The Depiction of Human Nature through Allegory: An Analysis of Golding's Lord of the Flies

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ABSTRACT
This article critically analyzes Golding's *Lord of the Flies* to investigate how human nature was allegorically depicted by constructing an almost parallel fictional world to his contemporary time. In this paper, I argued that Golding allegorically exhibited the basic human nature of his contemporary time by experimenting with the schoolboys on the Pacific Ocean, which unveiled the brutal and uncivilized nature of schoolboys, and that such activities as depicted in the novel resembled the brutal and savage nature of the men of his time. The methodology I employed in this study was a close analysis of the primary text to examine how Golding used allegory to uncover the basic nature of human beings, and I analyzed secondary resources related to the study to support my arguments. The analysis identified that Golding depicted savagery and animalistic human nature through allegory, which questioned the traditional understanding of human nature as civilized and moral, and his experience of involving himself in the war and working as a school teacher helped him in reflecting such brutal and uncivilized events of his time. He provided a wider space and various layers of secondary meanings for characters, setting, and events in the story, which resonated in many respects with the events of his contemporary time. In addition, this study unpacked the fact that savagery existed inside the human heart and manifested in a lack of guardianship and civilizational forces in human beings. This paper will be useful in exploring the novel for a better understanding of human nature.

Keywords: allegory, animalism, civilization, disintegration, nature, savagery

INTRODUCTION
Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* depicted the devastating social realities of his time (Spitz, 1970) and questioned human civilization by exposing the bleak picture of human relationships (Zhu, 2020). In addition, his novel raised the controversy of human civilization by exhibiting a dichotomy between real and outward appearance (Watt, 2014) and painting a portrait of atrocities created by human wars and conflicts (Bloom, 2008). Golding had the experience of his time, as he was involved in the Second World War and observed how Hitler and his rule massively motivated inhuman activity, particularly among Jews. However, he would like to generalize by projecting the possibility of such events all over the world, constructing a fictional world (Bloom, 2008). I found Golding's depiction of an almost parallel fictional world to reflect social disintegration caused by imperialism, various conflicts of his time, the holocaust of Jews, male-dominated society, and so forth. Here, in this study, I argued that Golding allegorically depicted human nature as uncivilized and brutal in the real sense by experimenting on the children on the desolated Pacific island, isolating them from human law, order, and guardianship, and he utilized the literary device of allegory for reflecting such human nature as it assisted in providing vivid and multiple layers of

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human nature associating with political, moral, and religious aspects of human life. My proposition of this argument is that Golding exposed the schoolchildren after the plane crash on the remote island of the Pacific Ocean in the time of nuclear war between England and Germany and exhibited their fractions into groups led by Ralph and Jack as it was in his time, and conflicts, war, killing, and horror among them in the absence of human law and order, thereby exposing the real human nature as uncivilized and brutal in the allegorical form. The main objective of this study was to analyze Golding's *Lord of the Flies* to investigate how human nature was reflected. The study's significance remained valuable as it unpacked the real human nature as reflected in the novel in allegorical form. Golding's portrayal of the island, along with its aggressive nature and conflicts with children, resembled the real world of his contemporary time, full of wars and human atrocities. To reflect such a bleak picture of the world, Golding used allegorical methods utilizing various symbols such as fire, smoke, rock, and hunting, just to name a few. Thus, this study aims to explore the answer to the research question of how human nature was depicted in the novel *Lord of the Flies* using the concept of allegory as a theoretical perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Golding's debut novel, *Lord of the Flies*, has become fertile ground for discussion since its publication. As a result, numerous critics studied the novel, which depicted various themes such as feminism, the conflict between civilization and savagery, the human condition in the world, and so forth. For instance, Chang (2021), reading Golding's *Lord of the Flies* from the perspective of eco-criticism and relating the absence of women in the novel, argued that male-dominated society exploited both women and nature together by using patriarchal ideology. This indicated the reasons behind the destruction of the peaceful island by the boys and the physical absence of women in the novel. In addition, a previous study by Roy (2003) interpreted the absence of females in *Lord of the Flies* as their (women's) incapability to face the atrocities of the wars and the male ideology that limited the women in their homes. Moreover, Singh (1997) interpreted the novel *Lord of the Flies* as a depiction of the values of the family by reflecting the failure of boys to maintain civilization and the absence of their parents, particularly mothers, on the island. In addition, a study by Alnajm (2015) argued that human beings without governmental and parental guardianship moved toward destruction by portraying the devastating condition of children on the island of the Pacific Ocean without the guardianship of their parents. However, Mayborn (2021) claimed that Golding's depiction of the chaotic lives of schoolboys without their guardians' figures on the island reflected the social anarchy of his contemporary time.

