WILLIAM GOLDING: A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

APPROVED:

[Signatures and titles of officials]
WILLIAM GOLDING: A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Diane M. Dodson, B. A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1970
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  INTRODUCTION.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. LORD OF THE FLIES</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE INHERITORS.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. PINCHER MARTIN AND FREE FALL.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE SPIRE</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE PYRAMID</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. CONCLUSION.</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The scholar who is especially interested in the influence of a writer's life and intellectual background on his literature would probably find William Golding's biography a sheer delight because almost all that is known about Golding's life and interests can easily be traced in his novels. Golding spent a rather isolated childhood during which he read simultaneously the great classics of childhood and adulthood. He recalls with equal enthusiasm the first time he read the works of Ballantyne, Burroughs, and Verne, and Homer, Sophocles, and Euripides. Among his favorite memories of his youth is his passion for the written word and for words themselves:

While I was supposed to be learning my Collect, I was likely to be chanting inside my head a list of delightful words which I had picked up God knows where--deebriss and Skirmishar, creskent and sweeside.

---

Golding's ability to describe a setting with such vivid sensual effectiveness, with such a sense of actuality, that the reader is forced to become involved in the fictional experience, must have emerged from his own love for words and from his ability even as a child to enter the worlds of the literature he was reading:

I dived with the Nautilus, was shot round the moon, crossed darkest Africa in a balloon, descended to the center of the earth, drifted in the south Atlantic, dying of thirst, and tasted—oh, rapture! It always sent me indoors for a drink—the fresh waters of the Amazon.

The world of words and literature has always been real to Golding, and he has an exceptional command of words: his use of highly descriptive language in prose is an unusual and pleasant departure from most contemporary British fiction.

Golding was heir to a strong tradition of scientific humanism, the parentage of which was the combined influence of Golding's science-oriented father, his initial training at Oxford, and the intellectual atmosphere in Britain at the time of his youth. He began his education at Oxford as a science major, but later changed to the study of literature. Critics seem to be unanimous in attributing Golding's

---


5A moving account of Golding's youthful doubts about rationalism and his father's optimistic view of the universe is found in "The Ladder and the Tree" in Golding's The Hot Gates, pp. 166-175.
disenchantment with the scientific rationalism of the times to his war experiences, but James Baker, just to mention one, points out that even as a student at Oxford, Golding exhibited doubts about "the neat rationalism of the scientists and historians he was reading at the time."\(^6\) Golding made his only public attempt at writing poetry during this time, and although the small book of poetry which was published in a contemporary poet series (which also included W. H. Auden) was not successful, there are several poems which question the validity of the rationalists' theory of human progress. One of the most delightful poems, and the only one that is frequently mentioned, is a satire on Alexander Pope as the kind of rationalist who cannot accept the natural chaos of the universe.\(^7\)

Golding's experiences as a sailor and commander of a rocket ship during World War II must have confirmed his youthful suspicions about the nature of the universe and human experience, though, because war serves as a background in three of his six novels and his participation in World War II has been revealed by Golding as one of his major lessons in human nature. In an interview on Lord of the

---

\(^6\) Baker, William Golding, p. xiv.

Flies, Golding reflects what must have been a revolution in thought for many post-war Europeans:

Before the war, most Europeans believed that man could be perfected by perfecting his society. We all saw a hell of a lot in the war that can't be accounted for except on the basis of original evil.  

In the same article, he explains his purpose in Lord of the Flies as "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature." This attempt to discover and reveal the defectiveness of human nature has been Golding's major preoccupation in all of his novels.

With the exception of the war years, Golding has spent most of his adult life as a schoolteacher, teaching in a boys' grammar school for twenty years and later lecturing on various British and American university campuses. Certainly his years of teaching offered him abundant opportunity to observe human nature in action, and his educational theories, best expressed in "On the Crest of the Wave," contain his concern for the damaging effect of human nature on society and, more explicitly, his fear of the domination of science in education. It is in this essay that Golding makes the oft-quoted—sometimes out of context—statement of his hopes for the future of education: "I am by nature an optimist; but a defective logic—or a logic which I

---

8"Lord of the Campus," Time, LXXIX (June 22, 1962), 64.
sometimes hope desperately is defective--makes a pessimist of me." Much of his pessimism is derived from what he sees as the detrimental effect of a type of education which points youth to a world where the material is worshiped, a world where it is better to be financially and socially successful than it is to be good. Science, he says, teaches us facts and how to get them, but it fails to teach us how to make value judgments or, more important, how to get along with other people:

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.10

Our humanity, he continues, rests in the ability to decide that something is right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, just or unjust, and science is not equipped to make moral or aesthetic judgments.

Golding gives fictional life to his attack on rationalism in all of his novels, but his fear of the dangers of rationalism are best portrayed in the characters of Sammy Mountjoy, in Free Fall, and Oliver, in The Pyramid. In Free Fall, Sammy rejects God as a result of his conversion to scientific rationalism and bases his actions on the assumption of the relativity of good and evil, good being


10Ibid., p. 128.
what he wants to do, bad, what does not give pleasure. Oliver, in The Pyramid, is persuaded to deny his love for music and study science because science is the key to social and financial success. Golding believes that only the methods of philosophy and art can teach us how to make value judgments and that the arts are the only cure for "sickness so deeply seated that we begin to think of them in our new wealth as built-in: boredom and satiety, selfishness and fear." Both characters recognize and despair over the chaos of human existence; both are searching for the truth. Sammy rejects value judgments based on unselfish regard for the rights of other human beings, kills his humanity, and therefore can find no pleasure and no truth in his art. The town of Stilbourne, which is a perfect example of the sicknesses Golding describes, imposes its own scientific-materialistic set of values upon Oliver so that he loses the truth and fulfillment that can come from a true love of the arts and which cannot be measured in objective scientific terms.

Golding's first novel, Lord of the Flies, was not published until he was forty-two, in 1954. Although it was rejected by twenty-one publishers before it was finally accepted, Lord of the Flies has so far received the greatest public acceptance, especially by the young on American and

11 Ibid., p. 130.
British campuses. In fact, the novel has replaced Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* as the most popular optional and required reading in many universities. There is a great body of criticism on *Lord of the Flies*, most of it favorable, and much of it is concerned more with Golding's philosophy than with his art as a whole. Not only did the novel establish Golding's philosophical foundation, upon which the rest of his art is built, but it established Golding as an important contemporary British novelist whose next work would be eagerly awaited.

The next novel, *The Inheritors*, was published in 1955, and it is Golding's favorite. *The Inheritors* presents the most obvious reaction against the scientific humanism and optimistic superiority of the late Victorian period. Both *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*, published in 1956, were well-received initially, but enthusiasm waned soon. Both have been charged with obscurity because the total reality of both novels is almost entirely expressed through the perception of different but extremely limited intelligences:

Lok, in *The Inheritors*, is incapable of rationalization,

---

12 "Lord of the Campus," *Time*, p. 64.


and Pincher Martin, in Pincher Martin, has created his own world, which is shaped entirely by his will. Pincher Martin has also been criticized for its "trick ending,"\(^{15}\) although the surprise endings in Lord of the Flies and Pincher Martin are thematically essential and very effective.

By the time Free Fall was published in 1959, Golding's novels had become material for many critical and scholarly publications, and Golding was assured a large reading audience in the academic field.\(^{16}\) Free Fall was received by some as Golding's finest achievement and rejected by others as obscure and disorganized.\(^{17}\) Free Fall represents a move away from the well-defined allegory of the first three novels as it has to be because Golding is attempting to reveal the chaos of human existence. Events are narrated in order of emotional value rather than chronologically, which accounts for the difficulty which careless readers have objected to.

Although The Spire, published in 1964, is as difficult and demanding as its predecessors, it was on both the British and American best-seller lists for a long time. Oldsey and Weintraub point out, though, that with Golding's

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 34.


\(^{17}\) Baker, William Golding, p. 56.
renewed popular acceptance, the "school of skepticism" about his value as a novelist grew. They attribute his decline in scholarly acceptance to an emotional hostility to Golding's persistent and pessimistic philosophy.

Golding's last novel, *The Pyramid*, published in 1967, presents such a reversal of style and approach that many readers must have been shocked. John Wain was disappointed in Golding's retreat to the position of being a "social chronicler," but Clive Pemberton has called *The Pyramid* "a rare achievement; it is one of the ways in which the novel could develop." Of course, the novel has already developed in the direction of social history rather than myth, and Wain's disappointment may have come from the feeling that many of his contemporaries have successfully—more so than Golding in *The Pyramid*—described the adverse function of society as a shaping force on the personality and ethics of the individual. In his other novels, Golding has proved his originality and power as a myth-maker; he is

---


a master of structure,\textsuperscript{21} and the essence of his myth-making is his ability to unify theme, character, and structure. The structure in \textit{The Pyramid} has been almost universally criticized, although for the most part excused, as weak. Marshall Walker excuses the weakness as the inevitable result of an attempt to record the "velleities and carefully caught regrets" of a person's past which is essentially patternless.\textsuperscript{22}

Two works in other genres should be mentioned here. The \textit{Brass Butterfly} (1956) is a three-act comedy adapted from a radio play and novella entitled "Envoy Extraordinary."\textsuperscript{23} The play is set in Imperial Rome and is another attack upon rationalism and belief in the possibility of uninterrupted human progress. The \textit{Hot Gates} is a collection of essays which have all been published previously. The essays are informal, and they are written in a personal tone, often with warm humor, that is completely lacking in Golding's novels. Two of the best are "On the Crest of the Wave," which has already been mentioned as a good summary


\textsuperscript{22}Walker, "William Golding: From Paradigm to Pyramid," p. 82.

of Golding's educational theories, and "Billy the Kid," which is a humorous but thoughtful reminiscence of Golding's childhood.

Attitudes towards Golding have ranged from a feeling that he is too difficult and that his philosophy is too out of step with contemporary philosophy to a feeling that "no English novelist has dared--and achieved--as much." Although some critics would label Golding an old-fashioned Christian moralist, most agree that he is contemporary, as he most certainly is, because he is describing, whether the fictional setting is primeval or twentieth-century, the modern-day Godless society in which man is making a rather pathetic and so far futile attempt to make order out of the chaos of his experience. Although Golding belongs to no particular school and makes great intellectual demands on his readers (and all the while telling them something very unpleasant about themselves), he is one of the most popular and most significant contemporary British novelists.26

24 Ibid., p. xvi.
26 Ibid., p. 11.
CHAPTER II

LORD OF THE FLIES

Lord of the Flies and The Inheritors, taken together, provide the fundamental picture of the nature of man as Golding sees it. Golding claims, and many critics agree, that he is an experimenter, and in these two novels, he develops, in almost empirical fashion, his basic attitudes about the nature of man, man in this case stripped of the superficial restraints of civilization, man operating in an unlegislated society and confronting untamed nature directly. Lord of the Flies is the seminal novel from which each following novel derives its basic thematic material while adding new thought and examination to the problem with which Golding is always preoccupied: the destructive elements of man's nature and the awesome consequences of those elements in man's individual and collective existence. The Inheritors contributes such original and complementary thought to the philosophy expressed in Lord of the Flies that the reader experiences a process of discovery in the

\[\text{1For example, see Oldsey and Weintraub, The Art of William Golding, pp. 35-36.}\]
two novels, and out of the inescapable and alarming conclusions which he is forced to make with Golding comes the material for all of the following novels. Novel by novel, after Lord of the Flies and The Inheritors, the Golding reader observes one man confronting reality and responding (usually over-responding) with one or more of the fundamental aspects of human nature which are revealed in the first two novels and which Golding believes must be revealed to and acknowledged by man. There is a process working throughout the novels, and it is leading us somewhere. A pattern of human behaviour emerges and, more important, a few solutions to the problems inherent in that pattern—although neither dogmatic nor definitive—are suggested.

The criticism of Lord of the Flies has been so thorough and has taken so many varied approaches that it has almost reached the point of saturation. In The Art of William Golding, Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub comment upon the overwhelming amount of criticism and analysis of

---

the novel as social, political, and psychological allegory, to which *Lord of the Flies* is so susceptible, and upon the dearth of real literary criticism. But critical analysis has been more than sufficient to establish that this almost allegorical account of isolation and survival presents a grim picture of human nature, and the purpose of this discussion is to reveal that picture and establish Golding's philosophy as it appears in *Lord of the Flies* and as it is treated in all of the subsequent novels.

Golding is dealing with an ancient inquiry fundamental to man's attempt to understand his universe, that is, the study of the nature of man, how it operates within the universe, and how it shapes the society of man. It is therefore understandable that critics, eager to extract Golding's philosophy (and pin it wriggling on the wall) and influenced by philosophical notions of their own, might attempt to apply a well-defined, well-established framework of philosophy to his work. But, just as Sammy Mountjoy in *Free Fall* attempts to apply inadequate patterns to the universe, many critics have tried to apply neat patterns to Golding's attitudes in *Lord of the Flies* which simply do not quite fit.

---

Part of the problem lies in the fact that Golding, who calls himself a fabulist,\textsuperscript{4} uses allegory in \textit{Lord of the Flies}. Some good and relatively thorough criticism has been given to the question of whether \textit{Lord of the Flies} is simply a fable.\textsuperscript{5} Oldsey and Weintraub conclude that, although the characters in \textit{Lord of the Flies} are allegorical (they call it naturalistic allegory), they are not merely fabulous characters because they become real, they are sufficiently clothed in "actuality," during the process of the novel. The characters do represent certain human characteristics, but there are moments of contradiction in the personalities of the characters which force the reader to accept them as human beings rather than simple embodiments of abstract qualities. Also, Golding has a fine dramatic ability which enables him to give his characters very realistic, very affective, dialogue.\textsuperscript{\textbullet} Jack, a natural leader in charge of the hunters, obviously represents the force of evil in man's nature, the irrational and savage tendency to control and destroy, the chaotic darkness of fear and blood lust which, when allowed to run rampant after long suppression, will not

\textsuperscript{4}William Golding, \textit{The Hot Gates}, p. 86.

\textsuperscript{5}One of the best discussions of the use of fable in Golding's works is John Peter, "The Fables of William Golding," \textit{Kenyon Review}, XIX (Fall, 1957), 577-592.
be ordered. Jack is probably the least "real" of the major characters, but several times he tries to be a part of the ordered existence Ralph is attempting to create on the island or at least explain the terrific force that is moving him away from order and an attempt to be rescued. Jack offers part of his group of hunters to Ralph as fire-watchers and shelter-builders, and in the foreboding scene in which he tries to explain his feelings for the hunt, Jack reveals the very human quality of wanting to understand himself and to be understood:

"I went on," said Jack. "I let them go. I had to go on. I--"
He tried to convey the compulsion to track and kill that was swallowing him up.
"I went on. I thought by myself--"
The madness came into his eyes again.
"I thought I might kill."^6

Although Ralph represents man trying to bring order out of chaos and trying to apply rational judgment to irrational forces, his sense of control and of individual responsibility gives way several times in response to the instincts of fear and blood lust. Ralph has an overpowering urge "to get a handful of the brown, vulnerable flesh" during an early ritual,^7 and he admits his part in the murder


^7Ibid., p. 106.
of Simon. Ralph is a human being with irrational urges and fears, but he uses his ingrained sense of good and self-and-other preservation to control those urges. Like most humans, he is not always successful, chiefly because, Golding says, he does not recognize those urges until it is too late. Piggy is the scientific rationalist who always has a logical answer for everything. In fact, Piggy is almost irrational as he clings to his rationality and belief that law and order and logic are the governing forces for all men's behavior. It would seem that were Piggy thoroughly logical, he would have known by empirical evaluation of all his experience on the island not to confront Jack's hunters with a plea, actually a demand, for justice with nothing between himself and them but the conch shell—a meaningless token of a kind of authority now distant in place and relevance. Piggy's "wisdom" is marred by human fallibility, and, ironically, shortsightedness. Simon, the fainting boy-seer, is the mystical saint who communes with nature and retreats from the world of Jack and Ralph and Piggy into a church-like enclosure in the jungle. However much, though, Simon may be removed from the daily conflicts and dilemmas of life on the island, it is Simon alone who knows the truth about the beast and has the courage and wisdom to confront it. Also, Golding presents to the
reader at the very beginning and at the very end of the novel
typical, full of fun and the thrill of exploration, and end
their ordeal dirty and sobbing because they had a bad time
and they do not know why.

