

Envisioning a 'good' utopia on a dystopian island: culinary and cultural conflicts in *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract: Thanks to the rising interest in island literary studies, there is a considerable body of research on the relationship between islands and utopia/dystopia, but the motif of food, namely, what characters eat on an island, has seldom been explored. Using Terry Eagleton and Frederic Jameson's theories on utopia and dystopia as an interpretive lens, and drawing upon the varied contentions regarding food and eating by Levi-Strauss, Paul Atkinson, Carol J. Adams and other theorists, this paper examines the triangular relationship of island, food, and utopia/dystopia in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. The paper argues that although this island story is generally categorized as dystopian, it blends both utopian and dystopian discourses and represents a literary endeavour to envision a 'good' utopia. This argument is supported by a detailed analysis of how the eating practices of the British schoolboys marooned on a desert island parallel their attempts to construct a desirable microcosm. By vividly depicting the boys' contrasting culinary patterns of gathering fruit and hunting pigs, Golding subverts the hierarchy built upon the opposition between the raw/vegetable and the cooked/meat and their corresponding implications of 'the barbarous' and 'the civilized.' His further depictions of the boys' cannibalism and degeneration into savages showcase his vision of human beings' universal evil, his doubt about the linear progress of Western society, and his caution about the potential disasters that might befall seemingly progressive civilization due to the fall of mankind.

Keywords: dystopia, food, islands, *Lord of the Flies*, utopia, William Golding

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Introduction

Published in 1954, William Golding's first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, is one of the most widely read and highly admired novels in the English language. It is also hailed as one

of the most penetrating and provocative literary responses to the post-War disillusionment with human nature, which originates from the author's experience of human atrocities during the Second World War. The novel describes a group of English schoolboys, surviving after an air crash on a desert island, where they wish to establish a democratic and civilized micro-society, but end up creating a savage one.

Over the past half century, numerous critical evaluations have been conducted concerning this novel, mainly concerned with the fable, the literary genre of adventure, religious implications, war atrocities, evil, and the fall of man. Apart from New Criticism, which prevailed around the time of the novel's publication, more recent literary theories and perspectives, varying from utopian/dystopian studies to postcolonialism, have been adopted by contemporary critics. Despite extensive and profound scholarship on *Lord of the Flies*, scant attention has been paid to the novel's many descriptions of food and eating practices, which are laden with social, cultural and political implications. Aware of the immediate influence of wartime rationing on Golding, Kirstin Olsen (2000) mentions the entanglement between food and power, exemplified by meat as currency on the island. She also notices the rich symbolism of eating, such as eating fruit being synonymous with laziness and eating meat with violence. However, Olsen does not connect food with island narratives and the utopian/dystopian imagination, which constitutes a significant point in textual analysis, nor does she consider the correlation between the boys' contrasting culinary patterns and the competition between civilization and savagery. Placing the novel within the framework of utopian/dystopian narratives and island studies, the present paper investigates the schoolboys' literal and metaphorical consumptions on the desert island, especially the contrasting eating practices of consuming fruit and roasting pigs, which are indicative of the opposition between raw and cooked food, and correspondingly the competition between civilization and savagery. Examining the boys' cannibalism, the paper further traces Golding's account of the hidden evil of mankind and his reservations regarding the progressiveness of civilization from a historicist perspective.

Island, food, and the juxtaposition of utopia and dystopia

Throughout literary history around the globe, especially in Western culture, there has existed a visible and powerful tradition of the island trope. The recent decades have seen a surge in interest in island literature, in terms of authorship, readership and scholarship. Literary critics have examined the island metaphors as deployed in early Western island literature (Duzer, 2006), in popular fiction (Crane & Fletcher, 2016, 2017), in contemporary German-language literature (Dautel & Schödel, 2016), and in poetry (Patke, 2018). Some scholars have made significant contributions in theorizing island literature studies, either in the form of monographs (e.g. Kinane, 2016; McMahon, 2016), articles (e.g. Fletcher, 2011; Graziadei et al, 2017a, 2017b), or collections of essays (e.g. Le Juez & Springer, 2015; Gugganig & Klimburg-Witjes, 2021). There have been a number of pioneering works exploring conceptions of islands in

non-Western literary and cultural traditions, such as the Caribbean (DeLoughrey, 2001, 2007; Redd, 2017) and China (Luo & Grydehøj, 2017).

