Chapter I: Culture and the Irrational

The fulcrum of all social interpretation of Golding lies in the very fact that what he tries to do in these novels, according to Jack I. Biles, is simply to diagnose the defects of human society by diagnosing the defects of the individual which is the basic unit in the formation of society (Biles 41). As the contemporary reality, the world, the civilization is found to be "in ruins" (Golding *Lord* 78), obviously because of the war, but allegorically because of the loss of the empire, these novels build up a narrative of loss of innocence, reason, freedom, masculinity and good sense, corresponding to the narrative of the loss of the empire. To illustrate the point, Golding posits the issue of ironic discord that lies at the core of civilization. In *Lord of the Flies*, he takes up the story of a group of pre-puberty British schoolboys, plane-crashed on an uninhabited Pacific island, their childhood representing mankind in its childhood, and who left alone without any adult supervision, try to build a society, but the society breaks down in blood and terror because the boys are suffering from the same terrible moral disease that humanity suffers from (Golding *Hot Gates* 89). The terrible moral disease manifests itself, and emblamatic of, in man's heroism and sickness (Golding *Lord* 128) at once, to contain reason and unreason in the same place, to show remarkable sense of reason and justice but at the same time to be in the grip of irrational fear. Golding's thesis of man's being a morally diseased creature (Golding *Hot Gates* 87), is also exacerbated by the irony that man remains ignorant of his own fallen condition, "that man suffers from an appalling ignorance of his own nature" (Golding "The Writer" 46). Golding criticises the political systems for covering up man's defective nature in the name of reform and correction, and what is most shocking is that the political systems become the handmaiden of man's self-aggrandisement, because regretfully man's sheer capacity for greed and violence gets conveniently hidden behind 'a kind of pair of political pants' that he used to wear in his civilised life (Golding *Hot Gates* 87). Golding finds civilization and the political systems as a pretension, as a devious way to divert attention from the real issue, as a convenient pretext to remain ignorant by refusing to see reality like an ostrich. By giving a striking example from a social situation of how people behave in society regarding the human reproductive organs which are generally covered with dress in such a manner that gives the impression that there is no genitalia, or the genitalia does not exist, Golding can drive the point

home that same attitude prevails regarding the human selfishness and self-aggrandisement as if these things do not exist. Taboos are created regarding both genitalia and human nature so that there is not much admission of them in public. However in times of sickness and human aggression, these things have to be exposed to the doctor for necessary correction.

> It seems to me that in nineteenth-century and early twentieth century society in the West, similar taboos grew up round the nature of man. He was supposed not to have in him, the sad fact of his own cruelty and lust. When these capacities emerged into action they were thought aberrant. Social systems, political systems were composed, detached from the real nature of man. (Golding *Hot Gates* 87)

The task of cutting open the civilization, to find the fundamental imperfection working in its core, to expose it candidly and without any bias, is the way how Golding can discover the root causes behind human savagery and his novels contribute to the discourse of human lust for power and the eventual destruction of the Other.

It can easily be shown that the central paradigm of Golding's vision of civilization is to offer a critique of the view of western enlightenment philosophy about civilization which is organised around the centrality of reason and the marginality of unreason; and to explode the usual colonialist effort of the reason to dominate over irrationality, and the final movement is a bigger consciousness of a need to understand and accommodate the irrationality as an essential component of intuition and creativity. In Golding's view, the failure to understand the nature of the irrational is the one key failure of reason. Reason is mostly blind, and it is this blind reason upon which the foundation of civilization is laid. The conflict between the centre and the margin is based on the perceived antagonism between reason and unreason, in the line of the antagonism between light and darkness. Reason, like light, assumes the responsibility of civilizing the unreason, the darkness of human heart. This explains the god-given civilizing mission of colonialism. The justification of European colonialism is made on the basis of the spread of reason and modernity, necessitating self-aggrandisement and domination over the Other. Thus civilization becomes a mask behind which the true face of humanity lies

hidden. The novels of William Golding constitute a commentary on the hollowness of human civilization. The fact that is emphasised in his fiction is that irrationality lies at the heart of reason, and the margin becomes the foil, the scapegoat in a process of Othering and projection. As Edward Said later in *Orientalism* (1978) will have to expose the politics of the Western representation that stereotypes the Other by means of projection of its own negative qualities upon the Other, so Golding in *The Inheritors* shows how the new [modern] people project their own evil impulses upon the Neanderthals [primitives], this projection is itself an act of colonialism, and this exemplifies the blindness and irrationality of the new people's fear and paranoia about the old people – the Neanderthals. This blindness and irrationality constitute what Golding calls man's appalling ignorance about his own nature.

