

Analysis of Lord of the Flies Based on the Theme of Human Evil

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Abstract:

Since its publication, *Lord of the Flies* has been internationally renowned. Unlike the previous desert island novels, *Lord of the Flies* has made great breakthroughs in form and theme, and become a sensational and literary masterpiece. This article explores Golding's view of human nature on the post-war world with the theme of human evil in *Lord of the Flies*. Golding reminded people to face the evil of human nature, guard against the fragility of democracy, pay attention to the natural ecology, call for moral concern in scientific rationality, and call on people to regain their faith. Only then can humanity emerge from the spiritual crisis and survival predicament of the new century.

Keywords: Human evil, desert island literature, tragedy, human nature

I. INTRODUCTION TO DESERT ISLAND LITERATURE

William Golding was a world-renowned British novelist after World War II. His first work "*The Lord of the Flies*" is one of the most important masterpieces of the literary world. The novel adopts the literary style of the "Desert Island Literature" to construct a new plot structure, breaks through the traditional idealized mode, and at the same time creates a pioneer in the exploration of human nature.

The unique location of the British islands makes its history, literature, art and islands inextricably linked, therefore, "Desert Island" has become an indispensable theme in British literature. In this type of novel, the author consciously puts the protagonist on a remote and uncivilized desert island, and expresses the subject of the author's expression through his description of the activities on the desert island. As far as the scene is concerned, such novels are all based on the desert island as a specific space for unfolding stories, with unique artistic symbols; as far as the plot is concerned, it is the trilogy that constitute the main plot of the novel, that is, to be abandoned on the desert island for some reason that does not transfer people's will, to have a unique experience on the island, and to be rescued and returned to the human society unexpectedly. While in terms of creative guiding ideology, the desert island fiction are generally opening up a piece of heaven and earth, to make the author with his life experience and imagination to explore freely and society in isolation, without civilization ethics constraint of survival mode and human nature.

"The Lord of the Flies" mainly describes the era of the atomic war in the future. An airplane that evacuated British primary school students fell on a deserted tropical island. The surviving children gradually split from a united whole and lived in harmony. Developed to satisfy the desire for killing, malignant expansion, mutual killing, burning a beautiful island into scorched earth. Finally, a naval warship found fireworks coming and saved the children.

The development of British desert island literature is inextricably linked to the political and social development of the United Kingdom. The desert island literature originated from the British Renaissance and experienced the development process of Britain from a backward island country to a world hegemon. Therefore, the traditional British desert island literature is the portrayal of the development of British political and economic situation and reflects the national characteristics and optimistic spirit of Britain.

In the course of the development of literature, there are many famous novels based on desert islands. As the pioneering work of British desert island literature, *The Tempest* is one of Shakespeare's classic works. It has the characteristics of humanism in the Renaissance, and it is the promotion and eulogy of human nature. The good and evil of human beings have a contest on the desert island described by Shakespeare, and the final outcome of good defeating evil is attributed to Shakespeare as a humanist. In order to bridge the gap between ideal and reality, he tries to influence evil with goodness and achieve the utopian ideal of reconciliation through forgiveness[1].

Robinson Crusoe written by Daniel Defoe describes that on the way to the maritime voyage to Africa, Robinson encountered a storm and drifted to an uninhabited desert island, beginning a life of isolation. With his strong will and unremitting efforts, he survived stubbornly on the desert island and returned to his hometown after 28 years. Robinson's fate is not only a fun adventure, but also a symbol of the fate of the British. The novel expresses the theme of "human nature" and "effort, pursuit, and salvation", and thus forms the traditional structural model of the "Desert Island Paradise".

Ballantyne's *Coral Island* was published in 1857, and the three protagonists flowed onto a deserted coral island. They lived actively and civilized on the island, built dwellings and boats, made all kinds of utensils that are easy to live, and feed on fruits and wild boars, fully reflecting the education and demeanor of the young gentlemen of the British Empire. At the end of the novel, the children happily took the boat back to their homes and left the green and beautiful coral island far behind[2].

In the novel *Treasure Island*, Robert Stevenson describes the growing up of Jim Hawkins, the protagonist of the novel, who has been tested and overcome difficulties and dangers to become mature in the battle of perseverance and wisdom with pirates again and again.

