

**A STUDY OF THE NATURE OF MAN AS PRESENTED  
IN THE NOVELS OF WILLIAM GOLDING**

---

**NORMA CLARK WILSON**

A STUDY OF THE NATURE OF MAN AS PRESENTED  
IN THE NOVELS OF WILLIAM GOLDING

---

An Abstract  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Norma Clark Wilson  
August 1970



## ABSTRACT

William Golding is now recognized as one of England's most important novelists. To date he has written six novels: Lord of the Flies, The Inheritors, Pincher Martin, Free Fall, The Spire and The Pyramid. Although criticism has already appeared on each of them, an especially large amount has been written on Lord of the Flies. Several critics have studied Golding's novels separately, but few have linked them together in order to show the important relationships among them. When they have linked, they have done so with the purpose of fitting Golding into a neat category such as classicist or moralist. In addition, general critical opinion is that Golding is entirely pessimistic in his view of mankind.

It has been evident since Lord of the Flies that Golding's fiction is primarily concerned with the nature of man. This concern, carried from Lord of the Flies through The Pyramid, presents no clear-cut solution to the question of whether man's nature is inherently good or evil. Rather, his writings show that the nature of man is complex--a mixture of good and evil.

This study concerns all six novels, not only to determine the concept of man's nature presented in each, but also to show the links among the six and among the rest of Golding's works, including his drama and poetry. Such a study shows that in Golding's writings, the nature of man is darkness and light. The darkness is expressed through his self-will, the light through his love for others.

A STUDY OF THE NATURE OF MAN AS PRESENTED  
IN THE NOVELS OF WILLIAM GOLDING

---

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Norma Clark Wilson

August 1970



To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Norma Clark Wilson entitled "A Study of the Nature of Man as Presented in the Novels of William Golding." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Edward E. Irwin

Major Professor

Richard Covington

Second Committee Member

Charles C. Seet

Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:

Wayne E. Stamp

Dean of the Graduate School

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Edward E. Irwin, Professor of English, Austin Peay State University, who suggested the topic and who aided and counseled her during the course of her research and writing; to Dr. Charles C. Holt and Dr. Richard D. Covington, English Department, for their suggestions, encouragement, and constructive criticism of the manuscript.

Appreciation is also extended to Elnor W. McMahan, assistant professor and Reference Librarian, Austin Peay State University, for her kind assistance in obtaining needed books from other libraries.

The author sincerely thanks her husband for proofreading the manuscript and for helping in many other ways.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE NATURE OF CHILDREN AND MEN . . . . . (A Study of <u>Lord of the Flies</u> )	6
III. THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT WHAT? . . . . . (A Study of <u>The Inheritors</u> )	17
IV. THE TEETH . . . . . (A Study of <u>Pincher Martin</u> )	34
V. UNFATHOMABLE, INDIVISIBLE DARKNESS. . . . . (A Study of <u>Free Fall</u> )	45
VI. IT'S LIKE THE APPLE TREE . . . . . (A Study of <u>The Spire</u> )	56
VII. AMOR VINCIT OMNIA. . . . . (A Study of <u>The Pyramid</u> )	69
VIII. CONCLUSION . . . . .	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	89



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Song of the Flowers at the Land's End

DARKNESS sits beneath the sea,  
The sun is worn, the earth is cold,  
And we are wild with mystery,  
So young we be, and oh! so old.

An echo haunts the busy hours  
Of all but recollected song  
Sung soft among the ancient flowers  
So long ago, so long, so long.

How often have we in our pain  
Swayed to the "Why?" but moments give  
Faint answer that it must remain  
Most sweet and terrible to live.

Darkness hovers on the sea,  
The sun is set, the earth lies cold,  
And we are wild with mystery,  
So young we be, and oh! so old.

--William Golding, Poems

William Golding's first book, Poems, was published in 1934. He was unsuccessful as a poet, and now he is uncomfortable about this specter of his past, disclaiming all responsibility for his early poetry. However, Golding's prose shows the influence of his desire to write poetry. He writes like a poet, particularly one who uses an archetypal form of metaphor; for example, in The Pyramid, Oliver compares Evie's eyes to plums; and they become plums.<sup>1</sup> Golding once confided "with a

---

<sup>1</sup>Bernard F. Dick, William Golding (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967), pp. 88-89.

nostalgic quiver in his voice, . . . 'You might say I write prose because I can't write poetry.'<sup>2</sup> Much of his prose is more poetic than his poetry, as will be shown later by quotations from his novels.

Much is to be gained by looking at Golding's Poems. In one of them, in particular, one sees the major themes which are carried through all of his novels. The ballad, "Song of the Flowers at the Land's End," quoted in full above, is a good example. Darkness, the darkness deep within man's nature, the unfathomable darkness of his heart, is a recurring theme in each of Golding's six novels from Lord of the Flies through The Pyramid. The nature of man is presented by Golding as complex, "sweet and terrible," though in some novels the complexity is greater than in others. Finally, Golding is concerned with the echoes of prehistoric man, "so long ago," which are still present in the nature of modern man. Materially, man has made great progress, and much more is within his grasp; but spiritually, man has made little progress; and there is little promise of his achieving more: "So young we be, and oh! so old."

In studying Golding's fiction, it is helpful to know some general information about his life and works. He was born in Cornwall in 1911. He rebelled against a scientific education; and after three years at Oxford, he devoted himself to the study of Old English. He joined the Royal Navy at the outbreak of World War II; and at the end of the war, he was a lieutenant in command of a rocket ship. He had seen action against submarines, battleships and aircraft and had participated in the Walcheren and D-Day operations. He earned the reputation of a

---

<sup>2</sup>Dick, p. 15.

daredevil among his men because at moments of stress in the middle of action, his facial muscles would contract violently, producing a broad, ghastly grin, which his men interpreted as a sign of pure delight in combat. His sensitivity toward the physical manifestations of psychological states which he reveals in his novels may have been intensified by the observation of such facts about himself as his violent facial contraction.<sup>3</sup>

Golding has declared that his hobbies include thinking, classical Greek, sailing, and archaeology and that his literary influences include Euripides and the author of the Old English poem, The Battle of Maldon.<sup>4</sup>

The following list of his works in order of their publication will be useful for later reference:

1934	<u>Poems</u>
1954	<u>Lord of the Flies</u>
1955	<u>The Inheritors</u>
1956	<u>Pincher Martin</u>
1958	<u>The Brass Butterfly</u> (play)
1959	<u>Free Fall</u>
1964	<u>The Spire</u>
1965	<u>The Hot Gates</u> (essays)
1966	<u>The Pyramid</u>

After having read all of Golding's novels, one can see definite relationships among them. Each seems part of a complex whole. Marshall Walker best expressed their unity when he said:

To read Golding entire, . . . is to become aware . . . of an oeuvre with its own structure of consiliences and reverberations. . . . The individual books, of course, hold to their own lines, but they also melt into each other and in the melting we see development. . . . Golding begins with a kind of

---

<sup>3</sup>E.L. Epstein, ed., Pincher Martin, by William Golding (New York, 1965), pp. 186-187.

<sup>4</sup>Epstein, p. 187.



total assurance, compassionate but rigid, and moves with a momentum that each novel increases, away from the grand, categorized, tightly sealed certainties of Lord of the Flies, through Free Fall's Doctor Halde who "does not know about peoples" and Dean Jocelin's transcendent acquiescence in complexity to the delicate, unforced recognition of The Pyramid.<sup>5</sup>

In his essay, "Fable," a commentary on Lord of the Flies,

Golding made this statement:

To many of you, this will seem trite, obvious and familiar in theological terms. Man is a fallen being. He is gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous. I accept the theology and admit the triteness; but what is trite is true; and a truism can become more than a truism when it is a belief passionately held.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the great emphasis on original sin and the fallen nature of man in Lord of the Flies, The Inheritors, and Pincher Martin, early critics termed Golding a Christian Moralistic. Later critics, such as Bernard Dick and James R. Baker, have looked at Golding's work from a different point of view. They see Golding presenting classical Greek ideas. Golding has called himself a moralistic and has avowed a great interest in classical Greek, and one who has studied his fiction is aware of both influences. But he must also be aware of other influences which have helped to shape Golding's fiction. One great influence is his interest in anthropology. He has studied the ruins of ancient Britain and ancient Egypt, always with his primary interest being in the nature of the men who left them. Also, the influence of psychology is very strong in his novels.

---

<sup>5</sup>"William Golding: From Paradigm to Pyramid," Studies in the Literary Imagination, 2, No. 2 (Oct. 1969), 67.

<sup>6</sup>William Golding, The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces (New York, 1967), p. 86.

It would be futile and ridiculous to attempt to classify each of Golding's novels according to a single great influence, for in each, several or all of these influences converge. As the nature of man is complex, so must be the expression of that nature. During the course of this thesis, several psychologists and philosophers will be quoted. Parallels will be drawn from Golding's ideas to theirs, not to show their influence on him, but to help to clarify Golding's statements on man's nature.

In Lord of the Flies, The Inheritors, and Pincher Martin, Golding's characters are somewhat static. He presents them at a given point of time and studies their present natures. He does not attempt to discover what environmental influences, what experiences helped to shape their natures.

In an interview with D.M. Davis, in 1963, Golding expressed an idea of the nature of man which was somewhat different from that expressed in "Fable":

I'm not saying anyone is evil. I set out to discover whether there is that in man which makes him do what he does, that's all.<sup>7</sup>

In his last three novels, Free Fall, The Spire, and The Pyramid, Golding's main interest is not in what the nature of his characters is, but in how they became what they now are. Golding has progressed in his last three novels from a simple statement that man is a fallen creature to a study of how he falls from innocence and how he may rise from and overcome his sinful nature. His characters who achieve the greatest stature are those who recognize their own inner darkness and strive to overcome it.

---

<sup>7</sup>"Conversation with Golding," New Republic, 148 (May 1963), 28.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE OF CHILDREN AND MEN

I decided to take the literary convention of boys on an island, only make them real boys instead of paper cut-outs with no life in them; and try to show how the shape of the society they evolved would be conditioned by their fallen nature.

--William Golding, "Fable"

In his first published novel, Lord of the Flies, William Golding places a group of pre-adolescent boys on an island. By isolating them and allowing them to develop their own society, Golding shows that in man's nature, "the human propensity for evil knows no limits, not even limits of age."<sup>1</sup>

The novel takes place in the future. On most of the earth a nuclear war is raging, but the boys who have been evacuated from England and dropped onto the island from a plane seem isolated from the violence of the war.

Ralph, the protagonist, is the first character who appears. He is at once presented as an innocent: ". . . there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil<sup>2</sup>." He becomes the acknowledged leader--for a while, at least--of the boys who are marooned on the island, for he is the bearer of the conch which has the power to call the boys together but which later proves fragile, as does Ralph in his inflexibility. Ralph struggles to remain rational, and he succeeds more

---

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Hynes, William Golding (New York and London, 1964), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>This and all subsequent quotations from Golding's Lord of the Flies without footnotes are quoted from William Golding, Lord of the Flies (New York, 1962).



than any of the other characters. As one critic has made clear, his instincts are to domesticate and to ward off terror by social community.<sup>3</sup>

Jack is Ralph's rival; and as Ralph represents the rational part of man's nature, so Jack represents man's irrational nature. At first, Jack seems no more savage than any of the other boys; but it is apparent that he resents Ralph's leadership and wants authority over the group. Since the boys elect Ralph instead of him, Jack accepts the position of head hunter.

In his first attempt to provide meat for the tribe, Jack fails. He finds that after catching a hog, he is unable to stab it. The omniscient narrator says of the other boys:

They knew very well why he hadn't: because of the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood (p. 33).

They understand Jack's impotence because they feel the same inhibition. It is a disposition inherited from their prehistoric ancestors, one of several such dispositions which Carl Jung terms the collective unconscious.<sup>4</sup> The boys are not savages, but they have been suddenly dropped into an environment completely foreign to the civilized one that they have grown up in. They are forced to create their own society; and free from the restraints and conveniences of a more civilized environment, they revert to a kind of behavior characteristic of savage man. Despite the fact that Golding has stated that he "will concede

---

<sup>3</sup>Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, William Golding: A Critical Study (New York, 1967), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>"Jung, Carl Gustav," Encyclopedia Britannica (1969), XIII, 135.

little or nothing to *The Golden Bough*<sup>5</sup>, Frazer's book contains a description of the savage and his aversion to killing animals which is similar to the reaction of Jack, who is unable to stab the hog:

Thus to the savage, who regards all living creatures as practically on a footing of equality with man, the act of killing and eating an animal must wear a very different aspect from that which the same act presents to us, who regard the intelligence of animals as far inferior to our own and deny them the possession of immortal souls. Hence on the principles of his rude philosophy the primitive hunter who slays an animal believes himself to be exposed to the vengeance either of its disembodied spirit or of all the other animals of the same species, whom he considers as knit together, like men, by the ties of kin and the obligations of the blood feud, and therefore as bound to resent injury to their number.<sup>6</sup>

The savage disposition described by Frazer is a part of Jack's collective unconscious, preventing him, at first, from killing.

On his second hunting expedition, Jack takes on the characteristics of an animal which is furtive and has the appearance of being both the hunted and the hunter. After hearing the cry of a wounded hog,

Jack himself shrank at this cry with a hiss of indrawn breath, and for a minute became less of a hunter than a furtive thing, ape-like among the tangle of trees (p. 54).

Although he feels compelled to track down and kill a hog, Jack is impotent as long as he remains Jack, the Englishman. He decides to paint his face in order to camouflage it. His idea is a reversion to both civilization and savagery. In the atomic war, dazzle paint is used to camouflage ships; and in primitive tribes, savages disguise their faces with paint. This is Jack's plan: "We could steal up on one--paint

---

<sup>5</sup>James R. Baker, William Golding: A Critical Study (New York, 1965), p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>Sir James George Frazer, "The Propitiation of Wild Animals by Hunters," William Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Source Book, ed., William Nelson (New York, 1963), p. 238.



our faces so they wouldn't see--perhaps surround them and then--" (p. 60). It is important that he uses the pronoun we. He realizes that he is incapable of killing the animal by himself. A psychological explanation for Jack's incapacity is found in Sigmund Freud's Totem and Taboo. Freud says of the slaughter of a totem animal:

Each man is conscious that he is performing an act forbidden to the individual and justifiable only through the participation of the whole clan; nor may anyone absent himself from the killing and the meal.<sup>7</sup>

A close correspondence between Freud's primitive clan and the clan of boys in Golding's novel gradually takes place.

In the second assembly of the boys on the island, Jack says, "We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English. . . ." (p. 47). But after he has painted his face,

He looked in astonishment no longer at himself but at an awesome stranger. . . . He capered toward Bill, and the mask was a thing on its own behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness (p. 72).

Now Jack is free to allow the barbarous part of his unconscious to take over. This definition describes Jack's barbarism:

. . . hostility towards civilization; the effort, conscious or unconscious to become less civilized . . . and to promote a similar change in others.<sup>8</sup>

It would be easy to simply describe Jack as entirely evil because of his compulsion to track and kill, but he is in some ways more knowledgeable and understanding than Ralph. He is the first of the older boys to accept the "beastie," described by the littlun with the

---

<sup>7</sup>"from Totem and Taboo," William Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Source Book, ed., William Nelson (New York, 1963), p. 246

<sup>8</sup>R.G. Collingwood, The New Leviathon (London, 1966), p. 342.



strawberry mark, as possible. He knows that it is not sufficient to proclaim as Ralph does that "this is a good island."<sup>9</sup>

Although, of all the boys, Jack is the most barbarous, with the exception of Roger who is sadistic, there are evil tendencies in all, even in the youngest. In Chapter Four, some older boys, Maurice and Roger, kicked over the sand castles that the littluns, Johnny, Henry, and Percival, had built. As he walked by, Maurice flung sand in Percival's eyes and

Percival began to whimper. . . . Percival finished his whimper and went on playing, for the tears had washed the sand away. Johnny watched him with china-blue eyes; then began to fling up sand in a shower, and presently Percival was crying again (p. 68).

Here Johnny, one of the smallest boys on the island, shows a tendency toward wanting to see others suffer.

Henry, another of the littluns, shows a desire to exert his will over other creatures as he plays at the water's edge:

Like a myriad of tiny teeth in a saw, the transparencies came scavenging over the beach.