> If Colonialism is viewed as a form of absorbing, or 'devouring', the colonized country, then cannibalism will be seen as one of its most potent metaphors. The irony that runs throughout the novel, of course, is that Lok's people are no threat at all; not only are they not cannibals, they are only carnivorous in exceptional circumstances. The New Men assume Lok's tribe are cannibals only because, as colonizers, they are projecting their own desires and appetites for complete absorption onto a conquered people, the colonized. (McCarron 10)

This shifting of the blame of cannibalism exonerates and to a great extent justifies the modern men of their wrongdoing and injustice to the Other. Thus the ironic discord that lies at the core of civilization is one of the key points of investigation in Golding's novels. Golding's contention is that this irony is often glossed over, as in the case of H. G. Wells who, like the new people in *The Inheritors,* shifted the blame to the Neanderthals. Golding shows the political process of Othering behind the claim that Wells made about the Neanderthals in his *The Outline of History*. Golding quotes Wells as an epigraph to his novel only to deflate the very bias that Wells tries to institutionalise as part of the human history, and this institutionalised bias remains in the very cultural bias against the Other. This is an explosive observation and logic that serves as an example of how cultural and representational bias works in the mind of the enlightened modern men. This also highlights Golding's belief that darkness lies at the very heart of enlightenment; and that in the very heart of

Western rationalism and humanism lies this strange corruption of thinking about the Other. Herein lies the significance of the epigraph to *The Inheritors.* Talking to James R. Baker, Golding shows that Wells is an optimist and progressivist in his evolutionary beliefs about the progress of man, but he is a pessimist in his science fiction writings of dark horror and dark motives of human heart, "He's a divided person. And I sympathize, but I would attack his simplistic view of history and his simplistic view of the nature of man" (Baker "An Interview" 138). The utopia of "Wells's scientific rationalism" (Golding *Moving Target* 181) is severely criticised and counterpointed in Golding's first two novels. Talking to Frank Kermode he makes clear the point of modern man's need of projection of the darkness that lies inside him via externalisation, and that is the reason why the Other appears a feared monster in his imagination and that is too without any justification (Kermode "On William Golding" 157-158). As a committed and serious writer belonging and catering to his age, Golding takes upon himself the task of setting history right in terms of the truth about human nature. This is his engagement and contribution to the understanding contemporary reality, although in a more Aeschylean manner, in the way of going beyond the symptoms to the root cause of the complexity of human nature (Golding "The Writer" 45); which he does in order to probe into the postimperial neurosis of the British psyche.

Thus it is clear that Golding's commitment is to set history right by offering a correct perspective. His celebrated thesis in *Lord of the Flies* that the 'beast is inside of us' and that we tend to place the beast outside onto the Other is an insight generated from this perspective. As he writes in "Fable",

> One of our faults is to believe that evil is somewhere else and inherent in another nation. My book was to say: you think that now the war is over and an evil thing destroyed, you are safe because you are naturally kind and decent. But I know why the thing rose in Germany. I know it could happen in any country. It could happen here. (Golding *Hot Gates* 89)

There is no such beast and ogre outside one's own prejudiced self, a prejudice that gets manifested through one's irrational fear of the Other. *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* are elaborate illustrations of this thesis. The boys try to build a society, but their effort is ruined by their own irrational fear. Golding's dystopian vision

shows that man's much vaunted intelligence and scientific rationalism are not enough to correct the irrational fear. The character of Piggy becomes the focal point of this thematic strand. An analysis of his character and role and also what he stands for in the novel is clearly brought out by Carl Niemeyer in his article "The Coral Island Revisited". According to Niemeyer,

> Physically, however, he is ludicrous – fat, asthmatic, and almost blind without his specs. He is forever being betrayed by his body... Though Piggy is the first to recognize the value of the conch and even shows Ralph how to blow it to summon the first assembly, he cannot sound it himself. And he lacks imagination. Scientifically-minded as he is, he scorns what is intangible and he dismisses the possibility of ghosts or an imaginary beast... Of course he is quite right, save that he forgets he is now on an island where the artefacts of the civilization he has always known are meaningless. (Niemeyer 243)

Piggy's reason and intelligence make him say that life "'is scientific, that's what it is'" (Golding *Lord* 105), but he is himself "short-sighted intellectually and physically" (Talon 306). In this world of irrational fear, according to Henri Talon, "Piggy's intelligence, valuable in spite of its shortcomings, is not recognized, neither is Simon's vision, which could have redeemed them, nor Ralph's good will and common sense, which should have enabled them to survive" (Talon 306). To illustrate what Golding tries to achieve through such portrayal of the three major characters in the novel, Talon further comments,

> He [Golding] condemns both Piggy who only believes in what is reasonable and Simon who fails to realise its necessity. He indicts Ralph who thinks that it is enough for a community to ensure the practical welfare of all. The rationalist, the visionary, the eudemonist are all guilty because they all are mistaken. (Talon 306)

The purveyors of civilization must be 'mistaken' in their beliefs and action regarding human nature and that is why they fall short. Piggy becomes the tool by which Golding can drive the point home, because he is the living example of the ironic discord that lies at the core of human civilization. Of all characters, he has a special role to play in the novel. He views life from a scientific perspective, he

himself is the embodiment of science, and he becomes a victim of the misuse of science. His thick-lensed spectacles are used to light a fire, and by this instance he becomes a Promethean character, "he is the voice of sanity personified, a Promethean symbol" (Green 83); but his spectacles are stolen by bad guys and when he goes to recover them by using reasoning with the bad guys, he is killed by a big stone which was rolled over him by one of the bad guys who used a system of lever. According to Kevin McCarron,

> Golding constructs a complex metaphorical system around Piggy; the conch shell and his glasses being paramount. For Piggy, who has intelligence, but no intuitive powers, the conch is order, and he fails to realize that the conch in itself is nothing, a literally hollow shell, unless the others agree on its symbolic powers. When Jack's tribe steal his glasses to make fire and Piggy stands among them, blind, fat, and trembling, his words – almost his last – are genuinely tragic in their uncomprehending innocence. (McCarron 6)

