

An Investigation of Postmodern Stylistic Elements in William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract

Postmodern literature is noticeable for different literary style and approaches. For this reason, postmodernist novelists use legendary stylistic practices like intertextuality, metafiction, and parody etc., for uniqueness and diversity. The paper tends to demonstrate the various elements used by William Golding in his novel 'Lord of the Flies'. Golding was a British prominent novelist, who was awarded Nobel Prize in 1983 for his literary distinctiveness. His novel is about boys who are beached on an unknown island and then they reveal their nature. Some remain civilized while others become brutal. The author has written it in the scenario of World War II. Firstly, this paper attempts to investigate the presence of parody and its playfulness, intertextuality, metafiction, and magical realism in Golding's novel 'Lord of the Flies'. Secondly, it further reviews to reveal that how the novelist has involved the reader in the story and impact of his techniques on them.

Keywords: Postmodernism, intertextuality, metafiction, parody, magical realism

1. Introduction

Postmodernism is a literary movement and roughly the term 'postmodernism' is in use since the 1960s. It parades certain features which consist of the denial of rationality, rejection of met-narrative, and refutation of modernism. Thus, it is a host of movements that reacted against the predispositions of modernism in the various fields like literature, art, philosophy, history, and literary criticism (Mullick, 2013, p. 283). Postmodernism appeared after the end of World War II in an intricate political condition especially in the setting of the Cold War and the spread of nuclear weapons (Forghani, 2015, p. 106). Fedovsova (2015) elucidates

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that postmodern literature is often noticeable by some stylistics techniques like irony, black humor, intertextuality, metafiction, temporal distortion, magical realism, and faction (P.79). The use of these techniques basically highlights their distinct style on the one hand, and to furnish the complex meanings inside the text on the other. The latter is focused so that the readers are involved in the reading more inextricably, which is another literary convention of this age.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective is to 'explore Postmodern Elements in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*'. The specific objectives are to analyze Golding's use of intertextuality, metafiction, parody, and magical realism in the novel. The researcher takes William Golding as a focus of research due to his immense stylistic postmodernist use of different elements. The techniques are taken into consideration because they are most prominent features of postmodernist authors as a trademark of their styles.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. What postmodern elements are present in Golding's novel *The Lord of the Flies*?
- ii. How do these elements play the role in readers involvement of the novel?

1.3 William Golding

Golding (1911-) is considered as an eminent author on account of his different experiences of his life. Ramji Lal (2012) has highlighted certain facts about Golding precisely. Born in Cornwall, England, he studied at Marlborough Grammar school and Brasenose college Oxford with his focus on science respectively. However, he could not fulfil the wish of his father to study the specific course related to science and turned to literature. In 1940, when he joined British army after trying his luck in different professions, he faced the horrible experiences of World War II. Sinking of German warship was one of the terrible things that he observed. His part in the Allied assault of Normandy was another bitter experience and Golding in 1945 bade good bye to army and restarted his teaching profession. War and its effects were a turning point in his life, which he made as an important subject in his novel "*Lord of the Flies*". He condemned the evil of war in his writing and at the same time thought of people who produced evil during war through their action. From 1954

to 1987, he produced different novels and in 1983, he was awarded Nobel Prize for literature. Pincher Martin, Free Fall, The Spire, The Pyramid, Darkness Visible are his other famous novels dealing with the theme of evil and human destructiveness besides the current novel (Lal, 2012).

1.4 Lord of the Flies

In 1954, after leaving the British Army, William Golding penned this novel. It is the story of British boys who are landed on dissolute island. Some of the boy remained civilized but most of them left their discipline, sense of humanity, and civilization. They became brutal, violent, non-cooperative. The whole story is told allegorically with the great meaning underneath.

All postmodern stylistic techniques are used by the novelist. Due to intertextuality, sometime readers are forced to read the Treasure Island and the Coral Island. The researcher observes that this practice is to acknowledge the previous work on the one hand but it is a parody on the other. Golding is realistic and he is satirizing the 19th century novels mentioned above. The novelist idea is apt that evil resides in human nature and when it finds time to expose, it comes to the forefront. Another postmodern feature in the novel is that the plot is quite complex. Boys on the unknown play, they wait, they create society but it is never-ending story. At the end, when the naval officer arrives, his comments are too oblique on their playing and enjoyment. There is a sudden shift in the narrative at the end. The reader's involvement is taken into consideration and many questions are raised by them.

