

# An archetype study of Lord of the Flies based on the view of Bible

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**Abstract:** Lord of the Flies is one of the most important novel written by William Golding and it contains multiple meanings. This paper aims to interpret author's intentions through an archetype study based on the view of Bible. Through detailed analysis, it comes to a conclusion that if human wants to be rescued, we have to be aware of the evil side in us.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The author and the work

William Golding is one of the most popular authors in British. His work Lord of the Flies which won the Noble Price in 1983 has been generally well received. The story takes place in the midst of an unspecified war. A stock of boys landed in a coral island by accident and they were left to themselves on this paradisiacal place, far from modern civilization. Some of the marooned characters were ordinary students, while others arrived as a musical choir under an established leader. Although collaborated well at the very beginning, their gradual separation into barbarian group and civilized group; descent into savagery; finally, the well-educated children regressing to a primitive state are portrayed in this book. The harsh brutality of man is the underlying

theme in Lord of the Flies, a theme which he addressed in a diversity of historical contexts and settings in subsequent works<sup>[1-3]</sup>.

### 1.2 Materials review

There has been a lot of perspectives and angles to study Lord of the Flies. With the growing concerns about the relation between industrialized modern society and human being, Yuxia Tian<sup>[4]</sup>, Xiaomei Wang<sup>[5]</sup> and Daquan Li<sup>[6]</sup> applies ecological approach to reveal the warning hidden deeply inside the novel that the crumbling ecology will lead to human's alienation. Apart from that, the absence of female in Lord of the Flies has gained researchers' attention. Through careful explore, Kaiyan Yu<sup>[7]</sup>, Tiantian Wu<sup>[8]</sup> and weixin Wang<sup>[9]</sup> came to the conclusion that the absence of female actually emphasized the importance of women. In addition to that, more researches are focused on theme study. Aimed to investigate the theme, Yanjie Sun<sup>[10]</sup> evaluates and reorganizes the plots based on three dimensions: humanity, religion and civilization; Notice that Golding uses lots of symbols and abstract images. Weixuan Shi<sup>[11]</sup>, Cunbo Liu<sup>[12]</sup> and Hualan Wu<sup>[13]</sup>, interpret the meanings of mask, fire and figures to do further researches. Particularly, studies of archetype are introduced to dig up more explanations for the theme. Taking the mythology about Dionysus as a thread running the whole story, Lei Hu<sup>[14]</sup> interpret the prototypes of main figures including Jack, Roger, Rafael, Piggy and Simon; Nan Deng<sup>[15]</sup> extracted the prototypes of wise man, hero as well as evil from the main figures to explain the mythological metaphor of

the tragedy; Liming Wu<sup>[16]</sup> focused on the study of the prototypes of masks and shades in the main figures.

### **1.3 Archetypal literary criticism**

Archetypal criticism is rooted from Frazer's anthropology and Jung's analytical psychology which can be regarded as the first two phrases by some critics. Through collecting abundant of information about myths, religious rites and games, Frazer found that the mythologies as well as sacrificing rituals shared a great many features in common, and those abstract cultural forms appeared in literatures. Those forms actually can stimulate similar psychological reactions. Inspired by Frazer's study, through further investigations, Jung coined the collective unconscious conception which combines the mythology and prototype from the scope of psychology. He holds an idea that there exists individual as well as collective experiences which are actually inherited from our ancestors and stored in people's minds. Those collective experiences appear repeatedly in a literary form, such as myths and legends. In fact, Jung affirmed that archetypes are actually primitive images. Based on previous study, Swedish researcher Frye asserted that the analysis and research of the literary works are to explore the significance through archetypes.

Both Hebrew culture and Greek culture exerted profound influence on Western culture. Greek mythology as well as stories from Bible form the most important constituent in Western mythological archetypes. As a result, this paper aims to investigate deeper meanings of the novel through analysis on the prototypes of progressive changes of scene and monster based on Bible.

## **2. THE SCENE: FROM EDEN TO THE HELL**

### **2.1 The garden of Eden**

The Biblical theological world view divided the world into four layers: Heaven, Eden, the living world and the hell. The supreme layer is the heaven where God are; the second layer Eden is an ideal world where there is filled with harmony and pleasure; the third layer living world is a corrupted world with both good and evil, death and live, hope and desperation; the bottom layer is the realm where Satan and demons are indulged in mass massacre. Apart from the heaven

part, the process of the changing scenes in the Lord of the Flies coincide with this structure. By applying Biblical features in literary, readers can see the process of human's degradation clearly.