In the literary imagination, the island is a fertile land and a symbolic space that can be fictionalized both as a utopia and as a dystopia. Islands are “complex and multifaceted phenomena,” providing powerful resources for “images of despair and exile” and narratives related to “memory, belonging and desire” (Klaus & Stephen, 2003, p. 495). Scholars from different disciplines have investigated how writers utilize islands to “project political and social possibilities” (Savory, 2011, p. 37) or as “performative geographies” (Crane & Fletcher, 2016, p. 637). Niall Sreenan (2017) identifies a genealogy of post-Darwinian narratives in which the island facilitates a specifically utopian dream of individual autonomy, which is bound up with the ideology of capitalism. For other writers, island locales are “prime sites for piracy, smuggling, slavery, and all manner of inhumane incarceration” (Lowenthal, 2007, p. 215).

The (post)coloniality of islands and the positions of islands within imperialism are increasingly being scrutinized through revaluations of classics and rediscoveries of neglected works in literary history (Fletcher, 2011; Kapstein, 2017; 朱峰, 2018; DeLoughrey, 2019). In their recent article, McMahon and André (2018) examine three of the dominant binaries by which islands have been understood and bifurcated: reality and fantasy, utopia and dystopia, isolation and connection. Nevertheless, the motif of food (that is, what characters eat on the island) is rarely explored in terms of the island’s utopian or dystopian elements. Conceptualizing islandness across media, genres, and regions, members of the Island Poetics Research Group explored the phenomenology of fictional islands, focusing on the ways in which island topographies are constructed through the senses, especially taste and smell (Graziadei et al, 2017a). Several scholars have also touched upon cannibalism on islands (e.g. Weaver-Hightower, 2007; 汪汉利, 2015). Using Terry Eagleton and Frederic Jameson’s theories on utopia and dystopia as an interpretive lens and drawing upon the varied contentions on food and eating by Levi-Strauss, Paul Atkinson, Carol J. Adams and other theorists, the present paper examines the triangle relationship of island, food, and utopia/dystopia in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*.

In *The Idea of Culture*, Terry Eagleton (2000) distinguishes between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ utopia. ‘Bad’ utopia “consists simply in a sort of wistful yearning,” which “negates the present in the name of some inconceivably alternative future,” indicative of naivety and impracticality. In contrast, ‘good’ utopia “finds a bridge between present and future in those forces within the present which are potentially able to transform it” (Eagleton, 2000, pp. 25-26). Utopianism, for Eagleton (1999, p. 34), is “a way of interrogating the present which unlocks its dominative logic by discerning the dim outline of an alternative already implicit within it.” Judging by Eagleton’s definition, William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, which has generally been categorized as a dystopian novel (e.g. Woodward, 1983; Carter & McRae, 1997; Shaffer 2006; Firchow, 2007; Claeyes, 2017; Randall, 2021), should be regarded as a ‘good’ utopian novel, whereas R.

M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, which the former parodies, should be deemed a 'bad' one.

In order to provide a persuasive rationale for this significant distinction, we first examine the similarities between these two texts. Both novels are set on a desert island, which provides "an island solution," in Attewell's (2014, pp. 35-68) words, that is, the island serves as an ideal space for utopian imagination and reconstruction of national identity. Fredric Jameson (2005, p. 51) argues that "the issue of the kitchen and the dining room is a central feature of the Utopian text from More to Bellamy and down to our own time." Desert islands proffer neither kitchen nor dining room for cooking and enjoying food, yet food that is acquired from nature and processed using simple methods takes on extraordinary significance.

Both *The Coral Island* and *Lord of the Flies* contain rich depictions of food and eating, among which the hunting of pigs for pork is particularly prominent. Due to their similarities, the two novels have been compared by many scholars, taking a variety of perspectives (e.g. McEwan, 1981; Bloom, 2008; 李道全, 2011; 陈彦旭, 2019; Yoon, 2020). Focusing on the pig-hunting scenes in both novels, Xia Xiao 肖霞 (2003, p. 43) investigates the hunters' differing motivations by comparing the verbs employed in these two texts from a stylistic perspective: Ballantyne's boys kill pigs only to fill their stomachs, not to amuse themselves, while Golding's boys slaughter pigs out of evil intent, treating pork as a by-product. In *The Coral Island*, the three English teenagers are depicted in positive terms, with a strong sense of discipline and teamwork, searching for and enjoying food together, in line with the Zeitgeist of Victorian England.