This was fascinating to Henry. He poked about with a bit of stick, that itself was wave-worn and whitened and a vagrant, and tried to control the motions of the scavengers. He made little runnels that the tide filled and tried to crowd them with creatures. He became absorbed beyond mere happiness as he felt himself exercising control over living things (p. 69).

These actions of Johnny and Henry are commentaries on nature and natural man; in fact, as expressed by one Golding critic, "Johnny's 'natural belligerence' and Henry's absorption in exercising control are basic elements of human nature."<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 32.

The fear of the "beastie" told about by the littlun in the second assembly is quickly transferred to the other littluns and to Jack and finally to the other older boys. Simon alone realizes that the true beast they have to fear is within themselves. He muses, "Maybe, . . . maybe there is a beast. What I mean is . . . maybe it's only us" (p. 103). The narrator says, "However Simon thought of the beast there rose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick"(p. 121). Golding says of Simon,

For reasons it is not necessary to specify, I included a Christ-figure in my fable. This is the little boy Simon, solitary, stammering, a lover of mankind, a visionary who reaches common-sense attitudes not by reason but by intuition.<sup>11</sup>

Simon is the only one who realizes the dangers present in his unconscious nature, and because of his realization, or perhaps in spite of it, he will become the scapegoat for the boys. The pig's head on a stick, the Lord of the Flies, was brought to the clearing where Simon was praying. After Jack and the hunters had left:

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head. For a moment or two the forest and all the other dimly appreciated places echoed with the parody of laughter. "You knew, didn't you? I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" (p. 172).

After a fainting spell or an epileptic seizure, Simon goes to the top of the mountain and sees the dead parachutist whom the boys had taken for a beast. It is ironic that the beast should be in reality human, for as Simon knows, what the boys fear is, in fact, a part of their own humanity.

While Simon is discovering the truth about the beast, the other boys are feasting on the meat from the body of the Lord of the Flies. Ironically, instead of pretending that they had not killed the animal,

---

<sup>11</sup>The Hot Gates, p. 97.



as true primitives would, the boys chant in their dance which is a mock hunt, "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (p. 181).

Perhaps the explanation is that they have allowed the beast in their unconscious to take over. Carl Jung explains this psychological phenomenon in The Psychology of the Unconscious:

There is really something terrifying about the fact that man has also a shadow-side to his nature which is not just made up of small weaknesses and blemishes, but possesses a positively demoniacal impetus. The individual human being seldom knows anything about it; for, as an individual, it seems to him incredible that he should somewhere or somehow outreach himself. But let these harmless beings form a mob, and the result can be a delirious monster, and every individual is only the smallest cell in the body of the monster, where, for good or ill, he can do nothing else but join in the blood-lust of the beast, even upholding it with all his might. Out of a dim presentiment of the possibilities lurking in the dark side of human nature, we refuse to recognize it. We struggle blindly against the healing dogma of original sin, which is nevertheless so utterly true. We even hesitate to admit the conflict of which we are so painfully aware.<sup>12</sup>

When Simon comes into the center of the ring to tell the boys of the parachutist, they fall upon him and kill him. He becomes the scapegoat for the evil in their natures. Explaining the scapegoat figure, Jung says:

The actual existence of an enemy on whom we can pile all our malice means an unmistakable lightening of our conscience. We can then say without the least hesitation who the real culprit is, i.e., it is perfectly clear to us that the cause of misfortune is to be found outside and not in our own attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

Simon has met the fate of all saints. He is doomed by his insights. Ironically, the children on the island are of Christian heritage. When they kill Simon, their savior, they reenact an ancient

---

<sup>12</sup>Jolande Jacobi, ed., Psychological Reflections: An Anthology of the Writings of C.G. Jung (New York, 1961), pp. 214-215.

<sup>13</sup>Jacobi, p. 200.



and a universal tragedy which "has its true source in the defects of the species."<sup>14</sup>

There is evil in Jack; there is evil in the littluns; and Simon, saint-Christ-figure that he is, recognizes evil in himself. Two others reveal the dark side of their natures in the mock hunt and ritual killing of Simon. Ralph and Piggy were among the mob that murdered Simon. They are talking the following day. Ralph begins:

"Piggy."

"Uh?"

"That was Simon."

"You said that before."

"Piggy."

"Uh?"

"That was murder."

"You stop it!" said Piggy shrilly. "What good're you doing talking like that?"

. . . . .  
"It was dark. There was that--that bloody dance. There was lightning and thunder and rain. We was scared!"

"I wasn't scared," said Ralph slowly, "I was-- I don't know what I was."

. . . . .  
"P'raps he was only pretending--"

Piggy's voice trailed off at the sight of Ralph's face.

"You were outside. Outside the circle. Didn't you see what we--what they did?"

There was loathing, and at the same time a kind of feverish excitement, in his voice (pp. 186-187).

Piggy and Ralph try to rationalize their way out of guilt. They end by saying they were on the outside of the circle. They will pretend they did and saw nothing.

Later in the novel, Piggy is killed; and Ralph is almost killed. If it is true, as Freud has explained, that everyone must hunt with the primitive tribe, Simon, Piggy, and Ralph have become enemies to the tribe because of their refusal to hunt.

---

<sup>14</sup>Baker, p. 14.

As a result of the experience on the island, all of the boys lose their innocence; and most allow themselves to be swept into a collective savagery. Although it becomes difficult for even Ralph to explain why, he refuses to allow the dark side of his nature to gain control of him. Ralph is almost killed. The stick, sharpened at both ends, is for his head which will replace the pig's head. A human sacrifice will be the propitiation for a beast that is also human. In the nick of time, a naval officer appears, restoring adult authority and thus preventing the murder of Ralph. The paradox foreshadowed by the parachutist and brought more clearly in focus by this "gimmick" ending is that the boys will return to a society not so very different from the one they have created. Although England is supposedly civilized, human slaughter is condoned.

Despite the fact that Jack's barbarous clan kills two boys and burns much of the island, and despite the fact that the adult world outside is also violent and destructive, the view of the nature of man presented in the novel is not entirely pessimistic. The fact that there is one remaining boy who does not allow his barbarism to overcome him and who shows compassion for another human being leaves the reader some small hope: "And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the true, wise friend, Piggy" (p. 242).

The usual and the generally widespread response to Golding's presentation of the nature of man in Lord of the Flies is this:

Whenever the problem of evil is fictionalized, there is the latent danger of regarding it as the only fundamental truth of existence and of considering the demonic as the only real side of man.<sup>15</sup>

Just so, many of Golding's critics feel that his fiction reveals the nature of man as evil. For instance, John M. Egan, in an essay, "Golding's View of Man," says

The beast then is human nature itself--vile and hateful, worthy to be symbolized by human excrement. It is this hateful power which Jack apotheosizes and begins to worship.<sup>16</sup>

It is true that Jack becomes possessed by the vile and sinister part of his nature, but this is hardly sufficient ground to assert positively that the "beast is human nature itself." The beast is only a part of human nature as Golding presents it.

Egan identifies the island as a microcosm representing the rest of the universe:

The book . . . presents man and the universe as a cruel and irrational chaos. This artistic vision . . . induces a sense of despair and even hatred of what is human. One joins with Satan himself in the devil's loathing of man. This is why certain critics have termed some aspects of modern art diabolic. There is supreme irony in the title of the book itself. The term lord of the flies is, as has been mentioned, a translation of the word "beelzebub." And Beelzebub is Satan.<sup>17</sup>

To carry the definition further, Egan has said earlier in his essay that another meaning for Beelzebub is "lord of dung." But Egan goes too far and ignores too much else of significance in the novel in asserting Golding's pessimism toward mankind. Certainly one does loathe Jack and Roger, but he feels sympathy for the younger boys who are forced to join Jack; and, most of all, one not only sympathizes with Simon, Piggy, and Ralph, but also sees in them characteristics which are opposite to the malign behavior of the other boys.

---

<sup>16</sup>William Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Source Book, ed. William Nelson (New York, 1963), p. 147.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.



The nature of man is complex. Golding has set out to dispel notions that man is inherently good and rational; but he does not deny, even in Lord of the Flies, that there is goodness and rationality in addition to evil and irrationality in the nature of man.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT WHAT?

Perhaps it is not so good an idea to try to penetrate temporal boundaries and identify yourself with people without first knowing what sort of people they are. There is a sense in which I share the guilt buried beneath the runway, a sense in which my imagination has locked me to them. I share in what was at least a callous act--in what at the worst may well have been a prehistoric murder.

--William Golding, "Digging for Pictures"

Like Lord of the Flies, Golding's second novel, The Inheritors, concerns the nature of man. Both novels "attack the pride of modern man who fancies that he is a rational creature in control of his own destiny."<sup>1</sup> The Inheritors is another novel whose incidents are isolated in time; it takes place during the Last Glacial stage of the earth's evolution, which began around 75,000 years ago.

If the children in Lord of the Flies show in their collective unconscious certain characteristics of primitive men, the creatures in The Inheritors show that the evil and barbarous part of man's nature stems from his Homo sapiens ancestors.

In his Outline of History, H.G. Wells had described the Neanderthal men as "gorilla-like monsters" who may have been "the germ of the ogre in folklore." Golding felt that this was not a true picture of the Neanderthals. He felt that it was unfair for Wells and other civilized human beings to project the darkness in their natures to a

---

<sup>1</sup>Baker, p. 19.

lower species, and to rationalize that the evil was present outside rather than inside their own natures. Bernard Dick is correct in stating:

What Golding is saying is that the "true men," as Wells called them in the Outline, if they are supposed to tower over the rest of creation, should be capable of using their intellect to quell these dark, demonic urges; but in fact they are less able to cope with them than their Neanderthal brothers. Each rung on the evolutionary ladder brings additional knowledge, but there is always a price for it.<sup>2</sup>

Critics such as Samuel Hynes and Bernard Dick have said that The Inheritors is a retelling of the Garden of Eden Myth. Certainly, the novel does bear some resemblance to the Genesis story. The action of the novel takes place over a period of seven days. But the resemblance ends there. The Neanderthals never lose their innocence even though they attain knowledge of evil; and the Homo sapiens have had a fallen nature long before the story begins. The novel is a study in contrast. On the one hand, the Neanderthals who are called "the people" are meek, simple and loving, while the Homo sapiens who are called "the new people" and "the others" are violent, sophisticated, and lustful.

For the major portion of the novel, the events are related from the point of view of the people. It was necessary for Golding to employ this point of view so that one could understand the actions of the Neanderthal tribe. This imaginative way of telling the story makes the novel far more interesting than normal archaeological or anthropological accounts of the prehistoric past.

The first word of the first chapter is Lok. He is the first of the people to appear, and he is the protagonist. Gradually, the other members of the family of eight appear. They are Mal, the old woman,

---

<sup>2</sup>Dick, p. 47.



Liku, Fa, Ha, Nil, and the new one. In the first chapter, the people reveal great difficulty in reasoning. Lok, who is in the lead, is completely perplexed when he comes to the edge of a marsh over which the tribe must cross and finds that the log they have always used for a bridge is gone. The family look to their patriarch, Mal, to tell them what to do. A "picture" comes into his mind of a time long ago when this happened before, and he tells them to look for a fallen tree. They follow his directions, and soon a new log crosses the marsh.

The tribe calls ideas "pictures." These pictures are, for the most part, memories. The people have a kind of group consciousness. They are able to share pictures without verbalizing:

Then as often happened with the people, there were feelings between them. Fa and Nil shared a picture of Ha thinking (p. 14).<sup>3</sup>

The old woman carries with her a ball of clay which she uses as a hearth for the fire she builds when they arrive at the terrace, underneath an overhang of rock, where generations of their tribe have lived during the summer months. The people give other parts of nature their own characteristics. For example, at the end of Chapter One, the old woman says, "The fire is awake again" (p. 30).

In Chapter Two Mal tells the story of the creation:

"There was the great Oa. She brought forth the earth from her belly. She gave suck. The earth brought forth woman and the woman brought forth the first man out of her belly" (p. 35).

Their matriarchal religion and patriarchal government direct their attitudes toward life and death.<sup>4</sup> And these attitudes are quite different

---

<sup>3</sup>This and all subsequent quotations from Golding's The Inheritors without footnotes are quoted from William Golding, The Inheritors (New York, 1955).

<sup>4</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 77.

from those of the Homo sapiens, who appear later in the novel.

Lok keeps watch while the family sleeps on the first night. At the beginning of the second day, Mal is hot with fever. He sends Fa, Lok, and Liku to find food and Ha, Nil, and the new one to find wood. Fa and Lok come upon two hyenas which are eating the carcass of a doe which has been killed by a cat. They throw rocks at the hyenas to scare them away. The people themselves never kill; they only take meat from an animal that has already been killed by another animal. Even so, they feel guilty in just taking the meat: "The air between the rocks was forbidding with violence and sweat, with the rich smell of meat and wickedness"(p. 54). Lok excuses their taking of the meat, saying

"There is little food when the people come back from the sea. There are not yet berries nor fruit nor honey nor almost anything to eat. The people are thin with hunger and they must eat. They do not like the taste of meat but they must eat" (p. 56).

After he and Fa have reached the terrace with meat, Nil tells the people that Ha has disappeared: "I see Ha running up towards the cliff. He looks back and he is glad and then he is frightened and glad--so! Then I cannot see him any more" (p. 66). She also tells of smelling someone. Much of the perception of the people is through their sense of smell, which is very acute. The family finds it impossible to picture anyone outside of their tribe. But Nil is sure that "there is another smell of a nobody" (p. 66).

They are afraid that Ha has fallen into the river. At the beginning of Chapter Four, Fa and Nil, both of whom have lain with Ha, mourn because of his loss. The people find it against their natures to restrain the sound of mourning.



The old woman says that without help, Mal will die. So "Fa must take a present to the ice women and speak for him to Oa." The ice formations which are hanging beside a nearby waterfall are shaped like women, and the people associate them with Oa--their earth mother. Fa is to offer a prayer to Oa in the ice sanctuary. The task is entrusted to her because she is a woman: "A woman for Oa and a man for the pictures in his head" (p. 70).

Lok tells the people that he will look for Ha. He thinks that Ha and "the other" "changed words or shared a picture." He explains, "People understand each other," and "The people considered this and shook their heads in agreement" (p. 72). This is ironic because the Neanderthals will never be able to understand the new people completely; and even less will the new people be able to understand the Neanderthals.

The second night fell as Lok traced the scent of Ha, which broke off at the edge of a cliff. Then:

Lok leaned out and looked down. He could see the weed tails waving under the brilliance of the river. He felt the sounds of mourning about to break from his throat and clapped a hand over his mouth (p. 74).

Thinking that Ha might be alive in the river, Lok called:

"Ha! Where are you?" . . . there came a cry from the island. Lok shouted again and jumped up and down. But as he jumped he began to feel that Ha's voice had not called. This was a different voice; not the voice of the people. It was the voice of other. Suddenly he was filled with excitement. It was of desperate importance that he should see this man whom he smelt and heard. (p. 74).

As Ha had been curious about the others, so is Lok. Neither could conceive of people being dangerous. However, Lok now feels an uncomfortable separation from the rest of his family:



The other had tugged at the strings that bound him to Fa and Mal and Liku and the rest of the people. The strings were not the ornament of life but its substance. If they broke, a man would die (p. 78).

The Neanderthals are communal people. They are dependent upon one another physically, mentally, and emotionally. Therefore, they cannot conceive of life without the strings of attachment to each other.

When Lok and Fa return to the terrace, they find Mal worse. The prayers have not helped, and he asks the old woman to bury him. Lok begins to dig a grave beside the fire in the shape of Mal's body, which has been placed in a fetal position by the old woman. Lok, the only man left to dig the grave, tires; and contrary to custom, the women dig too. They dig up bones of ancestors along with dirt. Finally, they place Mal's body in the hole with meat beside his face and water on his head so that he may eat and drink when he wishes. After they have covered Mal with dirt, the old woman speaks: "Oa has taken Mal into her belly" (p. 91).

Chapter Five begins with the third day and with the realization that Lok, the man of many words and few pictures, is now the leader of the tribe. Now Lok must be the man with the pictures. The old woman wants him to take up his responsibility, but his inability to reason frustrates her; so she helps him out. It is decided that he and Fa will look for the other and Ha. During their search, Lok says, "With the scent of other I am other. I creep like a cat. I am frightened and greedy. I am strong" (p. 97). Here he shows an uncanny knowledge of what the new people are like from their scent only. But still, he is not frightened by the new people. He wants to meet them. Fa goes back to the terrace, but Lok climbs to the top of a tree and shouts toward

the island, "New people! New people!" The others hear him and smother their fire. While Lok is shouting to them, part of their tribe are on the terrace killing the old woman and Nil and making off with Liku and the new one.