The difficulty with the philosophical pattern-makers is
not lack of accuracy as much as lack of sufficient scope.
Most of the analyses of *Lord of the Flies* as allegory are
quite relevant to the picture of man presented in the novel,
and, although they are not encompassing enough, they are very
helpful in establishing Golding's philosophy. That these
rather strict interpretations of the novel as social,
political, and psychological allegory are relevant suggests
that Golding is attempting to describe something so basic
to human existence and so influential upon that existence,
individual and collective, that the subject cannot be dis-
missed as exclusively social, political, or psychological.
One of the tragic myths held sacred by Western culture,
according to Golding's essay, "Fable," is that man "was
supposed not to have in him the sad fact of his own cruelty
and lust." And in designing political and social systems,
the real nature of man, his "capacity for greed, his innate
cruelty and selfishness," has never been taken into account.

---

8*Golding, The Hot Gates*, p. 87.
This is all to say that Golding, by his own admission, would never confine himself to an attack upon man as simply a social, political, or psychologically aberrant being.

As social comment, Lord of the Flies does provide a situation in which human beings are deprived of the superficial protection and control of civilization and are therefore allowed to regress to a more "natural state." Although Golding is continuing a tradition that goes back as far as Sterne and includes Swift, he is a reactionary in many ways, and Lord of the Flies is a reaction against the Rationalist, Christian, and Romantic traditions. The boys on the island are not noble savages; they become the island savages R. M. Ballantyne describes in his boy's book, The Coral Island,

9Oldsey and Wintraub, The Art of William Golding, p. 34.

10The Coral Island was admittedly an influence upon Lord of the Flies. The main characters, who are British schoolboys named Ralph, Jack, and Peterkin, are abandoned on an uncivilized island inhabited by cannibalistic natives and visited by barbarous pirates. The story is a Victorian tale of the victory of Christian morality and British superiority over savagery and lawlessness. In Samuel Hynes' William Golding, pp. 7-8, Golding explains his approach to the Coral Island morality:

"What I'm saying to myself is 'don't be such a fool... Now you are grown up, you are adult; it's taken you a long time to become adult, but now you've got there you can see that people are not like that. There savagery would not be found in natives on an island. As like as not they would find savages who were kindly and uncomplicated and that the devil would rise out of the intellectual complications of the three white men on the island itself."
instead of the very British, very Christian boys who are the main characters of the novel. James Baker has pointed out that, although the humans in this case are children and therefore capable of shedding the acquired code of behaviour more readily than adults, they are not intended to be mere children; they represent human nature, and "life on the island has only imitated the larger tragedy in which the adults of the outside world attempted to govern themselves reasonably but ended in the same game of hunt and kill."\textsuperscript{11}

The adult society the boys have been emulating has been tested and proven defective. To this extent, \textit{Lord of the Flies} can be considered a social criticism, but the society has failed only because of the defectiveness of the individuals who make up that society.

Oldsey and Weintraub have rightly accused Frederick Karl of oversimplifying when he suggests the label of political allegory for \textit{Lord of the Flies}, although they do admit the political implications in the characterizations of Jack, Ralph, Piggy, and Roger.\textsuperscript{12} Jack is the ruthless dictator who uses fear and blood lust to gain unlimited power. Roger is the sadistic henchman. Ralph is the

\textsuperscript{11}Baker, \textit{William Golding}, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{12}Oldsey and Weintraub, \textit{The Art of William Golding}, pp. 28-29.
baffled but earnest democrat who is the elected leader of the boys but who retains power only as long as the boys voluntarily allow him to have power. Piggy is Ralph's "brain trust" and the spokesman for law and order. But, where does Simon fit? He is too important to be dismissed as one of Ralph's followers because Simon understands much more about the nature of man and the boys' situation. Simon is a savior, but the salvation he offers is not political or governmental. Lord of the Flies is a comment upon man's desire for power and his penchant for misusing power, but Golding will say in later novels that no social, political, or religious institution is sufficient to control man's baser traits.

Golding has said that a Freudian interpretation of Lord of the Flies is very interesting but very misleading because he never read Freud. Of course, many writers have described man's personality much as Freud did without knowledge or use of his particular labels. Jack, according to a Freudian interpretation, is the human id, the uncontrolled

---

and largely unconscious passions and instinctual urges of man. Piggy, as the representative of the adult world of law and order, is the superego, or conscience. Ralph is the ego, attracted and acted upon by both inner forces and the external forces of daily reality as it tries to move the organism forward and into a more secure life situation. Ralph actually assumes the role of conscience, though, as he admits his guilt and shame in the murder of Simon, while Piggy wants to deny any guilt in the crime. Also, Piggy is "extremely id-directed" towards food and does not hesitate to accept Jack's pig meat regardless of the ethical question involved. Again, Simon is more or less left out of the pattern.

Perhaps the most legitimate interpretation of the novel, although still too confining and dogmatic, is the rather orthodox religious concept of the Fall of Man, and certainly Lord of the Flies is about man's fall from innocence and the taint of Original Sin. Oldsey and Weintraub, in an attempt to place Golding in the mainstream of British fiction, mention that Golding has been acclaimed the most original British novelist in the last twenty or thirty years, that although Golding is operating within a

\[14\text{Ibid., p. 26.}\]
strong tradition, his work "leaves its individual mark, and
sometimes excoriatingly, on tradition."\(^{15}\) There are biblical
allusions (parallels) in *Lord of the Flies*, but Golding
does not adhere literally to the biblical version of man's
fall from paradise and away from God. In fact, Golding
would probably say that the paradise was imperfect to begin
with because the original inhabitants were defective.
James Baker asserts that *Lord of the Flies* argues against
the tag often given to Golding as an orthodox Christian
moralist.\(^{16}\) He suggests that Golding's view of paradise
and the fall of man is taken more from *The Bacchae* than from
the Bible. *The Bacchae*, according to Baker, is a "bitter
allegory on the degeneration of society," the aim of which
was precisely what Golding's was in *Lord of the Flies*:
"to trace the defects of society back to the defects of
human nature" and "account for the future of rational man
who invariably undertakes the blind ritual hunt in which he
seeks to kill the threatening 'beast' within his own being."\(^{17}\)

The god Dionysus in *The Bacchae* corresponds to
Beelzebub, the lord of the flies, because he represents the

\(^{15}\) *Ibid.*, p. 34.


principle of animal life," the instinctual and elemental urges which are restrained and denied by reason and social custom. In *The Bacchae* the bacchantes are punished, because they refuse to recognize the baser, bestial aspects of their nature, by losing all rational and ethical restraint and committing acts of savagery and bloodshed in a moment of the utter defeat of reason. (They rip Pentheus to pieces and devour him.) The greater sin is repression of one aspect of the human psyche, and the greatest punishment is the terrible realization, only after unspeakable atrocities have been committed, that the force moving men towards destruction and lust and greed is within, was always within, man himself.  

Even the biblical allusions in *Lord of the Flies* seem to be used to point to the fact that the island is not a paradise even "in the beginning." Parallels to the biblical version of the Fall begin with the island paradise itself. The island on which the boys are dropped as their plane crashes, killing all the crew and the rest of the passengers, is described as a good island abundant with fruit, attractive, and free of restraints of the adult, civilized world. As the boys begin their exploration of the island, Ralph says it is "like pink icing on a pink cake."  

18 Ibid., pp. 7-15.

of lavish blue flowers against a background of pink rock, and the air is moving gaily with butterflies. The island has a verdant lushness of forest and near-jungle set alongside mountains and beach and glittering sea. Since there is ample food, fresh water, and pleasant weather, the boys react as if they truly are in a paradise, but there is a tone, a vague but ominous note, in the description of the island which suggests that the island is not at all a paradise. The forest part of the island is overgrown with creepers that "shiver" and "clamorous" vegetation whose "riotous" colors seem to clash with the "gaudy" butterflies. Set into the description of the island is the boys' first encounter with the pigs which inhabit the island. Jack wants to stab the pig, but he cannot "because of the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into the living flesh; because of the unbearable blood." Jack could not kill the pig, but he wanted to, and he says, "I was going to . . . I was choosing a place. Next time—!" The thought of shedding blood is an early reaction to life in the new-found "paradise," and James Baker reminds us that "there was no death in Eden, no riot or urgency, no creepiness."

---

20 Ibid., p. 9.  
21 Ibid., p. 27.  
A serpent provides the first hint of the presence of evil in the paradise. The first reference to the "beast" which will destroy the paradise and corrupt the boys is made by a "littlun" with a garrish birthmark on his face. He reports inarticulately to the assembly that he has seen a snake-thing, a "beastie" that hides itself in the vines of the forest in the day and comes out at night. The boys use logical arguments to shout down the notion of a beast, but the assembly assumes a deadly silence as the boys feel the presence of the irrational fear of the dark and the possibility of an unknown, external threat.

It is significant that, of the older boys, only Jack admits the possibility of the existence of the beast. If there is a beast, he says, they will kill it just as they are going to kill the pigs for meat. In fact, Jack uses fear of the beast to gather followers and fulfill his need to hunt and kill the pigs. Just as Dionysus is a deified manifestation of the baser aspects of human nature in The Bacchae, Beelzebub, lord of the flies, is the god in Lord of the Flies and Jack is his high priest. Beelzebub is the "prince of demons of Assyrian or Hebrew descent" and was the "idol for unclean beings." He is the lord of flies and dung and is the "embodiment of the lusts and cruelties which
possess his worshippers." In the same way that Dionysus and his followers are the hunter and the hunted, the "beast" is both the imaginary hunter and, in the form of the pigs, the hunted. Jack tries to explain the feeling he has in the forest: "There's nothing in it of course. Just a feeling. But you can feel as if you're not hunting, but--being hunted, as if something's behind you all the time in the jungle." Beelzebub is a part of the boys, and out of that part grows the fear of being hunted and the urge to hunt.

The beast grows in the minds of the boys until it becomes a terrifying reality. Fear becomes more intense and articulated as blood lust, initiated and manipulated by Jack, increases among the boys. Hunting for pigs becomes ritual beyond hunting for food. It is almost as if they must kill or be killed, as if they are hunting that which is hunting them. The first real hint of man's true capacity for brutality is revealed when the savage appetites of the hunters are whetted by the bloody chase and butchering of a sow. There is a hint of sexual lust as well as blood lust in the killing of the sow. The boys become "wedded to her in lust, excited by the long chase and the dripped blood," and after Roger has impaled

\[^{23}\text{Ibid., p. 14.}\]
\[^{24}\text{Golding, Lord of the Flies, p. 47.}\]
her from the rear, the boys are "heavy and fulfilled upon her." Jack rubs blood on another boy's face, and the hunters giggle and revel in the mutilation, leaving the dripping, severed head on a stick as propitiation for the beast. 

As Jack becomes more obsessed with the hunt, the fragile order on the island breaks down. At the very moment that Ralph spots a ship passing by the island, Jack's hunters have neglected the fire, and the smoke signal dies out. Jack and his hunters are no longer interested in rescue—Jack no longer feels any connection with the other, civilized world. The irony of the struggle between Ralph and Jack for leadership of the boys is found in Ralph's attempt to emulate the adult world. From the beginning, Ralph and Piggy have seen the need to imitate the adult world in order to assure themselves and everyone of comfort, safety, and rescue. In the assemblies, the boys try to use democratic procedure so that everyone will be allowed to speak, but Piggy, the spokesman for the rules and rationality of the adult world, is rarely allowed to speak and is never heeded. Although Ralph and Piggy are consciously struggling to do what they believe their fathers and teachers would do, it is Jack who

25 Ibid., p. 125.
really, unconsciously and instinctively, manages to copy his elders. The appalling truth is that Jack, in his ruthlessness and his lust for the kill and for power, is conducting himself precisely as adults have throughout the entire history of mankind in their wars and pogroms and individual cruelties. After all, the chaos and destruction of what must be a major war is the background for the boys' story. According to Golding, Jack, with his use of masks and body paint and the ritual of killing—all of which are designed to give men a feeling of anonymity and strength so they can avoid guilt and fear—has regressed to the "natural state of man," and it is a poor state indeed.

Golding never allows the reader to forget that, although each man comes into the world with the capacity for evil and destruction as an innate part of his personality, man has free will, and the fall of man involves his refusal to see himself realistically and to fight his propensity to sin. The boys are offered a chance to know the truth and be made free, thus avoiding their fall. Simon, the paradise's Christ figure, has the audacity and the insight to suggest that there is no real beast, that "maybe it's only us," and when Simon asks the boys to think of the dirtiest thing there is, Jack inadvertently gives the right—perhaps the cosmic—answer by
referring to human feces. Jack has unknowingly expressed the truth: the evil they instinctively fear is human, just as human feces is an unpleasant but fundamental part of man's life process. The sound of Jack's answer silently reverberates throughout the novel as references are made to the pig dung and as the "littluns" are "caught short" and, finally, as the boys refuse to follow the sanitation rules suggested by Ralph.

Simon's suspicions are confirmed after the butchering of the sow takes place in his quiet forest sanctuary. He remains behind to confront the hideous, dripping head of the sow:

The pile of guts was a black blob of flies that buzzed like a saw. After a while these flies found Simon. Gorged, they alighted by his runnels of sweat and drank. They tickled under his nostrils and played leap-frog on his thighs. They were black and iridescent green and without number, and in front of Simon, the Lord of the Flies hung on his stick and grimmed, at last Simon gave up and looked back; saw the white teeth and dim eyes, the blood—and his gaze was held by the ancient, inescapable recognition.

The lord of the flies, the lord of the dung in which Jack takes such delight as he follows the trails of pig droppings in the hunt, is man's own evil, externalized, and Simon has already realized the truth of the message of the Lord of the

26 Ibid., p. 82.
27 Ibid., p. 128.
Flies: "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you." Perhaps Simon's confrontation with the sow's head is not merely an illusion or hallucination or even vision, but Simon is talking to himself, to a part of himself that has to be infected with the same defectiveness present in all humans. The difference is that Simon acknowledges that aspect of human nature and can therefore control it. In spite of Simon's mystic vision, he is a realist, and he knows the awful consequences of bringing truth to those who wish to suppress it. The head warns Simon not to interfere or else "we shall do you. See? Jack and Roger and Piggy and Ralph. Do you. See?" Simon knows he will be destroyed if he attempts to reveal the truth to the boys, but his extraordinary vision does not dissipate his goodness. He is compelled to fulfill his destiny as a saint: revelation and martyrdom.

As Golding moves the reader from the fly-covered head of the sow to the decaying body of the dead parachutist, the significance of each is intensified, and they are linked together in the truth they imply about man. Simon realizes that he must return to the place where Ralph and Jack saw the

28 Ibid., p. 132.

29 Golding, Lord of the Flies, p. 133.
"beast" and discover exactly what they saw. What Simon sees is what he has already recognized: the evil beast is a man, in this case as dead and corrupted by decay and insects as the grinning head.

