

The Philosophy of Political Authority in John Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract: The comparative analysis of John Steinbeck's play *The Moon Is Down* (1942) and William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) sheds light on the philosophy of political authority. A great debate is held through the way these authors represented the characters and their deeds. Through a post-colonial approach, this article explores and presents two sources of political authority. The first one presents political authority as the result of the hegemonic power of an individual, a group of people or a country, and the second one rather intends to recall that political authority starts and ends with the sole will of the people.

Keywords: philosophy, authority, political, people, democracy, dictatorship, legitimacy.

Résumé: L'étude comparée de la pièce théâtrale *The Moon Is Down* (1942) de John Steinbeck et du roman *Lord of the Flies* (1954) de William Golding met en lumière la philosophie de l'autorité politique. Un grand débat est tenu à travers la façon dont ces auteurs ont représenté les personnages et leurs actes. A travers une approche postcoloniale, le présent article explore et présente l'autorité politique selon deux sources. La première source présente l'autorité politique comme le résultat du pouvoir hégémonique d'un individu, d'un groupe de personnes ou d'un pays et la seconde essaye plutôt de rappeler que l'autorité politique commence et finit par la seule volonté du peuple.

Mots clés: philosophie, autorité, politique, peuple, démocratie, dictature, légitimité.

Introduction

A glance at the tumultuous sphere of power and decision in various organizations and countries shows that authority is not only a privilege, but also a weight, a responsibility to hold. According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Soanes & Stevenson, eds., 2009: 88), authority is "the power or right to give orders and enforce obedience." The term also stands for "a person or organization exerting control in a political or administrative sphere." (Ibid). Thus, political authority can be perceived as the ability to have respect from others, to influence and control what they do as the result of a given power one has or is given. This kind of authority is particularly important in the ruling of a given group, organization or country. John Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down* (1942) and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

(1954) present a great and controversial debate on the sources and the conditions under which authority can be used. The former gives us the opportunity to analyze authority at the superstructure level with adults representing countries while the latter permits the same analysis at the structure of the individuals, in children's environment. Both works offer the possibility to cross-read authority at the intersection of age in order to grasp the shapes that are potentially observable. They deal with stories that shed light on human attitude in periods of chaos and disorder.

The Moon Is Down is endowed with an intense political awareness. The play tells the story of a town which is invaded by a foreign country for the control of their coal mine and the port. Through the representation of political authority, the playwright offers the opportunity to compare and contrast the opposing realities of democracy and dictatorship. His work opens a debate on the realities that hide inside the possession and use of political authority with adults representing states or nations.

Lord of the Flies is a novel that deals with a group of British children who are accidentally dropped from the plane evacuating them in a war time. They find themselves on a deserted tropical island and have to survive until they are rescued. In their attempt of self-organization, the ensuing misuse of power and authority among the children gives way to a controversy about the source of authority and the conditions under which it should be used. In fact, does authority come solely from the individual's self-worth or is it necessarily the product of a will outside the individual? Can one have a permanent authority on others without their consent? These are some of the questions to be analyzed and answered in this work.

In order to understand the philosophy of political authority, there is a need to cast light on the representation of characters in each work. The characters in *The Moon Is Down* can be split into two groups. On the one hand, there are the invaders. Their ideology is domination

and use of military power in order to control the resources of the invaded town. The character who mostly represents that ideology of domination and dictatorship is Colonel Lanser who uses strategies to impose the presence of his troops in the town mayor's house. On the other hand, we have the invaded people. The prevailing ideology on their part is democracy which is mostly represented in the way the mayor, Mr. Orden leads his group. In fact, the mayor is the real embodiment of the philosophy of democracy, presented in the play as the best ruling system.