2. Literature Review

Previous researchers have already worked on Golding's *Lord of the Flies* from several perspectives. However, the current researcher finds the gap that certain postmodern elements have not been discussed on which the current paper is grounded.

2.1 Previous studies

Nambrol (2019) has clearly analyzed Sontag's use of pastiche in her novel "*The Volcano Lover*" (1992). In this novel, Sontag subverts the historical events (related to romantic story) into the paraphernalia of inquiry. Sontag alters the story of Admiral Nelson and William Hamilton and his wife Emma, into an investigation about the nature of bravery and imperialism. Instead of the real version of the story, the narrator expresses Sontag's

views. This method of narration incites an examination of the way tale itself incorporates the content (the history) on which the narrator contemplates (p.10).

In the analysis of postmodern novels as an instance of metafiction, Nambrol (2019) elaborates that one of the examples of another postmodern element in Sontag's novels can be found in "*Death Kit*". The novelist leaves the reader doubting if her protagonist, Diddy, really did murder of a railroad worker or if the whole action of the novel is happening in his mind. This uncertainty questions everyday insight(p.17).

Fedovsova (2015) explains the use of time in postmodern novels. Temporal distortion is another postmodern element to intensify the use of other postmodern elements. American writer Vonnegut's characters for a certain period get to different places, and being in one place, they can stay in various time planes. Time outlines in the novel 'The Sirens of Titan' are defined by the novelist in terms of 'the second world war' and 'Third Great Depression'. These frameworks give the impression to the reader as endlessness of events as they are half-fantastic and half-realistic. Nevertheless, the novelist gives the concrete time by descriptions like 'Tuesday afternoon' 'springtime in the northern hemisphere of earth...' (P.82-83).

All the postmodern elements are explored by the researcher in *The Alchemist* to analyze narrative technique. This is viewed as the postmodern novel on account of fragmentation due to imbrication of time and events. Religious and historical events are parodies ironically. Metafiction is explored in the form of quotation, allegories, and allusion. Sixteen characters are included in the technique of minimalism (Hassan, 2016, p. 131).

In short, the previous studies have established the importance of the use of post-modern stylistic techniques in the novels. This study deals with these post-modern stylistic elements in *Lord of the Flies*.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The following certain postmodern elements are taken into consideration as a theoretical framework of this study.

2.2.1 Intertextuality

Julia Kristeva coined a term 'Intertextuality' who intended to see the relationship between the text and the reader and then complicated set of relationship of one text to other texts. In other words, intertextuality acknowledges the previous writers in terms of their writing in the current writing. This is the name often given to the method in which texts of all types incorporate references to other texts that have, in some way, sponsored to their structure and connotation. Postmodern writers were interested in self-referential distinction of art and they openly supported the frame of both production and its analysis. Writers use different procedures to outline intertext references like allusions, quotes, pastiches, and parody. It is used in poetry, drama, novels, and short stories. Postmodern authors have used them in two different ways: referential and typological. The former refers to the fragmented texts while the latter is used in the form of style and pattern. Intertextual references from Richardson's novel *Pamela* are used intentionally by Henry Fielding in *Joseph Andrew* to parody the chastity of the heroine in the form of presentation of Joseph. However, one thing is indicated by different critics that it is used by authors inadvertently not always purposefully (Childs, 2006, p. 121).