Golding creates an atmosphere of tension and fear as he leads up to the moment of Simon's death. The blue flashes of lightning herald a thunderstorm which will put out the boys' fire, a fire which they need for much more than cooking or signal purposes now. Ralph notices that night comes with the threat of violence. The boys are frightened and restless, and they find release and comfort in the ritual dance Jack uses as some tribal chieftain might to give his men false courage for a hunt or battle. As Simon crawls out of the dark, the boys are chanting the familiar rhythm: "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" Simon is butchered. The boys rip and claw and bite just as the bacchantes tore and devoured Pentheus. In the most peaceful scene in the novel, Simon's mutilated body is washed by the tide and rolls, purified, out to sea. Simon, the Christ-bearer, has been destroyed, and with his death goes the final restraint of the adult, rational world. And, ironically,

\[30\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 140.}\]
with Simon's death comes the long-awaited sign from the adult world. The body of the parachutist, freed from the entangling lines by Simon, is carried by the wind over the boys and out to sea. The message of the body, the "sign" from the adult world, is identical to Simon's silenced message: the beast is man. The boys have confirmed that message without help from the adults. No one is blameless; innocence is irrevocably gone. The rest of the downward fall is easy and accelerated.

One of the forces in man which enables him to make technical progress, the part of man that creates regulated societies and enforces rules in those societies, is at the same time the force that suppresses those animalistic, destructive tendencies that might impede "civilized" progress. But, the instinct to destroy never dies; it becomes more subtle; it is clothed in the respectability of treaties, of international and domestic laws; it is even evident in the increasingly technical and regulated wars themselves. Man's destructive tendencies are defended on the basis of nationalism or self-preservation, or, for the individual, poor socio-economical environment or emotional deprivation. The fact is that those tendencies are always with us, and as the irrationality and destruction that Jack represents are suppressed in the civilized world, so the world of order.
and rationality that Piggy represents is suppressed and denied on the island. After all, in a primitive setting where a high value is placed upon killing and physical prowess, the fat, half-blind, asthmatic Piggy is useless. Jack dislikes Piggy intensely from the very beginning, and it is through Jack's power that Piggy is suppressed and finally destroyed. Piggy's role and the failure of that role in the island society is best and most tragically expressed in the confrontation scene between Piggy and Jack, when Piggy goes to Jack's camp to get his glasses back. Piggy alone still has faith in the authority of the conch, and then the conch becomes no less than the basic challenge of the Tribe to choose between democracy and anarchy, civilization and savagery. The answer comes in unequivocal terms: "The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist." The shell, whose sound began as a summons to society, ends as a murderous explosion on the rocks.\textsuperscript{31}

The "Tribe," under the fear-and-power wielding leadership of the chief, who knows how to promulgate and at the same time temporarily assuage fear, makes a choice: with the exception of Ralph, all go over to Jack.

Perhaps Golding might have more appropriately ended *Lord of the Flies* with the chase and capture of Ralph, who is to be impaled on a spear like a pig; but Golding uses the final rescue scene to juxtapose the grimy, bloodthirsty little savages, obviously hot in pursuit of human prey, to the precise, civilized uniform of the naval officer who has taken time out from the grown-up war to rescue the children. The reader is abruptly reminded that the war of the officer is different primarily in that it is more widespread, sophisticated, and, sad to say, effective. Golding asks, "And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?"^32 Golding answers time and time again that man alone can save himself.

There is little hope for the future of mankind expressed in *Lord of the Flies*, but there are intimations of hope in the novel which will be reinforced and expanded in later novels. In "On the Crest of the Wave," Golding says that we must put our faith in the mysterious and miraculous saints we are offered from century to century.^33 Simon is a saint, and the implication is that had the boys listened to Simon, lived on the island according to what Simon knew about the human spirit, they might have avoided that final and irrevocable fall. They might have discovered a way to

---

^32 Epstein, "Notes on *Lord of the Flies*," p. 189.

contend with their own defectiveness and a way to allow their natural goodness to flourish. There is some hope in the character of Ralph, also, because he exhibits the natural goodness and generosity which Golding discusses more optimistically in *Free Fall*, and if the saints of the world are ever heeded instead of crucified, it will be the Ralphs who will do the listening and leading.

The philosophy of *Lord of the Flies* is encased in a richly "woven symbolic web," and Golding employs the same technique and many of the same symbols in his following novels. The island in *Lord of the Flies* becomes the New Men's island, the island of another "fall," in *The Inheritors*; it becomes a lone rock in *Pincher Martin*; a single human being in *Free Fall*; and a religious community in *The Spire*. The "mouth" into which Simon falls during his terrible epiphany becomes the mouth of nature which devours Pincher Martin. The scatological symbols in *Lord of the Flies* are repeated in *Pincher Martin*. The symbol of salvation, Simon, appears in the character of Nathaniel in *Pincher Martin*. The philosophy of *Lord of the Flies* is expanded, added to, solidified, and the symbols acquire additional meaning in the course of the process of examination, but the core of

---

34 Epstein, "Notes on *Lord of the Flies,*" p. 189.
thought and many of the emblems of that thought are established in *Lord of the Flies*. 
CHAPTER III

THE INHERITORS

One of the major steps in the continuing process and symbolism of Golding's work is found in The Inheritors, an imaginative re-enactment of the prehistorical confrontation between Neanderthal man and his evolutionary superior, homo sapiens, thus a re-enactment of one step in the descent of man through the evolutionary process. Like Lord of the Flies, The Inheritors is also the story of the Fall of Man, and it is a comment on the "natural state" of man. Golding is refuting the rationalists' belief that man's superior intelligence makes him "better." The Inheritors and Lord of the Flies serve as companion pieces because, while Lord of the Flies reveals the destructive tendencies which grow out of man's instinctual and irrational urges and are inherent in his nature, The Inheritors reveals, much more definitively, the inadequacy of rationality as a deterrent to those destructive tendencies. In fact, according to Golding, superior intelligence has merely enabled man to become more capable of inflicting destruction upon himself and others.
Golding believes *The Inheritors* to be his best novel, and if a novel should be valued according to the relation of the difficulty of its creation to the success of that creation, *The Inheritors* is a superb achievement. Until the last pages of the penultimate chapter, Golding's story is told through the delicately tuned senses and limited understanding of a man-like creature, a Neanderthal man, who is unable to draw conclusions or make analogies until he is faced with extinction. *The Inheritors* is an achievement of the imagination, and the reader is forced most of the time to suspend his reasoning power and use his imagination to the utmost. Golding's characterization and style are limited, as is the reader's understanding of what is taking place, but the very essence of the story demands such limitations. The reader is allowed, even called upon to rationalize enough to interpret visual description into intent and action; but Golding does not allow the reader to use all of his reason and knowledge gained from real-life experience too soon because he wants the reader to suspend judgment until the true nature of the people and the struggle in which they are involved can be revealed. He omits as best he can the possibility of an oversimplified, prejudiced judgment.

---

1 Bernard Dick, "The Novelist Is a Displaced Person": An Interview with William Golding," p. 481.
In *The Inheritors* Golding is again reacting to a popular belief about man's nature and to a specific literary expression of that belief. No analysis of the novel can be complete without reference to a work with which Golding was very familiar in his youth and which he re-read and re-evaluated as an adult. The epigraph which introduced *The Inheritors* is from H. G. Wells' *Outline of History*, and it represents, John Peter says, the kind of "smug prejudices" that Golding so deliberately "plays off against" in the irony of the novel:

> ... We know very little about the appearance of the Neanderthal man, but this . . . seems to suggest an extreme hairiness, an ugliness, or a repulsive strangeness in his appearance over and above his low forehead, his beetle brow, his ape neck, and his inferior stature. . . . Says Sir Harry Johnston, in a survey of the rise of modern man in his *Views and Reviews*: "The dim racial rememberance of such gorilla-like monsters, with cunning brains, shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and possibly cannibalistic tendencies, may be the germ of the ogre in folklore. . . ."

Golding called Wells' *Outline* the "rationalist gospel in excelsis," and he found it an adequate interpretation of evolutionary history:

---


By and by it seemed to me not large enough . . . too neat and slick. And when I re-read it as an adult I came across his picture of Neanderthal man, our immediate predecessors, as being the gross brutal creatures who were possibly the basis of the mythological bad man, whatever he may be, the ogre. I thought to myself that this is just absurd. What we're doing is externalizing our inside.4

Life as an adult, especially in a world where concentration camps and the bombing of millions of innocent people could take place, must have convinced Golding that the ogre is within man, not an extinct creature on the prehistorical end of the evolutionary chain.

Although Golding is obviously rejecting the doctrine of the rationalists, he is not dogmatic, nor does he present a simple struggle between good and evil, innocence and corruption. The novel can be seen as a "mythic counterpart to the fall of man and the loss of Eden,"5 but both the biblical fall of man and the historical thought expressed in the epigraph from the Outline serve as mere starting points: if innocence excluded the possibility of man's survival, then man, homo sapiens, must not be totally condemned for the very instincts which enabled him to survive, dark and destructive as they might be.

4Dick, William Golding, p. 38.
5Ibid., p. 38.
Proof of the unchanging Neanderthal man's inability to survive in a changing world is the fact that the People have been reduced to a small tribe of eight, two elderly people, four young adults, and two children. Mal, the Old Man of the tribe, is obviously in a weakened condition before he suffers his fall in the water which precipitates his death and foreshadows the "fall" of the People. One of the females, Fa, has lost a baby, and one may assume that she cannot bear children. Even before the People are confronted with the New Men, they have been decimated by natural catastrophes such as the great fire which Mal remembers with terror. Also, we must consider that perhaps Mal did not bring the People to their summer home too early, but that in the evolution of time, the seasons are changing and Mal has been unable to sense or adjust to the change. Although Mal's reference to a time "when it was summer all year round and the flowers and fruit hung on the same branch," seems to be an allusion to Eden, it might better be interpreted as a sign of the flux of the earth and its seasons which, when contrasted to Fa's determined assertion that "to-day is like yesterday and to-morrow," reveals the tragic irony of the fate of the People.

---

6 Golding, The Inheritors, p. 35.
7 Ibid., p. 46.
Irony and allegory are the principal tools of the novelist in *The Inheritors*, and the greatest irony of the novel is suggested by the title. Golding asserts that the meek and the innocent shall not, in fact did not, inherit the earth; for the People are innocent and the main character is the most innocent of the People. The People are creatures of the earth: they do not "possess" the earth, have not established mastery over nature. They "fit" into nature. When the People return to the spring shelter of the overhang, they fit their bodies into the grooves in the rock which have been formed by the bodies of the People from time out of mind. They do not make or keep tools; they return to use the natural tools, the bones and rocks, which are already in the overhang. Their religion is of the earth: "There was the great Oa. She brought forth the earth from her belly. She gave suck. The earth brought forth woman and woman brought forth the first man out of her belly."⁸ The People do not construct idols; they worship Oa in the form of the ice-women, great natural formations of ice which are just beginning to melt as the People return to the overhang. Because they worship the earth, the People accept death, not without sorrow, but

⁸Ibid., p. 33.
without bitterness. Man returns to the mother, earth, from whence he came. Mai dies and is placed, in the foetal position, in a grave which has been dug while he is still alive. Food and drink are buried with him to accompany him in his new life as he becomes once more a part of Oa's belly: "Oa has taken Mai into her belly."\(^9\)

Although the People accept death as a natural occurrence, they do not know aggressive violence as a part of their nature. In fact, the only "sin" in their consciousness is that of taking life. Meat is "sweet but wicked" because it comes from the dead body of one of Oa's creatures. The scene in which Fa and Lok take the body of a doe killed by a cat, and therefore bloodless, is heavy with the awareness of evil and shame and filled with repeated attempts to rationalize guilt: "A cat has sucked all her blood. There is no blame."\(^{10}\) Fa grunts and gasps as she tears the skin and guts of the doe. Shadows flit across Lok's face as he sees two huge birds circling over the kill. Lok and Fa feel a frantic urgency which has little to do with fear of the cat's return or of the hyenas because "the air between the rocks was forbidding with violence and sweat, with the rich smell of meat and wickedness." The People are near

---

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 91.

\(^{10}\)Ibid., pp. 53-54.
starvation and the doe is already dead; yet Lok feels the shadow of evil: "This is very bad. Oa brought the doe out of her belly." The People know evil and feelings of guilt, but there is none of the ogre in Golding's version of the Neanderthal man. Ironically, the cannibals are the New Men, the homo sapiens, who are described as having teeth that "remember the wolf."

Lok, and therefore the reader, lives through his senses. Not only does he have an acute sense of smell, one which can separate and identify smells even several days old, but, unlike man, he can inhibit his own scent. The ears of the People are not as closely attached to their heads as are man's; they can move towards the slightest hint of a sound. The irony of Lok's superior sense perception is that he is unable to understand much of what he perceives, and when Lok first sees a New Man throw a weapon at him, he sees only the man's arm move and the object change shape, hears the whiz and thud of the "twig." He fails completely to understand the intent of the action. Again, Lok's senses are so perceptive that he "becomes" whatever he is tracking: "So now the scent turned Lok into the thing that had gone before him."\(^{11}\) Lok becomes "Lok-other," but he

\(^{11}\textit{Ibid.}, \text{p. 77.}\)
knows the other "without understanding how it was that he knew" and without understanding more about the other than where he has been and that he is greedy and strong, characteristics he has already experienced with the cats.

The People have mental "pictures" which represent memory and limited thought. Lok has many words and few pictures and is, therefore, the least intelligent of the group (except, perhaps for Nil). The People are communal mentally as well as physically. When they mimic Mal as he struggles to reach the overhang, they become Mal; they are in total sympathy with Mal. When one of the People is describing a memory or a thought, the others often respond with "I have this picture" or "I do not have this picture": they are able to share everything, including thought. Often their minds become one mind in such a way that to modern man it might seem no mind: "one of the deep silences fell on them, that seemed so much more natural than speech, a timeless silence in which there were at first many minds in the overhang, and then perhaps no mind at all."12

Although the adults seem to be paired, Lok with Fa and Ha with Nil, Nil's comforting dream that she and Fa have lain with both Ha and Lok indicates that there are no cultural

12 Ibid., p. 34.
or religious restraints upon the sex act, no shame. Nil's baby is called the New One and is shared and cared for by all the People. There can be no real conflict among the People because they share a group consciousness. But, when the younger members of the group decide to obey Mal's order, which seems to them to be a "bad picture," they are revealing a dangerous inability to act independently for survival.

The communal instinct, the similarity and community of love and sympathy which governs every aspect of the People's existence, is the very defect in their nature which renders them helpless in comprehending the danger of the New Men. Lok's first reaction to knowledge of the New Men is joy and fascination. Pathetic irony is found in Lok's refusal to accept the evidence that Ha has been pushed into the swift current running into the fall: "They have changed words or shared a picture. Ha will tell us and I will go after him. . . . People understand each other." When one of the New Men hurls an arrow at Lok, Lok thinks the man is trying to give him something. On the other hand, we discover and can understand the terror the New Men experience when they first see the People. When Lok shouts at the New Men in his excitement, "Hoe man! . . . Hoe new people!"

\[13\] Ibid., pp. 71-72.
fire of the New Men is immediately extinguished and they disappear. The fear and suspicion which are so lacking in Lok are the very instruments of survival which drive the New Men to run or even kill first and satisfy curiosity only after safety is assured.

The New Men are already "fallen" men if, Golding is always implying, there was ever a time when rational man was innocent. And they have a life style, religious sentiment, and consciousness entirely alien to those of the People. Theirs is a totemic religion based on fear and the desire to hunt and kill successfully. A stag is the emblem of their religion, and the strength of their stag cult calls for blood sacrifice. Lok watches as Pine Tree gives a finger to the stag, and the harshness of the blaring stag call is emblematic of the New Men's terror of the unknown and the violence which that terror creates. From the struggle we observe between Marlan, the Old Man of the New Men, and the other members of the tribe, the religion of the New Men seems to be only as strong as the "magic" proves to be effective in providing food for the tribe or killing the "red devils" which they have come to fear.

The New Men have possessions, and we can see the progress they have made and the pain and tribulation that progress costs them as they make a frantic and backbreaking
effort to move their canoes over land to the sea. With possessions comes fear of loss so that the men must secure the canoes as they camp on the island. In fact, the New Men are very like their modern descendents: they have possessions which have become indispensable and are objects of pain and hard work; they have a structured society and a religion which involves fear and which does not protect them from their fear; they have the urge and the power to destroy; they even have an alcoholic beverage to which they turn in their fear and hunger.

