Simon

DONALD R. SPANGLER

In *Lord of the Flies* the character Simon has about him a general aura of saintliness. Critics have suggested that Simon is a Christ figure. And William Golding, on the artist's part, has said that he intended to present a Christ figure in the novel, intimating that Simon is the character he meant so to present. Accordingly, it might be of value to examine what textual evidence there is to document the function of Simon as a Christ or "saint" in *Lord of the Flies.*

Even before identified by name Simon is introduced as the choir boy who had fainted, an oblique bit of characterization that, in retrospect, is seen to have impressed upon the reader the hallucinatory, and hence, mystical-religious proclivities of a boy who is subject to "spells." His name, when we are given it, reveals in its etymology the distinguishing "attunedness" of the mystic—Simon, "the hearkening." And the Mother Goose appellative, *simple,* hints of the "holy idiot" folk-type.

Simon is skinny, a trait that, in a child, suggests the adult correlative of ascetic self-abnegation. A "vivid little boy," his face "glows," radiant after the manner of nimbus and halo. Jungle buds rejected by the others because inedible, Simon's religious imagination sees as "candles." (The buds open at night into aromatic white flowers, whose scent—incense prayer—and color—white-innocence—confirm the value that he singularly had sensed them to have.) And when the lethargic Piggy fails to help gather fire wood, Simon defends him to the others by observing that the fire had been started with Piggy's glasses, that Piggy had "helped that way," a ratiocination on Simon's part the casuistry of which is surely offset by its overriding compassion.

In the scene in which Simon "suffers the little children to come unto him," Golding's description unmistakably evokes the Biblical accounts of Christ amid the bread-hungry masses:

Then, amid the roar of bees in the afternoon sunlight, Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach, pulled off the choicest from up in the foliage, passed them back down to the endless, outstretched hands. When he had satisfied them he paused and looked round.

In this passage and elsewhere Simon's abstinence from eating meat contributes to the impression of his saintliness, particularly since the novel implies that the hunt for meat as food disguises the bloodlust to kill for killing's sake, and further, that carnivorousness is linked with carnality (by the symbolic coitus of the sow killing). As a repeated object of ridicule, snickered over and laughed at, Simon's predicament recalls the New Testament details of the centurions' mocking of Jesus. And as Golding has pointed out, the Biblical temptation of Christ has its parallel in *Lord of the Flies,* in the confrontation between the boy and the "beast," between Simon and the sow's head, which tries to while him into complacency.

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1 This article was written for this volume.
3 The buds also appear in Ballantyne's *The Coral Island,* but significant here is the reception of them by everyone but Simon.
4 Compare E. L. Epstein, "Notes on *Lord of the Flies,*" p. 301 in this volume, and further, Golding's own remarks in the interview with James Keating, p. 216 in this volume.—Eds.
To Ralph, Simon prophesies that, "You'll get back where you came from," and by excluding himself from the predicted rescue, prophesies in that same breath his own fate, not to be rescued. Not to be rescued is not necessarily to die, but the attendant analogues being what they are, there seems to be a clear correspondence between Simon's foresight and that of Christ, as accounts hold Christ to have anticipated the imminence of his 'hour.'

Images of Gethsemane and Golgotha amass in the description of Simon's agony in his thicket sanctum, transexxed by the impaled head—the apparition of the beast in the forest that induces in Simon his apprehension of the beast in man's heart, the boy-mystic's vision, to paraphrase Richard Wilbur, of how much we are the beast that prowls our woods. The incidents of Simon's kneeling and sweating accord directly with the story of Gethsemane; moreover, Golding's description reinforces those associations by half raising popular pictorial renderings of the person of Jesus and of the Agony in the Garden: Simon kneeling in an "arrow of sun," with "head tilted slightly up," sweat running from his "long, coarse hair." (The deft advantage to which Golding here puts calendar-art graphics is noteworthy.)

As the thicket is the setting for incidents that recall Gethsemane, it is the setting also for events that evoke images of Golgotha. Simon falls, in accord with gospel accounts of Jesus' ascent to the cross, and losing consciousness, regains it only after shedding blood, the nosebleed of the boy analogous to the lance-wounding of Jesus in the details of the crucifixion.

It is as sacrificial victim, however, that Simon most clearly emerges as a Christ figure. A lad whose feet "left prints in the soil" (the dirt-road treks of the teaching Master?), he is described as "burned by the sun," not tanned to gold like the other boys, but burnt, offering-like. When, after he has received the revelation that the "beast," the "thing" really to fear, is man's nature, it is with Christ-like resignation to inevitability ("What else is there to do?" / "Let Thy will be done.") that Simon sets out to discover what the "beast on the mountain" really is, since it is not a thing to fear. When he finds the body of the chutist and disentangles the lines, Simon is seen as min-

istering to the dead, committing the body to the earth so that the processes of decomposition can complete the return "to earth." However, because the wind takes hold of the chute and carries off the corpse, Simon becomes the exorcist from the island of the false menace, the mistakenly feared dead man. (Golding recollects in the Keating interview—after explaining that his memory of the novel might be blurred—that Simon releases the body "so that the wind can [italics mind] blow this dead thing away from the island," implying intention on Simon's part.) In any event, Simon's Christ-role is confirmed when, following his discovery that the "beast on the mountain" is only the dead airman, Simon comes down from the mountain—the "heights of truth"—to save the boys from their false fears and to turn their sights inward upon their own behavior, sharing the knowledge that, while the dead are not to be feared, the live are. (It might better be said that, while the dead are not to be feared, the killed are.)

The responsibility for the martyrdom of Simon, like the responsibility for that of Jesus, can be ascribed either to secular or sacred interests. At first the tribe maintains that it was not Simon they had killed, but the terrorizing "beast," and Simon is made a scapegoat, the capital-punishment of whom satisfies the established state (the tribe) by eliminating a supposed enemy. Later on the boys admit that it was not the "beast" that they had killed, but Simon, rationalizing that the human sacrifice will finally appease the "beast," which they have been placating with pigs' heads; and Simon is made a human offering, the immolation of whom assuages the established god (the "beast"), the priests of which the "celebrants" of the sacrificial feast become.

However, the analogue between Golding's Simon and Christianity's Saviour stops short of soteriology. Only Simon has hearkened. From his life and death no help accrues to that microcosm of humanity, on its island Earth in a space of sea, lost, and in need to be "saved." Upon Golding's Simon Peter no church is founded, no mechanism for salvation. In fact, the implication of the novel is that the beast in man can never be recognized because it causes
imagined “beasts” forever to be misidentified and slain before identified correctly, so that, unrecognized, the beast endures. The beast is man’s inability to recognize his own responsibility for his own self-destruction.

Of course, what constitutes self-destruction the centuries have quarreled over. (What “good” is really evil, what “evil” really good? Does man destroy himself in being himself, or in trying not to be himself? What is his nature, for him to be guilty in response to, innocent in accord with, or guilty in accord with and innocent in response to? The physics and metaphysics of “self” produce the paradoxes of guilt: does man react to a basically innocent nature with misguided guilt, or react to a basically guilty nature with unrecognizing innocence?) Apollo and Dionysus still wrestle. Nevertheless, whatever in man is to blame, what is to blame is something in man. It is the shifting by man of responsibility onto “beasts” outside himself, his refusal to confront his own nature, that the sow’s head symbolizes and Golding excoriates.

