A STRUCTURALIST APPROACH TO TWO PAGES FROM GOLDING'S 'LORD OF THE FLIES'

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Abstract: *According to the structuralist approach, the literary text is conceived as a homogeneous system within which each part (the fragment of this analysis) interacts with the others. The aim of this paper is to analyze the dynamic alternations of the narrator's and the character's voices and also the vivid usage of the intertext, with the help of which the respective text links itself to the body of the novel, revealing different interpretations and significances.*
Key words: *structuralism, sign, free indirect style, significance.*

Structuralism is a theory applied to certain human sciences that attempts to discover and to describe the specific field (mythology, for instance) as a complex system of interrelated parts. It began in linguistics with Ferdinand de Saussure's work. But many French intellectuals perceived it to have a wider application, therefore the pattern was soon modified and applied to other fields, such as anthropology, psychoanalysis, literary theory or architecture.

In literary theory, the structuralists claim that there must be a structure in every text, which explains why it is easier for the experienced readers than for the non-experienced ones to interpret a text. Hence, they say that every piece of written work seems to be governed by specific rules, a "grammar of literature".

Structuralism is known to consider literary work as a sign, but not as a linguistic one (as theorized by Saussure (1999)), but as a poetical sign (as theorized by Dumitru Irimia (2000)). Structuralism also regards the literary text as intertext, meaning that if a structuralist reading focuses on multiple texts, there must be some way in which those texts unify themselves into a coherent system.

In William Golding's novel, Chapter Five – *Beast from Water* - is most significant for the state of mind of Ralph. The first two pages of the chapter which will make the object of this analysis are very important as they reveal exactly Ralph's beginning to become aware of their situation on the lonely, deserted, savage island.

The first complex sentence (*The tide was coming in and there was only a narrow strip of firm beach between the water and the white, stumbling stuff near the palm terrace*.) is definitely related to the next one (*Ralph chose the firm strip as a path because he needed to think…*) by the fact that now Ralph is perfectly aware that the new inhabitants of the island (he and the rest of the children) need organization, rules for a civilized behaviour. And since he has been chosen a leader, he is the only human being (undoubtedly helped by Piggy's and the other boys' ideas), whose difficult task is to organize a group of children and not of adults. The adjective *narrow* points exactly to the difficulty of his task. Making his way to the platform, Ralph realizes *the wearisomeness of this life, where (...) a considerable part of one's waking life was spent watching one's feet*. With so much energy devoted to survival, little time is left to devote to the kind of conceptual thought or abstract reasoning available to those sheltered by the institutions found in civilizations.

He could not even find the necessary words to express *the wearisomeness of this life, where every path was an improvisation* as expressed in the following sentence:

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He lost himself in a maze of thoughts that were rendered vague by his lack of words to express them. The fact that every path was an improvisation is easily explainable by a child's unstable, ever-changing nature and this is the author's very intention to suggest by the respective words. The only way to survive on this island is to perpetually change each rule of living. There are no fixed rules as there are no fixed characters. They do not have a complete vision upon the world, or a precise set of rules to apply in order to lead a good, moral life. The word *narrow* which acquires a new semantic value in this particular context again indicates that there are not many possibilities for Ralph in his attempt to order things. In fact, as it will be revealed later on throughout the novel, there are only two antithetical possibilities: order or chaos, civilization or barbarism, good or evil, moral or immoral.

Throughout *Lord of the Flies* Ralph stands for civilization alongside Piggy. In moral terms this is the side of goodnesss as opposed to the hunters who act from the darkness of their hearts. But Ralph and Piggy and therefore the relationship between the two sides of the antithesis, are very ambiguous. Both boys extol the reasonable virtues of the adult world: *They wouldn't quarrel – Or talk about a beast* - "But this adult-worship is misplaced because adults would quarrel – after all, the reason why the boys are on the island is due to an adult "quarrel". The difference is that the adults would rationalize the beast into an enemy and battle against it." (REDPATH, 1986). Mary Midgley (1980) argues: *If ... there is no lawless beast outside man, it seems very strange to conclude that there is one inside him. It would be more natural to say that the beast within us gives us partial order; the task of perceptual thought will only be to complete it.*