In these works, the desert island symbolizes the paradise of the protagonist and is the utopia of a happy life. In these books, the courageous and resourceful British boy always triumphantly conquered the pirates and tropical islands, inevitably revealing the complacency and pride of the nation that was not unique to the Empire at that time. It was a portrayal of the general mentality of the British at that time[3]. However, Golding introduces the idea of human evil into the theme of desert islands, it's a rebellion and subversion against tradition. With the flow of the plot, the Lord of the Flies finally shows a different theme from other desert island novels, from naive children to crazy and cruel bloodthirsty, from building a small civilized society to savage killing, from the primitive desert island to the bloody and cruel atomic war of the future human society, Golding awakens people from the optimistic and intoxicating mentality of "human goodness", facing up to the "evil" in the human nature.

II. DESERT ISLAND AND HUMANITY

The evil of human nature is an ancient proposition. The original sin of Christianity is actually a kind of prophetic of evil humanity. This culture not only occurs in Western countries, in the history of Chinese thought, there is also a theory that advocates the evil of human nature, the legalism held this view. Xunzi, a thinker in the Warring States period in Chinese history, also advocated that human nature is inherently evil.

In the Lord of the Flies, Golding's humanistic theme is centered around the "human evil." The connotation of this human evil is not evil in life, or everyone is evil, but refers to the darkness that exists in people's hearts. Evil comes from the depths of human beings. It is the evil system that is hidden in the human heart, which has changed the original situation and development. It turns the beautiful things into evil and harm. The children attempted to build civilization on the desert island, but it collapsed in blood and terror because the children suffered from terrible diseases as human beings, which refers to the darkness that exists in the depths of heart[4]. The children who live on the desert island go from peace to killing. Golding explains that the evils that lie in the depths of the heart can be stimulated in the proper environment.

Golding's desert island has lost the authenticity in the traditional novel, but like the desert island in Shakespeare's works, it has become a platform to show human nature, reflecting the author's concern about human nature and future.

A. Tragedy in Lord of the Flies

Golding expressed his research and thinking on human existence through his novels. Because he attributes all kinds of social evils to the "darkness of the human heart" and the evil of human nature, his works have obvious pessimism and deep tragic consciousness. The "fall" of man, the loss of innocence, the burden of self-consciousness and sin, the arbitrary recklessness of the human will, the trauma of chaos in the search for order -- all these are the basic ingredients of human tragedy[5].

Golding, through his profound revelation of the darkness of human nature and the evil of human beings, depicted the living conditions of people in western society after World War Two, and explored the relationship between human beings and society, barbarism, civilization and other common problems faced by human beings.

The name of this novel comes from a Hebrew "Baalzebub" word, in Bible, "Baal" represents extremely evil or the absolutely vicious. And in English, lord of the files is the king of excrement and filth, and a synonym for ugliness. The author named the novel after this, just to show the dirt, depravity and evil in human nature, and further revealed the true identity of "beast" through the mouth

of "Lord of the flies", that is, the rotten pig's head which is full of flies. What's more, the name suggests that the dirty, depraved and evil in human nature are like the beasts that exist in everyone's heart and can never be separated. Children are afraid of imaginary beasts, but in the end the real beast is the one that lurks in human nature. The barbaric nuclear war brought the children to the desert island, but this group of children to reproduce the whole process of the history that reduced them to this desperate situation, it is not alien monster, but man himself turned paradise into a slaughterhouse. Therefore, the evil of human nature is the root cause of the tragedy. Faced with kindness and evil, civilized order and barbaric power, the children are mentally controlled by "monster" and "lord of the flies", while their behavior is threatened by powerful Jack. In hunger, despair, and fear, the evil inherent in human nature occupies their hearts, and they gather to throw away conch, abandon civilization and order. From a group of naive choirboys to a group of irrational savages with colorful faces who hunt animals and kill their companions. After a difficult exploration, Simon discovered the so-called "monster" is the body of a paratrooper was hung on the branch. Before he fainted, he saw the Lord of the flies hanging on a wooden pole. It was actually a rotten pig's head that attracted countless flies. When he woke up, he told his companions about these discoveries, but to his surprise, the crazy children who were encouraged by Jack were beaten to death as wild animals. The fact that human beings are derived from animals has determined that people can never completely get rid of animal nature, so the problem can only be to get rid of more and less, in the degree of animal or human nature. The naval officers who came to the rescue at the end of the novel became the savior of the children on the island, saving them from evil, and the world outside the island became a symbol of a beautiful and civilized world. However, when we think about it more deeply, the navy that stopped the brutal killing of the children on the island, the cruiser that saved the children and took them away from the island, in naval warfare, they were also a brutal mutual killing of human companions. The ending casts a dark gloom over the novel.