What finally happens to Simon the saviour the four paragraphs closing Chapter Nine relate, in detailing the disposition of Simon’s body. These paragraphs emphasize the material assimilation of the corpse back into the material universe. It is true that the last glimpse Golding provides of the body is that of its drifting “out to sea,” in the ancient symbolic act of the soul’s “crossing over,” but the absence of evidence that Simon is to have a conscious afterlife, that he will remain in any way intact as a person, makes the decorporealization seem very permanent. The body glows ironically, with the luminescence of scavengers, metamorphosing it into the subhuman world of ragged claws. Even as Simon’s body is seen, at the close of Chapter Nine, to be a “silver form under the steadfast constellations” (the body to disintegrate, the stars to prevail), the intimations of immortality are quite evanescent. The romantic metaphor of its becoming a star obviates the urgent practicalities of the Christian’s “getting into heaven.” Simon’s soul (breath-spirit) leaves him with a last gruesome “plop.” At best the prospect seems to be the certainly non-Christian one of Simon’s disembodied spirit’s remaining forever disembodied. The drift of these paragraphs of Lord of the Flies seems to counter the Christian anticipation of an eventual hylozoic reunion of human body and soul. And though the reader’s sympathies yearn that the beauty of Simon’s spirit preclude its extinction, that beauty in the end only makes the oblivion Simon comes to more poignant.
It and Innocents Abroad. He swallowed these almost as completely as he had done Nat the Naturalist. The humour of these books and their irreverence towards many accepted things encouraged his own scepticism. It was an attitude he was already adopting toward the society of 4,000 people around him. In addition he had a father who welcomed criticism of any institution under the sun, though any deviation in personal conduct produced a muted rumble of thunder.

The Fables of William Golding

JOHN PETER

A useful critical distinction may be drawn between a fiction and a fable. Like most worthwhile distinctions it is often easy to detect, less easy to define. The difficulty arises because the clearest definition would be in terms of an author's intentions, his pre-verbal procedures, and these are largely inscrutable and wholly imprecise. For a definition that is objective and specific we are reduced to an "as if," which is at best clumsy and at worst perhaps delusive.

The distinction itself seems real enough. Fables are those narratives which leave the impression that their purpose was anterior, some initial thesis or contention which they are apparently concerned to embody and express in concrete terms. Fables always give the impression that they were preceded by the conclusion which it is their function to draw, though of course it is doubtful whether any author foresees his conclusions as fully as this, and unlikely that his work would be improved if he did. The effect of a fiction is very different. Here the author's aim, as it appears from what he has written, is evidently to present a more or less faithful reflection of the complexities, and often of the irrelevancies, of life as it is actually experienced. Such conclusions as he may draw—he is under much less compulsion to draw them than a writer of fables—do not appear to be anterior.

1 This article first appeared in the Kenyon Review, 19 (Autumn, 1957), pp. 577–92. It is reprinted in part here through the courtesy of the Kenyon Review and the author.
but on the contrary take their origin from the fiction itself, in which they are latent, and occasionally unrecognized. It is a matter of approach, so far as that can be gauged. Fictions make only a limited attempt to generalize and explain the experience with which they deal, since their concern is normally with the uniqueness of this experience. Fables, starting from a skeletal abstract, must flesh out that abstract with the appearances of “real life” in order to render it interesting and cogent. 1984 is thus an obvious example of a fable, while The Rainbow is a fiction. Orwell and Lawrence, in these books, are really moving in opposite directions. If their movements could be geometrically projected to exaggerate and expose each other, Lawrence’s would culminate in chaotic reportage, Orwell’s in stark allegory.

... [The distinction] has a particular value for the critic whose concern is with novels, in that it assists him in locating and defining certain merits which are especially characteristic of novels and certain faults to which they are especially prone. Both types, the fiction and the fable, have their own particular dangers. The danger that threatens a fiction is simply that it will become confused, so richly faithful to the complexity of human existence as to lose all its shape and organization... The danger that threatens a fable is utterly different, in fact the precise opposite. When a fable is poor—geometrically projected again—it is bare and diagrammatic, insufficiently clothed in its garment of actuality, and in turn its appeal is extra-aesthetic and narrow. Satires like Animal Farm are of this kind.

It will be said that any such distinction must be a neutral one, and that the best novels are fictions which have managed to retain their due share of the fable’s coherence and order. No doubt this is true. But it also seems to be true that novels can go a good deal farther, without serious damage, in the direction of fictions than they can in the direction of fable, and this suggests that fiction is a much more congenial mode for the novelist than fable can ever be. The trouble with the mode of fable is that it is constricting. As soon as a novelist has a particular end in view the materials from which he may choose begin to shrink, and to dispose themselves toward that end. ... The fact is that a novelist depends ultimately not only on the richness of his materials but on the richness of his interests too; and fable, by tying these to a specific end, tends to reduce both. Even the most chaotic fiction will have some sort of emergent meaning, provided it is a full and viable reflection of the life from which it derives, if only because the unconscious preoccupations of the novelist will help to impart such meaning to it, drawing it into certain lines like iron filings sprinkled in a magnetic field. Fables, however, can only be submerged in actuality with difficulty, and they are liable to bob up again like corks, in all their plain explicitness. It may even be true to say that they are best embodied in short stories, where economy is vital and “pointlessness” (except for its brevity) comparatively intolerable.

Lord of the Flies, which appeared in 1954, is set on an imaginary South Sea island, and until the last three pages the only characters in it are boys. They have apparently been evacuated from Britain, where an atomic war is raging, and are accidentally stranded on the island without an adult supervisor. The administrative duties of their society (which includes a number of “littluns,” aged about six) devolve upon their elected leader, a boy of twelve named Ralph, who is assisted by a responsible, unattractive boy called Piggy, but as time passes an independent party grows up, the “hunters,” led by an angular ex-choir leader named Jack Merridew. This party, soon habituated to the shedding of animal blood, recedes farther and farther from the standards of civilization which Ralph and Piggy are striving to preserve, and before very long it is transformed into a savage group of outlaws with a costume and a ritual of their own. In the course of one of their dance-feasts, drunk with tribal excitement, they are responsible for killing the one individual on the island who has a real insight into the problems of their lives, a frail boy called Simon, subject to fainting fits, and after this more or less intentional sacrifice they lose all sense of restraint and become a band of criminal marauders,
threat to everyone on the island outside their own tribe. Piggy is murdered by their self constituted witch doctor and torturer, the secretive and sinister Roger, and Ralph is hunted by them across the island like the pigs they are accustomed to kill. Before they can kill and decapitate him a naval detachment arrives and takes charge of all the children who have survived.