Liku is a little girl about six, and Lok seems to be her father. Hearing her scream as the others transport her across the river in a canoe makes Lok scream "without knowing it." Hearing him, one of the others shoots an arrow at Lok. Having never seen an arrow before, Lok calls it a "twig." He sees the old woman's body floating past him under water. She has been murdered by the new people, but Lok does not seem to realize this.

As Chapter Six begins, Lok is "past screaming." The second arrow is shot at him, this time from the island. "He had a confused idea that someone was trying to give him a present" (p. 111). Going toward the terrace, he meets Fa, who tells him to give the twig back. She has more pictures than Lok, and one feels that she realizes that the twig is a weapon:

Fa spoke indistinctly.  
"We throw stones at the yellow ones."  
"?"  
"The twig."

Here she is connecting the twig with the stones that she and Lok throw at wildcats.

When night comes, Fa gets the idea of crossing to the island on a log. They are unsuccessful in securing a log to cross over on, but finally they do cross on logs and rocks. They can see to do so because, unlike the new people, they have night vision.

On the island, Lok and Fa hide behind a bush and watch the new people. They see a man dressed in the skin of a stag, and they think it is a real "rutting stag." Actually, the new people have a totemic religion, and the stag is their totem animal. It is easily seen that Lok and Fa, whose faith is in Oa, could not conceive of such a religion.

They hear the new one mew, and Lok jumps up and down behind the bush and yells, "Liku!" Fa claps her hand over his mouth, but not before Liku and the new people hear him. Lok hurls some meat he has brought Liku into the clearing. Then he and Fa run away, followed by the new people, armed with their weapons.

Lok and Fa cross the river again and escape to the terrace. All alone there, they realize that many of the strings linking them to the rest of their family have been cut. In this scene, their passion for each other is deep and spontaneous:

Then they were holding on to each other, breast against breast. The rocks around them were like any other rocks; the firelight had died out of them. The two pressed themselves against each other, they clung, searching for a centre, they fell, still clinging face to face. The fire of their bodies lit, and they strained towards it (p. 131).

The fourth day begins with Chapter Seven. Lok wants to go to the island again, but Fa is afraid that if he goes he will be killed. She says that she will bear children. But Lok cannot forget Liku.

They see some new people crossing the river in canoes; and, again forgetting the danger, Lok starts to run down to meet them. Fa restrains him, and they climb a tree in the forest to watch the new people who are coming inland. Enchanted by the new men with their oddly shaped heads, they name them Pine-tree, Chestnut-head, and Tuft. Lok, who had thought the new people's faces were concealed by bone, was



astonished at this short distance to see that "there was no Mal face, Fa face, Lok face concealed under the bone. It was skin" (p. 139). The new people were so thin that they looked like they were dying. Lok had to gesticulate and dance out his meanings along with a few expressive sounds, but he saw that the new people communicated through their lips only.

From their position in the tree, Lok and Fa see another part of the new people's religion without realizing it. Tuami cuts off Pine-tree's finger for a blood sacrifice or offering to the stag.

Seeing the new people work together makes Lok feel affection for them again, despite his knowledge of their evil:

Tuft had thrown his skin on the ground below the dead tree and was heaving at a great bundle. Chestnut-head came quickly to help him and they laughed at each other and a sudden gush of affection for them pushed the heavy feeling down in his body (p. 144).

Chapter Eight is the beginning of the fifth day. All of the new people have moved across from the island. Lok and Fa see the new one with the fat woman, Vivani. One realizes that Vivani, like Fa, has probably lost a child, and that she wanted the new one to ease the pain in her breasts. The new people opened a bag, and out came Liku. There was a leash around her neck, and a young girl held the other end. As Liku and the young girl played, they laughed together:

Lok and Fa were laughing too. The feeling in Lok had turned warm and sunny. He felt like dancing were it not for the outside-Lok who insisted on listening for danger (p. 154).

They are happy that Liku and the new one are safe and well-fed. The girls learn each other's names. The young girl's name is Tanakil.

In the midst of the clearing, the new people build a fire; and they construct huts, which Fa and Lok call caves, around it. The new

people are hungry, and the old man, whom Lok and Fa associate with Mal, appeases them with liquor.

They see the old man come out of the clearing and tell Tanakil to take Liku and go to their hut. When they have gone, he pulls a lump of meat, the one Lok had thrown for Liku, out of his clothes and begins to eat it. Pine-tree comes upon him and sees him eating. He tells the others in the tribe, and all become furious. Led by Tuami, they demand drink, and this time they refuse to be rationed.

The new people spit at the old man, their leader, and at the stag's head, their totem. Fa sees them preparing to kill and eat Liku. Knowing that Lok would risk death to prevent this, she does not let him know what is happening; and she persuades him to go to sleep.

Chapter Nine begins on the fifth night. When Fa wakes Lok up, the people have eaten and drunk their fill. Their drink smells of "honey and wax and decay." Lok calls it "bee water." Fa, who has seen their cannibalism, says to Lok, "Oa did not bring them out of her belly" (p. 173). Their act of killing another human being for food is so unnatural that Fa cannot feel that her nature goddess created them.

Vivani and Tuami, both intoxicated, come under the tree lookout of Lok and Fa. Their lustful lovemaking is in sharp contrast to that of Lok and Fa, which was described in Chapter Six:

Their fierce and wolflike battle was ended. They had fought it seemed against each other, consumed each other rather than lain together so that there was blood on the woman's face and the man's shoulder. Now, . . . they played together. Their play was complicated and engrossing. There was no animal. . . that had the subtlety and imagination to invent games like these, nor the leisure and incessant wakefulness to play them. They hunted down pleasure as the wolves will follow and run down horses . . . They sported with their pleasure when they had it fast, as a fox will play with the fat bird she has caught, postponing death because she has the



will to put off and enjoy twice over the pleasure of eating. They were silent now except for little grunts and gasps and an occasional gurgle of secret laughter from the fat woman (pp. 176-177).

In this description, Vivani and Tuami are compared to animals. Their love appears merely sensual; it is a game, and its only reward is physical. Here there seem to be no strings of deep feeling connecting their "centres" as there are between Lok and Fa, whose love was described in elemental rather than physical terms.

After Vivani and Tuami have gone their separate ways, Fa says that she will take the new one. Lok is to follow her when she is gone. But Lok cannot forget Liku. Fa still has not told him that there is no more Liku. After Fa has crept into the clearing, Lok crawls into a hut, searching for Liku. A man inside wakes up and screams to the others, who all awaken and rush out of their huts. Lok cries out, "Where is Liku?" And Tanakil begins to scream.

Next he calls out, "Where is Fa?" Chestnut-head shoots an arrow at Lok but misses him. Meanwhile, two of the hunters are following Fa. They wound her. Lok follows her scent, but at the end of the chapter he has lost it.

At the beginning of Chapter Ten, "The sound of mourning burst out of his mouth, prolonged, harsh, pain-sound, man-sound. . . . Far off, the stag blared again (p. 190). This is the beginning of the sixth day. All at once, Lok felt wise, like Mal:

. . . his head was new, as though a sheaf of pictures lay there to be sorted when he would. These pictures were of plain grey daylight. They showed the solitary string of life that bound him to Liku and the new one; they showed the new people towards whom both outside--and inside--Lok yearned with a terrified love, as creatures who would kill him if they could"(p. 191).



His feeling toward the new people is incomprehensible to him. He feels an attraction for them that he cannot resist, even though he is frightened by them.

In addition to the sheaf of pictures or ideas that Lok gains, he also comes to accept his suffering:

To be Mal was proud and heavy. The new head knew that certain things were gone and done with like a wave of the sea. It knew that misery must be embraced painfully as a man might hug thorns to him and it sought to comprehend the new people from whom all changes come (p. 194).

Lok also discovers "Like." Before, he could only use metaphor to name a new object or experience, but now he is able to form analogies.

Suddenly, Fa appears in the water nearby. Lok begins speaking:

"It is bad to be alone--"

"I ran into the water after the man hit me."

"The water is a terrible thing."

"The water is better than the new people."

Despite her natural fear of water, Fa learns that it is less dangerous than the new people. But both Lok and Fa realize that ". . . the people could not be left alone. Terrible they might be as the fire or the river, but they drew like honey or meat"(p. 198).

They go back to the clearing and find what they interpret as gifts. The new people have actually left a new stag which they have killed with a figure pinned to it. One sees that the figure is made to look like the Neanderthal men, but Lok and Fa do not realize this. An opened jug of "bee-water" stands by the stag's head as a sort of propitiation for killing it.

Lok and Fa think that the haunch of meat and the "bee-water" were meant for them. Each drinks some of the liquid. Then they begin to fight over the jug. Drunk, they feel like the new people. Lok feels

that there is nothing he cannot do. Chapter Eleven is the beginning of the sixth day. Fa wakes Lok, telling him that the new people are going away. She is still determined to take the new one back from them. She tells Lok, "The new people are frightened. . . . They heave and sweat and watch the forest over their backs. But there is no danger in the forest. They are frightened of the air where there is nothing" (p. 206). Lok and Fa have no idea that the new people are actually frightened of them and think they are devils. They have never even killed an animal, much less a man, so they cannot conceive of anyone being frightened of them.

The two watch as the old man whips the backs of the new people who are straining at ropes which pull their canoes up the mountain. Fa has a plan. She will climb the mountain and distract the new people while Lok goes up the path by the cliff, takes the new one, and runs. The plan does not work because Lok, still thinking about Liku, seizes Tanakil and asks her, "Where is Liku! Tell me, where is Liku?"

When the plan fails, Fa has another idea: "We will take Tanakil. Then they will give back the new one." They try out this plan. Lok goes to get her. Tuami has made a figure:

It was some kind of man. Its arms and legs were contracted as though it were leaping forward and it was red as the water had been. There was hair standing out on all sides of the head. . . . There was a stick driven into a crack in the creature's breast and to this stick was fastened a strip of hide; and to the other end of the hide was fastened Tanakil (p. 215).

Lok pulls the stick out of the crack, picks up Tanakil, and runs with her after Fa on the terrace. He lets her go when the crumple-faced woman, Tanakil's mother, comes toward him. It had been Tuami's purpose to appease the Neanderthal devils by leaving Tanakil as a sacrifice.



But Lok and Fa did not want to keep, hurt, or kill Tanakil; they just wanted the new one back.

The new people let a tree fall, knocking Fa unconscious and into the water. Her body goes over the fall and is gone.

Up to this point, the narrative point of view in the novel has been that of the Neanderthal people. But for the last half of Chapter Eleven, the point of view is that of a detached observer. For the first time, a full description of Lok's appearance is given:

It was a strange creature, smallish and bowed. The legs and thighs were bent and there was a whole thatch of curls on the outside of the legs and the arms. The back was high, and curved over the shoulders with curly hair. Its feet and hands were broad, and flat, the great toe projecting inwards to grip. The square hands swung down to the knees. The head was set slightly forward on the strong neck that seemed to lead straight to the row of curls under the lip. The mouth was wide and soft and above the curls of the upper lip the great nostrils were flared like wings. There was no bridge to the nose and the moon-shadow of the jutting brow lay just above the tip. The shadows lay most darkly in the caverns above its cheeks and the eyes were invisible in them. Above this again, the brow was a straight line fledged with hair; and above that there was nothing (pp. 218-219).

One wonders if he would have felt the same sympathy for and kinship with Lok if this description of his ape-like appearance had been given earlier. To some extent, the description accounts for the fright of the new people. Modern man, like the new people, has a fear of other creatures that is more overpowering than the fear of the cat that Lok and Fa share.

Now that Lok is completely alone, he weeps. And his crying reminds one of the crying of Ralph. He is crying for the loss of all his family, as Ralph was crying for the loss of Piggy; and he, too, is crying for the darkness of the new men's hearts:



There was light now in each cavern, lights faint as the star-light reflected in the crystals of a granite cliff. The lights increased, acquired definition, brightened, lay each sparkling at the lower edge of a cavern. Suddenly, noiselessly, the lights became thin crescents, went out, and streaks glistened on each cheek. The lights appeared again, caught among the silver curls of the beard. They hung, elongated, dropped from curl to curl and gathered at the lowest tip. The streaks on the cheeks pulsed as the drops swam down them, a great drop swelled at the end of a hair of the beard, shivering and bright. It detached itself and fell in a silver flash, striking a withered leaf with a pat (p. 220).

This description arouses a feeling of pathos and heightens one's love for Lok. Now his grief is so intense that the sound of mourning can no longer comfort him. One of the poems in Golding's earliest publication expresses similar grief, although the poem is not as poetic as the prose description of Lok crying. The persona of the poem is not so simple a creature as Lok, but both have had similar experiences:

Tactus Aratrost

When thou art gone  
And thy bright beauty thrust into the grave,  
To lie alone  
Where seagulls cry and tumbled waters rave,  
Expect no windy grief from me  
Save the thin tears that I may weep  
As winter weepeth, easily,  
Between the even laughter and my sleep.  
I will not moan  
Nor rant of endless love or make-belief,  
For I have known  
In my few years a brimming meed of grief.  
Thy piteous ghost a stranger shall depart--  
So well I know the touch of pain  
Upon the rawness of my heart  
That I would die ere I would grieve again.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the strings have all been broken by the new people and

Lok must die:

---

<sup>5</sup>William Golding, Poems (London, 1934), p. 9.

The creature wrestled with a rock that was lying on a mound of earth but was too weak to move it. At last it gave up and crawled round the hollow by the remains of a fire. It came close to the ashes and lay on its side. It pulled its legs up, knees against the chest. It folded its hands under its cheek and lay still. The twisted and smoothed root lay before its face. It made no noise but seemed to be growing into the earth, drawing the soft flesh of its body into a contact so close that the movements of pulse and breathing were inhibited (p. 221).

It is right that Lok should return to Oa's belly, for he has kept the innocence he was born with. Although Lok and his meek race of people did not inherit the type of intelligence necessary to survive on the earth, they inherited something far more valuable. Possessors of a primal simplicity and innocence, they were the inheritors of the very essence of Oa. The new one symbolizes the meek, some of whom are still living on our planet. Though they are not inheritors of worldly goods, the meek are inheritors of the essence of nature. They are those few who have not sacrificed the spiritual for the material.

As in Lord of the Flies, Golding has placed what he calls a "gimmick" ending on The Inheritors.<sup>6</sup> Chapter Twelve is told from the point of view of the new people who are fleeing in canoes. They call the new one "the little devil," and one can see in their feeling for him something much akin to Lok's feeling for the new people:

He sniffed, turned, ran at Vivani's leg and scrambled up to her breast. She was shuddering and laughing as if this pleasure and love were also a fear and a torment. The devil's hands and feet had laid hold of her. Hesitating, half-ashamed, with that same frightened laughter, she bent her head, cradled him with her arms and shut her eyes. The people were grinning at her too as if they felt the strange, tugging mouth, as if in spite of them there was a well of feeling opened in love and fear. They made adoring and submissive sounds, reached out their hands, and at the same time they shuddered in repulsion at the too-nimble feet and the red, curly hair (pp. 230-231).

---

<sup>6</sup>James Gindin, "Gimmick and Metaphor in the Novels of William Golding," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Summer 1960), 147.



The artist of the tribe, Tuami, shows an awareness of the darkness of the world which is not far from an awareness of his own heart:

Tuami, his head full of swirling sand, tried to think of the time when the devil would be full grown. In this upland country, safe from pursuit by the tribe but shut off from men by the devil haunted mountains, what sacrifice would they be forced to perform to a world of confusion? They were as different from the group of bold hunters and magicians who had sailed up the river towards the fall as a soaked feather is from a dry one. Restlessly he turned the ivory in his hands. What was the use of sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world? (p. 231).

The last paragraph of the novel says symbolically that the darkness of man's heart is passed on and on from generation to generation:

Holding the ivory firmly in his hands, feeling the onset of sleep, Tuami looked at the line of darkness. It was far away and there was plenty of water in between. He peered forward past the sail to see what lay at the other end of the lake, but it was so long, and there was such a flashing from the water that he could not see if the line of darkness had an ending (p. 233).

Golding would hope and so would we that the line of darkness will have an ending. But a knowledge of his own and our own natures tells us that as yet the darkness is still within us. By allowing one Neanderthal, the new one, to live with the Homo sapiens tribe, Golding suggests that modern man has inherited characteristics of both groups.

