CHAPTER 1
"Abyss of human illusion"
William Golding gained considerable literary prominence since the 1954 publication of *Lord of the Flies*. Before its publication, however, the typescript of this novel had to undergo many changes under Charles Monteith. The initial title, *Strangers from Within* was rejected being too "abstract and explicit."¹ I am calling attention to it, nevertheless, because it serves my purpose, which is to show that *Lord of the Flies*, like all his other works, is designed to assert something permanent and significant about human nature.

*Lord of the Flies*, is not merely a philosophical allegory or an account of the degeneration of the boys. We also do the book an injustice, if we treat the boys as figures in a theoretical treatise on human nature. For Golding’s superb, all-encompassing vision of reality, presents us with an imaginative achievement first and foremost, and in a thoroughly contemporary manner.

On the subject of Golding’s work innumerable things have been said and remain to be said, but I will stick to a few essentials which will demonstrate Golding’s theory of human nature, thereby revealing the capacity for evil inherent in every human heart. His way of doing this was to create a fiction in which a group of schoolboys, in the fresh innocence of youth, and not yet completely conditioned by the settled prejudices of the civilized world, would be stranded on a desert island and left to fend for themselves. The thesis lying behind the story presumes, that in such a situation man’s
depravity, fear and his selfishness assert themselves at the expense of his compassion and rationality. These latter qualities can flourish only in the protected condition of civilized society.

Golding's purpose (in his own words) is "to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature." The moral illustrated thereby is that "the shape of society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable." We are invited to consider, not so much, "the ethical justification of human behaviour, but human motivation as the source of behaviour." Lord of the Flies, reveals Golding's penetrating understanding of the sickness of the society, though his analysis seldom amounts to a full indictment. In such a society, evil is revealed as a subtle force, difficult to dislodge, not only because it is covert and surreptitious, but also because it has been institutionalized and invested with charm. Evil is not something that we have recently invented. It is the natural projection of man's consciousness. That the seat of evil in Golding is the human heart or the human psyche, may be illustrated from any one of his works. Such an evil, as Jack and his hunters represent in Lord of the Flies, is necessarily rooted in consciousness. Jack's type of evil, however, assumes another form in the societal context - "the sin of manipulation" - to borrow Tony Tanner's phrase for the novels of Henry James. As the story progresses, the larger issues of the novel begin to recede, and the smaller, but more inflammable issues of the violation
of human psyche takes on an obsessive form, especially as Golding dramatizes it in all its unmasked hideousness and lurking brutality. The "sin of manipulation", though proceeding from varied and complex motives, is finally an aspect of evil. There is therefore, a qualitative difference in the types of manipulation in the novels. In Lord of the Flies, the assault on a tender psyche is so naked as to resemble aggression rather than manipulation. Jack apparently wanted to manipulate the children's life for his own gain. Evil does not have to show the proverbial horns and hoofs, it may as well sport paint and a mask which the children use as a disguise against the pigs they want to hunt on the island. In the novel, Golding presents aggression as instinctive and spontaneous. It is only the mask of paint that liberates the children from "shame or self-consciousness." (p.155) to show what human nature is basically constituted of. The question of evil in children presented in varying aspects in the novel, show the insidious and malignant nature of evil which can violate the very sanctuary of innocence.

Whatever its intellectual dimensions, Golding has created a successful adventure story, for it is part of the novel’s theme to state that "children man of smaller growth." show human nature in its most basic form when they make a mess of things, as they regress to savagery.

John Peter in "The Fables of William Golding," distinguishes fiction from fable and classifies Lord of the Flies, as a "fable." Indeed, if we feel that the plotting of
this novel is too schematic and relentless, this may be because everything has to conform to the pattern of behaviour, Golding perceives as natural to man, and which he therefore imposes upon the novel. But, Golding relates the story with such economy and intensity that its predictability - the boys' movement towards savagery - does not become monotonous but gains poetic credibility. For instance, the arrival on the hill of the dead parachutist and even more, his departure from it after Simom's "murder" (172) are improbable episodes, if we read Lord of the Flies, as though it could really happen. They however, work figuratively and have a poetic credibility. When Coleridge remarked that the symbol "always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible," he was saying that symbols were irreducible - and I would like to take the next step and say that if the symbol is autonomous, so is a work of the imagination as is depicted in this novel.

Incidentally, Golding says that this dead parachutist is "history." Golding writes in 'Fable':

"What the grown-ups send them is a sign ... that arbitrary sign stands for off-campus history, the thing which threatens every child everywhere, the history of blood and intolerance, of ignorance and prejudice, the thing which is dead and won't lie down ... it falls on the very place where the children are making their one constructive attempt to get themselves helped. It dominates the mountain top and so prevents them keeping a fire alight there as a signal" (The Hot Gates p.95-96).

This ugly emblem of war and decay provides the only objective equivalent for the beast, the boys imagine.
The plot of the novel is fairly simple, remarkable for its relentless progression. The boys impose civilized standards of conduct, modelled on what "grown-ups" would do, before they finally give way to fear and frenzy. The adventure ends in a reversal of their expectation. The rule of reason is overthrown and the survivors regress to savagery.