Lord of the Flies is a counterexample. Randall Stevenson (1993, p. 99) states, "Any 'anger' in Golding's fiction arises not from social conditions in the fifties" but "from dark conclusions about human nature in general based on the experience of the Second World War." Indeed, Golding's five-year service (1940-1945) in the navy, which exposed him to the incredible cruelty and barbarity of which humankind was capable, significantly influenced his worldview and his literary creation. When *Lord of the Flies* was first published in 1954, Golding described the novel's theme in a publicity questionnaire as "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature" (qtd. in Kelly, 2000, p. 85). Reflecting upon the havoc wrought by the Second World War, Golding is disillusioned with the myth of humankind's linear progression, thus presenting dark images of violence in a peaceful environment, from hunting wild pigs to hunting fellow humans. Dystopian as it may seem, such a depiction constitutes the quality of a 'good' utopia in Eagleton's definition.

Abundance, commensality, and the utopian imagination

Food is the foundation of any society and community, whether a highly developed country or a remote island. This has been true in the East and the West, from ancient times up through the present. Utopia entails, first and foremost, an abundant supply of food. For those suffering from famine, the availability of food is a key component of utopia, where starvation and hunger are nonexistent. Utopian narratives of bounty

brim in the Hebrew Bible, which places great value on land, regarding it as God's promise to and covenant with His people. This is best illustrated by the Garden of Eden. In the New Testament, utopian abundance is a characteristic of the eschaton, the period immediately preceding the Apocalypse. Descriptions of abundance permeate the literary imagination of utopia and are closely linked with "the fantasy of self-sufficiency" (Gilbert, 2014, p. 340) in 'desert island' books, such as the one discussed here.

Food shortage has been a severe challenge throughout human history, especially in times of war. With the outbreak of the Second World War, food rationing became a pivotal part of British life. On 8 January 1940, bacon, butter, and sugar were rationed in the United Kingdom, and meat was rationed two months later, with many other foodstuffs subsequently added to list. As Carol J. Adams (2010, p. 52) notes, "during the wars of the twentieth century, the pattern of meat consumption recalled that of English nineteenth-century working-class families with one variation: the 'worker' of the country's household, the soldier, got the meat; civilians were urged to learn how to cook without meat." Food rationing was an administrative measure of resource distribution, aimed at maintaining supplies to the British front while fulfilling basic needs for civilians' daily lives by maximizing the country's limited social resources. The most devastating war in human history eventually ended in 1945, but "the battle on the kitchen front lasted long after the war, for food rationing did not end in Britain until 1954 and was indeed more severe after the war than during it" (Mennell, 1996, p. 249). Brought up in such a system, British children of the early 1950s were aware of food's importance in their lives, as meat and imported fruit (such as oranges and bananas) remained luxuries.

It is thus unsurprising that Golding highlights the social, cultural, and political significance of food in *Lord of the Flies*. Food plays a crucial role in the novel, which unfolds as a culinary utopia, situated on an uninhabited island that provides excellent material conditions for survival, such as pleasant weather, fresh water, and easily accessible food sources. This insular area seems to be an enchantingly beautiful and peaceful Arcadia, "an uncorrupted Eden offering all the lush abundance of the primal earth" (Baker, 1965, p. 14). The boys perceive the island as a tropical paradise in part because of the availability of food, such as fruit, crabs, fish, and wild pigs. It is worth noting that Ralph's perception of the island is associated with gastronomic experience, as he delightedly senses the mirages of the lagoon as like "icing on a pink cake" (Golding, 2001, p. 18). This environment gives the children the opportunity to establish a utopia. As an elected leader, Ralph attends to the welfare of each group member, hoping to establish a micro-society based on freedom, democracy, and justice. He devises a detailed plan for division of labour, with some boys responsible for transporting and storing water using coconut shells, some responsible for looking after the fire, and others for building shelter. The discovery of fresh water is of paramount importance, for which Ralph holds a plenary meeting to discuss issues such as water intake points, tools, storage locations, and methods. Another issue related to fresh water is the location of the toilet. Ralph proposes selecting a place where the excrement can be flushed away with the tide and prohibiting the children from urinating everywhere, so

as to prevent the fresh water from being polluted and causing disease. As several shelters have been built, children no longer sleep on the beach; and when the fire is finally lit, they eat, dance, and sing, as though they are having a party.

