WILLIAM GOLDING'S
VISION OF
HUMAN NATURE

By Datta
SUMITA DUTTA

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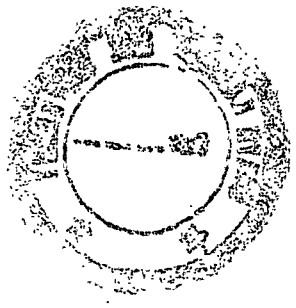

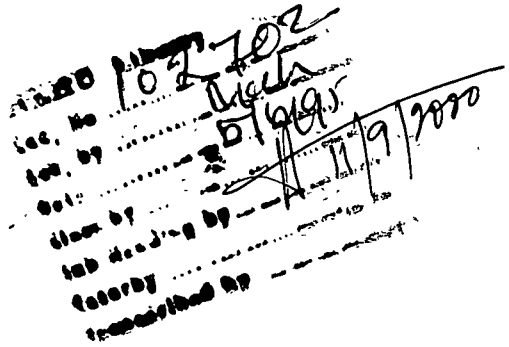

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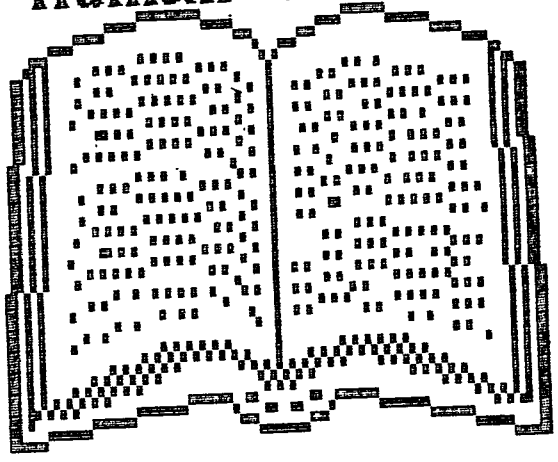
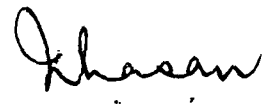


CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**William Golding's Vision of Human Nature,**" submitted by **Ms.Sumita Dutta** in partial fulfilment of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** to the **Department of English, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong,** is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. The results embodied in the dissertation have not been submitted to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.



(Noorul Hasan)

Professor of English
&
Dean School of Languages

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In closing, I'd like to say with **Montaigne** : "I have here gathered a posy of other men's flowers, and only the thread that binds them is mine own." .

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Shillong.

Sumita Dutta
(SUMITA DUTTA)

INTRODUCTION

"The Contemporary Malaise"

"O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed..."[1]

The lines quoted above from the poem, "No worst there is none" by Gerald Manley Hopkins, finds a ready echo in the mind of William Golding. This mind is unique in every individual. But, "taboos grew up round the nature of man. He was supposed not to have in him, the sad fact of his own cruelty and lust."[2] What happened, in effect, was that half of human nature - the areas of existence behind or beyond man's rational being in the universe, which a protagonist in his recent novel The Paper Men calls 'asisness' (p,161) or the "My Godness" of man, that "original spirit, the scintillans Dei"[3] - in the centre of man's darkness - was treated simply as if it did not exist, or in Golding's words, "is hopelessly obscured by his thirst for separate individual life."[4] What Golding does, is to make us aware of the potential of that mind in spiritual terms: "to liberate the instinctive life in man from the bondage imposed upon it by reason and social custom."[5]

Golding attempts, throughout his work, to create a structure that makes the life of the spirit a reality, at least in the imaginative realm. Archie Campbell has said of Golding, that he "not only draws aside the veil of the confessional but penetrates far beyond into deeper, darker recesses of the spirit, to those processes of subconscious thought which cannot be confessed because their presence is not even suspected."[6] This enables the joining into wholeness

of man's spiritual and physical sides. The measuring rod of the present time, according to Golding, is the link between the spiritual and the material realm:

> "... the seamy side where the connections are. The whole cloth of what had seemed separate now appeared as the warp and woof from which events and people get their being" (Darkness Visible, p.48).

That is why, Golding overturns our ordinary sense of human nature and makes its "warp and woof" (p.48) unmistakable. Golding explores, time and again, the two counterposed worlds of human awareness - the physical universe and the metaphysical, and Sammy, the protagonist in Free Fall, discovers that both the scientific, rational world of his physics master and the other world of the spirit of good and evil - "both worlds are real. There is no bridge" (p.253). Golding perceptively comments in The Spire, that "the spiritual is to the material three times real" (p.193). Similar sentiments was expressed by the Engineer- in-chief in Joseph Conrad's novel Nostromo:

> "Things seem to be worth nothing by what they are in themselves ... the only solid thing about them is the spiritual value which everyone discovers in his own form of activity" (p. 318).

We realize as we read Golding, that, like Tchekov and Virginia Woolf, he too has chosen to reveal that "innermost flame which flashes its messages - "this," "that" and the other - and placed them together to compose something new."[7]

Much of the genius of Golding's fiction, lies in the power of his language, to render the immediate experience, to convey this "greater reality,"[8] or rather the fusion of these two dimension of experience in an unified vision: "One is one and ever more shall be" (Darkness Visible p.225), explaining the mystery of life, by accepting its existence. Golding was enough of a realist to know that, although what human beings think and feel is more real to them than reality, it is just the confrontation of the dichotomy between imaginary construction and actual existence ,that constitute the most dramatic - enlarging or devastating - experience in human life. In the end (in Golding's own words) "Knowledge displays no dichotomy ... but is one ... until what seems diverse is seen to lie in the hollow of one hand" (The Hot Gates, p.40).

Human pride wishes to deny any connection with the death, decay and corruption, the "original evil" lurking in the dark heart of man. In fact, we like to think of the "spirit" as separate, immaculate and immortal; but in Golding's world, "spirit and flesh, spirit and nature, are one indivisible entity."[9] As such, the novels become "mirrors in which we view not the surface but the interior of our being."[10] Rather, they draw the reader into the books and into himself. A Golding novel, therefore, engages our imagination and we are able to share in it. For as Golding stated: "I don't simply describe something. I lead the readers round to discovering it anew."[11]

It is an intensely subjective exercise left to us, to build the bridge between the different perspectives and discover the "asisness" (p.161) of which we have remained oblivious. Our perceptions are refreshed and renewed, as we resee man's nature and become aware of the complexity, and in many cases, the impossibility of describing in rational terms our perception of the world. In the end, it all depends on man himself and his perception of the universe. In Browning's words:

> "Man ... like a glass ball
> Out of the magic fire that lurks inside
> **Suffuses bright with dark."**[12]
> (Emphasis mine).

What is important, therefore, is that man should approach his "primitive self" by whatever path he chooses and from the voyage within, achieve a peaked awareness or a heightened and spiritualized view of reality, such as we find in the Keats of the final sonnets and Odes where "one hears the music of the mind in a world within world."[13] To achieve a revelation like that, we need to do what Roger's wife, Rachel in The Spire did:

> "stripped the business of living down to where horror and farce took over" (p.59).

In other words, to consider our whole being - "the whole building cellarage and all" (p.213) - the morbidity and horror lurking beneath the conscious self - and what "the cellarage - [the subconscious] knew" (p.213). To ignore the reality of what man is, is to ignore the reality of what man is capable of doing. To understand this is to understand one's own nature

which leaves us, like the Ancient Mariner's wedding-guest, a stunned and very much sadder, if wiser man.

To borrow a phrase from Thomas De Quincey, we are made to see "the things that ought not to be seen,"[14] sad and fearful truths about ourselves and our world, the discovery of which may shake our very sanity. Golding's achievement is not merely to have initiated discussion on man's basic nature, to probe the inner recesses of human behaviour and thereby see what instincts fundamentally define us. These problems have, in one form or another been posed in most periods of intellectual history. What makes his work utterly fascinating,is his readiness to "dive down through the complexities of living to find a curious creature not usually found on the surface."[15] And he does so in a thoroughly contemporary manner, dealing with the sort of story in which the human being is treated in his abundant totality, beyond the threshold of merely moral judgements. Therefore, in his inspired discovery of the uses of language, Golding assembles an intelligent picture of our personality. With conviction, taste and abundant evidence, Golding defends the provocatively simple thesis of the nature of things - the true nature of his fellowmen: "What man is, whatever man is ... that I burn to know ... The themes closest to my purpose ... have stemmed from that preoccupation."[16]

So whatever situation is presented in his novels, appear to be a simple means of illuminating contemporary human

nature. The point of asking what human nature is "really" like, is to see through - or behind - what man locally believe, want, approve and abhor. In short, "to uncover the substratum beneath man as he locally appears."[17] But this presents us with a problem to which no wholly compelling answer has been given, certainly a problem which Golding set for us rather than solve. He saw more plainly than his contemporaries that the entire picture of the natural order had been dealt a mortal blow. It was the chaotic condition of the individual self which distressed him. There is no question of a society coherently violating human nature. Civilization, is simply a condition in which we lose touch with ourselves. We put on masks and play our particular roles, just as the first Man did in the Garden of Eden; - hiding behind the "aprons of figs,"[18] to hide his nakedness and fear. That is a legacy we have carried till today. What is in Golding which possesses a curiously current interest, is the fear that not enough of our real nature is visible or recoverable to provide us with a clear guide as to what moral self we can create.

The problem today is not simply political, social or moral. It is the sickness in human nature. No wonder, Golding stated in reply to a literary magazine's questionnaire, The writer in his Age: "I am very serious. I believe that man suffers from an appalling ignorance of his own nature. I produce my own view, in the belief that it may be something like the truth. I am fully engaged to the human

dilemma but see it as far more fundamental than a complex of taxes and astronomy."[19]

Contemporary man, according to Golding must have an apprehension of the unseen world, the "Egyptian amulet" which is "at once alive and dead" and which suggests "a mystery with no solution," since it mixes "the strange, the gruesome and the beautiful" and "dwells with a darkness that is its light." I quote here from Golding's essay "Egypt from my inside." (Hot Gates p.80) Golding's superabundant figurative language and his ambiguity, are joined in a single key image that occurs in all three of the novels I'll be dealing with. This image is that of "darkness" which is opposed by various images of light. That is why, without stating so explicitly, his novels, I assume embody the religious dictum "the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not."[20] If this was the situation, as the religious mind conceived it, several millennia ago, it remains so today. My effort will be to comprehend and define the nature of this darkness, through which Golding comments on the world around him and on the people in it. If the world of light and consciousness exists on the surface in Golding's thinking, then the world of darkness, ambiguity also exists beneath the surface, in the subconscious itself. Golding therefore, constructs an occassion when a character's centre breaks away from its given essential being. Golding claims that for contemporary man, that darkness holds the "promise and danger of wholeness."[21] But contemporary man "lacks vision and discounts the spiritual

world,"[22] thereby he experiences mystery as "a dark thing" (p.206). Invariably, Golding chooses as his subject, men convinced of their own significance as self sufficient creatures in a materialistic world. This, Golding dramatizes as their rejection of the world of spirit and their curious fear of darkness. The merciless punishment and fear which each protagonist imagines, is the projection of that character's darkness. They turn away from acknowledging their own nature and create a monster instead. He therefore experiences mystery only as malignancy not holiness or wholeness. The "lighted centre"[23], in man's darkness, we shall see gleams only momentarily. We can only stare at the dancing shadows occasionally thrown up by the light. Therefore, the novels are a reflection of the protagonists' divided mind which experiences the breakthrough of an elemental darkness into his daylight consciousness. Infact, the hallmark, of a Golding novel is its mythic nature, that is to say, he searches for the shape of life beneath the surface of man's consciousness. His real subject matter, in effect, comprise a "religion of consciousness."[24] Page by page is given to its exploration. The critical problem then is to comprehend and define the nature of this consciousness which gives meaning to his works.

It is out of the experience of modern man, and above all out of the confusions of his sense of moral freedom, that Golding creates his vision. Hence he reworks myth and religion in his view of man, but does so, in the form of an

archetypal image or root image: "I do feel fable as being an invented thing out on the surface whereas myth is something that comes out of the roots of things in the ancient sense of being the key to existence, the whole meaning of life and experience as a whole."[25]

He, infact, turns the table on modernity by analysing our condition as morally diseased, or in terms or Original Sin: "the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness and the corruption of man's whole nature."[26] That does not mean that he puts into fictional terms "a theology" however subtle and complex, but uses theology merely to describe metaphorically a general condition.

There is no adequate critical term for the forms that his books have taken. Golding himself has called his books both myths and fables. I cannot summarize here the controversy the word "fable" and "myth" has generated. Reassuringly to me, Golding has claimed, while speaking to Frank Kermode - and that is precisely the claim I wish to make for his novels - that "Myth is a story at which we can do nothing but wonder."[27] We know from his most revealing lecture "Belief and Creativity" that though deeply religious, he is not a believer in the conventional sense, nor does he provide a substitute for belief since he "suffers those varying levels or intensities of belief" which are part of "the human condition" (p.192). The epitaph of such an artist is simply "He wondered" (p.199).

Therefore, myth as something which explains is the wrong term with which to meet Golding's work. It is necessary to recognize, that, his novels are an expression of moral feelings and the imaginative forms of life; the form or structure itself; that is to say, carries meaning. Consequently we must identify with the moral - with the conception of man and the shape of the universe. According to Golding, the "Fall is self awareness and is really man's emergence."[28] The point at which man acts triumphantly from his consciousness is precisely the point at which he can fall. Golding's imagination departs from a modernist context, for he holds that "man has a free choice between two alternatives - each he implies - causally determined - yet free."[29] Man could have stood if he chose, but he chose to fall. Self-destruction is a matter of choice. Perhaps that is why he told Prof. Kermode that, "the parallelism between intelligence and evil comes out in my books because it is our particular sin, to explain away our own shortcomings rather than remedy."[30]

A fictional technique derived from Golding's concern with the spiritual realm is what Virginia Tiger calls the "confrontation scene" (p.18) or what I simply see as "peak" experiences. Perhaps most striken persons, Golding seems to suggest, achieve a peaked awareness of things before death, or achieve a heightened and spiritualized view of reality, when driven by the pressures of life to the private sanctuaries of the mind. In this scene, a direct confrontation is therefore

made to occur between a character's ego (consciousness) and his psychic darkness. This encounter, takes the form of an interview with an ambiguous object: a pig's head, a pile of stones, a rag, a stone hammer, and so on. In Lord of the Flies, Simon recognizes himself in this encounter, and having admitted evil is able to act without evil, since he realizes the truth, that we populate the world with spectres from our own malignant imagination or compose a horrific god, much in the same way the children created their own god out of their own murderous nature. This is also the reason why, in Free Fall, to Sammy "the central not comprehended dark"[31] is occupied by odious objects. In The Spire, Jocelin realizes that he "traded a stone hammer for four people" (p.222), symbolizing his ideal aspirations. In such an encounter, he learns to accept the "rising tide of muck" (p.58) associated with his "cellarage" (p.213) and experiences "terror and joy" (p.223), for above the "panic shot darkness" (p.223) struggled a magnificant Kingfisher, an emblem; "evidence of mysterious Mercy"[32] which operates in the world though it is hidden to the eye which rejects such goodness. Jocelin, alone among the fictional heroes, I'll be dealing with, is granted release from the conviction of his own guilt. It must be noted, however, that Golding's symbolism is suggestive rather than precise and therefore, each book is but a single, partial, isolated view. Golding is not offering us a handbook on the process of becoming spiritually whole. The protagonist's simply undergo a radical revision of thought.