The structure of the novel is similarly controlled, without ramblings of any kind, except the two incidents involving the outside world - the arrival of the dead parachutist and of the naval officer. The characters in the novel are both recognisable people whom we might encounter in actual experience as well as embodiments of particular aspects of human nature. The conflict between Ralph and Jack, illustrates a fundamental split between the two warring sides in man. Harry Beverly explains: "The boys, representing human nature, are placed on this island, inorder for Golding to hack his way through the facade of civilization to get to the tangled human dilemma where man is as he really is". "Their struggle is the ancient battle between the forces of good and evil raging in every man." 7

The children start off by facing the new experience as an adventure. As the novel proceeds it concentrates more and more on the rivalry between Jack and Ralph. In other words:

The brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled common-sense" (p.77).
They begin with a kind of comradeship:

"Jack and Ralph smiled at each other with shy liking." (p.25)

And that was possible because "a kind of glamour was spread over them and they were conscious of the glamour and made happy by it" (p.27). The original pleasure however, dwindles, for the glamour is no more than a temporary cloak thrown over the natural surroundings by the boys. When the network of association that binds them to the civilized world is dissolved, unconscious forces usurp rationality. The savage overcomes the civilized. A concomitant effect is the loss of civilized value system. Golding therefore, presents the "constant battle between the primitive levels of response and deceptive consciousness, the beast and the human," in the individual psyche. What Leon Edel says of Henry James is equally true of Golding. In his work, "the sense of the abyss (is) always lurking beneath the fragile surface" (p.117). If ever a man's imagination, he added "was clouded by the Pit, it was (his)."

Thomas Hobbes' The Leviathan, provides a valid parallel to Lord of the Flies. He is, however, not the only source for Golding's theory of human nature. In the Leviathan, Hobbes asserted that "man is intrinsically selfish, that each individual is fundamentally guided by self interest." The covenant man forms with his "sovereign" exists because he fears "the alternative lack of protection against the wildness of nature and the opposition of his fellow-men." We adopt
according to Hobbes, certain "articles of peace," which impose restrictions on individual liberty. To see that these 'articles' are implemented, an external power is entrusted with absolute authority. By the common consent of the other children, this power in *Lord of the Flies*, is initially entrusted to Ralph, "the man of goodwill and commonsense" (*Hot Gates* p.89). Ralph preserves an orderly rational society in the island, with the help of the Conch Shell, a symbol of authority. Hearing its sound, the children gather together. Golding shows by this means, how dependant humans are upon symbolic sanctions. No community can exist without symbols and rituals. The meaning however, "is in the boys" and not such symbols as the "conch." According to Jack, "the conch doesn't count on top of the mountain" (p.46) and he starts questioning the authority and discipline which has been imposed upon him and which the conch symbolises. While he has a rebellious and even anarchistic streak in him, he is not altogether wrong to distinguish between symbol and practicality. He is warning the boys, that they cannot depend on symbols alone if they are to survive.

Golding also underscores a typical Hobbesian notion about man's instinctive insecurity. The boys acknowledge Ralph as their leader, because he happens to be in possession of the Conch. Their social sense also never lapses, they always assemble on the beach, to see what can be done as a group. It never occurs to anyone, except Simon, to act as a solitary individual, unencumbered by social responsibilities. The voluntary surrendering of individual will to the
collective will, is the beginning of civilization. So, in a way, the novel criticizes collectivity and celebrates the inviolable, sacred independence of the human mind to seek truth. It is Simon alone who explores the forest, marvelling at the beauty and harmony of the natural world and discovering within it a secret place of his own.

Initially the children relish their new freedom but under instinctual pressures - aggression and superstition - they develop tensions which finally break out into conflict. Ralph, who proves too ineffective as a leader is displaced by the more ruthless figure of Jack, whose growing neglect of the authority of the Conch clearly point to his abuse of social custom, and hence to the establishment of tyranny. One by one the remnants and relics of twentieth-century civilization fall away and are discarded. Ralph knows, that they can survive, only if, they agree on common procedures and keep the signal fire alight. Jack, absorbed in the hunting of pigs, lets the fire go out and a ship passes by. Bitter recriminations follow. The island paradise degenerates into an inferno of fear and terror. Piggy, sensing doom, tries to restore order and avert calamity. But is killed in the process. Jack wields his authority, by pandering to the fears of the children and offering them outlets for their apprehension. They start worshipping their own god as a means of allaying their terror of forces they cannot intellectually understand. The reality is that, regardless of the intelligence we possess, we suffer a fall, brought upon by our own irrationality; a fall which
focuses on all our wretchedness, the depravity and brutality of human nature. The break down of reason and its destruction is one of the 'truths' of the novel.

The tragedy on the island repeats the actual pattern of human history because the children inherit the same defects of nature which doomed their fathers. The boys in the novel are partly the victims of adult self-destruction, responsible for their being stranded on the island after their aeroplane had been shot down. Since Golding’s interest lies less in causes than in consequences, we do not know why a war rages in the background of the book. All we know, is that the northern hemisphere has become unsafe and the children have to be evacuated. That area of the world which most prides itself in its culture and science has now become uninhabitable for its young people. Golding creates a civilization where devastation seems to prevail over creativity. The novel does not uphold the values of civilized society, since we are not allowed to forget the horrors that lurk beneath; the dead parachutist and the uniformed naval officer with his sub-machines. The war that was responsible for shooting down their plane is still, it seems, going on in the adult world beyond the island. Golding mentions this aerial battle going on in the distant sky:

"... other lights in the sky, that moved fast, winked, or went out ..." (p.104)

Golding thus makes the failures of the adult world explicit and total. He constantly has the children referring
to it in contrast to their present existence on the island. Ironically, they tend to miss its comforts - ponies, warm hearths, games of football - and have scant conception of its horrors.