At this point, a fascinating utopia seems to have taken shape. This utopia bears a striking resemblance to the primitive communism or tribal society created by peoples whose economic resources are most scarce and whose survival depends on subsistence production (Herskovits, 1952; Sahlins, 1972). The children even have the potential to create what Charles Fourier termed “gastrosophy,” referring to a profound and sublime theory of social equilibrium with high gastronomic wisdom. “In creating gastrosophy,” as Jane Levi (2015, p. 54) comments, “Charles Fourier turned gastronomy from an individualistic indulgence into a pleasurable expression of utopian social harmony.”

However, as the story progresses, the typical romantic island narrative characteristics gradually disappear, and the utopia turns into a dystopia. This precisely corresponds with Elizabeth McMahon’s (2016, p. 177) claim that “one of the truisms of utopian fiction is its inevitable invocation of its dystopian opposite.” Golding suggests that children’s physical and psychological behaviours are products of the existing human society. The island provides food and other necessities for survival, but conflicts soon arise between two parties, one led by Ralph, who wants to be rescued and thus calls on everyone to build enough shelters and look after the fire, and the other led by Jack, who is not eager to return to their homeland but indulges in entertainment and hunting pigs. The disagreement mainly lies in the use of fire.

In the novel, the children use fire to dry clothes, keep warm at night, drive away wild beasts, make smoke signals, and roast pork. The bonfire symbolizes the human desire for society and companionship, but fire is also a tool for roasting meat and satisfying one’s physical urges. When looking after the fire clashes with searching for meat, the conflict between Ralph and Jack intensifies. Jack leads several children to attack Ralph’s camp at night, plunders Piggy’s glasses, using them to light a fire to roast pork, and invites children from Ralph’s camp to participate in the feast, with the aim of weakening Ralph’s leadership. As a consequence, the fire used for sending smoke signals dies out after having been left unattended, while the fire for roasting meat flourishes. The children see greater appeal in eating pork and hunting pigs.

Upon their arrival on the island, the children gather and eat fruit. Their desire to eat meat is part of what produces conflict and strife. Ralph is not opposed to hunting as long as it does not violate the rules issued by the plenary meeting. He stresses the importance of keeping the fire: “You hunters! You can laugh! But I tell you the smoke is more important than the pig, however often you kill one. Do all of you see?” (Golding, 2001, p. 69). Ralph’s leadership is based on rational analysis and problem-solving, diverging from the childhood yearning for freedom, whereas Jack’s leadership caters to the children’s physical needs and playful nature.

Aside from Jack’s selfish motivations, hunting originates not just from the physical desire for meat but also from a psychological desire. At the very beginning, Jack leads his team members in hunting pigs and makes a clear division of labour and coordination, such as collecting firewood, roasting, distributing, and sharing meat.

Even Ralph, who is rational and restrained, cannot resist the lure of roast pork. He thus visits Jack's camp for meat, and because of his humble manners, his appeal for pork is not rejected. Upon receiving Jack's order, the boys in his group "gave Ralph and Piggy each a succulent chunk. They took the gift, dribbling" (Golding, 2001, p. 133). When all the members eat the same food and share the fruits of their hard labour, they seem to live in a completely equal society. Golding makes a lively description of their carnivalesque commensality:

A fire burned on the rock and fat dripped from the roasting pigmeat into the invisible flames. All the boys of the island, except Piggy, Ralph, Simon, and the two tending the pig, were grouped on the turf. They were laughing, singing, lying, squatting, or standing on the grass, holding food in their hands. But to judge by the greasy faces, the meat eating was almost done; and some held coconut shells in their hands and were drinking from them. Before the party had started a great log had been dragged into the center of the lawn and Jack, painted and garlanded, sat there like an idol. There were piles of meat on green leaves near him, and fruit, and coconut shells full of drink (Golding, 2001, p. 132).