They move from a faulty vision to a "restructured vision"(p.54), to borrow Philip Redpath's phrase. Appropriately enough, such scenes end with a vision rather than a view or an extractable proposition. Golding constructs, like poetry "an intuitive field of subject/object, reverie and element"[33] and as such the language at such moments gain in poetic intensity. Golding states: "We are at a height or depth ... where the questions are not to be answered in words."[34]

Golding stated in the essay "Belief and Creativity" : "The lighted awareness that we call a conscious person is indescribable and incommunicable" (p.195). Such moments of "vital awareness (are) moments of most passionate and unsupported conviction" (p.197). These "lambent moments are a novelists equivalent of the poet's lyric impulse" (p.196). The result is self-evidently, a properly mysterious poetry. Therefore, music serves ultimately as a metaphor for the achievement of the novel as a whole. We are ultimately left with "the awareness of something not argued over but directly apprehended" (p.190). The reality Golding wishes to communicate in his novels,is not reducible to a language which is just an opaque window through which we can view reality. When language ceases to perform its customary role of describing and telling us things, we naturally regard it as becoming opaque and obscure. Consequently, an appelation used for Golding's fiction is that they are 'obscure'. Obscurity is not in the novel itself, but in the matter of perspective, the

unexpected shifts of thought, the reduction of concept to experience. Therefore, this obscurity is vital to Golding. He has a powerful imagination, which is why he convinces even at his most obscure. There is ultimately no "suspension of disbelief," to borrow Coleridge's phrase; but an active conviction of its truth, as we are involved in a richer sense of wonder. In a stray comment to James Baker, Golding once stated that "to insist on the neglected or perhaps forgotten religious dimension of human experience is natural to me." Although that kind of "Holy Joeing"[35] may put people off, he needed to penetrate what in his recent novel, Darkness Visible, the captain who rescues the child Matty calls, "the screen that conceals the workings of things" (p.16). It would be presumptuous and pointless to do more than draw our attention to the need to penetrate this screen. Though the protagonists of his works all to some extent fail in achieving wholeness, it does not mean that the interior journeys, Golding recounts in his novels are not worthwhile. For "man can seek the path of his truth in unfanatical absoluteness, in a decisiveness which remains open."[36]

The final analysis of his novels shows that Golding is a profoundly pessimistic writer, but since he is concerned with the total form of a work "the whole shape of the thing,"[37] to borrow Virginia Woolf's phrase, his novels achieve that "eternal beauty"[38] and it cannot but be moral or true, in John Keats' famous statement.

Golding stated in the essay "Belief and Creativity" that "beyond the transient horrors and beauties of our hell there is a Good which is ultimate and absolute" (p.202). The most Golding can do, is make us aware that it exists. J.L. Mc Intyre echoes the same sentiment when he stated: "...evil is necessary for Good, for were the imperfections not felt, there would be no striving after perfection."[39] Infact, Golding has successfully depicted, like Shakespeare, "the horror of life's ingrained conditions."[40] But he has also managed to show that inspite of it "there is life which is mightier than life's conditions."[41] If Golding's originality in fiction could be summed up in one sentence, this might be the one to choose. Incidentally, this is also the Swedish Academy's citation on Golding's fabled world.

This has prompted me to organize my own tentative thoughts on the nature of man as revealed in the novels I have chosen to discuss. To avoid abstract theorising, I'd like these thoughts to emerge through the discussion of his three novels, namely - Lord of the Flies, The Spire and Rites of Passage. In what follows, I have tried to build on the critical works which Golding's fiction has stimulated. Thus, hints collected and assembled imaginatively from his own novels, a collection of his essays, as well as critical works and echoes and comparison of bygone writers; all construct the wider view and play their part in accentuating his theme - human nature. This interpretation is just one of an infinitive number of possibilities which we call reality. His

novels' obscurity, infact, ensures that the interpretative quest remains open for the readers. The work of a great writer is so much deeper and wider and more inclusive than the view of any single critic, that no one man can or should hope to dredge up all the richness and mysteries which the writer has miraculously caught and contained in his work. Therefore, my perspective becomes no more than a single thread, for as we know, records of experience are but "one pebble in the artists' larger mosaic."[42] If anyone wishes to bring in other opinions, apart from what I have suggested, there is still room for them, since Golding gives us a picture, which we well know is irreducible. So long as he is read, readers will disagree about the ideas on which his fiction turns. Personally, I'd like to get illumination from that rejoinder of Rimbaud's - "It means what it says."[43]

In conclusion, I'd like to add a word for the order in which specific treatments of the texts and general themes are arranged. I have divided my work into five chapters.

The Introduction, examines the major themes and sets the tone for what follows in the discussion of his novels. It is argued here, that man is a complex creature who escapes rational analysis. Therefore, the realms of his experiences too are beyond the limits of language. However, when Golding explores the depths and darkness of this, he manages to discover the "shadows" in each of us. A major feature of his novels is, therefore, their inward concentration on the world they map out. Young boys coping alone with the excitement of

an exotic island, the building of a Cathedral spire by an inspired Dean, an eighteenth century voyage to Australia - all form the mould into which are poured speculations about the incorrigible corruptibility of the human will. From the perspective of three decades, we are at a good vantage point to note that although the intensity with which Golding has probed our "asisness" (p.161) has changed over the years, the preoccupation with its complexities has been there from the very first book. These and other facts as has been pointed out, are very general points, but they are points which Golding's work forces us to confront. It is in this kind of context, that I want to examine the novels.

In Chapter 1, based on his most arresting book Lord of the Flies (1954), I have shown that it is a book written out of the dark and unhesitating convictions about "the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart" (p.223). Golding examines man's inner nature, but he uses schoolboys in the fresh innocence of youth, as a device by which to x-ray human nature. He explores the dark underside of civilized human nature and shows a struggle between reason and the savagery that springs from terror. In this first novel, the issues are complex, but clear cut. The general conclusion, to put it simply, appears to be that evil is ineradicable, although we tend to camouflage it. The title is a translation of the Hebrew "Beelzebub" applied in the novel to the pig's head on a stick, rotting and covered with flies, which becomes the god of the boys on their island. It is, in other words, a

manifestation of the dark side of human nature, an evidence of the human will to destroy what is good. The bleakness of the novel's vision has been eloquently encapsulated by Golding himself. "The theme of Lord of the Flies is grief, sheer grief, grief, grief, grief" (A Moving Target, p.163). The grief which Golding expresses and powerfully elicits in the novel, is grief at man's very nature and the nature of his world, grief that the boys, and we too, are "suffering from the terrible disease of being human" (Hot Gates p.89). The novel presents us with a fearless and savage close-up of human nature, a stripping-down of man to what essentially he is . The effect is appalling and humiliating: we are, in Golding's words, a species that "produces evil as a bee produces honey" (Hot Gates p.87). As naturally as the humble insect produces sweetness, we produce the wickedness and violence which sour our lives.

An analysis of The Spire (1964) follows in Chapter 2. Here man's being is explored, which is the natural centre of attention after having examined his inner nature. This novel too extends the themes of the first novel. Still concerned with the problem of good and evil, Golding this time is intent on showing the ethical ambiguity of even our most noble deeds. Self love and drive for power taint even such an outwardly commendable act as arranging for a 400 foot spire to be mounted on a Cathedral. The moral conflict is crystallized internally in the mind of one man, Jocelin, Dean of a great Cathedral. His motives are compounded of idealism on the one

hand, and contempt for many people on the other. He equates his strong ambition, irrational though it is, with the will of God, driving himself half-insane and exploiting people callously. Although Golding has come a long way in his explorations, he still gives us basic insight into human nature, suggesting that his fascination with the recesses of man's nature has not yet been exhausted. However, darkness is no longer simply associated with evil and violence but also with good. It is shrouded in mystery, alien to definition. The most we can hope for, is momentary insight like Jocelin. In other words, we experience what James Joyce called "epiphany."[44] In a moment of vision, Jocelin glimpses the everlasting truth that no man can justify the claim to be innocent of his own nature, the truth which Golding expresses in almost all his works:

> "There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be" (p.222).

Chapter 3 deals with the winner of Booker Prize, Rites of Passage (1980). This novel shows Golding's most controlled display of the handling of structure. We are made to experience the same events twice in completely dissimilar ways. The simple question that provides a starting point is "What circumstances would cause a man to die of shame?"[45] This novel too, highlights the major theme of this analysis, the haunting concern to reveal "the undiscovered person" (p.111), to borrow a phrase from The Pyramid. It is a voyage on an 18th century ship. The "crossing of the line," as the

sailors describe crossing the equator marks a crossing into guilt, darkness, death and self recognition."[46] The "rite" of this passage signifies an attempt to fuse the spiritual to the material realm. The shallowness of Talbot's scientific perspective - "Man is all that is monstrous under the sun and moon" (p.278) is shown by making us aware of the same events from Colley's point of view, since he realizes that man is capable of grace as well.

In several of the chapters, reference is made to his other novels which allows similarities to be highlighted and perhaps, more importantly, emphasizes apparent contradictions which can be resolved when the novels are viewed in terms of each other. It is therefore appropriate, that the final Conclusion, complements the rest of the study on man's nature. In this chapter, I have tried to survey the "connecting pebbles" in Golding's "larger mosaic." Looking back, we can see the transformations which Golding's imagination has undergone. But again and again, as we balance explanation against explanation in his novels, the answers become a matter of increasing indifference to us. What matters ultimately, is to realize what a Golding protagonist, Nathaniel, tells Pincher Martin, in the novel of the same name that, "evil is human" (which we know) "and would vanish if the mind could alter its theme."[47]

To study Golding is to realize the truth of Cocteau's great epigram: "If the poet has a dream, it is not of becoming famous but of being believed."[48]

Infact, Golding stated in the essay, "Egypt from my inside":

> "I am, infact an Ancient Egyptian, with all their unreason, spiritual pragmatism and capacity for ambiguous belief. And if you protest on the evidence of statistical enquiry they were not like that, I can only answer in the jargon of my generation, that for me they have projected that image" (Hot Gates p.82).

Everything that Golding has said "may be nothing more than an approximation to the truth, because the truth itself is so qualified on every side, so slippery that you have to grab at it as and how you can. But we are on the crest of the wave and can see a little way forward." (Hot Gates p.129). So the best we, as readers, can do is follow Wordsworth's dictum in The Prelude:

> "Enough of Science and of art;
> Close up these barren leaves;
> Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives."[49]

* * * * *

NOTES

1. **Poems of Gerald Manley Hopkins**, second edition (London : Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 62.

2. Golding, William: **The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces** (London : Faber Paper Covered Editions, 1970), p. 87.

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CHAPTER 1

"Abyss of human illusion"

William Golding gained considerable literary prominence since the 1954 publication of Lord of the Flies. Before its publication, however, the typescript of this novel had to undergo many changes under Charles Monteith. The initial title, Strangers from Within was rejected being too "abstract and explicit."[1] I am calling attention to it, nevertheless, because it serves my purpose, which is to show that Lord of the Flies, like all his other works, is designed to assert something permanent and significant about human nature.

Lord of the Flies, is not merely a philosophical allegory or an account of the degeneration of the boys. We also do the book an injustice, if we treat the boys as figures in a theoretical treatise on human nature. For Golding's superb, all-encompassing vision of reality, presents us with an imaginative achievement first and foremost, and in a thoroughly contemporary manner.

On the subject of Golding's work innumerable things have been said and remain to be said, but I will stick to a few essentials which will demonstrate Golding's theory of human nature, thereby revealing the capacity for evil inherent in every human heart. His way of doing this was to create a fiction in which a group of schoolboys, in the fresh innocence of youth, and not yet completely conditioned by the settled prejudices of the civilized world, would be stranded on a desert island and left to fend for themselves. The thesis lying behind the story presumes,that in such a situation man's

depravity, fear and his selfishness assert themselves at the expense of his compassion and rationality. These latter qualities can flourish only in the protected condition of civilized society.

Golding's purpose (in his own words) is "to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature." The moral illustrated thereby is that "the shape of society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable."[2] We are invited to consider, not so much, "the ethical justification of human behaviour, but human motivation as the source of behaviour."[3] Lord of the Flies, reveals Golding's penetrating understanding of the sickness of the society, though his analysis seldom amounts to a full indictment. In such a society, evil is revealed as a subtle force, difficult to dislodge, not only because it is covert and surreptitious, but also because it has been institutionalized and invested with charm. Evil is not something that we have recently invented. It is the natural projection of man's consciousness. That the seat of evil in Golding is the human heart or the human psyche, may be illustrated from any one of his works. Such an evil, as Jack and his hunters represent in Lord of the Flies, is necessarily rooted in consciousness. Jack's type of evil, however, assumes another form in the societal context - "the sin of manipulation" - to borrow Tony Tanner's phrase for the novels of Henry James.[4] As the story progresses, the larger issues of the novel begin to recede, and the smaller, but more inflammable issues of the violation

of human psyche takes on an obsessive form, especially as Golding dramatizes it in all its unmasked hideousness and lurking brutality. The "sin of manipulation", though proceeding form varied and complex motives, is finally an aspect of evil. There is therefore, a qualitative difference in the types of manipulation in the novels. In Lord of the Flies, the assault on a tender psyche is so naked as to resemble aggression rather than manipulation. Jack apparently wanted to manipulate the children's life for his own gain. Evil does not have to show the proverbial horns and hoofs, it may as well sport paint and a mask which the childern use as a disguise against the pigs they want to hunt on the island. In the novel, Golding presents aggression as instinctive and spontaneous. It is only the mask of paint that liberates the childern from "shame or self - consciousness,"(p.155) to show what human nature is basically constituted of. The question of evil in children presented in varying aspects in the novel, show the insidious and malignant nature of evil which can violate the very sanctuary of innocence.

Whatever its intellectual dimensions, Golding has created a successful adventure story, for it is part of the novel's theme to state that "children man of smaller growth."[5] show human nature in its most basic form when they make a mess of things, as they regress to savagery.

John Peter in "The Fables of William Golding," distinguishes fiction from fable and classifies Lord of the Flies, as a "fable." Indeed, if we feel that the plotting of

this novel is too schematic and relentless, this may be bècause everything has to conform to the pattern of behaviour, Golding perceives as natural to man, and which he therefore imposes upon the novel. But,Golding relates the story with such economy and intensity that its predictability - the boys' movement towards savagery - does not become monotonous but gains poetic credibility. For instance, the arrival on the hill of the dead parachutist and even more, his departure from it after Simom's "murder" (172) are improbable episodes, if we read Lord of the Flies, as though it could really happen. They however, work figuratively and have a poetic credibility. When Coleridge remarked that the symbol "always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible,"[6] he was saying that symbols were irreducible - and I would like to take the next step and say that if the symbol is autonomous, so is a work of the imagination as is depicted in this novel.

Incidentally, Golding says that this dead parachutist is "history." Golding writes in 'Fable':

> "What the grown-ups send them is a sign ... that arbitrary sign stands for off-campus history, the thing which threatens every child everywhere, the history of blood and intolerance, of ignorance and prejudice, the thing which is dead and won't lie down ... it falls on the very place where the children are making their one constructive attempt to get themselves helped. It dominates the mountain top and so prevents them keeping a fire alight there as a signal"(The Hot Gates p.95-96).

This ugly emblem of war and decay provides the only objective equivalent for the beast, the boys imagine.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple, remarkable for its relentless progression. The boys impose civilized standards of conduct, modelled on what "grown-ups" would do, before they finally give way to fear and frenzy. The adventure ends in a reversal of their expectation. The rule of reason is overthrown and the survivors regress to savagery.

The structure of the novel is similarly controlled, without ramblings of any kind, except the two incidents involving the out side world - the arrival of the dead parachutist and of the naval officer. The characters in the novel are both recognisable people whom we might encounter in actual experience as well as embodiments of particular aspects of human nature. The conflict between Ralph and Jack, illustrates a fundamental split between the two warring sides in man. Harry Beverly explains : "The boys, representing human nature, are placed on this island, inorder for Golding to hack his way through the facade of civilization to get to the tangled human dilemma where man is as he really is". "Their struggle is the ancient battle between the forces of good and evil raging in every man."[7]

The children start off by facing the new experience as an adventure. As the novel proceeds it concentrates more and more on the rivalry between Jack and Ralph. In other words:

> The brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled common-sense" (p.77).