2.2.2 Metafiction

William H Gass invented a term 'metafiction' which means the act of writing about fiction. "*It is a method used to fictionalize fiction*" (Butler, 2002, p. 73). A very prominent critic on this postmodern stylistic technique is Patricia Waugh. She gives a detailed insight to it. In her assessment, postmodernism rejects the idea of language as an ultimate reality of communication. Language cannot depict reality, so traditional narrative is replaced by the self-conscious narrative. She explains that in metafiction when the writer merges fiction and reality together, it does not mean that he/she focuses on integration or disagreement but it marks a state of uncertainty and this vagueness is an important feature of postmodern literature. It is through this technique that writers analyze the conversion of realism through self-reflection. To put it differently, metafiction supports the reader to identify the reality of the everyday life or daily life, when the author declares it in the world of fiction. The author creates the world and write about it in his fiction (Waugh, 1984, pp. 38-42). Anaya Baker (2018) states that a writer uses this technique in various way. It may be detected in writing when the writer has addressed the reader directly as if he is talking to the reader. It may be in the form of a story within a story.

Sometimes it can be checked when the author shows a character who is indulged in reading or writing the same story in which he acts. Finally, it is revealed in footnotes or within the text itself. Other time, the narrator reveals himself both as a character and the narrator (p.2).

2.2.3 Parody

Expert on this technique Linda Hutcheon has explained this notion of postmodernism, which is linked to the above mentioned two techniques. "*Parody ... is repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity*"(Hutcheon, 2000, p. 6). Postmodern practitioners used this tool through the medium of irony in terms of their change in style, tone or sometimes ideas of their work. In parody, the postmodern authors study the history of art and literature, appreciate, or depreciate certain facets of that art and then they convert them or present them afresh. As it is already discussed that Lind has presented in-depth study on parody in her theory of parody. Her view is that it is '*a form of imitation, but this imitation is characterized by ironic inversion*'(Hutcheon, 2000, p. 6). Irony is contrast or contradiction of what is expected and what results. Postmodern writers use all possible forms of ironies like verbal, situational, and comic to caricatures the events (Oyrehagen, 2013, p. 21).

2.2.4 Magic Realism

Magical realism is one of the common elements used by postmodern writers. This term was first time used by German Art Critic Franz Roh in 1925. His major perception was to follow more realistic style in writing as he saw abstraction in expressionism earlier. The concept of 'magical realism' declared that the interaction of realism and the supra-rational was the style which might best permit us to explore the complexities and contradictions of all late twentieth-century societies (Childs, 2006, pp. 134-135). The main aim of this technique is to make the work of art more enchanting and effective. Authors make fiction imaginary by blending dream like quality through this practice. Though Coleridge used it in his poetry, it found the best expression through postmodern writers. The postmodern writers merge realistic and imaginary time shifts by linking fairy tales, unusual dreams, legends, and metaphysical events. It is an assortment of the discernable and the imperceptible, of illusion and fantasy.

3. Research Methodology

The researcher has used descriptive method to analyze the novel. The primary source is the novel itself '*Lord of the Flies*' by William Golding. The secondary sources are previous studies in the form of research articles, handouts of class discussion and other reliable internet sources mentioned in references. In examination of data, descriptive research method is used. 'Descriptive Research Method' is a process of research which is used enormously in the field of education, psychology, and social sciences. "*The goal of this research is to describe phenomenon and its characteristics*" (Nassaji, 2015, p. 129). It reveals the researchers' efforts to evaluate texts descriptively in terms of close reading. The current researcher has investigated the text with the help of close reading method to evaluate data about the postmodern literary elements and its technique in the relevant book descriptively. Close reading method supported the researcher to determine the connotation of text and textual references as evidences accordingly.

4. Data Analysis and Investigation of Postmodern Elements in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

4.1 Intertextuality

William Golding aptly uses the technique 'intertextuality' in his novel. The purpose of this technique is to recognize the previous literary work. Readers are incited to read the work, which has been depended by the author in the current work of art. The researcher observes that in chapter 2 of the novel, Golding refers to preceding works. When the children were stranded on the island, they mentioned treasure island and said 'it is like in a book' (p.38). *The Coral Island* is also cited, which is a story written by Ballantyne. This is a direct reference to the novel of the 19th century related to island and boys over there like Jack and Ralph. At the same time, it is an indirect attack on the theme of the novel and Golding questions the non-realistic portrayal of Ballantyne perhaps who presented young boys on the island quite disciplined. Secondly, the novelist makes an orientation to *Treasure Island* by Louis Stevenson and Arthur Ransom's *Swallows and Amazon*. Besides these references of the work, he borrows names of characters (Jack and Ralph) from the first work. However, in the current novel, he displays the dominant narrative of human behaviour and psychology. Earlier works focus on the theme which is not related to war but the current novel deals with the grim picture of society and impact of war on people and their state of mind and psyche. Golding has also used