*Lord of the Flies*, is founded on the conviction of civilization as a moral paradox, a disguise for what really is. This is because, Golding has seen beneath the illusion which generates a view of history as progressive and civilization as a power for good. Golding's universe is therefore, primitivistic at its core and yet also conscious, that it is only through knowing our primitivism that we will find our innocence. In this novel, civilization is desired because it acts against the corruption of the "savages" (p.155). Here reason is linked to unreason. However, the text resists a simplistic labelling, or the applicatio of exclusive moral values. To say, as one critic does of *Lord of the Flies*, that Golding is "convinced that without restraint of social order the human being will sink below the level of the beast,"¹² is to neglect that in the *Inheritors* which was published a year after *Lord of the Flies*, Golding takes a family of savages and shows us that they are more civilized than the newman or Homo Sapiens. Here Golding links goodness to the Neanderthalers or savages and evil is linked to reason and the beginnings of civilization. In other words, civilization in one novel is desirable because it "acts against the corruption of the savages", and in the other "it is desired although it is itself corrupt."¹³ The exposition
of the nature of good/evil, reason/unreason is complex. Golding cleverly allows us to build up our sympathy and simply traces human nature in all its indefinability. The more Golding explores human nature, the more he comes across the unexpected, the 'stranger' within ourselves.

Golding's relationship with other writers is obviously important enough to pause over. He admits that Lord of the Flies has a "pretty big connection to the Coral Island." A century without war and with a settled sense of the human personality produced the safe community of R.M. Ballantyne's Coral Island (1859). In setting his novel on a tropical island, Golding uses it ironically as a foil for his own version of man's moral nature. In this reversal Golding suggests the weakness of the civilized order and by implication the unrecognised emotions of the savage lurking within it. The coral island morality, though optimistic, is "unrealistic" according to Golding, and he explained in an interview that the savagery would not be found in natives on an island - cannibals and such like alien creatures - "but that the devil would rise out of the intellectual complications of the three white men on the island itself." In Golding's story, the choir boys "who had said, 'Sir, yes Sir,' and who had worn caps and crosses", revert to the role of painted savages who chant a ferocious litany of hate and blood: "Kill the beast, Cut his throat, Spill his blood" (p.168). The vileness proceeds not from cannibals, but from the boys, though man is not so much vile as "heroic and sick"
Unlike Bailantyne's boys, Golding's boys have notion of order, symbolized by the Conch which heralds formal meetings, but when civilized conditioning fades, the shelters they build are inadequate, the signal fire goes out at the very moment when Jack first succeeds in killing a pig. Intelligence fades, irrational taboos and blood rituals make hopeless the task of the practical but partial intellect of Ralph and Piggy. Always a little nearer to raw humanity than adults, the boys slip into a condition of animality; they make an unnecessary evil fortress, they steal and abandon all operations aimed at restoring them to civility.

The effect is to hold before us two radically different pictures of human nature. Ballantyne gives us an optimistic picture, whereas, *Lord of the Flies* projects the pessimistic picture of the malignity of man's heart. Golding mentioned in a panel discussion on *Lord of the Flies*, that he had two pictures in mind: One was of a small boy, standing on the sand for sheer delight of, at last, being where he's always read about - on a coral island. The other picture was of the same boy crawling bloodstained through the undergrowth being hunted to death like a pig, by the wild tribe that the children had turned into. How did one picture become the other? That is the question to which Golding gives unswerving attention. Golding's imagination always speculates and discovers in his form, structure and content where the connections are, constantly seeing in every detail, "the larger design" of the whole.
Golding wished to communicate a somewhat unorthodox picture of human nature, but partly because he employed a traditional form in his first three novels, he contributed to the impression that he was also a deeply traditional thinker. Golding is partly to blame for this. In a lecture 'Fable' in *The Hot Gates*, we are reminded of how simple a writer he is and how complex too. Like any orthodox moralist Golding insists that:

"Man is a fallen being. He is gripped by Original Sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous. I accept the theology and admit the triteness; but what is trite is true; and a truism can become more than a truism when it is a belief passionately held .... I decided to take the literary convention of boys on an island, only make them real boys ... and try to show how the shape of the society they evolved would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature" (p.88).

Such a statement merely describes metaphorically a general condition, it does not place it within a constricting scheme of theology. It is not surprising, however, that this led, the orthodox commentators, no doubt, to expect some cut-and-dried answer, a "code-message" to be "cracked and its matter extracted." To impose a rigid theological framework, however, would be to severely limit his work. *Lord of the Flies*, is a moral novel embodying a conception of human depravity which is compatible with, but not limited to, the Christian doctrine of Original Sin. Golding's religious faith is based upon his interpretation of experience, rather than upon an unquestioning acceptance of revelation. It matters little whether we say, in religious terms, that man reverting
to his natural state shows the reality of Original Sin or, in
post-Freudian terms, that it shows the inevitable triumph of
the 'Id'. It is, of course, entirely possible that Golding had
managed to construct a fable that does express all these ideas
and that what we are dealing with is not alternative
interpretation but simply levels of meaning. This is not to
say, though, that Biblical allusions are unimportant in his
work. Like other Christian philosophers, he believed in an
outer world independant of man's knowing mind. No wonder he
called himself, in the essay "Belief and Creativity" — a
universal pessimist but a cosmic optimist (p.201). And he
further explained: "Universe I will use for the universe we
know through our eyes ... I will use cosmos to mean ... the
totality, God and man and everything else that is in every
state and level of being" (p.201).

We therefore, need to be wary of dismissing religion from
Golding's view of the universe. Like the novelist Thomas
Hardy, Golding frequently reminds us of the immensity of the
cosmos in relation to the puniness of man. Human achievements
and failures seem unimportant in contrast to the regularity
and impersonality of the Universal process:

"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.170).