It is obvious that this conclusion is not a concession to readers who require a happy ending—only an idiot will suppose that the book ends happily—but a deliberate device by which to throw the story into focus. With the appearance of the naval officer the bloodthirsty hunters are instantly reduced to a group of painted urchins led by “a little boy who wore the remains of an extraordinary black cap,” yet the reduction cannot expunge the knowledge of what they have done and meant to do. The abrupt return to childhood, to insignificance, underscores the argument of the narrative: that Evil is inherent in the human mind itself, whatever innocence may cloak it, ready to put forth its strength as soon as the occasion is propitious. This is Golding’s theme, and it takes on a frightful force by being presented in juvenile terms, in a setting that is twice deliberately likened to the sunny Coral Island of R. M. Ballantyne. The boys’ society represents, in embryo, the society of the adult world, their impulses and convictions are those of adults incisively abridged, and the whole narrative is a powerfully ironic commentary on the nature of Man, an accusation leveled at us all. There are no excuses for complacency in the fretful conscientiousness of Ralph, the leader, nor in Piggy’s anxious commonsense, nor are the miscreants made to seem exceptional. When he first encounters a pig, Jack Merridew is quite incapable of harming it, “because of the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh,” and even the delinquent Roger is at first restrained by the taboos of “parents and school and policemen and the law.” Strip these away and even Ralph might be a hunter: it is his duties as a leader that save him, rather than any intrinsic virtue in himself. Like any orthodox moralist Golding insists that Man is a fallen creature, but he refuses to hypostatize Evil or to locate it in a dimension of its own. On the contrary Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies, is Roger and Jack and you and I, ready to declare himself as soon as we permit him to.

The intentness with which this thesis is developed leaves no doubt that the novel is a fable, a deliberate translation of a proposition into the dramatized terms of art, and as usual we have to ask ourselves how resourceful and complete the translation has been, how fully the thesis has been absorbed and rendered implicit in the tale as it is told. A writer of fables will heat his story at the fire of his convictions, but when he has finished, the story must glow apart, generating its own heat from within. Golding himself provides a criterion for judgment here, for he offers a striking example of how complete the translation of a statement into plastic terms can be. Soon after their arrival the children develop an irrational suspicion that there is a predatory beast at large on the island. This has of course no real existence, as Piggy for one points out, but to the littluns it is almost as tangible as their castles in the sand, and most of the older boys are afraid they may be right. One night when all are sleeping there is an air battle ten miles above the sea and a parachuted man, already dead, comes drifting down through the darkness, to settle among the rocks that crown the island’s only mountain. There the corpse lies unnoticed, rising and falling with the gusts of the winds, its harness snagged on the bushes and its parachute dis tended and collapsing. When it is discovered and the frightened boys mistake it for the beast, the sequence is natural and convincing, yet the implicit statement is quite unmistakable too. The incomprehensible threat which has hung over them is, so to speak, identified

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3 As an illustration of this argument, note Ralph’s actions when the boys attack Robert as the substitute pig, p. 116, and when Simon is killed as the beast, p. 156. —Eds.
and explained: a nameless figure who is Man himself, the boys' own natures, the something that all humans have in common.

This is finely done and needs no further comment, but unhappily the explicit comment has already been provided, in Simon's halting explanation of the beast's identity: "What I mean is... maybe it's only us." And a little later we are told that "However Simon thought of the beast, there rose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick." This over-explicitness is my main criticism of what is in many ways a work of real distinction, and for two reasons it appears to be a serious one. In the first place the fault is precisely that which any fable is likely to incur: the incomplete translation of its thesis into its story so that much remains external and extrinsic, the teller's assertion rather than the tale's enactment before our eyes. In the second place the fault is a persistent one, and cannot easily be discounted or ignored. It appears in expository annotations like this, when Ralph and Jack begin to quarrel:

The two boys faced each other. There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense.

Less tolerably, it obtrudes itself in almost everything—thought, action, and hallucination—that concerns the clairvoyant Simon, the "batty" boy who understands "mankind's essential illness," who knows that Ralph will get back to where he came from, and who implausibly converses with the Lord of the Flies. Some warrant is provided for this clairvoyance in Simon's mysterious illness, but it is inadequate. The boy remains unconvincing in himself, and his presence constitutes a standing invitation to the author to avoid the trickiest problems of his method, by commenting too boldly on the issues he has raised. Any writer of fables must find it hard to ignore an invitation of this kind once it exists. Golding has not been able to ignore it, and the blemishes that result impose some serious, though not decisive, limitations on a fiery and disturbing story.
condition, with which a peruser of the daily newspaper should already be familiar. The ultimate purpose of the novel is not to leave its readers in a state of paralytic horror. The intention is certainly to impress upon them man's, any man's, miraculous ingenuity in perpetrating evil; but it is also to impress upon them the gift of a saving recognition which, to Golding, is apparently the only saving recognition. An orthodox phrase for this recognition is the "conviction of sin," an expression which grates on many contemporary ears, and yet one which the author seemingly does not hold in derision.

Lecturing at Johns Hopkins University in the spring of 1962, Golding said that *Lord of the Flies* is a study of sin. And he is a person who uses words with precision. Sin is not to be confused with crime, which is a transgression of human law; it is instead a transgression of divine law. Nor does Golding believe that the Jacks and Rogers are going to be reconstructed through social legislation eventuating in some form of utopianism—he and Conrad's Mr. Kurtz are at one in their evaluation of societal laws which, they agree, exercise external restraint but have at best a slight effect on the human heart. Golding is explicit: "The theme [of *Lord of the Flies*]," he writes, "is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable."

William Golding's story is as old as the written word. The figure of the Lord of the Flies, of Beelzebub, is one of the primary archetypes of the Western world. The novel is the parable of fallen man. But it does not close the door on that man; it entreats him to know himself and his Adversary, for he cannot do combat against an unrecognized force, especially when it lies within him.

Is Golding Calvinistic?¹

*A more optimistic interpretation of the symbolism found in Lord of the Flies*

THOMAS MARCELLUS COSKREN, O. P.

In an issue of *America* last winter, two critics gave their interpretations of William Golding's remarkably successful *Lord of the Flies.*² While the approach of each of these critics differed, Mr. Kearns being concerned with the socio-political implications of the work and Fr. Egan with the theological, both reached the same conclusion: *Lord of the Flies* presents the Calvinist view of man as a creature essentially depraved. As one of the professors who has placed the novel on his required reading list, I should like to raise a dissenting voice.

While I am prepared to admit that *Lord of the Flies* is hardly the most optimistic book that has appeared in recent times, I find it difficult to accept the conclusion reached by Fr. Egan and Mr. Kearns. Both, it seems to me, have left too much of the novel unexplained; indeed, their view of the work seems to render important sections inexplicable. If Golding has presented man as essentially depraved,

¹ This article is reprinted with permission from *America*, the National Catholic Weekly Review, 920 Broadway, New York City. It appeared in the issue of July 6, 1963, Volume 109, pp. 18–22.
why are three of his four major characters good people? Granted that Ralph, Piggy and Simon possess a limited goodness, the condition of all men, they are decidedly boys of high purpose, who use good means to achieve their ends. Jack may strike many as the perfect symbol of essentially depraved man, but he is only one out of four. Three-to-one seems a rather impressive ratio favoring at least a limited goodness in the human community.