Furthermore, Al-Saidi (2012) argued that Golding's *Lord of the Flies* exposed the conflicts between civilization and savagery by depicting the clash between two opposing groups of characters, Ralph and Jack. This reflected that Golding aimed to reveal the actual human condition of his contemporary time in fictional form to question the so-called civilized society. In addition, Chen (2021) argued that Golding's *Lord of the Flies* blurred the traditional division of human beings as civilized and uncivilized by exposing both qualities of civilization and savagery co-existing within human beings. Moreover, a study by Xiao and Chen (2022) argued that Golding's *Lord of the Flies* questioned the traditional understanding of civilized and uncivilized human beings by depicting the contrasting nature of the food of boys, such as cooked and uncooked together on the island. However, Khan et al. (2021), exploring *Lord of the Flies,* claimed that Golding's attempt to reflect human weakness and his aim to generalize such weakness as the universal condition were one-sided as he only included European boys on the island by excluding women and various minorities. In addition, Jiang (2022) argued that human-centric behavior was one of the reasons for the destruction of a harmonious relationship between humans and nature by depicting massive natural destruction and the conflict of the boys in Golding's *Lord of the Flies.* However, Anoosheh and Oroskhan (2018) claimed that the reason behind the degeneration of

schoolboys was a lack of spiritual and moral values in them, which was reflected by projecting a dystopian world of the schoolboys on the island of the Pacific Ocean.

Moreover, Miyanaga (2017) argued that Golding wanted to make a peaceful world by reflecting on the evils of the wars of his time and human weakness in his novel *Lord of the Flies.* In addition, a previous study by Fitzgerald and Kayser (1992) interpreted Golding's novel as the depiction of a disintegrated society due to the darkness of the human soul and loss of innocence. Furthermore, Van Vuuren (2004) argued that *Lord of the Flies* portrayed a bleak picture of post-war pessimism and a failure of human-made law, order, and hope of salvation to maintain an organized society. However, by collecting information from students in Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Norway, a study by Naylor et al. (2022) claimed that students believed there were cunning and selfish people in society and utilized technology for sharing such issues in their circle, obtained from reading the novel *Lord of the Flies.* Furthermore, a previous study by Beyad and Gholamhosseinzadeh (2019) argued that Golding's *Lord of the Flies* unveiled two contrasting worlds under the leadership of Ralph and Jack, which exposed the power struggle in the democratic election and its consequences in the future. In addition to exploring the character of Ralph, a study by Mogea (2023) claimed that Ralph had characteristics of leadership such as a sense of humanity, courage, determination, and the art of speaking to tackle unfavorable situations. However, Hasan and Sharif (2020) argued that *Lord of the Flies* allegorically reflected human lives and society after World War II. In addition, *Lord of the Flies* was analyzed as an allegory of biblical man's fall from Eden (Petrosyan, 2022b), and Petrosyan (2022a) claimed that Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is an allegory of Jesus Christ by alluding Simon to Jesus Christ. However, this study aims to explore how human nature is allegorically depicted in Golding's *Lord of the Flies.*

The departure of the study

The above literature depicted various themes related to the novel *Lord of the Flies,* such as the conflict between civilization and savagery, the importance of guardianship, post-war society and pessimism, the marginalization of women, allegories depicting post-war lives and society, allegories of Jesus, allegories of the biblical man's fall, and so forth. Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* has become a fertile source for researchers investigating various themes and issues; however, the allegorical depiction of human nature in the novel has almost remained unexplored. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the novel to find the answer to the research question of how human nature was allegorically depicted in the novel *Lord of the Flies,* and this study utilizes the concept of allegory as a theoretical perspective for analyzing the novel.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative interpretative research design, and Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* was purposefully selected as the primary text. I utilized the secondary information derived from various sources, such as journal articles, theses, books, and other various archive documentaries, to explore the research gap and strengthen my arguments in the study. In this study, I argued that Golding utilized the literary device of allegory for the depiction of human nature; thus, the concept of allegory assisted in analyzing multiple layers of human nature as depicted in Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies.* Primarily, I analyzed Golding's *Lord of the Flies* to derive qualitative information to support my arguments. The proposition of my arguments was that Golding used the literary device of allegory by depicting schoolchildren on the remote island of the Pacific Ocean and showing their conflicts, fights, killing, and horrors in the absence of parents, law, or any regulatory

civilizational system that reflected human nature and society of his contemporary time through allegory.

