



ISSN 0976 8165

THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English

OCTOBER 2019
VOL. 10 | ISSUE - 5

10TH YEAR OF OPEN ACCESS

Editor-In-Chief
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ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Resistance Tactics in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

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Article History: Submitted-14/09/2019, Revised-05/11/2019, Accepted-06/11/2019, Published-20/11/2019.

Abstract:

Power has been one of the most discussed issues of the twentieth century. The one having power always wants to exhibit it so as to gain attention as it can be used either to show one's superiority or to denounce superiority of others. The two obvious applications of power are Subordination and Resistance. The theories of power discuss the two applications in details. However, there are rare evidences of exploring these applications in literature. This paper aims at analysing different tactics of Resistance in *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding.

Keywords: Power, Resistance, Subordination, Tactics.

Introduction

Power is a complex concept due to its natures of operation, functions and outcomes. No thinker would completely agree with the others as power has several complicated aspects, and complexity is there due to explicable and inexplicable, visible and invisible, apparent and underlying elements constantly influencing each other. It is impossible to elaborate power completely yet it can be uncovered to some extent through exemplification. It is for this reason that we need to arrive at a workable definition of power for the present research purposes. From the above discussions, a working definition of power for the purpose of this research could be made as *Power is a capacity of an individual or group to affect or influence the behaviour or/and actions—physical or mental—of other individual or group.* The capacity may be physical or intellectual, natural or acquired, manifest or latent, accessible or inaccessible but it has potential to influence the behaviour either positively or negatively. If the above definition is taken for granted, power could be assumed to have only two applications—when the behaviour is influenced positively there is subordination, and when the behaviour is influenced negatively there is resistance. The words positive and negative need elaboration.

Tactics of Resistance

Tactics of resistance exists with the tactics of subordination as subordination does not exist without resistance. It would be interesting to analyse techniques of resistance used by the boys against subordination strategies used by some boys.

Meek Submission

Submission without resistance is a strategy to dominate. Meek submission may result either in provoking the subjugator to use stronger weapons and strategies of oppression, or in creating feeling of shame and repentance in the subjugator. The object who submits in this way is a person beyond attitudes either to dominate or to submit, a person in search of the eternal truth, a person who is everywhere and nowhere. The only boy who neither resist nor attempt to dominate in the novel is Simon. Simon represents mystic attitude, a believer of absolute which lies beyond human sentiments. Simon helps the biguns as well as the littluns when the help is demanded. He goes with Ralph and Jack on the expedition to explore the place and confirm it to be an island. He helps Ralph build huts on the beach. He helps the littluns to get fruits from the higher twigs of trees. He expects nothing from any of the boys. He performs duties assigned to him and does not participate in power game. However, on the issue of beast, he goes with the majority though he is sure about its absence on the island. He submits to the majority.

He discovers the lord of the flies and speaks to him. The lord of the flies reveals the nature of evil and of beast to him but he does not resist. The lord promises fun with him but he accepts it without hesitance or resistance. He accepts his words and proceeds to discover reality of the beast. Even on the death bed, his attempt is to disclose the truth to the boys who at that moment are not in the mood to listen to him. He receives divine funeral; his body is taken to the sea by the flood of water poured from the sky and is embraced by the eternal ocean.

Manufacturing Bias

‘Understanding may be of two kinds: the first is the direct observational understanding of the subjective meaning of a given act as such, including verbal utterances.’ (Weber 1968, p. 8). ‘Understanding may, however, be of another sort, namely explanatory understanding. Thus, we understand in terms of *motive* the meaning an actor attaches to the proposition twice two equals four, when he states it or writes it down, in that we understand what makes him do this at precisely this moment and in these circumstances’ (Weber 1968, p.8). Manufacturing bias is a subtle strategy used for both subordination and resistance. Piggy right from the beginning

disapproves Jack for reasons of his own. Jack often mocks him in the assembly and interrupts Piggy's speeches for his being logical. Jack is physically stronger than Piggy. Hence, Piggy attempts to manufacture bias about Jack when Ralph thinks of resigning his leadership as he is unable to tackle the issue of beast. Piggy tells Ralph that Jack hates him for a reason that he does not know. He has arrived at this conclusion only after thinking a lot when he was in the bed. He is trying to find out the reason but is not able to discover it. Some probable reasons for Jack's hatred for him may be Ralph accused him for his irresponsible behaviour towards signal fire, or Ralph is the chief and Jack is not. Ralph is stronger. Hence, Jack does not hurt him but he hurts the next boy who is Piggy. (LOTF, p.102-03) This conversation between the two makes Ralph alert about intentions of Jack by germinating seeds of authority in his mind and bias for Jack. Ralph wants to confirm this and