Moreover, if Golding hesitates to view evil in a religious framework,” as Mr. Kearns says, why is Simon, on the symbolic level, so cleverly identified with Christ? In fact, this identification is so obvious that one is tempted to agree with Kearns’ statement about Lord of the Flies being “too neatly symbolic, too patently artistic.” Certainly, the very presence of a Christ-figure in the novel, a presence which pervades the work, implies some kind of religious framework.

Again, if man were not good or innocent at some time in the long history of the race, why should Ralph at the end of the novel weep “for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy”? Ralph weeps for an innocence that man once possessed; he laments the loss of goodness, and this is not some vague goodness, but the palpable goodness in his “true, wise friend.”

Thus far, the objections I have offered to the view presented by Mr. Kearns and Fr. Egan concern only the characters in Lord of the Flies. These objections are serious enough, but there are others which demand examination by the critic. If the world into which these characters have been placed is, as Fr. Egan states, a universe that is “a cruel and irrational chaos,” why does Golding indicate, with almost obsessive attention to detail, the pattern, the order of the island world which the boys inhabit? Throughout the novel we find natural descriptions which use metaphors from the world of manufacturing.

In other words, the universe of Lord of the Flies is one that has been made, created. The novel is filled with phrases like the following: “a great platform of pink granite”; “a criss-cross pattern of trunks”; “the palms . . . made a green roof”; “the incredible lamps of stars.” Further, Golding’s adjectives indicate an ordered universe. This indication is especially apparent after the terrible storm accompanying Simon’s death. In this section he uses such words as “angular” and “steadfast” to describe the constellations. If William Golding’s universe is “a cruel and irrational chaos,” he has certainly chosen most inappropriate words to describe it.

Basically, it seems to me, the real difficulty with the interpretation of Lord of the Flies offered by Fr. Egan and Mr. Kearns is its failure to treat the novel as a whole. William Golding’s novel is not anti-human; it is anti-Rousseau. It does not portray human nature as such; it presents human nature as infected with the romantic chimera of inevitable human progress, a progress which will be achieved because of the innate nobility and innocence of the human species. In theological terms, which are perhaps the most accurate critical tools for explaining this novel, Lord of the Flies is not so much Manichean as it is anti-Pelagian. A more detailed analysis should help to show this anti-Pelagian character of the work.

Lord of the Flies begins with all the paraphernalia of the romantic, and sentimental, preconceptions that owe so much to Rousseau’s social philosophy. In the first chapter we are presented with a group of children, the contemporary world’s symbol of innocence. They are placed on a tropical island, an earthly paradise, Rousseau’s habitat for the “noble savage.” But these boys are not Adam-figures; they are not innocent. Each of them, in varying degrees, reflects the influence of the serpent—which, by the way, is introduced in the first chapter when Ralph unfastens “the snake-clasp of his belt.” Here begins the terrible irony that runs through the whole novel. Romantic man thinks he can rid himself of evil merely by taking off his clothes, the symbol of civilization and its effects.

In this superficially idyllic community, made up of refugees from an atomic war, we discover Golding’s four major characters: Ralph, Piggy,
Jack and Simon. It is with these characters that Golding’s symbolism becomes somewhat more complex than either Mr. Kears or Fr. Egan suggests. *Lord of the Flies* is essentially a fable about contemporary man and contemporary ideas. Thus, Ralph is not only the symbol of the decent, sensible parliamentarian; he is also the figure of an idea: the abstract concept of democratic government. The same double role is filled by the other characters: Jack is at once the dictator and the concept of dictatorship; Piggy is the intellectual, with all his powers and deficiencies, and representative of the Enlightenment or scientific method. Finally, Simon is the mystic and poet, who is also a Christ-figure and thus the symbol of religious faith. The symbolism of *Lord of the Flies*, therefore, functions on a number of levels, and it seems to be an injustice to Golding’s extraordinary dexterity in handling these multiple levels to reduce them to one level, that of universal human nature.

Golding suggests the complexity of these symbolic figures in their physical descriptions. Ralph is “the boy with fair hair [who has] a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil.” On the literal level we have the good boy, the “solid citizen.” As such, Ralph engages our sympathies. And on the most obvious symbolic level he still has our sympathies, for he represents the decent, sensible parliamentarian, the political ideal of the Western world.

But on another, and deeper, level Golding has introduced an ironic twist. The symbolic value Ralph possesses as the abstract concept of the democratic process is presented as a challenge to the reader. If, as the Western world seems to believe, the democratic process of government is the best devised by man throughout his history, why doesn’t it work always and everywhere? It is at this level that Golding suggests symbolically the inadequacy, not the depravity, of the solely human; it is at this level that he directs his devastatingly ironic commentary on the Rousseauian myth of the general will and its unproved presupposition of the natural goodness of the human species.

In effect, Golding’s modern fable puts Rousseau’s social contract to the test: *Lord of the Flies* takes man back to the primitive condition of things, which the French social reformer had advocated as the one sure way of restoring man to his proper dignity. Then it shows that, far from being naturally good, man has some type of defect for which civilization is not responsible. Rousseau’s social philosophy fails the test, and the essentially confused notion of nature which Rousseau bequeathed to the contemporary world is exposed for the fraud that it is.

Moreover, the irony implicit in Ralph’s inadequacy is extended to the other characters, either as they participate in the same inadequacy or as they question symbolically the solution offered for human ills by Ralph’s faith in Rousseauian democracy. Piggy participates in the “grand design” of restoration. As a figure of the Enlightenment, he cannot accept the extremes of romanticism, and he votes for Ralph only “grudgingly”; but he will use the more popular romantic concept of government and will try to direct it. Yet, even with his discerning rational assessment of the problem of forming a government for the refugees, his inherent weaknesses are evident. Ultimately, he is destroyed, not because his intellectual gifts are depraved, but because he falls into the mistaken belief that they are sufficient unto themselves. Piggy is intelligent enough, for example, to question Ralph’s blind faith in rescue by the military (a scathing commentary on the Western democracies’ current worship at the shrine of Cape Canaveral), but he remains blind to the limitations of his own reason.

Jack and Simon, on the other hand, are not taken in by the Rousseauian solution. Jack’s approach to the human condition is much too twisted for even the remotest comparison with the idealism, fanciful though it is, implicit in Rousseau; Simon’s view of humanity is so penetrated with realistic self-appraisal that he transcends the idealism of the French reformer. Jack descends to the subhuman; Simon soars to the superhuman. While Ralph and Piggy exemplify ironically the “noble savage,” Jack and Simon provide the necessary counterpoint; Jack exploits the savagery, and Simon explores the nobility.

And it is probably through the figure of Jack that William Golding pronounces his severest condemnation of the romantic myth of
human progress. For, in the last analysis, it is the dictator who has benefited most from Rousseau’s social view. When man’s efforts toward progress and eventual fulfillment, however altruistic his motivation, proceed from sloppy thinking, then brute force takes over to direct the course of progress and subverts even the good in human nature to its own destructive ends.

