



Weird in the Wild: A Study of Bizarre Human Behavior Far from the Framework of Civilization in *The Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract— *When the norms of a civilized society are nonexistent and the rules and regulations to control human behavior are absent or inadequate, an eccentric outburst of violence and cruelty overpowers the civilized and controlled conduct of human being. In terms of the daily acts of violence performed by one man against another, whether on a small, personal level or during large world wars, Golding's portrayal of this aspect of human nature in his novel The Lord of the Flies appears to be very true. On the other hand, Conrad has depicted in Heart of Darkness the qualities that make us human, primarily the darker aspects of our nature, such as man's pride of his own superiority. This approach is revealed when the colonizers in Africa treat the natives more cruelly and dehumanizingly due of the primitive manner of their life and weaponry. In both of the novels the settings are dark and deep forest, which holds a special place in the human imagination because it allows us to briefly put our urbane, civilized selves aside, and let our wild selves take over the control. This essay makes an effort to pinpoint and examine the weird behavior of violence that flares out in a remote, wild setting, away from the network of civilization.*

Keywords— *Far from civilization, human behavior, violence, Lord of the Flies, The Heart of Darkness.*



I. INTRODUCTION

Human nature is a concept that provides the fundamental ideas of humankind; basically, an attempt to define what is assumed to be human. It's really hard to tell what human nature is, because it's made up of so many different ways people act, react, expect, and accept things. Human nature comes from the genes and is shaped by environment. People occasionally feel like revolting from the regular behavioral pattern or from the routine agenda for frustrations, the weight of compulsions, social obligations etc. They want to break free from their restrictions and do whatever they want, especially when their suppressed drives come out to the surface. People respond to the norms mainly because of fear of penalty or to avoid being abandoned, if it occurs within the boundaries of the society. This paper shows that the most unmatched examples are found in *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, investigates thoroughly into the problems with

imperialism. Marlow sees instances of torture, cruelty, and almost slavery as he moves towards the 'Heart of Darkness', the name given to Africa, mainly Congo, for the shape of its map and the mystery of ambiguity. The incidents of the book presented by Marlow gives us a miserable picture of colonial exertion and he seems arguing to support imperialism. What the company's employee call "trade", and their way of treatment for the colonized Africans as the act of "civilization", emerges to be forceful collection of ivory and the natives were treated in the worst way as slaves. Such violation of human rights could have never taken place, even is unimaginable if Kurtz, the protagonist was in England treating his own natives. It was only because of his power of weapons supported by imperial force, where there were no legal rights of the native Africans as their country was under the imperial English rulers.

On the other hand, in *Lord of the Flies* we experience goosebump finding the story of a deserted island, where an

aero plane carrying adults and prep-school boys crashes, killing all the adults on board. The lads' attempts to construct a social order that gradually degenerate into barbarism as they create their own civilization. Before the boys were rescued, their unruly savage manner extends to the intentional murder of a boy and another was at the edge of his life being chased by the unbelievably transformed unrestrained boys, who were quite innocent and far from such violent attitude just a few days ago. This paper finds the weirdest manner in a colonizer protagonist and in a group of boys and a similar downfall to savagery from civilization in a wild environment free from rules and regulations.

II. METHODOLOGY

The paper can be considered as a qualitative study; it does not have any specific formula or methods. It approaches the in-depth study of the two fictions and the characters are analyzed, their actions are scrutinized with attempts to find cause and effect, the protagonists' behavior in some specific moments of the plot which relates with the violent approaches deep inside the jungle, far away from all social or law infrastructure. Some similar texts are also brought into light comparing and contrasting their manner in similar situations. Some psychoanalytic theories by some renowned writers are presented which matches with their conditions and unleashed the reasons of such cruel violence. Some well-known writers' psychoanalytic views are provided, which fit their circumstances and reveal the causes of such heinous violence. The authors' personal ideas and claims about the subject are also highlighted and examined. These searches are combined to reach a hypothesis that weird behavior in the characters of different texts is found that goes beyond control when far from the society; but in terms of intensity and extremity, the presentation in the Heart of Darkness and Lord of the Flies surpass any other texts available.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* and William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* were published in 1902 and 1954, respectively. Many researchers have looked at these works for their research and reviews. *The Heart of Darkness* has already been the subject of many reviews and studies, particularly from a postcolonial perspective. The disastrous effects of European empire as shown in the novella, are rarely utilized as references in post-colonial writing, but the politics of colonialism and the mistreatment of the colonizers are frequently selected as the subject of study. Along with topics like racism, religion, solitude, etc., "white sepulture" is a frequent issue that appears in studies and essays. On the other side, in the