The boys' fear of the beast becomes an increasingly important aspect of their lives, especially at night, from the moment the first littlun claims to have seen a snake-monster in Chapter 2. In this chapter, the fear of the beast finally explodes, ruining Ralph's attempt to restore order to the island and precipitating the final split between Ralph and Jack. At this point, it remains uncertain whether or not the beast actually exists. In any case, the beast serves as one of the most important symbols in the novel, representing both the terror and the allure of the primordial desires for violence, power, and savagery that lurk within every human soul. In keeping with the overall allegorical nature of *Lord of the Flies*, the beast can be interpreted in a number of different lights. In a religious reading, for instance, the beast recalls the devil; in a Freudian reading, it can represent the id, the instinctual urges and desires of the human unconscious mind. However we interpret the beast, the littlun's idea of the monster rising from the sea terrifies the boys because it represents the beast's emergence from their own unconscious minds. As Simon realizes later in the novel, the beast is not necessarily something that exists outside in the jungle. Rather, it already exists inside each boy's mind and soul, the capacity for savagery and evil that slowly overwhelms them (*Maybe it's only us*).

The first two pages in Chapter 5 can be divided into three smaller texts delimitated as follows: the first one lasts from the beginning of the chapter up to *At that he walked faster…*; there follows the second, which is smaller, up to *At that he began to trot*, which makes the appearance of the third part which lasts up to *Again he lost himself in deep waters.*

One can notice the interference of the auctorial voice with the character's voice, a fact which reveals a literary device most frequently used by Golding, namely the free indirect style which is a manner of presenting the thoughts or utterances of a

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fictional character as if from that character's point of view by combining grammatical and other features of the character's 'direct speech' with features of the narrator's 'indirect' report, allowing a flexible and sometimes ironic overlapping of internal and external perspectives. Free indirect style (a translation of the French *style indirecte libre*) dispenses with tag-phrases and adopts the idiom of the character's own thoughts, including indicators of time and place.

Therefore, we will further establish which parts of the fragment belongs directly to the character (Ralph) and which to the narrator (omniscient in this case, thus the relationship between the two being, according to Tzvetan Todorov (1967), the one in which the narrator knows more than the character does).

In the first part the narrator's voice can be identified within the first sentence: *The tide...* up to *...he went carefully over the points of his speech.* The clause *There must be no mistake about this assembly, no chasing imaginary* strictly belongs to Ralph, the clause not being put in Ralph's mouth, but in the narrator's. *He lost himself in a maze of thoughts that were rendered vague by his lack of words to express them. Frowning, he tried again.*- these sentences also belong to the narrator, but the final one opens the possibility for Ralph to speak again, to manifest himself, although indirectly. *This meeting must not be fun, but business.* - is the next sentence and it belongs to Ralph again, this interpretation being supported by the previous sentence.

The next one, which opens the second part of our fragment, is an auctorial impulse given to Ralph, reminding him in fact that he has serious things to attend to, and not have fun. It is another textual proof of the interference of the narrator's voice with Ralph's. Thus, the narrator's voice can be heard from: *At that he walked faster* up to *At that he began to trot.*

The third part of our two pages belong entirely to the narrator, as it is a description of the place in which the boys gathered to discuss what they were supposed to do. This scene reminds one of an ancient practice which is, however, present nowadays, too, according to which when a community has a problem, they meet and discuss about it, having a leader who, actually, is supposed to be the centre of their thinking, acting. Therefore, Ralph is seen, not only here, but throughout the rest of the novel, as an *axis mundi*, an organizing element around which everybody was supposed to circle.

The word defining the physical place where they gathered is *triangle*, a geometric figure, with deep semantic value in this context. According to ancient beliefs, an upright equilateral triangle, with one point at the top and two at the base, is a male and solar symbol representing spirit, divinity, fire, life, prosperity and harmony. In contrast, the reversed triangle is female and lunar, representing mother earth, water, rain and grace.