Golding believes that humanity is degenerate and entangled in the original sin. he looked around for a convenient form of expression of this subject, and found that the most ideal form was the children's play[6]. He insists that the corruption of the world originates from human nature itself, and the evil in human nature creates the corrupt social system, which is reflected in the novel with a deep sense of tragedy.

Inhuman Depravity and Brutal Killings

In the description of the novel, the children led a fire under the leadership of Ralph, hoping to get rescued by the scattered smoke attracting the attention of the passing ships, but burning the whole forest because of improper use of fire. The children did not feel guilty for the damage caused by their own mistakes to the desert island. Instead, they gave awe of the power they had released. There was a burst of screams and excitement[7]. Ecologists believe that man's conquest and control of nature in turn strengthens man's conquest and control of man[8]. In his pen, Jack as the representative of the children for us to show how human beings step by step to the abyss of evil. From the beginning of the ruler of the island to the final destroyer, from the hunting of wild boar to the hunting of people, and finally set fire to the island, gradually completed the whole process of human beast-like alienation. The brutal and cruel Jack represents the conflict between human beings and nature. As the two groups of children to power and interests of the increasingly fierce competition, the island gradually lost its primitive beauty. From his various acts, we can see that hunting wild boar is only to satisfy his savage instinct and obtain the pleasure of conquering nature. The children, led by Jack, who hunt, kill and

torture animals, are cruel when they kill old sows, which is far from the attitude of Ralph and Simon in dealing with nature.

In the climax of the novel, the appearance of lord of the flies, the reader can clearly appreciate the contrast between the natural scenery before and after being attacked by human beings. As the pigs lay comfortably in the shade, Jack and the other hunters attacked them savagely, and in their pursuit of the wounded old sow, they did so inhumanely, even disgustingly. The horrible scream of the wild boar turned into a sharp whine, then he found the pig's throat, and the knife went down, and the blood spurted into his hand. Then Jack began to slaughter the pig. He cut his chest, the steaming colorful internal organs were arrested, and the pig's internal organs were piled up on the rock. The beautiful woods that were quiet and innocent, the birds are flying, the paradise of animals, under the trampling of human desires, has become such a terrible ruin in an instant.

In the last chapter of the novel, there was a second fire on the desert island. If the first fire was an accidental fire, then the second time Jack and others intended to arson were full of evil and blood. In the end of the novel, Jack became the leader of the children, and Ralph was to be wiped out. In order to avoid the hunt, Ralph hid in the bushes. He heard the kind of "deep rumble" again. It turned out that Jack had smoked him out and set fire to the island. In the roaring sound of fire, the earth is quivering.

In the confrontation with the same kind of contradiction, the people who are carried away by crazy desire completely ignore the interdependent relationship between human beings and natural resources, and have reached the commanding heights of human atrocities such as killing and evil. At this time, the picturesque "Xanadu" has ceased to exist, and the exotic tropical forests on the desert island are about to become ashes. The harmony between man and nature has disappeared without a trace. Through the lord of the flies, Golding says that beast is the objective existence of human nature. Desert island itself is a miniature of human society, where people can be closest to nature, so their performance is closest to human nature. The evil of human nature can be disguised and restrained in civilized society, but it cannot change the defects of human nature itself.

III. CULTURAL PHENOMENON IN LORD OF THE FLIES

Golding incorporates the biblical elements in the esoteric and philosophical proposition of the nature of humanity in Lord of the Flies, thus blending the theme with the traditional culture of the West. At the same time, through the reverse of the biblical culture, the work creates a strong tension, which makes the theme of "human evil" more profound, dignified, sharp and thought-provoking. The Bible is the pillar of the western culture. The western religious belief and spiritual concept established by the Bible make the western culture, advance continuously and create valuable wealth for the world civilization.