Behind such order there may well exist a creative being, but
Golding's characters "grew accustomed to these mysteries and
ignored them, just as they ignored the miraculous, throbbing stars" (p.63).

The island on which Golding sets Lord of the Flies, enjoys an extraordinarily unviolated calm, before human intervention effectively disrupts it for ever: "This dreadful eruption from an unknown world" (p.149). The boys have imported the blood-lust of another kind of life, to a world which does not appear to have known it before. At the source of the book, is the myth of Eden in the Book of Genesis, whereby man's first innocence is corrupted by his inability to resist sin. But Golding manages to secularise this myth without destroying its viability, as an illustration of the human temptation to do wrong. Golding presents several images of the bliss in nature, emphasising the Eden-like innocence of it - the exquisite colouring of the Conch as it lies quietly in the sea, the butterflies in Simon's retreat, the sow nurturing its young. The arrival of human beings invariably disturbs nature. Golding presents examples of man's rapacity, from the scar left on the landscape by the crashed aeroplane, to the raging fire which not only devastates the island, but takes a child's life as well. An example of how the natural world shows up human inadequacies is seen in the contrast between Ralph's despair at lacking a fire: "So we can't have a signal fire ... We're beaten" (p.138) - with the regularity of the sunrise: - "A point of gold appeared above the sea and at once all the sky lightened" (p.138). Golding thereby emphasises the vast
time scale of natural evolution. By implication the human adventure on the island has only an ephemereal significance.

Unlike most contemporary novels, Golding's fiction is preoccupied with what is permanent in man's nature, looking not at men simply in relation to a particular society, but in relation to his cosmic situation. To present this, Golding creates at the very heart of the fable, an episode where the character is stripped down to his very 'Being', and is forced to accept or reject the "darkness that which is his internal landscape." In Golding's view, contemporary man experiences his spirituality as "darkness." His interior landscape contains "a central not comprehended dark" (Hot Gates p.167). The centre inhabiting that darkness, constitutes what in conversation Golding calls the "My goodness" of man or our "asisness" (The Paper Men p.161). Golding therefore, constructs an occasion when a character's centre breaks away from its given essential 'Being.' Golding claims that for contemporary man, that darkness holds the "promise and danger of wholeness." But only the saints like Simon, can embrace darkness and discover its "lighted centre." For instance, in the case of Simon, the encounter with the Lord of the Flies Head, an emblem of violence and fear, transforms his innocent view of himself, by making him confront his own capacity for evil. The Lord of the Flies seems to tell him that it is both the beast and yet just a pig on a stick, that in the end, he is part of Simon himself. In Simon's quest, then, the concept of the fable becomes sheer experience. At the centre of the
book is therefore, simply this 'abyss' or void - "the overwhelming question"\(^{22}\) - to borrow Eliots' phrase, which cannot be evaded in the pursuit of truth. The 'Simonness'\(^{23}\) of Simon is a quality of imagination which allows him to know the "ancient, inescapable recognition" (p.152) of the existence of his own evil. His confrontation with the dead parachutist complements that with the Lord of the Flies. Simon's experience here completes his knowledge of how humanity works and what is the nature of evil that afflicts the other boys. Talking about Simon, in the essay 'Fable', Golding described him as a "Christ figure" (p.97), "solitary, stammering, a lover of mankind, a visionary who reaches commonsense attitudes not by reason but by intuition" (p.98). In other words a "Saint - people around whom miracles happen, not merely good people."\(^{24}\) To describe him, Golding "distributed odd bits and pieces" of "Simonry"\(^{25}\) throughout the text. We first meet Simon anonymously: he is the fainting child, of whom Jack speaks disparagingly. Thereafter, we see more of him alone than in the company of other children. His view of nature is one of understanding and acceptance, the qualities which give us the "Simonness" of Simon. Simon's quality of sheer faith is seen as he reassures Ralph "I just think you'll get back all right" (p.122) establishing the "simonness" of Simon. He makes a Christ-like gesture and pulls down fruit from the high branches to feed the "littluns" (p.64). Again, Golding marvellously evokes this quality of his, in the passage where, in the heart of the forest, Simon has communion with nature.
The place is like a church, scented and lighted by the white flowers of the night - blooming candle-nut tree, but what the communion is we do not know. We simply see Simon's kind of vision, its "acceptance" of what is.

"Tall trunks bore unexpected pale flowers all the way up to the dark canopy where life went on clamorously" (p.61).

The description given here is what Simon sees and hears, not coloured by mood, as with Ralph and Jack, but accepted whole and for what it is. He apprehends neither through adherence to social creeds or rational analysis, but through an intuitive perception. In contrast to Ralph's experience, where he wanted "to light" the candlebuds, and Jack, who wanted "to cut and eat them," it is Simon, who just "sees" them, recognizing the 'lighted centre' of his darkness. He alone sees things "without definition and illusively" (p.152) behind a "luminous veil". He realizes that what is, is neither horror nor beauty, because it is both, rather like the two-toned face of Matty in his recent novel, *Darkness Visible*, becoming one colour "gold." The two-toned reality - malignancy-and-holiness - can fuse together to become a perfect symbol of wholeness.

A look at the scene of Simon's confrontation with the "pig's head on a stick" (p.58), shows that Simon gets no real answers from the Lord of the Flies. It simply poses a series of questions to which he already knows the answers:

"You knew didn't you ? I'm part of you ? ... I'm the reason why it's no go ? Why things are what they are ?" (p.158).
 Appropriately, the name "Simon", in Hebrew, means "the one who listens." What speaks to him is namely "a power, not ourselves, but in ourselves, making for corruption, or destroying it." Simon's words become "inarticulate" (p.97) in his efforts to express "mankind's essential illness" (p.97).

