

The Matrix of Arabo-Islamophobia
In American Culture:
The Contribution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to shed light on the matrix of factors, old and new, that contributed to the creation of petrified, negative image of Arabs and Arab culture in the American mind. This is attempted through unearthing albeit briefly, the political and religious roots of these factors in order to understand the attitude of Americans from all walks of life and intellectual levels towards the Arab world in the twentieth century.

In particular, this article also hopes to familiarize the reader with the octopic outreach and the devisive strategies utilized by the pro-Israeli lobbyists in order to distort and suppress the truth about the Arab-Israeli conflict and even Arab culture as a means of attaining their political goals.

To achieve this aim, the article not only explicates a sample of widely disseminated journal article, editorials, literary and non-literary works, but also denudes the propagandist purpose behind these works and how they can likely shape and subsequently ossify the American public opinion about Arabs, their culture, and political issues.

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□ ملخص □

تعتبر رواية "سيد النباب" لويليام غولدنغ مسرحية ناجحة لفكرة "الخطيئة الأصلية". فالأولاد في الرواية النين يُلقون على جزيرة مهجورة يُظهرون استعداداً غريباً للرجوع إلى وحشية الإنسان. ويخلق الكاتب ظروفاً معينة ليكشف طبيعة الإنسان الشريرة ورغبته الجامحة لتحقيق مكانة متميزة على حساب الآخرين. إن هذه الرواية تجسد تهاية براءة الإنسان وظلمة قلبه في عالم لا يرحم حيث تحل فيه الإنسان الأقوى والأثمن مكان الصدارة.

NOTES

1. William Golding, quoted by Frank Kermode, 'Golding's Intellectual Economy', in *William Golding: Novels, 1954-67*, a Casebook (London, 1985), p.56.
2. William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, (London And Faber LTD), 1954, pp. 169-70.
3. Ibid. pp. 90-92.
4. Ibid. p. 189.
5. For a similar view, see Stephan Wall, 'Aspects of the Novel 1930-60' in *Sphere History of Literature in the English Language*, Vol. 7 (the Twentieth Century), ed. Bernard Bergonzi, Sphere Book (London, 1970), p.264.
6. *Lord of the Flies*, Op. Cit. p. 174.
7. Ibid. pp. 222-3.
8. C.B.Cox, 'On *Lord of the Flies*', in *William Golding: Novels, 1954-67*, Op. Cit. p. 121.
9. *Lord of the Flies*, Op. Cit. p. 223.
10. Norman Page thinks that the phrase 'the darkness of man's heart' is taken from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* although Golding says that he had not read *Heart of Darkness* before writing *Lord of the Flies*. See *William Golding: Novels, 1954-67*, ed. Norman Page, a Casebook (London, 1985), p. 105.

drill, epulettes, revolver and row of guilt buttons are only more sophisticated substitutes for the war paints and sticks of Jack and his followers. He too is chasing men in order to kill, and the dirty children mock the absurd civilised attempt to hide the power of evil.⁽⁸⁾ Likewise the reader is almost forced to identify himself, if only partially, with the children but more so with the naval officer; or at least he should heed the implicit warning that the evil which is integrated within them is potentially dormant in his very humanity. Thus when Ralph weeps 'for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy'⁽⁹⁾ we can only respond by fully sympathising with his plight and at the same time feeling both sorry and melancholic that man should be like that.

Ralph's realisation is more or less similar to that of Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*⁽¹⁰⁾ who is stunned at 'the horror' in human nature, a vision which is made particularly shocking since it comes at the last moment of his life. Although Ralph is a mere boy, his final penetrating words will have a strong impact on our imagination which is difficult to be erased even by the passage of time.

little out of place. Otherwise, almost everything else in the novel is fully convincing since the author presents a lively drama without apparently intruding on the narrative. In terms of his exaggeration of the scope of evil in the book one may observe that Golding is deliberately magnifying the issue as a warning to his fellow human beings as if saying: Man beware; if you do not control yourself you have the potentiality of becoming as vicious as Jack and his group. His method has been to use the boys as an emblem for man. Initially the marvelous element of the story delights us and drives us away from our reality. Furthermore, the fact that the actors are mere boys makes us distance ourselves from them. But when they act like men we realise that it is man in general who is being implied in the criticism. It is the same method which is adopted by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* who also creates certain devices to prevent initially the identification with characters; but later it becomes clear that it is man himself who is meant to be the target of satire and he is indirectly warned against the 'Yahoo' element in his nature.

By the same token, the naval officer, who comes to rescue the boys when they burn the whole island, feels superior to them; he is utterly shocked and highly ironical of their behaviour:

"I should have thought that a pack of British boys - you're all British aren't you? - would have been able to put up a better show than that - I mean ---"

"It was like that at first," said Ralph, "before things---"

He stopped.