The theme of human evil is not accidentally formed in the course of human development, but the original consciousness of human beings passed down from generation to generation. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve originally lived a happy and beautiful life, but a serpent snake coiled around the tree of wisdom tempted Eve to violate God's warnings and eat the fruit of the tree of wisdom. God was so angry that he made corresponding cruel punishments for them. "Original sin", as the basic concept of Christianity, it is because "Adam and Eve steal the wisdom of fruit and it is the first crime of human beings. Therefore, it is called the fall of mankind, and human beings are thus guilty of original sin. "Original sin" is the root of the sinful consciousness of human beings in Western literature and culture and the permanent struggle between good and evil. From the beginning of the human ancestor Adam and Eve, all the flesh is born with sin. In the novel, the countless flies on the

pig's head that sacrifice to the beast become a huge king of flies, which represents the evil and darkness hidden in human nature. This is contrary to the positive and optimistic salvation spirit given by Christ in the biblical culture. Golding is using the Lord of the Flies to expose the human beings who are truly brutal and cruel to self-proclaimed Christian civilization.

The protagonist of the story in *Lord of the Flies* is a group of children between the ages of six and twelve. In the Bible, children are regarded as the representatives of the best and the purest. This kind of thinking has even affected countless Western literati. For example, Wordsworth regards children as the father of adults, because they are closer to God and therefore good. In the novel, the order and reason from the civilized society influence the children's actions, so they even try to establish a certain order at first. And the beautiful island scenery attracted their interest at first. As the binding force of civilization gradually disappears, the hidden evil in human nature wakes up. In these young and innocent children, it is actually a kind of satisfaction, intoxication and enjoyment for the bloody killing, which is a terrible degeneration of human nature. At the end of the novel, after Ralph was rescued, Golding wrote that Ralph couldn't stop the tears, weeping for the loss of childlike innocence and the darkness of human nature. The tragedy described by Golding in children is a reversal of the child's innocent purity and sanctification in the Bible.

Golding gave all the virtues of mankind to Simon and created a Jesus-like image of a saint. Simon is the only child who combines truth, goodness and beauty. The prototype of Simon is Jesus. The name "Simon" comes from a disciple of Jesus and is full of religion. Simon showed the spirit of Christian love. His kindness is from the heart, pure and unselfish, stemming from his love for mankind. Simon is actively choosing to alienate, as God stands tall and silently cares for the entire human community. After understanding the truth of the beast, Simon climbed down the mountain to inform everyone, but the lightning and thunder were dark and the children lost their rationality in the brutal and crazy dance, killing Simon as a beast. Simon is dedicated to truth and morality. His death bears the meaning of Christian redemption. Jesus sacrificed his life to save all mankind. Simon also used his own life to atone for the children of the island.

IV. THE REALISTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF LORD OF THE FLIES

Flowing out of the desert island, away from the real society, *Lord of the Flies* caused a sensation in the world literary world with a new plot and a breakthrough theme. Golding wakes people up from the optimistic and intoxicating attitude of human goodness and faces the omnipresent evil in human nature, as if the epitome of European society in the 20th century. During the Second World War, the evil forces of fascism trampled on truth and justice with impunity, and many innocent people lost their lives in the war. The ideals of freedom, democracy, and fraternity pursued by the philosophers of the past are crushed by the cruel reality. The civilization created by human beings has become the power of aliens and destroys human beings themselves. The desert island described in the book of *Lord of the Flies* is no longer a desert island as a reality, but a symbol of the living environment of mankind and the opposite of the world of Western civilization. Golding used the process of the gradual fall of the desert island in human evils, emphasizing that human beings should consciously establish a civilized, peaceful, and rational social order, in order to prevent the tragedy that occurs due to the gradual deterioration of the living environment.