In Christianity and Judaism, a triangle is often used as a symbol for God and the holy trinity, and in magic it was seen as representing the element fire. When upright and downward triangles are put together, they form the Star of David and symbolize balance and knowledge. The triangle, in this case, stands for the children's need for equilibrium, harmony, while the sides (represented by logs which *must have been quite exceptionally big for the platform*) offer the children the safety which only an adult can offer a child. Therefore, we can say that the juvenile inhabitants of this island are in a perpetual quest for safety, certainty, organization according to the good laws of nature. The fact that the triangle was *irregular and sketchy, like everything they made* suggests that the children's physical and psychological position is exactly at the dawn of humanity when people began to be aware of the world in which they were forecast to

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live. This idea is perfectly rendered by the word *legendary* in the sentence: *Perhaps one of those legendary storms of the Pacific had shifted it here.* To support again the idea of intertextuality, we should mention at this point the artistic message of the romantic authors speaking about an original point, the instant out of which the world rose. We could interpret the description of the logs as unstable and irregular as another argument in favour of the children's insecurity and imperfection as characters: *The two sides of the triangle of which the log was base were less evenly defined. (…) On the left were four small logs, one of them - the farthest - lamentably springy.*

The final two sentences of the third part of our analysis - *So they would continue enduring the ill-balanced twister, because, because…Again he lost himself in deep waters.* – prove again the narrator's omniscience and the interference of the two voices mentioned above.

According to the structuralist approach, the literary text is conceived as a homogeneous system within which each part (the fragment of this analysis) interacts with the others. By its profound literary significance revealed with the help of the device used by the author here, the dynamic alternations of the narrator's and the character's voices and also the vivid usage of the intertext this fragment links itself to the body of the novel, conferring the latter homogeneity and cohesion.

5. Beast from Water

[*The tide was coming in and there was only a* ***narrow*** *strip of firm beach between the water and the white, stumbling stuff near the palm terrace. Ralph chose the firm strip as a path* because he needed to think, and only here could he allow his feet to move without having to watch them. *Suddenly, pacing by the water, he was overcome with astonishment. He found himself understanding* ***the wearisomeness of this life, where every path was an improvisation*** *and a considerable part of one's waking life was spent watching one's feet.* He stopped, facing the strip; and remembering that first enthusiastic exploration as though it were part of a brighter childhood, he smiled jeeringly. He turned then and walked back toward the platform with the sun in his face. The time had come for the assembly and as he walked into the concealing splendors of the sunlight he went carefully over the points of his speech. *There must be no mistake about this assembly, no chasing imaginary.*

He lost himself in a maze of thoughts that were rendered vague by ***his lack of words to express them****. Frowning, he tried again.*

*This meeting must not be fun, but business.***]**

[At that he walked faster, aware all at once of urgency and the declining sun and a little wind created by his speed that breathed about his face. This wind pressed his grey shirt against his chest so that he noticed - in this new mood of comprehension - how the folds were stiff like cardboard, and unpleasant; noticed too how the frayed edges of his shorts were making an uncomfortable, pink area on the front of his thighs. With a convulsion of the mind, Ralph discovered dirt and decay, understood how much he disliked perpetually flicking the tangled hair out of his eyes, and at last, when the sun was gone, rolling noisily to rest among dry leaves. At that he began to trot.**]**

[The beach near the bathing pool was dotted with groups of boys waiting for the assembly. They made way for him silently, conscious of his grim mood and the fault at the fire.

The place of assembly in which he stood was ***roughly a triangle****; but irregular and sketchy,* ***like everything they made***. First there was ***the log*** on which he himself sat;

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a dead tree that must have been quite exceptionally big for the platform. *Perhaps one of those legendary storms of the Pacific had shifted it here.* This palm trunk lay parallel to the beach, so that when Ralph sat he faced the island but to the boys was a darkish figure against the shimmer of the lagoon. *The two sides of **the triangle** of which **the log** was base were less evenly defined. On the right was **a log** polished by restless seats along the top, but not so large as the chief's and not so comfortable. On the left were four small logs, one of them - the farthest - lamentably springy*. Assembly after assembly had broken up in laughter when someone had leaned too far back and the log had whipped and thrown half a dozen boys backwards into the grass. Yet now, he saw, no one had had the wit - not himself nor Jack, nor Piggy - to bring a stone and wedge the thing. *So they would continue enduring the ill-balanced twister, because, because… Again he lost himself in deep waters*.**]**

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