God planted a garden eastward for Adam and this garden is called "the Garden of Eden" which is filled with "gold of land"<sup>[2]</sup>, beautiful rivers, kinds of trees, "bdellium and onyx stones"<sup>[2]</sup>. There is no death, no disease, no pain and all live in harmony. The garden is so beautiful as well as peaceful that it is also called "a paradise of pleasure" in Douay-Rheims Bible. In fact, same with other biblical literature, in Lord of the Flies, corresponding to the Garden of Eden, Golding created a similar scene—the coral island. At the very beginning, when children were delivered into this coral island, this island was very beautiful and fertile. There were a lot of fruits for eating, pink stones together with shimmering water for creating wonderful scenery and a warm lagoon provided for children to play or swim. Children collaborated well. They selected Ralph as the leader, and led a harmony life: "this is a good island. We—Jack, Simon and me—we climbed the mountain. It's wizard. There's food and drink."<sup>[1]</sup> In this period, the morality, ration, ethic still resided in children's hearts. They knew they needed to vote for a chief, and gave everyone a chance to speak, and never hurt others for selfish desire.

### **2.2 The living world**

As for living world, in this novel, it refers to the transitional environment from Eden to hell. The disruption between Jack and Ralph becomes shaper and sharper, the evil hidden inside children's heart is gradually coming around and the civilization is actually crumbling. Fortunately, similar with living world, good and evil coexist in the island. Children's consciousness still works. When Jack and Ralph argued about which was more important between hunting and fire, "they faced each other on the bright beach, astonished at the rub of feeling"<sup>[1]</sup> and then Ralph changed the topic to avoid further argument. Roger dared not throw stones at Henry because his "arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins"<sup>[1]</sup>. In the meantime, living world also refers to the real world where

children were sent from. Due to indefinite expansion of people's selfish desire, with the alienation of scientific technology and the collapse of belief, the world is going through a large-scale war, and death, desperation as well as corruption are stalking everywhere. Only a few of people like Golding realized it and tried to save people by recalling their ration and, more importantly, consciousness back.

### **2.3 The hell**

Unfortunately, in *Lord of the Flies*, instead of being redeemed by anyone, children drag themselves into the hell—they changed the Garden of Eden into a hell-like place. In John Milton's work *Paradise Lost*, there is an excerpt of description about hell: ".....And rest can never dwell, hope never comes that comes to all; but torture without end. Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed with ever-burning sulphur unconsumed"<sup>[3]</sup>. The flame in hell will never die and it is no doubt a horrible and scary place where there is filled with terror, desperation and torture. Corresponding to that, Golding depicted a similar scene. Jack set fire to burn up the forest to find Ralph out. The blaze was burning out of control very quickly, and the roar of the forest rose to thunder, and finally "the whole island was shuddering with flame"<sup>[1]</sup>. It cut Ralph's path for escaping and burned up all the fruit trees, and even the author was worried about them—"the fire must be almost at the fruit tree—what would they eat tomorrow?"<sup>[1]</sup> What's worse, the hell also suggests the evil power exceeds the good side, in a cruel way. Simon who tries to recall the children's ration back and Peggy who wants to save modern civilization are put to death. When Roger kills Piggy, he, "with a sense of delirious abandonment, leaned all his weight on the lever"<sup>[1]</sup>. Compared with his previous behavior, he has never been conditioned "by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins"<sup>[1]</sup>. They literally destroy the Garden of the Eden; murder the morality, kindness, ethic, democracy; witness the degradation of humanity. It is also a warning for people in the real world that if we can't recognize our situation correctly and realize the dark side in us, we will also run the world and convert it into the hell.

### **3. BEAST: FROM A SNAKE TO THE DEAD PIG**

## **HEAD**

### **3.1 Snake**

The first appearance of beast is an image of a snake. A boy whose face "was blotted by a mulberry-colored birthmark" claims that he saw "a snake-thing"<sup>[1]</sup>. When it comes to snake, we always think of Satan. In Bible, it tempts Adam and Eva to eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and makes them stay away from The Garden of Eden forever. As a result, the snake becomes the prototype symbol as the antithesis of God. With the cunning spirit, it is considered to be the root of evil in Christian culture. As for this novel, the snake actually is the trigger of the divergence between Jack and Ralph. To answer the little boy's confusion and calm down other boys, Jack wants to clarify it with hunting, while Ralph prefers to respond to it with ration by stating that "You couldn't have a beastie, a snake-thing, on an island this size, you only get them in big countries, like Africa, or India"<sup>[1]</sup>. This is the first divergence between them and it also marks the start of the fight between evil and conscious, savage and civil, hell and Eden.

