


**LITERATURA E PSICANÁLISE EM DIÁLOGO: A DINÂMICA FREUDIANA EM “O SENHOR DAS MOSCAS”****LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS IN DIALOGUE: FREUDIAN DYNAMICS IN “LORD OF THE FLIES”****LITERATURA Y PSICOANÁLISIS EN DIÁLOGO: DINÁMICAS FREUDIANAS EN “EL SEÑOR DE LAS MOSCAS”** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.021-053>**Rodrigo Gonçalves Basílio<sup>1</sup>, Nicole Zanon Basílio<sup>2</sup> and Murilo Pedro Demarchi<sup>3</sup>****RESUMO**

Este artigo realiza uma análise da obra literária *O Senhor das Moscas*, de William Golding, sob a perspectiva da psicanálise freudiana, com especial atenção aos conceitos desenvolvidos por Sigmund Freud nas obras *Totem e Tabu* e *Psicologia das Massas e Análise do Eu*. A metodologia adotada é de natureza teórica, aplicando os princípios psicanalíticos aos personagens e eventos narrativos, com o intuito de interpretar os conflitos que permeiam a trama. Os resultados evidenciam a luta intrínseca entre as estruturas psíquicas — id, ego e superego —, bem como as pulsões instintivas e as tensões entre a ordem social e os impulsos primitivos. O estudo reside na abordagem interdisciplinar que conecta literatura e psicanálise, demonstrando a riqueza analítica que emerge dessa interseção. No plano prático, o artigo contribui para diálogos interdisciplinares entre literatura, psicologia e ciências sociais, além de oferecer subsídios para reflexões aplicáveis em contextos educacionais. Como sugestão para futuras pesquisas, propõe-se a análise de outras obras literárias à luz da psicanálise, bem como a investigação das dinâmicas psíquicas e sociais em diferentes contextos culturais e históricos.

**Palavras-chave:** Freud. Psicanálise. *Senhor das Moscas*. William Golding.

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents an analysis of the literary work *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis, with particular emphasis on the concepts developed by Sigmund Freud in his works *Totem and Taboo* and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. The methodology adopted is theoretical in nature, applying psychoanalytic principles to the characters and narrative events in order to interpret the underlying conflicts within the plot. The results highlight the intrinsic struggle between the psychic structures — id, ego, and superego — as well as instinctual drives and the tensions between social order and primal impulses. The study relies on an interdisciplinary approach that bridges literature and psychoanalysis, demonstrating the analytical richness that emerges from this intersection. On a practical level, the article contributes to interdisciplinary dialogues between literature, psychology, and the social sciences, while also offering insights applicable to educational contexts. As a suggestion for future research, the analysis of other literary works through the psychoanalytic lens is proposed, along with the exploration of psychic and social dynamics in various cultural and historical settings.

**Keywords:** Freud. Psychoanalysis. *Lord of the Flies*. William Golding.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la obra literaria *El señor de las moscas* de William Golding desde la perspectiva del psicoanálisis freudiano, con especial atención a los conceptos desarrollados por Sigmund Freud en sus obras *Tótem y tabú* y *Psicología de masas y Análisis del yo*. La metodología adoptada es de naturaleza teórica, aplicando principios psicoanalíticos a los personajes y eventos narrativos, con el objetivo de interpretar los conflictos que permean la trama. Los resultados destacan la lucha intrínseca entre las estructuras psíquicas — ello, yo y superyó —, así como las pulsiones instintivas y las tensiones entre el orden social y los impulsos primitivos. El estudio se apoya en el enfoque interdisciplinario que conecta la literatura y el psicoanálisis, demostrando la riqueza analítica que emerge de esta intersección. A nivel práctico, el artículo contribuye a los diálogos interdisciplinarios entre la literatura, la psicología y las ciencias sociales, además de ofrecer soporte para reflexiones aplicables en contextos educativos. Como sugerencia para futuras investigaciones, proponemos el análisis de otras obras literarias desde la perspectiva del psicoanálisis, así como la investigación de dinámicas psíquicas y sociales en diferentes contextos culturales e históricos.

**Palabras clave:** Freud. Psicoanálisis. *El señor de las moscas*. William Golding.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humanity has oscillated between civilizational advances and returns to barbarism. This tension is present both in literature and in theories that seek to explain the deepest mechanisms of the human psyche. In this context, the purpose of this article is to analyze the work "Lord of the Flies", by William Golding, in the light of the main concepts of Freudian psychoanalysis, such as the id, the ego, the superego, the feeling of helplessness, the behavior of the masses and totemism.

William Golding (1911–1993), British writer and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1983, believed that evil was not a phenomenon external to human beings, but something intrinsic to their nature. His experience as an officer in the British Royal Navy during World War II was decisive for the construction of his disenchanted view of man, who he considered capable of atrocities when free from social ties. For Golding, civilization is just a thin veneer that can easily break in extreme situations.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), in turn, founder of psychoanalysis, proposed a structure of the psychic apparatus in which human behavior is the result of the clash between unconscious drive forces and internalized normative instances. Based on the second Freudian topic – composed of id, ego and superego – Freud argues that civilization imposes instinctual renunciations, which, although necessary, generate uneasiness and can collapse in the absence of external repression.

