

## William Golding and Bram Stoker – Conceptual Core and Glossing Windows (EVOLI)

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*As Carol Senf suggests (“Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror” 1979), one of the greatest dangers which Bram Stoker’s characters have to face is the evil inside them. This theme was developed in different ways in 20th century British literature. An interpretation of the background, setting and story in William Golding’s Lord of the Flies can be very useful for the understanding of the darkness of one’s soul and the way in which people can dread human nature. The digital tool EVOLI offers a chance for teachers and students alike to teach and learn about Lord of the Flies by transgressing the borders of language and turning affected spirituality into a reason for analysing the depths of cultural codifications. The elements connected to the novel are taken into account using various views on methodological hermeneutics so that meanings may be made transparent and the message of the author can be rendered without any bias. The importance of this approach is shown by students’ feedback to this kind of a perspective on a theme of evilness, terror and death. The presence of a Beast in the midst of the action and of an overall Beelzebub influencing all characters helps one create a scale of human corruption which determines a gradation of the connotations of what haunting is.*

Keywords: *Lord of the Flies, Dracula, blood, teaching, EVOLI*

### 1. Introduction

Our paper presents a very interdisciplinary perspective, in between literary studies – literary perception, language and literature teaching and translation and interpreting studies, and starts from central similarities between William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. We shall also deal with one of the main digital tools developed within the frame of the Erasmus+ *ELSE* project, called EVOLI, a teaching/learning feedback instrument which allows students to watch a theoretical video complementing a course in their own time and offer their

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opinions as to the efficiency of the recording in terms of its content importance, clarity and usefulness. An interpretation of the background, setting and story in Golding's novel can be very useful for the understanding of the darkness of one's soul and the way in which people can dread human nature. It is thus essential to render its ideas with accuracy when trying to gloss the text which should also suggest the necessity of an in-depth research of the book.

The "heart of darkness", as Joseph Conrad calls it, appears in different lights in Golding's book which is analysed based on Stoker's well-known creation mentioned above. The children of the night take on new roles metaphorically shaped by their 20<sup>th</sup> century author in order to symbolically show the cruelty of battles such as WWII. The transformation of human beings into hunted preys reveals the sad truth about our civilised age and the indifference of the masses as to their rulers' ideology.

Morality as a Christian cultural emblem lacks the solidity necessary for a fierce struggle and our characters consequently display similar tendencies and perform similar activities to those of the characters in Stoker's horror world. Destroying a life for personal satisfaction matters less than suspected as the British writers' protagonists develop an interest in repeatedly annihilating individuals' existence in order to prove their unmistakably ill personality.

## **2. Evil Spirits and Gothic imagination**

As Carol Senf suggests (1997, 430), one of the greatest dangers which Stoker's characters have to confront is the evilness inside themselves. Its excess leads to miserable results. Several critics agree that the vampire is a symbol of hidden passions and forbidden desires which, in the book, are amalgamated with strange tendencies reinforced by their natural or acquired vile nature.

By breaking the (moral) restrictions, Lucy, one of the first victims of Dracula in England, cannot resist the temptation of the vampire and turns into an un-dead. The same thing is about to happen to Jonathan Harker, the solicitor protagonist of Stoker's novel, and later to his wife, Mina, if they lose control of their consciousness. In a memorable phrase, David Punter (1996, 19) suggests a Freudian reading of the narrative, stating that Dracula is the "passion which never dies, endless desire of the unconscious for gratification".

Dracula's evil force is contagious and the vampire has the power to conquer time and space. As the vampire hunter Van Helsing explains, the vampire "cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world. For all that die from the preying of the Undead become themselves Undead, and prey on their kind. And so the circle goes on ever widening, like the

ripples from a stone thrown in the water” (Stoker 1994, 257). The vampire count becomes a symbol of the evil which threatens the entire world.