They begin with a kind of comradeship :

> "Jack and Ralph smiled at each other with shy liking." (p.25)

And that was possible because "a kind of glamour was spread over them and they were conscious of the glamour and made happy by it" (p.27). The original pleasure however, dwindles, for the glamour is no more than a temporary cloak thrown over the natural surroundings by the boys. When the network of association that binds them to the civilized world is dissolved, unconscious forces usurp rationality. The savage overcomes the civilized. A concomitant effect is the loss of civilized value system. Golding therefore, presents the "constant battle between the primitive levels of response and deceptive consciousness, the beast and the human,"[8] in the individual psyche. What Leon Edel says of Henry James is equally true of Golding. In his work, "the sense of the abyss (is) always lurking beneath the fragile surface " (p.117). If ever a man's imagination, he added "was clouded by the Pit, it was (his)."[9]

Thomas Hobbes' The Leviathan, provides a valid parallel to Lord of the Flies. He is, however, not the only source for Golding's theory of human nature. In the Leviathan, Hobbes asserted that "man is intrinsically selfish, that each individual is fundamentally guided by self interest." The covenant man forms with his "sovereign" exists because he fears "the alternative lack of protection against the wildness of nature and the opposition of his fellow-men." We adopt

according to Hobbes, certain "articles of peace,"[10] which impose restrictions on individual liberty. To see that these 'articles' are implemented, an external power is entrusted with absolute authority. By the common consent of the other children, this power in Lord of the Flies, is initially entrusted to Ralph, "the man of goodwill and commonsense"(Hot Gates p.89). Ralph preserves an orderly rational society in the island, with the help of the Conch Shell, a symbol of authority. Hearing its sound, the children gather together. Golding shows by this means, how dependant humans are upon symbolic sanctions. No community can exist without symbols and rituals. The meaning however, "is in the boys" and not such symbols as the "conch."[11] According to Jack, "the conch doesn't count on top of the mountain" (p.46) and he starts questioning the authority and discipline which has been imposed upon him and which the conch symbolises. While he has a rebellious and even anarchistic streak in him, he is not altoghether wrong to distinguish between symbol and practicality. He is warning the boys, that they cannot depend on symbols alone if they are to survive.

Golding also underscores a typical Hobbesian notion about man's instinctive insecurity. The boys acknowledge Ralph as their leader, because he happens to be in possession of the Conch. Their social sense also never lapses, they always assemble on the beach, to see what can be done as a group. It never occurs to anyone, except Simon, to act as a solitary individual, unencumbered by social responsibilities. The voluntary surrendering of individual will to the

collective will, is the beginning of civilization. So, in a way, the novel criticizes collectivity and celebrates the inviolable, sacred independence of the human mind to seek truth. It is Simon alone who explores the forest, marvelling at the beauty and harmony of the natural world and discovering within it a secret place of his own.

Initially the children relish their new freedom but under instinctual pressures - aggression and superstition - they develop tensions which finally break out into conflict. Ralph, who proves too ineffective as a leader is displaced by the more ruthless figure of Jack, whose growing neglect of the authority of the Conch clearly point to his abuse of social custom, and hence to the establishment of tyranny. One by one the remnants and relics of twentieth-century civilization fall away and are discarded. Ralph knows, that they can survive, only if, they agree on common procedures and keep the signal fire alight. Jack, absorbed in the hunting of pigs, lets the fire go out and a ship passes by. Bitter recriminations follow. The island paradise degenarates into an inferno of fear and terror. Piggy, sensing doom, tries to restore order and avert calamity. But is killed in the process. Jack wields his authority, by pandering to the fears of the children and offering them outlets for their apprehension. They start worshipping their own god as a means of allaying their terror of forces they cannot intellectually understand. The reality is that, regardless of the intelligence we possess, we suffer a fall, brought upon by our own irrationality; a fall which

focuses on all our wretchedness, the depravity and brutality of human nature. The break down of reason and its destruction is one of the 'truths' of the novel.

The tragedy on the island repeats the actual pattern of human history because the children inherit the same defects of nature which doomed their fathers. The boys in the novel are partly the victims of adult self-destruction, responsible for their being stranded on the island after their aeroplane had been shot down. Since Golding's interest lies less in causes than in consequences, we do not know why a war rages in the background of the book. All we know, is that the northern hemisphere has become unsafe and the children have to be evacuated. That area of the world which most prides itself in its culture and science has now become uninhabitable for its young people. Golding creates a civilization where devastation seems to prevail over creativity. The novel does not uphold the values of civilized society, since we are not allowed to forget the horrors that lurk beneath; the dead parachutist and the uniformed naval officer with his sub-machines. The war that was responsible for shooting down their plane is still, it seems, going on in the adult world beyond the island. Golding mentions this aerial battle going on in the distant sky :

> " ... other lights in the sky, that moved fast, winked, or went out ..." (p.104)

Golding thus makes the failures of the adult world explicit and total. He constantly has the children referring

to it in contrast to their present existence on the island. Ironically, they tend to miss its comforts - ponies, warm hearths, games of football - and have scant conception of its horrors.

Lord of the Flies, is founded on the conviction of civilization as a moral paradox, a disguise for what really is. This is because, Golding has seen beneath the illusion which generates a view of history as progressive and civilization as a power for good. Golding's universe is therefore, primitivistic at its core and yet also conscious, that it is only through knowing our primitivism that we will find our innocence. In this novel, civilization is desired because it acts against the corruption of the "savages"(p.155). Here reason is linked to unreason. However, the text resists a simplistic labelling, or the applicatio of exclusive moral values. To say, as one critic does of Lord of the Flies, that Golding is "convinced that without restraint of social order the human being will sink below the level of the beast,"[12] is to neglect that in the Inheritors which was published a year after Lord of the Flies, Golding takes a family of savages and shows us that they are more civilized than the newman or Homo Sapiens. Here Golding links goodness to the Neanderthalers or savages and evil is linked to reason and the beginnings of civilization. In other words, civilization in one novel is desirable because it "acts against the corruption of the savages", and in the other "it is desired although it is itself corrupt."[13] The exposition

of the nature of good/evil, reason/unreason is complex. Golding cleverly allows us to build up our sympathy and simply traces human nature in all its indefinability. The more Golding explores human nature, the more he comes across the unexpected, the 'stranger' within ourselves.

Golding's relationship with other writers is obviously important enough to pause over. He admits that Lord of the Flies has a "pretty big connection to the Coral Island."[14] A century without war and with a settled sense of the human personality produced the safe community of R.M.Ballantyne's Coral Island (1859). In setting his novel on a tropical island, Golding uses it ironically as a foil for his own version of man's moral nature. In this reversal Golding suggests the weakness of the civilized order and by implication the unrecognised emotions of the savage lurking within it. The coral island morality, though optimistic, is "unrealistic"[15] according to Golding, and he explained in an interview that the savagery would not be found in natives on an island - cannibals and such like alien creatures - "but that the devil would rise out of the intellectual complications of the three white men on the island itself."[16] In Golding's story, the choir boys "who had said, 'Sir, yes Sir,' and who had worn caps and crosses", revert to the role of painted savages who chant a ferocious litany of hate and blood : "Kill the beast, Cut his throat,Spill his blood" (p.168). The vileness proceeds not from cannibals, but from the boys, though man is not so much vile as "heroic and sick"

(p.113). Unlike Ballantyne's boys, Golding's boys have notion of order, symbolized by the Conch which heralds formal meetings, but when civilized conditioning fades, the shelters they build are inadequate, the signal fire goes out at the very moment when Jack first succeeds in killing a pig. Intelligence fades, irrational taboos and blood rituals make hopeless the task of the practical but partial intellect of Ralph and Piggy. Always a little nearer to raw humanity than adults, the boys slip into a condition of animality; they make an unnecessary evil fortress, they steal and abandon all operations aimed at restoring them to civility.

The effect is to hold before us two radically different pictures of human nature. Ballantyne gives us an optimistic picture, whereas, Lord of the Flies, projects the pessimistic picture of the malignity of man's heart. Golding mentioned in a panel discussion on Lord of the Flies, that he had two pictures in mind : One was of a small boy, standing on the sand for sheer delight of, at last, being where he's always read about - on a coral island. The other picture was of the same boy crawling bloodstained through the undergrowth being hunted to death like a pig, by the wild tribe that the children had turned into. How did one picture become the other? "[17] That is the question to which Golding gives unswerving attention. Golding's imagination always speculates and discovers in his form, structure and content where the connections are, constantly seeing in every detail, "the larger design"[18] of the whole.

Golding wished to communicate a somewhat unorthodox picture of human nature, but partly because he employed a traditional form in his first three novels, he contributed to the impression that he was also a deeply traditional thinker. Golding is partly to blame for this. In a lecture 'Fable' in The Hot Gates, we are reminded of how simple a writer he is and how complex too. Like any orthodox moralist Golding insists that :

> "Man is a fallen being. He is gripped by Original Sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous. I accept the theology and admit the triteness; but what is trite is true; and a truism can become more than a truism when it is a belief passionately held .... I decided to take the literary convention of boys on an island, only make them real boys ... and try to show how the shape of the society they evolved would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature" (p.88).

Such a statement merely describes metaphorically a general condition, it does not place it within a constricting scheme of theology. It is not surprising, however, that this led, the orthodox commentators, no doubt, to expect some cut-and-dried answer, a "code-message" to be "cracked and its matter extracted."[19] To impose a rigid theological framework, however, would be to severely limit his work. Lord of the Flies, is a moral novel embodying a conception of human depravity which is compatible with, but not limited to, the Christian doctrine of Original Sin. Golding's religious faith is based upon his interpretation of experience, rather than upon an unquestioning acceptance of revelation. It matters little whether we say, in religious terms, that man reverting

to his natural state shows the reality of Original Sin or, in post-Freudian terms, that it shows the inevitable triumph of the 'Id'. It is, ofcourse, entirely possible that Golding had managed to construct a fable that does express all these ideas and that what we are dealing with is not alternative interpretation but simply levels of meaning. This is not to say, though, that Biblical allusions are unimportant in his work. Like other Christian philosophers, he believed in an outer world independant of man's knowing mind. No wonder he called himself, in the essay "Belief and Creativity " - a universal pessimist but a cosmic optimist (p.201). And he further explained: "Universe I will use for the universe we know through our eyes ... I will use cosmos to mean ... the totality, God and man and everything else that is in every state and level of being" (p.201).

We therefore, need to be wary of dismissing religion from Golding's view of the universe. Like the novelist Thomas Hardy, Golding frequently reminds us of the immensity of the cosmos in relation to the puniness of man. Human achievements and failures seem unimportant in contrast to the regularity and impersonality of the Universal process :

> "Somewhere over the darkened curve of the world the sun and moon were pulling; and the film of water on the earth planet was held, bulging slightly on one side while the solid core turned" (p.170).

Behind such order there may well exist a creative being, but Golding's characters "grew accustomed to these mysteries and

ignored them, just as they ignored the miraculous, throbbing stars" (p.63).

The island on which Golding sets Lord of the Flies, enjoys an extraordinarily unviolated calm, before human intervention effectively disrupts it for ever : " This dreadful eruption from an unknown world" (p.149). The boys have imported the blood-lust of another kind of life, to a world which does not appear to have known it before. At the source of the book, is the myth of Eden in the Book of Genesis, whereby man's first innocence is corrupted by his inability to resist sin. But Golding manages to secularise this myth without destroying its viability, as an illustration of the human temptation to do wrong. Golding presents several images of the bliss in nature, emphasising the Eden-like innocence of it - the exquisite colouring of the Conch as it lies quietly in the sea, the butterflies in Simon's retreat, the sow nurturing its young. The arrival of human beings invariably disturbs nature. Golding presents examples of man's rapacity, from the scar left on the landscape by the crashed aeroplane, to the raging fire which not only devastates the island, but takes a child's life as well. An example of how the natural world shows up human inadequacies is seen in the contrast between Ralph's despair at lacking a fire : "So we can't have a signal fire ... We're beaten" (p.138) - with the regularity of the sunrise :-
"A point of gold appeared above the sea and at once all the sky lightened" (p.138). Golding thereby emphasises the vast

time scale of natural evolution. By implication the human adventure on the island has only an ephemereal significance.

Unlike most contemporary novels, Golding's fiction is preoccupied with what is permanent in man's nature, looking not at men simply in relation to a particular society, but in relation to his cosmic situation. To present this, Golding creates at the very heart of the fable, an episode where the character is stripped down to his very 'Being', and is forced to accept or reject the "darkness that which is his internal landscape."[20] In Golding's view, contemporary man experiences his spirituality as "darkness." His interior landscape contains "a central not comprehended dark"(Hot Gates p.167). The centre inhabiting that darkness, constitutes what in conversation Golding calls the "My goodness" of man or our "asisness" (The Paper Men p.161). Golding therefore, constructs an occasion when a character's centre breaks away from its given essential 'Being.' Golding claims that for contemporary man, that darkness holds the "promise and danger of wholeness." But only the saints like Simon, can embrace darkness and discover its "lighted centre."[21] For instance, in the case of Simon, the encounter with the Lord of the Flies Head, an emblem of violence and fear, transforms his innocent view of himself, by making him confront his own capacity for evil. The Lord of the Flies seems to tell him that it is both the beast and yet just a pig on a stick, that in the end, he is part of Simon himself. In Simon's quest, then, the concept of the fable becomes sheer experience. At the centre of the

book is therefore, simply this 'abyss' or void - "the overwhelming question"[22] - to borrow Eliots' phrase, which cannot be evaded in the pursuit of truth. The 'Simonness'[23] of Simon is a quality of imagination which allows him to know the "ancient, inescapable recognition" (p.152) of the existence of his own evil. His confrontation with the dead parachutist complements that with the Lord of the Flies. Simon's experience here completes his knowledge of how humanity works and what is the nature of evil that afflicts the other boys. Talking about Simon, in the essay 'Fable', Golding described him as a "Christ figure" (p.97), "solitary, stammering, a lover of mankind, a visionary who reaches commonsense attitudes not by reason but by intuition" (p.98). In other words a "Saint - people around whom miracles happen, not merely good people."[24] To describe him, Golding "distributed odd bits and pieces" of "Simonry"[25] throughout the text. We first meet Simon anonymously : he is the fainting child, of whom Jack speaks disparagingly. Thereafter, we see more of him alone than in the company of other children. His view of nature is one of understanding and acceptance, the qualities which give us the "Simonness" of Simon. Simon's quality of sheer faith is seen as he reassures Ralph "I just think you'll get back all right" (p.122) establishing the "simonness" of Simon. He makes a Christ-like gesture and pulls down fruit from the high branches to feed the "littluns" (p.64). Again, Golding marvellously evokes this quality of his, in the passage where, in the heart of the forest, Simon has communion with nature.

The place is like a church, scented and lighted by the white flowers of the night - blooming candle-nut tree, but what the communion is we do not know. We simply see Simon's kind of vision, its "acceptance" of what is.

> "Tall trunks bore unexpected pale flowers all the way up to the dark canopy where life went on clamorously". (p.61).

The description given here is what Simon sees and hears, not coloured by mood, as with Ralph and Jack, but accepted whole and for what it is. He apprehends neither through adherence to social creeds or rational analysis, but through an intuitive perception. In contrast to Ralph's experience, where he wanted "to light" the candlebuds, and Jack, who wanted "to cut and eat them," it is Simon, who just "sees" them, recognizing the 'lighted centre' of his darkness. He alone sees things "without definition and illusively" (p.152) behind a "luminous veil".[26] He realizes that what is, is neither horror nor beauty, because it is both, rather like the two-toned face of Matty in his recent novel, Darkness Visible, becoming one colour "gold." The two-toned reality - malignancy-and-holiness - can fuse together to become a perfect symbol of wholeness.