Allegory was defined as verse, prose, or narrative where characters, events, and often the setting indicate the secondary level of meaning (Abrams & Harpham, 2014). In the context of this study, the above definition supports understanding how the story, characters, events, and setting of Golding's *Lord of the Flies* are associated with and implied by secondary layers of meaning resembling the society and human nature of its contemporary time. In addition, allegory was further explained as characters and events of narrative that provide a certain moral lesson (Mayor, 2009). This concept of allegory facilitated my understanding of Golding's purpose in utilizing allegory in *Lord of the Flies* to reflect the basic human nature of his time. Moreover, Angus Fletcher defined allegory as "allegory that says one thing and means another" (Fletcher, 2021, p. 2). In the same way, in the novel *Lord of the Flies*, Golding created two layers of meaning, which provided more creative space for the readers to understand the secondary meanings of the text by connecting with the broad context of its contemporary time. The above-discussed concept of allegory helped me analyze *Lord of the Flies* as an allegorical novel, which paved the way to understanding how Golding depicted human nature in the allegorical form.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section of this article reports the analysis and discussion of Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* for investigating how Golding depicted human nature in allegorical form. I argued that Golding projected human nature as uncivilized and brutal in allegorical form by creating characters, events, and settings that resembled the human nature and civilization of his contemporary time. Thus, this section aims to present the interpretation and analysis of his novel to answer the research question of how human nature was depicted in the novel *Lord of the Flies* using the concept of allegory as a theoretical perspective.

Human Nature in Lord of the Flies

Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* interrogated the basic nature of humans by exposing a devastating fictional world on the island of the Pacific Ocean where schoolchildren were divided into two groups and involved in hunting animals, fighting, and killing their friends, which ultimately led them into destruction. The schoolchildren saved from the plane crash gathered together on the island and attempted to systematize their way of life by establishing law and order on the island; however, they became a failure due to their fraction into two groups led by Ralph and Jack. They were free from external impositions and restrictions to perform their activities on the island. They showed violent and aggressive natures, which led up to the stage of murdering their friends. Here, I argued that Golding's depiction of such conflicts, quarrels, and chaotic worlds of the schoolchildren against the backdrop of the Second World War in the fictional form allegorically reflected the basic human nature, which was brutal and destructive. They lacked cooperation, sympathy, and empathy and depicted animalistic behaviors; thus, this novel questioned the basic nature of human beings in an allegorical form. The characters, events, and setting of the novel reflected the secondary level of meaning and instructed the moral lesson by depicting animalism within human beings. For instance, the children were on the island and hoped that somebody would come and rescue them from an isolated island, so they decided to make a fire for a better signal. They produced a fire with large flames, and there was smoke all around them. It was narrated:

> Almost at once a thin trickle of smoke rose […] the flame, nearly invisible at first in that bright sunlight, enveloped a small twig, grew, was enriched with color, and reached up to a branch which exploded with a sharp crack. The flame flapped higher and the boys broke into a cheer (Golding, 1983, p. 32).

Here, the fire, the smoke, and their happiness in such a situation indicated that they would be happy in the destruction, and in addition, it reflected their forthcoming conflict and

quarrels, which led to the deaths of their friends. Such incidents and their mood allegorically projected deeply rooted animalism in the human heart and, at the same time, unveiled the ground reality of its contemporary time, which was full of wars, conflicts, and destructions. This narrative of smoke, fire, and a boy's celebration paralleled Golding's time, which was full of wars and conflicts, and warmongers were merrymaking as the boys were projected in the above, which was adequate to show human nature. Moreover, this finding was to some extent aligned with the study of Van Vuuren (2004), which claimed Golding's *Lord of the Flies* depicted post-war pessimism. In addition, when the story proceeded further, particularly, boys led by Jack enjoyed hunting animals and playing with the bloodshed. It was narrated in the novel:

> The boys chattered and danced. The twins continued to grin. There was a lashing of blood, said Jack, laughing and shuddering, "you should have seen it!" We'll go hunting every day (Golding, 1983, p. 58).