"We were together then---"

The officer nodded helpfully.

"I know. Jolly good show. Like the Coral Island."⁽⁷⁾

However, the double irony is that he himself is also the target of satire. As C. B. Cox observes, 'His trim cruiser, the sub-machine gun, his white

"I'm going to him with this conch in my hands. I'm going to hold it out. Look, I'm goin' to say, you're stronger than I am and you haven't got asthma. I'm goin' to say, and with both eyes. But I don't ask for my glasses back, not as a favour. I don't ask you to be a sport, I'll say, not because you're strong, but because what's right's right. Give me my glasses, I'm going to say - you got to!"⁽⁴⁾

Here the voice of civilisation and the powerful moral protest are mocked and later translated into crushing Piggy once and for all. The implication is quite clear: left to his nature man is only motivated by whatever satisfies his pure selfish motives and he is prepared to do anything in his power to feed his 'eccentric' and narrow-minded egoism. The bitter irony is particularly apparent when man harms his fellow human beings without gaining anything in return except satisfying his sadism and sense of pleasure at the miseries of others.

One may conclude that Golding is a little extremist by exaggerating the sadistic nature of man. One may also protest that life is not like that, for there are many good-natured people and humanists who would act differently. Whether art should be true to life or not, and how far, is a controversial issue which critics are still preoccupied with. Certainly an artist has the right to create his own vision of reality without being absolutely accurate about the process of 'imitation' provided he does not impose his ideas on the narrative. As far as *Lord of the Flies* is concerned everything in the novel is dramatised convincingly with the possible exception of Simon's characterisation. He is sometimes a little abstract owing perhaps to his weighty role in the novel.⁽⁵⁾ It is simply difficult to imagine a boy so courageous and sacrificial to the point of annihilating himself for others, something which makes his action appear motivated not so much by the dramatic force of the novel but rather by the symbolic implications of the story. Similarly after Simon's murder, when Piggy touches Ralph's bare shoulder, we are told that 'Ralph shuddered at the human contact,'⁽⁶⁾ a gesture which appears as imposed from above and a

boys in Lord of the Flies are dirty, inefficient, short-sighted, disorganised, and highly selfish. They are prepared to steal and kill just for pleasure of satisfying their egotism and sadism. The murder of Simon, the stealing of Piggy's glasses which reduces him to blindness and futility, and the arduous and prolonged pursuit of Ralph to kill him are all acts of pure evil which naturally develop with the boys as they live on the island. In other words, their vicious instinct drives them to get rid of the visionary Simon, the intelligent Piggy and of their sensible and legitimate leader Ralph so that their barbarity is not checked by any force. Actually they feel secure and liberated in the idea of painting their faces to hide their shame and self-consciousness of whatever they are doing. Thus we feel deeply moved with Piggy who cannot under any circumstances understand that somebody should be delighted in the idea of blinding him, and worse still that he has any right of doing something under the influence of his whimsicality:

"You can take spears if you want but I shan't. What's the good? I'll have to be led like a dog, anyway. Yes, laugh. Go on, laugh. There's them on this island as would laugh at anything. And what happened? What's grown-ups goin' to think? Young Simon was murdered. And there was that other Kid what had a mark on his face. Who's seen him since we first come here?"

"Piggy! Stop a minute!"

"I got the conch. I'm going to that Jack Merridew and tell him, I am."

"You'll get hurt."

"What can he do more than he has? I'll tell him what's what. You let me carry the conch. Ralph. I'll show him the one thing he hasn't got."

Piggy paused for a moment and peered round at the dim figure. The shape of the old assembly, trodden in the grass, listened to him.

"I got the conch!" said Piggy indignantly. "Ralph--they ought to shut up, oughtn't they? You shut up, you littluns! What I mean is that I don't agree about this here fear. Of course there isn't nothing to be afraid of in the forest. Why--I been there myself! You'll be talking about ghosts and such things next. We know what goes on and if there's something wrong, there's someone to put it right."

He took off his glasses and blinked at them. The sun had gone as if the light had been turned off.

He proceeded to explain.

"If you get a pain in your stomach, whether it's a little one or a big one---"

"Yours is a big one."

"When you done laughing perhaps we can get on with the meeting. And if them littluns climb back on the twister again they'll only fall off in a see. So they might as well sit on the ground and listen. No. You have doctors for everything, even the inside of your mind. You don't really mean that we got to be frightened all the time of nothing? Life." said Piggy expansively, "is scientific, that's what it is. In a year or two when the war's over they'll be travelling to Mars and back. I know there isn't no beast--not with claws and all that, I mean--but I know there isn't no fear, either."⁽³⁾

Such a passage can only be produced by a writer who perfectly understands the psychology of children and the elements which excite their wild imagination. As the story moves forward their evil becomes more apparent and they begin to feel at home with their new environment. Unlike the boys in *The Coral Island* who remain civilised till the end, the

whispering littluns. "Serve you right if something did get you, you useless lot of cry-babies! But there is no animal---"

Ralph interrupted him testily.