A look at the scene of Simon's confrontation with the "pig's head on a stick" (p.58), shows that Simon gets no real answers from the Lord of the Flies. It simply poses a series of questions to which he already knows the answers :

> "You knew didn't you ? I'm part of you ? ... I'm the reason why it's no go ? Why things are what they are ?" (p.158).

Appropriately, the name "Simon", in Hebrew, means "the one who listens."[27] What speaks to him is namely "a power, not ourselves, but in ourselves, making for corruption, or destroying it."[28] Simon's words become "inarticulate" (p.97) in his efforts to express "mankind's essential illness" (p.97).

> "Maybe there is a beast ... What I mean is ... maybe it's only us" (p.97).

We see the impossibility of capturing the reality, the "thereness" (p.16-17), of which Sammy speaks in Free Fall. Language becomes a superfluity in such moments. To quote Bergson, "there is nothing left but the flow of meaning which pervades the words."[29] Instead of locating evil in a dimension of its own, Golding argues that Beelzebub, the Hebrew translation of the title of the novel, is 'only us'. The wrong of human conduct arises because evil is a real element in human beings, independent of human environment and circumstances. Simon appears to "see", in the "Lord of the Flies", a manifestation of the dark side of human nature, and an evidence of the human will to destroy. But Golding leaves the phrase 'ancient, inescapable recognition' (p.152) enigmatic, for it is his conviction, that paradoxically many explanations may be simultaneously true. We can interpret Simon's experience, according to our private set of priorities, and not limit it only to a theological condition or to a natural disposition towards destruction. The most satisfactory explanation is to encompass both views, as two parts of the same reality, like Simon's 'transcendental'

vision. Such a vision "flashes across the inward eye"[30] of which William Wordsworth spoke. This quality, not of celebrating the thing seen, but like Blake, the seeing of it or an insight into it is the way we too need to respond to Golding.

Contemporary man experience 'mystery' only as malignancy, not holiness or wholeness. That is why, apart from Simon, the boys create a supernatural set of values, out of their fear and fantasies. They start to imagine mysteries in their surroundings which - as Simon perceives - only really exist as extensions of themselves. Unlike Simon, Ralph turns away, from acknowledging his own nature and creates a monster instead. His instincts are always to domesticate, to ward off terror, by social community, to civilize, to provide against the 'littluns' (p.64) nightmares, the security of 'home.' On a search for the illusory beast on the island, Ralph feels 'clamped down', 'helpless' and 'condemned' (p.122) as he sees beyond the lagoon out to the open sea and sees the "sleeping leviathan" (p.115), a monster with "arm of surf" and "fingers of spray" (p.122). This creature becomes a part of his consciousness, a symbol of reality, which he tries to avoid. Golding, recreates Ralph's imagination, which starts to see everything, even the sea, as a potential beast : "like the breathing of some stupendous creature" (p.115). The whole impulse of contemporary man, like the boys, is to transform darkness of the unknown into a devil or external system of evil.

The natural paradise in the island is lost with the first rumour of the "snake-thing" (p.39), a beastie, one of the boys mention seeing in the woods at night. This, of course, does not exist, but has been imagined by the boy, in his terror at finding himself on the island; the "ancient, inescapable recognition" (p.152) of the presence of evil which insures a repetition of the fall from Grace. Golding's image of the boy's shadow like "a black, bat-like creature" (p.20) intimates the presence of evil among the children. The bat is traditionally associated with night and the devil. The children are affected by the fear of the unknown, which descends with the night. In other words, "the looming terror", to borrow a phrase from another Golding novel, which the protagonist Oliver felt "night-long in his very bones" (Hot Gates p.173).

It is the "littluns" (p.64), those least influenced by civilized values, who mistake the tree-creepers for snake. Sam and Eric, infact, describe the "beast" so excitedly, that they forget to distinguish, what they really saw from what they imagine.

Jack insists that there wasn't a beast because he had hunted all over the island and never seen it. He understands better than Ralph, though, that their fears cannot be dismissed, for he too admits that in the forest "when you're on your own ... you can feel as if you're not hunting, but - being hunted; as if something's behind you all the time in the

jungle" (p.57). He further suggests that the fear they sometimes feel is only the result of nightmares, "fear can't hurt you any more than a dream" (p.90). Jack has no understanding that dreams can hurt, because they do psychological harm. He perceives things only in a sensual way and has no regard for the inner life, like Simon had.

The natural rhythms are coloured by their fears. Morning is menaced by the heat of the afternoon; the cool of evening is "menaced by the coming of the dark" (p.63-64), which brings nocturnal fears.

In this mood therefore, fantasy replaces commonsense and supernatural beliefs sway the children. The "unnameable, unfathomable and invisible darkness that sits at the centre of him" (Free Fall p.8) gradually assumes a monstrous identity and becomes the beast, actually the decomposing parachutist on the hill. To the children, this figure, entangled in the lines of the parachute, seem like a grotesque beast. It is simply the projection of their own darkness. We should not forget that the Lord of the Flies is only a skull, an object given miraculous life because of faulty vision. Unlike Simon, because they evade the 'overwhelming question', they fail to find the "lighted center" of their darkness.

Mary Midgley has beautifully argued that, "Man fears his own guilt and insists on fixing it on something evidently alien and external."[31] This is ironically what happens to

Ralph at the end, when the savages act like civilized men and hunt him down, as an enemy of the society they have formed around the aggressive Jack. Ralph tries to hide the beast in himself, by a worship of the adult world, and his advocacy of rational behaviour in the end, becomes nothing, but an illusion. He worships the lie behind which man attempts to conceal his true nature : "They wouldn't quarrel - or talk about a beast" (p.103). This adult worship is misplaced, because civilization denies the darkness of its heart. Ralph himself discovers this lie when he finds himself longing to hurt Robert : "The desire to squeeze and hurt was over mastering" (p.126). Ralph represents the perspective that conceals the true nature of man and rationalizes acts of inhumanity. The emergence of this concealed, basic wildness is one of the "themes" of the book. The tenets of civilization, the moral and social codes, the human intelligence itself form only a veneer over this "entirely unsuspected peculiarity"[32] in the constitution of human nature, as William James called it. Lord of the Flies can be considered a novel of"faulty vision",[33] to borrow Malin's phrase.

Whatever beast there is in man, or as I mentioned in the introduction of my thesis, "the frightful, sheer/cliffs of fall" in our minds, it also has its opposite; resources of the spirit like unused muscles and organs, never employed in our time in the world. Man abstracts from his violence something his nature possesses and projects it as fear of a demon which

will destroy him. He seldom abstracts from his goodness, something his nature also possesses. Spirituality, as a consequence can no longer be dark but light.

Lord of the Flies makes us work towards the conclusion, that man is somehow good and evil, that his nature endlessly contradicts itself. Given the nature of man, Piggy's tactless question -

> "Which is better - to be a pack of painted niggers ... or to be sensible... ? to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?" (p.199).

- cannot be answered upon an either/or hypothesis, since innocence and brutality exist in man in an exquisite poise. This reminds me of Eric Smith's perceptive comment on Ralph, that although he sticks by "law and rescue", rather than "hunting and breaking things up,"[33] yet he gradually approaches the savagery of Jack and his tribe. Our reasonable side will claim that to agree, have rules and be sensible is best, but man still goes out and hunts, kills and destroys while claiming to be a rational creature acting in the name of reason. Our inability to imagine evil is a consequence of the optimistic picture of ourselves with which we work. We need to turn our attention away from "the consoling dreams ... towards the real impenetrable human person."[35]

Golding's view is reminiscent of what Thomas Hardy states in Jude the Obscure : "... the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellation have to the real star-patterns."[36]

It is with Hardy's remark in mind, that I'd like to cite a passage from Chapter 4. The whole thesis of the novel is miniaturised in this passage :-

> "The subsoil beneath the palm trees was a raised beach; and generations of palms had worked loose in this the stones that had lain on the sands of another shore. Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed and threw it at Henry - threw it to miss ... Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins" (p.67).

We have the primeval setting (generations of palms) and the sense of a constantly evolving nature (stones that had lain on the sands of another shore). Roger starts by throwing stones at Henry for something to do, but we perceive a struggle in his subconscious, between a desire to hit Henry and the knowledge which society has instilled in him, that it is wrong to cause hurt and therefore forbidden. Roger hides his body behind a tree while throwing stones, but he cannot hide from the memory of codes of civilized conduct. However, restraint is only a taboo or a superstition, not anything inherent. Therefore, the "old life" has a progressively weaker hold over Roger and the others. Man's urge for destruction and his capacity for evil are real and enduring. The child's sadistic impulses are our first significant peep into the "heart of darkness", to borrow the title of Conrad's novel.

Similarly, Maurice, walking through the castles built in the sand by the little children, inadvertently kicks sand into Percival's eye and hurries "guiltily" away for "at the back of his mind formed the uncertain outlines of an excuse" (p.65). Johnny's "natural belligerence" and Henry's "absorption" in "exercising control over living things"(p.66) are basic elements of human nature. Watching the "tiny transparencies", that linger near the water over the beach for "food", gave Henry the "illusion of mastery" (p.66), which changes to reality when the inhibitions fostered by civilized society disappear. Then the knife descends with freedom - "the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh" (p.34) which earlier was "unbearable" (p.34) to them. Under Jack's rule, the children colour their faces, and behind the mask of their paint, assume a more self-confident and brutal personality. Like Eliot's 'Prufrock', the children become automatons or "cogs" in the vast machinery of society, changing their "social masks" to suit the occasion.

When in the first scene of Macbeth, the three witches chant "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (p.4) we are introduced to a see-saw of moral contraries which points to Macbeth's wrong choice. Similarly, in Lord of the Flies, Golding skilfully uses several "foreshadowing devices",[37] to establish present jollility and future terror to show that the line between reason/unreason, fun violence/real violence is thin. For instance, the boys indulge in a mock fight and were a

"happy, heaving pile in the under-dusk" (p.29). But this scene later becomes the mob hurling itself upon the terrified sow and then the hysterical savages who kill Simon as they "screamed, struck, bit, tore" (p.168). Another scene is depicted in Chapter 1, coloured by one mood and then repeated later, coloured by an opposing mood. This is seen when the three boys are diverted by the fun of rock-rolling. The incident takes on a different tone when we read later in the novel, of Piggy being deliberately toppled to his death by a rock, which Roger pushes "with a sense of delirious abandonment" (p.200) on to Piggy who "fell forty feet and landed on his back across that square, red rock in the sea. His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed" (p.200).

From a traditional point of view, the Head - the centre of reason -is destroyed with Piggy's death and the "bridge" between rationality and irrationality is severed. The Conch's destruction at the same time symbolizes the limitation and destruction of that rationality.

The mask of warpaint is enough to make the children lose their inhibitions against violence using a ritual chant of real violence :

> "Kill the Pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood" (p.75).

culminating in a bloody and violent slaughter of a pig. If we examine the scene before the slaughter, we can see how the boys transform a natural idyll into something monstrous :

> "The pigs lay, bloated bags of fat, sensuously enjoying the shadows under the trees. There was no wind and they were unsuspicious; ... A little apart from the rest sunk in deep maternal bliss, lay the largest sow of the lot. She was black and pink; and the great bladder of her belly was fringed with a row of piglets that slept or burrowed and squeaked" (p.147-148).

Jack and his hunters select this sow for their victim, track it and kill it in bloodthirsty abandonment. The episode mirrors the rise of emotionalism at the expense of self-control, which is one of the principal themes of Golding's novels.

The sow's head is placed on "a stick" sharpened "at both ends" (p.150) and "jammed" in a "crack" (p.151) and left as an offering to the gods, a "gift for the Darkness" (p.137), so that in time, it becomes metamorphosed into the Lord of the Flies. The real relevance of this episode, lies in its latent brutality and the knowledge of the depths of human bestiality - a knowledge dimly perceived by Henry - a "knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink." (p.76) Beneath the adult veneer of reason and civilization lurks a nature that is repulsive. Nietzsche in The Geneology of morals pointed it out when he stated :- "Deep within all these noble races there lurks a beast of prey bent on spoil and conquest ... from time to time (the beast) has to be let loose in the wilderness."[38]

Lord of the Flies is also about the death of ethical behaviour, the death of goodness and civility, the death, crucially of our authority as selves. The appearance of reason is seen to be useless, when contrasted with man's true nature. There is an "indefinable connection" (p.203) between Ralph and Jack. Jack's appeal to the pleasure-loving side of his supporters contrasts with the responsibility Ralph had displayed at earlier meetings. Jack forestalls disruption of his authority by pandering to the fears of the children, offering them outlets for their apprehension. He helps them to release their pent-up energies : "Do our dance! Come on! Dance!"(p.167). Ralph by contrast, has always insisted on rigid self-discipline. Ralph's nightly game of "supposing" (p.181) failed to comfort him. He failed to conjure up "a tamed town where savagery could not set foot" (p.182). His failure to understand why "the world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away" (p.99), demonstrate the limitations of his mind. It is the 'mind' alone that releases the secret knowledge that there is no safe barrier between civilization and wild nature. Ralph could not trace the "arc of their descent,"[39] could not explain why "Things are breaking up. I don't understand why. We began well; we were happy. And then -" (p.89). That is because he blames the symptom 'Jack' rather than the real reason. In the course of events he was at times among the hunters, one of them, and he discovers the appalling ambiguities in his own Being. The growth of savagery forces him to grow up to see the dirt on

their clothes. The decline of the boy's moral state manifests itself visually. "Each of them wore the remains of a black cap and ages ago they had stood in two demure rows and their voices had been the song of angels" (p.146-147). He further makes "strange speculation" (p.85) about the meaning of human identity :

> "If faces were different when lit from above or below - what was a face? What was anything ?" (p.85)

This is however only a fumbling growth of his awareness. His objectivity is narrow,owing to his adherence to the "surface-truth"[40] of the fire, symbolising rescue, which in the end represents nothing but a miscomprehension, an illusion.

Like Tuami, in The Inheritors, Simon is powerless to alter anything for "What was the use of sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world?" (p.43). Simon's perception that evil lies within the heart of man himself, had not merely wearied him physically, but made him the repository of all wisdom - "like an old man" (p.161). He releases the dead parachutist "from the rocks and... wind's indignity" (p.162) and thereby frees himself, intuitively grasping the fact that man can escape the "brute obtuseness" (p.122). But when he goes down to tell the other boys about his concept of evil-and-innocence, or good-and-evil, he is murdered by the children, who mistake him for the beast. Simon's powerlessness shows that all men are at the mercy of their nature, which is basically the same. Man tends to regard himself in exclusive moral terms forgetting that,

not only rules are irrelevant, when one confronts the "slice of life" (p.90) but rules are non-existent. It is left to man to see for the first time "a different picture" (p.111), from what he has been accustomed to, like the Protagonist in The Pyramid.

It is significant that the two boys who are killed, Simon and Piggy, as well as the beast as a part of man, are taken back to the infinite Ocean, where they become part of the natural universe. Nature is seen to invite visions of unity and wholeness within itself. The beauty of the sea and the power of the cosmos controlling its tidal movement, converts the human horror into a scene of tranquility and dignity.

The advancing "line of phosphorescene", "full of strange, moonbeam - bodied creatures with fiery eyes" (p.169) - those same transparencies that Henry saw earlier "scavenging for food" (p.66), "like a myriad of tiny teeth in a saw" (p.66) - held the sand, grains, pebbles and Simon's body and "accepted them with an inaudible syllable and moved on" (p.169).