Likewise, in *Lord of the Flies*, the reader is introduced to a childish world, which is normally a world of innocence. However, the study of the novel makes it clear that whether we deal with adults or children, "the right of domination"¹ (Golding, 1954: 39) is there and pushes human being to dominate nature and its treasures. It is an evidence that human kind is inclined to dominate its surrounding. The characters in this novel can also be split into two groups. On the one hand, we have those who may be referred to as the constitutionalists, that is to say that they are tied to the instauration of rules and their respect. We can mention for example Ralph (the chosen leader of the group), Simon, and Piggy. This group knows the importance of rules and also suggests to the rest to make fire that could signal their presence to a passing boat in order to be eventually rescued. On the other hand, we have those who may be called the anti-constitutionalists, or those who are not tied to rules. Most representing this group are Jack, Roger and more generally the hunters. These children are more concerned with hunting and having fun than setting rules or making a signal-fire.

To analyze these literary works, I use post-colonial theory, a literary theory which "has only recently been recognized as a designated area within the Literary Studies in higher education" (Green & Lebihan, 1996: 289) but which should not be reduced to "post-independence" or "after-colonialism" (Ashcroft *et al.*: 1995, 13). As Ashcroft *et al.* put it:

¹ All subsequent references to *Lord of the Flies* are henceforth shortened: *LF*.

Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. None of these is 'essentially' post-colonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field. (Ibid: 2).

Following such a definition, post-colonial theory offers a diversity of interpretations that intend to redefine and reorient previous thoughts and knowledge. In fact, post-colonialism, as Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge (1994:276) put it, "foregrounds a politics of opposition and struggle." Therefore, the use of post-colonial approach will help in grasping more suitably the logics of resistance and the representation of values related to the use of political authority. For example, it will contribute in explaining the perception people have of authority before and while they have it. Through post-colonial approach, I contend that political authority is no more a reserved privilege, but a necessary tool that finds its worth in the assurance of peace, security and well-being of a given people. When these outcomes are not successfully met, political authority finds itself threatened and eventuates in dictatorship, submission and/or resistance.

1. Political Authority as the Result of a Hegemonic Power

In politics and to a certain extent, authority is the fruit of a certain hegemonic power one has over others. This power can be material (possession of wealth), physical (strength and skills that permit to dominate others), intellectual (knowledge and the know-how) or moral (based on certain religious or social beliefs). However, no matter the form from which political authority is inspired, it is a truism that it rests on a certain particularity the leader has or is said to have. This section is concerned with the study of the factors of authority on the one hand and the relationships that exist between political authority and dictatorship on the other hand as developed in the studied fictions.

1.1 Factors of Authority

The Moon Is Down and *Lord of the Flies* suggest diverse factors of authority. Among these, we can mention illustratively, but not limitedly knowledge, social origins, virtue and military power. By knowledge, I mean a body of acquired information that contribute to the understanding and resolution of situational problems. The expression “social origins” refers to the characters’ parental relationships and societal group of belonging. Virtue, here, stands for a person’s skills and qualities that are either inherited as in Machiavellian notion of virtue² or acquired through education/training. The military power alludes to the capacity of mobilizing energy for an attack or defense either at the individual level or the national scale.

In *Lord of the Flies*, for example, knowledge and social origins are factors to which Ralph refers to claim indirectly his singularity. He boasts: “I could swim when I was five. Daddy taught me. He’s commander in the Navy. When he gets leave he’ll come and rescue us.” (*LF*: 19). Ralph is an intelligent boy. By presenting his social origins (a father who is commander in the Navy) and his early capacity to swim, this child is indirectly pretending his particularity and thus the fact that he is the one who is more inclined to lead others and help them be rescued. Thus, Ralph’s knowledge or skill in swimming and his social origins are factors that he successfully uses at his advantage in order to lead the group. Additionally, he is the one who blows first the conch to call for a meeting. This tool offers him a great advantage over the other children. One of them suggests: “Let him be chief with the trumpet-thing.” (*LF*: 30). Clearly enough, the conch and Ralph’s knowledge or skill in blowing it constitute a mark of legitimacy for him.

² See Nicolas Machiavel (1994). *Le Prince*. Tunis: Cères Editions, p. 8. In Machiavellian notion, virtue has nothing to do with morals. Machiavellian virtue includes both physical and spiritual talents bestowed by nature upon a human being and may include alternatively or totally intelligence, skills, energy and heroism.