60 years since its publication, *Lord of the Flies* has gained popularity among academics who study civilization, laws and regulations, the loss of innocence, and other related topics. Particularly the significant adjustments those boys underwent to cope with a difficult survival phase, are a common topic of psychoanalytic examination. There are several things about these two fictions to contrast and compare. To the best of my knowledge, it contributes some new concepts to the previous works as a wide variety of other texts are brought to light and a comparative and exhaustive study is attempted, focused on the psychoanalysis in a rules-free independent state.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychoanalyst Chanter profoundly simplifies that social rules and regulations are like burdens to the free human soul, as they compel them to obey certain methods and forbid them to do whatever they want. He states:

“The forest occupies a unique position in the human imagination, as a place where we can temporarily lay down the burden of our urbane and civilized personalities and let our wild selves come to the fore.” (Chanter, 2022, para. 2)

Some social responsibilities make them play certain roles as a father, as a son, or as any other family member, and do the duties like earning or taking care of the family- keep them busy. At the workplace, they need to play roles as an employer or employee and the pressure of everlasting deadlines, challenges, and anxieties of different events, loss, and pain of failure, even the celebration of some attainments keeps them running like a robot regardless to their personal feelings of tiredness or boredom. Even if the cases are not of extreme disappointment or loss, monotony or the unattended adventures of life chase us towards a breathing space free from all bindings.

The Tolkien scholars, Shelley Saguaro and Deborah Cogan Thacker mention the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim's said of the forest-as-symbol that, “The passage into the forest signifies a psychoanalytic space – a place separated from everyday experience in which to be lost is to be found.” (Saguaro et al, 2023, p.140)

Epiphanic returns by self-consciousness are also common as depicted by Robert Frost in his well-celebrated poem, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”-

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep

But I have promises to keep

And miles to go before I sleep

And Miles to go before I sleep”. [Frost,1969]

Here a social being was out of his regular routine for some moment and was obsessed with his fantasies of entering into a forest on the darkest and freezing evening of the

year. The reason was just the adventurous instinct to watch the woods filling up with snow, some spiritual enlightenment or some uncanny suicidal tendency- is not clearly mentioned. The same kind of fantasy in the forest is found in Keats' deeply sensual poem, "Ode to a Nightingale" where fondness for death is revealed as a frequent tendency, as if life itself is in love with death and inviting it by different names in different occasions were not very rare for him. This happens when the poet describes himself deep inside the jungle, when eyes cannot see in the darkness and other senses like listening to the darkling and buzzing of insects, smelling the wildflowers and guessing the season, or trying to solve the mysteries in the darkness touching things around. So much of living with all senses somehow triggers the feeling of living in full and a disappointment in forthcoming less sensitive moments, auspiciously inspires the poet to seize the moment by breathing last while living so much full in senses. Feeling "Now more than ever seems it rich to die" the poet utters-

"Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;"

[Keats, 1820]

The above shared experiences of the poets are highly emotional and intellectual imagination or self-destructive actions which harm no one else. *Robinson Crusoe* the novel composed by Daniel Defoe in 1719, depicted another figure far from the civilization who coped up in an uninhabited island after a shipwreck. At least in the first few chapters of the book, Crusoe's accomplishments in conquering his circumstances, getting through his challenges, and being in charge of his surroundings paint a favorable picture of the condition of mastery. Crusoe arrives in an unfriendly place and settles there. He demonstrated his newfound mastery by domesticating and taming wild goats and parrots while Crusoe served as their leader. Crusoe is also a master of his fate and of himself thanks to his mastery of nature. Crusoe's mastery can be portrayed until the arrival of Friday. However, with Friday's arrival, this mastery-related motif becomes less uplifting and more complicated as it starts to relate more to unfair human interactions. Even before teaching him the words "yes" and "no," Crusoe teaches Friday the word master in Chapter XXIII, and he even told Friday that was his name." Crusoe never considers Friday as a buddy or an equal; for some reason, he automatically assumes superiority.