At the literal level the passage describes the advancing Pacific tide as it starts to cover Simon's corpse, but Golding imagines the scene poetically and sensuously. Therefore, the veil of bright whiteness, implies purification of the saintly Simon -- White being, in European culture, the traditional colour for innocence. The departure to sea of Simon's body is related with a "lingering sense of wonder but no problems are solved." It merely represents "a cessation of suffering, a

cleansing."[41] The natural surrounding is, as it was before, so is the human situation. Accepting the contrariness of human experience, the "dead body" of Simon and also the "steadfast constellation", can one understand an order and heroism within the human heart. The essence of Simon's view of "acceptance" becomes explicitly the mode of writing in this passage.

The death of Simon moves Ralph towards an awareness of guilt: "I'm frightened of us" (p.173). Ralph too stumbles upon the skull "who knows all answers and won't tell" and who "seemed to jeer at him cynically" (p.204). Once again the darkness is depicted as resting "about on a level with his face" and the skull's "empty sockets seemed to hold his gaze masterfully and without effort" (p.204). But, unlike Simon, he couldn't recognize his own face and "a sick fear and rage swept him ... and (he) cried out in loathing" (p.204). If only man is prepared to face his "face", he will no longer be in Ralph's words "cramped into this bit of the island, always on the look out" (p.110). Ralph cannot release fully the fear in himself, as he sees one of Jack's hunters slowly approaching him. The last chapter is structured along the line of a children's game of "tag."[42] The idea of the game is emphasised by the use of a truce term, "Pax" (p.216). But, since the boys become savages the game becomes a deadly reality as they hunt Ralph. "The multitude", Thomas Hobbes says, "will clamour, fight against and destroy those, by whom all their life- time before, they have been protected and

secured from injury. And if this be Madness in the multitude, it is the same in every particular man."[43] Ralph hides himself in Simon's cell "the darkest hole" (p.217) of the island, but with only a partial acknowledgment of his own savagery, he breaks through the cell. His last thought of rescue and the hopeless memory of Simon's faith "you'll get back to where you came from" (p.122) is replaced by a scream of fright, anger and frustration. He became "fear; hopeless fear on flying feet, rushing through the forest towards the open beach ... trying to cry for mercy" (p.220).

Unlike Simon, Ralph had "the experience but missed the meaning. / An approach to the meaning restores the experience beyond meaning. / In a different form."[44] This is how T.S.Eliot puts the notion abstractly in his poem The Dry Salvage, and which Golding changes into sheer experience.

As Ralph "staggered to his feet, tensed for more terrors" (p.221) he is saved from being lynched only by the arrival of a "naval officer" (p.221), attracted not by signal fires for rescue, but by a barbaric blaze prepared for destructive purposes. The naval officer, "grinned cheerfully" (p.221) at the "semicircle of little boys, their bodies streaked with coloured clay, sharp sticks in their hands" (p.221), seeing only dirty, frightened boys enjoying "fun and games" (p.221). He is still fast bound in the world of illusion. Ralph, however has a glimpse into the real nature of these "pack of British boys" (p.222). Through tears and agonies and most instant perils, Ralph learns the nature of "mankind's

essential illness" (p.97).

The shift from Ralph's agonised eyes to the complacent and benign view of the officer reveals the " infinite cynicism of adult life" (p.151), the absurd civilized attempt to hide the power of evil.

When we reach a truth at the end of the novel, we discover that we must accept it in an ironical light. The officer who rescues the boys, reminds us at the end, like the crash-landing of the boys at the beginning, and the fall of the airman in the middle, that the adult world is involved in a nuclear war more violent and widespread than that of the children. It is typical of Golding's deep irony that the neat symbol of human rationality and inventive achievement is also the frightening symbol of man's will to destroy. "Good symbols" it has been said, "should crystallise the intangible and clarify the obscure."[45] Golding uses his symbols in this way to add depth and meaning to his reconstruction of the traditional story. Rescue is possible in The Coral Island where only external danger threatens, but not in Lord of the Flies, which raises the question Golding poses : "And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?"[46] A return to civilization "in ruins" (p.67) and ravaged by atomic war is fatal. It is only our conscious 'mind' which can guarantee rescue from ourselves.

At the end Ralph "weeps" for "the end of innocence and the darkness of man's heart," (p.223), a world he mistakenly thought, existed, recognising the failure and irrelevance of

the kind of human moderation and civilization, he had thought he embodied. The naval officer thinks himself adult, because he can distance himself from the grief of the children, by which he is "moved and a little embarassed" (p.223). But Ralph's tears have sprung from a terrible insight into his own being. This is a sign, that he is more awake and struggling with his nature. His compassion is a hard-won knowledge, although only a fumbling growth of awareness, about the fallen nature of man, which the officer does not possess. Seeing through eyes that have been washed clean by tears, is the deepest dimension of insight in Golding. Ralph does not weep for Piggy, but for the loss of a dream or an illusion, the belief that he and Piggy were "true" or "wise."[47] In this moment of "tragic knowledge" he remembers those strange interims of blindness and despair when "a shutter clicked down over his mind and left him at the mercy of his own dark heart."[48] The fact that children are vulnerable and ignorant of their own nature, is ignorance, and we confuse it with innocence. The loss of innocence for which Ralph weeps is not, however, for a transformation from child-like goodness to adolescent depravity; is not a growing into wickedness. It is rather, the coming of an awareness of darkness, of the evil in man's heart, that was present in the children all along. To acknowledge the presence of this darkness in one's own heart is a necessary but devastating condition of growing up, of becoming fully and yet flawedly human. Innocence, Ralph realises, is the fruit of the disciplined self that has come

truly to understand itself, like the 'transcendental vision' of Simon. Perhaps, this is the kind of "wise innocence"[49] which great literature may restore to us, if we can learn how to read it. The supreme value of Golding lies in this, that beyond conclusions, and arguments, he was passionately interested in "existence." This mystery he finds as every man must find, in his own way. "Intimations of mystery,"[50] are what the twentieth century needs. The seeing or "epiphany" as Conrad stated, should be the adequate understanding of a work of art, where the readers are left with suggestions rather than answers. It is Golding's supreme literary achievement, that he succeeds in persuading us that "evil is nearer than hands or feet, that evil is endemic in the heart of man."[51]

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NOTES

1. Quoted in **William Golding : The Man and his Books** by John Carey, p. 62.

2. Epstein E.L. :"Notes on Lord of the Flies" in **Lord of the Flies** (A Wideview/Perigree Book. Putnam Publishing Group),p. 186.

3. See "Henry James at the Grecian Urn" by Daniel Lerner and Oscar Cargill in **Henry James : Modern Judgements** edited by Tony Tanne, p. 171.

4. Quoted in **Henry James : The Indirect Vision** by Darshan Singh Maini, p. 112.

5. Quoted in **William Golding : A Panel Discussion** by Susheela Punitha, p. 20.

6. See the essay by John Wain "An idiom of desperation." pp. 113-131.

7. Quoted in Mark Kinkead - Weekes and Ian Gregor, **William Golding : A critical study** (London Faber and Faber,1984), p. 30. (All subsequent citations are to this edition).

8. See "The elements of William Golding" by Irving Malin, p. 36.

9. Quoted in **Henry James : The Indirect Vision** by D.S.Maini, p. 119.

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11. Quoted in **William Golding : A critical study** by Mark Kinkead - Weekes and Ian Gregor, p. 21.

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13. Redpath, Philip : "Doorways through walls," in **William Golding : A Structural Reading of his Fiction**, p. 87.

14. Kermode, Frank : **Modern Essays** (Collins Fontana Books, 1971), p. 242.

15. Quoted in Samuel Hynes : **William Golding**, p. 7.

16. Ibid., p. 8.

17. Quoted in Susheela Punitha : **A Panel Discussion**, p. 20.

18. Quoted by Ian Gregor in "The religious imagination of William Golding," by John Carey : **William Golding :The Man and his Books**, p. 99.

19. I owe this observation to John Wain in the essay "An idiom of desperation," pp. 113-131.

20. Tiger, Virginia : **William Golding : The Dark Fields of Discovey**, p. 18.

21. Ibid., p. 34.

22. I quote this from T.S. Eliot's poem "The love song of J. Alfred Prufrock," in **Collected Poems 1909-1962** (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 13.

23. Quoted by Weekes and Gregor, **William Golding : A critical study**, p. 31.

24. William Golding to Stephen Medcalf in **William Golding : The Man and his Books** by John Carey, p. 61.

25. Ibid., p. 61.

26. Tiger, Virginia : **William Golding : The Dark Fields of Discovery**, p. 59.

27. Talon, Henri : **Evil in the work of William Golding** (Paris. Lettres Moderners, 1966), p. 25.

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29. G.H. Bantock quotes Bergson in his essay 'The social and intellectual Background.' **The Pelican Guide to English Literature**. Vol.7. **The Modern Age** edited by Boris Ford, p. 46. (All subsequent citations are to this edition).

30. I owe this observation to Mark Kinkead - Weekes in his essay "The Visual and the Visionary" in **William Golding : The Man and his books** edited by John Carey p. 79.

31. Quoted by Philip Redpath : **William Golding : A Structural Reading of his Fiction**, p. 88.

32. Quoted by G.H. Bantock in **The Modern Age** by Boris Ford, p.19.

33. See Irving Malin : "The elements of William Golding," p. 39.

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45. Babbage, Stuart B. : **The Mark of Cain** (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1966), p. 27. (All subsequent citations are to this edition).

46. Quoted in Golding, "Biographical and critical notes," **Lord of the Flies**, edited by E.L. Epstein, p. 189.

47. Quoted by Barbara Everett in the essay "Golding's Pity" in **William Golding : The Man and his Books** by John Carey p. 123.

48. Quoted by Baker, in **William Golding : A critical study**, p. 10.

49. **Span magazine**, April 1986 "Literature in a Technological Age." This essay by Cleanth Brooks is excerpted from the Jefferson Lecture in 1985.

50. Quoted by Anthony Storr in the essay "Intimations of Mystery" in **William Golding : The Man and his Books** by John Carey, p. 145.

51. Quoted by S. Babbage in **The Mark of Cain**, p. 28.

CHAPTER II

"Deceptive Consciousness"

The Spire, Golding's fifth novel generated a good deal of controversy when it first appeared. This is because "the disagreement among critics" relates more to "evaluation rather than explication,"[1] as Katharine. T. Jobes observes in her perceptive introduction to Hemingway's novels. The Spire, however, holds our fascinated, riveted attention for the convincing world that it recreates. The book's impressiveness still resides in the feeling of supreme poetic intensity, by which the rich complexity of its themes are realized. Therefore, despite all the controversy, this is what makes The Spire an arresting book, with an originality of its own, and marks a watershed in Golding's career in a number of ways. Between Lord of the Flies and The Spire, Golding wrote, The Inheritors, Pincher Martin and Free Fall. Though we see the various transformation which Golding's imagination has undergone in the last forty-two years, his concern is still to draw our attention to the "undiscovered person" (The Pyramid p. 111) within us - "the cliffs of fall" which "no-man-fathomed," which I alluded to in my introduction. Golding avails himself of "every moment" to reveal "the new and shocking valuation of all we have been."[2]

Still concerned with the problem of good and evil, Golding this time is intent on showing the ethical ambiguity of even our most noble deeds. Self-love and drive for power, taint even such an outwardly commendable act as arranging for a 400 foot spire to be mounted on a Cathedral. Jocelin's motives are compounded of idealism on the one hand, and

contempt for many people on the other. He equates his strong ambition, irrational though it is, with the will of God, driving himself half-insane and exploiting people callously. The tone of the book is sympathetic, but the vision is stark and ruthlessly penetrating as usual.

In this novel too, therefore, Golding's moral patterning is locked into the very fabric of the novel like hidden foundations. The 'myth' can only be discovered beneath, where we like Jocelin learn to see:

> "More, much more. More than you can ever know ... The work before everything. And woven through it, a golden thread ... Growth of a plant with strange flowers and fruit, complex, twining, engulfing, destroying, strangling." (p.194)

In Golding's mythic view of reality, ordinary seeing is always a lens to see something deeper, to tell the ultimate nature of things and dare to see whether in those words from The Inheritors "the line of darkness had an ending" (p.233). The result of this structural order is that, the real depth and meaning of successive events, does not emerge clearly until Jocelin makes his discovery, for only then, does he enter into a state of consciousness that allows him to take a valid measure of himself and the pattern of complication in which he has been involved. The structure of the novel allows us "to understand what it means to perceive and will thus, in a sense give us back the world."[3] In this way, his novels "are productive of meaning at the same time as (apparently) concealing meaning."[4]

The Spire, is set in the Middle Ages - the period when most of the great Cathedrals of Europe were built - and it is clear that it is based on the actual history of the construction of the spire at Salisbury Cathedral. Despite its historical setting, Golding did not intend to recreate a particular historical age. He always treats his time and place with assurance and authority, deriving from the fact that he uses them as something near to metaphor. What is at issue, is not the social facts as such, but the human experience which they mainfest. And so Golding writes in An affection for Cathedrals:

"If you live nine miles from Salisbury Cathedral, it is natural to take something away for your writing. But the story .... could have taken place elsewhere - The Spire could have been anywhere. **I was writing about a Cathedral of the mind."**[5] (Emphasis mine)

Salisbury, is built on marsh land without sufficient foundation to support a structure of such weight, it nevertheless stands and so is said to be "built on faith."[6] These facts, however, suggest very little of the central meaning of this complex study in human motives. We need to see through, and into, and past, the "idea" or "vision". The wonder of the book is to be inside the protagonist's mind and to discover thereby what it is to be 'us'. The whole novel is a preparation for the single moment of visual perception, "imagination plus the thing-perceived in-itself"[7] - the spire not to be conceived instrumentally as pointing towards

something "a diagram of prayer"(p.120) - but as something supremely self-contained, a thing of beauty in need of no justification. This is possible only at the moment when we, like Jocelin, can keep at bay the idea-making patterning intellect so that all that lies "in" the spire can come through, until knowing nothing, we are left staring at an object, seeing it as it is, for the first time. we are left at the end stating:

> "I shall never know the truth until they take the Cathedral apart stone by stone like a puzzle" (p.199).

We too, like Jocelin, require an indepth study to discover the truth of the novel. "The kind of eye... to grasp and mould what (we)look at ... or accept it in totality" (p.36). Although the spire, is human nature in both its height and depth, we are not really told about this. Golding simply implies it. His novels, as we well know, never have one unequivocal message. As the protagonist states :

> "That's too simple, like every other explanation. That gets nowhere near the root" (p.195).

Vision, as we know, is a representation of what eternally exists, really and unchangeably. But when man tries to transform his vision into matter, vision becomes complex and withers. "It was so simple at first", says Jocelin. "I had a vision, ... a clear and explicit vision... But then the complications began. A single green shoot at first, then clinging tendrils, then branches, then at last a riotous confusion" (p.168).

This brings to mind Lawrence's remark in his Foreward to Fantasia that "Man live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision."

That is why, Jocelin cannot allow the 'air' to be free but feels he must "fashion his vision in stone" (p.21) - build a four hundred foot spire to pierce it.

Gothic architecture expresses spiritual aspiration, but it is a "diagram" of man and so it is built in blood and sin, human evils, quarrels and hatred - "life's lavatory" (p.91), Golding's own phrase in The Pyramid. No man can justify claim to be innocent of his own nature, the truth which Golding expresses in almost all his work:

> "There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be" (p.222).

In his essay, "Anatole France", Joseph Conrad expresses similar sentiments on man's limitations and aspirations: "Our best hopes are irrealizable; that it is the almost incredible misfortune of mankind, but also its highest privilege, to aspire towards the impossible; that men have never failed to defeat their highest aims by the very strength of their **humanity which can conceive the most gigantic tasks but leaves them disarmed before their irremediable littleness."**[8] (Emphasis mine).