Based on these two worldviews, this article focuses on the following research problem: **"What does the rupture with civilization, portrayed by Golding in his work, reveal about the psychic structure of the subject, according to Freudian psychoanalysis?"** After all, how far is the human being capable of going when there is no threat of institutional punishment? What differentiates the "civilized" individual from the savage? What are the limits of drives? In group behavior, does the law of the strongest really prevail? From this, it is intended to investigate whether the primitive behaviors presented in the narrative are only circumstantial or if they result from an atavistic psychic nucleus common to all human beings.

The methodology adopted is qualitative, with a deductive approach and of a bibliographic nature. The main corpus is the work *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding (2014), confronted with Freudian texts such as *Psychology of the Masses and Analysis of the Self* (Freud, 2011), *The Discontent in Civilization* (Freud, 2010) and *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 2012). The central objective is to highlight how literature can serve as a fertile field for psychoanalytic reflections, shedding light on human nature and the limits of civilization.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### WILLIAM GOLDING: THE HUMAN CONDITION UNDER THE SIGN OF DARKNESS

William Golding (1911–1993), a Cornwall-born British writer, became world-renowned for his ability to portray the dark side of human nature. His literary thought was consolidated in the midst of the ruins left by World War II — an event that marked his biography and his intellectual production. Having served as an officer in the Royal Navy during the conflict, Golding directly witnessed the collapse of European civilizing ideals. The experience of the horror of war, according to the author himself, undid his beliefs in human progress and in the essential goodness of people. In his words: *"man produces evil as the bee produces honey"* (Torres, 2018).

Golding's work is marked by a deep distrust of the stability of civilization and the conviction that evil inhabits the very core of the human being. His literature adopts a dystopian ontological perspective, in which the fragile social pact can be easily dissolved, exposing the primitive violence that is latent in individuals. Among his novels, *Lord of the Flies* (1954) is the most emblematic in this sense.

The narrative follows a group of schoolboys who, after a plane crash during World War II, find themselves isolated on a deserted island. Day after day, they discover the charms of this tropical refuge and, led by Ralph, try to organize themselves while waiting for a possible rescue. Gradually, however, these seemingly innocent boys turn the island into a fierce struggle for power and savage behavior comes to the surface, defying the thin veneer of civilization. The island, located somewhere in the Pacific Ocean, is a true tropical paradise: there is plenty of water, fruits and good shelter; in short, everything that, in theory, would be necessary to live in harmony. Although free from social rules, they initially remain connected to the values of Western civilization: they elect a leader in a democratic way and face adversity peacefully. However, the darkness of the night, the delay in the arrival of the rescue and the natural fear of the unknown provoke visions of a strange animal and make the boys start to act no longer within a civilized pattern, but rather wild and primitive. Once the order is undone, a disproportionate struggle for power begins, leaving a trail of destruction, which ends in human hunts and murders (Martins et al, 2011, p. 02).

Considered a modern classic, William Golding's work portrays the areas of shadow and darkness of the essence of the human being. Originally published in 1954, it is considered one of the essential novels of world literature. Adapted twice for the cinema, translated into 35 languages, with more than 25 million copies sold in English alone, it has been seen as an allegory, a parable, a political treatise and even as a vision of the apocalypse. Tragic and provocative, ontologically dystopian, it presents the reader with a return of man, in just a few weeks, to that state of darkness from which it took him

thousands of years to emerge (Golding, 2014).

The plot, which could easily be configured as a fable of survival and solidarity, reveals itself to be a profound study of moral degradation and regression to barbarism. The paradisiacal scenario quickly gives way to a hostile environment marked by power struggles, group fragmentation, acts of violence and the rise of a tyrannical leadership.

In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding not only portrays an extreme situation, but proposes an allegory of the human condition. The absence of adults — and, therefore, of consolidated social structures — causes boys to reveal atavistic behavioral traits. The island, which at first glance symbolizes freedom, becomes a stage for the return to the state of nature. The author constructs a scathing critique of the idea that childhood is a state of pure innocence and of Rousseau's assumption that man is naturally good. The violence that emerges among the boys denounces how much evil is constitutive of human subjectivity, being contained only temporarily by civilizing institutions.

Golding's literature, in this sense, operates as an instrument for unveiling deep psychological structures, thus approaching the psychoanalytic theories proposed by Sigmund Freud.

### SIGMUND FREUD: DRIVES, REPRESSION AND CIVILIZATION

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), an Austrian neurologist and creator of psychoanalysis, offered Western culture a new way of understanding the human being: as a subject of the unconscious, moved by drives that are not always accessible to reason. In his vast theoretical production, Freud sought to demonstrate that culture and civilization are fragile constructions, sustained by mechanisms of repression and sublimation of instinctive drives, especially aggressive and sexual drives.

In the text *The malaise in civilization* (2010), Freud argues that civilized life requires the renunciation of unconscious desires. This renunciation generates psychic tension, internalized in the subject in the form of guilt. The superego — a moral and normative instance — acts by repressing the impulses of the id, a drive instance governed by the pleasure principle. The ego, in turn, acts as a mediator between these forces, trying to reconcile the demands of external reality with internal and unconscious demands.

Another concept essential to Freud's analysis is that of mass psychology. In *Mass psychology and analysis of the self* (2011), Freud observes that, in the group context, the subject tends to regress to primitive states, giving up his critical sense and becoming more susceptible to suggestion and impulsiveness. The mass, as a collective phenomenon, reduces individual responsibility, disinhibiting behaviors normally restrained in civilized contexts.

In addition, in *Totem and Taboo* (2012), Freud investigates the foundations of social and religious organization in the early days of humanity. There, he postulates that the totem – usually represented by an animal – functions as a symbolic substitute for the figure of the father and as a point of cohesion of the group. The ritualistic death of the totem and its subsequent worship would be unconscious ways of dealing with guilt and interdiction originating in culture.