In the above remarks, the image of blood, their dance, and their regular hunting indicated their destructive nature of life as well as the island, as they started loving violence and hunting. This hunting for animals reflected the hunting of their kind since they killed their friends as well. They loved killing pork by making spears, which reflected their basic nature of having pleasure in killing and playing with blood. It was narrated, 'Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!' (Golding, 1983, p. 152). They started eating the meat of the pig, and then their lives were completely transformed into the lives of the beast. These narratives echoed the human nature and social and historical reality of Golding's time, where particularly the British Empire and Hitler in Germany loved human hunting and bloodshed; however, such findings were not discussed in the study of Miyanaga (2017). In addition, the majority of them believed that there was beast in the forest of the island and had an assembly for discussion about it. It was narrated in the story as:

> Ralph thrust the conch into Jack's arms […]. I've called an assembly, said Jack, because of a lot of things. First, you know now, we've seen the beast. We crawled up. We were only a few feet away. The beast sat up and looked at us. I don't know what it does. We don't even know what it is. The beast comes out of the sea. Out of the dark (Golding, 1983, pp. 111-112).

The above remarks about their realization of the existence of the beast on the island indicated the beasts within themselves. They attempted to learn about the beasts; however, they failed to discover where exactly they remained. Their faith outwardly existed, but their beasts covertly signaled their beasts hiding inside them. Here, I argued that such a situation in the above narrative to some extent allegorically indicated how the British Empire was supposed to be civilized; however, it could not explore the location of savagery and ultimately remained within them. As Golding argued that enemies of human beings remained within them (Bloom, 2008), savagery and animalistic instinct were located within human beings; however, the British Empire and Adolf Hitler in Germany projected them onto others and massively killed them. Moreover, their conflict increased as they divided into two groups, and they (Jack's group) were involved in killing their friends. It was narrated as:

> The great rock that had killed Piggy had bounded into this thicket and bounced there, right in the center, making a smashed space a few feet in extent each way. When Ralph had wriggled into this he felt secure and clever. He sat down carefully among the smashed stems and waited for the hunt to pass (Golding, 1983, p. 173).

In the above remarks, the rock that killed Piggy indicated the self-destruction of human civilization due to the inner savagery of human beings. The schoolchildren killed their friend, Piggy, who was innocent and went to ask for his glass. They did not realize Piggy's inner feelings; instead, they killed him with the support of a massive stone rolling over him. This

narrative of the story allegorically indicated the situation of Golding's time and the nature of human beings who were incapable of understanding the sentiments and inner feelings of human beings. Many innocent people were killed in the various wars in the same way Piggy was killed in the narrative.

In addition, Jack's group became aggressive by killing and brutalizing his friends, and finally, Ralph was their target, and he was chased by Jack's group. He was running for the protection of his life, and it was traumatic for him as the island was almost covered by fire and smoke. However, even in such a situation, Ralph visualized "a smallish savage standing between him and the rest of the forest, a savage striped red and white and carrying a spear" (Golding, 1983, p. 176). It was a pig head that they (Jack and his friends) offered to the beast in the forest since they had faith that the beast was roaming in the forest. It was still safer even in the bonfire, and this pig head indicated Beelzebub, who was known as the devil. In addition, Simon, a spiritual character, had a conversation with Beelzebub that stated that it was part of humans. It was narrated as "you could hunt and kill! You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you. Close, close, close! (Golding, 1983, p. 143). This further reflected that boys' hunting of beasts and animals was, in reality, hunting, as the beast was part of human life. In addition, it revealed how evil nature resided within human life and needed to be controlled by civilization; it would manifest and cause devastating situations, as depicted in the novel. These findings to some extent aligned with the study of Chen (2021), which depicted that civilization and savagery qualities could not be found separately; rather, they coexisted with human beings.

Moreover, the characters of the novel further showed their various types, indicating the abstract ideas of political and moral lessons that ultimately proved the savage nature of humans. For instance, Piggy was a voice of reason, but he was killed. It was narrated, "There was no Piggy to talk sense" (Golding, 1983, p. 177). Ralph was a democratic man who focused on rules, and Jack was an authoritarian man who wished to create disorder and chaos on the island. As it was narrated, "The rules,' shouted Ralph, "you're breaking the rules.' Jack replied, who cares? Ralph summoned his wits. 'Because the rules are the only thing we've got.' But Jack was shouting against him" (Golding, 1983, p. 91). This part of the narrative reflected how Ralph was devoted to maintaining the rules and order, in contrast to Jack, who threatened such a system as he had resources and many supporters as well. In addition, Simon was a visionary and spiritual being who loved to remain away from the crowd and was involved in exploring the hidden meaning of things. Thus, these characters indicated the types and stood for various abstract ideas that ultimately showed the decadence of human morals because of the evil that remained within them. Such a division of characters and the failure of their attempt to establish harmony on the island reflected the global condition of Golding's contemporary time, where Simon, Piggy, and Ralph types of people were brutalized and traumatized by Jack types of people.