The above quote foregrounds Jack as a demigod or lord of a kingdom. According to McMahon (2016, p. 5), the island enchantment can create "a kind of island ideogram in the collective psyche, one that connects identity, space and desire," and "the island is a perfect object of control, where the onlooker imagines he [sic] can be king." In this sense, the original food-sharing utopia turns into a centralized dystopia. Fredric Jameson (2005, p. 150) rightly observes that many utopias are "explicitly or implicitly collective in their nature," either in the pattern of villages and small towns in the Middle Ages or the contemporary versions of the official state in which "crime [...] defined by the law and legality [...] can be ignored in the name of clan loyalty [...] in a kind of dialectical reversal and paradox, can offer a new form of collective labor." Jameson's view explains the crimes, atrocities, and murders committed by Jack's hunting camp in the name of collective interests.

Loyalty to the leader is the precondition for the children eating meat, but this loyalty leads the children to become barbarous and results in banditry. The price of obtaining the meat provided by Jack and his hunters is to submit to their autocracy. Jack accuses Ralph of never providing pork, implying that excellent hunting skills are the essential quality of leadership. In a 'primitive' society consisting of hunters and gatherers, hunting is a major way of establishing authority, signifying "manliness and prestige" (Bates, 2013, p. 13). Hunting is not only a form of entertainment and means of survival but also the embodiment of masculinity. Given that a large amount of fruit grows on the island, the children have no difficulty finding enough food to survive. Roast pork is a valuable resource due to its rarity, and it can only be obtained through teamwork and improved hunting skills. Because pig hunting requires cooperation and a large amount of labour, the most important task—looking after fire—is neglected.

Since only some people can eat meat, access to meat becomes indicative of privilege and status, which generates a particular power mechanism on the island. As Jack hunts and provides meat, he possesses the power. Viewed in this light, food is a double-edged sword in the construction of the island community, blending elements of utopia in terms of the children's searching for and sharing food on the one hand and the emergence of dystopia in their scrambling for food and killing fellow creatures on the other.

Fruit, pork, and the collapse of the culinary hierarchy

It is widely acknowledged that what we are what we eat, and this statement makes even more sense on an isolated island. Nick Lacey's (2000, p. 67) study of "Levi-Strauss and binary oppositions" discusses Golding and *Lord of the Flies*, stating that the novel articulates the oppositions of nature/savagery and culture/civilization, represented by the villain Jack and the hero Ralph respectively. Lacey argues that the book has a conventional ending, with the hero triumphing, and the text implies that savagery should be condemned. He also acknowledges that much of what is 'evil' in Jack, also exists in Ralph, and much of the book's power comes from this "unresolved resolution" (Lacey, 2000, p. 67). Lacey does not, however, take the necessary next step in linking picking fruit and roasting pork with Lévi-Strauss's discussion about the dichotomy between raw food and cooked food.

In 'The Culinary Triangle', Claude Lévi-Strauss demonstrates similarities between linguistic systems and other cultural systems. Based on Roman Jakobson's (1963, p. 138) theory of structural linguistics, in particular the "vowel triangle" and "consonant triangle," Lévi-Strauss proposes that cooking involves a triangular semantic field, with three points corresponding to the categories of the raw, the cooked, and the rotted respectively. For Lévi-Strauss (1997, p. 41), the raw constitutes the unmarked pole, while the other two poles are strongly marked, as "the cooked is a cultural transformation of the raw, whereas the rotted is a natural transformation." In a final sense, his argument focuses on the opposition between nature and culture.

Paul Atkinson (1983, p. 11) nevertheless argues that food "can stand for the many different ways in which the world of culture—of meanings, values and human work—is created and sustained in the face of an alien, non-human universe (the jungle, the desert, the 'wild')." Golding presents two modes of eating on the island: picking fruit and roasting pigs. Seen from Atkinson's perspective, both modes contain human labour and thereby belong to the cultural domain. From Lévi-Strauss' perspective though, picking fruit and roasting pigs correspond to nature and culture respectively. In other words, Jack and his hunting camp are more civilized than Ralph and his picking camp. Upon the children's arrival on the island, "they ate most of the day, picking fruit where they could reach it and not particular about ripeness and quality. They were used now to stomachaches and a sort of chronic diarrhea" (Golding, 2001, p. 49). Since fruits are not high-calorie food, they must keep eating them in order to acquire the energy their bodies need. But eating fruits casually without washing will inevitably damage the

children's stomach and intestines. Seen in this light, filling the stomach with fruit remains a primitive lifestyle. In contrast, eating roast pork prevents the children from diarrhoea and stomach aches caused by eating unclean fruit, and is more nutritious and delicious. In the long run, eating fruit cannot satisfy the body's basic needs, while eating meat can provide sufficient nutrients. In addition, hunting pigs gives the children not only fun but also a sense of power in conquering nature as well as a sense of security, significantly reducing their fear of the imaginary beast.