These concepts provide a powerful interpretive lens for the analysis of William Golding's work. The moral degeneration of the boys on the island, the formation of a group ruled by aggressive drives, Jack's authoritarian leadership and the totemic adoration of the pig's head — the "Lord of the Flies" — find clear parallels in the mechanisms described by Freud. Thus, the intersection between literature and psychoanalysis allows for a deeper understanding of the conflicts between civilization and barbarism, between culture and drive.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This article is a qualitative research, with a theoretical-interpretative approach and exploratory nature. The methodological choice is justified by the central objective of understanding, from a literary work of an allegorical nature, the unconscious psychic mechanisms that govern human behavior in situations of civilizational rupture, using as conceptual support the foundations of Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

From a technical point of view, it is a bibliographic research, carried out based on classic works of literature and psychoanalysis. According to Marconi and Lakatos (2011), bibliographic research is that which makes use of material that has already been published, including books, scientific articles, dissertations, theses and other secondary sources, which allows the researcher to develop a critical and in-depth analysis of a given object of study.

The main corpus of the investigation is the novel *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding (2014), used as a starting point for a symbolic analysis of human behavior. The work is examined in the light of key concepts drawn from Freudian psychoanalysis, such as id, ego, superego, drives, repression, mass behavior, feelings of helplessness, and totemism. The main theoretical sources used are the texts *The malaise in civilization* (Freud, 2010), *Psychology of the masses and analysis of the self* (Freud, 2011) and *Totem and taboo* (Freud, 2012), all selected for their relevance to the understanding of the psychic dynamics involved in the narrative.

The analysis was conducted based on the deductive method, starting from broad



theoretical assumptions — extracted from psychoanalysis — for the interpretation of specific situations present in the literary work. This approach allows us to illuminate the behaviors and decisions of the characters based on the conceptual structures offered by Freud, contributing to a symbolic and critical reading of the work.

Finally, this research does not propose to exhaust all the interpretative possibilities of Golding's work or Freudian theory, but rather to establish a dialogue between literature and psychoanalysis, demonstrating how fictional elements can reflect structural aspects of human subjectivity.

## **SOME ELEMENTS OF FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS IN THE WORK "LORD OF THE FLIES"**

In Golding's novel, there is a kind of allegory of man in his natural and primitive state: the setting consists of a deserted island where fruits and drinking water are abundant. The characters are even more primitive – children left to their fate, unattended by any adult. There were the "little ones", between six and seven years old, and the "big ones", between eleven and twelve years old.

After the crash of the aircraft that was taking them home (home as a symbol of tranquility and conflict resolution), the children need to form a "civilization", aiming at their own rescue or, simply, living in a "new world", until then unknown and full of mysteries. Faced with the death of the only adult crew members, they need to create their own rules, learn them, disseminate them, obey them, and transgress them: all in the light of a natural civilization, under the spectrum of the civilization of their parents, noble respecters of morals and good customs (Torres, 2018, p. 15).

The realization that, most likely, there would be no adult on the island causes, at first, a feeling of euphoria in the boys, which is clear in one of the first dialogues between Ralph ("the blond boy") and Piggy ("the fat boy"):

Is there really no adult?  
I don't think so.  
The blond boy gave his answer in a solemn tone; but then he was seized with the joy of a fulfilled ambition. In the middle of the open wound in the forest, he planted a banana tree and smiled at the fat boy upside down.  
No adults! (Golding, 2014, p. 08)

At one point, Ralph shouts to the others: "I think we need a boss to solve things" to which the boys respond: "A boss! A boss!" (Golding, 2014, p. 23). Later, in an attempt to organize the large group, Ralph mentions again: "We need rules," he exclaimed, excitedly.

"Too many rules! And when someone fails to comply with the rule –". "Pimba!" (Golding, 2014, p. 36).

Even Jack, the boy who will later become the symbol of transgression and tyranny, at first agrees with the need for rules in the group: "I agree with Ralph. We need rules, and we need to obey the rules. After all, we are not savages. We are English; and the English are the best in the world at everything. Therefore, we need to do things the right way" (Golding, 2014, p. 46)

When describing Ralph, the boy who would become the first leader among boys, Golding (2014, p. 10) mentions that: "He was old enough, twelve years and a few months, to have already lost the prominent belly of childhood, but not yet enough for adolescence to leave him shy".

#### 4.1 THE EMERGENCE OF THE MASS

Behold, the mass is formed and the concept of collectivity inevitably comes to the fore. Line after line, striking aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis emerge from Golding's novel.

The individual in the mass acquires, by the mere fact of numbers, a feeling of invincible power, which enables him to yield to instincts which, being alone, he would keep under control; and it will yield all the more easily to them, because, being the mass anonymous, and therefore irresponsible, the feeling of responsibility that, in most cases, holds back individuals completely disappears (Freud, 2011, p. 20).