word 'mirage' in the beginning of the story, which is a religious reference indeed. Readers are enchanted by the stylistic trend of Golding's use of intertextuality and they find it interesting to refer to the 19th century style of writing on the one hand and they are not hesitant to see the harsh reality of life in the book under study. They are entrapped by the postmodern idea that the world has undergone numerous adversities and it is beyond refurbishment.

4.2 Metafiction

Golding's exhibits the postmodern element metafiction, when his narrator addresses the readers directly after describing the status of the hero Ralph in the first chapter: *'You could see now that he might make a boxer, as far as width and heaviness of shoulders went, but there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil'* (P.10).

The researcher observes that the narrator has turned from the story of Ralph to the narration of the novel. He is dramatizing the fiction and taking the consideration of the reader while commenting on the status of a character. The readers' attention is drawn into the statement of the narrator and the narrative process. The objective of this stylistic technique is involving the readers in the narrative as opposed to modernist novelists, who are never hesitant to contradict the relationship between authors and their readers. They set them apart. Secondly, the story within a story can be perceived in the novel when Ralph tells the story of his father that his father is in navy and there are not any unknown islands left. But the narrator or the novelist contradicts his own statement when in the beginning he said that boys are beached on unnamed island. This technique involves the reader in terms of evaluating the piece of art in the light of every day authenticity of life. Readers are free to interpret the text as they want unlike modern authors who set the relation between the reader and author apart, postmodernist authors include them in the narration through self-reflexivity and self-conscious narration as mentioned in the above example. Allegorically, the island in the novel may represent 'Eden' in the beginning but at the end in the last chapter, it becomes a place of evil, 'loss of innocence' and 'the darkness in man's heart'. It seems the writer has contradicted his beginning and end. Apparently, the story is about boys but indirectly the author makes a reference to Bible's story and the story discussed in Milton's Paradise Lost. This is powerfully recollection of the original sin and the dismissal of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after the lost innocence.

4.3 Parody

The novel is full of parody and irony. Golding has ridiculed the traditions, people's behaviour, and their nature and reality. As already discussed in the framework of this paper, that postmodern writers make parody of history, traditional and popular literature. To satirize the blemishes of society are the flaws of human beings. Golding playfully does it in his novel. The introduction of the first mock hunt under the supervision of Jack with a slogan 'kill the pig, cut the throat, bash her in' is preceded by the second mock-hunt. Sam and Eric report about the beast on the island. Other boys want to search it. Just for fun, they make one of their friends Robert make a pig. Robert begins to shriek like a pig while his friends make a circle round him. They begin to shower blows upon 'kill him, kill him and finally Robert begins to cry. Jack holds Robert by the hair and begins to brandish his knife as if Robert were a real pig. The third mock-hunt continues, Jack asks the boys to join his 'tribe' to have fun. This time, they are in a wild fury to kill the beast. They suddenly see Simon who has just come down from the mountain, they mistake him for the beast. In short, tradition of savagery is parodied by the novelist through the gesture and attitude of all children. Golding has made attack on the malice which has entered this second mock-hunt. Similarly, some critics suggest that Golding makes the parody of African people and their culture. Perhaps words like 'tribe' and make a 'circle' may make a connection.

In the novel, the effect of WWII is parodied that nobody can help other in a state of distress and war. Ralph thinks his father is a commander in Navy and he would come to rescue them but reality is declared in the dialogue of Piggy when he states: '*Did not you hear what the pilot said? About atom bomb. They are all dead*' (Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 1983, p. 14). *Wacco*, *Wizzard* are terms used to mock the witchcraft and black things of the past. Secondly, Golding exposes the inside evilness of Ralph to exercise power over others. Golding has borrowed two names 'Jack' and 'Ralph' from the *Coral Island* and they are presented differently. In the first version, they were men of characters but in the current novel, they make wrong decisions and face consequences. They are gentle in the *Coral Island* but wicked in *Lord of the Flies*. By presenting Choir scene in the novel, Golding perhaps makes a reference to Christian religious people, who take vow but fail to fulfil it as in the novel the researcher observes that Ralph and Jack are elected as leader in the scene but they fail to fulfil their responsibility.