Furthermore, Golding's *Lord of the Flies* allegorically depicted how human attempts became failures to establish order and systems in the world and further depicted how human beings ultimately loved destruction, war, and chaotic situations. For instance, Ralph narrated, "We can't have everybody talking at once. We'll have to have 'hands up, like at school.' He held the conch before his face and glanced around the mouth. 'Then I'll give him the conch" (Golding, 1983, p. 34). Such a rule for maintaining peace and order on the island was accepted by Jack, who said, "I agree with Ralph. We've got to have rules and obey them" (Golding, 1983, p. 34). However, their attempt to establish a democratic system on the island could not function well as they divided into two groups and fought each other, which led to the destruction of their kind and the island where they were living. This situation indicated that human beings could not be wiser due to the savagery that remained within their hearts and allegorically echoed humans' failure to stop the wars and massacres, particularly the Jews in Germany. These findings to some extent paralleled the findings of Alnajm (2015), who claimed that *Lord of the Flies* exhibited a clash between civilization and savagery.

In addition, the setting of Golding's *Lord of the Flies* resembled the setting of the world at the time of The Second World War. However, the island was beautiful and full of resources when the school boys reached there. It was narrated as "All around him, the long scar smashed into the jungle was a bath of heat. He was clambering heavily among the creepers and broken trunks when a bird, a vision of red and yellow, flashed upwards with a witch-like cry, and this cry was echoed by another (Golding, 1983, p. 1), and it was further narrated, "Here the beach was interrupted abruptly by the square motif of the landscape; a great platform of pink granite thrust up uncompromisingly through forest and terrace and sand and lagoon to make a raised jetty four feet high (Golding, 1983, p. 5). It was unquestionable that the island was beautiful and resourceful, as it was narrated, "This is our island. It's a good island. Until the grownups come to fetch us, we'll have fun" (Golding, 1983, p. 35). Gradually, boys spoiled the island by setting bonfires and killing wild animals, particularly wild pork. The beautiful island, which was like paradise for them in the beginning, was transformed into a battlefield at the end of the story. They chased Ralph to kill him, and there was a bonfire full of smoke. It was narrated as "All crying out madly. He could hear them. […] On the left was the hot, bright thunder of the fire. He forgot his wounds, his hunger, and his thirst […] rushing through the forest toward the open beach" (Golding, 1983, p. 180). This narrative of the story was adequate to reflect the island where there was a bonfire, full of smoke, horror, and terror. Thus, their savage nature was responsible for the destruction of such a beautiful island. This finding is to some extent aligned with the finding of Chang (2021), which claimed that a male-dominated society exploited not only females but also nature. In addition, the above discussion identified that the setting of the novel allegorically resembled the world's scenario at the time of the Second World War, where there were conflicts, horror, and terror in the world. However, the reason for such destruction is human nature, which is evil. Therefore, as I argued, Golding's *Lord of the Flies* allegorically depicted human nature by exposing characters and events in settings that reflected the inner darkness and savagery of humanity.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion reflected that Golding's *Lord of the Flies* depicted human nature in allegorical form by exhibiting the characters, events, and settings that unveiled the basic human nature and the reason for the decadence of human moral values in his contemporary time. As the novel was set against the backdrop of a nuclear war between England and Germany, it unpacked the reasons for human conflict, as humans have beasts within them. This study aims to investigate the answers to the research question of how human nature was depicted in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, exhibited Golding's projection of beast within the human, and how a lack of guardianship and civilizing trends manifested the savagery nature that made the world of humanity equal to animals' snatching away all the humanly qualities. In addition, by enriching himself from the experience of war, teaching in school, and experimenting with the British students in the Pacific Ocean, he concluded that humans were, in a real sense, no less than animals, savage and brutal if they did not receive proper training in civilization and guardianship. Unpacking such a bitter reality of the human condition in allegorical form, he questioned a prolonged faith that humans were social beings who would have sympathy, empathy, and humanity. He constructed a fictional world where its characters, story, events of the story, and setting resembled the real world, and his selection of characters stood for a certain abstract idea of reflecting the actual human condition of his time. By reflecting on his time in fictional form, Golding's *Lord of the Flies* depicted the main reason for the inhuman condition of humans in the world. In addition, this brief study analyzed some of the characters and events as shown in the novel to find out the answer to

the research question; therefore, further study is required to further explore the human nature in the novel, yet it provides a clear direction for the advanced exploration.

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