Thus, Freud (2011, p. 21) continues, the individual in the mass is subject to conditions that allow him to free himself from the repressions of his unconscious instinctive impulses. The apparently new characteristics, which he then presents, are precisely the manifestations of this unconscious, in which everything bad in the human soul is contained, in predisposition. A kind of "atavistic aggressiveness" is noted in the group of boys, which is accentuated throughout the story in the absence of punishment and the social brakes immanent to the idea of civilization. The author narrates, for example, a game between the boys, in which Roger, one of the children, pretends to be a pig, so he is attacked by the others with spear thrusts, simulating a real hunt:

At the same time, Robert began to scream and thrashed with frenzied force. Jack held him by the hair, knife in hand. Behind him was Roger, who was trying to get closer. The screams were increasing in volume, ritually, like the last moment of a dance or a hunt. 'Kill the pig! Cut your throat! Kill the pig! Fall on the stick!'. Ralph also struggled to get closer, to reach some point of that tanned and vulnerable flesh. The desire to crush and wound was irresistible (Golding, p. 127, italics).



In a mass, feelings and acts are contagious, to the point that the individual easily sacrifices his personal interest for the collective interest. One has, therefore, an aptitude contrary to his nature, of which man becomes capable only as part of a mass. As striking characteristics of the individual in the mass, it is possible to observe: a) the evanescent of the conscious personality and the predominance of the unconscious personality; b) the state of extreme exaltation and the irresistible impetuosity; c) the orientation by way of suggestion and the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts; d) automaton and, in most cases, thoughtless behavior; e) intolerance and excessive belief in authority (Freud, 2011, p. 22-27).

In the work there is a significant episode that reveals the conflict between primitive impulses and the remnants of moral conditioning inherited from social life. In one scene, the characters Roger and Maurice leave the responsibility of feeding the fire to others and head to the beach for a swim. Along the way, Roger destroys sandcastles built by smaller children, kicking them and scattering flowers and decorative stones, while Maurice accompanies him, laughing and intensifying the destruction. Despite the absence of protests from the children, Percival begins to whimper when he has sand thrown in his eyes, which causes Maurice to suddenly retreat. At this moment, the author shows that, on another occasion, Maurice was punished for similar behavior, and, even in that environment free from the presence of authority figures, he still experiences moral discomfort in the face of the evil committed. This feeling leads him to sketch an attempt at an apology before walking away, revealing that although social structures have been undone on the island, the internalization of norms and punishments persists to some degree in the characters' unconscious.

### The manifestations of the unconscious

In Golding's dystopia, the predominance of the unconscious personality becomes more and more evident as the narrative progresses. Elements such as fear, homesickness, uncertainty about the rescue, the feeling of helplessness, the mysteries involving a supposed monster and the disappearance of a boy in the first moments of the story intensify the internal conflicts and reveal the predominance of the unconscious in the psyche of the characters.

Fear is a constant in the narrative of *Lord of the Flies* and manifests itself, in a subtle way, in dialogues and behaviors of the characters. In conversation with Ralph, Jack reveals that, during hunts, he is often taken by a strange sensation — as if, instead of hunting, he is being hunted, as if there was always something hidden watching him in the jungle (Golding,

2014). This perception evidences the growing restlessness in the face of the hostile and unknown environment, as well as the projection of their own internal fears. In addition, dreams contribute to intensify the climate of tension and helplessness among boys. An example of this is the account of little Phil, who mentions having had a nightmare in which he left the cabin alone and found himself fighting against distorted figures that seemed to hang from the trees, which reveals the dreamlike anguish in the face of the jungle and the unknown (Golding, 2014). These psychic manifestations function as symbolic elements of the latent fear that permeates the collective experience of the characters, reflecting both the collapse of rational control and the rise of primitive impulses.

Amid the growing tension and oppressive atmosphere of the island, Golding inserts a dreamlike moment experienced by Ralph, revealing the contrast between the character's psychological state and the unconscious desire to return to the safety and affection of the family environment. Ralph dreams of a serene scenario, in which he sees himself feeding ponies with lumps of sugar over the wall of a garden, in a space that clearly refers to his home of origin. It is an idyllic image, marked by comfort and predictability, in total opposition to the fear of the unknown and the instability that dominate its concrete reality on the island. This dream, by temporarily interrupting the logic of survival and conflict, evidences the symbolic refuge of childhood and civilization in Ralph's imagination, functioning as a psychic mechanism of escape in the face of the increasing brutality of the environment in which he is inserted (Golding, 2014).

Their fear became not only in relation to external factors, such as storms and the monster, but also in relation to themselves and the attitudes they had been adopting in the interior of the island. This fear made her homesickness even more great, a symbol of protection and warmth: "I'm afraid. From us. I want to go back home. Oh, my God, I want to go home" (Golding, 2014, p. 173). Later on, Piggy, the most rational and analytical character in the novel, also exposes his intense concern: " 'I'm serious' If we don't go home soon, everyone will go crazy" (Golding, 2014, p. 182).

The uncertainty about the possibility of rescue intensifies as the boys realize the loss of contact with civilization, a feeling that is evidenced at the moment when "The world, that comprehensible and law-abiding world, was collapsing. First it was one thing, then another; and now – the ship had passed" (Golding, 2014, p. 101).

The work also highlights the deep sense of helplessness experienced by the characters in the face of the inhospitable vastness of nature and the absence of any concrete prospect of rescue. Golding symbolically contrasts two scenarios of the island: on the one hand, the serene image of the lagoon, protected and shrouded in mirages, where it

was still possible to nurture the hope of a rescue; on the other, the direct confrontation with the open, immense and indifferent ocean, which reinforces the perception of absolute isolation. In this context, the brutality of the sea, combined with the immeasurable distance from the civilized world, awakens in boys an oppressive feeling of impotence, abandonment and inevitable condemnation, translating the collapse of the symbolic security that was previously offered by the presence of adults and social institutions (Golding, 2014).