Again, Golding has shown the complexity of human nature. Again he has refused to present it as completely filled with darkness. Again there is a glimmer of hope because one can see in the new people a mixture of love and hate. Their feeling is ambivalent, but something within them wants to love. In Lord of the Flies and in The Inheritors, Golding has begun to show that it is the ability to love which enables man to overcome the darkness of his own nature.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE TEETH

The Goodwins do not merely wreck ships; they chew them up and then swallow them. The moving stones act like a system of files, mincers, teeth. The Goodwins give back nothing.

--William Golding, "The English Channel"

It seems probable that the Goodwins were the inspiration of the rock island setting of Pincher Martin. As Golding has personified the Goodwins, so Christopher Martin personifies the barren rocks which surround him. They, too, have the properties of teeth and their hostile appearance creates fears in him of being chewed up. Christopher is Golding's representation of what will happen to man whose nature is entirely selfish.

Golding's first three novels occur in isolated time or place, and all can best be classified as myths. Pincher Martin, "a myth of dying,"<sup>1</sup> is the most myth-like of all Golding's fictions:

If myth selects from multitudinous complexity an archetypal situation, there could be nothing more rigidly exclusive than the man on the rock, and nothing more archetypal than the vision which insists that even that might be stripped away to leave man facing God or Void nakedly.<sup>2</sup>

This third myth is different from the others in that it occurs in the present and in that this novel concerns itself primarily with the individual unconscious of one man, Christopher Martin, rather than with

---

<sup>1</sup>Hynes, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 156.

the collective unconscious. In The Inheritors, Golding went back to explore the roots of our collective unconscious in our prehistoric ancestors. In Lord of the Flies, he showed the presence of certain racial memories in children of the near future. But in Pincher Martin, he is concerned with the individual unconscious of a character in the present. Christopher himself is archetypal in that he is a perfect example of a particular type of individual.

Several critics have linked this novel with the Genesis story. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor say:

There plays across the narrative chapters a kind of parody of the Divine Week of Creation, but ending at the beginning of the Seventh Day when the work of human hands must be set aside.<sup>3</sup>

The week of creation dealt with in Pincher Martin is the week during which Chris creates his own heaven.

Another critic sees the novel as made up of three main divisions:

(1) The drowning: This occurs on the first two pages of the novel. With the half-formed word, "Moth--," Martin dies. (2) Purgatory: Alternated with scenes of Chris's struggle for survival in the present are "memory scenes" of his past life, and all is culminated in his annihilation by the "black lightning." (3) The aftermath of the drowning: Mr. Davidson, a captain in the British navy, comes to claim the body found by Mr. Campbell; and the discovery is made that the episode on the rock was entirely in Chris's mind.<sup>4</sup>

E.C. Bufkin says that Pincher Martin is an "adaptation of the morality play"<sup>5</sup>, and proceeds to point out several similarities. Many

---

<sup>3</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup>Dick, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup>"Pincher Martin: William Golding's Morality Play," Studies in the Literary Imagination, 2, No. 2 (Oct. 1969), 5.

of the characters' names are symbolic. "Christopher" (Christ-bearer) is an ironic name for the protagonist. His nickname, "Pincher," symbolizes his greed. "Nat," short for Nathaniel, the name of the saint-figure, means "gift of God," and Mary, the name of the woman Chris raped and Nat later married, is emblematic of the Virgin Mary. The novel is very dramatic in places, and this is as it should be because Christopher was an actor in civilian life. In the novel, he plays the part of man against the elements as he attempts to create his own heaven. And he is half aware that he is only playing a part.

In addition to myth and morality play, the novel has been labelled "existential." Those who saw the novel as fitting into this third category erred in judging it too hastily. One critic who saw the novel in this way wrote in a review for Time magazine:

William Golding, English novelist, writes like a French existentialist who has wandered into the Manhattan offices of True magazine. The French practitioners of the art of the "extreme situation" lean to plagues (Albert Camus) or politics and perversion (Jean-Paul Sartre). A Cornishman and sometime naval officer, Author Golding of course sends his existential hero to sea.<sup>6</sup>

This reviewer failed to realize that Christopher is both more and less than an "existential hero." Martin compares himself to Prometheus, and he is correct in the comparison, for his immense courage is both inventive and hopeful. If he had been an existential hero, he would have compared himself to and would have been portrayed as Sisyphus, whose striving was disillusioned and hopeless.

Of the three categories--myth, morality play, and existentialist novel--Pincher Martin is most nearly a myth. It is concerned with Being

---

<sup>6</sup>"Rock and Roll," Time, 70 (Sept. 1957), 118.



rather than Becoming. Golding does not attempt to find the causes of Pincher's greed; he is merely interested in studying him as he is. And it is in this respect that Pincher will be viewed here--a finely drawn representation of at least one aspect of man's nature, if not that nature itself.

One feels admiration for Pincher's courage in struggling to survive against such overwhelming odds; but at the same time, one loathes the man who has been dominated by greed in his relationships with others. Samuel Hynes best describes the way that Chris is viewed by a great many readers:

This lonely survivor we must regard as admirable, simply because he clings to life so tenaciously and against such odds (how can we not side with Man, against Nature?). His endurance, his will, his ingenuity are all heroic--he is man opposing adversity, refusing to be annihilated. And when he cries, "I am Prometheus," we see what he means--he is a man trapped on a barren rock, defying the fate that put him there.

But woven into this heroic narrative are flashbacks of Martin's past that establish a character who is the opposite of heroic--an unscrupulous egoist who has stopped at no depravity, no betrayal of love and friendship to nourish his ego. By seeing this character developed parallel to the Promethean survivor, we are forced to acknowledge that the same qualities that have kept him alive against such odds are the qualities that make him morally repulsive. And so . . . we face a moral dilemma: on what grounds can we condemn those qualities by which man survives?<sup>7</sup>

Like Ralph, in Lord of the Flies, Chris has hopes of being rescued. He makes a dwarf out of rocks and attaches a piece of foil to its head so that it may be spotted from a ship or plane. Also, he decides to make a line of seaweed to draw attention to the rock.

His attempt to be rescued does not succeed any better than Ralph's. The fire that brought about the rescue of the boys on the

---

<sup>7</sup>Hynes, p. 25.

island was a fire built by Jack's tribe to smoke Ralph out, not for the purpose of rescue. The dwarf and the seaweed were objects in Chris's mind only. They could not affect his rescue in any way, for he could not be rescued from death by human hands. The only purpose they served for him was the prolonging of "his heaven."

Christopher Martin is not deluded about his nature. He knows that he is greedy, and he is frightened by the realization that greed is a characteristic of external nature as well. Imagery of eating is carried throughout the novel. Chris is frightened by the thought that the rocks which surround him are teeth:

"I shall call those three rocks out there the teeth."

All at once he was gripping the lifebelt with both hands and tensing his muscles to defeat the deep shudders that were sweeping through him.

"No! Not the Teeth!"

The teeth were here, inside his mouth. He felt them with his tongue, the double barrier of bone, each known and individual except the gaps--and there they persisted as a memory if one troubled to think. But to lie on a row of teeth in the middle of the sea--(p. 81).<sup>8</sup>

Chris has devoured other people all his life. Therefore, anthropomorphizing nature, as did the Neanderthals in The Inheritors, he sees it as being greedy, and he sees himself in danger of being eaten.

The story Pete told about the fish in the tin box haunts Chris's memory. In real life, Chris had been like the one remaining maggot in the tin box. He had eaten up all of the other people he had known, whenever they attracted his appetite. Unable to sleep on the rock, Chris tells himself:

---

<sup>8</sup>This and all subsequent quotations from Golding's Pincher Martin without footnotes are quoted from William Golding, Pincher Martin (New York, 1956).



Think about women then or eating. Think about eating women, eating men, crunching up Alfred, that other girl, that boy, that crude and unsatisfactory experiment, lie restful as a log and consider the gnawed tunnel of life right up to this uneasy intermission (p. 81).

Now, on the rock, the fish-maggot story is completed. Chris, the last remaining fat maggot, hears the spade knocking on the crevice of rock which becomes the tin box. Nature is about to gobble up the fat delicacy which has so gluttonously faced the world with "his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab" (p. 106).

Besides the teeth and maggot which symbolize Christopher's greed, there is a third symbol, his lobster hands:

He eyed the peculiar shapes that lay across the trousers indifferently for a while until at last it occurred to him how strange it was that lobsters should sit there. Then he was suddenly seized with a terrible loathing for lobsters and flung them away so that they cracked on the rock. The dull pain of the blow extended him into them again and they became his hands, lying discarded where he had tossed them (p. 116).

Although Chris's memories and actions show greed to be the primary characteristic of his nature, and although he must recognize this greedy nature, on occasion he foolishly thinks that he can overcome his nature. After his symphonic enema he says, "Now I shall be sane and no longer such a slave to my body" (p. 146). But Chris has been and always will be a slave to his body. In one way or another, he will continue to be motivated by bodily desire. When troubled by the fear that he will lose his sanity, he says:

The solution lies in intelligence. That is what distinguishes us from the helpless animals that are caught in their patterns of behavior, both mental and physical (p. 153).

Certainly Chris has been caught in a mental and physical pattern of behavior for a very long time, even though he is quite intelligent. And



it is perhaps because of intelligence rather than lack of it that he has been caught in this pattern.

Two characters, revealed in Christopher's memory scenes, are in contrast to him in that their natures are loving and unselfish, making them the opposites of Pincher in human nature. One is his former best friend, Nathaniel. "He is the saint of the novel--wholly unworldly and innocent, humble, unselfish, loving."<sup>9</sup> Before the war, Nathaniel had come to visit Chris. Nat's lectures on heaven, "the sort of heaven we invent for ourselves after death, if we aren't ready for the real one," had not been well-received in London. Nat tells Chris, "Take us as we are now and heaven would be sheer negation. Without form and void. You see? A sort of black lightning, destroying everything we call life--" (p. 162). When Chris recalls this scene, Nat's words take on great importance, for they describe what is happening to him.

The other character who is in contrast to Chris is Mary. To Chris, she has been an object of both desire and hate. He recalls a scene in the past in which he actually raped her. Thereafter, Nathaniel became engaged to her and asked Chris to be best man at their wedding. On the rock, Chris curses an invisible Nat:

Christ, how I hate you. Because you fathomed her mystery, you have a right to handle her transmuted cheap tweed; because you both have made a place where I can't get, because in your fool innocence you've got what I had to get or go mad (p. 90).

Chris's memory goes back on board the Wildebeeste before it was torpedoed. He remembers thinking before his attempted murder of Nat, "Good-bye, Nat, I loved you and it is not in my nature to love much. But what can the last maggot but one do? Lose his identity?" (p. 163). It is ironic

---

<sup>9</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 209.

that the order calculated to make Nat lose his balance and fall overboard, "Hard a-starboard," would have been the right order to give in order to make the ship avoid the torpedo. But the order was too late.

One might think that Christopher was devoid of conscience, but he has felt pangs of guilt because of the darkness of his heart:

Black, a familiar feeling, a heaviness round the heart, a reservoir which any moment might flood the eyes now and for so long strangers to weeping. Black, like the winter evening through which the centre made its body walk--a young body . . . The centre was thinking--I am alone; so alone! The reservoir overflowed . . . The center felt the gulping of its throat, sent eyesight on ahead to cling desperately to the next light and then the next--anything to fasten the attention away from the interior blackness.

Because of what I did I am an outsider and alone (p. 160).

Unlike Ralph and Lok, Chris has been unable to unstop completely the reservoir and allow his tears to cleanse his heart. He is unwilling to fully accept the blackness within him, and therefore, he cannot overcome it.

Near the end of his struggle with the elements, Chris chooses madness as the only remaining way of surviving. In this graphic passage, he describes the plight of man as he sees it:

"I will tell you what a man is. He goes on four legs till Necessity bends the front end upright and makes a hybrid of him. The fingerprints of those hands are about his spine and just above the rump for proof if you want it. He is a freak, an ejected foetus robbed of his natural development, thrown out in the world with a naked covering of parchment, with too little room for his teeth and a soft bulging skull like a bubble. But nature stirs a pudding there and sets a thunderstorm flickering inside the hardening globe, white, lambent, lightning, a constant flash and tremble. All your lobsters and film-trailers are nothing but the random intersections of instant bushes of lightning. The sane life of your belly and your cock are on a simple circuit, but how can the stirred pudding keep constant. Tugged by the pull of the earth, infected by the white stroke that engraved the book, furrowed, lines burned through it by hardship and torment and terror-unbalanced, brain-sick, at your last gasp on a rock in the sea, the pudding has boiled over and you are no worse than raving mad" (p. 169).



At the very end of his creation of heaven, on the sixth day, Chris creates God in his own image. The god wearing sea boots asks, "What do you believe in?" And Chris answers, "The thread of my life." Since this is all that has meaning for Chris, his creation of heaven and of God is quite true to his nature. The dialogue between Chris and God reveals much about Chris's attitude toward the nature of man and his predicament. Chris begins:

"I have created you and I can create my own heaven."

"I prefer it. You gave me the power to choose and all my life you led me carefully to this suffering because my choice was my own. Oh yes! I understand the pattern. All my life, whatever I had done I should have found myself in the end on that same bridge, at that same time, giving that same order-- the right order, the wrong order. Yet, suppose I climbed away from the cellar over the bodies of used and defeated people, broke them to make steps on the road away from you, why should you torture me? If I ate them, who gave me a mouth?" (p. 175).

Chris recognizes that he was born with a greedy nature and that it would have been futile had he tried to overcome it. On the seventh day, Chris was unable to hold out his struggle any longer, and despite his resistance:

The lightning crept in. The centre was unaware of anything but the claws and the threat. It focused its awareness on the crumbled serrations and the blazing red. The lightning came forward. Some of the lines pointed to the centre, waiting for the moment when they could pierce it. Others lay against the claws, playing over them, prying for a weakness, wearing them away in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy (p. 179).

To show mercy on Chris, God would have to allow the claws, the only meaningful part of him, to remain. But because physical greed was the only thing that Chris called life, the black lightning of compassion was destined to wear away everything that was Chris. Through the compassion of God, Chris undergoes a second death, and he is rescued from



his "self-created nightmare."<sup>10</sup> Nat's prophecy about a self-made heaven has come true.

As in Lord of the Flies and The Inheritors, the final chapter is a surprise. One realizes, if he has not before, that Chris has undergone the trial on the rock in his imagination, for he is still wearing his sea boots--when his body is washed ashore, the boots he had "thought-kicked" off early in the novel.

Some critics have objected that by revealing only at the end of the novel that the struggle was mental, Golding has tricked us. On the contrary, as Bernard Dick has made clear, ". . . Golding has not really tricked the reader; he has described a drowning, but he has also shown that the indomitable essence of a person cannot be snuffed out by water alone."<sup>11</sup> The suggestion is too powerful to miss: if the essence of a man like Christopher, who lived an entirely physical existence, was not destroyed at once, but was able to go on living after the physical death, then the essence of a man who possessed a spiritual as well as a physical being would not have been snuffed out by the black lightning.

Pincher Martin marks both an end and a beginning. It is the end of a group of novels in which the state of man is explored as a finite concept. In Lord of the Flies, The Inheritors, and Pincher Martin, Golding attempts to answer the question, what is the nature of man like? He does this by showing man as a fallen creature although in each of the three novels some characters are exceptions. After this, Golding will

---

<sup>10</sup>Baker, p. 38.

<sup>11</sup>Dick, p. 59.

begin a set of novels in which questions will begin to be asked about how one should look at man and about his process of becoming what he is.<sup>12</sup> Golding will remain concerned with the essential nature of man, but he will ask in the next three novels: How did his nature develop?

---

<sup>12</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 161.

## CHAPTER V

### UNFATHOMABLE, INDIVISIBLE DARKNESS

I must be careful. But it seems to me that an obvious truth is being neglected. Our humanity, our capacity for living together in a full and fruitful life, does not reside in knowing things for the sake of knowing them or even in the power to exploit our surroundings. At best these are hobbies and toys--adult toys, and I for one would not be without them. Our humanity rests in the capacity to make value judgments, unscientific assessments, the power to decide that this is right, that wrong, this ugly, that beautiful, this just, that unjust.