Yet, Golding is not interested merely in the altruism or the subversion; between these two forces in contemporary civilization he places the figure of Simon. He introduces him to the reader in somewhat melodramatic fashion: the boy faints. In this, the first of Simon’s actions, we have a possible ironic twist on Swinburne’s famous line: “Thou hast conquer’d, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath.” It is obvious from Simon’s subsequent history that he is a Christ-figure; and the romantic view of humanity proposed by Rousseau has so infiltrated every aspect of life in the contemporary world that even Christ is seen through the rose-colored glasses of sentimentality, which is the logical and real successor to romanticism.

Thus, the Christ of Lord of the Flies is the “pale Galilean”; yet it is this same weak Christ who, in the first act he performs, forces a concession from Jack, and the choir boys are allowed to rest. The irony is evident: even a weak Christ is more than a strong dictator. Further, when Simon announces his name (and his name has the strongest biblical overtones), Jack says: “We’ve got to decide about being rescued.” Immediately, Simon is linked, however vaguely, with the idea of salvation.

After the boys have elected Ralph as leader by “this toy of voting,” Jack, Simon and Ralph begin exploring the mountain. This section of the novel is crucial, for it is here that Golding gives his abbreviated ironical summary of the romantic view of human progress. The passage needs analysis in depth (impossible in an article of this length), but it should be pointed out that Golding has chosen as explorers those who have dominated the history of man: the totalitarian, the parliamentarian and the mystic-poet. And, as is clear from the text, Simon is the realist of the triumvirate. When the boys examine the bushes on the mountain, Simon accepts them for what they are. Ralph and Jack are concerned only with how the buds can be used. That Golding’s figure of religious faith accepts reality as it is provides an interesting comment on the limited approaches of the parliamentarian and the dictator.

As we follow Simon through the novel, we discover that he is the mystic who separates himself from the others to ponder the mysteries of existence. Simon is the carpenter who continues building the shelters after the other boys have abandoned the work; Simon feeds the “littluns”; Simon encounters the beast in all its loathsomeness and does not succumb to the beast’s temptation to despair. This encounter is the boy’s Gethsemane: he comes face to face with evil, recognizes it for what it is, and, despite the agony and horror of the meeting, he is neither defeated nor intimidated by it. Immediately after he recovers consciousness, he ascends the mountain to free the dead pilot, whose parachute lines have become entangled in the rocks. In other words, Simon climbs the mountain to free “fallen man.”

He returns then to the boys to announce the good news; they need no longer fear the beast. But the group will not listen to him. Like the One in whose place he stands symbolically, Simon is murdered during a religious festival—the diabolical liturgy of the pig. His death occurs while the island world cowers under the lash of a gigantic storm. And it is only after Simon has actually died that the dead man in the parachute is finally freed and washed out to sea, the sea which is Golding’s symbol of mystery, not chaos.

Finally, Simon has his symbolic hour of glorification: his body is surrounded by “moonbeam-bodied creatures with fiery eyes”; gleaming in this unearthly phosphorescence, he is carried gently out to sea.

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4 Simon’s martyrdom, however, indicates that the saint or Christ-like personage (in spite of his spiritual strength) fails to rescue man from the nightmare of history —Eds.
And it is difficult not to recognize the hint of a resurrection motif here, for the pattern is that of the hero carried through the waters to his apotheosis.

*Lord of the Flies*, as I have suggested, is not an optimistic novel, but at least it is pessimistic about the right things. It states quite clearly that the time has come for the Western world to abandon its fantastic belief in the Rousseauvian concept of the natural goodness of the human species, which goodness must lead inevitably to the total perfection of the race. It shows what happens to scientific man, when he trusts only in the activity of his unaided reason. It castigates the Western democracies for their blind acceptance of salvation through militarism. It pictures the tragic destruction of any society which nourishes and exalts the dictator. Ultimately, it presents the awesome spectacle of a world which, not satisfied with murdering Simon, continues to neglect the significance of his sacrifice.

But William Golding’s world is not merely pessimistic. There is goodness in his characters; there is order in his universe. However, like all authors who have tried their hand at the intellectual exercise we call fable, he wants to teach man some hard truths about his own nature. In the complexity and ambiguity of a highly elaborated symbolism, he has reminded modern man of the fact of original sin. This is a reminder that we all need every so often. In a later novel, *The Inheritors*, Golding places the following ironic words in the mouth of one character: “People understand each other.” *Lord of the Flies* answers: “Perhaps; but not well enough.”

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5 It might well be noted, however, that the goodness and the order are overcome in every instance. True, Ralph survives and he steps forward to announce himself to the “rescuer” as the leader, but the rescue is decidedly ironic; the boys are freed from primitive and childish militarism only by sophisticated adult militarism.—Eds.
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When an author consciously dramatizes Freudian theory—and dramatizes it successfully—only the imaginative re-creation of human behavior rather than the structure of ideas is apparent. In analyzing William Golding's Lord of the Flies, the critic should assume that Golding knows psychological literature, and must then attempt to show how an author's knowledge of theory can vitalize his prose and characterization. The plot itself is uncomplicated; it is simple, in fact, that one wonders how it so effortlessly absorbs the burden of meaning. During some unexplained man-made holocaust a plane, evacuating a group of children, crashes on the shore of a tropical island. All adults are conveniently killed. The narrative follows the children's gradual
return to the amorality of childhood, a non-innocence which makes them small savages. Or we might make the analogy to the childhood of races and compare the child to the primitive. Denied the sustaining and repressing authority of parents, church, and state, the boys form a new culture, the development of which reflects that of the genuine primitive society, evolving its gods and demons, its rituals and taboos, its whole social structure. On the level of pure narrative, the action proceeds from the gradual struggle between Ralph and Jack, the two eldest boys, for precedence. Consistent clusters of imagery imply that one boy is godlike, the other satanic—thus making a symbolic level of meaning by transforming narrative events into an allegorical struggle between the forces of Good and those of Evil. Ralph is the natural leader by virtue of his superior height, his superior strength, his superior beauty. His mild expression proclaims him "no devil." He possesses the symbol of authority, the conch, or sea shell, which the children use to assemble their miniature councils. Golding writes, "The being that had blown... [the conch] had sat waiting for them on the platform with the delicate thing balanced on his knees, was set apart." Jack, on the other hand, is described in completely antithetical terms; he is distinguished by his ugliness and his red hair, a traditional demonic attribute. He first appears as the leader of a church choir, which "creature-like" marches in two columns behind him. All members of the choir wear black; "their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks." Ralph initially blows the conch to discover how many children have escaped death in the plane crash. As Jack approaches with his choir from the "darkness of the forest," he cannot see Ralph, whose back is to the sun. The former is, symbolically, sun-blinded. These two are very obviously intended to recall God and the Devil, whose confrontation, in the history of Western religions, establishes the moral basis for all actions. But, as Freud reminds us, "metaphysics" becomes "metapsychology"; gods and devils are "nothing other than processes projected into the outer world." If Ralph is a projection of man's good impulses from which we derive the authority figures—whether god, king, or father—who establish the necessity for our valid ethical and social action, then Jack becomes an externalization of the evil instinctual forces of the unconscious; the allegorical has become the psychological.