The figure of the "monster" present in *the work Lord of the Flies* acts as a metaphor for the irrational fear that progressively dominates the group, exposing the latent conflict between reason and imagination. This psychological tension is noticeable in the reflections of the characters themselves, as when Maurice mentions that fear seems to be a constant in the human experience — something that people always end up feeling, even when there are no concrete reasons for it. Although he claims not to believe in the existence of the monster and declares that he agrees with the rational and scientific view defended by another character, he admits that absolute certainty is unattainable, which highlights the fragility of reason in the face of the unknown and instinct (Golding, 2014).

As the plot progresses, this restlessness intensifies, triggering a collapse of the structures of dialogue and coexistence. At a certain point, the platform where the boys gather becomes a chaotic space, taken over by screams, arguments and disorderly gestures, in Ralph's eyes symbolizing the collapse of sanity. Fear, belief in monsters, and disagreements about the bonfire — an essential element to the hope of rescue — become signs of a process of collective disintegration, in which any attempt at rationalization gives way to emotional lack of control and irrationality (Golding, 2014).

This atmosphere of disorder was already announced from the beginning of the narrative, with the disappearance of one of the boys. Golding treats the disappearance with a disturbing subtlety, marked by a certain erasure of what happened in the group's imagination. The missing child, previously identified by a birthmark, is no longer explicitly mentioned, and the author observes that, among the faces of the many dirty and indistinct boys, the one with the purplish stain was no longer to be found. Such omission suggests the naturalization of violence and negligence, as if chaos and loss became normative elements within that new social order in formation (Golding, 2014).

### Extreme and impetuous actions

The state of extreme exaltation and the irresistible impetuosity are manifested in several moments of Golding's work, revealing intense psychic tensions between the characters. These behaviors clearly illustrate the constant conflict between the id and the

superego, central elements of the second Freudian topic. Presented by Freud in 1923, in the work *The Ego and the Id*, this theory proposes a new modeling of the human mind, composed of three instances: the ego, the id and the superego. Such a psychic structure came to represent a milestone in psychoanalytic theory, explaining the internal clashes that shape the conduct of individuals (Vilaça, 2019, p. 07).

In this context, Freud (2010, p. 215) points out that the id represents the obscure and inaccessible part of the human personality, functioning as a true psychic chaos — a "cauldron full of seething excitements". Responsible for accommodating instinctive needs, the id operates according to the pleasure principle, disregarding the laws of logical thought and reality. In continuity, the author compares the relationship between the ego and the id to that between the rider and the horse: while the horse provides the driving force, it is up to the rider to determine the direction. However, Freud observes that, in practice, the ego (rider) is often forced to lead the individual to where the id (horse) wants to go (Freud, 2010, p. 220).

The superego, in turn, is related to the aspects of self-observation and moral conscience. He is also the bearer of the ego-ideal, by which the ego measures itself, and whose demand for ever-increasing perfection it strives to satisfy. He is, therefore, the representative of all moral limits, the advocate of the desire for perfection (Freud, 2010, p. 196-206).

As a rule, parents and similar authorities follow, in the education of the child, the precepts of their own super-ego. In this way, the child's superego is constructed not according to the model of the parents, but in accordance with the superego of the parents; it is filled with the same content, it becomes a vehicle of tradition, of all the constant values that have thus been propagated from generation to generation (Freud, 2010, p. 205). In turn, the ego represents reason and prudence in psychic life, in a continuous and herculean effort to balance the demands arising from the superego and the id. Quoting a proverb, Freud (2010, p. 220) reminds us that one cannot serve two masters at the same time. In this way, the task of the ego is all the more difficult, which serves three severe masters (the external world, the id, and the superego) by striving to harmonize their demands and requirements. Such demands always diverge and often seem irreconcilable, which is why it is very common for the self to fail so much in its task (Freud, 2010, p. 220).

### **Suggestible conduct aimed at immediacy**

Another striking feature of the boys' conduct is guidance through suggestion and the tendency to immediately turn into action any idea presented to them. This behavior,

although more recurrent among younger children, extended to the mass as a whole. All it took was for someone with greater influence in the group—such as Ralph or Jack—to express a suggestion for the others to execute it promptly, often without any prior planning. A notable example of this impulsiveness is the episode in which they caused a fire in the vegetation, which almost consumed the entire island. Outraged by the inconsequential conduct of his colleagues, Porquinho, the most rational and analytical among them, expresses his concern:

"And then, when we get up here, you set a fire that is useless. And then they set fire to the whole island. Won't it be funny, if the whole island burns down? Boiled fruit to eat, and roasted pork. And it's not funny at all! We decided that Ralph was the boss, but no one gives him time to think. So, **as soon as he says something, everyone runs out**, done, done – . He paused to breathe, and the fire continued to burn" (Golding, 2014, p. 49, italics)

### Automaton and unreflective behavior

The automaton and, for the most part, unreflective behavior of the mass of boys emerges in a recurrent and intensified way throughout the narrative. The extreme point of this attitude is manifested in decisive passages of the work, such as the deaths of Simon and Piggy, in addition to the final chase conducted by Jack's "tribe" against Ralph. Simon's death scene is especially symbolic, constituting one of the most brutal moments in the novel. In the midst of the darkness of the night, the torrential rain and the lightning that tears through the sky, the boys indulge in a primitive collective frenzy, chanting, in a tribal tone, words of hatred and violence: "Kill the monster! Cut your throat! Scatter the blood!" (Golding, 2014, p. 167). It is in this environment of lack of control that Simon, when he appears in the boys' circle, becomes the target of the projection of his deepest fears.