Contrary to Ralph who uses knowledge and social origins as factors of authority, Jack takes advantage of his military power and his personal virtue. Jack Merridew imposes himself as a successful challenger to Ralph due to his military hegemony. He is the leader of a choir of children who assign themselves the role of hunting and defending the group on the deserted island. He presents himself as endowed with exceptional qualities to lead the other children. Right from the beginning of the novel, the reader would be astonished to notice that the military discipline of the choir is more obvious than the religious one. This is probably because of the hegemonic presence Jack imposes on the other children. As the narrator in *Lord of the Flies* says: “He [Jack] shouted an order and they [the choir] halted, gasping, sweating, swaying in the fierce light.” (LF: 26-27). While looking at the choir, even Piggy “was intimidated by this uniformed superiority and the offhand authority in Merridew’s voice.” (LF: 28). So, in the novel, Jack is presented like a General who leads an army with an undiscussable authority.

As the children recognize the necessity of setting rules and organizing themselves, there is a challenge for chieftaincy between Jack and Ralph. During the children’s first meeting after the crash of the plane, both Jack and Ralph hope to be the leader and impose his authority on the rest of the group:

Jack spoke.

“We’ve got to decide about being rescued,”

There was a buzz. One of the small boys, Henry, said that he wanted to go home.

“Shut up,” said Ralph absently. He lifted the conch. “Seems to me we ought to have a chief to decide things.”

“A chief! A chief!”

“I ought to be chief,” said Jack with simple arrogance, “because I’m chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp.” (LF: 29).

By referring to his capacity to sing better than everybody, Jack clearly contends that to be a leader, it takes particular skills that differentiate the candidate from the rest of the group. So, if Jack does not become the chief of the children by vote despite being “the most obvious leader” (*LF*: 30), he finally imposes himself due to his hegemony towards the other children or due to what Machiavelli calls virtue, that is to say his intelligence, skills, energy and heroism. Accordingly, in *Lord of the Flies*, Jack’s military hegemony as the leader of the army or hunters coupled with his personal virtue constitute real factors of that child’s authority while, inversely, the misfortune of Ralph is due to his lack of such power and virtue.

Likewise, in *The Moon Is Down*, the invaders controlled by Colonel Lanser impose their domination and hegemony on the invaded people that mayor Orden leads. Here, the hegemony is at the level of superstructure (national level) with Colonel Lanser representing the German country. Its nature is essentially military. As in *Lord of the Flies*, the military power offers the invaders the opportunity to attack and occupy the coastal town of mayor Orden. Colonel Lanser, “a middle-aged man and tired-looking”³ (Steinbeck, 1942: 123) is a veteran of wars. He is an intelligent soldier and a specialist of stratagems in matter of negotiation. He suggests to Orden to keep on being the mayor in order to earn the latter’s collaboration. By seeking the mayor’s collaboration, Colonel Lanser hopes to be able to have a quick control over the people and exploit their mineral resources. Thus, without the military hegemony of Germany, without the intelligence and personal virtue of Colonel Lanser who tried, however in vain, to pacify the people of mayor Orden, the political authority exerted on this people would not have existed. Accordingly, in both *The Moon Is Down* and *Lord of the Flies*, political authority is the result of factors such as knowledge, social origins, virtue and military power. These factors do influence the possession and use of authority. Additionally, no matter which group is considered (the children in *Lord of the Flies* or adults/countries in

³ All subsequent references to *The Moon Is Down* are shortened: *TMID*.

The Moon Is Down), people are inclined to claim authority on others for its apparent benefits of prestige and privilege. However, the misuse of such authority quickly leads to dictatorship.

1.2 Political Authority and Dictatorship

Dictatorship is the drift or misuse of power and political authority. Either in *The Moon Is Down* or *Lord of the Flies*, the representation of authority shows clear signs of dictatorship as a ruling mode. Dictatorship is perceivable mainly with Colonel Lanser and more generally the invaders in *The Moon Is Down*, while in *Lord of the Flies*, Jack and the hunters epitomize dictatorship and the misuse of power and authority.