Clearly then, the New Men are the "fallen" and the People the "unfallen," and part of the significance of the conflict between them is that the innocent must suffer a "fall" because the knowledge of evil and a new rationality are forced upon them. Golding's fiction is rarely without allegory and symbolism, and the chief emblems of the "fall" are the dead tree, the waterfall, the deep water of the river, and the logs which roll over the fall and out to sea. Even before we know the "good" things about the New Men, even before we really are able to identify with them, we feel the contradictory fear and attraction Lok feels each time he is drawn to them. Throughout the novel, the New Men
are associated with water: 14 "the other people with their many pictures were like water that at once horrifies and at the same time dares and invites a man to go near it." 15

A sign of the change in Lok is his new-found ability to make analogies:

The people are like a famished wolf in the hollow of a tree.
He thought of the fat woman defending the New One from the old man, thought of her laughter, of men working at a single load and grinning at each other.
"The people are like honey trickling from a crevice in the rock."

They had emptied the gap of its people with little more than a turn of their hands.
"They are like the river and the fall, they are a people of the fall; nothing stands against them." 16

But it is Fa who tastes more completely and much sooner of the "knowledge of good and evil" as she and Lok sit in the dead tree in the clearing and watch the New Men. While Lok is asleep, Fa watches the cannibalization of Liku in what was probably an orgy of fear and starvation. When Fa turns to speak to Lok after the ordeal, she unconsciously mimics the "fallen" as she tries to express the horror of what she has experienced:


15 Golding, The Inheritors, p. 126.

16 Ibid., p. 195.
A movement round her mouth—not a grimace or preparation for speech—set her lips fluttering like the lips of the new people; and then they were open again and still. "Oa did not bring them out of her belly."\(^{17}\)

Fa automatically and unconsciously becomes more like the fallen herself. She becomes more aggressive: she suggests that they throw stones at the New Men, and it is her idea to steal Tanakil, a homo sapiens child, in order to trade for the New One.

Lok's understanding comes more slowly and too late. His "fall" is gradually unfolded in terms of the emblems in the novel. The People are afraid of the deep water they must cross each year; and early in the novel, the description of the river includes the certainty that the water separating the island and the overhang "was eager to snatch them over the fall. Only some creature more agile and frightened would dare that leap."\(^{18}\) The threat to Lok and Fa involved in making that leap is a kind of "fall" they cannot conceive. Lok is increasingly willing to immerse himself in the water in order to satisfy his fascination for the New Men and later in order to rescue Liku and the New One. Later, as Fa and Lok cross the river, now agile in

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 173.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., pp. 40-41.
their terror, they use a bridge of logs, and just as the hollow logs of the New Men enable them to master the sea and progress into the future, the logs used by Lok and Fa will carry them to their destruction, into the deep waters of oblivion and extinction, but not before they experience the "deep waters" of the New Men's consciousness, a "consciousness born of fear"\textsuperscript{19} and knowledge. As Lok is crossing the river, he is aware of two Loks, an inside and an outside; and while the "inside" Lok remains innocent, hears "Mal's voice of the summer land," the "outside" Lok knows fear and prudence and hears the sound of the fall which fills his head as he watches the blood sacrifice of the New Men and hears the stag call which is "harsh and furious, full of pain and desire."\textsuperscript{20}

The vision of the murdered Old Woman, submerged in the deep water, reflects the "upside-downness" of Lok's world and the nightmarish quality of the "deep waters" of his new consciousness:\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
The weed-tail was shortening. The green tip was withdrawing up river. There was a darkness that was consuming at the other end. The darkness became a thing of complex shapes, of sluggish and dreamlike movement. Like the specks of dirt, it turned over but not aimlessly. It was touching near the root of the weed-tail, bending the tail, turning over, rolling up the tail towards him. The arms moved a little and the eyes shone dully as the stones. They revolved with the body, gazing at the surface, at the width of deep water and the hidden bottom with no trace of life or speculation. A skein of weed drew across the face and the eyes did not blink. The body turned with the same smooth and heavy motion as the river itself until its back was towards him with dreamlike slowness, rose in the water, came towards his face.  

Just as we have experienced the "peopleness" of Lok, lived through his senses and innocent consciousness, as he begins to "fall," to develop a new consciousness, we experience Lok, "upside-down over deep water." Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor explain the significance of the nightmarish rhythm of the passage above:

A formless thing disengages itself from the depths of the mind, becomes a dark spectre, rises with dreadful slowness, but "not aimlessly," and we are frozen, it is impossible to escape. It reveals the sudden intimations of terror; hides them. Then, slowly, relentlessly, it turns towards us the full horror of its face. And as we respond to this we become aware of the sense in which it is happening in Lok, not merely to him.  

22Golding, The Inheritors, p. 108.

The rhythm of the deep water and the river and the rolling body of the Old Woman is the rhythm of the terror in Lok's mind: "Innocence becomes aware of deep water, inside itself, inescapable."\(^{24}\)

Early in the novel, as Mal is remembering the horror of the great fire which apparently killed most of the People, a log moves past the People and slides noiselessly over the lip of the fall. After Lok has experienced the "other," he tells Fa, "The log killed Mal," referring to the "log that was not there" when they first crossed the river on their return to the summer home. Reference has already been made to the hollow logs of the New Men, logs which have eyes in the front to lead onward, and to the log-bridge which enables Lok and Fa to cross the river in their desperation. In the closing action of the novel, after Lok and Fa have sent the New Men into a frenzied flight from the "red devils," they are reunited, and flame and deep water and log are fused into a vision of terror and the sure knowledge of destruction: "Now is like when the fire flew away and ate up the trees. . . . They have gone over us like a hollow log. They are like winter."\(^{25}\) The New Men are as "terrible as the fire

\(^{24}\)Ibid., p. 190.

or the river," but they are as irresistible as they are destructive.

Fa "fell" first because of her superior intelligence. She goes over the fall literally as well, as she sits stunned on a log. Lok is left behind, alone, as the New Men move out to sea. Golding abruptly changes his point of view, and Lok is seen from a distance as a small, bowed creature resembling a red ape or squirrel. It is interesting to imagine here how modern men would react to the sight of this "strange creature, smallish, and bowed." If we could see Lok suddenly, with no more knowledge of the People than the New Men had, we would probably react in much the same way they did—with fear and suspicion and the urge to destroy that grows out of irrational fear of the unknown and the instinct for self-preservation. We would have the advantage of superior intelligence, but all evidence supports the suggestion that we would find reason inadequate in quieting our fears and would use it instead to find the quickest and best means of eliminating what we believed to be the source of our fear.

One of Golding's basic beliefs about the nature of man is that although man begins his life with a defective nature, he can avoid "falling further"; he must learn to control his defects and cultivate his equally natural assets.
Tuami, the artist of the stag cult, made the second "fall," and, like Lok, he is irrevocably changed. As Tuami tries to calculate some way to make the dug-out run against the wind and current, he is confused by the attempt to make another urgently-needed calculation:

But this was confusion. He rested his eyes on the back of his left hand and tried to think. He had hoped for the light as for a return to sanity and the manhood that seemed to have left them; but here was dawn--past dawn--and they were what they had been in the gap, haunted, bedevilled, full of strange irrational grief like himself, or emptied, collapsed, and helplessly asleep. It seemed as though the portage of the boats . . . from the forest to the top of the fall had taken them on to a new level not only of land but experience and emotion. The world with the boat moving so slowly at the centre was dark amid the light, was untidy, hopeless, dirty.26

The final irony of the men in the boat is that Marlan represents the old and the darkness which he attributes to the "red devils" and the trees on the shore where they "live." Tuami sees Marlan now as smaller and weaker, and the similarity between Marlan and the People is unmistakable: "The sun was blazing on the red sail and Marlan was red. His arms and legs were contracted, his hair stood out and his beard, his teeth were wolf's teeth and his eyes like blind stones."27 The description might have been taken

26 Ibid., pp. 224-225.
27 Ibid., p. 229.
from the image painted by the New Men themselves of the People. The New Men are taking with them the very fear which they have externalized in the form of the "red devils" and which is one with them. Further irony is provided by the spontaneous love and hope inspired in Tuami by the New One. Tuami is the true inheritor of the earth, and he realizes the futility of shaping a weapon against the fear they carry with them: "And who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world?" Tuami has a double legacy: although they will carry hate and fear with them and they are faced with a line of darkness which has no visible end, Tuami sees the answer and feels his confusion dissipate as he observes and shares the love Vivani has for the New One.

As we observe the red creature, abandoned and alone, make the final heart-breaking discovery of the horror of Liku's death, watch the tears roll down his hairy cheeks, and finally see him assume the foetal position to return to Oa's belly, as it seems must have been the destiny of his people, we feel a great sympathy for Lok and nostalgia for his great uncomprehending trust and the agony it cost him to lose that trust. But, as we experience Tuami's

---

28 Ibid., p. 231.
despair and confusion and willingness to love, we are compelled to identify with Tuami and feel a great sorrow for the men who are beginning a precarious journey haunted by fear and guilt.

The ideas and symbols in *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* are the essential elements in the Golding process. He has already added to his foundation of thought in *The Inheritors*: he adds a new dimension to the concept of Original Sin by proposing the concept that somehow the characteristics that we usually label as Original Sin are evolutionary necessities. This concept in no way, however, releases man, individual and collective, from the responsibility of controlling those characteristics; hence man's second "fall." The island motif, which is a very loose structure, has already been mentioned and is perhaps a key to the continuing implications of Golding's philosophy. The island in *Lord of the Flies* is unnamed and its inhabitants are threatened not only by their chaotic and savage violence, but also by the chaos and unpredictable violence of a major war; the New Men live on an island which is surrounded by the rushing currents, the mist and roar of the waterfall, and the terrifying red devils; the main characters in the remaining novels seem to live on or in self-created islands of greed, pride, emotional and ethical indifference, or...
simple confusion. It is almost as if the islands represent (in a very unspecific and maybe unintentional way) man's existential dilemma: man lives in an unpredictable and chaotic universe, and, as part of that universe, man's inner life, his very being, contains the irrational and chaotic. The trouble is that Golding's "heroes" do not use their free will to make the proper choices, the choices that will ennoble them and bring order and ethical life out of the chaos. One of the most constant strains in Golding's thought, initiated in these first two novels and continued in the following novels, is the absolute life-and-soul-saving necessity of self-knowledge out of which, Golding seems to be sure, will come the wisdom and the desire to assert the will to move man towards good and away from evil and self-destruction.
CHAPTER IV

PINCHER MARTIN AND FREE FALL

Since, according to Golding, "the shape of society must depend upon the ethical nature of the individual and not upon any political system however apparently logical or respectable,"¹ the defects of society can not only be traced to human nature in general, but they can be traced effectively and dramatically in one individual nature. That is precisely what Golding attempts to do in Pincher Martin (The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin) and Free Fall. The main characters in these novels are individual embodiments of the philosophy established in Lord of the Flies and The Inheritors. The emphasis in this case is upon free will and the individual responsibility of man to develop his natural goodness.

As we have seen, Golding believes that the evil in man's nature is compounded by his refusal to use his superior intelligence and free will to recognize and combat his propensity to sin. It is almost as if man has concentrated for so long on the intelligence which separates him from the rest of the animals that he can or will no longer

¹Golding, Lord of the Flies, p. 189.
recognize his own animal instincts, such as blood and sexual lust, greed, brutality, selfishness. In fact, Golding's greatest condemnation of man is his tendency to make himself his own god and justify the destruction he wrecks upon others and, ultimately, upon himself. The sin of greed, a particularly human evil, is perhaps the most appropriate sin Golding uses as representative of man's evil, because greed makes self all-important and necessitates loss or even destruction on the part of another person. It would certainly seem that greed is one of the major causes of man's increasing propensity and ability to destroy other men on a world-wide basis. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss Golding's use of the sin of greed, epitomized by the main character in Pincher Martin and exhibited by Sammy Mountjoy in Free Fall, and its rationale as types of evil in and representative of the destructive side of man's nature. Using an examination of the forces in man which destroy him, a few assumptions can be made concerning what Golding believes will save man.

In the graphically detailed account of Christopher Hadley Martin's excruciating struggle for survival on a lone rock in the middle of the sea, Golding presents man alone asserting self as god and denying God in the very face of God. Martin is appropriately characterized by the
nickname "Pincher" because he is a grabber. In the fast flashbacks so often consisting of no more than a few vivid words of dialogue, Martin is revealed to be the epitome of greed. He is, in civilian life, a professional actor, and, throughout his life, a professional user. He uses everyone he knows and every faculty he possesses to please himself, whether that means sleeping with the producer's wife to get a better acting part, using friends to escape serving in the war, or killing his best friend to keep him from marrying the girl for whom Martin has an obsessive lust.

The play of revealing flashbacks against Martin's agonies on the rock increases the reader's appreciation of Martin's super-human ego, which has been submerged totally in an all-consuming desire to satisfy his greed. Here is a man who will cling to his life and exaggerated sense of self-importance at all costs. In one flashback, a cuckolded producer lashes out with a hate-filled summary of Martin's personality. He says that of the Seven Deadly Sins, Martin can best play Greed, that, like Greed, Martin "takes the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best woman. He was born with his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab."\(^2\) The grasping hands, all-devouring mouth, and

\[^2\]William Golding, Pincher Martin (New York, 1956), p. 120.
selfish lust to which the producer refers become symbols of Martin's greed during his struggle on the rock.

Martin is attracted and repelled by the lobsters he "sees" near the rock. Hunger contracts "under his clothes like a pair of hands." He uses his hands in an attempt to carve a reality and rescue signal out of the rock. He uses his hands to tear food from the rock. In the end, he is reduced to a bodiless "centre" and a pair of red claws locked in a final, desperate attempt to grasp life.

In his previous life, Martin has used his charm and physical appeal to satisfy his lust and get what he wants professionally. (In four out of his six novels, Golding uses lust to show how one human can permanently harm or destroy another person through sexual exploitation.) Martin threatens to kill Mary if she will not succumb to him physically. He "loves" her because she attracts him physically and hates her because he can never possess her. His obsession for her increases when he learns she will marry his friend Nathaniel, about whom he has violently conflicting emotions. Martin hates Nat: "Christ, how I hate you. I could eat you. Because you fathomed her mystery, you had a right to handle her cheap tweed; because

\(^3\text{Ibid., p. 63.}\)
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.\textsuperscript{4}

And he loves Nat:

\begin{quote}
I do not want him to die! The sorrow and hate bit deep, went on biting. . . .
"Does no one understand how I feel?"

\ldots \ldots
"I am chasing after—a kind of peace.\textsuperscript{5}\ldots \ldots"
\end{quote}

Martin's conflicting emotions about Nat and Mary are especially significant because they exhibit better than anything else in Pincher Martin Golding's conviction that man, through his selfish and cruel acts, commits himself to a way of life which is both confining and increasingly damming. Christopher Martin wanted to love Nat, but he was trapped in life as he was on the rock. His greed, the pattern of life he has created for himself, has left him no choice. He is not a free man, and, apparently, to Golding loss of freedom is a permanent thing, not because God is unforgiving, but because man is, perhaps psychologically, incapable of altering his course once he has set it away from God.

But grabbing something with the hands or taking someone through lust is only a part of Golding's most significant and recurring motif in Pincher Martin: the eating motif. Christopher believes that he is simply carrying out a natural law for satisfying his greed: "The whole business of eating

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 100. \hfill \textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 105.
\end{flushright}
was peculiarly significant. . . . And of course eating with the mouth was only the gross expression of what was a universal process. You could eat with your cock or with your fists, or with your voice." Golding makes constant reference throughout the novel to eating, reducing Martin to a less-than-human creature gobbling and destroying his way through life. On the rock, Martin becomes "the mouth" or "the voice" shouting its fading identity into a "blotting-paper void." He forces into his mouth raw mussels and red blobs of jelly-like substance as he watches the petals of the anemones opening like a mouth. There is nothing and no one that he will refrain from eating to preserve self. The implication is that the evil in man, in this case greed, unless controlled by a willed concern for other men and, as we shall see, belief in God as a guide for conduct, dehumanizes man so that he becomes a gaping mouth or hardened, grasping claws with no identity at all.