Golding seems to mock the progressivist view of a rational, just and scientific world. The positivistic thinking of the progress of society through the religious, pantheistic and positivistic phases denudes the role of the religious/spiritual basis of human society; so also the view regarding the human progress through myth, magic, ritual to science. The positivistic thinking of Auguste Comte and George Eliot puts forward a vision of the progress of society based upon the scientific basis of reality. The mythical progressivist view as propagated by James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, and Jessie L. Weston in *From Ritual to Romance* puts forward a vision of necessary and welcome change enacted by the development of science. Moreover, the evolutionary progressivist view of man as propagated by Darwin, Huxley and H. G. Wells makes natural morality/spirituality redundant in view of a scientific explanation of man and society. For Golding, the impact of scientific rationalism is that it makes human existence devoid of morality. And he writes about this predicament and in the process he becomes a retrogressive thinker directing his attack on scientific humanism. Talking to James R. Baker Golding confesses that he rebelled against the scientific humanism of the kind of H. G. Wells not only intellectually but also emotionally (Baker "An Interview" 130). And he defines this

condition of a scientifically-oriented modern man unhinged from morality as 'free fall', "that without a system of values, without an adherence to some, one might almost call it, codified morality, right and wrong, you are like a creature in space, tumbling, eternally tumbling, no up, no down, just in "free fall" in the scientific sense" (Baker "An Interview" 133). And arriving at this stage, man becomes "a creature who suffers from an innate inability to live a proper and satisfactory life in a social circumstance" (Baker "An Interview" 134) without self-aggrandisement, without grabbing "something that belongs to somebody else, and we have either to be taught or teach ourselves that you've got to share, you can't grab the lot" (Baker "An Interview" 134). It is not merely H. G. Wells whose optimistic progressivist view is implicated by Golding, but also the entire theory of human progress as enunciated by James Frazer in his book *The Golden Bough.* A. D. Fleck finds similarity between the story of *Lord of the Flies* and the golden bough myth, and points out James Frazer's wide-eyed optimism in *The Golden Bough,* by quoting Frazer, "'that the hope of progress – moral and intellectual as well as material – in the future is bound up with the fortunes of science, and that every obstacle placed in the way of scientific discovery is a wrong to humanity" (Frazer, quoted in Fleck 196). But Golding, according to Fleck, seems not to endorse such views, because he can visualise the end of the road in dystopia. Fleck thinks that Golding

> cannot share Frazer's optimistic view of the nature of science, for science is controlled by a corrupt mankind. It is, after all, as the result of an atomic war that the boys find themselves stranded on the island, as the sign from the adult world that is sought by Piggy and Ralph descends on the island in the form of a dead airman who brings terror to their nights. Nor does their three-fold appeal to reason prevent Piggy and the conch shell to be destroyed by the huge rock which Roger levers upon them. (Fleck 196)

In Fleck's analysis Golding deflates the very optimism of the theory of progress based on science and rationality, because he finds that such a theory renders existence godless. The boys are thrown into a crisis by the scientific world, into an existence that necessitates god. It is possible to see the world of the boys on the island as lacking right direction, because it is a world without the supervision of the

adults, that is to say without the presence of a god. They wish there had been an adult with them to help them. In the course of events their fun and games take a grim turn, and an adult in the form of *deus-ex-machina* naval officer arrives there at the appropriate moment to prevent their life becoming too grim, with a smug and pointed jibe, "'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 –'" (Golding *Lord* 248); and with the authority of an adult master to rescue them. But even in this matter of the role of the naval officer Golding does not sound optimistic, as he exclaims "And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?" (Golding to E. L. Epstein, quoted in Tiger *Unmoved Target* 38). The naval officer is thus himself in an ambiguous role, both as a god who saves life and as a destroyer who will go on hunting and destroying lives. Another vital role of the naval officer that is seldom noted is that he embodies not only the British ignorance which Golding detests but also the British/imperialist arrogance that Golding seems to convey as the political message in his fiction.

However the boys make valiant effort to follow the footsteps of the adults to organise their life according to their European social parameters. Golding's point is to demonstrate that their effort fails because of exclusivity of reason and unreason, worked out in terms of the cultural symbol of 'running in circles' (Hollahan 22). Eugene Hollahan in an article titled "Running in Circles: A Major Motif in *Lord of the Flies*" shows that Golding uses two kinds of circles, rather circle and anti-circle, that the boys indulge in the course of building their version of society, to show the dramatic changes from order to falling into chaos, from disintegration of reason to the rise of unreason,

> ...Golding's novel is arranged around the concept of two important kinds of circles, the first being the socio-political circle where the assembled boys engage in rational discussion in order to plan their way out of their difficulties, and the second being the tribal circle where the regressive boys dance ritually and kill savagely. On the whole, the first of the two great circles appears in the first half of the novel and the other in the second half. Conveniently, one might refer to these two group patterns as

> circle and anti-circle, although the terms might be only rhetorical and not essential. (Hollahan 26-27)

The dynamic artificiality and schematic nature of the novel brings out Golding's artistic and visionary profundity in using motifs and symbols to unbare a complex theme of the essential imperfection that lies at the heart of civilisation. In terms of setting, according to Hollahan, the circle image suggests both human isolation and containment, and "that rational society and primitive tribe are in one sense fundamentally the same. In fact, the chief irony of the book, that Ralph's way and Jack's way take similar form, is conveyed by the circle image and motif" (Hollahan 29). The two circles remain mutually exclusive, overlapping at the crucial juncture of conflict and incomprehension, that reason faces in the face of unreason.