In *Dracula*, the vampire count is also associated with flies. The flies are the first offerings which Renfield, the worshiper of Dracula, gathers for his master. He feeds the flies to spiders, the spiders to birds, and then he needs a cat to eat the birds. The “zoophagous maniac”, as Dr Seward diagnoses Renfield, cuts the psychiatrist’s arm with a knife, and licks the blood drips off the floor. The attraction of the evil is irresistible, in the case of Renfield. He is connected “in some diabolical way” to Dracula, whom he calls ‘lord and master’.

The theme of the evil inside was developed in different ways in 20<sup>th</sup> century British literature, and Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* is one of the masterpieces based on this topic.

“The title of the novel, *Lord of the Flies*, can be interpreted as Beelzebub, that is represented by Collin de Plancy in his *Dictionnaire Infernal* (1863, 89) as a huge fly with wings that carry the pirate marks of the skull, below which there lies a pair of crossed bones. It represents the devil, the evil force that becomes the engine of the book. Golding gives it a concrete representation in the form of the head of a sow on which flies swarm.” (Pârlog 2011, 54).

*Lord of the Flies* also develops the dichotomy of civilisation and barbarism, but, this time, there is little chance for the boys who discover the island to civilise it. The opposition paradise – hell can also be discussed in Golding’s novel: at first the Pacific island seems to be heaven, with all the beautiful shades of green and blue, but the characters discover that the foreshadowed evilness is there, suggested by nature, weather conditions and even their mates’ shadows.

A boy’ shadow in *Lord of the Flies* is compared to “a black, bat-like creature”: “(...) 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, shrunk by the vertical sun to a patch between the hurrying feet” (Golding, 1999, 15).

This is yet another suggestion of what the boys may cause if they are not careful – the loss of life, as bats feed themselves on blood.

The religious choir boys appear as “something dark fumbling along” (idem) which Golding suggests is some less clearly visible creature that steps on the sand. The opposition morality – corruption is paradoxically represented, as it is these very boys who determine the later killings and the scorching of the island. As taught in school and church, they are supposed to be able to make the difference

between good and bad and not allow their souls to be tainted by the low energies of extreme actions.

Their heart of darkness is emphasised and therefore their imagination is presented as taking over and making them fear their own impulsive decisions. The beast that the children talk about is their inner evil. They are afraid of themselves and discover at an early age an unfortunate truth which affects all humankind – *homo hominis lupus est*.

Living among human beings who pretend to be civilised and act savagely is deemed to create unfortunate expectations which fuel the boys' imagination. As a result, Golding develops a typology of beasts in the book, according to the places where the children are when they supposedly encounter them. One can talk about a beast of the air, one of the land and one of the water (Pârlog 2011, 58). They are all envisaged as external to the children's mental conception – not recognised as imaginary – as if they try to redeem their fallen selves by a split personality syndrome mechanically determined. Like in *Dracula*, the evil has a strong power of metamorphosing.

### 3. Symbolic motifs and Primitive protagonists

Another common ground between Stoker's *Dracula* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is the motif of blood. Blood is in both novels a symbol of the thirst for power and, at the same time, a threshold on whose crossing survival depends. Like the vampire, for whom blood is a condition of existence, the children shipwrecked on the island cannot survive without eating meat, so they spill pigs' blood during their hunting expeditions.

Beyond the need for food, for subsistence, hunting becomes a ritual. The vampiric effect of hunting in *Lord of Flies* is suggested by the ritual nature of pig hunting. There is, in fact, a religious transformation: a transition from Christianity, the religion of the *civilized* world, to a *primitive* religion. The transition is made by the leader of the children's religious choir, Jack. The children's choir appears from the beginning as a religious group, whose identity is marked by the Christian symbol of the cross: "Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks which bore a long silver cross on the left breast and each neck was finished off with a hambone frill" (Golding 1999, 16). However, Christian clothing is removed, and the black coloured cloak – a symbol of discipline and rigor specific to Christian morality – is replaced by rudimentary clothing, more suitable for a desert island.