The pivotal image of the eating motif is the story of the Chinese box. Just as the maggots eat the fish, then each other, leaving one fat maggot to be eaten as a Chinese delicacy, Chris is a fat maggot feeding himself to the discomfort and even destruction of others: "She's the

---

6Ibid., p. 88.
producer's wife, old man. Fat. White. Like a maggot with black eyes. I should like to eat you."\(^7\) The bitter producer who tells the story understands Chris, but Chris learns the full significance of the Chinese box on his rock. He is "alone on a rock in the middle of a tin box," and, as his death becomes more inevitable, he cries, "I'll live if I have to eat everything on this bloody box!"\(^8\) What the producer and Christopher have failed to recognize is that there is something larger than the fat maggot, which has, in truth, been fattened to be eaten itself. Golding reminds us with this grim story that even if we become the very best at destroying, there is something of which man is only a small part that will destroy man.

In fact, according to E. L. Epstein,\(^9\) Golding has placed Martin in the very mouth of Nature. Golding describes the rock as tooth-shaped: "A single point of rock, peak of a mountain range, one tooth set in the ancient jaw of a sunken world."\(^10\) Martin is horrified when he imagines himself lying on a row of teeth in the middle of the ocean: "I shall call those three rocks out there the Teeth. . . . No!

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 95. \(^8\)Ibid., p. 159. 
\(^10\)Ibid., p. 30.
Not the teeth!"¹¹ The reader is disturbed by Martin's haunting but vague feeling that there is something familiar about the rock as he feels the gap in his own mouth where a tooth has been extracted. The metaphor may be a bit forced, but the meaning is real. As Christopher "ate" the feelings and lives of others, he is "eaten"; his identity, mind, body are devoured by Nature, and Golding implies the warning that no amount of self-willed determination, even on the part of a man who declares himself to be Prometheus and Atlas, is sufficient to evade the inevitable.

No amount of intelligence or education can save the fallen man, either. Martin tells the sea at the beginning of his ordeal: "I don't claim to be a hero. But I've got health and education and intelligence. I'll beat you."¹² Education and intelligence have been Martin's chief tools for creating his identity, his pattern of life, and he uses them to retain his identity. He names the rock formations on the island and places seaweed in patterns in an attempt to stamp his identity on the rock: "Men make patterns and superimpose them on Nature."¹³ Martin has committed himself to rationality and greed, and when he is faced with

¹¹Ibid., pp. 90-91. ¹²Ibid., p. 77. ¹³Ibid., p. 108.
irrationality and cosmic greed, he loses his identity: "It was uncertain of its identity because it had forgotten its name. It was disorganized into pieces."\(^{14}\)

Golding himself says that he is searching for a cure,\(^{15}\) which presupposes belief that a cure for the sickness of society does exist. Nathaniel is the key to the cure. He is Simon of \textit{Lord of the Flies} recreated. He is the voice of God warning against the "sort of heaven we invent for ourselves after death, if we aren't ready for the real one,"\(^{16}\) and it is through Nathaniel that Martin is offered and refuses salvation. Nat predicts that Chris has not long to live, that man, Martin especially, must turn to God to learn to live that he might die into heaven. Through Martin's conflict with Nathaniel over the "technique of dying into heaven," Golding damns Martin for not only turning away from God, but also for using God to create a rationale for his greed. Martin defiantly confronts God in the image of Nathaniel:

\begin{quote}
You gave me the power to choose and all my life you led me to this suffering, because my life was my own. . . . Yet, suppose I climbed away from the cellar over the bodies of used and defeated people,
\end{quote}

\(^{14}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 167.


\(^{16}\) \textit{Golding, Pincher Martin}, p. 183.
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?\textsuperscript{17}

Martin has admitted his guilt: "Because of what I did I am an outsider and alone,"\textsuperscript{18} but God is to be cursed because He gave Martin the intelligence and free will which led to his guilt. As Pincher curses God and His compassion, Nathaniel's warning is fulfilled. The black lightning spreads, releasing Martin from his self-created existence.

The student of Golding might be presumptuous in assuming that Golding is so orthodox that he believes in a biblical kind of heaven, but he surely believes that greed and selfishness not only bring about destruction for men in society, but also private hells for individuals. The reality of a hell on earth assaults the reader with startling impact as the final scene reveals that Martin's entire gruesome struggle has been a sort of psychic hallucination taking place either in the instant it took Martin to die or even after his death. Martin's ego was so great, so determined to exist at all costs, that he did create his own grotesque hell. If Golding is not presenting hope for salvation in the sense of an afterlife, he emphatically states man must return to God, whatever that entails theologically, and

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 197. \textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 181.
use his intelligence and free will to take care not to destroy
the lives of others. This hope, although negatively expressed,
is reinforced by Sammy Mountjoy's search for answers to his
own failure to exercise his free will properly in *Free Fall*.

Sammy Mountjoy is telling his own story in *Free Fall*. There are two major differences between *Pincher Martin* and
*Free Fall*. First, the main character of *Free Fall* is not
isolated physically; he is living in the ordinary society
of men, goes to school, chooses a profession, has a family.
He is only slightly, if at all, more selfish than the
average man. Second, Sammy is not a very good person, but
he knows he had lost his freedom by his own misuse of free
will. As Sammy puts it, he "would sooner be good than
clever,"\(^\text{19}\) and yet he has been unable to regain the
innocence he believes he had as a boy.

Sammy's story is of a search for two things: the moment
he lost his freedom and a pattern which can be satisfactorily
and permanently applied to the disordered and confusing
experiences of life which comprise our knowledge of the
universe. Sammy wants to wear a hat: "I have hung all
systems on the wall like a row of useless hats. They do

not fit. They come in from outside, they are suggested patterns, some dull and some of great beauty. But I have lived enough of my life to require a pattern that fits over everything I know. . . ."

Golding shows his understanding of man's irrational animal fear of the unknown, out of which probably much of man's brutality and instinct for self-preservation emerge, in childhood recollections of both Christopher Martin and Sammy Mountjoy. Martin remembers a dark cellar which frightens and lures him as a child and from which he has fled all of his life. E. C. Bufkin says that the cellar "not only supports the enveloping metaphor of death, but it also augments the meaning of that metaphor. The cellar is a place of death, a source of fear." Sammy lived in a ghetto of filth, drunkenness, and disorder from which he was shielded only temporarily by his mother. He spends the rest of his youth under the guardianship of a paranoid and presumably homosexual clergyman in whose house "bed meant darkness and darkness the generalized and irrational terror."
Martin's greed and rationality become his "pattern" for ordering his universe, but greed and rationality are simply inadequate. And it is within the framework of Sammy's search for patterns and that moment of "free fall" that we discover his particular sin of greed.

In his essay on Pincher Martin, E. C. Bufkin defines lust as sexual greed. Lust is the chief expression of Sammy Mountjoy's sin of greed, and, like Martin, Sammy uses his rationality and denial of God to justify his selfish pursuit of sexual satisfaction. Sammy is forced to reject one of the Western world's most popular "systems" while he is still a school boy. Miss Pringle relentlessly persecutes Sammy, attacking his genuine curiosity about the Bible and his skillful ability to draw, while she teaches that God is love. She represents the world of Moses and miracle, and as a lonely and aesthetically sensitive boy, Sammy is attracted to Christianity. There is nothing of the miraculous or loving about Miss Pringle, however, and the young learn by example.

Nick Shales, another teacher, is a Rationalist, an atheist who exhibits all of the "Christian" qualities Miss Pringle does not. He is loving and patient, and he shows the boy miracles in test tubes. Mountjoy, the adult, realizes that

---

his acceptance of scientific naturalism and rejection of Christianity were little more than turning towards a loving friend.

Golding gives several possibilities for the moment of Sammy's loss of free will, a moment of decision so selfish, so greedy, that it would establish his pattern of behaviour from that time on. As Sammy recalls the various possibilities, desecration of a church altar as a boy, failure to become a fighting soldier in the war, crying for help in the Nazi prison camp, he answers his own question, "Not here."

Only in regard to one affair in his life is Sammy unable to say "Not here." When Nick Shales converts young Sammy to scientific naturalism, Mountjoy immediately takes advantage of what Golding believes is the inherent danger of Rationalism as a pattern applicable to all experience. Sammy decides that if there is no God, "if man is the highest, is his own creator, then good and evil is decided by majority vote. Conduct is not good or bad, but discovered or got away with."24 Self becomes God, and the chief function of that self is to satisfy itself. But Sammy is given a chance to avoid his "free fall." Immediately preceding Sammy's momentous decision, his headmaster gives him a bit of advice

24Golding, Free Fall, p. 197.
which sums up Golding's message in *Free Fall*. He warns:
"If you want something enough, you can always get it provided you are willing to make the appropriate sacrifice. Something, anything. But what you get is never quite what you thought; and sooner or later the sacrifice is always regretted." When Sammy asks himself what he will sacrifice for sexual possession of Beatrice Ifor, he answers "Everything." He will pursue her at all costs, and the cost includes more than the fall of Sammy Mountjoy. It is at the end of his recollection of this decision that Sammy asks himself "Here?" and has no answer.

Sammy's pursuit of Beatrice is relentless and calculated: "Pull yourself together. You know what you want. You decided. Now move towards that consummation step by step." He has dedicated himself to imposing "his will upon another being who is patently incapable of conformity with his egotistical desire," a fact which Mountjoy realizes shortly after the "consummation." Beatrice is a beautiful but insipid school girl who is incapable of reciprocating Sammy's passion and who submits to his lust and possession.

---

of her entire being because he is "dying of love" for her, because he promises to marry her, and because his will is simply greater than hers.

Sammy's sexual greed destroys the slender fabric of Beatrice's personality. He tries to resist the temptation to abandon her; he tells himself for several years that there is a "secret," some intelligence or depth of feeling, behind Beatrice's dog-like devotion and clinging, passionless body. Golding creates in the character of Sammy Mountjoy an ordinary person who exhibits only an average amount of selfishness by allowing the reader to agonize with Sammy in his attempts to remain faithful to the person he knows he has exploited. Not only is Beatrice pitiful in her terror of losing Sammy, but Sammy is perhaps more pitiful in his guilt and indecision. In a passage reminiscent of Sartre's No Exit, Golding declares that the fallen "are forced here and now to torture each other. . . . Those who lose freedom can watch themselves forced helplessly to do this in daylight until who is torturing who is?"^29 Beatrice is, in his mind, like a fatally wounded cat which was "draggling away and screaming and demanding to be killed."^30 Sammy dreams that he and Beatrice are threatened by rising water as Beatrice runs

^29 Golding, Free Fall, p. 102.

^30 Ibid., p. 114.
after him. The water never reaches him, but it "rises round her, always rises." Sammy can do nothing but run away: "I could no nothing but run away. I could not kill the cat and stop it suffering. I had lost my power to choose. I had given away my freedom."

Only in one scene in the entire novel does Golding hint at the way to salvation, a way sadly lost to most men because they have built for themselves traps of isolation through their self-willed alienation from God and other men. When Sammy cries out for help in terror of the dark room in the prison camp, a room reminiscent of Pincher Martin's cellar, he realizes that Rationalism is no protection against the irrational fear of the unknown. He remembers later that his cry was like that of an animal which screams in terror without knowledge of or belief in anything to save it. But, he says, "the very act of crying out changed the thing that cried," and in the case of Sammy, he began to search for something outside of himself to answer the cry.

Sammy's experience upon release approaches a kind of mystical revelation:

\[31\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 116. \quad \text{32Ibid.}, \ p. \ 166.\]
I lifted my arms, saw them too, and was overwhelmed by their unendurable richness as possessions, either arm ten thousand fortunes poured out for me. Huge tears were dropping from my face into dust; and this dust was a universe of brilliant and fantastic crystal, that miracles supported in their being.

He feels a surge of love for the beauty of the universe and is reborn by that love: "... I was visited by a flake of fire, miraculous and pentecostal; and fire transmuted me, once and for ever." He realizes once and for ever that the force of belief in God and that of dependence on scientific data form lines that intersect in man, that although he, Sammy, is forced to accept the scientific naturalism which he chose so long ago, he will always cling to the glory of the world of miracle.

Sammy’s rationalization of his temporary rebirth is Golding’s message to society: the crucial substance so necessary to man’s salvation is "a kind of moral vitality, not the relationship of a man to remote posterity nor even to a social system, but the relationship of individual man to individual man." There is, along with the evil in man’s nature, a natural generosity which can be cultivated, used to join in the brotherhood of man, or given away. By committing acts of selfishness, by using free will to make

---

33 Ibid., p. 167.  
34 Ibid., p. 169.  
a god, man alienates himself from his natural goodness, God, and man. Sammy's loss of freedom, his "free fall," was not so much the destruction of Beatrice Ifor—surely that single act could be atoned for—but the act of sacrificing his will to satisfy his greed. Once that sacrifice was made, Sammy was as helpless as Beatrice.

The great feeling of well-being which has accompanied Sammy's rebirth is destroyed when he recognizes that he has given his goodness away, as most men do. The light of the newly discovered glory of the world has illuminated Sammy's own nature for him, and "to live with such a thing was unendurable." As a result of this revelation, Sammy wonders how and where he lost his freedom and begins the search described in Free Fall.

Golding would certainly consider the old adage, "It's never too late," to be a cosmic lie. Apparently, it is all too often too late. Man's inability to recover his goodness—his inability to forgive or be forgiven—is revealed in two confrontation scenes. When Sammy visits Beatrice in the mental hospital where she is institutionalized for life, sees her close-cropped hair, bulky figure and empty, "nittering" eyes, his contribution to her destruction seems

36 Ibid., p. 171.
to be the single most important act for which he wishes atonement. Beatrice is not capable of forgiving, and Sammy is merely faced with his dilemma again.

Sammy is horrified, sickened, at the sight of Beatrice and recognizes his guilt, but is still unable to feel deeply for anyone. Although he understands the necessity to reach out to other men, that "moral vitality" has been killed in his nature. Just as Pincher Martin was unable to commit himself to love of Nathaniel, Sammy is helplessly indifferent as Beatrice's psychiatrist and his friend, Kenneth, admits his love for Sammy's wife and his desire to be a part of what they have together. He is reaching out to Sammy but finds no response, no warmth of human caring. Dr. Halde of the prison camp was accurate in his definition of Sammy's inability to relate passionately to anything or anyone: "Oh, yes, you are capable of a certain degree of friendship and a certain degree of love, but nothing to mark you out from the ants or the sparrows."\(^{37}\)

The second confrontation takes place between Sammy and Miss Pringle. In this case, Sammy visits Miss Pringle in an effort to forgive her and in an attempt to span the gulf of alienation which so defines his life. The idea of inescapable,
mutual torture is repeated as Sammy imagines what he will tell her: "We were two of a kind, that is all. You were forced to torture me. You lost your freedom somewhere and after that you had to do to me what you did." Men are not the innocent or the wicked, but the guilty. The victims have to offer forgiveness to their torturers because elsewhere the victims have victimized, and someone has got to break "the awful line of descent." But, Miss Pringle is beyond forgiveness because she is completely blind to the evil in her nature. She had lost her freedom and constructed an imaginary past in which she was one of Sammy's inspirations. Sammy is unable to bridge the gap because Miss Pringle is unable to receive the forgiveness he wants so badly to give, and in his life he will be unable to bridge the gap between the world of miracle and the world of science: "Her world was real, both worlds are real. There is no bridge."  