--William Golding, "On the Crest of the Wave"

In Free Fall, a modern man explores his past to find the point at which he lost his freedom and fell from innocence. Samuel Mountjoy lost his humanity when he decided that everything was relative. From his science teacher, Nick Shales, he learned that value judgments could not be made scientifically; therefore, he decided that attempts to make such judgments were meaningless: "At the moment I was deciding that right and wrong were nominal and relative, I felt I saw the beauty of holiness and tasted evil in my mouth like the taste of vomit" (p. 205).<sup>1</sup> Here, an inability to make value judgments, a feeling that right and wrong are relative, occurs at the same time that Samuel falls from innocence. He is exhibiting the fundamental sin--pride--the insistence that he is "the final arbiter of what is good for him."<sup>2</sup> And Samuel realizes the evil

---

<sup>1</sup>This and all subsequent quotations from Golding's Free Fall without footnotes are quoted from William Golding, Free Fall (New York, 1967).

<sup>2</sup>W. Burnett Easton, Jr., "Original Sin," William Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Source Book, ed., William Nelson (New York, 1963), p. 265.



in his nature. Christopher Martin was guilty of the same sin, but Chris never repented. To the very end of his body and soul, he wanted to be governed by his own will. Like Chris, Sammy was motivated by physical desire after the time of his fall, but unlike Chris, he finds that he must submit to a stronger power than himself and that morality is important.

Golding's first three novels were concerned with the nature of man as he is rather than how his nature develops. But in Free Fall, an individual is concerned about his own nature. He feels guilt, and he wants to know when this feeling of guilt began.

This novel is more directly philosophical than the first three. One sees through the plight of Samuel, the artist, into the plight of Golding, the writer. As Samuel is looking for a pattern, so Golding seems to be looking for one. In Lord of the Flies, children demonstrated the concept of inherent evil. In The Inheritors, the "new people" demonstrated the fact that it has existed on the earth for tens of thousands of years. In Pincher Martin, one character showed the evil of modern man whose drives were purely physical. Golding has successfully pointed out in all three novels that the nature of man is fallen. In Free Fall, he attempts to discover the reasons for this fall by a close study of an individual.

Samuel wants to "see and speak" about the dark shadow in his unconscious. In Chris, there were some traces of his also wanting to see into his inner darkness, but he did not let finding out about himself become a basic aim. Samuel makes clear his desire, not only to understand, but also to communicate his essence:

We are dumb and blind yet we must see and speak. Not the stubbed face of Sammy Mountjoy, the full lips that open to let his hand take out a fag, not the smooth, wet muscles inside round teeth, not the gullet, the lung, the heart--those you could see and touch if you took a knife to him on the table. It is the unnameable, unfathomable and indivisible darkness that sits at the centre of him, always awake, always different from what you believe it to be, always thinking and feeling what you can never know it thinks and feels, that hopes hopelessly to understand and to be understood. Our loneliness is the loneliness of that dark thing that sees us at the atom furnace by reflection, feels by remote control and hears only words phoned to it in a foreign tongue. To communicate is our passion and our despair (p. 3).

"That dark thing" is almost impossible to communicate. In this novel, Golding tries harder than ever before to communicate it, and no doubt he realizes that his task may be an impossible one. Samuel wants to communicate the nature of the shadow side of his unconscious: "I am looking for the beginning of darkness, the point where I began (p. 39). He feels a passion for doing so, but he despairs because he is unable to do it.

The narrative is not told in the order in which the events occurred. Instead, Samuel tells his story by association. Since the novel has a stream-of-consciousness style, the reader must organize the pattern of events according to the time sequence in which they occurred. At present, Samuel is a successful artist. A great change in his life occurred when he was a prisoner in a Nazi prison camp in the war.

Samuel had fallen into the pattern that Christopher Martin was in. He had allowed himself to be controlled by purely physical desires. In the middle of the dark cell, a Nazi psychologist had placed a severed penis. This became a source of fright to Samuel, whose sexual appetite had controlled him since his loss of freedom. This importance of his sexuality over everything else is shown by his feeling in the cell:



"My flesh, though it crawled, cared nothing for the recent brain nor the important, social face. It cared only to protect my privates, our privates, the whole race" (p. 149). In later reflection about the torture devised for him, the presence of the severed penis, Samuel says:

Their cleverness was to shatter all the taboos of humanity, to crash through with an exhibition so brutal, a warning so unequivocal that the third step was like standing on a step of sheer horror above the others (pp. 163-164).

The importance of his imprisonment to his later life is recognized by Samuel as he tells his story:

And yet my life has remained centred round the fact of the next few minutes I spent alone and panic-stricken in the dark. My cry for help was the cry of the rat when the terrier shakes it, a hopeless sound, the raw signature of one savage act. My cry meant no more, was instinctive, said here is flesh of which the nature is to suffer and do thus. I cried out not with hope of an ear but as accepting a shut door, darkness and a shut sky (p. 165).

Samuel has realized that he must appeal to something else for help, that he can no longer be his own sole arbiter of what is right and wrong.

"Help me!" is a cry of despair and of hope. Forced to find a new way of life, Samuel looks to the future:

Here the thing that cried out came up against an absolute of helplessness. It struck with frantic writhing and viciousness of a captive snake against glass and bars. But in the physical world there was neither help nor hope of weakness that might be attacked and overcome. . . . There was no escape from the place, and the snake, the rat struck again from the place away from now into time. It struck with full force backwards into time past, saw with the urgency of present need that time past held only balm for a quieter moment; turned therefore and lunged, uncoiled, struck at the future. The future was the flight of steps from terror to terror, a mounting experiment that ignorance of what might be a bribe, made inevitable. The thing that cried fled forward over those steps because there was no other way to go, was shot forward screaming as into a furnace, as over unimaginable steps that were all that might be borne, were more, were too searing for the refuge of madness, were destructive of the centre. The thing that screamed left all living behind and came to the entry where death is close as darkness against eyeballs.

And burst that door (p. 166).



Samuel has burst the door between the physical and the spiritual. The difference this made in his life is shown by the change in his nature which the episode in the cell brought about:

Therefore when the commandant let me out of the darkness he came late and as a second string, giving me the liberty of the camp when perhaps I no longer needed it. I walked between the huts, a man resurrected but not by him (p. 167).

In being resurrected, Samuel gained the ability to love. His period of isolation in the cell produced quite different results from Christopher Martin's isolation on the rock. Chris never could submit to God and His heaven. He could never overcome his body, nor did he really want to.

Samuel, on the other hand, attains a fourth dimension, a soul:

I returned to my fourth dimension and found that love flows along it until the heart, the physical heart, this pump or alleged pump makes love as easy as a bee makes honey. This seemed to me at that time the only worth-while occupation; and while I was so engaged the place became so hot that a flake of fire, a brightness flicked out of the hidden invisible and settled on the physical heart for all the world as though the heart is what poetry thinks it to be and not just a bit of clever machinery. Standing between the understood huts, among jewels and music, I was visited by a flake of fire, miraculous and pentecostal; and fire transmuted me, once and for ever (pp. 168-169).

The fire is the cause of his going back to see Nick and Miss Pringle and of his visiting Beatrice in the asylum. And finally, and most important, of his effort to discover the source of his guilt.

In recalling his past, Samuel realizes that as a little boy, he was a different person from what he is now. Now he is looking for what made the difference between "the little boy, clear as spring water, and the man like a stagnant pool" (p. 5). Sammy's first years were spent in Rotten Row, a slum area. About these early years, Bernard Dick has stated:

. . . the detailed account of Sammy's youth in Rotten Row soon leads one to feel that there is more sociology than theology operating in the novel, a factor which might explain its inadequacies.

Sammy Mountjoy, the prototype of Oliver, is the product of a slum environment, a whorish mother, an atheistic science teacher, a sexually repressed teacher of religion, and a frigid mistress. This compendium of neuroses is, of course, an oversimplification, and with all due respect to Mr. Golding, he never outlined the reasons for Sammy's loss of freedom like an amateur psychologist.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps there is more sociology than theology in the novel, but Dick's conclusion that Sammy's surroundings caused him to develop "neuroses" is incorrect. On the contrary, one concludes from Sammy's description of Rotten Row life that this was the happiest time of his life. His security when living with his Ma was perfect:

Ma spreads as I remember her, she blots out the room and the house, her wide belly expands, she is seated in her certainty and indifference more firmly than in a throne. She is the unquestionable, the not good, not bad, not kind, not bitter. She looms down the passage I have made in time.

She terrifies but she does not frighten.

She neglects but she does not warp or exploit.

She is violent without malice or cruelty.

She is adult without patronage or condescension.

She is warm without possessiveness.

But above all, she is there (p. 11).

During his years of school, Sammy often allowed himself to get into predicaments instigated by a friend, Phillip. Cleverly, Phillip persuaded Sammy to commit such crimes as stealing fag cards from younger boys and spitting on the altar of a church. Sammy was always the one caught while Phillip, the brains of the operation, went free. Despite his part in these pranks, Sammy does not find the beginning of his unfathomable darkness there.

---

<sup>3</sup>Bernard F. Dick, "The Pyramid: Mr. Golding's 'New' Novel," Studies in the Literary Imagination, 2, No. 2 (Oct. 1969), 86.



As a result of being caught for spitting on the altar, Sammy had to be hospitalized for a mastoid infection, for the verger who had caught him had slapped his ear and burst the infection. Samuel's description of the hospital ward he recovered in is like the description of his Ma in showing that his view of human nature is mixed:

The walls were held up by sheer, careful human compassion. I was on the receiving end and I know. When I make my black pictures, when I inspect chaos, I must remember that such places are as real as Belsen. They too exist, they are one part of this enigma, this living. They are brick walls like any others, the people like any others. But remembered, they shine (p. 68).

Samuel sets off the period of his life up to the end of the "ward-world" as a time of pure innocence:

If I imagine heaven metaphorically dazzled into colours, the pure white light spread out in a cascade richer than a peacock's tail then I see that one of the colours lay over me. I was innocent of guilt, unconscious of innocence; happy, therefore, and unconscious of happiness (p. 68).

While Sammy was in the hospital ward, his mother had died. When he recovered from the mastoid infection, he became the ward of Father Watts-Watt. On his first night at the home of the rector, Sammy became acquainted with fear of the dark:

In Rotten Row I had never seemed to be so alone--there was always the brass knob of the pub's back door; and of course, in the ward we were legion we little devils--but here in this wholly not-understood milieu, among these strange, powerful people--and at that the church clock struck with a sound that seemed to make the rectory shake--here I was utterly and helplessly alone for the first time in darkness and a whirl of ignorance (p. 140).

The rector was suffering from a persecution mania. He imagined that enemies surrounded him and that they had tried to persuade Samuel to cooperate with them. He was afraid that people were whispering accusations to Sammy and that they were signalling him with lights.



Samuel's life at the rectory was anything but pleasant, but reflecting upon this period of his life, Samuel says of his relationship with the rector:

I cannot see then that we did each other much harm but little good either. He fed me, clothed me, sent me to a dame school and then the local grammar school. He was well able to afford this and I do not make the mistake of confusing his signatures on cheques with human charity. He effectually lifted me from the roaring squalor and happiness of Rotten Row to the luxury of more than one room to a person (p. 148).

Life at the rector's may have had little to do with forming Samuel's nature; but his teachers, Nick Shales and Rowena Pringle, had lasting effects upon his development:

Under what sign in the sky did Sammy develop then? There were two of them. They loom now in my memory, the virgin and the water-carrier. They form an arch, not of triumph but of defeat, they are supporters to my shield, if anyone made me, they made me, spiritual parents but not in the flesh (p. 175).

The effect of Nick Shales and his scientific rationalism on Sammy has already been described. But Sammy carried Nick's universe further:

And, of course, here Nick's universe of cause and effect, his soulless universe fitted like a glove. I was more intelligent than Nick. I saw that if man is the highest, is his own creator, then good and evil is decided by majority vote (p. 197).

If Nick, unwittingly, had a part in Samuel's exhibiting pride, the original sin, Rowena Pringle had a part in causing Samuel's loss of freedom.

When he was in the concrete cell in the Nazi prison, Samuel imagined what he would say to Miss Pringle when he should go back after the war offering her forgiveness:

"We are two of a kind, that is all. You see? The consequence was perhaps Beatrice in the looney bin, our joint work, my work, the world's work. Do you not see how our imperfections force us to torture each other? Of course you do! The innocent and the wicked live in one world--Phillip Arnold is

a minister of the crown and handles life as easy as breathing. But we are neither the innocent nor the wicked. We are the guilty. We fall down. We crawl on hands and knees. We weep and tear each other.

Therefore I have come back--since we are both adults and live in two worlds at once--to offer forgiveness with both hands. Somewhere the awful line of descent must be broken. You did that and I forgive it wholly, take the spears into me. As far as I can I will make your part in our story as if it had never been" (p. 228).

When Samuel says, "As far as I can I will make your part in our story as if it had never been," he is accepting the fact that although Miss Pringle's influence made him susceptible to exploiting another human being, she did not directly cause his exploitation of Beatrice.

Samuel narrows down as closely as he can the exact moment when he fell from innocence and lost his freedom. This moment occurs following his graduation from grammar school:

What is important to you?

"Beatrice I for."

"She thinks you depraved already. She dislikes you."

"If I want something enough I can always get it provided I am willing to make the appropriate sacrifice."

"What will you sacrifice?"

"Everything."

"Here?"

This is the only time in Samuel's exploration of his past that he does not answer the question "Here?" with the equivalent of "No, not here." His reflection upon his seduction of Beatrice shows his lack of freedom at that time. He was possessed by the desire for Beatrice's body:

Those fantasies of adolescence now brought to half realization on my side were sad, dreary and angry. They reinforced the reality of physical life and they destroyed the possibility of anything else; and they made physical life not only three times real but contemptible. And under everything else, deep was an anguish of helplessness and loss (p. 110).



After he had conquered her virginity, Samuel was unsatisfied, for he found her to be frigid. He became dissatisfied with her inability to respond sexually or intellectually. Her answer to any question was always "maybe."

At the time Samuel was carrying on the affair with Beatrice, he became a member of the Communist party. At a political rally, he met and at once became irresistibly attracted to a dark-haired girl named Taffy. The attraction was mutual, and as he began to see Taffy more and more frequently, Beatrice became more and more boring to him. He left his apartment without telling Beatrice, and he and Taffy got married. Meanwhile, Beatrice was writing letters and searching for him. He had become the most important thing in her life; the only thing she could hold on to had disappeared. Samuel realized this, but he still thought, "What else could I have done but run away from Beatrice." In later years, in the cell, he saw Beatrice in a new light:

Just as the substance of the living cell comes shining into focus as you turn the screw by the microscope, so I now saw that being of Beatrice which had once shone out of her face. She was simple and loving and generous and humble; qualities which have no political importance and do not commonly bring their owners much success. Like the ward for children, remembered they shine. And yet as I remembered myself as well as Beatrice I could find no moment when I was free to do as I would. In all that lamentable story of seduction I could not remember one moment when being what I was I could do other than I did (p. 172).

Sammy's decision to sacrifice everything in order to attain his bodily desire and his decision that he alone can decide what is right or wrong have caused him to become amoral. Because he has accepted his own selfish will as the ruling factor of his nature, he has fallen into a pattern from which it will take him a very long time to escape.



But, unlike Christopher Martin, Samuel does escape the pattern. He comes to feel guilty for the wrong he did to Beatrice, and after the war he visits her, hoping to help her. It is too late to remove the evil that he has done in the past, but one feels that in his honest attempt to get down to the roots of the darkness in his nature, Samuel is growing in character. He will never be able to achieve the innocence possessed by Samuel, the child in Rotten Row, but he has already achieved a sense of the grandeur and complexity of life and of the importance of every individual, not just himself.

Critics now place Free Fall below Golding's first three novels. Most of them feel that Golding erred in departing from the myth form which he employed so successfully before. Hynes, for example, admits, "With such a work, critical understanding sometimes grows slowly, and must pass through many minds before it comes to anything like a just judgment."<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, Free Fall has great merit, especially in the view of life that it presents: "Living is like nothing because it is everything--is too subtle and copious for unassisted thought"(p. 3). Life is complex, and the nature of man presented in this novel is complex. In Free Fall Golding has advanced from presenting types, the innocent and the wicked, to a combination of both, the guilty. And more than this he has shown one man falling from innocence but rising again to see his nature and his world more completely.

---

<sup>4</sup>Hynes, p. 40.