Violence

Ralph scolds Jack for being irresponsible towards the signal fire. He does not appreciate efforts taken by Jack and his hunter group for hunting a pig and making arrangement of meat for the food, Jack becomes violent. He cannot refuse the fault yet he does not want to be scolded. He is really very angry but cannot protest as he was at fault and dare not utter a word against Ralph. However, to express his anger he hits Piggy and breaks his specs (LOTF, p.77). This is a resistance strategy. When you cannot harm the first person directly, you harm the next one. Jack resists violently by beating Piggy.

When Jack becomes the leader forming his own tribe, Ralph becomes restless not because his powers have been snatched away but because he is doubtful about Jack's leadership and his intentions. Jack is a tyrant leader and for mere pleasure of enjoying his authority he may harm anybody. As long as boys are safe, Ralph does not undertake violent means to control Jack. However, when Jack steals Piggy's specs, Ralph becomes violent and challenges Jack calling him a thief. Both of them become violent and fight to test who is more powerful. 'Jack made rush and stabbed at Ralph's chest with his spear. Ralph sensed the position of the weapon from the glimpse he caught of jack's arm and put the thrust aside with his own butt. Then he brought the end round and caught Jack a stinger across the ear. They were chest to chest breathing fiercely, pushing and glaring' (LOTF, p.201). Both the boys attempt to prove their physical prowess; Ralph wants to re-establish his lost position and Jack wants to prove that only he is the right person to be the chief of the boys. Here, Ralph represents resistance strategy as he is no

more in the power position while Jack represents subordination strategy as he beholds the power position.

Digression

Digression is a technique of resistance used by people who commit some type of mistake knowingly or unknowingly. The littluns in the novel is a group of boys with the age group of five and six years. This is the age of enjoying childhood funs. Lack of adult presence on the island brings these boys into action and they have to shoulder some type of responsibility so as to simplify life on the island. They are not given any important responsibility but they are supposed to help the biguns in different activities. The littluns behaviour is in accordance with the children of their age. They unknowingly violate the norms on the island and forget all their duties. They spend most of their time in playing, bathing and eating whatever they find. Their ignorance towards duties assigned to them increases work pressure on the biguns. When Ralph asks them about their ignorance, the boys bring forth the issue of 'beast'. They want to know what the biguns have decided about the 'snake-like thing'. The beast issue diverts the whole attention of the assembly where Ralph attempts to discuss responsibilities and their execution by the boys. At the end of the assembly, the littluns follow Jack and become uncontrollable for Ralph. This is the way in which they resist Ralph's ignorance towards their problem.

Jack, when scolded by Ralph for being careless about his duties at the signal fire, hits Piggy and breaks his specs. Further he invites all the boys except Piggy to enjoy the feast of meat. This diverts focus of Ralph temporarily. Ralph becomes calm for some time and stops scolding Jack. Jack's digression serves his purpose of mitigating Ralph's anger to a certain level and gives him time to think about a stronger argument in defence of his fault.

Surface Accommodation

Surface accommodation, the subtlest of the resistance strategies, is used only by the leaders with cunning intentions of harming the person in power position. This strategy allows you to remain with the leader and understand all that he knows his strengths and weaknesses, the situations where he could be trapped. Jack uses this strategy against Ralph.

At the beginning of the novel, Jack wants to be the chief on the island. However, the boys vote for Ralph. Jack gets disappointed yet preserves his desire to become the chief. He accepts

the offer of leading the choir group which would function as a group of ‘hunters’ or ‘army’ (p.20), and would perform duty of keeping the signal fire alive.

Second example of surface accommodation is that of Piggy. Piggy right from the beginning exhibits his common sense and knowledge. He finds that there is no other boy superior to him in the intellectual abilities. This makes him one of the aspirants of the position of the chief. He accepts leadership of Ralph because he is not aggressive like Jack. He also knows how to use Ralph against Jack as and when required. Piggy controls Ralph when he starts to speak about issues like beast, ghost and snake-like things. He is far more logical than anyone else.

