

Foreshadowing in William Golding's Lord of the Flies

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It is worth noting that William Golding's post-war story *Lord of the Flies* (1954) is a parody of R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857) in which a number of boys are placed on an island and their behaviour is disciplined, in that they never change or deteriorate neither physically nor morally. But Golding wants to prove in his novel that what happens in *The Coral Island* is quite unrealistic. Golding is concerned with the violence in human nature. Golding's boys revert to primitive savagery because evil controls and guides their behaviour. J. S. Ryan notes that Golding's novel deals with the "inward realities, the inalienable violence in human nature, the responsibilities of organizing a society, and the failure of rational behaviour (symbolized in Ralph)."⁽¹⁾ The main theme of *Lord of the Flies*, as James R. Hurt says, is the deflation of English national egotism. The novel, he adds, "neatly punctures the myth of English schoolboy innocence celebrated by Ballantyne's hearty, wholesome *The Coral Island*."⁽²⁾

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This paper aims at shedding some light on one of the techniques used in Golding's novel: foreshadowing. This technique has a great deal to do with the ending of the novel. *Lord of the Flies* reaches its end upon the arrival of the British naval officer on a tropical island. The point which is still subject to critical disagreement is whether or not this arrival is symbolic of hope, of the boys' safety, and of the triumph of good over evil. This paper views the novel pessimistically by means of foreshadowing which supports Golding's dark outlook on man and the power and effect of evil in this world. It concentrates on two kinds of foreshadowing: evil (or ominous) events and good (or happy) ones, both of which foretell the evil consequences of the novel.

The technique of foreshadowing is skillfully used in Lord of the Flies right from the beginning so as to give hints at and prepare the reader for what happens later. Some foreshadowing devices or examples may be useful here. "All round him [Ralph] the long scar smashed into the jungle was a bath of heat" (p.7).⁽³⁾ The scar, made by the crashed aircraft that has carried the boys to the island, foreshadows that something bad, ominous or evil will occur. This example foretells the gap, division or split that will be gradually widening between the boys as far as the priorities, social duties and election are concerned.

Another example of foreshadowing is the comparison of the bird's cry with the witch's voice or scream. The mention of the "witch" implies evil - the main theme of this novel: ".. .a bird, a vision of red and yellow, flashed upwards with a witch - like cry and this cry was echoed by another" (p.7). This predicts the boys' savage "ululation" when hunting Ralph in the last chapter of this novel: "There he would sit, and the search would pass him by, and the cordon waver on, ululating along the island, and he would be free" (p.211); "It [the sound Ralph heard again] was an ululation over by the seashore, and now the next savage answered and the next" (p.211); "Behind him the ululation swept across the island once more and a single voice shouted three times" (p.215); "And there again, shrill and inevitable, was the ululation sweeping across the island. At that sound he shied like a horse among the creepers and ran once more till he was panting" (p.216). The "skull" prophesies horrible things to come; boys will be savagely killed later: "Then he [Ralph] leapt back on the terrace, pulled off his shirt, and stood there among the skull-like coconuts..." (p. 10). The unpleasantness of the island for the boys is foretold when Ralph, in an attempt to refresh himself in the pool, finds it very hot: "The water was warmer than his blood and he might have been swimming in a huge bath" (p. 13). Another example of prediction appears in: ".. .the eye was first attracted to a black, bat-like creature

that danced on the sand, and only later perceived the body above it. The bat was the child's shadow" (p.20). The boy's shadow is likened to a bat which is a kind of bird conventionally linked with the devil and night. This hint occurring early in the novel may be linked to a particular event which takes place later in the novel: the boys' savage dance culminates in the tearing into pieces of Simon's body, an event which shows the dark-natured and evil-hearted man. Golding's image or simile hints at or, as Alastair says, "intimates the presence of evil among the children."⁽⁴⁾ The comparison of the choir boys to something dark is another example of foreshadowing: "Within the diamond haze of the beach something dark was fumbling along.... Then the creature stepped from mirage on to clear sand, and they saw that the darkness was not all shadow but mostly clothing. The creature was a part of boys..." (p.20). Hereafter the lack of light and shadows will pervade the novel. The darkness, shadows and the colour black are used in this book to suggest the darkness that resides in man's heart. Another example of foreshadowing appears in the description of the boys' first exploration of the island:

.... A kind of glamour was spread over them and this scene and they were conscious of glamour and made happy by it. They turned to each other laughing excitedly, talking, not listening. The air

was bright. Ralph, faced by the task of translating all this into an explanation, stood on his head and fell over. When they had done laughing, Simon stroked Ralph's arm shyly; and they had to laugh again. (p.27)

The above passage reinforces and foreshadows the transiency of friendship. It obviously shows that the three boys Ralph, Jack and Simon feel so happy, proud, friendly and excited because of their first exploration of the island. But their happiness and friendship are temporary and will gradually be replaced by hatred. "Glamour" here, John S. Whitley says, "is no more than a temporary garment, a cloak thrown over the natural surround by the boys at this point, which will be easily stripped away to show the horror beneath."⁽⁵⁾ Being excited, they remember other island adventure novels they have read - Treasure Island, Swallows and Amazons, The Coral Island - which optimistically deal with romantic and pleasant adventures. But their dream world will soon be shattered when the little boy with a birthmark on his face tells them something about the night beast or a snake-like beast which was in fact nothing but tree - creepers.⁽⁶⁾ A significant prophecy can be seen in: "There was no place for standing on one's head. This time Ralph expressed the intensity of his emotion by pretending to knock Simon down; and soon they were a happy, heaving pile in the under-dusk" (p.29). The

boys, as this statement shows, are happy and still behave in a friendly way and civilized manner. They mean no harm, because it is a mock fight or fun violence now, but later it will turn into a real fight or violence. This prophecy of violence is later fulfilled, as John S. Whitley has commented: "The 'happy' pile is to become first the mob hurling itself upon the terrified sow and then the hysterical savages who, through a very different intense emotion, knock Simon down and never allow him to get up."⁽⁷⁾ The savage behaviour or future terror which the above example foretells appears in: "At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on the beast [Simon], screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws" (p. 168). The boys are now like wild animals, and the verbs of action (surged, poured down, leapt, screamed, struck, bit, tore) are expressive of the boys' intense, urgent and wild passion. The episode of the rock is a foreshadowing of the boys' savage action, their moral degeneration and the future horror. After climbing a high hill, the three boys Ralph, Jack and Simon become sure that it is an island. Out of happiness, they push a large rock which causes damage to the forest:

The great rock loitered, poised on one toe, decided not to return, moved through the air, fell, struck, turned over, leapt droning through the air and smashed a deep hole in the canopy of the forest. Echoes and birds flew, white and pink dust floated, the forest further down shook as with the passage of an enrage monster... (p. 30)

The simile is ominous for it describes the progress of the rock. The rock prophesies two rock incidents and hints at a future terror. The first is the rock which Roger will throw at Piggy: "The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee...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..." (p.200). The second is the rocks the savages will throw at Ralph to force him leave his hiding place to kill him⁽⁸⁾:

Something boomed up on the red rock, then the earth jumped and began to shake steadily, while the noise as steadily increased Ralph was shot into the air, thrown down, dashed against branches...the whole thicket bent and the roots screamed as they came out of the earth together, (p.214)

The above two quotations immediately remind us of and take us back to an earlier stage in the novel when the writer had threateningly prepared us for something awful to happen.

The island itself, being shaped like a boat, has a symbolic connotation: "It was roughly boat-shaped... The tide was running so that long streaks of foam tailed away from the reef and for a moment they felt that the boat was moving steadily astern" (p.31). According to Bernard S. Oldsey and Weintraub, the island subtly prefigures the coming regression among the boys. This backward movement, they rightly argue, is suggestive of the deviation from civilization and is related to Piggy's "assomart" and "the general note of scatology - as with the littluns being 'taken short' in the orchard-which prevails in this book on Beelzebub, lord of the flies and dung."⁽⁹⁾ When Simon asks the boys about the dirtiest thing that they can think of or imagine, Jack answers with "shit". Undoubtedly, this is not what Simon means; what he has on his mind is the evil in man.⁽¹⁰⁾ This is an indication that reason and sense no longer exist on the island or that their role has ended. All the boys are savages now.

In order to warn the reader against what is to come, the writer uses another foreshadowing device:

*'We'll have rules!'he [Jack] cried excitedly. 'Lots of rules!
Then when anyone breaks 'em—'*

'Whee-oh!'

Wacco!'