The situation is somewhat different from *Robinson Crusoe*, where the protagonist even alone on the island did not give up his clothes, a symbol of belonging to the values of the Western world that he represented. The children in *Lord of Flies*, with the exception of Ralph and the few friends who keep staying on

his side, give up the values of Western culture and renounce its symbols embracing an undeveloped behavioural pattern. “Ralph is elected leader when ‘reason’ is in the ascendant in the novel and he sticks to his principles of order and rescue against the overwhelming tide of ‘unreason’” (Redpath 1984, 47).

The transition from Christian values to the primitive cult of hunting is gradual. If first the children are reluctant to kill a pig for food, after several trials, hunting turns into a pleasant ritualistic activity. Their Christian education is replaced by the glorification of the pig's head placed on top of a stick. The thirst for blood is highlighted in numerous sequences that describe this barbaric ritual: “The chant rose ritually, as at the last moment of a dance or a hunt. *“Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Kill the pig! Bash him in!”*” (Golding 1999, 127).

Blood becomes a defining element for the group of hunters who paint their faces in order to improve their hunting and identify more readily with the savage roles they have embraced. Jack is the first who changes his identity, and in the beginning, is surprised to see his new face:

Jack planned his new face. He made one cheek and one eye-socket white, then rubbed red over the other half of his face and slashed a black bar of charcoal across from right ear to left jaw. He looked in the mere for his reflection, but his breathing troubled the mirror. [...] A rounded patch of sunlight fell on his face and a brightness appeared in the depths of the water. He looked in astonishment, no longer at himself but at an awesome stranger. He spilt the water and leapt to his feet, laughing excitedly. Beside the mere, his sinewy body held up a mask that drew their eyes and appalled them. He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling (Golding 1999, 67-68).

The motif of the face in the mirror is also an important element in Stoker's novel. During a discussion with the vampire, Jonathan observes that the mirror only reflects his face, while Dracula has no reflection on glass – which can be seen as indicating that he represents a form of energy absorbed by sand and metal (the substances of the mirror), that stand for earth, because Dracula symbolises the world of the dead that belong to the ground. At the same time, the light which is normally reflected by the glass is absorbed by the Prince of darkness – so one cannot see him in a mirror. The identification between Jonathan and Count Dracula is also suggested by the mother who came to take her child back from the vampiric castle and who called Jonathan *monster*, confusing him with the vampire: “Monster, give me my child!” (Stoker 1994, 60). In both novels children are sacrificed by the forces of evil in their quest for power.

In *Dracula*, the thirst for blood becomes a symbol of the desire for power. Dracula intends to conquer the world, turning humans into vampires that will

follow him unreservedly into the dark universe of primary instincts. In the vampire's vision, no one can stand against him, and he tells the strongest men who try to hunt them down that they will also be defeated by his power. If in *Dracula* the trap set by the vampire is sexual attraction (because the Count first turns women into vampires, and they vampirize men), in *Lord of the Flies*, children are attracted by hunting, which is viewed like a pleasurable activity and which means the spilling of blood caused by another primary instinct: hunger.

Jack, the one who provides them with food, is the supreme leader and acts like a high priest, telling them what is right and what is wrong according to his rigid reasoning. As, in the last part of the novel, Ralph remains the only child on the island who still believes in the balanced values of Western culture, Jack comes to the idea that Ralph must be killed. Consequently, Ralph becomes the 'bad character' and, all the other children are given the mission to destroy him as Jack has manipulated them into thinking that the former is against them and their wishes for entertainment.

Even though Ralph escapes alive, two children are killed: Simon and Piggy, both representing the voice of reason – transcendental reason, Simon and earthly reason, Piggy (Pârlog 2011, 57). Piggy is the one who tries to bring order to the world dominated by instincts, and, for this reason, is killed by the children-hunters. Simon is killed by the same children before being able to tell them that he has found the body of a paratrooper, hanging on the branches of a tree because of his parachute, so there was no beast – only an impression that there was one. Breaking away from the civilized world is symbolized in the first chapters by their no longer tending to the fire in order to go hunting. As Jack's group leaves the fire, a ship passes close to the island, and if the fire had not been extinguished, the children would have been found.