## CHAPTER VI

### IT'S LIKE THE APPLE TREE

A few years ago, when shapeless stones from Salisbury spire were piled in the cloisters, their replacements already in position 400 feet overhead, you could have seen me stand and regard them with a strange and slightly sheepish, ever furtive respect. They were stone, you might say, that was all. They were not art, they were not architecture. They were a formless substance but I could not take my eyes off them. Did I not say we British prefer the substance if we must choose? The historian of religion might mutter about the stones that they were "relics by contact." But contact with what? It was mana indescribable, unaccountable, indefinable, impossible mana.

--William Golding, "An Affection for Cathedrals"

Golding has remarked that the British "have a primitive belief that virtue, force, power--what the anthropologist might call mana--lie in the original stones and nowhere else."<sup>1</sup> One source of this mana is a reverence for history. Looking at stones hundreds of years old, one imagines the people who had a hand in fitting them into a work of architecture.

Salisbury Cathedral was the inspiration of Golding's novel, The Spire. Golding took the actual history of the cathedral and its spire and elaborated on it, making the focal point of interest, not the spire, but the people who were involved in and affected by its construction. Golding's main interest is not architecture or history but human beings. And The Spire is another study of the nature of man and of one man in particular, Dean Jocelin.

---

<sup>1</sup>William Golding, "An Affection for Cathedrals," Holiday, 36 (Dec. 1965), 35.

In creating the character Jocelin, Golding has achieved his greatest expression of the complexity of man's nature. Like Samuel Mountjoy, Jocelin becomes possessed, not by a desire for a woman but by a vision he feels that he has received from God. Like Sammy, Jocelin allows his will to take over, and he is forced to act according to a pattern of behavior which ignores everything but his goal, which for Jocelin is the erection of the spire. Sammy and Chris were motivated by their physical desires. Jocelin was motivated at first by a spiritual vision of a "bible in stone"; but during the course of the novel, he becomes incapable of repressing his physical desires. And though Jocelin does not consciously become determined to possess the body of a woman, he does become unconsciously possessed by sexual desire of Goody Pangall.

Jocelin is like Sammy in another way. During the narrative he gradually comes to understand himself and what he is doing and has done to the people around him. Sammy did not relate the events of his story according to their time sequence. He merely related them as he remembered them, hoping they would fall into a pattern. But Jocelin's story is told as the events occur. As he undergoes new experiences, Jocelin grows in understanding.

The action begins in medias res. The preparations for the construction of the spire have already begun. The master builder, Roger Mason, has ordered his men to dig a pit so that he can determine whether or not there is a sturdy enough foundation below for a four-hundred-foot spire of stone. While the pit is being dug, the rains come and water seeps into graves beneath the church, causing a detestable stench. This



raises great fear and discomfort in the parishioners, especially in the chancellor:

. . . one day, when he turned left, he kept going; and at last two of the vicars choral went after him. They found him in the semi-dark, pawing at the wooden screen between him and the crossways; and when they got him into the light, they saw how widely his right hand shook and how his face was empty. Then the ancient chancellor was removed to his house, and an extra terror of senility fell on the older men. Day and night, acts of worship went on in the stink and half dark, where the candles illuminated nothing but close haloes of vapor; and the voices rose, in fear of age and death, in fear of weight and dimension, in fear of darkness and a universe without hope (p. 47).<sup>2</sup>

To Jocelin, the building of the spire brought inspiration and hope, but to those around him, it was a sign of doom. Due to the stench, the people lived in fear of a plague, and they began to attend church services more regularly, but:

. . . Jocelin never joined them, since his own angel sometimes came to comfort, warm and sustain him. But like a good general, he saw how they needed help; for even to him, his instruments, these people he had to use, seemed little more than apes now that clambered about the building. He had the model of the cathedral brought to the crossways and stood against the north-west pillar, spire and all, to encourage them. The model stood on a trestle table and seemed the only clean thing in the building, though a finger that touched it came away wet (p. 47).

To him, the people are only instruments to be used. He barely credits them with humanity. Little more than apes, they seem dirty. He is confused, mistaken in thinking that a structure of glass and stone is more beautiful and more clean and more important to God than humanity. He is also mistaken in thinking that the thing that encourages him, the spire, will also be an encouragement to his parishioners.

---

<sup>2</sup>This and all subsequent quotations from The Spire without footnotes are quoted from William Golding, The Spire (New York, 1966).

Because of his over-powering will, Jocelin sees the people around him as being unimportant except as they can be tools in the building of the spire. He sees from the first the "tent" of passion and desire that surrounds Roger Mason and Goody Pangall, wife of the sexton; but he does nothing to prevent their adulterous affair, for he feels that, "She will keep him here." Nonetheless, their sexual attraction disgusts Jocelin:

All at once it seemed to him that the renewing life of the world was a filthy thing, a rising tide of muck, so that he gasped for air, saw the gap in the north transept and hurried through it into what daylight there was (p. 50).

This reaction shows an unhealthy attitude toward sex, and it is an indication of his own "cellerage." After he has seen the physical attraction between the two, he becomes unable to suppress his own sexuality.<sup>3</sup> His mind becomes inhabited by the devil as well as by the warm angel at his back after he has a significant dream:

But as if to keep him humble, Satan was permitted to torment him during the night by a meaningless and hopeless dream. It seemed to Jocelin that he lay on his back in his bed; and then he was lying on his back in the marshes, crucified and his arms were the transepts, with Pangall's kingdom nestled by his left side. People came to jeer and torment him; there was Rachael, there was Roger, there was Pangall, and they knew the church had no spire nor could have any. Only Satan himself, rising out of the west, clad in nothing but blazing hair stood over his nave and worked at the building, tormenting him so that he writhed on the marsh in the warm water, and cried out aloud. He woke in the darkness, full of loathing (pp. 56-57)

In this dream, the world within and the world without are seen within one perspective. One critic says: "The devil masturbates the phallus/spire of his body. And the dream poses the question: is the building of the Spire a similar self-erection and self-fulfillment, a distortion and degradation of God-given creativity?"<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



This interpretation is valid, but on a more literal level, Jocelin's dream seems to indicate that he, in the place of Christ, has become the church's foundation and that it is Satan who is building the spire. So that the spire which Jocelin has planned as a symbol of devotion and faith has actually become a symbol of evil.

The devil and the angel are archetypes which form part of Jocelin's collective unconscious. That his character is presented in a psychologically valid way is shown by Carl Jung's description of archetypes and their effects upon an individual:

. . . the archetypes have, when they appear, a distinctly numinous character which can only be described as "spiritual," if "magical" is too strong a word. Consequently this phenomenon is of the utmost significance for the psychology of religion. In its effects it is anything but unambiguous. It can be healing or destructive, but never indifferent, provided of course that it has attained a certain degree of clarity. This aspect deserves the epithet "spiritual" above all else. It not infrequently happens that the archetype appears in the form of a spirit in dreams or fantasy products, or even comports itself like a ghost. There is a mystical aura about its numinosity, and it has a corresponding effect upon the emotions. It mobilizes philosophical and religious convictions in the very people who deemed themselves miles above any such fits of weakness. Often it drives with unexampled passion and remorseless logic towards its goal and draws the subject under its spell, from which despite the most desperate resistance he is unable, and finally no longer even willing, to break free, because the experience brings with it a depth and fullness of meaning that was unthinkable before.<sup>5</sup>

Jocelin's archetypes are destructive. The warm angel appears in the form of a ghost though it can be physically explained as tuberculosis of the spine. The devil appears in the form of a spirit in a dream and in Jocelin's imagination. He is drawn under the spells of both angel

---

<sup>5</sup> Jung, C.G., "Patterns of Behavior and Archetypes," William Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Source Book (New York, 1963), p. 255.



and devil; and in his feeling of vision, he does seem to experience a deep spiritual fulfillment.

After the rains have subsided, the workmen resume their work. The bottom of the pit they have dug is found to be bubbling mud. Even Jocelin sees that the foundation is unsubstantial. But when Roger goes to plead with him not to attempt building the spire, Jocelin tells him:

You and I were chosen to do this thing together. It's a great glory. I see now it'll destroy us of course. What are we after all? Only I tell you this, Roger, with the whole strength of my soul. The thing can be built and will be built, in the very teeth of Satan"(p. 80).

Jocelin is heroic in that he is perfectly willing to be destroyed in attaining his goal.

When Roger tells his workmen of Jocelin's determination to go on building the spire despite the weak foundations, their response is a "fierce yell." For some time, they have used Pangall as their "fool." They felt he brought them luck because they could objectify in him their sense of the misshapen and ridiculous and neutralize it in mime and mockery. As Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor explain:

At this moment of panic and rage they turn on him en masse. With a victim so helpless (as with Simon in Lord of the Flies), tormenting turns to sadism and vilification to bloodlust. But, once again, there is more--there is primitive magic. In Pangall, Misshapeness and Impotence are ritually murdered. The sacrificial victim is built into the pit to strengthen the inadequate foundations.<sup>6</sup>

The workmen have turned into a monster and like the monster that murdered Simon in Lord of the Flies, they ritually murder Pangall, their

---

<sup>6</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 211.

scapegoat. They feel that they can destroy all misshapeness and impotence by destroying him. Although Jocelin does not understand the scene by the pillar consciously, he emerges noticeably changed after the murder. His will remains a blazing certainty as it was before, but his mind seems to approach insanity as he suddenly develops a high-pitched giggle and as he suddenly exhibits a wide range of emotions.<sup>7</sup>

In his overpowering dedication to building the spire, Jocelin does show great courage and faith, but he cannot easily be defended. One critic has said that there are "intensities of courage, faith and vision" in Jocelin and that "beside these the attitude of the master-mason to the building seems puny and cynical."<sup>8</sup> This may be true, but it is just as likely that Roger Mason was being practical rather than cynical. With his knowledge of architecture, he logically concluded that the cathedral's foundation would not support a four-hundred-foot spire and that it would be foolish and futile to endanger the lives of his workmen and the people living nearby by continuing to build. From the very beginning, Jocelin thinks of the tower of stone and colored glass as more important than the human beings around him. He is as mistaken about the nature of God as he is about his own nature. He is extremely foolish in thinking that the spire would be a greater object of praise than would a man of flesh and blood.

Jocelin forgets his priestly duty of serving mankind. He is so concerned with building the spire that he will not even take time to help Goody, who was derided on the night of Pangall's murder and who was

---

<sup>7</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 212.

<sup>8</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, pp. 210-211.



left alone and helpless and full of guilt after he was killed. Jocelin explains his indifference:

But my will has other business than to help, he thought. I have so much will, it puts all other business by. I am like a flower that is bearing fruit. . . . That's how it must be. My will is in the pillars and the high wall. I offered myself; and I am learning (p. 89).

One thinks that the fruit he is bearing must be bitter and even poisonous for it has the taste of death and destruction. Jocelin can neither help Goody nor pray for the workmen who have murdered Pangall because his "whole life has become one prayer of will, fused, built in."

One realizes, despite his impatience and anger at Jocelin, that he is a man possessed. Like Sammy Mountjoy, he is being ruled by his "devouring will":

"The net isn't mine, Roger, and the folly isn't mine. It's God's Folly. Even in the old days He never asked men to do what was reasonable. Men can do that for themselves. They can buy and sell, and heal and govern. But then out of some deep place comes the command to do what makes no sense at all--to build a ship on dry land; to sit among dunghills; to marry a whore; to set their son on the altar of sacrifice. Then, if men have faith, a new thing comes."

He was silent for a while in the prickling rain, looking at Roger Mason's back. It was my voice that spoke the words, he thought. No. Not my voice. Voice of the devouring Will, my master (p. 113).

Jocelin seems to think that it is God's will that he build the spire, but it is actually his own self-will that is in control of him.

By this point in the novel, Goody is obviously pregnant with Roger's child. As Jocelin observes her, his reaction is indicative of his nature:

Once, standing lost in his private storm at the west end of the empty cathedral, he saw her cross the nave, heavily and clumsily with child; and he knew in himself a mixture of dear love and prurience, a wet-lipped fever to know how and where and when and what (pp. 119-120).



Jocelin has a feeling of love mixed with lust for Goody. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor were correct in their statement that Jocelin, knowing "in the cellerage" of Pangall's impotence, . . . had used it for unadmitted reasons, to keep her from belonging sexually to anyone else." His suspicion of Goody and Roger's relationship is now confirmed.

Finally, he does try to help Goody by arranging to send her to a convent in Stilbury. When the convent demands a good-sized dowry in return for taking her in, Jocelin at once removes the sum from the coffer: "I know what they will say, he thought. First Jocelin's Folly; and now Jocelin's whore. But I don't mind what they say. I've lived with derision so long I no longer notice it. This also" (p. 126). Here Jocelin shows more courage than ever before for he is willing to be derided because of a Christlike action. But before Goody could be sent to Stilbury, she died; and her death marked a transition in Jocelin: "As far as some people were concerned, his eye had acquired a new facility. (Pain did it, pain did it, pain did it.) He saw with dreadful clarity of vision . . ." (p. 131). Jocelin is finally becoming aware of what he is: "I'm not very intelligent" (p. 132). With this humility comes a new humanity. He becomes more involved with the workmen, questioning them about their tools. Finally, the spire is completed; it sways; it hurls down rocks; the pillars bend; but somehow it stands.

Jocelin has been waiting to receive a Holy Nail. He felt that if he could just drive it into the top of the spire, there would be no danger of its falling. The Visitor who brings the nail questions Jocelin about the past two years. With the Visitor is a commission of priests who are connected with the cathedral. In answer to the Visitor's

question, "In fact the services of the church came to an end?" Jocelin says that he and the workmen formed a kind of service "adding glory to the house," and that although he does not know who has made the complaints against him or what the complaints are, "except in general terms," he "looked for men of faith . . . and there was none" (p. 156). Jocelin explains that "there were three sorts of people. Those who ran, those who stayed, and those who were built in. Pangall--" (p. 157). Of course, Pangall is the third type, and the thought of him causes Jocelin to think of Goody:

"She's woven into it everywhere. She died and then she came alive in my mind. She's there now. She haunts me. She wasn't alive before, not in that way. And I must have known about him before, you see, down in the vaults, the cellerage of my mind" (p. 157).

By answering the Visitor's question, Jocelin comes to a more complete self-knowledge. Now he seems more admirable, more sincere and more honest than ever before. He admits his feelings for Goody and that in his subconscious he must have known Pangall was impotent.

He is told to go home, and is led to the deanery by Father Adam. That night a storm comes, and stones fall from the spire. A group of townspeople come to Jocelin's room to communicate their fear, "The City's being destroyed!" Jocelin immediately decides that the thing to do is to pound the nail into the wood of the spire. Struggling through wind and rain, he climbs to the top of the spire and hammers the nail. After this is done, he feels that the spire is safe from the devils. "But he was not safe from them himself. His angel left him, and the sweetness of his devil was laid on him like a hot hand" (p. 167).



For a long time now, Jocelin has felt the weight of the spire on his back. During the sickness preceding his death, he comes to an awareness, a recognition of his past failings: "I thought I was chosen; a spiritual man, loving above all; and given specific work to do" (p. 175). Father Adam asks, "And from this, the rest followed, the debts, the deserted church, discord?" (p. 175). And Jocelin replies:

"More, much more. More than you can ever know. Because I don't really know myself. Reservations, connivances. The work before everything. And woven through it, a golden thread--No. Growth of a plant with strange flowers and fruit, complex, twining, engulfing, destroying, strangling" (p. 175).

The plant Jocelin is talking about is both the devouring will which had possession of him and his sexual passion for Goody.

Feeling the need for forgiveness for his exploitation of others, Jocelin goes to Anselm, his former confessor. And when Anselm refuses to forgive, he goes to Roger:

"Once you said I was the devil himself. It isn't true. I'm a fool. Also I think--I'm a building with a vast cellerage where the rats live; and there's some kind of blight on my hands. I injure everyone I touch, particularly those I love. Now I've come in pain and shame to ask you to forgive me" (p. 200).