Apart from that, the snake also induces dark side from children. The second time the snake appears is in chapter three, when Jack and Ralph are arguing about which is more important between hunting and building shelters. Both Ralph and Jack have a kind of feeling of the snake's existence. Notice that Jack's description is so frightening but provoking: "when you're hunting, not when you're getting fruit, of course, but when you're on your own..... if you're hunting sometimes you catch yourself feelings as if.... you're not hunting, but—being hunted, as if something's behind you all the time in the jungle"<sup>[1]</sup>. The fact is, they could get enough food on this island and they are not necessarily to do hunting, so what they really want is not food, not meat, not pork, but the different as well as exciting feelings of killing. The snake actually represents the desire which is hidden deeply inside human being to release their evil, savageness and cruelty, and hunting activity serves such function.

### **3.2 Monster from the sea**

In chapter five, the snake has a new reference, the monster from the sea. With every appearance of the

snake, the children's worries as well as new fears are elevated, and the wildness together with evil in their hearts are gradually released. Finally, when children get their first prey and miss the ship to come back to the civil society, the snake becomes bigger and bigger, more and more powerful, finally as the monster from the sea. As is described in Bible, "In that day the Lord, with his great and strong and cruel sword, will send punishment on Leviathan, the quick-moving snake, and on Leviathan, the twisted snake"<sup>[17]</sup>. Leviathan is the furious sea monster and as the opposite to the God's side, equaled with snakes, demons, Satan. It provides a common metaphor prototype of the devil in Western literature. Corresponding to that, Jack declaimed the dying out of civil and the growing of savage by saying that "Bollocks to the rules! We're strong--we hunt! If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat—!"<sup>[1]</sup> The evil inside people's hearts is further stimulated.

### 3.3 The lord of the flies

Both the snake and the monster from the sea are fictional. Any evidences of them are unclear and unconvincing, and all of the fear as well as disturbance are actually from imagination. However, in chapter six, the image of monster is actualized by the body of a dead pilot. The pilot could be seen as a representative of the modern society and his death suggests the death of civilization, ration and science in this island. However, the real beast is actually Beelzebub, which is "a prince of demons of Assyrian or Hebrew descent, who is later appropriated by Christians. He is a Lord of the Flies, an idol for unclean beings; He is what all devils are: an embodiment of the lusts and cruelties which possess his worshipers and of peculiar power among the Philistines, the unenlightened, fearful herd"<sup>[17]</sup>, emerging as a image of dead pig head and it reveals its existence in every human being: "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?"<sup>[1]</sup>. With giving the dead pig head as a gift to the "beast" and murdering Simon as well as Piggy, God was replaced by devil demon in this island. Satan's temptation gains success and violence, crime, guilt come to an upper hand as a consequence. From hunting as a way for evil desire to killing people for morbid happiness, children go

through a process of alienation and degradation. All the evil are elicited by the terror for the unknown. In the beginning, that little boy's claim may just a nightmare, but it becomes larger and larger, more and more real, more and more frightening in the following days. On the other hand, those kind of ignorance also refers to not knowing ourselves, especially the evil side in us. Children couldn't resist the temptation of wicked mind, and they only end up degrading into a savagery.

### 4. Conclusion

As is analyzed above, obviously, Golding uses some figures and stories from Bible, especially the story of Eden and Eve. Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden to the living world because they eat the forbidden fruit, and it is the called original sin. As a result, human beings, as offspring of Adam and Eve, are also born to be wicked. If they lose the constraint from civil and they can't see the evil side in them clearly, they will fall victim to original sin, to evil and to Satan, and they will be expelled from the Garden of Eden to a chaotic, violent world as a result. As is Golding said, "Human beings are depraved creatures, he is controlled by the original sin, his nature is evil, and his situation is dangerous"<sup>[18]</sup>.

Although cruel spots are depicted, Golding also suggests a possible positive development for not only this novel, but also for all human beings. In the end of Lord of the Flies, children are rescued by an officer and it is also served as a metaphor that all human beings could be redeemed. Through Frye's research, all the Biblical stories have a U-shaped narrative structure which means characters fall into disasters and misery, followed by repentance, and then are saved to a level almost the equivalent of the falling height. Golding adapted similar structure. The last cry refers to the repentance: when Ralph began to sob, "infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too"<sup>[1]</sup>. But he left the almost all the right-side part in blank. After all the degradation and corruption, even a descent to savages, children could still be saved. It provides profound thoughts for people that if human beings are well awareness of their evil and sin, there is still hope for them to be redeemed. The way of digging up ourselves could be

horrible but it is a necessary experience.

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