Robert J. White in his article "Butterfly and Beast in *Lord of the Flies*" also points out that "Golding conveys the mirror-like theme of the novel through a series of ironic symbols" (White 164) and these ironic symbols prevent the categorising of evil in simple terms, "What this evil in man consists of, whether it be the effects of original sin, or, as some have proposed, the Id, the great irrational thrust that dwells in all men, Golding has not seen fit to say" (White 164). There is no doubt that Golding's fiction tries to grapple with this irony which he finds to be the true condition of reality, whether it is the mythical original sin or the unconscious Id does not matter much. However, White perceptively points out the two ways the major themes of the novel take shape,

> First, he attempts to explore the interaction of society and man: the traditional dichotomy of *nomos* and *physis.* The development of society, he would maintain, depends upon the nature of man, not on any political system, regardless of its rationality and tradition. In society man has created for himself an artificial organism that comes into contact with nature at certain points, but which remains, for the most part, only a clouded mirror, or a substitute for nature...On the second level, Golding enters into the problem of a conflict within the *physis* itself and within the human personality. An individual finds that he is torn between his passions and imagination, on the one hand, and reason and common

> sense, on the other. He feels obliged to declare his allegiance to the god Apollo, but still cannot renounce his loyalty to Dionysus. (White 163-164)

This remains a wholly justified claim regarding the nature of conflict in Golding's fiction as White's analysis of *Lord of the Flies* demonstrates, signified through the symbols of butterfly and beast. The twin impulses of civilization and savagery they symbolise are fundamental to human nature, as manifested in the boys, is buttressed by the arrival of the adult, who having ended a manhunt and now preparing to take the boys off the island, waits "allowing his eyes to rest on the trim cruiser in the distance" (Golding *Lords* 248). According to White, the naval officer functions more than a *deus ex machina*, because he is crucial to drive the lesson home by embodying the ironic discord that lies at the heart of civilization, "Civilization is embedded in man's nature. The thing which in the embryonic society of the boys we find shocking has been quietly incorporated into our modern society as convention and custom. Any attempt to get rid society of evil is clearly impossible" (White 170). Civilisation is beset with this evil of original sin, that claims its price from time to time in the form of demonstration of power and the disruptions that happen in human history.

Thus through the introduction of an adult in the form of the naval officer helps transforming the microcosmic world of the boys into the macrocosmic world of the grown-ups and because the experience of the boys turns into an allegory of the experience of the grown-up modern man. The denial and suppression of the irrational fear results in severe repercussions. That is exactly what Golding tries to convey in *Lord of the Flies*, a novel that moves freely across the territories of fiction, fable and myth. That the novel moves closer to the conditions of myth is well-supported as Golding himself was in favour of calling it a myth. The mythical quality of the novel invites its comparative analysis with Euripedes's *Bacchae* and also with the Egyptian myth of Osiris. John F. Fitzgerald and John R. Kayser in their important study of the novel titled "Golding's *Lord of the Flies*: Pride as Original Sin", elaborate on this tragic flaw in the human nature that fails to take into account the role of the irrational part of the psyche which is responsible for the disharmony and disintegration of the being and on the larger scale the disintegration of the

society (Fitzgerald and Kayser 221). Robert C. Gordon in his essay "Classical Themes in *Lord of the Flies*" similarly finds Homeric elements in the novel, especially in Golding's use of the *deus ex machina*, "Golding's adaptation of *deus ex machina* makes it brilliantly clear that Ralph's rescue will lead him back to a world where law is similarly at bay. Dionysus the destroyer is king, having deposed Zeus and suborned Apollo himself" (Gordon 36). Fitzgerald and Kayser are however in favour of reading the novel in the light of the Egyptian myth of Osiris.

Bernard F. Dick finds both *Lord of the Flies* and *Bacchae* as "anthropological passion plays in which individuals – children in Golding, adults in Euripedes – revert to savagery and murder during a frenzied ritual. Both portray a divided society in which the Dionysian has not been assimilated by way of the Apollonian" (Dick "*Lord of the Flies* and *The Bacchae*" 15). In Golding's novel, the irrational or the Dionysan is represented by the hunters, who are former choristers. They are the Bacchants who first try to assimilate the rational and then destroy or try to destroy the rational voice of the trio – Ralph, Piggy and Simon, and they succeed in doing so. As Dick explains in quite unambiguous terms that in Euripedes's play the rational or the Apollonian is represented by Pentheus and the irrational by Cadmus and Teiresias. At first Pentheus is persuaded to join the new cult but he refuses and is killed by the irrational Bacchants (Dick "*Lord of the Flies* and *The Bacchae*" 15). Both the rational Piggy and visionary Simon are killed by the Bacchants in Golding's novel, drawing a parallel with the events in Euripedes's play. Both the characters embody the qualities of Pentheus in their denial and acceptance of the beast god, by way of rationalizing the irrational fear, with Piggy declaring life scientific, and with Simon discovering the beast in the form of a dead parachutist. Like Moses, Simon is enlightened by this knowledge of truth, but while coming down from the mountain he confronts and is warned by Beelzebub the lord of the flies, eventually to be killed by Jack and his tribe. Dick comments, "Confronted with the non-rational, Simon recognizes it, for it is an "ancient, inescapable recognition." But such recognition brings either a loss of innocence or death, and Simon is wantonly destroyed by a surge of anarchy that in Golding's eyes is inevitable in a flawed universe" (Dick "*Lord of the Flies* and *The Bacchae*" 16). Simon's death is one of the turning points in the novel, the intuitive grasp at the flawed universe is thwarted and the anarchy is let loose.