The temptation is to regard the island on which the children are marooned as a kind of Eden, uncorrupted and Eveless. But the actions of the children negate any romantic assumptions about childhood innocence. Even though Golding himself momentarily becomes a victim of his Western culture and states at the end that Ralph wept for the "end of innocence," events have simply supported Freud's conclusion that no child is innocent. On a fourth level, Ralph is every man—or every child—and his body becomes the battleground where reason and instinct struggle, each to assert itself. For to regard Ralph and Jack as Good and Evil, as I do in the previous paragraph, is to ignore the role of the child Piggy, who in the child's world of make-believe is the outsider. Piggy's composite description not only manifests his difference from the other boys; it also reminds the reader of the stereotype image of the old man who has more-than-human wisdom: he is fat, inactive because asthmatic, and generally reveals a disinclination for physical labor. Because he is extremely nearsighted, he wears thick glasses—a further mark of his difference. As time passes, the hair of the other boys grows with abandon. "He was the only boy on the island whose hair never seemed to grow. The rest were shock-headed, but Piggy's hair still lay in wisps over his head as though baldness were his natural state and this imperfect covering

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3 P. 18. All page references are to this edition of Lord of the Flies and will hereafter be noted in parentheses in the text.


5 Ibid.
would soon go, like the velvet on a young stag's antlers" (p. 62). In these images of age and authority we have a figure reminiscent of the children's past—the father. Moreover, like the father he counsels common sense; he alone leavens with a reasonable gravity the constant exuberance of the others for play or for play at hunting. When they scamper off at every vague whim, he scornfully comments, "Like a pack of kids." Ungrammatically but logically he tries to allay the "littleuns" fear of a "beast." "Life is scientific, that's what it is. . . . I know there isn't no beast—not with claws and all that, I mean—but I know there isn't no fear, either" (p. 84). He has excessive regard for the forms of order: the conch must be held by a child before that child can speak at councils. When the others neglect responsibility, fail to build shelters, swim in the pools or play in the sand or hunt, allow the signal fire on the mountain to go out or get out of hand and burn up half the island, he seconds Ralph by admonishing the others vigorously and becomes more and more of a spoilspost who robs play of its illusions, like the adult who interrupts the game. Ralph alone recognizes Piggy's superior intelligence, but wavers between what he knows to be wise and the group acceptance his egocentricity demands. Finally, Piggy's role—as man's reasoning faculties and as a father—derives some of its complexity from the fact that the fire which the children foster and guard on the mountain in the hope of communicating with the adult world is lighted with his glasses. In classical mythology, after all, fire brought civilization—and, hence, repression—to man. As the hold of civilization weakens, the new community becomes more and more irrational, and its irrationality is marked by Piggy's progressive blindness. An accident following an argument between Ralph and Jack causes one of the lenses of Piggy's glasses to break. When the final breach between the two occurs and Piggy supports Ralph, his remaining lens is stolen in a night raid by Jack. This is a parody of the traditional fire theft, which was to provide light and warmth for mankind. After this event Piggy must be led by Ralph. When he is making his final plea for his glasses—reasoned as always—he is struck on the head by a rock and falls. "Piggy 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. 185). What Golding emphasizes here is the complete animality to which Piggy is reduced. His mind is destroyed; his body is subject to motor responses alone; he is "like a pig after it has been killed."

The history of the child Piggy on the island dramatizes in terms of the individual the history of the entire group. When they first assemble to investigate their plight, they treat their island isolation as a temporary phenomenon. They are, after all, still children, willing only to play games until they are interrupted by the action of parents, until the decisions of their elders take them from make-believe to the actuality of school or food or sleep; until they are rescued, as it were, from "play." This microcosm of the great world seems to them to be a fairy land.

A kind of glamour was spread over them and the scene and they were conscious of the glamour and made happy by it (p. 24).

The coral was scribbled in the sea as though a giant had bent down to reproduce the shape of the island in a flowing chalk line but tired before he had finished (p. 28).

"This is real exploring," said Jack. "I bet nobody's been here before" (p. 25).

Echoes and birds flew, white and pink dust floated, the forest further down shook as with the passage of an enraged monster: and then the island was still (p. 27).

They compare this reality which as yet they do not accept as reality to their reading experiences: it is Treasure Island or Coral Island or like pictures from their travel books. This initial reaction reaffirms the pattern of play which Johan Huizinga establishes in Homo Ludens. Its in its early stages their play has no cultural or moral function;

it is simply a "stepping out of real life into a temporary sphere of activity.""7 Ironically, the child of Lord of the Flies who thinks he is "only pretending" or that this is "only for fun" does not realize that his play is the beginning of the formation of a new society which has regressed to a primitive state, with all its emphasis upon taboo and communal action. What begins by being like other games in having a distinct "locality and duration"8 apart from ordinary life is—or becomes—reality. The spatial separation necessary for the make-believe of the game is represented first by the island. In this new world the playground is further narrowed: not only are their actions limited by the island, but also the gatherings of the children are described as a circle at several points, a circle from which Piggy is excluded:

For the moment the boys were a closed circuit of sympathy with Piggy outside (p. 20).

They became a circle of boys round a camp fire and even Piggy and Ralph were half-drawn in (p. 73).

Piggy approximates the spoilsport who "robs the play of its illusion,"9 who reminds them of space and time outside the charmed circle, who demands responsibility.

The games of the beginning of the novel have a double function: they, first of all, reflect the child’s attitude toward play as a temporary cessation from the activities imposed by the adult world; but, like the games played before the formation of civilization, they anticipate the ritual which reveals a developing society. So the children move from voluntary play to ritual, from "only pretending" to reality, from representation or dramatization to identification. The older strictures imposed by parents are soon forgotten—but every now and then a

momentary remembrance of past prohibitions causes restraint. One older child hides in order to throw stones at a younger one.

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 (p. 61).

Jack hesitates when, searching for meat, he raises his knife to kill his first pig.

The pause was only long enough for them to understand what an enormity the downward stroke would be. Then the piglet tore loose from the creepers and scurried into the undergrowth... .

"Why didn’t you—?"

They knew very well why he hadn’t: because of the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood (p. 29).

The younger children first, then gradually the older ones, like primitives in the childhood of races, begin to people the darkness of night and forest with spirits and demons which had previously appeared only in their dreams or fairy tales. Now there are no comforting mothers to dispel the terrors of the unknown. They externalize these fears into the figure of a "beast." Once the world "beast" is mentioned, the menace of the irrational becomes overt; name and thing become one. Simply to mention the dreaded creature is to incur its wrath. At one critical council when the first communal feeling begins to disintegrate, Ralph cries, "If only they could send us something grown-up... . a sign or something" (p. 95). And a sign does come from the outside. That night, unknown to the children, a plane shot down and its pilot parachutes dead to earth and is caught in the rocks on the mountain. It requires no more than the darkness of night together with the shadows of the forest vibrating in the signal fire to distort the tangled corpse with its expanding silk parachute.

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7 Ibid., p. 8.
8 Ibid., p. 9.
9 Ibid., p. 7.
into a demon that must be appeased. Ironically, the fire of communication does touch this object of the grown-up world, only to foster superstition. But the assurances of the civilized world provided by the nourishing and protective parents are no longer available. Security in this new situation can only be achieved by establishing new rules, new rituals to reassert the cohesiveness of the group.