The children's regret of having lost the chance to be spotted is replaced by their satisfaction of discovering the principles and values of the primitive world of hunting. When Ralph reproaches Jack for having let the fire go out, the latter replies that Ralph would have also liked to discover the joy of hunting. Consequently, ensuring one's survival by killing becomes more important than ensuring one's survival by being rescued and returning to the civilised world.

As in Stoker's *Dracula*, the relationship between hunter and hunted is very complex. The hunter turns into the hunted, and the other way round. Stoker's vampires that hunt children, women and men, are also hunted by the members of the *Crew of Light*. The vampire hunters are in turn hunted by the vampire count, who vampirizes the women to whom they are related. Jonathan, who was about to be hunted by both the vampire count and his brides, is the one who (together with Quincey Morris) kills Dracula at the end of a hunting scene.

Hunting is central in *Dracula*, where the characters have an obsession with both cold weapons, especially knives, and firearms. The leader of the vampire hunters, Van Helsing insists on the importance of being properly armed: “Of course we shall all go armed, armed against evil things, spiritual as well as physical” (Stoker, 1994, 386). If the children on the island train themselves for pig hunting, the members of the Crew of Light prepare themselves for wolf hunting, as the wolf is the animal associated with the vampire. Quincey Morris suggests that, since “the Count comes from a wolf country”, they should use powerful hunting rifles: “I have a kind of belief in a Winchester when there is any trouble of that sort around. Do you remember, Art, when we had the pack after us at Tobolsk? What wouldn’t we have given then for a repeater a piece!” (Stoker 1994, 386).

The ritualistic function of hunting is suggested in the scene of Dracula’s destruction by Jonathan and Quincy: “But, on the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan’s great knife. I shrieked as I saw it shear through the throat. Whilst at the same moment Mr. Morris’s bowie knife plunged into the heart.” (Stoker 1994, 447).

In *Dracula*, the hunted vampire is the symbol of absolute evil. The idea that the hunted represents evilness is also prevalent in *Lord of Flies*. When the children kill Simon, they are convinced that they destroy Lord of Flies, actually they destroy “imaginative and religious knowledge” (Brînzeu 2001, 41). The children hunt down Ralph with the same conviction that his killing is necessary to destroy the evil on the island. Ralph’s hunting is described from the perspective of the victim, the one who hides and flees in order to survive, but is constantly chased.

The symbol of insularity is also a common point between the two novels. Stoker’s fictional Transylvania is described as an insular space, different from the Western world, where archaic faiths are still alive: “I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool” (Stoker 1994, 10). The abode of the vampire, Castle Dracula, is ruled by the forces of evil (Crişan and Senf 2021, 657; Crişan 2016, 74-76). The English guest is also about to be transformed into a vampire, but he is saved by the crucifix he had around his neck, which he had received as a gift from a Transylvanian landlady in Bistriţa. In *Lord of the Flies*, Jack and the children in his group reject Christian symbols and gradually adhere to the archaic cult of the hunter, in order to adapt to the specific of the island which they discover and conquer at the same time.

The motif of the bloody ritual is developed in the Icelandic version of *Dracula* which has Swedish origins (de Roos 2017), an adaptation of Stoker’s novel in which Harker discovers a secret temple hidden in the castle, where bloody group rituals take place (de Roos 2017, 36; 152). The theme of anarchy, which is central in *Lord of the Flies*, is another common point between Golding’s novel and the Icelandic version of *Dracula*. As Clive Bloom (2017, 128) puts it, in the Icelandic version,

“Dracula is less interested in vampirism than in anarchism, less in individual victims than in mass conversions.”

Changing the voice of reason with that of passionate desires thus leads to transformations of groups and masses in both books because the writers build upon the idea that responsiveness to lower forms of energy is always much more frequent in unusual individuals – such as Jack who enjoys killing animals and children or Dracula that seems to be a human hybrid of sorts – than in their fully educated human counterparts. By disrupting the universal balance, such characters generally have an unhappy ending – which is unclear in Golding’s case as he only shows us a coward Jack in the end and quite clear in the case of *Dracula* where the count is killed.