The failure of the Apollonian in the face of the Dionysan emerges as the central issue in Golding's fiction, placing civilization in a limbo, and the rationalist in a free fall condition. All the representative characters of Golding, like Ralph, Piggy, Simon, Lok, Tuami, Sammy Mountjoy, Pincher Martin and Jocelin all demonstrate this failure. The progressive and liberating power of modern science and rationalism denude life of the necessary nourishing values and thereby cause a constricting myopia regarding the other side of any picture. This limitations on the part of scientific humanism not only causes aggression of the superior against the inferior, but also a smug justification of self-aggrandisement and domination. The postwar and post-empire history is a rebuttal to man's overconfidence in scientific humanism, and it undermines the very foundation of western civilization. The prevalence of 'beastie' in its various forms like 'snake-thing', 'beast from water', 'beast from air', as human nature, and the suggestive title of the novel, support a reading of the novel in the line of the Osirian myth, as done by Fitzgerald and Kayser. Following the authority of Plutarch on the Egyptian fertility myth, they argue that the Osirian myth can avoid the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysan. By analysing the novel in the light of the Osirian myth, they are able to bring out Golding's assessment of the deep-rooted psychological malaise of the Western civilization (Fitzgerald and Kayser 228-229).

Based on A. D. Fleck's reading of the novel in the light of the golden bough myth, it can be easily said that the failure of civilized leadership is another central issue in the novel. In a comparative study of the novel and Robert Audrey's *African Genesis,* titled "*African Genesis* and *Lord of the Flies*: Two Studies of the Beastie Within," Richard Lederer and Paul Hamilton Beattie draw our attention to the Western civilization's insistence on the separation between animality and humanity, which are inextricably linked. Considering Simon's death as the crucial turning point in the novel, they argue that his death severs the animality from the humanity to such an extent that the wholeness of civilisation is badly affected. With the loss of animality with Simon's death, humanity is also irretrievably lost (Lederer and Beattie 1320). Thus Lederer and Beattie consider animality or bestiality, and aggression as inseparable from civilization, which is the key to understand why the beast always rises and that is why "We are risen beasts, not fallen angels" (Lederer and Beattie 1318). But for Golding "man's animal nature is an imminent threat that

must be held in check by repression; human problems issue from the tendency in man to regress to his animal origins" (Lederer and Beattie 1337). Comparing with the behaviour of other animals as discussed in Audrey's *African Genesis*, the lack of territorial imperative and the taboo of aggression in human behaviour results in the precariousness of survival and civilization. And this lack of territorial imperative and aggression accounts for Ralph's failure as a leader. Dehumanization happens because of a failure to meet aggression with aggression, and to demonstrate animality. As it is demonstrated in *The Inheritors*, that the inheritors of the earth is not the meek and the weak, but the strong and the aggressive. The liability to check aggression lies with the aggressed as well.

The polarity of the brittle conch as a symbol of authority and order and the degenerating pig's head on a stick as a rotten symbol of darkness of man's heart is counterpointed by the fire imagery. In fact fire imagery plays a vital role of providing unity in the novel, and that it emerges as a truly "organic symbol" (Rosenberg 138). Bruce A. Rosenberg in his article "Lord of the Fire-Flies" claims that "neither the conch nor the pig's head serves as an element of structure; neither gives the story unity, nor is either an ever-present reminder of the shifts in character, power, and plot. The fires do" (Rosenberg 138-139). Fire is the motivating force of existence in the novel, because it is initiated as a signal-fire to attract the passing ships, but it is neglected and allowed to get extinguished, or transformed into cooking fire. The fire imagery, according to Rosenberg, is used to highlight the discourse of the higher and the lower in human nature by its sacred and profane use.

> Universally, sacred fires are created anew, either by rubbing sticks together or by focussing a glass, as do Golding's boys...Profane fires, on the other hand – those used for warmth, cooking, or whatever non-religious purposes – are never created anew but are always taken from existing flame. So, Jack's fire, which is certainly profane, the blaze with which he stirs the blacker passions of his tribe, is not created afresh but stolen, first by filching Ralph's flaming logs, later by assaulting Piggy and stealing his specs. (Rosenberg 130-131)

In *The Inheritors* also, the Neanderthals carry their fire with perfect reverence; their sacred hearth-fire is defiled and destroyed by the new people. The characters and

their constructiveness or destructiveness are determined by their respective attitude towards fire, either reverent or irreverent one. The fire imagery with its being sacred and profane reinforces the polarity of order and chaos, but true to Golding's concept of ironic discord at the heart of man, it remains ironic, "for if Ralph's well-intended fire can kill if improperly executed, Jack's fire – lit to roast its prey or at least to drive him out of cover where he may be speared – ultimately seems to save" (Rosenberg 137) by creating a larger smoke and attracting the *deus ex cruiser* at the island which saves the life of Ralph and enables the rescue of the boys.