The Spire first appears to Jocelin in what he believes to be a holy vision which he thought God gave him, and which he senses physically as a fountain bursting up with "flame and

light, up through a notspace, filling with ultimate urgency and not to be denied ... an implacable, unstoppable, glorious fountain of the spirit, a wild burning of me for Thee"(p.193).

Jocelin's spiritual aspiration masks an unremitting egoism. His concern is centred on his will which defines and supports his self. "I shall thrust you upward by my will" (p.40), he states, although he sees it in omniscient terms: "It's God's will in this business" (p.40).

To quote Nietzsche, we might say that "architecture is a kind of rhetoric of power."[9] Jocelin admits "I was all pride" (p.191) and creates his own "rhetoric of power" in the spire.

Here, Golding examines not so much the self-centred and selfish human being as the dark centre of the self "the cellarage" (p.213), "morbidity and horror lurking beneath the surface of one's consciousness. Human pride wishes to deny any connection with the decay and corruption apparent in all nature and regards this dimension as darkness and evil."[10] That is why, Jocelin despite being a believer, is self deluded:

> "The mind touches all things with law, yet deceives itself as easily as a child" (p.10).

This capacity for self-deception and the myth making power of the mind may be traced simply to "human nature". Jocelin's belief amounts to an obsession with himself that he has been 'divenly' appointed to build a spire for his cathedral. His entire life has been built on idealistic

notions too pure to withstand the assault of reality. He builds his own self-made world and has a naive faith in his own goodness. The dumb stone cutter carves the "gargoyles"(p.67) of Jocelin with "wide, blind eyes" (p.24), an image of innocent naivety which Jocelin,as if to underline the point, misinterprets as representation of his spiritual vision. Jocelin's innocence is that of a wide-eyed child, who cannot see his own pride and who can lie to himself about his motive in wishing to see daily his "daughter in God" (p.11), Goody Pangall. Jocelin sees his church as an island of sanctity in a foul ocean of sin, a ship offering rescue on the rough seas of the world: "There is no good thing in all this circle but the great house, the ark, the refuge, a ship to contain all these people and now fitted with a mast" (p.107). Evil is a threat that comes from outside. Satan is "the beast" (p.161) who batters at the walls of the fortress church in a storm. Jocelin, given to identifying himself with his church, has a rather similar attitude to himself: he is sanctified; sin and Satan are threats from without. Thus a sexual dream is a visit from Satan not a welling-up of something from within, some repressed part of Jocelin's self. Even when he has gained much in self-knowledge he falls back on blaming Goody Pangall's supposed witchcraft. Jocelin has been guilty, as were others before him in Golding's novels, of externalising the devil. Jocelin is imperceptive and we are warned of this fact from the beginning of the novel, when he fails to understand, in his ignorant self-complacency and

pride, that the two deacons of his church are actually abusing him. Moreover, he feels he is doing all he can for all these poor people, sending his overpowering "arrows of love",(p.8) to everyone and yet he overlooks Father Adam standing at his very elbow. To Jocelin's consciousness he is merely "the little man"(p.26) :

> "... he has no face at all. He is the same all round like the top of a clothespeg ..."(p.26).

Jocelin spoke, laughing down at the baldness with its fringe of nondescript hair:

> "I ask your pardon, Father Adam. One forgets you are there so easily! And then, laughing aloud in joy and love - I shall call you Father Anonymous!" (p.26)

At the point of self-extinction, Jocelin earns the right to the pity of 'Father Anonymous', who alone stays to nurse him. It is then that Jocelin sees how mistaken he was to think the "clothes-peg" man was "faceless" (p.196) and he states:

> "It was just that what was written there, had been written small in a delicate calligraphy that might easily be overlooked unless one engaged oneself to it deliberately, or looked perforce, as a sick man must look from his bed" (p.196).

Jocelin learns to break the wall of the self which erected against others is destructive and enters into a world where he can perceive others for the individual miracles they are and finally state:

> "I would take God as lying between people and to be found there" (p.220).

The Cathedral is "an image of living, praying man. But inside it was a richly written book to instruct that man" (p.192),symbolizing man's physical nature as well as his spiritual dimension. By constructing the spire, simply as an act of love and forgetting that it is both physical and spiritual, Jocelin "ruins the foundations of his own being."[11] We are not really told about this. Golding implies, however, that the spire and the church itself resemble the male body. Jocelin's lust for Goody Pangall is anticipated in this description:

> "The model was like 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" (p.8).

It is Golding's belief that the physical and spiritual are perpetually intermingled. Jocelin is disgusted by any relationship between the flesh and spirit. He turns away in disgust catching the impotent Verger Pangall, being mocked by a workman dancing, the "model of the spire projecting obscenely from between his legs" (p.90). Jocelin has his head in the clouds from the outset and finds himself at ease in the airy world of the ascending spire. Time and again he tries to escape into free air and light, away from darkness where "horror and farce took over" (p.59). But "since no man can live his life with eagles" (p.110) Jocelin too is forced to affirm in his mind's dark cellar "the god that is both creator and destroyer."[12]

This novel gives us the vision of folly (as do all the others). It opens like The Inheritors, in innocence, with joy and laughter, the ecstasy of innocent vision. We see him laughing in "holy mirth" (p.8) as God the Father seems to explode in radiance through the stained glass of the Cathedral. But his eyes are "half closed" (p.7). Therefore, "the meaning of the stained glass, that story of Abraham and Isaac and the cost of faith passes Jocelin by."[13] It does so initially because his glance is so fixedly upwards "to the empty air above the crossways" (p.20) and his spiritual vision is "no more than a child's playing let's pretend" (p.85). He therefore is not sensitive to Pangall and the tears he sheds and has no scruples, as he forces others to fulfill his vision. Infact he tells Roger, the master builder:

> "The building is a diagram of prayer; and our spire will be a diagram of the highest prayer of all ... He chose me. He chooses you, to fill the diagram with glass and iron and stone, since the children of men require a thing to look at" (p.120).

Provision for a spire was not part of the original plan of the Cathedral and Roger estimated that the foundations were inadequate to support such a massive structure. But it is no match for what Jocelin calls "faith" and illusion on which he insists on building. But now he realizes that there may be a necessary price to be paid, by Roger as well as himself.

> "I see now it'll destroy us of course.What are we,after all? Only I tell you this, Roger, with the whole strength of my soul. The thing can be built and will be built, in the very teeth of Satan... Only you and I, my son, my friend, when we've done tormenting ourselves and each other, will know what stones and beams and lead and mortar went into it" (p.88).

Jocelin knew that Roger is trapped in what he sees as a "tent" (p.57) a net of illegal attachment with Goody, Pangall's wife. He disregards Roger's plea to remove him from the area of temptation and was wilfully blind to it. He connives at it because he thinks it will keep Roger at Salisbury to complete the task. He deliberately uses adultery to further his own end and although the thought - "she will keep him here" - was so "terrible that it went beyond feeling," yet it "left him inspecting it with a kind of stark detachment" (p.64). He is prepared to regard even this, as a means to the greater good. To console himself he states: "I am about my Father's business" (p.67). Infact he tells Roger:

> "The net isn't mine, Roger, and the folly isn't mine. It's God's Folly" (p.121).

Is it spiritual? Is it foolish? Is he guilty? Such questions are not answered rationally. Only during the process of building does Jocelin realize the full implication of Roger's frantic warning. "You just don't know what'll come out of our going on!" (p.89). Throughout the construction of the spire, he tries to avoid the "whole train of memories and worries and associations which were altogether random" (p.95). There were times where Jocelin "surprised himself; or, rather,

a dark corner of his mind surprised him" (p.75). But then his "logical mind would put the thing in perspective" (p.75). Therefore when perched at the top of the spire he is happy: "cheerful as a child that sings" for"the happiness calms all the confusions in his head" (p.106), but when he looks two hundred feet down at the pit "unlooked-for things came ... things put aside, from the time when the earth crept" (p.105).

Because Jocelin cannot see his own body-needs for worship, he gazes everywhere else. He stands high; he is dizzy. Not only are these repeated images of height realistic - they symbolize the spiritual adventures of Jocelin. He goes up, but he must fall; he must see his own earth as well as divine air. When Jocelin perceives his human limitations, he crawls with his face close to the ground:

> "So he crawled across the boards on hands and knees and the figure crawled towards him. He knelt and peered in at the wild halo of hair,the skinny arms and legs that stuck out of a girt and dirty robe. He peered in closer and closer until his breath dimmed his own image and he had to smear it off" (p.154-155).

This figure - also masked like Jack and the hunters - is the Dean himself. The dirt cannot be smeared off, especially by flying away. Through such means Golding reminds us that Jocelin's "vision hugs the ground."[14]

The first stage of Roger's programme is to breach the Cathedral walls, letting in both dirt and light. As the spire grows up, so does Jocelin. The process of enlightment involves becoming aware of the dirt and beauty of the human

world, his cloistered existence had kept at a distance. In a thick yellow fog, workmen with deformed cloth-covered faces, caked with dirt and sweat, chant obscene songs in the transepts. Golding manages to convey the startling effect of seeing a Cathedral which is not usually in a state of dust and chaos. The very first hours of effort to construct, illustrate that both man and nature will oppose and eventually corrupt Jocelin's pure vision. The autumn rains begin and do not cease in answer to Jocelin's prayers:

> "So he prayed among other things for fine weather. But the rain came for three days ... As for the whole building itself, the bible in stone, it sank from glorification to homilectics. It was slimy with water streaming down over moss and lichen and flaking stones" (p.51).

The Pit dug at the crossways reveal that the church now rests on rubble, brushwood, mud. Water seeps into the pit, into the graves, in the choir and arcades, and the Cathedral is filled with the smell of corruption. There is irrational fear among the workmen. Plague threatens "and the voices rose in fear, of age and death, in fear of weight and dimension, in fear of darkness and a universe without hope" (p.55). But Jocelin is adamant and says: "Let them fall and vanish,so the work goes on!" (p.49). The Pit, besides, suggesting the ingrained evil which is "one of us", also points to Jocelin's unscrupulous use of other people to achieve his goal:

> "...like a good general,he saw how they needed help; for even to him, his instruments, these people he had to use, seemed little more than apes now that clambered about the building" (p.55).

Here again the metaphor of seething water and darkness conveys the horror implicit in death, decay and destruction. Therefore, as Jocelin peers into the Cellarage beneath the crust of the earth: "down in the vaults, the cellarage of my mind" (p.166), he sees some form of hideous life that must not be exposed to the light of day. The ground is boiling with graveworms or grubs doing their silent work among the "noseless men" who lie buried there. To him it is "Doomsday coming up" (p.80). Like the children in Lord of the Flies, Jocelin too comes to regard this dimension as darkness and evil, a dimension of his nature he has always denied. The narrator in Poe's The Pit and the Pendulum, who looks down into the pit at the centre of his cell and sees the darkness of his inner self, so also does Jocelin become aware of himself when he confronts his reflected image "in an apocalyptic glimpse of seeing" (p.90). When he perceives his human limitations, he cries out in protest "Filth! Filth!" (p.60). But the "noises from the crossways, and his own memories were a hard thing to put aside" (p.77). He found himself "looking at nothing, and thinking about things instead of praying about them" (p.77). He found his mind was adrift and:

> "... he found himself looking down at the tiles of the floor with their heraldic beasts. Nearer to him than the floor were the people, the four of them - and his body shuddered again - Roger and Rachel Mason, Pangall and his Goody, like four pillars at the crossways of the building ... a horror of the burgeoning evil thing, from birth to senility with its ghastly and complex strength between" (p.62-63).

The spire is a place of vision yet a place of sacrifice too: "here where the pit stinks I received what I received" (p.53). It becomes clear that central to Golding's vision is the sacrificial victim who performs the necessary exorcism of fears. The whole incident of Pangall's murder "hunting noise of the pack that raced after the vanishing Pangall" (p.90),and burial in the pits earth "crouched beneath the crossways, with a sliver of mistletoe between his ribs" (p.212), is cleverly handled by Golding.

The workers adopt Jocelin as their totemic figure, since according to them he would ward off their superstitions about heights. Moreover, a sacrificial victim, according to them, would strengthen the inadequate foundations of the spire. Golding suggests tentatively that man prefers to destroy the "objectification of his fears rather than recognise the dark terror of his own cellarage,"[15] thereby showing "a failure of human sympathy, ignorant of facts, the objectivizing of our own inadequacies so as to make a scapegoat" (The Hot Gates p. 94). Therefore, like Liku and Simon in The Inheritors and Lord of the Flies, Pangall too is murdered.

As time goes on and the spire is near completion, Roger Mason becomes a drunkard since Goody miscarries his child and dies wretchedly. Jocelin comes to see how mixed were his own motives in wishing to build the spire. The spire is not merely a diagram of prayer or signpost to heaven, but a phallic image of his own desire for Goody Pangall, the lust that he had almost succeeded in concealing from himself. It

is sexual energy as well as faith that creates the work, as is underlined by Roger's intercourse with Goody in the scaffolding of the spire, and by the fact that the financial support of the project is being provided by Jocelin's aunt Lady Alison, a king's mistress, a fallen woman. Nor is this the only admixture Jocelin discovers, to the purity of the faith upon which the spire is built. The band of workmen that Roger precariously commands are not merely "Murderers, cutthroats, rowdies, brawlers, rapers, notorious fornicators, sodomites, atheists" (p.167) but "worsre" are worshippers as Jocelin sees it, of Satan himself.

Jocelin trusted only in the eye of the spirit but the novel carries him to the place where he can admit the eye of lust as well. So, the action of the novel is to bring home to Jocelin, how blind he has been to physical reality, to people, to relationship. Until cleaned of himself - his frenzied obsession to deny his true nature, he can bring the two windows of his eyes together and focus on the spire - a vision that overturns his view of the world. He experiences what Joyce called 'epiphany,'[16] far more profound in scope than the egocentric vision which led him to believe he was chosen by God to build the spire. This is the only moment when he has been able to keep at bay the idea-making intellect when the "disjunct sentences, burned before his mind" (p.157). His world of concrete perception turns inside out in a Blakean way, where insight becomes metaphysical, forced to contemplate what Golding calls the "thumbprint of mystery" (The Hot Gates

p.81), where reality freed from learnt meanings and dreary systems occurs as a spiritual event.

When he looks at the stained glass windows of the Cathedral now, it is not to see "God the Father... exploding... in a glory of sunlight" (p.7), but a "dully rich story ... and the light of the altar was a divided thing, a light in each eye" (p.62). Although Jocelin can see the completed spire which "joined earth to heaven" (p.69), its very stones are windows by which men look at the infinite yet "cry out" (p. 223) because of the thoughts which can torment one since one realizes that it is an expression of the worst aspects of human nature; greed, cruelty and lust.

To extend this to moral terms, human acts may be seen to have elements of innocence and guilt. Jocelin too cries out on his death-bed convinced of his own guilt. Like Pincher before the Dwarf, Sammy before the rag, Jocelin confronts the "stone hammer" that he has "traded for four lives" (p. 222). Lying on his twisted back - a form of spinal consumption that is slowly destroying him, he review his crimes:

> "... like a birth itself, words came, that seemed to fit the totality of his life, his sins, and his forced cruelty, and above all the dreadful glow of his dedicated will" (p.137).