As Golding sees society, then, men stumble down the blind alleys of systems and patterns in order to apply them to a patternless universe and account for the obvious evil in society. The patterns change from century to century, but the failure and frustration remain constant.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 228.  \(^{39}\) Ibid., p. 230.
The repugnant idea that man is instinctively destructive—greedy, brutal, selfish—is replaced by the more pleasing concept that society creates barriers, such as poverty, war, and ignorance, to man's natural goodness. Destruction goes on, but individual man is able to shrug off personal responsibility, even for his own damnation.

Support for the idea that Golding's view of man is not thoroughly pessimistic has little to stand upon in Pincher Martin and Free Fall. This is partially true probably because Pincher Martin is the better of the two novels. Every action on the rock, the dialogue in the flashbacks, the sensually and emotionally arresting imagery, all work together perfectly to tell the clear-cut story of a greedy man who willfully committed evil deeds and was damned for them. The story of Sammy Mountjoy is not so clear-cut, as it could not be. Pincher Martin is a statement of something: the destructive evil in man's nature; Free Fall is the working-out of something much more difficult to pinpoint: at what moment an individual man irrevocably loses his freedom.

Many of the childhood recollections in Free Fall are difficult to apply directly to the adult who is telling the story and to the purpose of his story. They are included, it seems, to show that Sammy was a good little boy, that, although we are all born with the taint of Original Sin, we
are endowed with at least a kind of mortal innocence and grace (as opposed to the pure good existing in the Being of God), but they sometimes disturb the unity of the novel. Sammy has told his story in a value sequence rather than a time sequence. His story is constructed as a memory: which is, "a sense of shuffle fold and coil, of that day nearer than that because more important, of that event mirroring this, or those three set apart, exceptional and out of the straight line altogether." The confusion sometimes resulting from what often merely seems to be lack of unity dissipates the force of Sammy's more subtle and hopeful questions and discoveries, whereas the brutal and more primitive actions of Pincher Martin (and Lord of the Flies) make all too explicit the pessimistic view of man which is part, we have to remember, of an earlier step in Golding's process.

In Golding's compassion for his characters, in his creation of thoroughly good characters (for example, Simon in Lord of the Flies and Nathaniel in Pincher Martin), and in his own statements in his works, Golding reveals himself to be a kind of "hopeful" pessimist, one who is ever willing to change his mind. Free Fall is a step in his process of

---

Ibid., p. 2.
discovery, and in *Free Fall*, Golding tells us:

There is hope. I may communicate in part; and that surely is better than utter blind and dumb; and I may find something like a hat to wear of my own. Not that I aspire to complete coherence. . . . But I may find the indications of a pattern that will include me, even if the outer edges trail off in ignorance.\(^1\)

For those who expect to find some truth about the destiny of man in Golding's literature, there remains the hope that he will find the pattern which includes all men and that he will communicate it to us, even "in part."

\(^1\)Golding, *Free Fall*, p. 5.
There is no doubt that there is a process working throughout Golding's novels. The problem in defining that process is that Golding seems to be moving from clarity to obscurity. In a way, he is; rather, he is moving from simplicity to complexity. He is moving from paradigm to paradox as he leaves fable behind: his last three novels are much more fictional than his first three. Fable requires a commitment to try to tell a specific moral truth about human beings; the novelist takes a stand, usually in terms of black and white.\footnote{Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, \textit{William Golding: A Critical Study}, p. 167.} Fiction allows the novelist to show the whole picture of human life, a picture which may include different and contradictory truths existing and operating side by side as they do in real life. \textit{Free Fall} represents a significant step forward in Golding's process of discovery, and if \textit{Free Fall} is more obscure than \textit{Pincher Martin}, it is because the reality perceived by Sammy Mountjoy is more obscure, more ambiguous, and probably much closer to real-life experience. Whereas the being of Pincher Martin is
static, representing a simple example of the manifestation of evil in one man's nature, Sammy Mountjoy represents man becoming as well as being. Sammy asks questions which are not even suggested in Pincher Martin. Sammy changes during the process of the novel. We not only observe Sammy's "fall" through the real-life flashbacks of his daily experience (as opposed to the merely emblematic flashbacks in Pincher Martin), but we discover with him in the final pages of Free Fall that the worlds of objective rationality and dark, "incommunicado" mystery, that the worlds of good and evil, are each a part of man's world and of his nature, are each real, and "there is no bridge." The Spire is not so much a step further in Golding's process as it is a corollary, an expansion, and a fusion of the vision we experienced in Free Fall. The main character in The Spire is Jocelin, Dean of the Cathedral Church of the Virgin Mary, and his sins are pride and self-deception. Dean Jocelin has an obsessive determination to fulfill what he believes to be God's will as revealed to him in a vision in which a magnificent four-hundred-foot spire, a "diagram of prayer," is to be built on top of the cathedral. But Jocelin and his master

\[2\text{Ibid., p. 165.}\]

\[3\text{Golding, Free Fall, p. 230.}\]
builder, Roger Mason, learn early in the construction that the church is built on almost no foundations and on swampy ground. The evil of Jocelin's pride and self-deception is compounded by his willingness to destroy the lives of at least four people, to destroy the religious atmosphere of his church, and to destroy himself physically and spiritually. Jocelin's only redemption, if he is redeemed at all, is found in his second, "real," vision at the end of the novel in which he sees, as Sammy saw, that human nature, human life, and therefore human endeavor contain good and evil like leaves on the same plant. Jocelin learns that good and evil are inseparable in any human being and in his own work of pride, the spire.

Jocelin exhibits his inordinate pride early in the novel when he tells his mute artist, Gilbert, who is carving the four stone heads of Jocelin which are to adorn the spire, that he, Jocelin, may not seem to be as busy as everyone else but that, like the stone pillars in the crossways, he is actually supporting the church himself. He tells Roger Mason that he is going to thrust Roger upward by his will, which is God's will. What we and Jocelin learn later is that he is more like the pillars than he suspected in his pride: the pillars are hollow, filled with rubble, and not at all strong enough to bear, without bending, the massive weight of the spire. Juxtaposed to Jocelin's conversation
with Gilbert is a conversation between two of the church's deacons:

"Say what you like; he's proud."
"And ignorant."
"Do you know what? He thinks he's a saint! A man like that!" ⁴

Although we are forced to see almost all of the other characters' reactions to Jocelin through his eyes, it is obvious and must be significant that none of his fellow churchmen has faith in Jocelin or his proud vision. In fact, at the end of the novel, Jocelin's confessor, Father Anselm, tells him that it had been an ordeal to listen to the "partial, self-congratulatory confessions,"⁵ which have indicated Jocelin's lack of humility.

Golding is a master at injecting the crucial elements of his novel into the most seemingly incidental description or chance remarks made by the characters during moments when the tension of the novel is unusually relaxed. In the opening action of the novel, Jocelin reveals a dangerous complacency as he watches the rays of the sun play on the dust in the cathedral. The dust creates an illusion of dimension and "solid sunlight," and Jocelin smilingly observes "how the mind touches all things with law, yet

⁵ Ibid., p. 194.
deceives itself as easily as a child."\(^6\) His entire life as revealed in *The Spire* is a conflict between real and distorted vision, and until he is forced to re-examine his life and motives realistically, his is always the distorted vision. His refusal to look at things as they really are is evidenced time and time again through his struggles with Roger Mason over the construction of the spire. Roger tries to make Jocelin look down at the church, to see it as it is, rather than always upward, where he can see only his mental projection of the spire. Jocelin's distorted vision is the result of his pride and self-deception; and in a novel tense with irony and the conflict of human vision and will, one of the most pathetic ironies is that Jocelin has apparently mistaken a normal feeling of exultation and communion with God for a vision worthy of great expenditure in both money and human life. When Jocelin asks Father Adam to read the account of his vision, Father Adam is horrified to discover that Jocelin never even understood the process of prayer: "They never taught you to pray!"\(^7\) The worst irony of all is that not only was Jocelin so impoverished intellectually and spiritually that he failed to understand prayer, but also that the prayer which resulted in his vision was intended

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 6. \(^7\)Ibid., p. 188.
to remove Jocelin's pride in "his" building: "I was young, and I took a monstrous pride in this great house of mine. I was all pride--." Jocelin, no matter how consciously sincere he was, had merely found in his "vision" an acceptable outlet for his pride.

But the fabric of Golding's irony is never a simple weave; there are many ironies in the distorted conception of Jocelin's vision. Another irony is that his vision is also the result of another kind of pride: the certain conviction that he has been chosen by God to do His will. The spire is the end of a search to discover how Jocelin might fulfill God's will, his great pride telling him that his work must be something special, something outside the ordinary vocation of the priesthood. He tells his aunt, a known paramour of the late king and the person from whom he has received enormous sums of money for construction of the spire, that he would not allow her to be buried in the sacred ground of the cathedral because "there's a sense in which your body would--forgive me--defile it." As Lady Alison observes Jocelin's own defilement of the church and hears his arrogant explanation that he is one of God's chosen men, she reveals the truth: she, not God, chose him to be Dean of the

---

8Ibid., p. 184. 9Ibid., p. 176.
cathedral—and in the bed of the king at that.

Jocelin's single-minded determination to complete the spire at any cost to himself and others is reminiscent of the moment of Sammy Mountjoy's "fall" in which he decides that he will sacrifice everything to possess Beatrice Ifor. The difference in the two characters is that Jocelin knows all along that he is destroying innocent people; worse, that he is forcing them to "fall" spiritually. But, Jocelin is as isolated from other human beings as all of Golding's "fallen" characters are. Jocelin speaks abruptly—and then not at all—to those who cannot help him with his spire. For example, he is completely indifferent to the complaints of Pangall, the church caretaker, that the crude workmen are constantly tormenting him, making fun of his deformity, and, in general, ruining his life and the peace of his cottage and home life. Jocelin is indifferent to the fact that Pangall loves the church and, like the churchmen, does not want to see it defiled and destroyed by the pagan workmen. And he is irritated by Pangall's warning that they have already killed a man; Jocelin is coldly indifferent to any opinion or bit of knowledge which in any way threatens construction of the spire. Jocelin's inability to relate to human beings outside the sphere of his monomania is especially true in his relations with his spiritual "brothers," the other clergymen: he is
condescending to Father Adam and calls him Father Anonymous, and he forces Father Anselm, who has opposed building the spire, to guard the "sanctity" of the cathedral, even though the priest's lungs and feelings are inflamed by the dust created by the builders.

Many times during the construction of the spire, Jocelin is faced with what he calls the "cost of building materials," and each time he considers no cost too great: "I didn't know how much you would cost up there, the four hundred feet of you. I thought you would cost no more than money. But still, cost what you like." Early in the construction, Jocelin realizes that Goody, wife of the deformed and impotent Pangall and his "adopted" child of God, and his master builder are hopelessly attracted to each other: "He saw they were in some sort of a tent that shut them off from all other people, and he saw how they feared the tent, both of them, but they were helpless." In the midst of his disgust, indignation, and hurt, Jocelin discovers that Pangall is impotent and that Roger and his wife, Rachel, are unable to find sexual fulfillment in their marriage. He knows the inevitability of sin and tragedy in any situation in which the four people are kept together, and he has the

10 Ibid., p. 31. 11 Ibid., p. 52.
insight and the power to help them avoid the tragedy. He feels a momentary surge of compassion for Goody, but another knowledge, terrible and strong, overpowers him: "She will keep him here."\textsuperscript{12} Roger Mason is an indispensable "building material" without which the spire cannot be built, and if the damnation of his and Goody's souls and the destruction of their lives and those of their mates are necessary, Jocelin is willing to sacrifice them. That he has not the right is never a consideration because his will is God's will. He tells Roger: "D'you think you can escape? You're not in my net--oh yes, Roger, I understand a number of things, how you are drawn, and twisted, and tormented--but it isn't my net. It's His. We can neither of us avoid this work."\textsuperscript{13} The net destroys them both: Roger becomes first a screaming, mooing creature who leaves the spire before it is completed, but too late to save himself. He ends blind, dumb, and mindless, the result of an abortive suicide attempt; Jocelin ends life as a physically broken man of God, a "stinking corpse," who has lost his God.

One of the most exciting and arresting aspects of Golding's art is his ability to use the third person point of view and yet almost disappear as the authorial narrator.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 59. \textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 115.
The *Inheritors* is much more than a simplistic fable chiefly because of this ability to make the reader experience sensations, emotions, and knowledge as the characters experience them. Thus, often the final action of a Golding novel or the denouement of a particular conflict will call for a complete re-evaluation of what we have already learned or, rather, perceived without understanding completely. This is especially true as we experience Jocelin's expanding awareness of what the spire means to him. His self-deception protects him from the knowledge that the construction of the spire is an outlet for something far outside the sphere of spiritual glorification or pride. The spire is obviously a phallic symbol; the earliest description of Jocelin's vision likens the church to a man lying on his back:

> The nave was his legs placed together, the transepts on either side were his arms outspread. The choir was his body; and the Lady Chapel, where now the services would be held, was his head. And now also, springing, projecting, bursting, erupting from the heart of the building, there was its crown and majesty, the new spire.14

All of the words in the phrase used to describe the spire, "springing, projecting, bursting, erupting," connote sexuality, and we are led to suspect early in the novel that Jocelin's obsessive determination to have the spire at any

---

cost is connected to the stirrings of his suppressed sexuality and physical desire for Goody Pangall. We are only allowed to suspect, though. Golding, again, is very scrupulous in revealing to us glimpses of the unconscious mind which cannot be immediately interpreted as much as experienced so that we are forced to suspend judgment. One good example of those glimpses of the unconscious mind is found in the moment immediately after Jocelin learns of the attraction between Goody and Roger and of the lack of sexual fulfillment in Roger's marriage. He feels as if he has received a blow in the groin, "so that he jerked out a laugh that ended in a shudder."15 He cries out, "Filth! Filth!" in what must be a response to his own sexual stirrings as much as to the potential immorality of others. Another direct and more revealing result of Jocelin's new knowledge, including knowledge of Pangall's impotence, is the dream in which he seems to reveal a fear of impotence or a resentment of his celibacy:

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 Rachel, 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

15 Ibid., p. 55.
worked at the building, tormenting him so that he writhed on the marsh in the warm water, and cried aloud. He woke in the darkness, full of loathing.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 59-60.}

Jocelin identifies with the church, and in his obsession that the church should have a spire is the sublimation of his own desire to "have a spire," to possess Goody physically. Just as Jocelin has transformed the fever and pain in his back, which is tuberculosis of the spine, into a "good" angel who warms and uplifts him during the difficulties of the construction, he transforms his lust for Goody into a "bad" angel, and finally Satan, who visits him and torments him in the form of Goody and stands, with her blazing red hair, between him and God. In his dream, it has been "only Satan" who "worked" on the building. The others have tried to deny him his spire and, therefore, his manhood. But, some time and a great deal more destruction have to pass before Jocelin's lust reveals itself to him in his conscious awareness.

Other characters, through overt speech or action, reinforce the sexual meaning of the spire. In the violent scene before the murder of Pangall, which is, according to Mark Kindead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, an act of propitiation by the pagan workmen in which they are killing not only Misshapenness,
but also Impotence, in the form of the misshaped and impotent Pangall, one of the workmen holds the model of the spire obscenely between his legs. And later, in his despair and bitterness, Roger shouts at the spire, "Fall when you like, me old cock!" Whether Roger realizes how close he has come to the truth we do not know, but Jocelin finally realizes what the spire has meant to him subconsciously. He has a vision in which Goody comes to him "naked in her red hair. She was smiling and humming from an empty mouth." She is speechless and faceless, and Jocelin knows at last that she is his "devil" and that he has lusted after her body, which has no spiritual identity at all. That discovery has been gradually unfolded also in terms of one of Golding's recurring symbols.

Jocelin's lust and the destruction that unacknowledged lust has wrought upon everyone involved, as well as his colossal pride and self-deception, can be traced by his steadily increasing awareness of the "cellarage" of his own being. The "cellar" as symbol occurs in Pincher Martin and Free Fall, and it becomes more defined in each novel. Pincher Martin sees the "cellar" as a place of death.