"Maybe there is a beast ... What I mean is ... maybe it's only us" (p.97).

We see the impossibility of capturing the reality, the "thereness" (p.16-17), of which Sammy speaks in Free Fall. Language becomes a superfluity in such moments. To quote Bergson, "there is nothing left but the flow of meaning which pervades the words." Instead of locating evil in a dimension of its own, Golding argues that Beelzebub, the Hebrew translation of the title of the novel, is 'only us'. The wrong of human conduct arises because evil is a real element in human beings, independent of human environment and circumstances. Simon appears to "see", in the "Lord of the Flies", a manifestation of the dark side of human nature, and an evidence of the human will to destroy. But Golding leaves the phrase 'ancient, inescapable recognition' (p.152) enigmatic, for it is his conviction, that paradoxically many explanations may be simultaneously true. We can interpret Simon's experience, according to our private set of priorities, and not limit it only to a theological condition or to a natural disposition towards destruction. The most satisfactory explanation is to encompass both views, as two parts of the same reality, like Simon's 'transcendental'
vision. Such a vision "flashes across the inward eye" of which William Wordsworth spoke. This quality, not of celebrating the thing seen, but like Blake, the seeing of it or an insight into it is the way we too need to respond to Golding.

Contemporary man experience 'mystery' only as malignancy, not holiness or wholeness. That is why, apart from Simon, the boys create a supernatural set of values, out of their fear and fantasies. They start to imagine mysteries in their surroundings which - as Simon perceives - only really exist as extensions of themselves. Unlike Simon, Ralph turns away, from acknowledging his own nature and creates a monster instead. His instincts are always to domesticate, to ward off terror, by social community, to civilize, to provide against the 'littluns' (p.64) nightmares, the security of 'home.' On a search for the illusory beast on the island, Ralph feels 'clamped down', 'helpless' and 'condemned' (p.122) as he sees beyond the lagoon out to the open sea and sees the "sleeping leviathan" (p.115), a monster with "arm of surf" and "fingers of spray" (p.122). This creature becomes a part of his consciousness, a symbol of reality, which he tries to avoid. Golding, recreates Ralph's imagination, which starts to see everything, even the sea, as a potential beast: "like the breathing of some stupendous creature" (p.115). The whole impulse of contemporary man, like the boys, is to transform darkness of the unknown into a devil or external system of evil.
The natural paradise in the island is lost with the first rumour of the "snake-thing" (p.39), a beastie, one of the boys mention seeing in the woods at night. This, of course, does not exist, but has been imagined by the boy, in his terror at finding himself on the island; the "ancient, inescapable recognition" (p.152) of the presence of evil which insures a repetition of the fall from Grace. Golding's image of the boy's shadow like "a black, bat-like creature" (p.20) intimates the presence of evil among the children. The bat is traditionally associated with night and the devil. The children are affected by the fear of the unknown, which descends with the night. In other words, "the looming terror", to borrow a phrase from another Golding novel, which the protagonist Oliver felt "night-long in his very bones" (Hot Gates p.173).

It is the "littluns" (p.64), those least influenced by civilized values, who mistake the tree-creepers for snake. Sam and Eric, infact, describe the "beast" so excitedly, that they forget to distinguish, what they really saw from what they imagine.

Jack insists that there wasn't a beast because he had hunted all over the island and never seen it. He understands better than Ralph, though, that their fears cannot be dismissed, for he too admits that in the forest "when you're on your own ... you can feel as if you're not hunting, but - being hunted; as if something's behind you all the time in the
jungle" (p.57). He further suggests that the fear they sometimes feel is only the result of nightmares, "fear can't hurt you any more than a dream" (p.90). Jack has no understanding that dreams can hurt, because they do psychological harm. He perceives things only in a sensual way and has no regard for the inner life, like Simon had.

The natural rhythms are coloured by their fears. Morning is menaced by the heat of the afternoon; the cool of evening is "menaced by the coming of the dark" (p.63-64), which brings nocturnal fears.

In this mood therefore, fantasy replaces commonsense and supernatural beliefs sway the children. The "unnameable, unfathomable and invisible darkness that sits at the centre of him" (Free Fall p.8) gradually assumes a monstrous identity and becomes the beast, actually the decomposing parachutist on the hill. To the children, this figure, entangled in the lines of the parachute, seem like a grotesque beast. It is simply the projection of their own darkness. We should not forget that the Lord of the Flies is only a skull, an object given miraculous life because of faulty vision. Unlike Simon, because they evade the 'overwhelming question', they fail to find the "lighted center" of their darkness.

Mary Midgley has beautifully argued that, "Man fears his own guilt and insists on fixing it on something evidently alien and external."\(^{31}\) This is ironically what happens to
Ralph at the end, when the savages act like civilized men and hunt him down, as an enemy of the society they have formed around the aggressive Jack. Ralph tries to hide the beast in himself, by a worship of the adult world, and his advocacy of rational behaviour in the end, becomes nothing, but an illusion. He worships the lie behind which man attempts to conceal his true nature: "They wouldn't quarrel - or talk about a beast" (p.103). This adult worship is misplaced, because civilization denies the darkness of its heart. Ralph himself discovers this lie when he finds himself longing to hurt Robert: "The desire to squeeze and hurt was over mastering" (p.126). Ralph represents the perspective that conceals the true nature of man and rationalizes acts of inhumanity. The emergence of this concealed, basic wildness is one of the "themes" of the book. The tenets of civilization, the moral and social codes, the human intelligence itself form only a veneer over this "entirely unsuspected peculiarity" in the constitution of human nature, as William James called it. *Lord of the Flies* can be considered a novel of "faulty vision", to borrow Malin’s phrase.