However, in Julie Hudson and Paul Donovan's (2014) opinion, both eating modes in the novel are barbarous and savage. A civilized society is generally equipped with a relatively sophisticated food processing system, including washing, extracting, peeling, eviscerating, chopping, preserving (e.g. heating, smoking, dehydration), and packaging for transporting or storing, which constitutes the basis of civilization and urbanization. In *Lord of the Flies*, the children live barbarically, picking fruit directly from plants and devouring them without processing, suffering from gastrointestinal problems as a result. By the same token, the wild pigs are slaughtered, dismembered, roasted (or directly exposed to fire), and then swallowed without any rituals. Such a lack of food processing suggests that the world falls into a barbaric state (Hudson & Donovan, 2014, p. 83). As a matter of fact, not all children on the island end up in a barbaric state. Though children who eat fruit like Ralph, Simon, and Piggy sometimes struggle to resist the lure of roast pork, they are always able to control their physical desires and resist the allure of savagery so as not to compromise on their moral principles. Unlike Ralph and his camp, who do little harm in picking fruit from the forest, Jack and his hunters kill and process pigs ferociously, which is at odds with the dualism between the raw (nature) and the cooked (culture) proposed by Lévi-Strauss.

The two opposing alimentary patterns in the novel also overturn a popular Darwinian "corollary for foods" proposed by George Beard (qtd. in Adams, 2010, p. 53), a nineteenth-century medical doctor: "In proportion as man grows sensitive through civilization or through disease, he should diminish the quantity of cereals and fruits, which are far below him on the scale of evolution, and increase the quantity of animal food, which is nearly related to him in the scale of evolution, and therefore more easily assimilated." In terms of manners and behaviour, those children in *Lord of the Flies* who eat cooked food (roast pig) are more barbaric than those who eat raw food (fruit). Such textual details also counter the nineteenth-century pseudoscientific assumption that "'brain-workers' [civilized class] required lean meat as their main meal, but the 'savage' and 'lower' classes of society could live exclusively on coarser foods" (Adams, 2010, p. 53).

As Julia Twigg (1984, pp. 20-21) contends, "Meat is the most highly prized of food. It is the centre around which a meal is arranged. [...] At the top of the hierarchy, then, we find meat, and in particular red meat, for the status and meaning of meat is quintessentially found in red meat." Through subtle descriptions of two major types of food, Golding writes in an opposite direction from Lévi-Strauss' dualism between the raw and the cooked, correspondingly nature and culture, for the boys in the novel who eat pork are cruel and violent as opposed to those who eat fruit. Although Jack and his hunters kill pigs to obtain meat for everyone, they indulge in torturing and slaughtering

them as living beings, as is illustrated by their bloody hunting slogans and activities. All these facets both undermine the culinary hierarchy that privileges meat with positive associations and demonstrate the cultural atrocity that results from mankind's insatiable desire for meat, a metaphor for greed and power.

Piggification, cannibalism, and the dystopian landscape

Ralph Crane and Lisa Fletcher (2017, p. 3) argue that "Islands are everywhere in the atlas of crime fiction." If the words of island and crime change their positions in this sentence, that is, "Crimes are everywhere in the atlas of island fiction," it makes as much sense as the original argument. On the bounded island in *Lord of the Flies*, crimes escalate from hunting pigs to hunting people and burning the whole island. Pigs in the novel are endowed with multiple meanings, e.g. food for the boys, propitiation to the unknown beast, and locus of projected evil. Throughout the novel, the sow is the only creature endowed with femininity and maternity, born into and part of nature. But it is slaughtered by the boys to satisfy their desire for meat. Before their attack, the sow is sensuously enjoying the shadows and wrapped in warmth and kindness, "under the trees an ear flapped idly. A little apart from the rest, sunk in deep maternal bliss, lay the largest sow of the lot. She was black and pink; and the great bladder of her belly was fringed with a row of piglets that slept or burrowed and squeaked" (Golding, 2001, p. 119). Jack and his hunters rush for the sow with wooden spears with fire-hardened points, chasing behind her when she staggers into an open space where bright flowers grow and butterflies dance round each other. Then Jack is on top of the sow, stabbing downward with his knife, and Roger finds a place to lodge his spear and begins to push until he is leaning in with his whole weight. The boys take sadistic pleasure in this hunting and slaughter, "the sow staggered her way ahead of them, bleeding and mad, and the hunters followed, wedded to her in lust, excited by the long chase and the dropped blood" (Golding, 2001, p. 120).