Jocelin sees his own ridiculous frailty and that of all men who are mere parchment - covered creatures, hollowmen held erect by "a mad structure of bones" (p. 222). But like the other protagonists, Jocelin rushes through the darkness and

has a vision that foreshadows his death and experiences mystery as "terror-and-joy." The notion of darkness is treated in a new manner here. The darkness is described here as "panic shot" (p. 223) but above it struggles a magnificent kingfisher flying like an arrow through the azure sky. The reborn Jocelin is a visionary, experiencing a Blakean vision of an apple tree as "a cloud of angels flashing in the sunlight" (p. 204) though with "a long, black springing thing" (p. 204), amongst its leaves. The joyous beauty contains also, and indeed grows out of, the darkness: the nature of beauty, like human nature, is terrible, mysterious and paradoxical. Jocelin experiences explosive beauty but has a vision also of the ugliness and darkness of men, mad bones and vile bodies prancing absurdly in "woven stuff" and "skins of dead animals" (p. 222). The achieved beauty of the spire which immortalises both Jocelin and Roger, is flawed by the tilt it develops; is an image and product of human aspiration and imperfection. Focusing on the spire enables him to realise that "everything is related to everything else" (Free Fall p. 186). He was blind for "at the moment of vision, the eyes see nothing" (p. 24), but he can now bring the two windows of his eyes together and see the "upward waterfall" (p. 223), a miracle in stone.

Jocelin struggles to leave behind for others, some fragment of the truth he sees, but the words that form in his mind are too complex to articulate what he has learned of his own nature, the nature of others and the nature of God's

world. He simply cries out "It's like the appletree" (p.223). It may seem a cryptic statement to us, but for Jocelin it is a truth discovered from his experience. We move away from the essence of Jocelin's paradoxical statement if we try to reduce it to a simple formula. We can take this episode like one of Marlowe's inconclusive experiences, "...where the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze."[17]

We can simply catch a glimpse at the shape of innocence-with-experience, if we read with great care, not only through the eyes but, in Frank Kermode's apt phrase, "over the shoulder of Jocelin,"[18] we see the fallen nature of his world, and the flaws in him, though at first these are mere suspicions.

The vision is, therefore, captured only in vague symbolic images which holds the fruit of both good and evil and Jocelin partook of both, as the first man did, as all men do. This is the reality of our mortal condition, the universal experience which can be seen in terms of original sin or the loss of innocence. For Golding, "that single-mindedness, relentless insistence on self, and exclusion of the rest of the universe in order to satisfy the imposing demands of the ego,is the definition of original sin."[19] And Jocelin's location of the sin in the course of his life completes his understanding of the guilt he cannot expunge, the fallen nature he cannot change.

In Golding's view contemporary man experiences his spirituality as 'darkness' which is accessible but elusive. Man has a choice either to resist the darkness, like Martin in Pincher Martin and suffer annihilation or like Jocelin to be momentarily transfigured into a state where he is certain of nothing - "I know nothing at all" (p.223), and yet, has gained a visionary insight into the nature of things. Appalled by the vision of his own sinfulness, and the sinfulness of the world around him , he abandons hope in God. Father Adam encourages him to reaffirm his belief that he might receive the Sacrament and be saved, but Jocelin's reaction is ambiguous:

> "Father Adam, leaning down, could hear nothing. But he saw a tremor of the lips that might be interpreted as a cry of : God! God! God! So of the charity to which he had access, he laid the Host on the dead man's tongue" (p.223).

It is clear that the mechanical system of salvation upheld by Father Adam is an absurd travesty of the mystery of a man's faith. At the close, Jocelin may be in despair, but, that despair is also a "visionary scepticism:"[20] Jocelin can see deeper into the mystery. His vision of the awful unknowableness, the mystery of things, seems in a curious way, closer to God, than Father Adam's mechanical faith. His despair is, after all, the product of his profound sense of his own sin in all its seriousness, and the physical devastation of his self-sacrifice. He may be in darkness, but perhaps that darkness is that spiritual desert of uncertainity

in God and self-condemnation so powerfully evoked in the "Terrible Sonnets"[21] of Hopkins, the darkness that is nearness to God.

The sources and means of evil are also the means of power and creation. For as Golding states in "All or Nothing":

> "The mind of man is the biggest thing in the universe, it is throughout the universe."

In the end, therefore, it all depends on man himself, and his perception of the shape of the universe. As the protagonist in Free Fall states:

> "What we know is not what we see or learn but what we realize" (p.149)...
>
> "Conduct is not good or bad, but discovered or got away with" (p.218).

Jocelin is ultimately saved by Grace and he earned it through suffering. What Baudelaire states is equally applicable to him: "He could not escape suffering and he could not transcend it ... but what he could do was to study his suffering."[22] He comes to realize 'what he was for' and that is his salvation. He is granted forgiveness because he learns the selfless quality of forgiveness. This occurs at the moment when he goes to Roger and admits:

> "I injure everyone I touch, particularly those I love. Now I've come in pain and shame, to ask you to forgive me" (p.210-211).

"Help me!"

> "It was as if these words were a key. He felt them shake him... The shaking hurt his back and his head;but it was connected with an infinite sea of grief which sent out an arm to fill him and overflowed liberally at his eyes" (p.196-197).

Jocelin "cried out, not in terror but in grief" (p.155). Grief and seeing through eyes that have been washed clean by tears, is the deepest dimension of all in human sight. The tears that have sprung from a forceful insight into his own being, finally help Jocelin to break down the wall of self and selflessly extend himself to others. He tells Anselm :

> "I beg you. No forgiveness for this or that, for this candle or that insult. Forgive me for being what I am" (p.203).

In the opening stanza of The Ring and the Book, Browning tells us that : "... there's nothing in nor out o'the world / Good except truth : yet this, the something else,/What's this then which proves Good yet seems untrue?"[23] The truth cannot be simply a rigid stone book that is clear in its meaning to all. Goodness cannot be reduced to following a strict code of rules. "Truth and goodness, we might usefully combine in the word wisdom. Wisdom is glimpsed only out of the corner of the eye, it is elusive."[24]

Golding, in The Spire, presents a religious vision, the meaning of which is dark. It can be expressed only in daring and ambiguous metaphors and paradoxes; the spire itself is such a metaphor and paradox. "Perhaps God has a key to meanings, the power to create light from darkness, perhaps he

alone has clear distinct ideas of truth and goodness,"[25] but "God knows where God may be" (p.222).

However we interpret Golding's novel, one thing is clear, The Spire begins in vision and proceeds by correcting that vision, refracting it through the physical world. It ends with a vision rather than a single view. And Golding leaves the discovery there. We are left with the flow of meaning which pervades this vision. Man's mind, which has "cliffs of fall," as we have seen traced in this novel, is ultimately what helps us to reassess and revise our simple categorization of the world we know or the world we think we know. For Golding, the "systems man creates to describe himself and his life - narrative structures or even Freudian theory - falsify because they are selective. They are useful nets for trawling in the dark waters, but they do not catch the ocean upon which they are cast; 'Living is like nothing because it is everything.' (Free Fall p.7)"[26]

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NOTES

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CHAPTER III

"Recesses of Man's Nature"

In Rites of Passage Golding has produced a novel which both stuns and stimulates. Rites of Passage, is perhaps, the most 'commented-on-tale' of Golding, after Lord of the Flies. It is the mark of his perfect authenticity as a novelist, that he could produce the stunning self-exposures of Rites of Passage. This is to say that in his inspired discovery of the uses of language, Golding assembles not simply a novel, but an intelligible picture of our personality. This happens because of the intense visual imagination which Golding has. Golding recounts from his childhood : "... I had no doubt that if one frowned long enough at the page it would brighten and come alive. Indeed it did. The words and paper vanished. The picture emerged. Details were there to be heard, seen, touched."[1] Elusive effects of words became subsidiary to vivid, dynamic and detailed imagination. This kind of attitude towards meaning rests in its turn on the whole approach of his books to experience. His genius seems to lie in pushing conceptualization back to the point where it is just experience. That is why, in Pincher Martin we read :

> "Words and sounds were sometimes visible as shapes ... They did not vibrate and disappear. When they were created they remained as hard enduring things like the pebbles" (p.26).

A picture of life that is rich in significance is what Golding manages to convey in Rites of Passage.

Rites of Passage was enthusiastically received, being more concerned with everyday life, especially that perennially popular activity - the journey by sea. One may unhesitatingly assert that Golding did not restrict his writing to the world of ships and sea-life in this novel. It contains in essence many ideas which Golding has focused upon and which are developed and reiterated in almost all his works. Human experience being the basis on which Golding builds this fictional world, it becomes a journey into the centre of man. At the least, Golding may be said to have established in Rites of passage - together with his earlier novels - an explanation of his life's chief ambition and procedure : "What man is, whatever man is under the eye of heaven that I burn to know and that ... I would endure knowing."[2]

Lest, the simple narrative written, according to the conventions of the eighteenth century epistolary novel, be taken at its face value, Golding's own pronouncement on this work at the Booker Prize ceremony is pertinent. He stated that Rites of Passage is about "mercy, the brotherhood of man,the necessity of understanding each other, and the capacity for cruelty which we all have in us."[3]

Such truths about the nature of man and of moral behaviour cannot be easily stated, they must be perceived by the reader, just as they are perceived by Edmund Talbot, the questioning protagonist, in this novel :

> "It seemed as if certain sentences, phrases, situations were brought successively before me - and these, as it were, glowed with a significance that was by turns farcical,gross and tragic"(p.276).

In Golding's world, therefore, "Life ought to be - perceptive" (The Pyramid p.148).

Talbot perceives everything in terms of theatricality and the stage. To see things in such terms, impresses on us the sense that, he does not see things realistically, that, he is actually looking at the world through rose-coloured glasses. Indeed, he views the whole journal as "the record of a drama - Colley's drama" (p.264). The real drama of Rites of Passage is a subjective drama. Talbot's error and resolution are, it seems to me, crucial stages on a psychic journey, which forms the very heart of the novel. This journey, is the journey of an uncommitted, undefined self, seeking realization and identity. This is wholly in keeping with Golding's interests. Golding said that he "built the ship up in a sense as a kind of theatre in which the drama could be played out."[4] In view of his growing awareness of the individual nature of all men, Talbot revises his early opinion of the parson Colley, after he has read Colley's own account of the events. He realizes that Colley experienced the events not as "farce" (p.104) but as "tragedy" (p.104) - "tragic trilogy" (p.266). To see Colley simply as "a sort of Punchinello" (p.104) is to simply see what the man appears to be rather than perceiving the tragic reality beneath the appearance. Farce and tragedy are fused in Colley's drama because man's nature consists of both,

the good and the bad. Virtue and vice are balanced in human nature : "the frightful fiend of man's nature treads hard upon the heels of the angels of light."[5] To quote from Talbot's godfather's translation of Racine:

> "Lo! where toils virtue up th' Olympian fteep -
> With like fmall fteps doth Vice t'wards
> Hades creep." (p. 278).

The true nature of man must be seen in juxtaposition. with a need for commitment and resolute decision to realize that, the outward form of man's life is a facade hiding deeper forces that can rise up to destroy him. Only Colley can know the price he paid for "stepping over the edge" of darkness - that last stride over "the threshold of the invisible."[6] He alone took those "small steps" and thrust himself through all the hazy glows and "misty halos" (Heart of Darkness p,8) which conceals from lesser men the complexion and meaning of their lives. It is the tragedy of Rites of Passage that Colley can offer no more efficient struggle against his terrible state than to take recourse in silence. Colley falls from the "heights of complacent austerity to ... the lowest hell of self degradation" (p.278), and finds out "how next to impossible is the exercise of virtue ! It requires constant watchfulness, constant guard ... (relies) at every moment on the operation of Grace!" (p.220) because "the power of Grace is infinite" (p.247). The Brocklebanks "the last person to offend the susceptibilities. Custom. Habit" (p.57), can take those "steps" and "survive to attain a deboshed and saturated finality which disgusts everyone but themselves" (p.278).

One way of looking at this novel, therefore, is to see it as a voyage through all the contradictory possibilities man finds within himself, a quest for some form of coherence and consistency. It is from the basic reality of his own vision of life that Golding judges the rest of humanity to be either hopelessly deceived or deliberately blind -

> "Life is a formless business... Literature is much amiss in forcing a form on it." (p.265)

Rites of Passage, it must be noted, is a social comedy. William Boyd states that the novel "is a witty and solidly realistic account of life on a sailing ship at the beginning of the last century."[7] It certainly, wryly observes, the warped respectability, the hugely conventional social norms, so as to make us question the viability of a world with the "cruelties and injustices of social stratification."[8] There is also the fusion of the grotesque and the pathetic in the very portrait of Reverend Colley. But this social comedy, is accompanied by a sober vision of man as a moral being and a flawed one at that. In other words, we get a glimpse of Golding's myth of the "varied fabrics of the human tapestry" (p.258) removed from contemporary social and cultural structures. A close examination of the novel amply reveals "the oddities of behaviour, the perplexities of the understanding, in a word, the strangeness of this life in this strange part of the world among strange people and in this strange construction of English Oak which both transports and imprisons"(p.223).

The text is a fiction based on a true 'historical' event of which Golding explains : "There was a case of a convoy moving from India across the Bay of Bengal, there was an unfortunate clergyman who either went naked among the sailors or got drunk and was stripped by the sailors and came back and went into his cabin and never came out ... The man turned his face to the wall and died."[9]

But the idea has perhaps never been so consummately concretized in a work of art as it is in Rites of Passage, where its presence is in all likelihood, almost entirely a product of Golding's life-long preoccupation with the true nature of his fellowmen. In this regard one dares to say that no other novelist could have ever invested so much in his work as Golding habitually does in his.

Safely anchored within society, living a so-called normal civilized life, where restraint has been institutionalized, Golding states that, it is easy to act in a civilized manner. But isolated from the surface routine of orgainzed society, one can succumb to the disintegrative powers within oneself. According to Golding, isolation robs certain men of the 'conscience' of conduct which allows him to survive in a civilized society. When man is at an extremity he becomes aware of a dimension beyond the rational world of cause and effect, a world in which reasonable explanations are no longer applicable : "it was not just that the rules were unknown, but that they were non-existent" (The Pyramid, p.90).

In Rites of Passage, Golding sees this destructive potential 'within' as a threat, not only to the individual, but also to the very fabric of society. Most men, like Talbot, spend the greater part of their lives in a world where prudence and practicality are the measurements of what is. The quality of Talbot's vision is faulty, and what he does not see for some time, is that he is looking at life represented, rather than truly lived. Among other things, then, Talbot's error is the result of a radical failure of vision: idealizing too much, he has perceived all too little. He lived exclusively for the world. But to care so totally and uncritically for society is to be absolutely enslaved to mere appearance, never questioning essences or the intrinsic worth of things. It is only when confronted with the naked truth of existence, that one can understand, like the Parson Colley, "things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with the great solitude" (Heart of Darkness p.83). Against such a grotesque nightmare as his own contradictory self, the 'social' man within Colley is annihilated. He is overwhelmed by an unknown power, a devil within him, he commits, what Anderson describes as "beastliness"(p.253),with Billy Rogers. It seems that, like Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, Colley lets the devil,the Beast within him loose. It is a crucial moment in Rites of Passage as it reveals the story's grim climax of self-exposures. But, as we have already noted, such peak experiences in Golding's novel, exists in a sort of misty halo or hazy glow. We are

kept in ignorance of the truth of what happened to Colley. Once again, a Golding novel makes us realize how obscure, relative and multivalent truth is. Only Colley can know the price he paid for crossing the white line "into the great unknown part of the ship"(p.109). Seen in this way, his dying presents itself as his purest moment of authenticity and grace. We, like Talbot, cannot understand the whole truth of his act of self-destruction, as we have not looked over the edge of darkness as Colley has. Our knowledge of life must remain "still in the egg" (p.146). Golding increasingly supposes, that a human being, may be more appropriately judged by the quality of his consciousness, than by the propriety of his behaviour. Whatever Colley has done, "the thing is that," as Marlow puts it for Jim, "in virtue of his feeling he mattered." [10] It is not for us to try to interpret Colley's terrible disaster as an evidence of submission or failure. That would be like responding to certain features of the book as to be lured like Talbot into false understanding. That Colley was "a fool and had made a cake of himself was neither here nor there" (p.138). So much as this is never a question in Rites of Passage. The novel takes it as its first assumption, that life is terrible and we can't disagree with Marlow's sense of the world in Heart of Darkness :

> "Droll thing life is - that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself - that comes too late - a crop of unextinguishable regrets" (p.100).