The collective hysteria, added to the chaotic environment of the storm, converts fear into a desire for uncontrollable destruction. The mass of boys, seized by unconscious impulses, acts without any trace of rationality or moral restraint. At that moment, it becomes impossible to recognize in the crowd any sign of a superego or a moderating ego; Only the *id*, in its most primitive state, manifests itself with vigor. The figure of Simon, who came to announce a liberating truth – the concrete non-existence of the monster – is immediately confused with the threat itself. The boys, dominated by primitive instincts, project the symbol of fear onto him, eliminating it as an unconscious way of restoring the shaken psychic security.

The climax of this moral degradation is consummated in the scene in which the violence reaches its apex. Simon, slumped to his knees, tries to talk about the body on the mountain, but his screams are lost amid the noise and fury of the group. "The rods fell down, and the opening of the new circle closed with shouts. [...] The monster tried to

advance, broke the siege and fell from the edge of the stone slab into the sand by the sea" (Golding, 2014, p. 167). At this point, Simon is no longer recognized as a subject, but as a symbolic representation of what must be destroyed. Reason is suffocated by irrational impulses, and its attempt to reveal reality is diluted in the midst of collective delirium.

Simon's death is marked by extreme brutality. The boys hit him with punches, bites and improvised spears, in a merciless act that definitively breaks the last limits that separated them from barbarism. The irrationality of the group becomes evident, reflecting the subject's total submission to the mass. "At the same time the gang threw itself at him, jumping off the slab, falling on top of the monster, screaming, hitting, biting, tearing [...]. Only the monster remained motionless, stretched out a few meters from the sea. Even in the rain, everyone could see that it was small; and his blood was already soaking the sand" (Golding, 2014, p. 167). It is a moment of symbolic annihilation of the other, of erasure of otherness, in which the subject is reduced to the fantasy that the group builds on him.

This type of collective behavior is in line with the analyses proposed by Freud (2011, p. 29–30), when he states that the masses do not seek the truth, but rather illusions that they cannot renounce. According to the author, the unreal exerts as much influence on them as the real, and the distinction between the two tends to disappear within the multitude. As in dreams, hypnosis or neuroses, what prevails is the psychic reality, and not the objective one. For Freud, the proof of reality recedes before the force of desires invested with affection. This logic is fully observable in Simon's death scene: the group acts based on the fantasy of a monster and, under the effect of the mass, this fantasy acquires contours of incontestable truth, legitimizing extreme violence.

### Intolerance and excessive belief in authority

Although it can be argued that, in Simon's death, there were elements of illusion or collective deception – the result of an outbreak of hysteria in the midst of fear and darkness – this mitigating factor does not apply to the scene that culminates in Piggy's death. In this episode, there is no room for confusion or misunderstanding: the action is intentional, deliberate, and strategically conducted. The scene that precedes his death reveals the conscious preparation of Jack's "tribe" for violence, with the boys positioning themselves for the attack, and Roger, located at a strategic point, assuming the role of executioner. Ralph and Piggy, side by side, try to maintain a rational posture, with the latter holding the shell — a symbol of authority and civilization — while being surrounded by a mass taken by a "spell of hatred" (Golding, 2014, p. 199).



The brutality of the attack, carried out by Roger by deliberately throwing a huge boulder down the hill, fatally hits Piggy, destroying the shell and symbolically eliminating the last remnants of civilized order among the boys. Golding describes, in detail, the impact: the stone hits Piggy's body, which is thrown into the air and plummets from a great height, with his head spread by the impact against the stone below. The extreme violence and naturalization of murder reveal a complete transition to barbarism. There is no hesitation or regret; only the cold execution of a symbolic and literal act of rupture with reason and discourse (Golding, 2014, p. 199–200).

This moment marks the point of consolidation of the logic of violence as the dominant norm in the group. Porquinho, representative of rationality, mediation and scientific thought – often associated with Socratic reason – is silenced through a gesture that exposes his contempt for pondering and dialogue. His death not only physically eliminates a character, but erases the possibility of resistance to the domination established by brute force and fear.

The power dynamics that are established on the island are personified in the figure of Jack, whose leadership is based on intimidation, violence and the staging of a totemic power. The ritualistic clothing adopted by him, composed of face and body painting, reinforces a mythical and haunting identity, distancing him from the image of an ordinary boy. With the mask, Jack depersonalizes himself and becomes a symbol of an ancestral power, free of guilt or responsibility. This transformation is perceived by the other boys, who react to the figure with fascination and fear. The mask allows Jack to hide from himself, freeing himself from shame and individual consciousness, and transforms into a device of psychic domination over the group. Jack's performance convinces and subjugates, establishing a new form of authority that is based on fear and irrationality (Golding, 2014, p. 71).

In this way, Golding illustrates how, in contexts of institutional rupture and the absence of civilizational mediations, collective organization can succumb to the logic of force and symbolic domination, replacing the values of reason with archaic power structures based on fear, violence, and mythology.

### ATAVISIVE AGGRESSIVENESS

Such events are in line with Freud's reflections (2010, p. 76) when he mentions that people like to deny that the human being is not a soft creature, eager for love, who at most can defend himself when attacked, but rather that he must also include among his instinctual gifts a strong share of aggressiveness. "The feeling of happiness when satisfying a wild instinctual impulse, not

tamed by the self, is incomparably stronger than that obtained when satiating a domesticated instinct" (Freud, 2010, p. 34-35).