The two leaders in *Lord of the Flies* (Ralph and Jack) as the two leaders in *The Moon Is Down* (Colonel Lanser and mayor Orden) have opposing views on authority. In *The Moon Is Down*, Colonel Lanser perceives political authority as a power which is intended to be used independently of the necessity to consult the group one leads. However, unlike Lanser, mayor Orden rather sustains that legitimacy is the key principle in ruling a group and responsibility towards the people is important. He says: “Some accept leaders and obey them. But my people elected me. They made me and they can unmake me!” (TMID:127-128). Here, mayor Orden is praising democracy and more specifically the notions of legitimacy and responsibility in front of the people who choose their leaders. Thus, while Colonel Lanser does not understand why a leader cannot take decision in emergency and is always tied to ask the view of his people, mayor Orden clearly posits that “Authority is in the town (TMID: 131). According to Colonel Lanser, one has to dictate decisions sometimes, but for the mayor, the viewpoint of the people should be always considered in the process of taking decisions. So, colonel Lanser idealizes dictatorship while mayor Orden praises democracy as the best ruling system.

Along with Colonel Lanser, George Corell, a traitor also thinks that “democracy was rotten and inefficient.” (*TMID*: 124) and the “new order” will be a source of salvation for his people. Corell’s statement is a clear praising of dictatorship as the best system of governing. He has it that “Things will be better now” (*TMID*: 124) through the replacement of the democratic order with a new one. Corell is so convinced of the necessity to collaborate with the enemies in order to instore the new governing system that he declares: “I work for what I believe in. That’s an honorable thing.” (*TMID*: 125). Again, Colonel Lanser praises dictatorial rules and principles: “The military, the political pattern I work in, has certain tendencies and practices which are invariable”. (*TMID*: 160). But mayor Orden quickly reminds him: “And these tendencies and practices have been proven wrong in very single test since the beginning of the world.” (*Ibid*). This assertion is a real criticism of dictatorship in its various forms, and especially Nazism. From these examples, it is an evidence that the use of political authority can be assimilated to dictatorship in *The Moon Is Down*, especially with the invasion and domination of Colonel Lanser and his troops.

Comparatively to Steinbeck’s *The Moon Is Down*, Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* also presents political authority in the form of dictatorship. This is done more specifically with the character Jack, the leader of the hunters in the novel. Besides, just as Colonel Lanser and mayor Orden in *The Moon Is Down*, Jack and Ralph in *Lord of the Flies* have different views on authority. Their approach of leadership is quite different and even opposed. Actually, the key matter on which they do not agree with one another is the priority of the time. For Jack, they need meat first; so they have to hunt. Besides, hunting is fun for him and many other children. It contributes to satisfying a “feeling” of domination and superiority. Thus, Jack would prefer to satisfy that “feeling” rather than being rescued. He would declare: “Rescue? Yes, of course! All the same, I’d like to catch a pig first —.” (*LF*: 67). So, the obsession of hunting pushes him to create a tribe of hunters and separate themselves from the rest of

children. However, Ralph rather considers that the urgent need for them is to build shelters on the island as a sort of “home,” then make a fire on the mountain so as to have the chance to be rescued if a boat passes by. Ralph reproaches to Jack his stubbornness as far as hunting is concerned: “Don’t you want to be rescued? All you can talk about is pig, pig, pig!” (LF: 68). As a result, the two boys would have different views on the best way to organize and govern the group. In the novel, Jack and Ralph remained “two continents of experience and feeling, unable to communicate.” (LF: 70). Tacitly, the conflict for control of the group grows and becomes open at a certain time.