Whatever beast there is in man, or as I mentioned in the introduction of my thesis, "the frightful, sheer/cliffs of fall" in our minds, it also has its opposite; resources of the spirit like unused muscles and organs, never employed in our time in the world. Man abstracts from his violence something his nature possesses and projects it as fear of a demon which
will destroy him. He seldom abstracts from his goodness, something his nature also possesses. Spirituality, as a consequence can no longer be dark but light.

Lord of the Flies makes us work towards the conclusion, that man is somehow good and evil, that his nature endlessly contradicts itself. Given the nature of man, Piggy’s tactless question -

"Which is better - to be a pack of painted niggers ... or to be sensible... ?
to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?" (p.199).

- cannot be answered upon an either/or hypothesis, since innocence and brutality exist in man in an exquisite poise. This reminds me of Eric Smith’s perceptive comment on Ralph, that although he sticks by "law and rescue", rather than "hunting and breaking things up," yet he gradually approaches the savagery of Jack and his tribe. Our reasonable side will claim that to agree, have rules and be sensible is best, but man still goes out and hunts, kills and destroys while claiming to be a rational creature acting in the name of reason. Our inability to imagine evil is a consequence of the optimistic picture of ourselves with which we work. We need to turn our attention away from "the consoling dreams ... towards the real impenetrable human person."

Golding’s view is reminiscent of what Thomas Hardy states in Jude the Obscure: "+... the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellation have to the real star-patterns."
It is with Hardy's remark in mind, that I'd like to cite a passage from Chapter 4. The whole thesis of the novel is miniaturised in this passage: -

"The subsoil beneath the palm trees was a raised beach; and generations of palms had worked loose in this the stones that had lain on the sands of another shore. Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed and threw it at Henry - threw it to miss .... Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins" (p.67).

We have the primeval setting (generations of palms) and the sense of a constantly evolving nature (stones that had lain on the sands of another shore). Roger starts by throwing stones at Henry for something to do, but we perceive a struggle in his subconscious, between a desire to hit Henry and the knowledge which society has instilled in him, that it is wrong to cause hurt and therefore forbidden. Roger hides his body behind a tree while throwing stones, but he cannot hide from the memory of codes of civilized conduct. However, restraint is only a taboo or a superstition, not anything inherent. Therefore, the "old life" has a progressively weaker hold over Roger and the others. Man's urge for destruction and his capacity for evil are real and enduring. The child's sadistic impulses are our first significant peep into the "heart of darkness", to borrow the title of Conrad's novel.

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Similarly, Maurice, walking through the castles built in the sand by the little children, inadvertently kicks sand into Percival’s eye and hurries "guiltily" away for "at the back of his mind formed the uncertain outlines of an excuse" (p.65). Johnny’s "natural belligerence" and Henry’s "absorption" in "exercising control over living things"(p.66) are basic elements of human nature. Watching the "tiny transparencies", that linger near the water over the beach for "food", gave Henry the "illusion of mastery" (p.66), which changes to reality when the inhibitions fostered by civilized society disappear. Then the knife descends with freedom - "the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh" (p.34) which earlier was "unbearable" (p.34) to them. Under Jack's rule, the children colour their faces, and behind the mask of their paint, assume a more self-confident and brutal personality. Like Eliot’s 'Prufrock', the children become automatons or "cogs" in the vast machinery of society, changing their "social masks" to suit the occasion.

When in the first scene of Macbeth, the three witches chant "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (p.4) we are introduced to a see-saw of moral contraries which points to Macbeth’s wrong choice. Similarly, in Lord of the Flies, Golding skilfully uses several "foreshadowing devices", to establish present jollility and future terror to show that the line between reason/unreason, fun violence/real violence is thin. For instance, the boys indulge in a mock fight and were a
"happy, heaving pile in the under-dusk" (p.29). But this scene later becomes the mob hurling itself upon the terrified sow and then the hysterical savages who kill Simon as they "screamed, struck, bit, tore" (p.168). Another scene is depicted in Chapter 1, coloured by one mood and then repeated later, coloured by an opposing mood. This is seen when the three boys are diverted by the fun of rock-rolling. The incident takes on a different tone when we read later in the novel, of Piggy being deliberately toppled to his death by a rock, which Roger pushes "with a sense of delirious abandonment" (p.200) on to Piggy who "fell forty feet and landed on his back across that square, red rock in the sea. His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed" (p.200).

From a traditional point of view, the Head - the centre of reason - is destroyed with Piggy's death and the "bridge" between rationality and irrationality is severed. The Conch's destruction at the same time symbolizes the limitation and destruction of that rationality.

The mask of warpaint is enough to make the children lose their inhibitions against violence using a ritual chant of real violence:

"Kill the Pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood" (p.75).

culminating in a bloody and violent slaughter of a pig. If we examine the scene before the slaughter, we can see how the boys transform a natural idyll into something monstrous:
"The pigs lay, bloated bags of fat, sensuously enjoying the shadows under the trees. There was no wind and they were unsuspicious; ... 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.147-148).

Jack and his hunters select this sow for their victim, track it and kill it in bloodthirsty abandonment. The episode mirrors the rise of emotionalism at the expense of self-control, which is one of the principal themes of Golding’s novels.