'Bong!'

'Doink'

(pp.36-37)

The "Bong" is now as equal in importance as the rules. Again this is only fun violence which is prophetic of real violence and, as Whitley declares, the "line between this and the real violence of survival is thinning."⁽¹¹⁾ In other words, the gap between the boys' civilized manner and savage act is shortening and the lives of some will be at the expense of others. Survival will be for the strongest and savagest, not for the fittest. The first episode of the fire in the novel prepares the reader for something threatening to come. The boys, excited and happy, make fire in order to give a smoke signal for rescue. But they do not notice the danger of the fire until it gets larger and larger and the smoke rises higher. The writer first likens it to the squirrel, a "relatively harmless beast"⁽¹²⁾, as Whitley says,

*The squirrel leapt on the wings of the wind and
clung to another standing tree; eating downwards.
Beneath the dark canopy of leaves and smoke*

the fire laid hold on the forest and began to gnaw, (p.48)

and then to jaguar, a "more predatory creature,"⁽¹³⁾ as Whitley says, too.

The flames, as though they were a kind of wild life, crept as a jaguar creeps on its belly towards a line of birch-like saplings that fledged an outcrop of the pink rock. (p.48)

Whitley rightly argues that the progression or development of the boys' passion for killing will take a similar course to that of fire and its results are "foreshadowed in the death, by fire, of the small boy with the mulberry-coloured birthmark."⁽¹⁴⁾ Then:

Tall swathes of creepers rose for a moment into view, agonised, and went down again. The little boys, screamed at them.

'Snakes! Snakes! Look at the snakes!'

(P-51)

This suggests that the beast has "claimed its first victims."⁽¹⁵⁾ The snake is ominous and associated with evil power like the devil and Satan. The second and most destructive fire occurs at the end of the novel when the hunters, by fire, try to force Ralph out of his

hiding place. The fire foreshadows the explosion of the boys' passion, their savagery and desire to kill. The episode of Henry and the tiny transparent sea creatures serves as another device of foreshadowing:

..... He poked about with a bit of stick...and tried to control the motions of the scavengers. He made little runnels that the tide filled and tried to crowd them with creatures. He became absorbed beyond mere happiness as he felt himself exercising control over living things. He talked to them, urging them, ordering them. Driven back by the tide, his footprints became bays in which they were trapped and gave him the illusion of mastery. (p.66)

The above passage hides "brutality" and prophecies "power".⁽¹⁶⁾ Henry does not do this to laugh or for fun only, but to satisfy himself while using and imposing his own power upon other weak creatures. He treats them as a master ordering his soldiers or slaves. This game gives Henry the illusion that he is a real master, strong and proud. It reveals a certain tendency in man, the tendency to control others and impose on them his own will. Later the reader will find how irresponsible, unjust and savage Jack and Roger become in using their power upon their some-time friends. This is,

the writer wants to suggest, an evidence for man's internal evil, dark nature and desire to torture or kill:

"He's [Jack] going to beat Wilfred. "

"What for?"

Robert shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't know. He didn 't say. He got angry and made us tie Wilfred up. He's been " — he giggled excitedly — "he's been tied for hours, waiting — "

"But didn 't the Chief say why? "

"I never heard him. " (p. 176)

In preparation for Piggy's death, or the defeat of reason, or the victory of passion over rationality which Piggy stands for, the writer describes how Jack hit Piggy on the head and the latter's glasses fell on the rock: "Ralph made a step forward and Jack smacked Piggy's head. Piggy's glasses flew off and tinkled on the rocks" (p.78). The writer, it seems, intentionally meant for one of the lenses to break so as to foreshadow a further danger or threat. To describe how they caught the pig for the first time, the boys make a circle and Maurice, taking the part of the pig, dances in the middle of the circle:

Then Maurice pretended to be the pig and ran squealing into the centre, and the hunters, circling still, pretended to beat him. As they danced, they sang:

"Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in."