"What is all this? Who said anything about an animal?"

"You did the other day. You said they dream and cry out. Now they talk-not only the littluns, but my hunters sometimes-talk of a thing, a dark thing, a beast, some sort of animal. I've heard. You thought not, didn't you? Now listen. You don't get big animals on small islands. Only pigs. You only get lions and tigers in big countries like Africa and India---"

"And the Zoo---"

"I've got the conch. I'm not talking about the fear. I'm talking about the beast. Be frightened if you like. But as for the beast---"

Jack paused, cradling the conch, and turned to his hunters with their dirty black caps.

"Am I a hunter or am I not?"

They nodded, simply. He was a hunter all right. No one doubted that.

"Well then--I've been all over this island. By myself. if there were a beast I'd have seen it. Be frightened because you're like that--but there is no beast in the forest."

Jack handed back the conch and sat down. The whole assembly applauded him with relief. Then Piggy held out his hand.

"I don't agree with all jack said. but with some. 'Course there isn't a beast in the forest. How could there be? what would a beast eat?"

"Pig."

"We eat pig."

"Piggy!"

It is significant that as Simon gradually moves towards realising the evil inherent within human nature his recognition is ironically countered by the rapid degeneration of the boys into a condition of total savagery and pure animality. Initially the children are fascinated by the island and their sense of order is quite awake. Ralph's common sense and Piggy's practical intelligence draw them to a world which is still civilised. Then Jack's sense of domination and the boys' readiness to follow a leader who can satisfy their latent instinct to liberate themselves from the restrictions of civilisation disrupt everything. Golding adopts the children's point of view to convey the physical sensations of childhood experience. He pays extensive attention to local, particular and physical life so that the reader can feel and imagine the boys' situation and be convinced of their dramatic change from initial delight to final horror and from appearing innocent at the beginning to becoming 'professional' savages at the end. Dialogue is exploited to the full which further convinces us of the reality of the children and how they actually think. Their creation of the beast, for example, which is a reflection of man's readiness to embrace superstition and of his fear of the unknown, is a result of the whole atmosphere which they find themselves trapped in:

Jack stood up and took the conch.

"So this is a meeting to find out what's what. I'll tell you what's what. You littluns started all this with the fear talk. Beasts! Where from? Of course we're frightened sometimes but we put up with being frightened. Only Ralph says you scream in the night. What does that mean but nightmares? Anyway, you don't hunt or build or help-you're a lot of crybabies and sissies. That's what. And as for the fear-you'll have to put up with that like the rest of us."

Ralph looked at Jack open-mouthed, but Jack took no notice.

"The thing is-fear can't hurt you any more than a dream. There aren't any beasts to be afraid of on this island." He looked along the row of

is 'animated' to embrace his 'saintly' body and to show that suffering is compensated for:

Along the shoreward edge of the shallows the advancing clearness was full of strange, moonbeam-bodied creatures with fiery eyes. Here and there a larger pebble clung to its own air and was covered with a coat of pearls. The tide swelled in over the rain-pitted sand and smoothed everything with a layer of silver. Now it touched the first of the stains that seeped from the broken body and the creatures made a moving patch of dressed Simon's coarse hair with brightness. The line of his cheek silvered and the turn of his shoulder become sculptured marble. The strange, attendant creatures, with their fiery eyes and trailing vapours, busied themselves round his head. The body lifted a fraction of an inch from the sand and a hubble of air escaped from the mouth with a wet plop. Then it turned gently in the water.

Somewhere over the darkened curve of the world the sun and moon were pulling; and the film of water on the earth planet was held, bulging slightly on one side while the solid core turned. The great wave of the tide moved further along the island and the water lifted. Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea.⁽²⁾

enough flesh and blood to make them act not so much as part of a scheme but rather as independent individuals fully responsible for their action. Golding is not a hardliner about his concept of evil. There is evidence in the novel that human life is a kind of experiment and worthwhile living and exploring. Moreover, people are different: if Roger is enthusiastic to join Jack's group the two Samneric are extremely reluctant to do so, while Ralf and Piggy oppose him despite pressure and danger; they also establish a beautiful friendship between them and do their best to act humanly and sensibly.