However, Jack takes an advantage over Ralph because he imposes himself and also seems to assure security and food (meat) to the group. The hunters organize feasts after pig hunts and this type of life attracts most of the children. Consequently, Jack sees his power and authority widened. Quickly, he falls into a real megalomania as he gives orders and the children obey him helplessly. He asks them to arrest, tie and humiliate whoever jeopardizes his authority. The example is with Wilfred who was tied “for hours, waiting—” (LF: 196) although no child knew the reason of such a treatment. Accordingly, in *Lord of the Flies*, Jack and his tribe of hunters show the misuse of political authority which slips into undecipherable dictatorship.

As a matter of fact, the longing for domination and even dictatorship is subtly inscribed in human nature irrespective of the individual’s status of adult person representing a country as in *The Moon Is Down* or a small child in his/her supposed state of “innocence” as in *Lord of the Flies*. Perhaps the difference may just hide in the scope of the occurrence of the situation and the level of tolerance of others.

2. Through Democracy: Political Authority as a Will of Others

Although there is evidence that political authority is strongly influenced by the hegemonic power one has over others, the permanent survival of such an authority rests

primarily on the will of others. In fact, any form of authority which is not the fruit of a recognition or an agreement in the sense of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "social pact" (2001: 55-58) between the leader of a group and the group itself is vowed to instability and disappearance. In this section, we are concerned with showing, on the one hand, the close link that exists between political authority and legitimacy and, on the other hand, the fact that law and rules are key principles of an efficient governing system.

2.1 Political Authority and Legitimacy

Legitimacy is a key principle on which rests the concept of democracy. Legitimacy is the state of being conform to the law, to rules or the will of the people. Strongly praising the concepts of democracy and legitimacy in *The Moon Is Down* is the mayor Orden. His political authority is based on democracy. Ironically enough, soon after the invasion, Colonel Lanser asks the Mayor for permission so that his people could have their headquarters in the mayor's house. Indirectly, he seeks to make sure he can count on the mayor's collaboration in order to quicken the town's occupation. When the latter answers that "The people will not like it" (*TMID*: 129), Colonel Lanser literally jerks: "Always the people. The people are disarmed. They have no say in this." (*TMID*: 129). This situation shows the two leaders' opposed views of governing. As a great soldier, Colonel Lanser has a good insight in the difficulty there will be in trying to settle down somewhere or occupy a land without any single collaboration of the previous occupants. As Machiavelli puts it: "Si puissante en effet que soit l'armée dont on dispose, on a toujours besoin de la faveur des habitants pour entrer dans une province."⁴ (Machiavel, 1994: 12). Thus, in order to settle in the town, Colonel Lanser uses the tactics of civility towards the mayor asking him for permission before settling in the latter's house.

From mayor Orden's prudence in ruling the town, one could fancy his real attachment to the will of his people. As he puts: "When the town makes up its mind what it wants to do I

⁴ "However powerful should be the army one leads, one always needs the favor of the inhabitants in order to enter in a province." The translation is mine.

will probably do that.” (*TMID*: 131). In this way, Orden is praising democracy and its principles such as legitimacy and responsibility towards the people. Therefore, the dichotomy between the two leaders is there: when Colonel Lanser sees mayor Orden as “the authority” the latter strongly contends that “Authority is in the town.” (*TMID*: 131). Actually, this is a good example of the mayor’s praising of democracy and legitimacy which are based on the will of others.

At the end of the play and before his execution, mayor Orden hopes that resistance shall continue. Invaders may kill him, but not the ideals his people carry: “No, they can’t arrest the Mayor. The Mayor is an idea conceived by free men” (*TMID*: 215). Orden praises not the individual, but the institution itself, thus democracy. Actually, in his heart, Colonel Lanser knew very well that “there are no peaceful people” (*TMID*: 147). In times of oppression, the natural reaction is resistance or temporary submission till one has the capacity to change the situation. As a matter of fact, when political authority is not rooted on the will of others, a kind of contract, it is vowed to uncertainty, resistance and disappearance.