As a result, one's neighbor is not only a possible collaborator and sexual object, but also a temptation to satisfy the tendency to aggression, to exploit his work without rewarding him, to usurp his patrimony, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him.

This atavistic tendency of human beings to aggression erupts in the work *Lord of the Flies* in several passages. As is well known, William Golding was a teacher of children for several years, during which time he was undoubtedly able to capture, witness and analyze human behavior in its most primary stage. In addition, it is stated that, in the novel "Lord of the Flies", under the ontological aspect, what prevails is the Hobbesian maxim "Homo homini lupus", that is, "Man is the wolf of man", in a true opposition to the Rousseauian maxim of the "good savage".

It should be noted that the famous phrase "Man is the wolf of man" was originally uttered by Plautus, a Roman playwright who lived about two centuries before Christ. The original transcription would be "*Lupus est homō hominī, nōn homō, quom quālis sit nōn nōvīt*", which can be translated as "Man is not man, but a wolf, to a stranger". Despite involving a much broader concept, the idea that has become popular over the years has been that man is, by nature and in an immutable way, an enemy of other men (Blanco, 2023).

For Rousseau, the human being was pure and innocent in his natural state, and society was responsible for introducing values and habits that lead him to conflict. From Rousseau's point of view, the civilized individual pays a very high price for this civilization, whereas, in a natural state, human beings could live in a more harmonious and peaceful way. On an opposite spectrum, however, we have Hobbes, for whom there would be three main causes for discord among men: competition, distrust, and glory, elements closely linked to profit, security, and reputation. "Alongside this, it becomes clear that, as long as men live without a common Power to keep them all intimidated, they will live in that state which is called War; and a type of war in which each man is opposed to the other" (Hobbes, 2015, p. 117). Thus, men, driven by their passions, struggle to achieve their own good and obtain pleasure, so that selfishness would be the general inclination of the human species, leading them to death (Cunha, 2012, p. 06-08).

## TOTEMISM

Another striking aspect in Golding's dystopian novel that finds correlation in Freud's reflections concerns **totemism**. In this context, Freud (2012, p. 19-20) points out that the totem, as a rule, is an animal, edible, harmless or dangerous, feared, and more rarely a plant or force of nature (such as water and rain), which has a special relationship with the entire clan.

The totem is first and foremost the common ancestor of the clan, but also its protective and auxiliary spirit, which sends it oracles and, even when it is dangerous to others, knows and spares its children. From time to time festivals are celebrated, in which the members of the clan represent or imitate, in ceremonial dances, the movements and characteristics of their totem; There are also ceremonies in which the totemic animal is solemnly killed.

The symbolic pattern analyzed by Freud, in which collective rituals and submission to the totemic figure represent the repression and channeling of primitive impulses, is manifested with intensity in *Lord of the Flies*, especially in the scene in which the boys, led by Jack, indulge in a tribalized and violent dance. In this episode, the narrative presents elements that refer directly to totemic rituals and practices of sacralization of violence within the mass: Jack jumps into the sand, inciting the others to ritual dance — "Let's dance! Let's go! Our dance!" — and is promptly followed by all the boys, who accompany him in a dark and threatening environment. The staging takes on dramatic and symbolic contours: Roger takes on the role of the pig, the hunters wield spears, others grab skewers and stumps of burnt wood, and the entire group organizes itself around a circle that reproduces, in a repetitive and hypnotic way, the frenzied chant — "Kill the monster! Cut your throat! Spread the blood!".

In this environment, even Ralph and Porquinho, representatives of rationality and civilizing discourse, are attracted to that society that, although maddened, offers an illusion of belonging and security. The boys become, at this moment, part of a single collective organism, driven by synchronized movements and a symbolic delirium that, in a ritualized way, channels their fears and desires (Golding, 2014, p. 166).

This scene portrays, in a symbolic and ritualistic way, the fundamental elements of totemism: the identification with the animal, the ceremonial representation of its figure and its symbolic death, which acts as a catalyst for social cohesion. The boys, around the fire, spinning in circles and reproducing the sounds and movements of the hunt, recreate a space of belonging and protection. As in Freudian thought, the rite not only organizes the collective, but also serves as a channel for primitive drives, here expressed by ritualized

violence against the "monster." In the end, everyone becomes part of a "single organism", signaling the dissolution of the self in the group and the return to archaic forms of sociability.

### The totemic animal

In Golding's novel, it can be said that the totemic animal embodies the very title of the work. In this way, as Ikeda (2022, p. 37) explains, the pig is not just any animal in the plot; he is the symbol of the "Lord of the Flies" and also the only animal constantly chased by the boys on the island. The pig will be killed and devoured as food, served as an offering to the "monster" and totemized as the true "Lord of the Flies". It has, therefore, a polysemic sense: it is, at the same time, the light of reason (embodied in Porquinho's rationalism); life (the hope of life is given by the wisdom of Piggy and the hunted pig that becomes food for the group); death (the violence against the animal and Piggy, who are chased and whipped to death); and darkness, represented in the omnipresent fear that everyone feels on the island, materialized in the head of the dead pig, in the form of a totemic offering (Ikeda, 2022, p. 37).

In the novel, Piggy is a representative of reason and reason: he says what is necessary, even if his words do not please the group. He is also the one who, despite his myopia, sees things longitudinally – beyond appearances – and who uses intelligence when physical form does not help. Piggy, however, cannot make his words count; His rules are not accepted and, despite all the rationality behind his every idea, nothing is of value to the group. His word is incapable of producing a structural effect, in the sense of making a bond with the other boys on the island. Interestingly, he – the most rational among all the boys on the island – is the only one to be identified by the nickname of an animal: the pig (Ikeda, 2022, p. 37).

