diverse intellectual insights, the literary and artistic explorations of this period had been shifted to new ends. Their writings depicted the inner hollowness and the uncertainty for future. As in, *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding transforms the Edenic island into a land full of sublimity. Unlike the other writers of that period can lead the society towards a more equitable, harmonious and sustainable future.

ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM AND THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

“The archetype is a tendency to form such representations of a motif – representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern.”

— Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*

Archetypal Criticism, influenced by Carl Jung’s theory of Collective Unconscious depicts that beneath every individual’s personal unconscious lies the collective unconscious which is a hive of inherited psychic patterns common to all human beings. Moreover, Northrop Frye, in *Anatomy of Criticism* reveals that literature is organised around recurring myths and archetypes that transcend individual works. Thus, the novel *Lord of the Flies* illustrates the fact that the conflict between

civilisation and savagery is not merely political or historical but it also shares psychological insights.

THE ISLAND: EDEN AND DYSTOPIA

“This is an island...the shore was fledged with palm trees. These stood or leaned or reclined against the light and their green feathers were a hundred feet up in the air. The ground beneath them was a bank covered with coarse grass, torn everywhere by the upheavals of fallen trees, scattered with decaying coconuts and palm saplings. Behind this was the darkness of the forest proper ...” (Golding, 04).

The island itself emerges as a significant archetype. The description of the island resembles the Biblical Garden of Eden which was an untouched utopia. But gradually this paradise transforms into a terrifying site of fear and violence. In mythological traditions these forests, isolated islands always represent the symbols of mystery and deep transformation. It is noteworthy that William Golding reverses the Edenic narrative in his novel. In the Book of Genesis evil enters into the Paradise through the shape of a serpent but in the novel, *Lord of the Flies*, evil is portrayed as an omnipresent thought, which already exists within the boys. Thus, Simon asserts this truth “May be there is a beast ...maybe it’s only us.” “This realization reflects Jung’s idea of the shadow which depicts the dominated unconscious aspects of personality. Therefore, the island becomes a symbolical dimension where social limitations and restraints gradually disappear and the hidden suppressed desires of human mind emerges. According to Sigmund Freud, repression of desires and thoughts lead people to a state where they remain unaware of their various actions. Thus, Freud says that “Regression is the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests.” (Freud,1914). From the archetypal perspective of Frye, the island descends from a place of peace and harmony into a site of violence and uncertainty. The novel depicts that the hidden enemy of human mind is internal rather than external. As Christopher Marlowe has shown through the character of Dr. Faustus in his drama *Dr. Faustus* that the inner desires and evil intentions can transform a renowned scholar into an ordinary sufferer.

THE CHARACTERS AS ARCHETYPES

Throughout the novel, Ralph represents the Hero archetype, who struggles to defeat the inner evil lies within the boys. He tried to maintain order and harmony amidst the overwhelming forces of chaos. Ralph continuously reminds the boys about the signal fire “The fire is the most important thing on the island. How can you expect to be rescued if you don’t put first things first and act proper?” (Golding, 47). Here Ralph seems as the conscious ego attempting to maintain control over unconscious impulses. Moreover, fire symbolises the spirit of civilisation, hope and reason and Ralph’s consciousness to maintain the signal fire depicts the voice of hope in the novel. But through the perspective of Frye Ralph can be considered as an ordinary individual, precisely because of his failure to maintain control which leads to

the gradual collapse of civilisation. Here heroism is not sufficient to overcome the destructive impulses and to restraint human desires.

Piggy serves as an archetype of wisdom, reason and intellectual guidance. His spectacles through which fire was produced, it symbolises civilisation. After the murder of Piggy Golding writes – “The conch exploded into thousand white fragments and ceased to exist”. (Golding, 220) This signals the complete annihilation of democracy, wisdom and rationality and the gradual collapse of civilisation. From the perspective of Frye, it is the complete destruction of the social order and leads to the wild form of survival. Simon is considered as the Christ figure in the novel and Jung’s theory identifies Simon with the Self archetype. It is noteworthy that Simon alone understood that the beast is not an external aspect but an internal instinct of human nature. Thus, he says “Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill ...I’m part of you” (Golding, 161). In Indian mythology human body is considered as the part of the five elements Fire, Water, Wind, Earth and the Sky and in the novel William Golding describes the reaction of nature in the death of Simon, he writes “The water dressed Simon’s coarse hair with brightness”. This creates the sense of purification and transformation.

“You cut a pig’s throat to let the blood out ...otherwise you can’t eat the meat.” (Golding, 29)

Jack Merridew embodies the Shadow archetype with a deep psychological depth. His painted face abandons all the social restraints and it becomes the visual portrayal of transformation. Frye’s theory also represents Jack as the leader of the world of devil. During one incident Maurice pretended to be the pig, and the hunters circled around him and started to beat him with singing- “Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in.” This shows that the children started to enjoy hunting. The hunger and their thirst for survival lead them to savagery and to the world of darkness. As in the poem *Hunger*, the poet Jayanta Mahapatra reveals the harsh realities of hunger and the destructive forces of human need – “It was hard to believe the flesh was heavy on my back... ...I felt the hunger there,”

The Beast and the pig’s head which is called as the lord of the flies together represent the novel’s central archetypal symbol of evil and the world of darkness. Jung argues that individuals sometime externalise their unconscious fears without realising them their own personality. Simon’s realisation that “maybe it’s only us” shows this reflection of unconscious fears.

THE FALL AND THE RETURN OF CIVILISATION

“The island was scorched up like dead wood ...The tears began to flow and sobs shook him ...Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.” (230).

The arrival of the naval officer arouses these emotions and fear for the light of civilisation amidst the boys. The naval officer also belonged to a world of devastating

warfare. Thus, in his novel William Golding creates a microcosm of the horrible devastation of the world engaged in a terrifying war. Golding's *Lord of the Flies* presents a dystopian perspective in which civilisation is shown to be fragile and temporary. Golding portrays the island not as a paradise but as a space where fear and savagery gradually destroy social order. At the beginning of the novel, the boys attempt to maintain democratic values through assemblies and rules, symbolised by the conch shell. However, as fear spreads among them, rationality disappears and violence takes control. This realisation exposes Golding's pessimistic view of humanity. The boys, despite their civilised upbringing, quickly descend into barbarism when social restraints are removed. The murders of Simon and Piggy symbolise the destruction of innocence, morality, and reason. Through these events, Golding demonstrates that civilisation is only a thin layer covering humanity's primitive instincts for violence and domination.

CONCLUSION

The novel *Lord of the Flies* reflects various archetypes throughout the whole narration and the characters represent different symbols of sin, fall and survival. The isolated island itself depicts the mystery of wilderness and the transformation that occurred after the arrival of human beings. The loss of innocence, descending into savagery and the collapse of basic sense of civilisation happened in that isolated island. It signifies that evil lies within human mind and it evolves in the absence of order and conscience. The hunters group becomes an archetype of this universal omnipresence of evil. The beast never appears because it did not have any physical form but it was the imagination that created the form of the beast. As John Milton says –

“The mind is its own place and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.”

(Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 254–255)

Therefore, the archetypes in the novel foreshadows the consequences of the actions, the inner desires and also throws light on the gradual decay of civilisation from the consciousness of human mind. Through Frye's theory the novel reworks the archetypal patterns of paradise, fall and sacrifice. William Golding profoundly leaves this novel for the coming generations to understand, interpret and convey the universal truths through the help of myth, archetypes and symbols to the world.

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