The extensive details about illustrating character, place, action and situation convince us of the reality of whatever is being described but they also signify that everything in the world of the novel is absolutely meaningful and part of design. In this Golding differs from many modern writers who look at life as futile and at human action, suffering and endurance as absurd. He at least tries to control and give a new shape and meaning not only to human values but also to the sense of futility and chaos which dominates present life. He, furthermore, revitalises our human concept of guilt, pain and horror and how they can affect the individual and possibly lead him to right action. If life is meaningless then naturally human values and responses should at least be naturalised; on the other hand, if life is meaningful, as Golding unequivocally believes and demonstrates, then every detail, no matter how trivial it might appear, is significant both in itself and as part of an overall scheme of existence. Simon's death which is seen as a Christian sacrifice is an obvious example that life is rich in meaning. First the small children are obsessed with the idea of a beast as part of their fantasy; then an actual beast is created whose emblem takes the shape of the head of a dead pig fixed on the end of a stick and animated by flies. The head is presumably offered as a kind of sacrifice for the beast which the children unwittingly associate with the 'vague' body of a dead parachutist. It is only Simon, the Christ-like figure, who 'voluntarily embraces the beast... and tries to get rid of him.'⁽¹⁾ His death is highly tragic since he discovers the reality of the dead parachutist and more importantly that the beast or evil is 'only us' and integrated within our souls. It is bitterly ironic that Simon is mistaken for the beast and murdered before he can communicate his useful and liberating knowledge. If his people cannot appreciate his sacrifice then nature itself

would insist on a reality that seeks its realisation through concrete images which are part of day-to-day life. To find a text firmly grounded in realistic details and yet capable of allegorical interpretation is not at all easy. Golding remarkably achieves the difficult task of describing concretely and vividly the life of his boys on the island and at the same time blowing enough spirit to make them stand for humanity in general and for modern civilised man in particular. Very often the boys act like men so persuasively that we often forget that they are mere children. By the same token, the island itself is boat-shaped symbolising man's life as a continuous journey into the bewilderment and the unknown and the 'ocean' of life; however, Golding devotes a lot of space to convince us of the lively reality of the island with its lagoon, jungle, hill, greenery, animal life and beauty. The conch, for example, is a piece of exquisite beauty and part of the island but at the same time it is used for calling for assemblies and acquires a new significance related to order and civilisation. When it is broken the incident signifies the end of all the positive associations related to the conch which are attached to the civilised world.

Evil is not a new subject in modern English literature. Looked at from a purely religious viewpoint, man is a sinner by nature. All branches of Christianity confirm the idea that Jesus sacrificed his life for the sins of humanity and that he is a mediator between man and God. The extremists, like the Calvinists, insist that man is intrinsically evil and they go so far as including children in their scheme of visualising a world full of satanic creatures polluting the earth after losing paradise. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for example, illustrates the idea of sin in the form of a burden which man has to get rid of before reconciling himself with God; only a few characters are saved through God's grace and the rest of the world is doomed to eternal damnation. Golding dramatises the question of evil often without making the reader feel that he is imposing his abstract idea on the narrative. He was a school-master and had enough experience of the life of children to make his boys' behaviour sound plausible and convincing while they retreat into savagery and embody evil. Although his characters at times appear somewhat like types (Piggy representing intelligence, Ralph common sense, Simon Christianity, Jack totalitarianism and Roger sadism), most of them are endowed with

The concept of evil has preoccupied many modern writers who were particularly dismayed by man's record in the twentieth century. The two world wars have confirmed the aggressive and vicious nature of man; some writers felt totally disillusioned with a creature bent on destruction to assert his domination. Christian novelists like William Golding found in the idea of original sin a confirmation of man's evil nature and of his desire to achieve prominence at the expense of his fellow human beings.

Lord of the Flies is a successful dramatisation of the concept of original sin and how man's evil is inherent within his very soul. Golding does not present his theme in a familiar environment where values are usually accepted without much questioning; he rather chooses an uninhabited island where 'man' is made to adopt the style of life developed by primitive people in order to reveal his barbarity which has been disguised by civilisation. Initially the island is looked at as a paradise but later it becomes 'polluted' by all the qualities which attest to man's evil nature. The novel can be seen as a test for man's resources to deal with nature and with his fellow human beings. The vehicle for this idea is a group of school boys who have been shot down on an island in the Pacific during some kind of atomic war, an incident which in itself signifies the destructiveness of man inflicted upon himself and nature.

In the last page of the novel there is a reference to R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* which is established as an ironical background for *Lord of the Flies*. *The Coral Island* tells the story of a group of British boys who are marooned on a desert island where they manage to lead a highly civilised and cheerful life. They use their resources to overcome all sorts of difficulties demonstrating all the time honour, courage, and obedience, qualities which are attributed to their British background. *Lord of the Flies* is a refutation of *The Coral Island*, and indeed of any book - such as *Robinson Crusoe* - which celebrates the resourcefulness and optimism of man. Golding demonstrates the almost instinctive readiness of his boys to lapse into savagery and to do away with their British civilisation and any sense of order. In a very short time they become so vicious that they form a stigma not only for their nationality but also for the whole human race.

Allegory implies some form of abstraction that is hardly suitable for fiction which has often associated itself with 'realism'. Most novelists