The Jungle Book first published in 1894, a collection of tales by English author Rudyard Kipling, was very well

known and extremely popular among kids for being adapted for film and other media. The stories' main themes were animal actions and Darwinian competition for "survival of the fittest"— are allegorically presented, different from human archetypes that appear in animal form. The tales also teach respect for authority, obedience, and a knowledge of one's place in society with "the law of the jungle" and show how free one can be to wander between many realms, like when Mowgli moves between the forest and the village. Furthermore, critics have emphasized the stories' underlying wildness. The coexistence of humans and animals in the jungle was romanticized by Kipling. People's impulses lead them away from the intended societal moral when they wander far from their familiar surroundings. Excluded from the norms of a civilized society, the inherent evil of conduct will come to light.

Another equally popular, and very eminent figure is Tarzan, first created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Several adaptations of the character appear in cinema, TV series, comic strips and comic books made the character one of the most popular characters of the world. Some more authors created sequels of the series with the creator's permission and was equally popular and well received by the audience or readers. This is another fantasy among audience about jungle, the purity of soul far from the selfish materialistic world. The romance enhances because of his hero like skills developed as the result of upbringing in the jungle by apes foster parents after his human parents' death in a robbery during his infancy. His ability of climbing, clinging, leaping or the unique style of communicating with animals and calling for help from the animals of the jungles while in trouble. These fantastic fantasy does not make Tarzan so called civilized as his fitness in the jungle mismatches with the norms and regulations of human society. Some more controversy rises regarding racism and gender issues through critical analysis of the character. This character is an extreme show of masculinity and white chivalry. The muscle, body strength speed all are power exhibition of a white human male in the kingdom of animals and native black people. Gail Bederman discusses how numerous historical figures supported or opposed the notion that "civilization" is based on white masculinity in her book *Manliness and Civilization*. She ends with a chapter on Tarzan of the Apes (1912) and to her point of view Tarzan is the typical male criteria early 20th century white Americans. She also accuses Tarzan for being revengeful for killing his ape mother and actually enjoys killing the cannibalistic Mbongans, the native black people. We find the human who was raised in the jungle by anthropoid ape parents was romantic enough to be called alike day dreaming but

his unrestricted power did find a way to bring violence in that human free jungle; free from human societal rules. In this section of literature review, we find many well received popular literature has depicted human nature as weird in the wild as the focus of this paper where there was scope for romanticism and good vibes for imagination. But the intense violence and cruelty in *The Heart of Darkness* and *Lord of the Flies* remained matchless.

V. WEIRD BEHAVIOR IN HEART OF DARKNESS

Conrad depicts the character of Kurtz in *The Heart of Darkness* as an ivory trader who was dispatched by an unknown Belgian organization into the heart of the Congo Free State, a region of Africa. Kurtz has used his superior technology to make himself a charming demigod of all the tribes surrounding his station and has so amassed enormous amounts of ivory. His name is therefore well-known throughout the area.

Kurtz had a good reputation as a high-class agent, but as he grew stronger through controlling the Africans, and turned nasty. Kurtz allowed his greed to his victims. He and his African Allies invade numerous villages as a result of his insatiable need of ivory. Marlow explains, "The jungle has got into his veins, consumed his flesh." (Conrad). The phrase "beyond the pale" can be appropriate for the drastic change of Kurtz as it refers to stand outside the conventional boundaries of law. The duration of Kurtz's stay in Africa, which is literally outside the boundaries of law, results in his corruption. He takes his pamphlet and writes, "Exterminate all the brutes!" at the very end. He creates rites and venerations fit for a tyrant in order to persuade the locals to worship him.

The Russian, describes to Marlow how he recovered Kurtz's health by nursing him and had the opportunity to observe him very closely. However, Kurtz's fascination with ivory has become overwhelming. The Russian informs us that Kurtz threatened to shoot him unless he gave him the ivory:

"He [Kurtz] declared he would shoot me unless I gave him the ivory ...because he could do so, and had a fancy for it, there was nothing on earth to prevent him from killing who he jolly well pleased". (p.72)

Kurtz is aware that he has the authority to kill and seize anybody he pleases. He wants to and will do so because no one will ignore him or advise him not to. Kurtz has reportedly resorted to harsh countrywide raids in search of more ivory.

Kurtz has turned corrupt, and it appears that his obsession for ivory has trumped his morality. By scaring the locals into following him, he has won their loyalty and won their allegiance. He doesn't show anyone any mercy. He does not only kill the savages mercilessly but places their heads on a stake to threat them whoever is planning to rebel against him. When Marlow arrived at the camp and noticed these chopped skulls on sticks.