Seeing Jocelin's humility, Roger does forgive him, at first; and he encloses him in his strong arms. But wanting to say everything, Jocelin says more than Roger can bear. When he begins to speak of Goody and to blame himself for her death, Roger yells, "Get out! Get out!" And he hurls Jocelin down a flight of stairs. At the bottom, a crowd is awaiting him. They are "all shouting and jeering and making hound noises." Pushing him along, they tear his clothing off. Their motivation and identity is never made clear. The mob could be made up of townspeople. If so, they are angry at him for pushing on with the building of the spire which constantly threatens to topple and destroy them. If the



mob is made up of the "army" of workers, they are angry at him for causing their master-builder to become an alcoholic. Without Roger, they are worthless. Perhaps the reason that the identity is not specified is that the significance of the mob scene lies in a different direction. Perhaps the mocking barking and laughter directed at Jocelin shows that he has become, like Pangall, a clown. Pangall was impotent, and Jocelin seems to be insane. These are defects that might very possibly be mocked by the people. The mob appears as a sort of monster with "mouths fanged and slavering." And the scene reminds one of the slaying of Simon in Lord of the Flies. Jocelin may be a scapegoat, and the people may have attacked him as a reminder of their guilt; but since the motivation of the mob is not revealed, one cannot be sure that Jocelin is so directly parallel to Simon. A closer comparison would be one of Jocelin to Christ in His agony on the Via Dolorosa. Jocelin's response to the mob is "My children! My children!"--a response that is truly Christ-like. He accepts his punishment without bitterness. "Here I show what I am," he thinks as he falls into the gutter. In his acceptance and humility, in his indifference to self, Jocelin reveals a new sanctity.<sup>9</sup> Saved from the mob by Roger's wife Rachael and Father Adam, Jocelin is taken back to his room to die. Lying on his death bed, he struggles to tell Father Adam:

"How proud their hope of hell is. There is  
no innocent work God knows where God may be"  
(p. 212).

Golding has placed these words in italics to show their importance. The actions of men are never innocent. No matter how good a man's intentions

<sup>9</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 229.

may be, he is still likely to bring about evil. The actions of a man are complex, part good and part bad.

Father Adam tells him, "Now, Jocelin, we are going to help you into heaven." And the thought of heaven makes Jocelin realize the true value of human love, his love for Roger and Goody:

Heaven thought Jocelin busily in the panic, you who bind me, you who won't die until tomorrow, what do you know about heaven? Heaven and hell and purgatory are small and bright as a jewel in someone's pocket only to be taken out and worn on feast days. This is a grey, successive day for dying on. And what is heaven to me unless I go in holding him by one hand and her by the other? (p. 212).

Jocelin's last words--"It's like the apple tree"--are the final expression of Jocelin's new-found understanding. Like the apple tree which is a combination of blossoms, branches reaching upward, and forbidden fruit, mankind is a mixture of beauty, spirituality and evil. The apple tree is what the entire novel is about. Commenting on Jocelin's last words, Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor have made clear the message of

#### The Spire:

The Spire is built in heavy stone, in faith, in sin; all three things are true and contradictory. But we have to be made to know and understand them all, in wrestling with twelve complex and difficult chapters, before we can be brought to the right position, with sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge, to receive from the corner of the eye in the deliberate tentativeness of a simile a single glimpse of what it is to be human.<sup>10</sup>

Jocelin is an extremely complex individual who shows through the development of his own nature a great deal about the nature of man. From the first, his story was paradoxical. One could not reconcile his desire to praise God with his willingness to use and destroy people in order to achieve his goal. In the end, Jocelin recognizes this paradox; and human beings become more important to him than his spire.

<sup>10</sup>Kinkead-Weekes, p. 235.



## CHAPTER VII

### AMOR VINCIT OMNIA

When I was seven, I wanted to write a play about Ancient Egypt--not the Egypt of the Badrian predynasts, or Ptolemy and Julius Caesar, or of General Gordon; but the Egypt of mystery of the pyramids and the valley of the Kings. Halfway through the first page of my scrawl, I was struck by the thought that these characters ought to speak in Ancient Egyptian, a language with which I was unacquainted at the time. I abandoned my play there--remember when those sideways-standing figures, those neat and pregnant symbols were not obscurely familiar to me. My inward connection with Egypt has been deep for more than a generation. When my mother took me to London, I nagged and bullied her to the British museum; and if I think of London now, that museum with the rich Egyptian collections is at the heart of it.

--William Golding, "Egypt from My Inside"

On the surface, Golding's latest novel, The Pyramid, seems to have nothing to do with Egypt. But Golding's "inward connection" with that country and its history is so strong that he made a definite connection between a man, Oliver, and an Egyptian pyramid. The title of the novel refers both to an Egyptian tomb, which contains many objects and pictures related to the king who is buried there, and to the three important sectors of a man's life. Actually, the novel could be thought of as three novellas, each of which is complete in itself. In fact, Golding published each of the three sections separately before combining them to form a novel. Although the book is neatly divided into three episodes, there is overlapping of all three so that the novel does have unity.



Golding has admitted that he is a moralist. One must agree that although his books contain many poetic passages which may delight rather than instruct, they are all didactic. And The Pyramid is the most directly didactic of them all. The epigraph of the novel is one of the precepts of Ptahhotep, an Egyptian vizier who lived around 2400 B.C. In his maxims, advice is put into the mouth of an old man admonishing a younger on the rules of good behavior. As a part of his education, a young Egyptian learned these rules by heart.

Golding, in quoting this maxim, "If thou be among people make for thyself love, the beginning and end of the heart"<sup>1</sup>, is admonishing Oliver, whose great failure was that he did not follow this advice. Indeed, he probably was never even acquainted with it.

Oliver tells his own story, as did Sammy Mountjoy, and the two characters are similar in several ways. The primary aim of both during their adolescence was the seduction of a beautiful girl. Both have old maid teachers. Sammy's Miss Pringle is an instructor in religion; Oliver's Miss Dawlish is a music teacher. And both characters seem to have grown up in England at the same time.

There are important differences between the two characters, however. Although both are talented in art--Sammy in painting and Oliver in music--only Sammy succumbs to his desire to become an artist. Sammy's first years were spent in Rotten Row, an area comparable to Chapman's Close, the slum area of Oliver's home town, Stilbourne. Sammy was illegitimate, but Oliver's parents were quite respected. His father was a pharmacist, and the family lived on the best side of town. Sammy Mountjoy was concerned about his own nature. He was introspective. But Oliver does not seem to be searching for the source of his guilt.

He tells about three significant events in his life, but he does not seem to really understand them. Like Free Fall and The Spire, The Pyramid is concerned with the development of a man's nature. But this time, the man is conditioned by society rather than individual choice. Oliver has an extremely small part in shaping his life. His is the story of a man who has been brought up to think of money and social status as the important things in life.

The first third of the novel concerns Oliver, his hopeless infatuation with Imogen, a girl five years older than he, and his seduction of Evie. Love, mentioned on the first page of the novel, is the topic of the entire novel. Oliver remembers "the width and power" of his love and infatuation for Imogen. He had felt that it "was the end," for Imogen was engaged to marry someone else.

That night in bed he was still thinking of Imogen. There was a storm outside which he thought at first was causing a knocking on his window. But he opened it to see Evie Babbacombe. She had been out with Robert Ewan, Oliver's next door neighbor, and the car they had been in was stuck in a pond. They were really in a predicament, for Robert had "borrowed" Miss Dawlish's two-seater. Through her feminine charm, Evie persuaded Oliver to help Robert push the car out of the mud. "Evie had none of Imogen's sacred beauty. She was strictly secular." And she was several steps down the social ladder from Oliver and Robert. Oliver muses:

I understood that the son of Dr. Ewan couldn't take the daughter of Sergeant Babbacombe to a dance in his father's car. Didn't have to think. Understood as by nature (p. 9).



When Oliver arrived, Robert explained that he and Evie had been parked for a "spot of slap and tickle" when he "jerked the handbrake off" with his "arse." Aware of Robert's success with Evie, Oliver becomes determined to obtain the same favors for himself.

On the day after he "rescued" Robert and Evie, Oliver heard Sergeant Babbacombe, the town crier, announce that his daughter had lost a gold cross. Thinking it must be in the pond, Oliver set out to look for it:

Because if some stroller in the woods saw the cross glittering among the twigs and empty acorn cups and turned it in to Sergeant Babbacombe, Evie was due for a shiner to outshine all shiners. She might even qualify, if rumour was not entirely a lying jade, for the Sergeant's army belt with its buckle and rows of shining brass studs (p. 16).

Evie is mistreated by almost everyone. Robert sneaks around to see her, not because he loves her, but because he wants her body. Oliver is motivated in the same way. And it is rumored that her father beats her.

After Oliver had searched the pond and surrounding area, Robert and Evie rode up on Robert's motorbike. Although he had been unsuccessful in finding Evie's cross, Oliver succeeded in beating up Robert. Then he gave Evie a ride on his bicycle back to Dr. Ewan's office where she worked. The bicycle had a flat tire coming into town, so after Evie had jumped off, Oliver went to Henry's garage to get it repaired. There he saw Miss Dawlish's two seater. Henry had found Evie's cross, inscribed, "Amor vincit omnia." It is ironic that a cross with such an inscription should have been found in the car of the old maid. But the motto was truly appropriate for Evie.

Robert and Oliver had been enemies for some time. And as children they had been very much like the children in Lord of the Flies:



As small children, socially innocent, so to speak, we had played together; and I knew things about that play which had reached neither Mrs. Ewan nor my mother. We had hardly been out of our respective prams.

"You're my slave."

"No I'm not."

"Yes you are. My father's a doctor and yours is only his dispenser."

That was why I pushed him off the wall into the Ewan's cucumber frame, where he made a very satisfactory crash (p. 14).

Robert was already aware of his social prestige. And Oliver had already learned to use physical violence when things did not suit him.

Oliver shows his own social snobbery and that of his class in describing Evie's mother, but it is not long before he does seduce Evie for the first time. He admits later in the narrative that he came close to raping her. On the way back to the village, Oliver draws back under the alders, wanting her to go on so he will not be seen with her. Evie, sneering, says, "Don't worry. Nobody'd recognize you at that distance."

One sympathizes with Evie even more after this episode. She told Oliver before he had his way with her that Captain Wilmot, her shorthand instructor, had told her he would beat her if she did not do any better. She said, "He said I'd like it." This is evidence that someone else plans to use her for his own gratification.

One might argue that Evie was stupid, that she liked sex; and the young men who used her did so because she deliberately made herself so tempting. But Evie was not so simple as that. She showed that she knew Oliver's motives and the motives of all the others and that she was disgusted with them when she said to him on their next meeting:

"You wouldn't care if I was dead. Nobody'd care. That's all you want, just my damned body, not me. Nobody wants me, just my damned body. And I'm damned and you're damned with your cock and your cleverness and your chemistry--just my damned body--" (p. 70).

"You never loved me, nobody never loved me. I wanted to be loved, I wanted somebody to be kind to me--I wanted--" She wanted tenderness. So did I; but not from her (p. 71).

Oliver's reaction exemplifies the feelings of all others toward her and the callousness of his nature.

Evie felt compassion for those who had sexual longings, and she seemed unable to keep from doing what she could to help them. Oliver saw that Captain Wilmot had begun to use her for his masochistic desires:

She had knelt in front of him, that was plain to see; and he, lowered into a chair perhaps, had reached forward over her bowed head and struck with his right hand, raising those red welts, it may be in time with some long ocean swell: and then, tiring--for he was not strong, this broken, heavily secreting gargoyle--he had struck those weaker blows with his left hand across the other weals (p. 72).

She explained to Oliver, "I was sorry for 'im."

Instead of wanting to help her and keep her from allowing herself to be exploited, Oliver began to see her as an object. He contrasted his ideal love, Imogen, and his parents with Evie:

All at once, I had a tremendous feeling of thereness and here-ness, of separate worlds, they and Imogen, clean in that colored picture; here, this object, on an earth that smelt of decay, with picked bones and natural cruelty--life's laboratory.

The object was still staring at me and her face was white again. We had made so little movement, so little noise, that a blackbird came picking over the humus. (p. 73).

Because of her submission to him, Oliver came to think of her as his slave.

Soon after this second sexual encounter, Evie confided in Oliver's father. That night at the supper table, he quoted her, "'All men are beasts.' That's what she said." Oliver's mother gave the characteristic reply, "Well, what d'you expect from a girl like that? Men are what you--" Her reply shows to some extent why Oliver did not



respect Evie as a human being. He has been taught not to respect women who are permissive and of a lower social class.

Oliver does not suspect that Evie has found a way to get back at him. She has told his father about his treatment of her, and she is willing to prove that her accusation of Oliver is true. So the next time they meet, she sits on the top of a hill overlooking Stilbourne and tells Oliver, "Here or nowhere." He refuses the invitation this time, but accepts her offer the next time they meet:

I felt the eyes of Stilbourne on my back; but they were distant, they wore pebble glasses, and we were two inscrutable specks. It was an irrational fear and embarrassment that laid a hand on my flesh, but a real one. Evie understood this, laughing sideways triumphantly, so that I think even she was astonished and frightened when I put one hand round her back, one on her breast, and savagely stopped her startled speech with my mouth. She neither resisted nor co-operated; and afterwards, when I was gasping face downwards, she went away flushed, silent and ashamed (p. 79).

When he arrived home, Oliver said that his father had not even bothered to put his binoculars back in their case and that the window toward the hill was open:

I stood, a heap of dung, yearning desperately for some sewer up which I might crawl and reach my parents, kneel, be forgiven, so that the days of our innocence might return again" (p. 81).

Oliver did not really want innocence to return. He was not worried about his own inner darkness as was Sammy. Instead, he was worried about his parents' opinion of him. He had acquired a false set of values from his social environment.

Oliver did not see Evie again before she went away to London to live with an aunt. He seems to realize in perhaps a subconscious way that Evie was more than an object; she was the only thing really alive in the village: "Evie went, and the coloured picture of Stilbourne was motionless and flat again (p. 82).



Oliver did not see her until two years later when he had come home on a visit from Oxford. The first thing that impressed him was that she "had hitched herself a couple of degrees on our dreadful ladder." His use of the word "dreadful" and his temptation to invite her to his house show that he has at least come to question some of the rules of society: "But common sense immediately reasserted itself."

He suggested that they go to the Crown Inn. After the two had several drinks, she accused Oliver of raping her two years ago. They quickly left, and outside she revealed that her reason for publically accusing him was that she thought he had been, "Telling an' laughing--" about "Me'n Dad." Her "slip of the tongue" caused Oliver to realize that he never really knew her:

I stood in shame and confusion, seeing for the first time despite my anger a different picture of Evie in her life-long struggle to be clean and sweet. It was as if this object of frustration and desire had suddenly acquired the attributes of a person rather than a thing; as if I might--as if we might--have made something, music, perhaps, to take the place of the necessary, the inevitable battle (p. 90).

The unconscious admission that even her father had used her to gratify his sexual desires caused Oliver to finally realize that Evie had suffered a great deal and that she was worthy of respect. At the end of part one, Oliver seems to have grown as a human being. He has at least overcome his class consciousness to the extent that he sees Evie as a person.

Part two is a predominately humorous account of one of Oliver's visits home from Oxford. The SOS, Stilbourne Operatic Society, was performing the King of Hearts. Oliver's domineering mother volunteered for him to play a gypsy on the final performance, which was to be held

the day after he arrived in Stilbourne. The account of the rehearsal and the night of performance is quite amusing. But the play is not the important thing in this sector of the novel. The important thing is the relationship between Oliver and Evelyn DeTracy, the director.

After Oliver's performance as a gypsy violinist, DeTracy suggested that they steal away for a drink. Sitting down in the bar, Oliver really opened up to Evelyn, telling him his true feelings about his home town. First he talks about the false set of values:

"Everything's wrong. Everything. There's no truth and there's no honesty. My God! Life can't--I mean just out there, you have only to look up at the sky--but Stilbourne accepts it as a roof. As a--and the way we hide our bodies and the things we don't say, the things we daren't mention, the people we don't meet--and that stuff they call music--it's a lie! It's obscene." (p. 122).

Next he expresses the stagnancy of the town:

"It's so mixed. D'you know? Only a few months ago I--had a girl on the hill up there practically in public. And why not? Was anyone in this, this--was anyone doing anything more--more--" (p. 123).

The word he cannot seem to find is natural. He goes on to say:

"You see Evelyn. It's like chemistry. You can take it as a thing--or you can take it as a thing--"

"What is like chemistry?"

"Well. Life" (p. 123).

Oliver found Evelyn easy to talk to. He felt an affection for him that he never expressed for Evie or even Imogan:

... everything was easy to say to him. I peered at him and smiled affectionately. A slight mist had formed round him, leaving him very clear and lovable in the middle (p. 123)

He expressed his problem of having to grow up among his society's false values: "Evelyn. I want the truth of things. But there's nowhere to find it" (p. 123). Evelyn tried to be truthful to Oliver. He handed



him a sheaf of photographs in which he was dressed in a ballerina's costume. In some of them, he was held up by a "thick, young man"; and "they gazed deep into each other's eyes" (p. 124).