During the first days the children, led by Jack, play at hunting. But eventually the circle of the playground extends to the circle of the hunted and squealing pig seeking refuge which itself anticipates the circle of consecrated ground where the children perform the new rites of the kill.

The first hunt accomplishes its purpose: the blood of the animals is spilled; the meat used for food. But because Jack and his choir undertake this hunt, they desert the signal fire, the case of which is dictated by the common-sense desire for rescue; it goes out and a ship passes the island. Later the children re-enact the killing with one boy, Maurice, assuming the role of the pig running its frenzied circle. The others chant in unison: “Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in.” At this dramatic representation each child is still aware that this is a display, a performance. He is never “so beside himself that he loses consciousness of ordinary reality.” Each time they re-enact the same event, however, their behavior becomes more frenzied, more cruel, less like dramatization or imitation than identification. The chant then becomes, “Kill the beast. Cut his throat. Spill his blood.” It is as if the first event, the pig’s actual death, is forgotten in the recesses of time; it is as if it happened so long ago that the children have lost track of their history on the island; facts are distorted, a new myth defines the primal act. Real pig becomes mythical beast to children for whom the forms of play have become the rituals of a social order.

Jack’s ascendancy over the group begins when the children’s fears distort the natural objects around them: twigs become creepers, shadows become demons. I have already discussed the visual imagery suggesting Jack’s demonic function. He serves as a physical manifestation of irrational forces. After an indefinite passage of time, he appears almost dehumanized, his “nose only a few inches from the humid earth.” He is “dog-like” and proceeds forward “on all fours” into the “semi-darkness of the undergrowth.” His cloak and clothing have been shed. Indeed, except for a “pair of tattered shorts held up by his knife-belt, he was naked.” His eyes seemed “bolting and nearly mad.” He has lost his ability to communicate with Ralph as he had on the first day. “He tried to convey the compulsion to track down and kill that was swallowing him up” (p. 50). “They walked along, two continents of experience and feeling, unable to communicate” (p. 54). When Jack first explains to Ralph the necessity to disguise himself from the pigs he wants to hunt, he rubs his face with clay and charcoal. At this point he assumes a mask, begins to dance, is finally freed from all the repressions of his past. “He capered toward Bill, and the mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness” (p. 63). At the moment of the dance the mask and Jack are one. The first kill, as I have noted, follows the descent of the signal fire and the conterminous passage of a possible rescue ship. Jack, however, is still reveling in the knowledge that they have “outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long and satisfying drink” (p. 69). Note that the pig is here described as a “living thing” not as an animal; only if there is equality between victor and victim can there be significance in the triumph of one over the other. Already he has begun to obliterate the distinction between animals and men, as do primitives; already he thinks in terms of the metaphor of a ritual drinking of blood, the efficacy of which depended on the drinker’s assumption of his victim’s strength and spirit. Ralph and Piggy confront him with his defection of duty, his failure to behave like a responsible member of Western society.

The two boys faced each other. There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense. Jack transferred the knife to
his left hand and smudged blood over his forehead as he pushed down the plastered hair.

Jack’s unconscious gesture is a parody of the ritual of initiation in which the hunter’s face is smeared with the blood of his first kill. In the subsequent struggle one of the lenses of Piggy’s spectacles is broken. The dominance of reason is over; the voice of the old world is still. The primary images are no longer those of fire and light but those of darkness and blood. The initial link between Ralph and Jack “had snapped and fastened elsewhere.”

The rest of the group, however, shifts its allegiance to Jack because he has given them meat rather than something as useless as fire. Gradually, they begin to be described as “shadows” or “masks” or “savages” or “demonic figures” and, like Jack, “hunt naked save for paint and a belt.” Ralph now uses Jack’s name with the recognition that “a taboo was evolving around the word too.” Name and thing again become one; to use the word is to incite the bearer, who is not here a transcendent or supernatural creature but rather a small boy. But more significant, the taboo, according to Freud, is “a very primitive prohibition imposed from without (by an authority) and directed against the strongest desires of man.” In this new society it replaces the authority of the parents, whom the children symbolically kill when they slay the nursing sow. Now every kill becomes a sexual act, is a metaphor for childhood sexuality, an assertion of freedom from mores they had been taught to revere.

The afternoon wore on, hazy and dreadful with damp heat; the sow staggered her way ahead of them, bleeding and mad, and the hunters followed, wedded to her in lust, excited by the long chase and the dropped blood. . . . The sow collapsed under them and they were heavy and fulfilled upon her (p. 138).

Every subsequent ritual fulfills not only a desire for communication and for a security to substitute for that of civilization, but also a need to liberate themselves from both the repressions of the past and those imposed by Ralph. Indeed, the projection into a beast of those impulses that they cannot accept in themselves is the beginning of a new mythology. The earlier dreams and nightmares of individual children are now shared in this mutual creation.

When the imaginary demons become defined by the rotted corpse and floating parachute on the mountain which the boys’ terror distorts into a beast, Jack wants to track the creature down. After the next kill, the head of the pig is placed upon a stake to placate the beast. Finally one of the children, Simon, after an epileptic fit, creeps out of the forest at twilight while the others are engaged in enthusiastic dancing following a hunt. Seized by the rapture of reenactment or perhaps terrorized by fear and night into believing that this little creature is a beast, they circle Simon, pounce on him, bite and tear his body to death. He becomes not a substitute for beast but beast itself; representation becomes absolute identification; “the mystic repetition of the initial event.” At the moment of Simon’s death, nature speaks as it did at Christ’s crucifixion: a cloud bursts; rain and wind fill the parachute on the hill and the corpse of the pilot falls or is dragged among the screaming boys. Both Simon and the dead man, beast and beast, are washed into the sea and disappear. After this complete resurgence of savagery in accepted ritual, there is only a short interval before Piggy’s remaining lens is stolen, he is intentionally killed as an enemy, and Ralph, the human being, becomes hunted like beast or pig.

Simon’s mythic and psychological role has earlier been suggested in this essay. Undersized, subject to epileptic fits, bright-eyed, and introverted, he constantly creeps away from the others to meditate among the intricate vines of the forest. To him, as to the mystic, superior knowledge is intuitively given which he cannot communicate.

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12 Ibid., p. 834.
symbolic death, he suddenly realizes that he must confront the beast on the mountain because "what else is there to do?" Earlier he had been unable to express himself or give advice. Now he is relieved of "that dreadful feeling of the pressure of personality." When he discovers the corrupted corpse hanging from the rock, he first frees it in compassion though it is surrounded by flies, and then staggers unevenly down to report to the others. He attempts to assume a communal role from which his strangeness and nervous seizures formerly isolated him. Redeemer and scapegoat, he becomes the victim of the group he seeks to enlighten. In death—before he is pulled into the sea—the flies which have moved to his head from the bloodstained pig and from the decomposing body of the man are replaced by the phosphorescent creatures of the deep. Halo-like, these "moonbeam-bodied creatures" attend the seer who has been denied into the formlessness and freedom of the ocean. "Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out toward the open sea" (p. 157). 14

Piggy's death, soon to follow Simon's, is foreshadowed when the former proclaims at council that there is no beast. "What would a beast eat?" "A pig." "We eat pig," he rationally answers. "Piggy!" (p. 83) is the emotional response, resulting in a juxtaposition of words which imply Piggy's role and Golding's meaning. At Piggy's death his body twitches "like a pig's after it has been killed." Not only has his head been smashed, but also the conch, symbol of order, is simultaneously broken. A complex group of metaphors unite to form a total metaphor involving Piggy and the pig, hunted and eaten by the children, and the pig's head which is at once left to appease the beast's hunger and is the beast itself. But the beast is within, and the children are defined by the very objects they seek to destroy.