In William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, legitimacy is symbolized by the conch, at least before its destruction. The conch institutes a contract between the children. One could say with Hobbes that “The contract created civil society and political authority, for it was a social and political contract.” (Hobbes, quoted in Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2012: 192). Thus, the child that holds the conch has the floor and the other children are expected to listen to him. It is a mark of power. The conch even played a great role in the choice of Ralph as the leader although the most obvious leader was Jack. As the narrator puts it:

But there was a stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out: there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch. The being that had blown that, had sat waiting for them on the platform with the delicate thing balanced on his knees, was set apart. (*LF*: 30).

Finally, Ralph becomes the leader of the group after a vote although his power is often threatened and the fact that Jack will retaliate and even overthrow him at a certain time. While Jack's leadership rests on violence and brutality, authority is vested in Ralph through the will of others. In putting together both realities, Golding contrasts the advantages of each system.

If the conch symbolized a kind of legitimacy, it will lose its sacredness when some children fall into anarchy and disorder. On several occasions, during meetings, Jack "had not got the conch and thus spoke against the rules; but nobody minded." (*LF*: 109). At this very time, Jack is going against the prescribed law and rules, thus endangering the efficient governing of the group.

2.2 Law and Rules: Key Principles of an Efficient Governing

It is a truism that without law and rules, societal life is quite impossible. Authority is something that needs to be organized no matter the group or structure. Right from the very beginning in *Lord of the Flies*, the reader is introduced to a human state where the children, alone on the deserted island, quickly acknowledge the importance of organizing their new life. This is the reason why the conch will take a symbolic force. Since it has been used to call for the initial meeting of the children and the meetings thereafter, it comes to be granted a recognition in the establishment of law and order. This need to have an external symbol of authority, law and order is the result of the observance that without a materialized power recognized and admitted by all, the group as a whole is in danger of the drifts of personal folly. The conch creates what Hobbes calls "an artificial person distinct from the natural individual." (*Ibid*). Here in *Lord of the Flies*, the conch embodies the principles of democracy and the respect of the rules. It appears as a materialization of law and order.

However, when one of the children, namely Jack comes to snatch the conch from the others, he snatches power and authority at the same time. Jack violates the rule of the group

by refusing the holder of the conch, Piggy, to have the floor and by ordering him to shut up.

As the narrator puts it:

Piggy had settled himself in a coign between two rocks, and sat with the conch on his knees.

“We haven’t made a fire,” he said, “what’s any use. We couldn’t keep a fire like that going, not if we tried.”

“A fat lot you tried, said Jack contemptuously. You just sat.”

“We used his specs,” said Simon, smearing a black cheek with his forearm. “He helped that way.”

“I got the conch,” said Piggy indignantly. “You let me speak!”

“The conch doesn’t count on top of the mountain,” said Jack, “so you shut up.”

“I got the conch in my hand.”

“Put on green branches,” said Maurice. “That’s the best way to make smoke.”

“I got the conch—”

Jack turned fiercely.

“You shut up!” (*LF*: 54-55).

Jack’s denial of the established norms is a coup-d’état. He does not respect anything. Even, he “snatched the glasses off Piggy’s face” (*LF*: 53). One of the lens will be broken and Piggy becomes one-eye blinded. Jack also overthrows Ralph and presents himself as a savior for the group, the one who could assure their security. Since the children abide less and less by the rules, they gradually fall into savagery and some of them such as Piggy and Simon will even die. Consequently, a symbolism of the conch is that it marks the time of civilization. In the novel, when it comes to be destroyed, the children fall into bestiality or savagery.

In Steinbeck’s *The Moon Is Down*, the mayor is closely tied to the respect of the law as his people established it. Thus, when he is asked to sentence Alexander Morden to death, the mayor answers: “First, I am the Mayor. I have no right to pass sentence of death under our law. There is no one in this community with that right. If I should do it, I would be breaking the law as much as you” (*TMID*: 159). This assertion canonizes the importance of the respect of law, since respect of the consensually established rules is a criterion of democracy. Without such respect, there is no order, because actions and reactions will derive into chaos and total

disorder. This is the reason why, while Colonel Lanser is sure that “This is an orderly people. They don’t want trouble,” Mayor Orden reminds him that “They’re orderly under our government. I don’t know what they’ll be under yours. We’ve built our government over a long time.” (*TMID*: 127). From the aforementioned quotation, it is clear that democracy is rooted in the collective spirit of a people; it becomes a way of living sipped into all the citizens.