---


corruption, and darkness out of which he has crawled over the lives of other people. The "cellar" suggests fear and chaos and mortality, and, ironically, Martin spends his entire life running away from the "cellar," which is actually a part of himself. For Sammy Mountjoy, the "cellar" seems to represent his childhood terror of the dark, the irrational fear of the unknown; Sammy's "cellar" is chaotic and evil. It is his fear of the damp, dark cellar which causes him to break down in the Nazi prison camp and which enables—in fact forces—him to understand his own nature, hence the nature of man. Unlike Martin, Sammy realizes that the "cellar" cannot be escaped, that it must be acknowledged and controlled. The "cellar" in The Spire is associated with the stink of the pit, the rising flood waters which unsettle the bodies long-buried underneath the church, and, most important, the appetites of mortal flesh, of which the spire is both an affirmation and a denial.

That is, Jocelin identifies entirely with the church: the spire is the highest pinnacle of the building, and when Jocelin climbs up the ladder to the dizzying heights of the spire, he is climbing away from the cellarage of the church and of his being; he is entering, he thinks, the spiritual world and leaving the wicked world of the flesh down below in the city and the cellar. But, as Jocelin discovers, the
"cellarage" cannot be avoided because his vision of the spire grows at least partially out of the "cellarage" of his own lust.

When Jocelin sees the open pit in the crossways on the spot where he saw his vision, we find him, like Lok in The Inheritors, upside-down and staring with horror at what will come to represent a new consciousness. He sees "some form of life; that which ought not to be seen or touched, the darkness under the earth, turning, seething, coming to the boil." He is reminded of Doomsday and imagines "the damned are stirring, or the noseless men turning over and thrusting up; or the living, pagan earth unbound at last and waking. . . ." The "pagan earth" uncovered by the open pit reflects his "cellarage," his physical urges, "unbound at last and waking"; and, in his aversion to those urges, he is nauseated and "racked with spasms." Jocelin has no real taste for mortal life, no capacity to embrace the real world of real people as God's creation, good and bad; or, rather, perhaps he is too attracted by the world of the flesh and therefore he has rejected that world all the more harshly. He is, from the beginning, alienated from his fellow man, and the irony of his vocation is that he has used the church

\[19\] Ibid., p. 74.  
\[20\] Ibid., p. 75.
and his spire to escape from people and reality. The fears and desires, even the souls, of the people surrounding him are really unimportant, and he feels that "the renewing life of the world" is a "filthy thing, a rising tide of muck"\(^{21}\) and sees the earth as a "huddle of noseless men grinning upward" in which "there are gallows everywhere, the blood of childbirth never ceases to flow, nor sweat in the furrow."\(^{22}\) The church is the only good thing on the earth, and yet Jocelin, by trying to deny in himself the urge which renews life, has been very effective in defiling and destroying what he believes to be the only hope for man's salvation.

The full meaning of the "cellarage" is made clear by Jocelin himself. In a scene reminiscent of the scenes in Free Fall in which Sammy returns to Nick Shales, Rowena Pringle, and Beatrice Ifor in order to give or receive forgiveness, Jocelin goes to Roger Mason to ask forgiveness. He explains to Roger that the "cellarage" is a part of himself; "I'm a building with a vast cellarage where the rats live; and there's some kind of blight on my hands."\(^{23}\) Jocelin admits that the "cellarage knew . . . he was impotent . . . and arranged the marriage,"\(^{24}\) knew that he

\(^{21}\)Ibid., p. 53.  \(^{22}\)Ibid., pp. 101-102.  \(^{23}\)Ibid., p. 202.  \(^{24}\)Ibid., p. 205.
was deliberately sacrificing Goody so that the emblem of his pride and lust for her might be completed. The "cellarages" in the three novels are essentially the same; and, taken together, they represent the irrational instincts and urges (represented by the character of Jack in *Lord of the Flies*) which cannot be suppressed and which must be recognized and controlled before they break out into rampant destruction.

But, as Golding makes Jocelin's "cellarage" more specific and more accessible to his understanding, he also allows him a more expansive, a more complete—and therefore more obscure—vision of the nature of man's life. It is obscure because one of Golding's constant messages is that life is ultimately mysterious, and man is self-defeating and needlessly futile in his attempts to confine the multifoliate experience of life to one explanation or pattern.

Jocelin's new awareness, as revealed in his conversation with Roger, is incomplete because he tries to create a pattern to explain all that he has done on the basis of his feeling for Goody. He decides that she has "bewitched" him. She stands between him and God, and for this reason, the spire is "an ungainly, crumbling thing"\(^\text{25}\) which threatens to topple at any moment. But that pattern is inadequate,

\(^{25}\text{Ibid.}, p. 186.\)
just as Jocelin's vision was an inadequate justification for all the destruction it caused. No single thing, nor Jocelin's pride, nor his illness, nor his lust, can explain the spire completely. None of these patterns can explain the spire completely. None of these patterns can explain why the spire is still standing or how it looks against the sky as it rises upward toward the heavens or even what the spire really represents. Another vision, apocalyptic and mysterious, reveals the truth of the spire.

The plant motif in The Spire is another example of Golding's ability to uncover a man's unconsciousness so realistically and so insidiously that the shutter-like flashes of memory and half-association are almost meaningless at first. Each time we receive another insight into Jocelin's unconscious, the view is a little clearer and slightly enlarged. Throughout the novel, Jocelin has conceived of the spire as a plant: "A single green shoot at first, then clinging tendrils, then branches, then at last riotous confusion."26 In one early scene, Jocelin shakes a twig off of his shoe and a rotten berry which is "clinging obscenely" to the shoe brings a flood of "memories and worries and associations" which cannot be forgotten. He thinks of a

26 Ibid., p. 162.
ship built out of timber so unseasoned that it sprouted a green leaf, and suddenly he has a vision of the spire "warping and branching and sprouting." He is terrified without conscious reason. The plant acquires a sinister nature as Jocelin becomes more aware of the evil of his actions. His spire has grown like a plant "with strange flowers and fruit, complex, twining, engulfing, destroying, strangling." One critic has said that the plant-spire represents the Tree of Evil, but it would be better called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, because Jocelin's final vision shows him that the spire, like man, is made up of both good and evil.

In a moment certainly not identical to, but approaching, the mystical "dark night of the soul," Jocelin realizes that men in their pride and complacency often unknowingly work towards hell: "How proud their hope of hell is. There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be." He sees God as "lying between people," and he despairs because he has traded the spire for four people with whom he might

28 Ibid., p. 187.  
have found God. He is ready to die, but in an instant so brief and followed so quickly by death that we can only feel and not rationalize, as he does, the evil plant is transformed into an apple tree. Again, Jocelin is making an association between the instantaneous perception of a visual stimulus and a half-conscious memory so characteristic of the moments of his other, less joyful, visions. Previously, on his way to ask Roger Mason's forgiveness, Jocelin has seen the branch of an apple tree which extends over a stone wall and into the churchyard. He likens the blossoms of the branch to a "cloud of angels," and "his head swam with the angels, and suddenly he understood there was more to the apple tree than one branch." 31 He sees almost simultaneously a flash of blue in the sky, a kingfisher, which he wants, childishly, desperately, to return. It does not, but for a moment he has felt joy and hope again. The meaning of the kingfisher is never clear, nor does it have to be. The apple tree has told Jocelin that there is often more to something "than meets the eye"; the kingfisher has been a moment of pure beauty to be enjoyed in a time of death and despair. The spire and the apple tree and the blue bird are fused into one single, healing vision at the moment of

31 Ibid., pp. 194-195.
Jocelin’s death. He sees the spire through the window, his double vision returns to single vision, and he realizes that the spire is somehow, mysteriously, a mixture of terror and joy, that the spire is like the kingfisher, "flying through the panic-shot darkness," perhaps giving some other tormented, lost soul the solace and hope the bird momentarily gave to him. The spire is like the apple tree because all of the tree cannot be seen from one point of view.

There is probably not very much difference in the final truth expressed in Free Fall and The Spire. Together they comprise the process of truth becoming totally realized. Free Fall is an example of what happens to a person when he tries to apply one explanation or pattern to the universe and then tries to live according to that pattern, because, although Sammy says he has tried on many "hats," the pattern we are most allowed to observe in Free Fall is rationality and, hence, the relativity of good and evil. The Spire puts several patterns in conflict and shows that each of them is true but individually inadequate. The final understanding we derive from Free Fall is basically on an intellectual level; that which we derive from The Spire is on an emotional level (although an emotion must, of course, be rationalized to a certain degree before it can even be translated into words) and, therefore, the experience is more meaningful
and at the same time more difficult to interpret or relate. In *Free Fall*, Sammy Mountjoy tells us that man's natural goodness is destroyed by the evil in his nature when that evil is unrecognized. Jocelin lives that truth in *The Spire*, and his final vision of the spire is a "single glimpse of what it is to be human." In both novels the only hopes for man's salvation seem to be self-knowledge and the determination to love others unselfishly.

---

The Spire seems to end one segment of Golding's process, although it does not, as one critic has claimed, end the process. In his first five novels, Golding has firmly established his belief in the inherent evil in the nature of man. He has used extensive and well-developed allegory and symbolism to show the tragic and cosmic manifestations and consequences of that evil in man, individual and tribal, and it is appropriate that Golding does not repeat himself in The Pyramid. On first glance, The Pyramid might seem to be a contradiction of the philosophy expressed so insistently in the previous novels, although it is obviously a continuation in the process of moving from fable to fiction.

Marshall Walker, in "William Golding: From Paradigm to Pyramid," points out that "critics of man often become critics of society," and Golding's treatment of the impact of Oliver's parents, teacher, and community upon his ethical self had already been suggested by the sociological overtones

---

in Free Fall. In The Pyramid Golding is not changing his view; he is expanding it again. He is shifting his emphasis and thereby adding another dimension to his reader's view of the nature of man. In his attempt to discover objectively all there is to know about man's condition, Golding is looking at another side of the coin, or, better, he is presenting another facet of the pyramid of human existence.

Like Free Fall, The Pyramid is set in contemporary life; the main character, Oliver, lives in the very ordinary society of provincial, middle-class England. Each of the three sections of the novel treats an episode or relationship in Oliver's youth in which the personalities, attitudes, and actions of his parents and the other members of his small community shape Oliver's ethical make-up and therefore his future life. One of this novel's major departures from the other novels is the absence of the reader's involvement with the unconscious mind of the main character. What we experience in The Pyramid is a trio of "slices" of Oliver's life. There are not the philosophical and psychological depths in The Pyramid that make up the framework of the other novels. Oliver is not undergoing any sort of tragic or mythic crisis of the soul, nor is he presented as a

---

2Walker, Studies in the Literary Imagination, p. 85.
hopelessly "fallen" man, although he is not very different from his ancestor, Sammy Mountjoy. What we are observing in *The Pyramid* is the working of external forces upon the nature of man: for the first time, Golding is dealing with sociology rather than theology.

The existence of man's natural selfish and destructive tendencies is not ignored in the narration of Oliver's youthful experiences, but the justification for Oliver's selfishness is in social terms this time. Oliver's "sin," the commission of which is described in the first section, is sexual greed, and the object of his lustful affections is Evie Babbacombe, the direct descendent of Mary in *Pincher Martin* and Beatrice in *Free Fall*. As the daughter of the ludicrous but forbidding Town Crier and as an inhabitant of the "tumbledown," very lower-class Chandler's Close, Evie is acceptable solely as a means of sexual fulfillment. She is pretty, ambitious, and apparently somewhat talented, but she is considered the town's "local phenomenon" only because of her overwhelming sexual appeal. Compared to Imogene Grantly, the older, upper-class girl with whom Oliver fancies himself to be hopelessly in love, Evie is "strictly secular"; she is "accessible." In his

---


4 Ibid.
despair over Imogene's approaching marriage, Oliver decides that he must have Evie. Little of the thought, dialogue, and action of The Pyramid has the intensity and symbolic value found in Free Fall, but Oliver's seductive pursuit of Evie is certainly reminiscent of the persistence and calculation of Sammy Mountjoy's seduction of Beatrice:

"There was no doubt about it. I should have to be subtle, devious, diplomatic—in a word, clever."^5 There is not the implication in Oliver's seduction of Evie of the crucial moment of the "fall" as in Free Fall; nor is there the violent destruction found in both Pincher Martin and Free Fall. Oliver does not kill to possess Evie; nor does he drive her insane. But, such calamity does not usually occur in the relationships of ordinary people in real life, and The Pyramid is about ordinary people. However, Oliver's selfish, callous attitude towards the tempestuous affair, his sole motive that of satisfaction of his adolescent lust, adds to the hurt and disappointment in Evie's drab but perilous life and reveals Oliver's indifference to the feelings of others. That indifference, which seems to represent the greater "sin" of lack of love for one's fellow man, seems to be proportionate to the degree of social

---

prestige enjoyed by the person in question and is shared by the members of his community.

Oliver's decision to seduce Evie grew out of a normal and instinctual urge, which can become destructive and grasping on its own, as we have already seen; but the social values of Oliver's community, hence of Oliver, reinforce his inability to see Evie as a real person and enable him to justify sexual exploitation of a girl from the lower class. In all three episodes in *The Pyramid*, the strict and jealously-guarded social distinctions which flourish in Stilbourne are revealed. When Robert Ewan, who is of higher social status than Oliver because his father is a doctor, tries to explain why he was forced to "borrow" Bounce's car to take Evie to a dance in a nearby village, Oliver understands "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." Oliver, whose father is the dispenser of drugs in Dr. Ewan's clinic, resents the attitude of superiority with which Robert Ewan treats him, and he remembers defending his equality with physical force even as a child. But Oliver feels Robert's superiority as strongly as Robert does. He envies Robert's

---

6 Ibid., p. 9.
motor bike and his military academy, and yet he feels a real sense of shame when he beats Robert in a fight by fighting "dirty." The thought that social inferiors always defeat members of the "aristocracy" by ungentlemanly behaviour stings Oliver as nothing he might do to Evie could ever affect him. But, of course, Oliver feels also a natural superiority to Evie. When she makes a plea to be regarded for herself as a real person, Oliver recognizes her need but is unable to respond: "She wanted tenderness. So did I; but not from her. She was no part of high fantasy and worship and hopeless jealousy. She was the accessible thing." The social classes of Stilbourne do not mix—they are too close together, probably—and Oliver, whose parents' social position seems to be rather precarious, never allows himself to be seen in public with Evie.

As the name implies, Stilbourne is a dull, dead place, and the little excitement the town affords its inhabitants comes chiefly from occasional conflicts among members of the Stilbourne upper class and from the excessive and almost obsessive invasion of the privacy of others, which includes a kind of thrill at the misfortunes and eccentricities of others. The former is described in the second section, the latter in the third. In each of the sections, as in the

7 Ibid., p. 71.
first, Oliver is seen to reflect the attitudes of his parents and community so automatically that he is unaware of their influence. In fact, Oliver has the feeling that he is somehow different from his parents and community, that he does not live by the same values. As he stares with "sheer incredulity" at Evie upon discovering her sexually perverted relationship with, he presumes, old Captain Wilmot, Oliver feels completely alienated from his parents and the wholesome "decency" of Stilbourne:

They were too far off for me to recognize them by anything but their surroundings and their movements, my father a dark-grey patch, my mother a light-grey one. All at once, I had a tremendous feeling of hereness and thereness, of separate worlds, they and Imogene, clean in that coloured picture; here, this object, on an earth that smelt of decay, with picked bones and natural cruelty--life's lavatory.