In these associated images we have the whole idea of a communal

13 Ibid.
and sacrificial feast and a symbolic cannibalism, all of which Freud discussed in *Totem and Taboo*. Here the psychology of the individual contributes the configurations for the development of religion. Indeed, the events of *Lord of the Flies* imaginatively parallel the patterns which Freud detects in primitive mental processes.

Having populated the outside world with demons and spirits which are projections of their instinctual nature, these children—and primitive men—must then unconsciously evolve new forms of worship and laws, which manifest themselves in taboos, the oldest form of social repression. With the exception of the first kill—in which the children still imagine they are *playing* at hunting—the subsequent deaths assume a ritual form; the pig is eaten communally by all and the head is left for the “beast,” whose role consists in sharing the feast. This is much like the “public ceremony” described by Freud in which the sacrifice of an animal provided food for the god and his worshipers. The complex relationships within the novel between the “beast,” the pigs which are sacrificed, the children whose asocial impulses are externalized in the beast—this has already been discussed. So we see that, as Freud points out, the “sacrificing community, its god [the ‘beast’], and the sacrificial animal are of the same blood,” members of a clan. The pig, then, may be regarded as a totem animal, an “ancestor, a tutelary spirit and protector,” it is, in any case, a part of every child. The taboo or prohibition against eating particular parts of the totem animal coincides with the children’s failure to eat the head of the pig. It is that portion which is set aside for the “beast.” Just as Freud describes the primitive feast, so the children’s festive meal is accompanied by a frenzied ritual in which they temporarily release their forbidden impulses and represent the kill. To consume the pig and to re-enact the event is not only to assert a “common identity” but also to share a “common responsibility” for the deed. By this means the children assuage the enormity of having killed a living thing. None of the boys is excluded from the feast. The later ritual, in which Simon, as a human substitute identified with the totem, is killed, is in this novel not an unconscious attempt to share the responsibility for the killing of a primal father in prehistoric times, as Freud states; rather, it is here a social act in which the participants celebrate their new society by commemorating their servitude from the authority of the civilized state. Because of the juxtaposition of Piggy and pig, the eating of pig at the communal feast might be regarded as the symbolic cannibalism by which the children physically partake of the qualities of the slain and share responsibility for their crime. (It must be remembered that, although Piggy on a symbolic level represents the light of reason and the authority of the father, as a human being he shares that bestiality and irrationality which to Golding dominate all men, even the most rational or civilized.)

In the final action, Ralph is outlawed by the children and hunted like an animal. One boy, Roger, sharpens a stick at both ends so that it will be ready to receive the severed head of the boy as if he were a pig. Jack keeps his society together because it, like the brother horde of William Robertson Smith and Freud, “is based on complicity in the common crimes.” All share the guilt of having killed Simon, of hunting Ralph down. In his flight Ralph, seeing the grinning skull of a pig, thinks of it as a toy and remembers the early days on the island when all were united in play. In the play world, the world of day, the world of the novel’s opening, he has become a “spoilsport” like Piggy; in the world based upon primitive rites and taboos, the night world where fears become demons and sleep is like death, he is the heretic or outcast, the rejected god. This final hunt, after the conch is broken, is the pursuit of the figure representing civilized law and

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15 There are further affinities to Sartre’s *Les Mouches.*

16 *Totem and Taboo*, p. 878.


20 *Totem and Taboo*, p. 916.
order; it is the law and order of a primitive culture. Finally, Jack, through misuse of the dead Piggy’s glasses, accidentally sets the island on fire. A passing cruiser, seeing the fire, lands to find only a dirty group of sobbing little boys. “Fun and games,” said the officer... “What have you been doing? Having a war or something?” (p. 206).

But are all the meanings of the novel as clear as they seem? To restrict it to an imaginative re-creation of Freud’s theory that children are little savages, that no child is innocent whatever popular Christian theology would have us believe, is to limit its significance for the adult world. To say that the “beasts” we fear are within, that man is essentially irrational—or, to place a moral judgment on the irrational, that man is evil—that, again, is too easy. In this forced isolation of a group of children, Golding is making a statement about the world they have left—a world that we are told is “in ruins.” According to Huizinga’s theory of play, war is a game, a contest for prestige which, like the games of primitives or of classical athletes, may be fatal. It, too, has its rules, although the modern concept of total war tends to obscure both its ritualistic and its ennobling character. It, too, has its spatial and temporal limitations, as the rash of “limited” wars makes very clear. More than once the children’s acts are compared to those of the outside world. When Jack first blackens his face like a savage, he gives his explanation: “For hunting. Like in the war. You know—dazzle paint. Like things trying to look like something else” (p. 62). Appalled by one of the ritual dances, Piggy and Ralph discuss the authority and rationality of the apparently secure world they have left:

“Grownups know things,” said Piggy. “They ain’t afraid of the dark. They’d meet and have tea and discuss. Then things ’ud be all right—”

“They wouldn’t set fire to the island. Or lose—”

“They’d build a ship—”

The three boys stood in the darkness, striving unsuccessfully to convey the majesty of adult life.

“Men of a Smaller Growth”

“They wouldn’t quarrel—”

“Or break my specs—”

“Or talk about a beast—”

“If only they could get a message to us,” cried Ralph desperately. “If only they could send us something grown-up... a sign or something” (pp. 94–95).

The sign does come that night, unknown to them, in the form of the parachute and its attached corpse. The pilot is the analogue in the adult world to the ritual killing of the child Simon on the island; he, like Simon, is the victim and scapegoat of his society, which has unleashed its instincts in war. Both he and Simon are associated by a cluster of visual images. Both are identified with beasts by the children, who do see the truth—that all men are bestial—but do not understand it. Both he and Simon attract the flies from the Lord of the Flies, the pig’s head symbolic of the demonic; both he and Simon are washed away by a cleansing but not reviving sea. His position on the mountain recalls the hanged or sacrificed god of Sir James Frazer’s The Golden Bough, in which an effigy of the corn god is buried or thrown into the sea to insure fertility among many primitives; here, however, we have a parody of fertility. He is dead proof that Piggy’s exaggerated respect for adults is itself irrational. When the officer at the rescue jokingly says, “What have you been doing? Having a war or something?” this representative of the grown-up world does not understand that the games of the children, which result in two deaths, are a moral commentary upon the primitive nature of his own culture. The ultimate irrationality is war. Paradoxically, the children not only regress to a primitive and infantile morality, but they also degenerate into adults. They prove that, indeed, “children are but men of a smaller growth.”