The sow’s head is placed on "a stick" sharpened "at both ends" (p.150) and "jammed" in a "crack" (p.151) and left as an offering to the gods, a "gift for the Darkness" (p.137), so that in time, it becomes metamorphosed into the Lord of the Flies. The real relevance of this episode, lies in its latent brutality and the knowledge of the depths of human bestiality - a knowledge dimly perceived by Henry - a "knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink." (p.76)

Beneath the adult veneer of reason and civilization lurks a nature that is repulsive. Nietzsche in The Genealogy of morals pointed it out when he stated :- "Deep within all these noble races there lurks a beast of prey bent on spoil and conquest ... from time to time (the beast) has to be let loose in the wilderness." 38
Lord of the Flies is also about the death of ethical behaviour, the death of goodness and civility, the death, crucially of our authority as selves. The appearance of reason is seen to be useless, when contrasted with man's true nature. There is an "indefinable connection" (p.203) between Ralph and Jack. Jack's appeal to the pleasure-loving side of his supporters contrasts with the responsibility Ralph had displayed at earlier meetings. Jack forestalls disruption of his authority by pandering to the fears of the children, offering them outlets for their apprehension. He helps them to release their pent-up energies: "Do our dance! Come on! Dance!" (p.167). Ralph by contrast, has always insisted on rigid self-discipline. Ralph's nightly game of "supposing" (p.181) failed to comfort him. He failed to conjure up "a tamed town where savagery could not set foot" (p.182). His failure to understand why "the world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away" (p.99), demonstrate the limitations of his mind. It is the 'mind' alone that releases the secret knowledge that there is no safe barrier between civilization and wild nature. Ralph could not trace the "arc of their descent," which could not explain why "Things are breaking up. I don't understand why. We began well; we were happy. And then -" (p.89). That is because he blames the symptom 'Jack' rather than the real reason. In the course of events he was at times among the hunters, one of them, and he discovers the appalling ambiguities in his own Being. The growth of savagery forces him to grow up to see the dirt on
their clothes. The decline of the boy's moral state manifests itself visually. "Each of them wore the remains of a black cap and ages ago they had stood in two demure rows and their voices had been the song of angels" (p.146-147). He further makes "strange speculation" (p.85) about the meaning of human identity:

"If faces were different when lit from above or below - what was a face? What was anything?" (p.85)

This is however only a fumbling growth of his awareness. His objectivity is narrow, owing to his adherence to the "surface-truth" of the fire, symbolising rescue, which in the end represents nothing but a miscomprehension, an illusion.

Like Tuami, in The Inheritors, Simon is powerless to alter anything for "What was the use of sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world?" (p.43). Simon's perception that evil lies within the heart of man himself, had not merely wearied him physically, but made him the repository of all wisdom - "like an old man" (p.161). He releases the dead parachutist "from the rocks and... wind's indignity" (p.162) and thereby frees himself, intuitively grasping the fact that man can escape the "brute obtuseness" (p.122). But when he goes down to tell the other boys about his concept of evil-and-innocence, or good-and-evil, he is murdered by the children, who mistake him for the beast. Simon's powerlessness shows that all men are at the mercy of their nature, which is basically the same. Man tends to regard himself in exclusive moral terms forgetting that,
not only rules are irrelevant, when one confronts the "slice of life" (p.90) but rules are non-existent. It is left to man to see for the first time "a different picture" (p.111), from what he has been accustomed to, like the Protagonist in The Pyramid.

It is significant that the two boys who are killed, Simon and Piggy, as well as the beast as a part of man, are taken back to the infinite Ocean, where they become part of the natural universe. Nature is seen to invite visions of unity and wholeness within itself. The beauty of the sea and the power of the cosmos controlling its tidal movement, converts the human horror into a scene of tranquility and dignity.

The advancing "line of phosphorescence", "full of strange, moonbeam - bodied creatures with fiery eyes" (p.169) - those same transparencies that Henry saw earlier "scavenging for food" (p.66), "like a myriad of tiny teeth in a saw" (p.66) - held the sand, grains, pebbles and Simon's body and "accepted them with an inaudible syllable and moved on" (p.169).

At the literal level the passage describes the advancing Pacific tide as it starts to cover Simon's corpse, but Golding imagines the scene poetically and sensuously. Therefore, the veil of bright whiteness, implies purification of the saintly Simon -- White being, in European culture, the traditional colour for innocence. The departure to sea of Simon's body is related with a "lingering sense of wonder but no problems are solved." It merely represents "a cessation of suffering, a
cleansing." The natural surrounding is, as it was before, so is the human situation. Accepting the contrariness of human experience, the "dead body" of Simon and also the "steadfast constellation", can one understand an order and heroism within the human heart. The essence of Simon's view of "acceptance" becomes explicitly the mode of writing in this passage.

The death of Simon moves Ralph towards an awareness of guilt: "I'm frightened of us" (p.173). Ralph too stumbles upon the skull "who knows all answers and won't tell" and who "seemed to jeer at him cynically" (p.204). Once again the darkness is depicted as resting "about on a level with his face" and the skull's "empty sockets seemed to hold his gaze masterfully and without effort" (p.204). But, unlike Simon, he couldn't recognize his own face and "a sick fear and rage swept him ... and (he) cried out in loathing" (p.204). If only man is prepared to face his "face", he will no longer be in Ralph's words "cramped into this bit of the island, always on the look out" (p.110). Ralph cannot release fully the fear in himself, as he sees one of Jack's hunters slowly approaching him. The last chapter is structured along the line of a children's game of "tag." The idea of the game is emphasised by the use of a truce term, "Pax" (p.216). But, since the boys become savages the game becomes a deadly reality as they hunt Ralph. "The multitude", Thomas Hobbes says, "will clamour, fight against and destroy those, by whom all their life-time before, they have been protected and
secured from injury. And if this be Madness in the multitude, it is the same in every particular man." Ralph hides himself in Simon's cell "the darkest hole" (p.217) of the island, but with only a partial acknowledgment of his own savagery, he breaks through the cell. His last thought of rescue and the hopeless memory of Simon's faith "you'll get back to where you came from" (p.122) is replaced by a scream of fright, anger and frustration. He became "fear; hopeless fear on flying feet, rushing through the forest towards the open beach ... trying to cry for mercy" (p.220).