A comparative analysis of this situation compels me to ask the question why, in *Lord of the Flies*, the “littluns” or the small boys obey the authority instituted by the conch and the grown-ups? Here is an answer from the narrator:

They obeyed the summons of the conch, partly because Ralph blew it, and he was big enough to be a link with the adult world of authority; and partly because they enjoyed the entertainment of the assemblies. But otherwise they seldom bothered with the biguns and their passionately emotional and corporate life was their own. (*LF*: 75).

The implication is that no individual is naturally inclined to obey law and rules, but an institutionalized power does encourage for the obedience of law. Besides, education is a key in the achievement of this objective. As a popular saying goes on, “the respect of the policeman is the beginning of wisdom.” Thus, the observance of law and rules which are democratically set is for the benefit of the group. These are requirements for an efficient governing system which could reduce crises in a society.

Conclusion

The issue of the sources of political authority and how it should be used has attracted the attention of many writers and scholars, namely but not exclusively Golding, Steinbeck, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau, to name but the few. This study offered a possible interpretation of political authority as represented by two creative writers, one American and

the other British. Through a post-colonial approach, it proposed a cross-reading of political authority at the “intersectionality”⁵ (to quote Kimberlé W. Crenshaw) of age and environment.

The overt political awareness in John Steinbeck’s *The Moon Is Down* would tempt some readers to consider it as propaganda. However, the play is a genuine literary work. Besides, it would be an illusion to sustain that art has no political purpose; for, as W.E.B. Du Bois observes: “all art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists.” (Napier ed., 2000: 22). The success of the play is also due to the principal themes such as authority, democracy and dictatorship it develops. These issues are up-to-date and the issue of political authority still interests not only scholars, but also all oppressed people who are denied the equality of opportunities. In *The Moon Is Down*, through the representation of both leaders of the invaders and the invaded people, respectively Colonel Lanser and mayor Orden, the reader is introduced to the depths of human nature in times of conflicts.

In *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding exposes also the shift in the use of authority, namely with human dictatorship, wickedness and evil-behaviors. At the beginning, there are principles that guide the relations between the children on the island. For instance, Jack is strongly influenced by moral norms that he firstly forbids himself to kill a piglet because of the “enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood” (*LF*: 41). With a thorough analysis of this event, it can be posited that the real reason why Jack did not kill the piglet is the social and moral conditioning. However, the appeal for the savage part inwards brings the boy to change throughout the novel. Thus, if initially, “Jack slammed his knife into a trunk and looked round challengingly” (*LF*: 43), as the story evolves, from trees, he moves to slaughter animals. By end of the novel, he kills people.

⁵ See Valerie Smith. (1998). *Not Just Race, Not Just Gender: Black Feminist Readings*. New York and London: Routledge, p. xiii-xiv. In this book, Smith attributes the word “intersectionality” to Kimberlé W. Crenshaw: “To describe the intersections of race and gender as they shape lives and social practices, Kimberlé Crenshaw has coined the term ‘intersectionality.’”

From the study of Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, I come up with four main conclusions. Firstly, political authority in the light of the studied literary works is accessible to structures (either individuals, towns or countries) provided they have certain hegemonic power on their counterparts. Factors such as knowledge, social origins, virtue and military power influence the acquisition of authority. Secondly, age and environment do not totally determine the human will for domination. In other words, the will to dominate others is inscribed in human nature when interests are there regardless of age and environment. Particularly, the study of *Lord of the Flies* showed that children dropped from a plane on a deserted island still covet to control one another and impose themselves. Thirdly, it appears that political authority gets its strength and stability on the will of the people who recognize and accept it. Otherwise, authority is in danger. The fourth remark is that political authority could quickly lead to dictatorship when the holder (s) of it does (do) not take into consideration the desires of the people.

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