The Russian describes:

"A head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and, with the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line of the teeth, was smiling, too, smiling continuously at some endless and jocose dream of that eternal slumber." [P.74]

Later, the Russian was watching over the living place of Kurtz and found it was abnormal, the household seemed equally lifeless like the heads on the poles. When he advanced to learn more he found Kurtz was about to die. He seemed to finally realize and the epiphany just immediately before his death was shortened to a pair of same words:

"The horror! The horror!" (P.86)

May be this was his ultimate realization of horror of death that he imposed pleasantly on others numerously. This epiphany was only when it was too very much late. Only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible revenge for the wonderful incursion.

The manager of Kurtz who was deadly against him mentioned this exhibition of cut heads could never had been a trade secret, but to him there was nothing profitable in this. He wanted to focus on the issue that it was merely his hobby to perform such things rather than a necessity. He mentions:

"Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him — some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence. Whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can't say." (P.76)

The discussion and analysis of Kurtz activity in Congo confirms that a civilized man may degrade himself in an environment lacking rules and orders but such demoralization and degradation of soul is beyond imagination even in colonial dealings of the colonizers.

VI. WEIRD BEHAVIOR IN LORD OF THE FLIES

The conflict between two opposing impulses that all humans possess—the instinct to live by rules, act

peacefully, obey moral commands, and value the good of the group—is the main theme of *Lord of the Flies*. These impulses are the instinct to gratify one's immediate desires, act violently to achieve superiority over others, and enforce one's will. Various methods of expressing this clash include: civilized vs barbaric, order versus chaos, reason versus impulse, law versus anarchy, or the more general category of good versus evil. Golding equates the inclination of civilization with good and the instinct of savagery with evil throughout the entire book. The tension between the two inclinations serves as the novel's central theme, and it is explored through the breakdown of the young English boys' morally upright and well-behaved behavior as they become accustomed to a wild, harsh, and savage existence in the jungle.

Lord of the Flies offers an interesting look at how people behave in a situation when there are no rules of civilized society. The book provides compelling evidence that Golding's theory that man is fundamentally evil is correct. Additionally, it forewarns us of the potential for chaos to degenerate into order at the opportune time. When a society is unable to manage a man's behavior, the man's developing sense of cruelty manifests itself in violence and violent behavior. It seems that Golding's portrayal of the evil side of human nature is remarkably accurate, as one man's act of violence against another is experienced every day, whether on a tiny individual scale or during significant international conflicts. Golding asks the most fundamental question here: "Which is better- to have laws and agree, or to hunt and kill?" [p.259] The similar question came to a comparatively decent boy who himself was surprised by the behavior of the other boys around him and asked in a rhetoric way, "What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages? What's grownups going to think?" [p.109] 'The grownups; definitely mean the rules and restrictions that were taught by them in the civilized society and outside the known periphery the identity of being human was under question. The boys' struggle for survival, quarrel with their own self and others to follow rules or not, later building up own rules and the violent imposing and finally ending up with killing each other everything ends up with the boys being rescued by the naval officers when all of them were crying significantly. When they were at the edge of their life and death by the audacity because of the failure of law and order then according to Golding, "The world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away." [p. 109]

VII. CONCLUSION

Lord of the Flies and *The Heart of Darkness* both feature many of the same themes. The themes of civilization against savagery are present in both books with a similar

settings of a restriction free space. Additionally, both books imply that every man has a dark side or an evil that is typically masked by civilization's light. Additionally, both books imply that every man has a dark side or an evil that is typically masked by civilization's light. The parallelism between the protagonists and antagonists in the two works are fairly comparable, which is another resemblance. Both novels include characters who voluntarily give in to their darkest impulses, as well as characters who see the cruelty of the consumed and struggle to return to civilized society. For instance, Kurtz succumbed to his dark heart and allowed his wicked tendencies to rule in *The Heart of Darkness*. He was once a morally upright individual who, when cut apart from society, gave way to his darker instincts. Marlow, on the other hand, travels away from society too, yet he maintains his moral standards. The same juxtaposition between Jack and Ralph is wonderfully depicted in *Lord of the Flies*. In comparison to the wide range of compositions discussed in the literature review, the two specific fictions under discussion ends up in a kind of catharsis, shocking the readers presenting the weird intensity of degradation, dehumanization and demoralization only because of the absence or inadequate social norms.

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