Third example of surface accommodation is the of Simon. Unlike others, Simon lives by his own norms. He does not want to hurt anybody nor wants to spread wrong information. He does not want to have enemies or rivals. He accepts all and opposes none, yet maintains his individuality. It is only due to his ability to accommodate immediately. He helps Ralph to build shelters. However, he escapes to the woods when he finds that Ralph is busy in a discussion with Jack. Due to his philosophical and most of the times obscure talks, most of the boys call him ‘batty’. To avoid such comments, he often escapes to the grove of trees at the centre of the forest where he sits like a sage for meditation. When there is the second discussion on existence of beast on the island, ‘‘Simon felt a perilous necessity to speak; but to speak in assembly was terrible thing to him.’ ‘May be there is a beast’ he said hesitantly’(LOTF, p. 97). When Ralph asks him about his belief, he replies ‘I don’t know. But ...’ He ends up in a whisper ‘What I mean is...maybe it’s only us’ (p. 97). Though he does not agree with the littluns and Jack that there is a beast on the island, for avoiding bitter comments, he simply agrees with them.

Share in Power and Hidden Agenda

Jack wants to be the chief of the boys on the island but the boys prefer Ralph. However, Ralph being mild by nature offers Jack his choir group and allows him to control it. Besides accepting choir, Jack undertakes all the most important duties on the island. His choir group shall work as hunters and gather food; they shall function as military to protect the island and the boys; and they shall look after the signal fire. All these are the most important duties on the island as hunting would provide food (meat), army shall protect all the members of the group from invaders i.e. the beast in this case, and the signal fire is the only way to get connected to the adult world. After accepting these duties, Jack trains his hunters to be his followers till the end for which he offers the joy of hunting and eating meat besides escape from all other duties.

Remaining a subordinate to Ralph, Jack acquires most of the necessary skills of a leader to use them against Ralph in the end. At the surface level he remains subordinate to Ralph but plans his replacement underneath. His plan finally works and he overcomes powers of Ralph and attempts to destroy his powers by killing him.

The second person willing to share powers is Piggy. The choir boys choose Jack as their leader, the rest of the boys choose Ralph as their leader but Piggy remains quiet for some time. He votes for Ralph because he is left alone. Piggy provides information and insights to Ralph. He wants Ralph to note the names and number of boys on the island so that they can plan things and duties properly. Secondly, he suggests Ralph to allocate duties to boys and simplifies Ralph's job. On different occasions, Ralph assigns him the duty of controlling the littluns. He becomes the custodian for the littluns. Piggy accepts all these duties only to make Ralph and Jack aware of his abilities and their importance on the island. He takes advantage of his physical weakness to remain near the beach and around the littluns. Thus he fulfils his desire to become the chief by sharing power with others.

Disregard for Norms and Orders

'Submission to an order is almost always determined by a variety of interests and by a mixture of adherence to tradition and belief in legality, unless it is a case of entirely new regulations. In a very large proportion of cases, the actors subject to the order are of course not even aware how far it is a matter of custom, of convention, or of law' (Weber 1968, p.37-38). When such confusion arises, the best way to overcome it is to explore loopholes. These loopholes function in two ways; they remind the makers of the rules that they need to work more and eliminate lacuna in the rules, and secondly it creates a safe passage for escapers as they can avoid adherence to the law and work on their personal interests.

Jack is an opportunist and is in search of opportunity to overthrow Ralph's authority on the island. When Sam and Eric report about the beast from air and their escape, Jack insists on hunting down the beast. While boys are preparing for the hunt, Ralph asserts safety of the littluns and appoints Piggy on the guard. Piggy attempts to suggest caution holding the conch in his hands. He insists on his right to speak as he holds the conch when Jack attempts to interrupt him. Jack rejects him offhandedly shouting 'Conch! Conch! We don't need the conch any more. We know who ought to say things. What good did Simon do speaking, or Bill, or Walter? It's time some people knew they've got to keep quiet and leave deciding things to the rest of us—'

(LOTF, p.112). He resists not only authority of Ralph but also the symbolic power of the conch shell. He attempts to decline the symbolic power of the conch shell when he forms a separate tribe and shifts to rock castle. Ralph attempts to control him by reminding him of the conch. Jack sneers and says ‘You haven’t got it with you. You left it behind. See, clever? And the conch doesn’t count at this end of the island—’ (LOTF, p.169). Jack finds himself in a powerful position where he has followers ready to follow his orders. He finds adherence to the norms created by the previous chief futile or unnecessary. He rejects Ralph’s claim to emphasize his own authority over the boys there and the place.