This scenario includes a pair of contrasting images: the tranquil forest with plants and animals living in harmony and the violent boys destroying them. It implies that females, represented by the sow, symbolize endless and vigorous life in nature, whereas males conquer nature and slaughter females so as to establish and display their authority and superiority. Jack's knife and Roger's spear demonstrate their dominance, and when they kill the animal, they insert them into the body of the sow, with strong sexual implications. Allon White (1993, p. 170) points out, "Meat, especially, pig meat, was of course the symbolic centre of carnival (*carne levare* probably derives from the taking up of meat as both food and sex)." In this sense, the hunters' appetite and sexual desire are simultaneously satisfied during the process of hunting pigs and eating pork.

The ironic effect of the story is achieved by juxtaposing the personification of the sow with the dehumanization of people. As Paul Crawford (2002, p. 47) puts it, "*Lord of the Flies* is replete with violent carnival images of the pig and the 'piggification' of humans, which is a carnivalesque reversal between human and beast." Seen in the light

of Mikhail Bakhtin's treatise on the carnival and the Dionysia festivals in ancient Greece, Jack seems to be an adherent of Dionysus, who hunts pigs and organizes the carnivalesque feast. He rouses the boys to sing bloody hunting songs and dance ritually. In a crazed manner, they brutally kill Simon and Piggy, and then hunt Ralph. But this kind of carnival cannot be understood in terms of Bakhtin's claims regarding the overturning of authority and assertion of freedom; it is, instead, irrational and inhuman. Jack and his hunters' killing Simon and Piggy is actually cannibalistic. Their destructive behaviour is represented as the devastating outcome of mankind's loss of rationality and humanity. Such cruel and violent acts do not only appear on isolated islands; they can be found in any place where morality and law have been eroded. If Jack and his hunters' atrocious act of killing pigs is an embodiment of human degeneration, their subsequent act of killing their fellow creatures, a form of cannibalism, is totally barbarous, an atavism of civilization.

In the Victorian and Edwardian eras, sticking pigs with spears was popular in the British army as a means of cultivating chivalry. Golding utilizes the imperial tradition of pig sticking to suggest a continuum between English imperialism and other forms of atrocity (Crawford, 2002, p. 64). Golding's pig-hunting imagery expresses both his criticism of "English chauvinism" and condemnation of extreme violence (陈彦旭, 2019, p. 104). In the first half of the twentieth century, beliefs in and ideals of a Europe undergoing continual progress and improvement were severely challenged by the two World Wars. By presenting a "Freudian island fable of human evil" (Riquet, 2019, p. 95), Golding reflected upon the causes of such apparent backward movements of civilization. If human virtues are not fostered and enhanced, and the evil side of human nature is not curbed, then imperialism and other forms of atrocity, such as cannibalism, may come out of "the Pandora's box."

The cannibalism first happens to Simon, a prophetic figure. In the Bible, Simon is the original name of Saint Peter, who changed his name after meeting Jesus. It is thus a name implying the figure of a saintly martyr or a scapegoat in Christianity. Shortly after the boys' arrival on the island, rumours of the 'beast' arise and spread, about which Simon is sceptical from the beginning. Unlike other boys who either fail to realize or acknowledge the evil in themselves, Simon is alone in courageously disclosing the truth of the imaginary beast—the corpse of the dead parachutist hanging in the trees. Eager to reveal the truth to the crowd, Simon rushes to them, against the backdrop of thunder and lightning taking over the dark sky. He is mistaken as the 'beast' and is killed by the frenzied boys in a horrific scene that begins with a war dance and the familiar chant, "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (Golding, 2001, p. 136), and ends with his dead body moving out toward the open sea. Golding depicts the wickedness of the boys losing their rationality and succumbing to animalistic impulses. Frightened and delirious, the boys led by Jack kill Simon, who is dedicated to seeking out the truth.