The commentary on human nature *vis-a-vis* civilization is one of the primary thematic strands in Golding's novels. The dominating tendency or the colonialist impulse in human nature and its effects on society are the points of exploration in his novels. This makes his characters look like characters of a comedy of humours. Civilization, the basis of which should be the ethical nature of individuals, suffers inherent instability through violence and aggression because of the unethical component in the individual. This unethical component is generated by rationality in its attempt to segregate irrationality in the human psyche, represented by the butterfly and the beast respectively. Butterfly is the purity and perfection of the soul, the beast is contamination. This segregation, the result of racial superiority and represented by the elements of nature, is found unwarranted and futile. The fire and water imagery show the ambiguity of an irony, both fire and water are at the same time sacred and profane, depending on what human nature is constituted of. There is no doubt a play of ambiguity in this coterminous status at the border of the sacred and the profane, but it is possible that Golding visualizes a perfect balance between nature and culture. The dystopian vision shows the disharmony and discord between the two. A utopian vision includes a free-wheeling cyclical movement of progress from the beast to the butterfly, marking progress or regress accordingly. The circularity or the changing places of the hunter and the hunted, the victimiser and the victim, is one element of Golding's view of liminality and which is part of this cyclical image of the relationship between nature and culture. Jeanne Delbaere-Garant in her article "Rhythm and Expansion in *Lord of the Flies*" finds a rhythmical movement in the novel, "a rhythmical balance of opposites recalling the waves of the ocean, that all things, animate and inanimate, are governed by the same law, that evil does not spare man any more than it does nature, that each living

creature is in turn hunter and hunted" (Delbaere-Garant 119); and this is exactly the way that Golding connects the microcosm and the macrocosm, and balances the apparent ambiguity of human evil.

Civilization, in order to be functional, has to rely on the fear of authority and restraint, or the rational methodology of discipline and punish; and fails in the same proportion as the law and restraint fail. This theme is explored as part of the vision of an orderly world, that is lost in the wake of war and also the loss of empire. *Lord of the Flies* is a study of the nature of fear of authority and restraint and their decline. According to Delbaere-Garant,

> With the throwing of rocks and the killing of pigs the movement is first confused and only gradually asserts itself as the boys lose control of the rational in themselves. The memory of punishment received for throwing sand in a younger boy's eyes holds back Maurice's hand on the beach. The interdictions from his former life keep Roger from throwing stones at Henry...When Jack raises his hand to kill his first pig, "there came a pause, a hiatus... The pause was only long enough for them to understand what an enormity the downward stroke would be." At the end of the novel the same boys, Maurice, Roger, and Jack, have become real forces of evil, intoxicated with their own power and impatient to exercise it. (Delbaere-Garant "Rythm and Expansion" 116)

This is an important twist in the nature-culture relationship. Civilization is found to be an important tool to subdue the beast. Then the question arises, is human nature inherently evil, or is it the weakness and failure of the civilization that is responsible for the rise of the beast? Deliberating on human nature, Rene Dubos in an article "The Despairing Optimist" comments, "the behavioral defects described by William Golding may not have their origin in human nature but rather in the system of values taught English schoolboys. Boys from other parts of the world might not behave as William Golding imagined on the basis of his English experience" (Dubos 566); and it is important to note that attitudes towards violence differ in different cultures, "Some cultivated it as a virtue; others developed complex social mechanisms to prevent or at least to control its manifestations" (Dubos 572). Based on his

assessment of human nature and its handling in different cultures, Dubos comes to the conclusion that,

> Man's propensity for violence is not a racial or a species attribute woven in his generic fabric. It is culturally conditioned by history and the ways of life. The instinct for self-defense exists throughout the animal kingdom and can exhibit aberrant manifestations in animals as well as in man – more frequently in man only because he always lives under conditions that differ profoundly from the ones under which he evolved. We cannot escape from the zoos we have created for ourselves and return to wilderness, but we can improve our societies and make them better suited to our unchangeable biological nature. I do not have much faith in the nineteenth-century version of the perfectibility of man, but I believe deeply in the perfectibility of human institutions. (Dubos 572)

Dubos's views no doubt takes the nature-culture debate to a new dimension and challenges Golding's thesis of the perfectibility of human nature, by positing a renewed effort at strengthening and upholding the efficacy of the human institutions.

Golding's survival narrative is based on his post-empire complexity and ambiguity regarding centre-margin, culture-nature, sacred-profane and physical-spiritual dichotomy. It follows a familiar pattern of displacement and shows a world on the move. The changefulness and volatility of human history makes him examine and experiment with the roles of human nature and civilization and he finds both human nature and civilization wanting in effecting a proper human order. Survival on the one hand and the preservation of the inherited legacy on the other, or survival through inherited legacy bring out the underlying tension between change and continuity in Golding's fiction. The preservation of what is good in human nature and what is good in civilization are represented by the tradition and continuity, and the destruction is represented by the necessity of survival and change. Both in *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors*, there is an emphasis on the theme of preservation of cultural inheritance and tradition, be it that of the Ralph, Piggy and Simon; or be it that of the Neanderthals. The almost unconscious and intuitive loving care and the adherence to their tradition and also to one another, marks the life of the Neanderthals which is at the evolutionary crossroads of survival and extinction.