Oliver did not understand that Evelyn was being honest in showing him that he was a transvestite. He just thought the pictures were funny, and he "laughed until it hurt." Seeing his reaction, Evelyn hurried him back to the theater so that he would not miss appearing in the final scene.

When the performance was over, Oliver realized that Evelyn had taught him the truth about Imogen and her husband:

They were two people whose ignorance and vanity made them suitable to, acceptable to no one but each other. It was a spyhole into them, an ugly balm to my soul. I listened; and I was free. I pushed my way against the tide down the stairs again and ran to find the man to whom I now owed so much (pp. 128-129).

Oliver found Evelyn drunk, and put him on the Barchester bus: "I sat him carefully and affectionately on the long seat just inside the door."

Of this whole episode, critic Marshall Walker has said of Oliver: "Having used DeTracy as a sounding board for his own bitter adolescent impressions, Oliver laughs at the essential man behind the billiard ball eyes and transvestite photographs."<sup>2</sup> The assessment is incorrect. Although Oliver did laugh at DeTracy's pictures, he was laughing, not out of malice, but because of the incongruity of a man in a ballerina's costume. Perhaps Oliver could have helped DeTracy had he understood more about him, but Oliver cannot be blamed for not realizing DeTracy's need for acceptance of his transvestism. Under the circumstances, Oliver was most kind and loving.

---

<sup>2</sup>Walker, p. 80.



The third section of the novel is the only portion of the book in which the word, "pyramid," is found. Here Oliver spoke of the "crystal pyramid," using it to symbolize the social structure of Stilbourne. For years Oliver's family had "vibrated in time to the crystal pyramid" (p. 18). Oliver's visit to Stilbourne, many years later, is the concern of this section.

The first thing he notices is the sign outside his home town:

This STILBOURNE could be read at a distance of half a mile. It stood by the motor road, white letters on blue; and I saw immediately that Stilbourne was like anywhere else, after all (p. 131).

At one time, Oliver had determined never to return because he was afraid that he would find his "heart wrung or broken by dead things." But in place of the emotion he had expected to feel was only a mild curiosity.

When he arrived in town, Oliver stopped at Henry's garage. Henry told him that his former music teacher, Miss Dawlish, was dead and suggested that he visit her grave. Walking toward it, Oliver "thought critically, but without much feeling, that Stilbourne had been prettied, like some senile old lady, made presentable for visitors." When he sat down on a nearby tombstone and looked at Miss Dawlish's grave, the inscription of the three words, "Heaven is Music," sent his memory racing back in time. These memories involved his relationship with a third person, Miss Dawlish.

From the age of six until he was old enough to leave home for Oxford, Oliver had taken violin and piano lessons from her. He called her Bounce, and she called him Kummer. After his first year of music lessons, Bounce had arranged for him to go along with several of her

other students to take his elementary examination in violin playing. Henry Williams drove Miss Dawlish and her students to Barchester. Charmed by Henry from the very first, she was frequently seen with him afterwards. He had persuaded her to buy a car and was teaching her to drive. It was obvious that she was falling in love with him; and Oliver's mother, for one, did not trust him. She may have been right in her suspicions of Henry's intentions, for before long, Henry and his wife and children moved in with Bounce. She even helped finance him in the garage business.

From part one of Oliver's story, his interest and talent in music were shown, first by his hours of practicing piano the summer before he left for Oxford and in the second part by his skill as a violinist. Music seemed to have been his great love, but although Bounce was his music teacher, although she mouthed her father's words, "Heaven is music," she did not really believe that music was valuable.

When Oliver suggested that he "might become a musician--a pianist, perhaps," Bounce advised, "Don't be a musician, Kummer, my son. Go into the garage business if you want to make money. As for me, I shall have to slave at music till I drop down dead" (p. 163).

For years Henry and his family had lived with Miss Dawlish. But on the day before Oliver was to leave for Oxford, they moved out. His mother insisted that he go over that night and say good-bye to Bounce. He got only as far as the door:

She was down there in the dark on the left, huddled before the dim fire beneath the glowering bust, trying to learn unsuccessfully, without a teacher, how to sob her heart out (p. 168).



She had lived a miserable life. Henry, the man she loved, had lived in the house with her; but he did not love her in the way she wanted. Being alone without him in the house turned out to be even worse than having him near, yet unattainable. One might wonder whether Oliver has failed again in not giving love to someone who needed it. Perhaps he should have gone in and tried to comfort her, but if he had he would not have been very successful.

It is true that Oliver was curious about, rather than eager to help, the lonely Miss Dawlish, but it is also true that she was indifferent to him. She often went to sleep during his music lessons.

After Oliver had gone to Oxford, Bounce began to wreck her car regularly so that she could phone Henry to come and get her. At dinner one night when Oliver was home for a visit:

. . . my father put out a hand, clumsily, and laid it on my sleeve.

"We were forgetting how much she means to you, Oliver. But you see, old son--those telephone boxes--she's done it before."

My father's gesture was so unusual in our undemonstrative household that I grimaced and stood up (p. 172).

A cause of Oliver's inability to respond with full love and affection is the undemonstrativeness of his family. Oliver's statement that the gesture was unusual and that he grimaced in reaction to it may be at the root of his problems and of the problems of the society of which he is a part.

In most of the novel, Oliver's mother has been presented very unsympathetically. She was nosey, always trying to find out what went on in her neighbors' homes. She was bossy--always ordering Oliver around, even to the extent of forcing him to appear in the King of Hearts.

82

She was very critical of and unkind to her husband. But, at least, she did seem to understand Miss Dawlish. "'Poor soul!' she said. 'All she wants is for him to put a little attention about her.'" Oliver remembers:

"Ah," said my mother darkly. "Money isn't everything. You'll find that out one day, Oliver."

I took my astonishment away; and in all that confusion of thought and feeling, I had a hazy awareness that the end earlier part of it; so that this was the first time I understood she was not only my mother. She was a woman. This mental revolution was emotional too and very confusing. I stood there in the hall, gloves on, scarf hanging down over chest and back, and was consumed with humiliation, resentment and a sort of stage fright, to think how we were all known, all food for each other, all clothed and ashamed in our clothing (p. 173).

The people in Oliver's world were so restrained by convention that there was no chance of their being open and frank with each other. Oliver has mentioned "the way we hide our bodies" before; and now one feels that he was speaking not of the physical body, but of the true self.

That night Oliver saw Bounce leave her house and head for Henry's garage. She was wearing a hat and gloves, but nothing else. Soon afterwards she went away to the asylum. Oliver later realizes:

You could say that the only time she was ever calm and happy, with a relaxed, smiling face, they put her away until she was properly cured and unhappy again (p. 182).

After many years, when he was married and had two children, Oliver saw her again. She had a house full of cats, and they had become more important than people to her since they were the world's only sign of affection for her. Oliver remembers taking his children with him on the visit:

My daughter nuzzled into my trouser leg, away from the square woman with the slablike cheeks. I put my hand through her hair, feeling the fragility of her head and neck; and a great surge of love came over me, protection, compassion, and the fierce determination that she should never know such lost solemnity but be a fulfilled woman, a wife and mother (p. 179).



83

Brought back from his reverie by the completed remembrance of the last time he saw Bounce, he looked again at the three words at the foot of her grave and began to laugh, seeing the inadequacy of music in fulfilling Miss Dawlish:

I caught myself up, appalled at my wanton laughter in that place; and, as if a long finger had reached out and touched me, I felt in every nerve that my shoulders came out of the ground itself. For it was here, close and real, two yards away as ever, that pathetic; horrible; unused body, with the stained frills and Chinese face. This was a kind of psychic ear test before which nothing survived but revulsion and horror, childishness and atavism, as if unnameable things were rising round me and blackening the sun. I heard my own voice--as if it could make its own bid for honesty,--crying aloud.

"I never liked you! Never!"

Then I was outside the churchyard, standing on the grass in the centre of the Square; and for that moment I could not think how I had got there. A middle-aged man, running away as though he had found himself once more in the long corridor between the empty rooms!

I was afraid of you, and so I hated you. It is as simple as that. When I heard you were dead I was glad. (p. 181).

Before he walked back to the garage, Oliver went to the garden behind Bounce's house and saw the evidence that she had burned her sheet music, destroyed her metronome, and smashed her father's picture before she died, showing her dissatisfaction with the life she had been forced to live because of her father's early determination that she should become a musician to the exclusion of everything else.

Having returned to Henry's garage, Oliver remembers:

I stretched out a leg and tapped with my live toe, listening meanwhile, tap, tap, tap--and suddenly I felt that if I might only lend my own sound, my own flesh, my own power of choosing the future, to those invisible feet, I would pay anything--anything: but knew in the same instant that like Henry, I would never pay more than a reasonable price (p. 183).

Oliver has been carefully taught to be concerned about money and social prestige rather than his own happiness and true values. He is a man who

has allowed the rules of the crystal pyramid to shape his life, and now it is too late to make any drastic changes. He does not feel that he can give up his financial success as a chemist to follow a risky career in music.

In the end, he drives away. He has not undergone any change in character during the course of the novel. The novel is concerned with what things in Oliver's past helped to shape his life, but he has not ever enjoyed the same freedom that Sammy Mountjoy had.

The Pyramid is definitely less poetic than any of Golding's former novels. It is written in a very traditional and realistic style; and Oliver is a most believable character, the most believable one Golding has created because he is so ordinary.

Oliver lacks complexity because his individuality has not been allowed to develop. He has been so restrained by society that he has not developed into the introspective character that Golding usually writes about. He lives on the surface, and it is impossible for him to see to the depths of what he is. In fact, he seems tragically unaware that there is anything down there worth seeing. He is to the aware reader a disconcerting example of one disastrous turn that the nature of man has taken in the civilized western world of the twentieth century.

The Pyramid is related to Golding's previous novels in its concern with the nature of man, this time socially-conditioned man. Marshall Walker explains how this novel fits into the scheme of Golding's other novels:

The image of the appletree indicates that while Golding's world may not yet be quite seamless, it is at least organic, convoluted and growing, a world in process where opposing categories of experience and value intermingle. This is the world in which he





## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

A steam ship, or anything powerful, in the hands of man, Phanocles, is like a sharp knife in the hands of a child. There is nothing wrong with the knife. There is nothing wrong with the steam ship. There is nothing wrong with man's intelligence. The trouble is his nature.

--"The Emperor" in William Golding's The Brass Butterfly

The Brass Butterfly, Golding's one full-length work for the stage, has a definite kinship with Golding's novels. The play satirizes the folly of rational man represented by the inventor Phanocles, who believes that he can bring about a new order in which all men will behave reasonably and in their best interests. In addition, it satirizes through the other characters the typical modes of rationalization which allow men to believe that the flux and chaos of the universe may add up to a meaningful pattern.<sup>1</sup> Here, as in Golding's novels, there is no solution to the problem of human nature.<sup>2</sup>

The trouble with man's nature is that it is so extremely complex. Jocelin explained it best when he said, "It's like the apple tree." In Golding's vision of the world, a number of conflicting ideas or philosophies exist in tension. For Golding, there are no simple, straightforward answers to the question of what is man's nature. Even in Lord of the Flies, The Inheritors, and Pincher Martin, in which

---

<sup>1</sup>Baker, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Dick, p. 65.



Golding is concerned with man's essential nature at some one point in its development, that nature is never entirely sinful. There are always those characters that do not fit into the fallen and sinful category. They are not merely foil characters, but well delineated contrasts to show either opposite qualities in human nature or at least potentialities for the opposite, good.

Golding's last three novels, Free Fall, The Spire, and The Pyramid, present protagonists who are mixed. Their natures are a combination of good and evil. Golding has reached the height of understanding the darkness of man's heart in the character Jocelin. And from the height of Jocelin's perception, he has presented Oliver, who has never learned to perceive the darkness within him and who shows only faint knowledge that the darkness exists.

Of Golding's protagonists, Oliver of The Pyramid has probably attained the greatest amount of practical knowledge since he is a chemist; yet he is the most spiritually underdeveloped of Golding's characters. Even Christopher Martin understands more about his own nature than Oliver does.

The development in Golding's novels is from Christian Moralism to Christian psychologist, from a calculated depiction of finished results to an unnerving demonstration of cause and effect. Throughout, however, the Christian moralism never disappears from Golding's writings. In fiction which is didactic as well as aesthetic, he has presented a series of warnings to modern man in the form of such characters as Jack, the "new people," Christopher Martin, and Oliver. On the other hand, he has offered hope by presenting characters such as

Ralph, Lok, Jocelin, and Sammy Mountjoy. Jocelin and Sammy seem Golding's most meaningful characters because both are able to change from men governed by their own self-will to men governed by their love for others. Golding has not given a falsely positive and arbitrary answer to the question--"What is man's nature?"--but he has at least studied it in enough depth and presented it in enough variety to show in convincing fashion that within it there moves darkness and light, Some terrible complexities, and infinite possibilities. Some

London: Oxford University Press,

with Republic, 148 (May

New York: Dwyer Publishers, Inc.,

in the Journal of William  
1900), 145-152.

Cathedral, Holiday, LXXVI (Dec.,

Holiday, 21 (August,

Holiday, 1901.

Holiday, 185-9.

Holiday, Inc., 1902.

Holiday, 1904.

Holiday, 1905.

Holiday, 1906.

Holiday, 1907.

Holiday, 1908.

Holiday, 1909.

Holiday, 1910.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "Anthropology," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 2. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1969.
- Baker, James R. William Golding: A Critical Study. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965.
- Birket-Smith, Kaj. Primitive Man and His Ways: Patterns of Life in Some Native Societies. Translated from the Danish by Roy Duffell. Long Acres, London: Oldhams Press, Ltd., 1960.
- Collingwood, R.G. The New Leviathan. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Davis, D.M., Ed. "Conversation with Golding," New Republic, 148 (May 4, 1963), 28-30.
- Dick, Bernard F. William Golding. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967.
- Gindin, James. "'Gimmick' and Metaphor in the Novels of William Golding," Modern Fiction Studies, VI (Summer, 1960), 145-152.
- Golding, William. "An Affection for Cathedrals," Holiday, XXXVI (Dec., 1965), 35, 42.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Delphi: the Oracle Revealed," Holiday, 42 (August, 1967), 87.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Free Fall. New York: Pocket Books, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Inside a Pyramid," Esquire, 66 (Dec., 1966), 165-9.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Lord of the Flies. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Pincher Martin. New York: Capricorn Books, 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Poems. St. Martin's Street, London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1934.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Brass Butterfly: A Play in Three Acts. London: Faber and Faber, 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Hot Gates and other occasional pieces. New York: Pocket Books, 1967.



- The Inheritors. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1955.
- The Pyramid. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967.
- The Spire. New York: Pocket Cardinal, 1966.
- John Wyndham and Mervyn Peake. Sometime Never: Three Tales of Imagination. London: Eyre and Spittiswoode, 1956.
- Gordon, Robert C. "Classical Themes in Lord of the Flies," Modern Fiction Studies, XI (Winter, 1965-66), 424-427.
- Hough, G. "Fables After the Fall," Saturday Review, 48 (July 31, 1965), 17, 18.
- Hynes, Samuel. William Golding. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964.
- Jacobi, Jolande, Ed. Psychological Reflections: An Anthology of the Writings of C.G. Jung. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1961.
- "Jung, Carl Gustav," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 2. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1969.
- Kinhead-Weekes, Mark and Ian Gregor. William Golding: A Critical Study. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967.
- Lederer, Richard and The Rev. Paul Hamilton Beattie, "African Genesis and Lord of the Flies: Two Studies of the Beastie Within," English Journal, 58 (December, 1969), 1316-1321, 1337.
- Levitt, Leon. "Trust the Tale: A Second Reading of Lord of the Flies," English Journal, 58 (April, 1969), 521-22, 533.
- Macpherson, C.B. "Hobbes's Bourgeois Man," in Hobbes Studies, K.C. Brown, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- "Neanderthal Man," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol 2. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1969.
- Nelson, William, ed. William Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Source Book. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1963.
- Ruch, Floyd L. Psychology and Life. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1958.
- White, Robert J. "Butterfly and Beast in Lord of the Flies," Modern Fiction Studies, XI (September, 1964), 163-170.