It is no coincidence that the idea of the totemic offering came from Jack, the character who represents authoritarian impetus and leadership based on fear. Jack had just returned from a successful and bloodthirsty hunt for a sow; he then communicated to his clan the details of the plan, which was intended to invade Ralph's camp and steal the fire there. As if seeking the protection and help of the monster in his "criminal" enterprise, Jack stuck the sow's dripping head of blood on a stick with sharp points and spoke aloud: "The head is for the monster. It is an offering."

### Totem and psyche

Throughout the work, the enormous influence of this totem on the psychic and fanciful spectrum of the boys, notably the character Simon, is noticed. When faced with the

head of the sow stuck on a stick, with its teeth bared and a black swarm of flies buzzing around the pile of viscera that surrounded it, Simon begins to exhibit hallucinatory behavior, as if the totem was talking to him, albeit in silence.

Even if he closed his eyes, he continued to see the sow's head, an image that persisted in his retinas. Her half-closed and opaque eyes displayed the infinite cynicism of adult life. [...] Simon found that he had spoken out loud. She opened her eyes at the same time and there she continued her head, smiling ironically at the strange brightness of the day, ignoring the flies, the scattered entrails, even the indignity of being stuck on a spit. Simon averted his eyes, licking his dry lips. An offering to the monster. Would the monster come for him? And he had the impression that his head agreed with him. Run out of here, said my head in silence, go back to the others. It was actually just a joke – why does it bother you? You were wrong, that's all, nothing else. A little headache, maybe something you ate. Come back soon, boy, said the head in silence. [...] The pile of viscera had become a black swarm of flies that buzzed like a saw. And after some time the flies found Simon. Gorged, they perched on the edge of the sweat wisps to drink. They tickled under the boy's nose, and played at jumping carrion on his thighs. They were countless, black and iridescent green; and in front of Simon, Lord of the Flies was still attached to his stake, baring his teeth. Finally, Simon gave up and looked again; He saw the white teeth and the opaque eyes, the blood – and his gaze stopped at that archaic and inevitable recognition. In Simon's right temple, a vein began to throb against his brain. (Golding, 2014, p. 151–152)

Totemism, as Freud (2012, p. 166) points out, was commonly treated as a primitive system of religion and society. As a religious system, it involves the mystical union of the savage with his totem; As a social system, it comprises the relations in which men and women of the same totem find themselves with each other and with the members of other totemic groups.

In the light of Freudian theory, it can be said that the "Lord of the Flies" constitutes a kind of totem of belonging to Jack's clan. In this sense, those who recognize the totem acquire a new identity, including their own clothing and face painting that differentiated them from other boys, as if they were united by ancestral ties. Younger children, in particular, come to love the figure of Jack, whose symbolism acquires a direct correlation with the totem itself. The latter, like Jack, is powerful and seductive, functioning for some as a redeeming power, giving them new life and acting as a kind of "substitute for the father" (Aydos, 2021)<sup>8</sup>.

Thus, in the light of Freudian thought, it can be stated that, if Golding's novel followed a different course from that observed in its outcome, that is, working on the hypothesis that the boys remained alone on the island, the next step would be the emergence of a kind of religion, with the totemic animal as the god himself in the conservation of the boys' insatiable yearning for the figure of the father.

In this sense, Freud (2012), in his work *Totem and taboo*, interprets the development of religiosity as a symbolic progression originating in the father figure. According to the

author, the god, at a certain stage, can be understood as an evolution of the totemic animal, which in turn already represented a symbolic form of the father. For Freud, the totem constitutes the first substitute for the father figure, while the god — at a later stage — reestablishes the image of the father in his human form. This symbolic transition would be possible due to transformations in the relationships with the father (and possibly with the totemic animal itself) over time, which demonstrates how the desire for the father is at the root of religious formations.

## CONCLUSION

The reading of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, in the light of the main concepts of Freudian psychoanalysis, allowed a deep analysis of the complexity of human nature and the limits of civilization. From the articulation between literature and psychoanalysis, it was possible to understand how the absence of social and repressive structures can lead the subject to regression, to the irruption of primitive impulses and to the dissolution of rationality in favor of barbarism.

The concepts of **id**, **ego and superego**, as well as studies on **mass behavior**, **totemism** and **atavistic aggressiveness**, have proven to be effective analytical tools to interpret the actions of characters. The scenes of collective violence, the emergence of an authoritarian leader, the symbolic transformation of the pig into a totemic entity, and the episodes of psychic delirium of characters like Simon illustrate the collapse of civilizing instances and the domination of the unconscious over human behavior.

By promoting a rupture with the established order, Golding reveals that the constituent elements of the human psyche — as conceived by Freud — remain latent, ready to emerge in the face of the fragility of social institutions. The novel, therefore, goes beyond the limits of a dystopian juvenile narrative to become a true treatise on the human condition, exposing, in literary language, what psychoanalysis names as the malaise of civilization.

In this sense, this study reinforces the relevance of interdisciplinarity between literature and psychoanalysis as a fruitful field to understand the ethical, social and subjective dilemmas of humanity. As a proposal for future investigations, it is suggested the analysis of other literary works from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory, as well as the deepening of the study on the dynamics of mass, leadership and identity in contemporary contexts.



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