At end of novel, the naval officer approaches island and here Golding plays ironically by expressing different terms apparently something but its oblique meaning is very different. For instance, he talks to the boys that they must have enjoyed by 'fun and games. Very ironically, it is observed by the activities of these boys that they displayed negative and wild attitude only a few behaved well. Here the irony becomes corrosive and the novelist satirizes the assumption of the officer when he uses the reference of 'the Coral Island' in his speech. What the officer thought and what the reality was on the island was in sharp contrast with each other. The intertextual text 'the Coral Island' exhibited boys who were well-disciplined, mature, and acted sophisticatedly. On the contrary, here in the novel boys like Jack, Ralph and others were in constant confusion, they became unrestrained and violent. Piggy and Simon were killed and Ralph tried his best to torture others brutally. On the one hand, Golding satirizes the immature opinion of the officer and attitude of young boys on the island on the other.

4.4 Magical Realism

This postmodern technique is frequently used by Marquez in his novels and short stories. Postmodern authors use it in different pieces of writing to astonish readers with unexpected events in the narratives. Golding used this element in his novel sporadically but this erratic use has made novel interesting. Moreover, it is established to reveal wild shift in time in the novel through the hallucination of Simon. It is through the presence of this element, readers are made attentive to the uncongenial, brutal actions of boys and unbelievable proceedings of the novel. In *Lord of the Flies*, one of the characters Simon was on the top of the mountain, when he sees Jack who offers the head of a slain pig to the beast as gift in the hope that the beast would not harm him and his friends. When Jack goes, Simon imagines the head of a pig, which had been stuck by Jack on a stick, has assumed the shape of 'the lord of the flies' and is addressed to Simon, 'I am warning you, you are not wanted. We are going to have fun on island, understand?' (p.159). Simon looks into a gigantic mouth and finds blackness inside it. It declares that wickedness is the part of all boys and it cannot be detached. After this scene, Simon becomes unconscious. This unusual dream adds the beauty to the novel and make known to magical realism in the novel. The readers are stunned between real and imaginary in chapter eight of the novel. This novel overall seems to be a dream and leave readers confused, which is another postmodern element where readers are caught in the web of confusion and worry. Boys are a

grounded on the shore, they do not know each other. The island is unknown then how the navel officer approach there becomes a mystery for the reader. So much paranormal elements are attached to the personality and presence of the navel officer. Readers are caught in the trap of fantasy and reality. The novel has fully captured the attention and presence of the reader due to its postmodernism stylistic feature.

5. Conclusion

After critically analysis the data based on postmodern stylistic techniques, the researcher has arrived to the conclusion that 'Lord of the Flies' is all in all a postmodern text. Reference to earlier works, direction communication with the reader, presence of magical realism to some extent and the way people and things are parodied, are hallmark of postmodernism. Reference and inferences from Ballantyne's novel and Stevenson's novel are observed in the current text fully, which is the proof of the stylistic use of intertextuality. All possible practices of metafiction as defined by experts like Baker and Patricia are evident in the novel. Mostly it is used in the form of allusions, references, and quotations. Other time, it is presented through allegorical form but it is also used in the shape of speaking to the reader directly. Most prominently, the novelist has not forgotten to display the dream of one of the characters which included the magical realism in the novel as an important segment of the novel in disclosing the evil inside the human nature. After evaluating the selected postmodern elements, the researcher has found quite good connection between the reader and the author and his text. As postmodernist authors allow the reader to interpret work of art. At the end of analysis of each postmodern element, the researcher has observed its impact on the reader. In short, Golding's novel has successfully established the bond between the reader and his text, which is noticeable feature of postmodernist writers. Onbasis of the presence of all postmodern elements in the novel 'Lord of the Flies', Golding is aptly a postmodern novelist.

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