Humanity is the result of the unity of human beings' biological and social attributes. No one can be pure or simple. The desert island is the carrier of Golding's exploration of human nature and a symbol of the entire human society. The significance of the novel is not only the moral exploration of abstract human nature, When naval officers representing the civilized world and moral order came to

the island, *Lord of the Flies* also came to reality, and the thinking about human nature was closely related to real life. After the Second World War, people have just experienced a physical and spiritual catastrophe, the world is not because of the end of the war and quiet down, the future war will destroy the shadow of mankind shrouded in western society. The purely child from the cooperation to the quarrel, from the rational to the superstition, from the follow-up to the dictatorship, from the friendly good to the brutal evil, is actually the true expression of the disgust and fear of the real society. The author integrates his own experience of the fear of the Second World War and the danger of the Cold War into his novel, which is the real significance of *Lord of the Flies* and the great success of his novel. It was published at the time when the Cold War and confrontation between the two sides of the East and the West were the most intense. The shadow of nuclear war shrouded the whole world. Many people have already thought that the atomic bomb will bring unprecedented devastating disaster to mankind. Golding is bold. It is assumed that this page, which may have occurred in history, caters to people's awareness of reality. The characters portrayed in the *Lord of the Flies* are representative of the personality traits of different characters in the Western world in that era, and have more universal moral significance. In the face of evil, the deserted island civilization, which was rapidly divided and disintegrated, insinuated the incomprehensibility of the rationality and civilization of Western society in the 20th century, and the imperfections of democratic institutions and rules. The children on the island split into two opposing parts. The group led by Ralph represented the progressive society of the West, and the group led by Jack symbolized the reactionary group of dark autocracy. At the end of the novel, the intellectual, civilized, and rational democratic camp represented by Ralph was weakened and gradually disintegrated. The dark barbaric forces represented by Jack gradually seized power, destroyed the symbol of democracy, and finally pushed the civilized society established on the island to the edge of division and collapse, which led to the disaster of the desert island. These have exposed the weakness of the democracies that the Western society strongly touted and flaunted in the Second World War. They criticized the vicious and inflated dark and brutal forces headed by Hitler in World War II, destroying modern human civilization with the weapons represented by the progress of civilization, bringing terrible disasters to the world.[9]

At the end of the novel, Golding shifts the scene from the isolated desert island to the human society in the atomic war, and leads the reader to connect the desert island with the reality. The novel warns that the influence of capitalist education and civilization is not enough for people to have the ability to prevent and resist human evil. The war should be to fully understand the evils hidden in themselves and the real society, and reflect on the human roots that lead to criminal wars, facing the evil, controlling the darkness, and avoiding more terrible disasters. The method of revealing social reality in *Lord of the Flies* is implicit and symbolic. Obviously, whether by means of the desert island or the human society symbolized by it, Golding did not break away from social, political and historical factors in the process of exploring human evil. From *Lord of the Flies*, readers can not only feel the revealing of human nature from the perspective of the natural attributes of people such as seeking for life, hunger, and fear. At the same time, from the perspective of the social attributes of Jack's power, possessiveness, vanity and other people, readers can understand the practical significance of revealing human evil.

In the traditional desert island literature, the Christian faith is an important spiritual pillar of the hero. Robinson said: "The Holy Spirit of God is also teaching us in the Word of God, leading us to know the truth and making us consciously obey the instructions of God." [10] The tragedy in *Lord of the Flies* shows the complex situation of religious beliefs in modern society. The sacred choir became a bloodthirsty hunter, and Jack was turned into a tyrannical tyrant by the choir leader. These are the

manifestations of "the death of God." Golding expressed his worries about the abandonment of God in the 20th century through Simon's tragedy. He believed that abandoning faith would lead to nothingness and chaos, barbarism and darkness would be rampant, and modern people who lost faith would be like children on desert islands, irretrievably toward the fall and destruction.

V. CONCLUSION

As an important theme in English literature, the desert island is inseparable from the geographical environment of the island country and the nature of the British people's risk-expanding expansion. Unlike the previous desert island novels, *Lord of the Flies* has made great breakthroughs in form and theme, and become a sensational and literary masterpiece. *Lord of the Flies* explores the fragility of modern democratic civilization by exposing the disintegration of the democratic and civilized rule of children on the desert island and the annihilation of humanity, exposing the hidden evil nature of mankind. In the previous desert island literature works, both scientific rationality and religious rationality played an important role. However, Golding described the story of a tragic color through the evil in human nature. Through the works to warn the world, he shows deep concern for human beings. Golding reminded people to face the evil of human nature, guard against the fragility of democracy, pay attention to the natural ecology, call for moral concern in scientific rationality, and call on people to regain their faith. Only then can humanity emerge from the spiritual crisis and survival predicament of the new century.

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