(pp.81-82)

The boys are happy, singing and dancing. They are just playing the hunting game and still civilized. This episode foreshadows and prepares the reader for another episode in which they will no more pretend or play but they will really kill Simon savagely. The writer aims at suggesting that the boys are on their way to change into cannibals, driven by the evil that resides deep in their hearts. Besides, Simon's death is foretold to us by one of the characters called Phil: "And I was frightened and started to call out for Ralph and then I saw something moving among the trees, something big and horrid" (pp.92-93). What Phil saw was only Simon, but he thought that Simon was a beast because he was afraid, and the frightened usually exaggerate and overestimate the description of the thing which results from fear. Equally effective as a prophecy of Simon's death is the setting or the hot, unpleasant weather:

..... *He [Simon] knelt down and the arrow of the sun fell on him. That other time the air had seemed to vibrate with heat: but now it threatened. Soon the weat was running from his long coarse hair. He shifted restlessly but there was no avoiding the sun.* (p. 146)

The 'arrow of the sun' may predict the attack of the hunters' spears [sticks] on him which he will fail to avoid. Furthermore, the writer, and shortly before Simon's death, warns the reader through a sign about or a description of the weather (mist, heavy clouds and humid air): "Up in the cloud canyons the thunder boomed again" (p. 155) and "...the build-up of clouds continued. A steady current of heated air rose all day from the mountain and was thrust to ten thousand feet; revolving masses of gas piled up the static until the air was to explode...." (p. 160). The weather is ominous, dull and expressive of violence, danger and explosion on the human level. A storm starts. Besides thunder, there is lightening and rain: "There was a blink of bright light beyond the forest and the thunder exploded again so that a littlun started to whine. Big drops of rain fell among them making individual sound when they struck" (p. 167). The bad weather conditions may suggest that even nature is angry, for the boys have become beasts, killing each other. The 'sucking sea' can be seen as another foreshadowing device preparing

the reader for Piggy's death. Piggy will be sucked by the sea: "With ludicrous care he embraced the rock, pressing himself to it above the sucking sea. The sniggering of the savages became a loud derisive jeer" (p. 195) and "Then the sea breathed again in a long sigh, the water boiled white and pink over the rock; and when it went, sucking back again, the body of Piggy was gone" (p.200).

Thus, the foregoing examples have obviously shown how effectively the writer employs the technique of foreshadowing which enables him to implicitly state his theme earlier in the novel as well as give us an idea about what kind of ending he has intended for his book. That man is inherently evil is revealed from the start of the text. It is man, he says, who brings violence with him and kills, for he cannot conquer his internal evil. The boys have practised and experienced evil and, consequently, lost their world of innocence, the world of children. The arrival of the officer will not guarantee the boys' safety for as long as man lives, there will be an endless tendency towards evil and a passionate desire to destroy. Foreshadowing clearly reflects the writer's gloomy mood and may defeat any explanation or reading of this novel in terms other than pessimistic, keeping in mind that the writers of the early 1950s, including Golding, expressed doubt about the future of mankind and reflected the mood in post-war European society.

Notes

1. T. S. Ryan, "The Two Pincher Martins: From Survival Adventure to Golding's Myth of Dying." A Journal of English Language and Literature, Vol.55, No.2 (April, 1974), p. 141.
2. James R. Hurt, "Grendel's Point of View: Beowulf and William Golding," MES. Vol.XIII, No.2, (Summer 1967), p.265.
3. William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954). Subsequent references to page numbers of this edition will appear in parenthesis in the text.
4. Alastair Niven, York Notes on William Golding's "Lord of the Flies" (London: Longman York Press, 1980), p. 13.
5. John S. Whitley, Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', Studies in English Literature, No.42 (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), p. 30.
6. Whitley, p.32.
7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p.31.
9. Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub, "Beelzebub Revisited: Lord of the Flies," in The Art of William Golding (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965). P.30.
10. Ibid.
11. Whitley, p.32.
12. Ibid., p.34.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p.38.

ملخص

أسلوب الإنذار بالأحداث في رواية سيد الذباب لوليام كولدنج

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يهدف البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على استخدام الروائي الانكليزي وليام كولدنج لأسلوب الإنذار بالأحداث قبل وقوعها بمهارة في روايته سيد الذباب وذلك لتهيئ القارئ لما سيقع فيما بعد من أحداث، كما ويستعرض البحث التشاؤم في الرواية من خلال هذا الأسلوب الذي يعزز نظرة الكاتب السوداوية للإنسان وقوة تأثير الشر في العالم، ويركز البحث على نوعين من الإنذار، السيئ والحسن، وكلاهما ينبئان القارئ بالعواقب السيئة للأحداث في الرواية.

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