Unlike Simon, Ralph had "the experience but missed the meaning. / An approach to the meaning restores the experience beyond meaning. / In a different form." This is how T.S.Eliot puts the notion abstractly in his poem The Dry Salvage, and which Golding changes into sheer experience.

As Ralph "staggered to his feet, tensed for more terrors" (p.221) he is saved from being lynched only by the arrival of a "naval officer" (p.221), attracted not by signal fires for rescue, but by a barbaric blaze prepared for destructive purposes. The naval officer, "grinned cheerfully" (p.221) at the "semicircle of little boys, their bodies streaked with coloured clay, sharp sticks in their hands" (p.221), seeing only dirty, frightened boys enjoying "fun and games" (p.221). He is still fast bound in the world of illusion. Ralph, however has a glimpse into the real nature of these "pack of British boys" (p.222). Through tears and agonies and most instant perils, Ralph learns the nature of "mankind's
essential illness" (p.97).

The shift from Ralph's agonised eyes to the complacent and benign view of the officer reveals the "infinite cynicism of adult life" (p.151), the absurd civilized attempt to hide the power of evil.

When we reach a truth at the end of the novel, we discover that we must accept it in an ironical light. The officer who rescues the boys, reminds us at the end, like the crash-landing of the boys at the beginning, and the fall of the airman in the middle, that the adult world is involved in a nuclear war more violent and widespread than that of the children. It is typical of Golding's deep irony that the neat symbol of human rationality and inventive achievement is also the frightening symbol of man's will to destroy. "Good symbols" it has been said, "should crystallise the intangible and clarify the obscure." Golding uses his symbols in this way to add depth and meaning to his reconstruction of the traditional story. Rescue is possible in The Coral Island where only external danger threatens, but not in Lord of the Flies, which raises the question Golding poses: "And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?" A return to civilization "in ruins" (p.67) and ravaged by atomic war is fatal. It is only our conscious 'mind' which can guarantee rescue from ourselves.

At the end Ralph "weeps" for "the end of innocence and the darkness of man's heart," (p.223), a world he mistakenly thought, existed, recognising the failure and irrelevance of
the kind of human moderation and civilization, he had thought
he embodied. The naval officer thinks himself adult, because
he can distance himself from the grief of the children, by
which he is "moved and a little embarassed" (p.223). But
Ralph's tears have sprung from a terrible insight into his own
being. This is a sign, that he is more awake and struggling
with his nature. His compassion is a hard-won knowledge,
although only a fumbling growth of awareness, about the fallen
nature of man, which the officer does not possess. Seeing
through eyes that have been washed clean by tears, is the
deepest dimension of insight in Golding. Ralph does not weep
for Piggy, but for the loss of a dream or an illusion, the
belief that he and Piggy were "true" or "wise." In this
moment of "tragic knowledge" he remembers those strange
interims of blindness and despair when "a shutter clicked down
over his mind and left him at the mercy of his own dark
heart." The fact that children are vulnerable and ignorant
of their own nature, is ignorance, and we confuse it with
innocence. The loss of innocence for which Ralph weeps is
not, however, for a transformation from child-like goodness to
adolescent depravity; is not a growing into wickedness. It is
rather, the coming of an awareness of darkness, of the evil in
man's heart, that was present in the children all along. To
acknowledge the presence of this darkness in one's own heart
is a necessary but devastating condition of growing up, of
becoming fully and yet flawedly human. Innocence, Ralph
realises, is the fruit of the disciplined self that has come
truly to understand itself, like the 'transcendental vision' of Simon. Perhaps, this is the kind of "wise innocence" which great literature may restore to us, if we can learn how to read it. The supreme value of Golding lies in this, that beyond conclusions, and arguments, he was passionately interested in "existence." This mystery he finds as every man must find, in his own way. "Intimations of mystery," are what the twentieth century needs. The seeing or "epiphany" as Conrad stated, should be the adequate understanding of a work of art, where the readers are left with suggestions rather than answers. It is Golding's supreme literary achievement, that he succeeds in persuading us that "evil is nearer than hands or feet, that evil is endemic in the heart of man."
NOTES


8. See "The elements of William Golding" by Irving Malin, p. 36.


21. Ibid., p. 34.


25. Ibid., p. 61.


29. G.H. Bantock quotes Bergson in his essay 'The social and intellectual Background.' The Pelican Guide to English Literature. Vol.7. The Modern Age edited by Boris Ford, p. 46. (All subsequent citations are to this edition).


36. Quoted by Arthur Mizener "Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy" in Modern British Fiction edited by Mark Schorer, p. 60.


42. Ibid., p. 23.


47. Quoted by Barbara Everett in the essay "Golding's Pity" in William Golding : The Man and his Books by John Carey p. 123.


49. Span magazine, April 1986 "Literature in a Technological Age." This essay by Cleanth Brooks is excerpted from the Jefferson Lecture in 1985.

51. Quoted by S. Babbage in *The Mark of Cain*, p. 28.