The 'cannibals' then set their target at Piggy, who is devoted to defending democracy and utopianism. While Simon's death is to some extent accidental, Piggy is murdered intentionally. Being fat, Piggy, as his name implies, is like the pigs hunted by Jack and his team. As Baker (1965, p. 11) remarks, Piggy is "the voice of reason" who

believes that human problems can be solved if only our irrational urges can be contained. However, he is killed brutally because “there had grown up tacitly among the biguns the opinion that Piggy was an outsider, not only by accent” but “by fat, and ass-mar, and specs, and a certain disinclination for manual labor” (Golding, 2001, p. 54), or in Tiger’s (1974, p. 63) words, “he is an alien, a pseudo-species.” Therefore, Piggy, who is still holding the conch, a symbol of order within the story, is struck by a great red rock, upon which Roger leans all his weight, and his “arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig’s after it has been killed” (Golding, 2001, p. 163). After the deaths of Simon and Piggy, Ralph, the only surviving outsider, is also sought out by the hunters. Slaughter in the novel turns from hunting pigs to hunting humans, an implicit form of cannibalism. Furthermore, Jack’s team sets fire to the island in order to chase Ralph out of the jungle in which he hides himself. From the perspective of Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (2007, p. 25), the dreadful crime of burning the island is part of the ‘embodied’ impulse, for she broadly defines “the mechanism of incorporation” as including “whether literally ingesting food or psychically consuming spaces.” At the risk of destroying their food sources and shelter, the criminals/cannibals have consumed the island.

Conclusion

By employing a desert island as the setting and marooned schoolboys as characters, and highlighting the boys’ alimentary activities, especially the contrasting culinary patterns of fruits and roast pigs, Golding reveals in *Lord of the Flies* both his utopian vision and dystopian perception of western society and mankind as a whole. Referring to dystopia as a literary genre, Fátima Vieira (2010, p. 17) claims that although the writers of dystopias present negative images of the future, they expect a positive reaction on the part of their readers: on the one hand, the readers are led to realize that all human beings have flaws, and consequently social reform instead of individual improvement is the only way to ensure social and political happiness; on the other hand, readers should understand that the horrible future in the writings is not a reality but only a possibility that they must learn to avoid. Such a view echoes Jameson’s (1977, p. 21) argument:

The Utopian narrative might be described as one which, having come into being by a radical act of disjunction, must then summon up all of its energies into a ‘motivation’ of that initial disjunction into an elaborate, endless, impossible demonstration that such unimaginable separation from the inextricable totality of Being of that ‘real’ world in which history and indeed the reader himself exist was in fact ‘imaginable’ in the first place.

In other words, although utopia and dystopia are opposites, they are interconnected, even mutually constitutive and convertible. Dystopia contains the elements of utopia, and it often results from the leader of a community or a country

making incorrect decisions in their pursuit of ideals. Dystopia comes into existence either because only a small number of privileged people enjoy the benefits of utopia or because the price paid for moving toward utopia is too heavy. The island depicted in *Lord of the Flies*, as Ian Kinane (2016, p. 162) observes, is simultaneously a 'good' and 'unfriendly' one, in which "images of paradise and images of hell are conflated." As has been analysed in previous sections, the conflation is most vividly illustrated in the opposing patterns of culinary activities, which assume political and sociological significance. Different from Ralph's reasonable effort to construct a utopia, Jack's is "the anti-Utopian one [...] according to which attempts to realize Utopia necessarily end up in violence and totalitarianism" (Jameson, 2005, p. 147). Therefore, *Lord of the Flies* can be considered a superb text that combines both elements: its dystopian torrent (similar to Orwell's *Animal Farm*) conceals a powerful utopian undercurrent (as is seen in More's *Utopia*).

Utopian narrative, like a star in the sky or a lighthouse in the sea, inspires one generation after another, whereas dystopian narrative offers criticism, reflection, and advice for people seeking to understand the uneven progress of human civilization. Humankind needs both types of narrative. As Golding himself remarked on *Lord of the Flies*, "The overall picture was to be the tragic lesson that the English have had to learn over a period of one hundred years; that one lot of people is inherently like any other lot of people; and that the only enemy of man is inside him" (qtd. in Bloom, 2008, p. 11). To refer back to Eagleton's distinction between 'good' and 'bad' utopias, we can safely draw the conclusion that Golding's story has offered a plenitude of intellectual inspirations and cultural resources for contriving a 'good' utopia.

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