#### 4. Glossing Windows (EVOLI)

In order to test the importance of having adequately understood Golding’s literary work, a class on literary translations was taught with the help of the digital feedback tool, EVOLI, employed in order to reveal the impact that a certain recording of a theoretical (part of a) course has on students. Generally, with this type of an electronic instrument, students are given the chance to watch the course content at home, in their own time and express their opinion about the relevance of a particular teaching strand from the point of view of language level, complexity of cultural stratification, prior knowledge of the topic, practical usefulness, etc. According to Anthony William Bates (2019, 666), “The last ‘fundamental’ key of quality teaching and learning in a digital age is evaluation and innovation: assessing what has been done, and then looking at ways to improve on it”. The MA group of students specializing in the Theory and Practice of Translations watched a YouTube video presented by Jill Dash *Why should you read “Lord of the Flies” by William Golding?* in class so as to have the plot and its implications clear in their head as they had mostly not heard about or read the novel so they could not interpret its linguistic stratification without knowing its contextual substrata. Their feedback was discussed immediately afterwards so that a preliminary debate on the exercise theme could be organised.

The focal point of the experimental class was the assessment of students’ reception of this text clarifying the dark core of Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* by doing an interpretation exercise about it. Without consistent knowledge of gothic literature, students who have graduated from applied modern languages, were not at all familiar with the key issues of the novel, so it was a little more difficult for them to grasp all the secondary meanings of various words and constructions and the associations that could be made with similar or dissimilar notions or concepts. Although they had understood the inhumane context of the book and the theme of *homo moralis*, they had problems with the terminology connected to evil spirits



(Beelzebub), war (destroyer), politics (superpowers, colonialism), complex constructions referring to island stories, longer sentences, etc.

An interdisciplinary perspective on literary works is always necessary especially with translators who do not have a linguistic and literary specialisation. In this case, the consecutive interpretation exercise showed how much it is necessary for students to grasp the main ideas connected to the heart of darkness and its philosophy, so that the glossing process may unfold faithfully. Those of them who were knowledgeable when it comes to the issues of the book fared much better than those who had heard about it for the first time.

EVOLI is quite useful for teaching both language and literature as the multitude of videos present on YouTube makes it easy for one to select the most relevant one which would support the knowledge transfer that takes place during a class. Its feedback element makes it a valuable interactive tool for both students and teachers. Literature, just as language, relies on many theoretical components for which there may be less time to spare during course time, so this tool offers an ideal solution to this problem.

## 5. Conclusion

The conceptual core of Golding's book is heavily based on the ideology adopted by Stoker in his novel. Although the centuries when these creations were published differ a lot, the consistency of the mistaken ideas by which the included characters lead their lives proves that there is little evolution as far as the human brain is concerned. The imposed necessity of mindless conquering of time and space does not justify the lack of opposition on the part of the children and of many characters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century book.

Fear combined with the potential for evil interventions results in loss of life which seems to have also lost its importance and in loss of microcosmic spaces which are scorched literally or metaphorical. The ultimate danger of ignorance lurks in these literary creations, while indifference despite proofs brings about disastrous situations. Putting superficial necessities first, such as those of *homo ludens*, unconsciously forces the symbolical individuals in the books to leave reason behind and embrace the unreasonable, the irrational, the insane, the morbid which do not encourage survival of any sort – be it vegetal, mineral or human.

The interest in liminal experiences reflects the human tendency to achieve more under influence or pressure. In such cases, the results disappoint as deluding urges cannot support any positive enterprise. Awareness and foresight are unfashionable abilities in both centuries which encourage human beings to go by a pre-digested path (19<sup>th</sup> century) or to live the moment (20<sup>th</sup> century). The encouraging impulses of societies which undermine the importance of the brain glorifying the body pose serious

hazards which determine the annihilation of intelligence, of solutions to problems and brings us eventually closer to an untimely end. This is why we consider it necessary to stimulate the young generations of readers to reflect on the social allegories constructed in masterpieces of world literature such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. By an in-depth analysis of such dystopian worlds, we can make the world that we live in better.

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