The irony of Oliver's feeling of isolation and shameful "otherness" is that his values are much the same and not particularly admirable for being so. That is, cruelty and selfishness and certain kinds of indecency are to be found down in the town, even in Oliver's home, as well as up in the woods with Oliver and Evie. The saddest and most telling aspect of Oliver's sense of shame because he is not more like his parents, Golding seems to imply, is that he does not know how to be ashamed of the things that are most shameful,

\[8\] Ibid., pp. 72-73.
such as his exploitation of Evie, because his vision is so limited by his social values.

Social values are usually learned at home by observation and osmosis rather than direct instruction; hence they are probably much more unconscious and difficult to change. Oliver senses his mother's regret that he and Robert Ewan have never been good friends because Robert represents a step up the social ladder. His fear of having to marry Evie, if she is pregnant, is expressed in terms of his parents' social standing: "To be related, even by marriage, to Sergeant Babbacombe! I saw their social world, so delicately poised and carefully maintained, so fiercely defended, crash into the gutter." Even Oliver's father, who seems to be the "best," most compassionate character in the novel, fails to develop Oliver's moral sense and instead reinforces his dread of becoming involved with a social inferior such as Evie. When he discovers Oliver's relationship with Evie, he says nothing about the moral wrong implicit in such a relationship although he has just observed Evie's pain and resentment resulting from such a relationship. He warns Oliver that people in Chandler's Close often carry venereal diseases, increasing Oliver's sense of guilt and

---

9Ibid., p. 65.
reducing Evie to a social and health hazard. Golding seems to be saying that what has happened to Oliver's parents and to Oliver is a deadening of the "natural generosity" referred to in Free Fall. This time, the natural goodness of man is not only diminished by the equally natural and individual propensity of man towards evil, but also by the shaping force of society.

In all of Golding's novels, love of man for his fellow man is either implied or directly regarded as the single most important force in man's nature by which he might find salvation from a second "fall." Self-knowledge, with the added result of the understanding of others, is another; and, of course, understanding and acceptance are inherent qualities of true love of any nature. Simon and Nathaniel represent Christ-like, brotherly love, and the result of the other characters' refusal to respond to their love, in Lord of the Flies and Pincher Martin, is chaos and destruction, that is, damnation. In The Inheritors, Tuamí finds the answer to his fear and confusion in love, not only in his love for Vivani, but also in their love for the New One. In Free Fall, Nick Shales' natural goodness comes from his love for humanity, and Sammy's greatest regret seems to be his inability to relate to others. Jocelin's discovery in The Spire that love is to be found "between people" leads
us to the epithet introducing *The Pyramid*: "If thou be among people make for thyself love, the beginning and the end of the heart." The irony of this adage increases as we discover that the episodes in *The Pyramid* are about the inability of the inhabitants of Stilbourne to love their fellow men.

We have already seen Oliver's inability to love Evie for her humanity, if for nothing else. In the next section of the novel, further evidence that Oliver, like Dr. Halde in *Free Fall*, "does not know about peoples," and the reasons for that ignorance are provided. Oliver has come home from school for a weekend, and in a rather detached, slightly superior manner, he tells of the rebirth of the Stilbourne Operatic Society. Oliver describes the society as a pressure valve, which is revived from time to time when the need for excitement and for the release of suppressed hostility arises: "With diabolical inevitability, the very desires to act and be passionate, to show off and impress, brought to full flower the jealousies and hatreds, meannesses and indignations we were forced to conceal in ordinary life." The excellent scenes in which Oliver's mother and the star of the production childishly argue about Oliver's role, of

---

which Oliver wants no part, and which he clumsily mishandles, provide the only humor in the book. But, the high seriousness with which Oliver's mother and Norman Claymore, the "star" of the production and of Stilbourne and the husband of the "sacred Imogene," treat the entire situation is pathetic. Although Oliver's mother has been awed by the importance of the town's leading citizens and her social superiors, Mr. Claymore's pompous self-importance is equalled by her petty determination to have a place of importance for her son, despite his obvious humiliation. But it is Oliver's acquaintance with Evelyn De Tracy, the "professional producer," which reveals that Oliver has not developed much perception with age or distance from Stilbourne. Mr. De Tracy exposes Imogene as a "stupid, insensitive, vain woman" and frees Oliver from his old infatuation, and Oliver does see Stilbourne as it really is. In an unexpected and passionate outburst, Oliver declares that he seeks Truth and shows that he sees the absurdity of the lives of the people in Stilbourne:

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! Don't they understand? It's a lie, a lie! It's--obscene!^1

\(^{12}\text{Ibid.}, p. 122.\)
Oliver has discovered some truth, probably because of the sophistication he has acquired at Oxford, but his vision is still limited; he does not really understand people or realize how much he carries the influence of Stilbourne with him. When De Tracy, apparently a homosexual, shows Oliver photographs of himself, thinking he has found a friend in Oliver, the boy responds with ignorant and humiliating laughter. Oliver is surprised by Mr. De Tracy's withdrawal and increased intoxication, but he never understands and never really cares. Truth-seeking involves the ability to recognize truth and accept it when encountered, and Oliver is incapable of such recognition and acceptance.

It is not that Oliver has exactly the same values as his parents and the community, but that his perception and his emotional and ethical responses to people have been unalterably shaped by his environment. His imperception is revealed by his brief and rather insignificant encounter with De Tracy, and his stunted capability for brotherly love and forgiveness based on adult understanding is revealed in the final section of the novel. The petty invasion of privacy, so much a part of the life in Stilbourne, is also revealed. In all societies there are probably a few misfits to whom everyone of all classes can feel superior and from whom everyone can take a secret joy in observing the misfortunes and misadventures of others. Miss Dawlish, Bounce, is one
of the misfits of Stilbourne. She also represents a person whose entire life is shaped by the force of parent and society, and a person whose entire life has been an unfulfilled, mute cry for love.

Bounce, who was taught by the threat of pain and withdrawn affection to love music, is Oliver's music teacher. She is plain, frighteningly abrupt, and she hides her desire to be treated as a woman behind a severe bun and mannish clothing. Oliver is terrified at times by her dark, cluttered house and her demanding, brusque manner. Bounce's attraction for Stilbourne increases when she brings Henry Williams to town first to teach her to drive the sports car he has encouraged her to buy and later as the town mechanic. The interest in Bounce's activities exhibited by Oliver's mother is somewhat malicious and probably reflects the attitudes of the rest of the town. She realizes that Bounce is probably infatuated with Henry and that Henry is using her loneliness and desire for affection to make a position for himself in Stilbourne, but she senses this without any understanding of the emotional deprivation Bounce experiences and without any compassion.

That Bounce is rather strange and severe Oliver can see for himself. He is exposed through his mother to Stilbourne's amused pity for her, and all the while, he is forced to
parrot his mother's claims that he is simply devoted to Bounce. The lack of any expression of genuine concern for Bounce, any suggestion that as a human being she deserves understanding, plus the implication that, as an eccentric, she is public property, can be seen as examples of the kind of very subtle daily life training that has shaped Oliver's perception of and reaction to people. And herein is what seems to be Golding's message in *The Pyramid*: it is probably fairly easy for ordinary people to avoid the big "falls," the extraordinary acts of selfishness and human violation presented in *Lord of the Flies*, *Pincher Martin*, or *The Spire*; the more dangerous threat is a daily "fall" in which we slowly, ignorantly lose our capacity for brotherly love.

Bounce, like Oliver, allowed her life to be shaped by the attitudes and unfulfilled desires of her parents. Music is the rather insecure bond between Oliver and Bounce, and music plays a significant part in their histories. Bounce's father forced music upon her; she exhibits no real love of music, and yet her favorite expression is "Music is heaven." The irony of this statement is found not only in the fact that there is absolutely no evidence that Bounce's life ever even approached heaven, but also in her later resentment of her father and music. Before she dies, she burns all of her music and her father's pictures and metronome.
On the other hand, Oliver has a true talent and love for music. He wishes to have a musical career, but is dissuaded by his parents because science, not music, is the key to social and financial success. Golding's theories in "On the Crest of the Wave" are brought to mind here, but Bernard Dick points out that the arts are not alive in Stilbourne: "This is the self-righteous community that blatantly proclaims its championship of the arts but would never understand art if confronted by it." Oliver's suspicions about the "art" of Stilbourne were confirmed in the second section, and as a young man he was horrified. In the final section, though, Oliver is an adult and is committed to a way of life that offers him a car of "superior description," a life that seems to fulfill all of Stilbourne's requirements.

During the third episode, Oliver is standing beside Bounce's tombstone and remembering his childhood. He does show some understanding when he describes the scene in which Bounce apparently suffers a nervous breakdown and appears walking down the street naked. Oliver recalls that moment as the happiest and most relaxed of Bounce's life. The implication is that he has recognized, in his memories, the tragedy of Bounce's life. However, the training and

---

experiences of childhood have a strong and rather permanent effect on us, and Oliver is unable to forgive Bounce for her severity and strangness: "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." In three accounts of Oliver's past, there are three instances in which he proves unable to relate to people who are reaching out for love and understanding. At the very end of the novel, Oliver admits how much he is a product of the deadening, materialistic influence of Stilbourne:

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 I knew in the same instant that, like Henry, I would never pay more than a reasonable price.\(^1\)

The invisible feet are those of the people in Stilbourne who have individually—in the form of his parents—and collectively chosen his future. They are also the feet of the people in Stilbourne, Evie and Bounce for example, with whom he might have "made music" had he used his own spirit and natural inclinations to shape his future and relation to other people.


\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 182.
In a novel which has begun with the admonition to make love the single most important thing in life, the irony and tragedy of the potential shaping force of society has been revealed. Although *The Pyramid* does seem to be a final step in Golding's process of moving into the world of history and fiction, there are emblems in the novel. The name Stilbourne represents the lifelessness of the town. The inscription on Evie's cross, "Amor Vincit Omnia"—love conquers all—is an ironical emblem of her life. Bounce's car, which is used by Robert Ewan for his loveless sexual exploitation of Evie and which has been used by Bounce to maintain her pathetic and unsatisfying relationship with Henry, seems to represent the inability of the inhabitants of Stilbourne to give or receive love. Mr. Dawlish's metronome, which Bounce has burned at the end of her life, represents the selfish domination by parents of their children's lives. The inscription on Bounce's tomb, "Music is heaven," is not only ironical in terms of Bounce's life as we have already seen, but seems an ironic comment on the pitiful attempts of the members of Stilbourne to bring art and beauty into their dull lives, while the most musically inclined members, such as Oliver, are discouraged from a real participation in the arts because the arts exclude the certainty of social and financial prestige.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Golding has called himself a fabulist and has said repeatedly that he sees the function and value of the novelist as a revealer of Truth, in his case as a doctor who reveals the sickness of a diseased body. Fable is constructed on a preconceived theory or moral lesson; the function of a fable is to exemplify in story form some Truth which the author had in mind before he conceived the tale by which he hopes to impart the Truth. But Golding admits that even in his first novel, Lord of the Flies, several of his symbols seemed to develop a life of their own, and the truth revealed was beyond his original intention. Speaking of the conversation between Simon and the pig's head, Golding said that his imagination "got out of hand," but he implies that the excess of imagination may have resulted in a greater revelation (or, better, discovery) than he anticipated: "May it not be that at the very moments when I felt the fable come to its own life before me it may in fact have become something more valuable, so

---

that where I thought it was failing, it was really succeed-
ing?"⁴ After a careful reading of all of Golding's novels, it would seem that this unexpected "life" in his fable comes from the addition of fictional elements to his allegory. Golding seems to have begun a process of revelation; what he has developed is a process of discovery, and the discovery usually takes place in the overlap of fable and fiction which is found in almost all of Golding's works.³

Fable is an adequate vehicle for revelation, but discovery implies Truth revealed out of the mysterious or unknown, and a novel of discovery, it seems, would have to reflect the mysterious as well as the uncovered Truth. For example, fable can teach (reveal) that life is paradoxical, but fiction must be used to create a life-like situation in which the reader experiences (discovers), intellectually and emotionally, the paradoxical quality of life. The arrival at Truth may be the same, but the journey is entirely different. In the process of discovery, as Golding's novels become less fabulous and more fictional, they also become more mysterious and in some ways more obscure.

²Ibid., p. 100.
Although Golding goes beyond fable even in *Lord of the Flies*, his first two novels are highly allegorical and are most clearly the result of a desire to instruct something specific about man: man is inherently evil and self-and-other-destructive. *Pincher Martin*, his third novel, treats for the first time an individual character, but Pincher Martin is still more of a manifestation, a personification, of the evil in man's nature than a real being. Martin's existence on the rock and his final obliteration comprise a warning to man, that the final result of selfishness and greed is self-destruction, and the "history" of Martin's earlier life is told in symbolical flashbacks which do little more than add to his allegorical meaning.

In *Free Fall* the main character becomes much more human; the reader is allowed to experience his "becoming." Sammy Mountjoy manifests selfishness and greed, but he is much more than a mere manifestation of those human traits. His history includes a time when he was innocent and displays the mysteriousness of human experience. In *Free Fall*, we are left with the mystery of Sammy as he has described himself on the first page:

I have walked by stalls in the market-place where books, dog-eared and faded from their purple, have burst with a white hosanna. I have seen people crowned with a double crown, holding in either hand
the crook and flail, the power and the glory. I have understood how the scar becomes a star, I have felt the flake of fire fall, miraculous and pentecostal.³

Sammy has experienced the miraculous and purifying and yet he is essentially fallen, isolated from other men and his own natural goodness. His condition reflects the condition of human life: the contradictory elements of his nature, pentecostal and damming, cannot be reconciled just as the worlds of rationality and disbelief and of miracle and faith cannot be bridged.

Sammy's inability to bridge the gap between the factual and the miraculous or, the way the world is and the way it seems it could be at times, is his determination to find one pattern to apply to the universe that will account for all the uncertainties man experiences and create order out of chaos. In The Spire Jocelin's final vision seems to bridge the gap between the ugly and the beautiful, the mundane and the glorious, the evil and the good, that are equally and intrinsically a part of the universe. In Jocelin's vision, he sees that all the patterns with which he tried to explain the spire and his life are true: they exist side by side and must be accepted as parts of the whole that is human life and the universe.

³Golding, Free Fall, p. 1.
The Pyramid, although lacking in the overlap of fable and fiction, is a part of Golding's process. The novel reflects Golding's now familiar belief that the shape of society depends upon the ethical make-up of each individual in the society: Oliver's mother represents Stilbourne society as a whole. And, for the first time in a Golding novel, we see how society shapes the individual. There is no startling discovery in The Pyramid, but we do observe, albeit rather casually, Oliver's "becoming." Like Sammy in Free Fall, Oliver's capacity for love and fulfillment has been deadened, and it is too late for him to change.

Perhaps Golding can be criticized for taking a long time and a number of novels to establish that there is evil and chaos in the universe and that man has been unsuccessful in finding a way to create an ordered, fulfilling existence in the midst of the absurdity and confusion of life. He has been criticized for "leading up" to the existential novel and then quitting where he should have begun. No one has specified the proper beginning, however. Golding's characters do not fall into either of two of the major catagories of what is often labelled Existential literature: they are neither the helpless victims of a cruelly absurd, usually inimical universe; nor are they courageous men of action who stalwartly double their fists at the godless, chaotic
faced with a chaotic universe—godless either because there is no God or because they refuse to acknowledge one. The point that Golding has tried to make, though, is that we cannot continue blaming the Universe and Life and Society for our own confusion and destruction. We must, he insists, know and accept the nature of the universe and of man as history and daily experience show them to be and work from that knowledge and acceptance. Certainly Golding is writing about free will and human choice: most of his characters make the wrong choices and, in so choosing, create their own isolated and fallen existences. In this way, Golding is dealing with the existential condition of man, and in this way he is very contemporary in spite of his use of allegory and his emphasis upon what others have labelled Original Sin.
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Dick, Bernard, "'The Novelist Is a Displaced Person': An Interview with William Golding," *College English*, XXVI (March, 1965), 480-482.


"Lord of the Campus," Time, LXXIX (June 22, 1962), 64.