Carelessness

‘The first rhythm that they became used to was the slow swing from dawn to quick dusk. They accepted the pleasures of morning, the bright sun, the whelming sea and sweet air, as a time when play was good and life so full that hope was not necessary and therefore forgotten. Towards noon, as the floods of light fell more nearly to the perpendicular, the stark colours of the morning were smoothed in pearl and opalescence; and the heat—as though the impending sun’s height gave it momentum—became a blow that they ducked, running to the shade and lying there perhaps even sleeping’ (LOTF, p. 61). This is the routine of the littluns. At assembly, they would ‘be, you know, very solemn, and someone would say we ought to build a jet, a submarine, or a TV set. When the meeting was over they’d work for five minutes then wander off or go hunting’ (p.52). They listen to the biguns carefully and agree with them to work independently or help others in their work. However, their enthusiasm fades away within half an hour of the meeting. This is a sort of tactic used by the littluns, though unknowingly, to resist the decisions of the biguns as the biguns do not really address the mind haunting problem of the littluns that is the ‘beastie’, ‘a snake thing’ ‘in the woods’ (p.35). There is a general common emotion among the littluns that if biguns do not care for our feelings, we do not bother about theirs.

Articulating Difficulties

This is the simplest strategy to resist subordination. The littluns do not participate in any power game consciously. They are ignorant about the grave conditions they are living in. Ignorance is a kind of blessing to them. They are happy with the life on the island as long as there are no difficulties for them and they are not controlled by the grown-ups. However, due to absence of grown-ups, the littluns often feel insecure on the island. They have Ralph, Jack, Piggy

and Simon to control them and to save them from any difficulty on the island. They are under perfect control of these biguns. However, when things are related to their survival, they express their difficulties. They do not complain about each other but they have, like any other kid on the earth, fear of something unknown or something which is beyond their abilities to describe. 'The older boys first noticed the child when he resisted. There was a group of little boys urging him forward and he did not want to go'. 'At last Ralph induced him to hold the shell but by then the blow of laughter had taken away the child's voice' (LOTF, p. 34-35). Yet these children speak out 'Tell us about the snake-thing'. 'Now he says it was a beastie' (LOTF, p. 35). The littluns do speak about the beast or snake thing or animal in assemblies. They do not have other problem but this problem haunts them throughout, and they express it and insist on getting a proper solution to the problem. When they notice failure of Ralph to solve their problem, they support Jack and become members of his tribe.

Ralph accuses Jack for his ignorance about his duties to the signal fire. Jack is angry and wants to express his anger. As Jack is often envious towards Piggy, he hits piggy and breaks his specs. Though, Piggy is weaker than Jack and is not shrewd like him, he retorts in indignation 'I got to have them specs. Now I only got one eye. Jus' you wait—' (LOTF, p.77). He repeats the sentence thrice but takes no action except verbal rejection of Jack's action. His physical weakness strengthens his ability to voice his problem and occasionally he uses empty threats. He uses the same technique throughout the novel against Jack as he knows his own physical limitations and also the intentions of Jack. Thus, he resists Jack's authority by pointing out harms Jack has done to him in public so that a negative opinion is automatically formed about Jack.

Mockery and Disregard for Logic

Piggy is a representative of intellectuals and rational beings. He is absolutely logical in his arguments. It is this capacity which is absent in rest of the boys. This ability to argue logically elevates Piggy above the remaining boys and he becomes dominant, a kind of burden for the boys who fail to prove their viewpoints. Boys are left with no other option but to listen to him and accept his argument. However, Jack and his followers find it difficult to tolerate a dominant place for Piggy in the group. However, like the adult world, he also becomes the object of mockery among the boys. Children do not like logical arguments made by Piggy as they are always against the will of the boys. Besides, his tone, throughout the novel is that of an authoritative person who possesses wisdom of the whole world and does not need it from anyone

else. Ralph often appreciates his ability to argue systematically but gets irritated with him due to his physical weakness, a common feature of intellectuals found in the civilized societies. He remains biased about Jack due to the scornful treatment given to him by Jack. Jack hates him for his logical abilities and common sense which postpones Jack's position as the chief of the island.

Conclusion

Because power is an indistinct part of life, resistance becomes inevitable. Power instinct is natural among all the living creatures because it is often connected to the survival instinct. Boys in the novel *Lord of the Flies* lead instinctual life which is parallel to the life of animals who survive by hunting. Hunting in the civilized world is a game, a mean of entertainment or sometimes cavalry but the novel takes us back in the pre-historic age where hunting was a mean of gathering food for survival. The author projects this hunting power acquired by boys to its extreme where the civilized English boys get converted into animals. This provides Golding with the opportunity to exhibit some of the resistance tactics discussed above.

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