Their self-sufficient and self-contained life is par excellent in their own limited circle, but confronted with the bigger circle this life provides a pathetically inadequate response to the changes brought about by the new order and the pressure of survival. Survival in terms of life or nature, and the survival in terms of culture thus become an important conflict in these novels and this conflict provides an irony regarding the themes of continuity and change, or the preservation and the survival. In *Lord of the Flies*, there is a continuous reference to the tradition of civilization that the boys belong to, their past and their common bond by means of their English background, which is now at stake because of their necessity of survival at the crossroads of the preservation of life and the preservation of the inherited values. The circle image in the novels plays an important role in the movement from tradition to survival, and the survival to tradition. In the words of J. P. Stern,

> Ralph, with Piggy's fine intelligence behind him, is concerned to preserve the social and moral certainties of their common past, their England. Jack's progress is away from the past, towards a barbarism where (as Nietzsche puts it) 'everything is permitted', all the way to destruction, murder, and holocaust. As the story comes to its climax, the structure that originally determined the behaviour of 'the bigguns' – individual self, social past, material present – recedes. A new morality, that of the pig-hunters who are the master race – the morality of the will to power – takes over. In this lethal conflict between Apolline order and Dionysan frenzy, what hope is there for tubby, asthmatic Piggy, the Socrates of the story? (Stern 23)

This ironic placing of the Apollonian and the Dionysiac, as we have already seen, is the most important factor in the post-empire understanding of the issue of continuity and change, that provides the obscurity and complexity – making his novels puzzles and epiphanies. If it is really the case, the tension created by the change brought about by decolonization might have been eased by the custodians of tradition and continuity, but they are themselves in disarray and their efforts are of no avail in the face of the rise of the chaotic margin which has been kept suppressed during the colonial domination and order.

The conflict zone between continuity and change is characterized by verbal violence and body shaming, as well as symbolic rendering of the physical body. This verbal and physical interface goes a long way to create an atmosphere of rough and tough world that also builds an atmosphere of chaos and disintegration. The description of the physical features is not probably a new thing in fiction, but what makes it different is the symbolic value attached to it. Apart from becoming a part of the topsy turvy world, in the words of Paul Crawford – a "world turned upside down" (Crawford 1), this also helps to further the self-other narrative. The defects of both nature and civilization are traced back into the body, and therefore body becomes one interesting area of description in Golding's fiction. As the survival narrative comes in the background of the post-empire condition of things falling apart, the resultant social chaos is traced back to the mental chaos as manifested in the body; and the novels become allegories of accommodation, and alienation and even elimination of the irregular and the chaotic. Golding's treatment of civilization takes the form of both tragedy and satire. On the tragic level the process of alienation and elimination or death is the organising principle of the plot, and on the satiric level the process is that of carnival and parody. Carnival, according to Peter Brooker, encourages what Bakhtin calls 'decrowning activity', by turning "the world upside down and can be seen as an act of subversive nose-thumbing on the part of the lower orders who indulged themselves on the same occasion in the pleasures of the BODY in eating, drinking and promiscuous sexual activity" (Brooker 24). There is no doubt that body features in a big way in Golding's novels, the immense symbolic possibility of the body of the underdog in the hierarchy of civilization provides him the scope to contribute to the master-slave narrative in the post-empire situation of a role reversal and new reality, set within the discourse of higher spiritual versus the lower body functions, as is evident in the conflictual patterning of the higher and the lower in *Lord of the Flies*. This reversal of the master-slave, or higher-lower positions in the post-empire time necessitates modification in the application of the carnival in his fiction, as pointed out by Paul Crawford (Crawford 52-53). Forwarding Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's arguments that carnivalesque practices are essentially anti-Semitic and mainly directed towards demonization of the outsiders like Jews, Crawford concludes that these practices in Golding are essentially directed against the weak and the marginalised (Crawford

52-53). If the words 'Jewish' and Semitic here are replaced by the colonialized subalterns, we get a full picture and force of Golding's use of the carnival in his novels set against the post-empire backdrop. The intertextual nature of his novels also points towards a community of imperialist texts which he supposedly subverts and rewrites, to disturb and realign the survival narrative with parodies, keeping in view the contemporary topsy-turvy postimperial history.

That the body is the vehicle of survival of the fittest, and that the superiority of the body is the way of domination, and the inferiority of the body is subject to bullying and even turned into a scapegoat to be hunted down and killed ritualistically as a sacrifice for society's ills, are the frightening elements in the rough and tough world of chaos not only in *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors, Pincher Martin*, but also in *The Spire.* Not only the setting is minutely described in these novels, but also the characters. The boys in *Lord of the Flies* are characterised by their physique, like the reader is told about the leadership quality exuding through Ralph's physique, "there was a mildness about his eyes that proclaimed no devil" (Golding *Lord* 15); that Piggy is an outsider because he is fatty like a pig and is averse to physical labour, and because of his asthma and his intellectual nature (Golding *Lord* 81); Simon and some littluns are batty in their appearance and behaviour, and Jack's physique is that of the hunter. It is Piggy who becomes the butt of bullying and body-shaming, but other characters like Roger and Percival, and the littluns are also variously bullied by the hunters. Their pig-hunting, eating meat, and talking about filth and shit, correspond to the title of the novel which in Hebrew means lord of the dung. But the important twist comes in the form of their body-painting like savages, their practice of ululation, their fierce blood-curdling chanting, and their phallicism – both verbal and in their use of spears – by which the hunters turn into the savages of the forest, to use the description given by Stefan Hawlin. The body imagery is effectively used to turn characters 'aliens' in a process of alienation. In *The Inheritors*, the Neanderthals and the new people are sharply contrasted by their respective physical features. The gorilla-like physical features of the Neanderthals make them alien ogres in the eyes of the physically superior new people, justifying their being hunted down and exterminated. The identification of the inferior body with beasts and animals is one imperialist strategy to undermine and vilify the other. Simon in *Lord of the Flies* is taken to be a beast and is murdered

like an animal, so the Neanderthals are either hunted down or killed like animals in *The Inheritors.* The dehumanization of the body of the other is thus a matter of inferiority and degradation, but the dehumanization of the colonial self is a matter of resistance and rebellion. Pincher Martin is dehumanized to be a crab or lobster, a transformation which is marked by an implicit rhetoric of diehard imperialist ideology of masculine and phallic aggression, like Jocelin's spire, which also carries the masculinist rhetoric of body directed against the other. Paul Crawford finds this function 'body-machine' of the soldier-male,

> The soldier-male is presented as maintaining phallic strength via his weapons and containing an otherwise fluid mass of people in militaristic parades, holding back like a dam the inner softness that threatens to undermine his firm stand. He has "the hard, organized, phallic body devoid of all internal viscera that finds its apotheosis in the machine. The body-machine is the acknowledged 'utopia' of the fascist warrior." It is this kind of protective, armored masculinity that lies at the heart of *Pincher Martin.* Christopher Martin's metamorphosis is into the "body-machine" of a lobster. But his hard, phallic body that is thrust into a crevice only temporarily fends off dissolution. His lobsteresque masculinity is eroded in a particularly mucosal and often feminine softness. (Crawford 94)

Thus the hardness of the body of the soldier-male is pitted against the softness of the body of the lotos-eater others. The spire in *The Spire* is similarly conceived as a body and the firmness of the virile male body is pitted against the moral infirmity and temptation of the female body, making the whole structure precarious. The identification of the spire as an erected phallus and then a spine is part of the body imagery used in Golding's fiction. The purity of the erected spire/male body is pitted against the contaminated female body of Aunt Alison and the lustful body of Goody on the one hand, and the impotent subaltern body of Pangall on the other. The subjugated female and the subaltern are grouped together to make a foil to the dominating master/colonialist. These subjugated bodies are placed in the grave and in the pit, beneath the erected male body of the spire/master. Goody is abused by the workmen, and the lame Pangall is mocked, hounded, tortured, and finally killed in a

ritual sacrifice by the workmen, as a scapegoat, to strengthen the stability of the spire. Inferior bodies like that of Piggy and Pangall are offered as a sacrifice of the scapegoat in order to maintain the health of the society and prevent the society from falling into chaos and disintegration. Jocelin's workmen "ritually mock the weak and the marginalized" (Crawford 125), and according to Crawford,

> Here, the impotent, cuckolded Pangall becomes a typical target for the carnival mob that has already murdered one man at the cathedral gate. In his portrayal of the mocked cuckold, Pangall, Golding extends his earlier interest in the victimization of the "weak" Piggy in *Lord of the Flies* and similarly cuckolded Alfred in *Pincher Martin.* The pagan workers make a "game" of Pangall (*SP*, 16), lewdly referring to his wife, mimicking his limp, before becoming violent towards him. Violence towards the excluded and marginal, an aspect of noncelebratory, racialist, or exclusivist practices at the heart of carnival, threatens to erupt out of horseplay that, as Roger tells Jocelin, is a pagan way of " 'keeping off bad luck'" (*SP*, 42). (Crawford 125-126)

Body becomes a site of the politics of domination and subjugation. The exclusivist practices against the weak is as much a societal practice, effectively kept hidden under socio-political systemic authorization, and erupts in the form of carnival, as that of the nature, as manifest in the evolutionary norm of the survival of the fittest. Golding's novels are an enquiry into these practices of culture and nature, aimed at to perpetuate domination over and subjugation of the weak, subaltern underdog. And Golding, the satirist of society, finally traces the defects of society not only in nature, but in the very psychology of the strong and dominating majoritarian class, and in the very colonialist impulse of this egotistical/megalomaniac class of humanity.

Thus Golding's assumptions regarding the role of culture is one important aspect in his fiction that focuses on the psychological ill effects of repression of the unconscious by the conscious, and the inevitability of the return of the repressed. Man's inability to diagnose and acknowledge this vital component of our psychological make-up leads to a blindness and hypocrisy that may be

counterproductive and dangerously disruptive for a harmonious existence on earth in the long run, and no amount of social or political system can prevent that.