Golding does not think that Colley has managed to change all this, that he had made life merciful or congenial to men. He believes, it remarkable, rather, that his own largely empty experience of life, has in some way been "enlarged" that he had managed some form of self-recognition. He perceives the full significance of a "step" which he is about to take. But his experience, has given him such tremendous insight, that he cannot communicate with the bulk of mankind. It is largely the limitations of individual consciousness that Golding is exploring. According to Golding, when self-knowledge or awareness is attained, so is freedom - freedom to know the good and evil. This self- knowledge is ultimately an expression of some sort of belief - a moral victory, paid for by "abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory!" (Heart of Darkness p.101). As Paul Tillich perceptively comments : "The act of accepting meaninglessness is in itself a meaningful act. It is an act of faith."[11]

Although Colley suffered, he died gaining self knowledge. Better his pain and suffering, than Talbots' own docile repose, his own plaintive separation from selfhood and life. Talbot is European enough to suppose that behaviour matters, that what one does has at least something to do with who one is. This precisely makes him a dedicated inhabitant of the world of means. What 'is', is neglected, what 'seems' is paramount. That is why, in his quest for the truth, he cannot fully understand the complex reasons for his act. As he states :

> "yet even while I was busy leading up to the events, the further events of his fall raced past me (p.119).

Therefore, we need to question the statement made by Talbot :

> "In the not too ample volume of man's knowledge of Man, let this sentence be inserted. Men can die of shame" (p.278).

The reduction of the novel to an end-product of this condition, is as fallacious, as the view that holds Dostoyevsky's work to be solely "the eruptions of an epileptic."[12] If we are accurately to assess Golding's total achievement, we must share individually and totally, both the simultaneous perspective of Talbot and Colley which Golding presents through their letter-journals. Golding thereby creates two vivid characters who are "brought together"[13] through their private confessions. The "rites" of this passage as Golding has stated are the "initiation rites. Talbot is going through a rite of passage, he is 'growing up'. He doesn't realize it because he thinks he's grown up already, but he's not. And poor old Colley fails to make the grade..."[14] The crossing of the white line, as the sailors describe crossing the equator, is symbolic of the plunge into the hidden recesses of the self, and therefore, marks "a crossing into guilt, darkness, death and self-knowledge."[15] The knowledge that they gain is their "rites" (p.37) of passage.

Rites of Passage, as is mentioned earlier, is a social comedy with a difference, dealing with those "unbelievable gradations,"(p.168) in society, as Golding states in the

essay, "The Ladder and the Tree." The influences of the ghastly social structures are starkly displayed in the ship's compartment. Therefore, the ship as a model of a hierarchically structured society, where the people exist in a medium of social discrimination, is particularly appropriate. The quarterdeck above, the gentlemen passengers, the dividing line painted at the mainmast, the lower passengers, the crew - all significantly point to the class structure in society. Dining with the captain is a rare and special privilege and Talbot comments that "such gatherings are customary in packets and company ships and indeed, wherever ladies and gentlemen take a sea voyage" (p.46).

Talbot himself goes on this voyage acquiescing to his godfather's desire that he should further his career. The ship is bound for Australia where he is to take up his new assignment as the Secretary to the Governor-General. He therefore, occupies a position at the top of the social chain and regards these 'gradations', as necessary, natural and justified. His 'ambition' being 'boundless' (p.10), he proposed to "form an acquaintance with the better sort of officer if there be any"(p.9). He behaves with an insensitive arrogance that he imagines his social position allows. His manipulativeness arises mainly from his social position. The evil of manipulation is, as we have noticed, a major motif in Golding's fiction. Though it proceeds from varied and complex motives, it is finally an aspect of moral evil. There is a qualitative difference in the types of

manipulation in the novels. Talbot's, like Jocelin's, is inevitably the product of a powerful vision. Talbot is keen on preserving illusions, particularly the illusion that civilization is a benefit to man, though it is plain that most of its benefits are given only to people of his elevated station or class. Talbot makes arrangement for a service to be held only because he felt "the brooding captain should not dictate" (p.63) to him. Infact, the reason why he attended the service was because as he states "I do not choose to submit to tyranny" (p.70). He notes with pleasure how the mere mention of his godfather's name tames the Captain :

> "What a silver-mounted and murdering piece of ordnance a noble name was proving to be among persons of a middle station"(p.31).

All his actions spring from the ideal conception he has of himself as the most well-born and well-educated person on the ship. He even shows off by speaking Greek to a midshipman. It may be noticed that there is a striking resemblance between Golding's presentation of the civilized hypocrisy of Talbot and the existentialist term for that state of being as "bad-faith",[16] being self-deceived; the deception being derived from accepting pre-given roles in which to present oneself to others. Golding denounces the false sense of security of such men, who believe in their superficial lives and thereby eludes the fundamental problems of existence. But Golding also holds the belief, that man has the capacity to transcend himself, turn to his inner self to comprehend life's significances and thus find a richer, meaningful existence.

Talbot scarcely permits conversation without perpetual overtones and intimations of authority. This veil of arrogance seals off real contact with his fellow travellers who share the voyage. In particular, his contempt is reserved for the parson Colley "a fledgling of the church" (p.67), who has stepped out of his station without any merit to support the elevation, and who is a "living proof of old Aristotle's dictum" (p.67), that man belongs by nature to a particular place in the social hierarchy. There are innumerable instances of his snobbery and class consciousness. Infact, the opening section of the novel presents the civilized ethos of Talbot - a feeling of unquestionable superiority. In his self-absorption, he fails to comprehend the feelings of Colley. He felt that Colley's friendliness towards him was the natural longing of the social climber. His perception at this point, is blinded to all, but what is explicable in rational terms. Like Jocelin, he is singularly imperceptive and we are warned of this fact as he fails to recognize that the "unfortunate character" (p.275) being criticized by two of the passengers is himself. Furthermore, he is complacent about the world he belongs to. "Complacency" being "next door to civilization" (p.60), he agreed with Lieutenant Deverel that, "there were few problems in society that would not yield to firm but perceptive government" (p.52). He is a man who lives for the image he presents to others. Since he feared that his reputation would be damaged, he even came up with a "hare-brained scheme" (p.120) to dump Zenobia on Colley if she

became pregnant after their loveless copulation. Soon after making love to her, Talbot "wished nothing so much as that she would vanish like a soap bubble or anything evanescent" (p.88). All his actions spring from his consciousness of the responsibility to live up to his reputation, that is why, he was "more concerned with what Wheeler may discover and pass on to his fellows than considerations of a kind of methodistical moralism!" (p.93). To his credit, however, Talbot realizes the folly of his ego-centered existence and is receptive to the lessons of experience. The events revealed in Colley's journal show him, how incomplete a man is when confronted with a crisis :

> "I sat before this journal, upbraiding myself for my folly in my attempt to play the politician and manipulator of his fellowmen!" (p.146)

The diary shows him truths he has not earlier imagined. Infact he saw "such concepts as "duty", "privilege" and "authority" in a new light. They moved out of books, out of the schoolroom and university into the broader scenes of daily life. Indeed, until I saw these fellows like Milton's hungry sheep that "look up," I had not considered the nature of my own ambitions nor looked for the justification of them that was here presented to me." (p.38)

Talbot gradually learns that these social systems are artificial structures imposed on man and can therefore disintegrate with the "least confusion."[17] The appearance of gentility was more important to him than human worth, that is why he felt more drawn to Deverel "the most gentlemanlike

officer" (p.47) and "an ornament to the service" (p.53). It was "a misjudgment on (his) part to esteem him" (p.268) and he eventually acknowledges the fact, when he states that Deverel "perhaps, illustrates the last decline of a noble family as Mr. Summers might illustrate the original of one !" (p.268). The letter further revealed the part Deverel played in victimising Colley in the traditional crossing-the-equator ritual, also termed as "Badger Bag"(p.79). His action was partly inspired by petty revenge since Colley had interrupted the officer as he fought with Cumbershum over Zenobia's letter. Infact, Talbot realised that his own absurd "half formed intention" was "so like Deverel's jest I came near to detesting myself"(p.269). Now that he is beginning to find out about the "overwhelming realities" (Heart of Darkness p,48) to which he has opened himself, he no longer embraces mere "surface truth" (Heart of Darkness p.30), but probes beneath the mere incidents of the surface, to discover who he is and what life is like. His voyage of discovery begins with his crucial but frank question :

> "Here was I, who considered myself an honourable and responsible man, contemplating an action which was not merely criminal but despicable ! How did that come about?" (p.102)

This, for Talbot and for us, is a crucial question. However, when he reconstructs Colley's drama, he is shocked by the "overwhelming realities" (Heart of Darkness p,48). He had not earlier supposed that extremes of existence could be so severe as this, nor had he guessed, at least in a conscious

way, that he was so unparticular a self, so nearly unactual a creature. Talbot had, it may be noted, all along laid emphasis on intelligence and intellect rather than sensibility and feeling. But after he gets a glimpse of the dark truth about human nature, he realizes the primacy of experience over intellectual analysis :

> "Something more there must be, some distillation of experience, before a man can judge the outcome in circumstances of such quantity, proliferation and confusion" (p.146).

Talbot experiences a blow to all his preconceptions about order in his meeting with Summers "the person of all in this ship who does His Majesty's Service the most credit" (p.124). Summers played the role of the accuser making Talbot aware of his guilty role in Colley's persecution. When Talbot thoughtlessly invaded the Captain's quarterdeck, he was grateful to see Anderson swallow his anger at the mention of Talbot's influential godfather. Anderson, however, took out his temper on the defenceless Colley, whom he detested and made no secret of it. He allowed Colley to be chosen as a victim for the "badger bag"(79) rituals. As Summers points out :

> "Had you not in a bold and thoughtless way outfaced our captain on his own quarterdeck ... he would never ... have crushed Colley with his anger and continued to humiliate him because he could not humiliate you" (p.134).

It is however impossible to point an accusing finger at anyone for what occurs on the voyage. Apparently, as Colley himself

asserts, he was nobody's tool or scapegoat. But, it is precisely the obscure and muffled nature which makes his tragedy more ironic and also more terrible. For the type of deception practised by Anderson and the manipulation of the situation by him is all the more difficult to perceive, in that social appearance and forms are scrupulously maintained. As we shall see that Colley's situation is a "boundary situation"[18] of which Karl Jaspers, an existentialist writer speaks of; explaining that it is a situation one can neither plan nor escape, one can just struggle with it, and in the end be shattered by it. Talbot learns about his responsibilities and begins to "take the only way towards justice - natural justice ... rather than that of the Captain or the law courts" (p.183). He thereby rejects the emphasis on rationality, and moves along an inward path towards rebirth, as a more caring, sympathizing and perceptive being. He manages to be joined with that half of himself he had denied and attempted to kill with his rationalistic outlook. He reflects upon himself and life, and tries to know the conditions of his existence. A form of wholeness is achieved as he loses his complacency and gains in compassion. However, the spiritual world finds no home in Talbot, which means that he remains incomplete. What he derives from his encounter with Colley's spiritual letter addressed to his God, remains obscure. Colley's letter begins in mid-sentence:

> "... so I have drawn a veil over what have been the most trying and unedifying of my experiences" (p.186).

It does not present the whole truth, thus showing that the meaning of our 'experience' is finally unfathomable. Talbot visits Colley at Summers' plea, to try and persuade him to return to the life of the ship, but to no avail. He cannot save Colley and the ship remains "a Godless vessel" (p.227). Spiritually Talbot is still empty and realizes that he must live in a world of the "bitumen of blood and the smoke of tears.[19] Talbot gradually recovers from the effect of reading Colley's letter. After all, as he states:

> "A man cannot be forever brooding on what is past nor on the tenuous connection between his own unwitting conduct and someone else's deliberately criminal behaviour" (p.259).

It comes as a moral shock to us, then that Talbot responds to this often postponed crisis of consciousness, by still overestimating so radically, the authority of his hollow principles. Once again he has shied from reality to preserve a 'surface-truth' (Heart of Darkness p.30). He seems conspicuously unrepentant. This does not mean that his interior voyage has not been worthwhile. The nature of success and failure in human terms remain highly questionable. Talbot is simply more particularized at the end of this novel than before his voyage, but he is no more effective morally, and certainly he is less happy. His 'enlargements' yield him grearter insight into the nature of man than before. Talbot has understood simply that Colley had broadened the range of human life, that, if he made an exhibition of himself, he had forced life to expand to the pressures of the self, against

the indifference of the universe and all the insipidity of men. We hear no nonsense about repudiation or repentance, for Golding's protagonists regret nothing about their conduct.

It is appropriate that after his confession and guilt -

> "I might have saved him had I thought less of my own consequence and less of the danger of being bored!" (p.185)

- Talbot inserts Colley's letter into his journal, thus allowing the spiritual to come into contact with the material. He is delivered into a world changed to his perception but which is in reality unchangeable. Golding leaves us in doubt as to whether it is possible for any man to achieve complete wholeness.

Talbot's journal is very limited compared to Colley's perceptive journal. Talbot liked to "expatiate free o'er all this scene of man", but the wider world of nature leaves him cold : "I am so accustomed to the sight that I do not see it" (p.142). He regards nature from a peculiarly shallow perspective, whereas Colley regards nature with awe and marvels at the ship. According to Talbot, "only when the sun is high does the sea seem to lack that indefinable air of Painted Art which we are able to observe at sunrise and sunset." (p.142). He regards the ship as an explicable means working towards a desired end, comparable to Politics : "I found the ship and the sea comprehensible not merely in terms of her mechanical ingenuity but as a - a what ? As a steed, a conveyance, a means working to an end" (p.16).

Though ill with sea-sickness, Colley, a man of feeling declares :

> "how remiss I have been to repine at my lot! It is an earthly nay, an oceanic paradise! The sunlight is warm and like a natural benediction" (p.187).

The redemptive power of God and nature are invoked by Colley in his description of a thunder storm and a strange white mist that hangs round the ship. He perceives things in depth and questions about appearance and reality which are related to the truth of things. He wonders :

> "How then can water added to water produce an opacity ? What impediment to the vision can colourlessness and transparency spread before us ? ... Yet here, what was glittering and black at night ... now began ... to turn blue and green under the sun that at last broke through the vapour!" (pp.196-197).

Attempting to probe beneath the surface truth, he notes "how the sailors make rope look like wood and can carve wood so that it looks like rope" (p.213). He even apprehends the harmony of the universe in a single vision, just before the baiting, which mysteriously warns him just as his servant Phillips had tried to do, that during the event, both he and his religion would be weighed in the balance of those "scales" (p.233) of God and would be found wanting :

> "I began to understand. I began to tremble. I was alone! Yes, in that vast ship with her numberless souls I was alone in a place where on a sudden I feared the Justice of God unmitigated by his Mercy! On a sudden I dreaded both God and man!" (pp.233-234).

Golding holds the conviction that man's anguish is due to the original sin of his fall from grace. Man is, no doubt, a part of the universe, but he is alone in it. In his description of the ship as "motionless" (p.233) the balance between "sun and moon" (p.233) as symbols of "God's justice and His mercy" (p.234) we are shown the true nature of man and God in juxtaposition. As Colley states :

> "What has remained with me apart from a lively memory of my apprehensions is ... a sense of His Awfulness and a sense of the majesty of His creation ... a sense of the splendour of our vessel rather than her triviality and minuteness" (p.191).

Golding had no intention either to show us or to preach to us what was right or wrong. What he does express through all his works, is that, right and wrong, good and evil co-exist, both being irrevocable factors of life. It comes as a moral shock to us that Colley wanted not only to be "a man of God", but to be "seen to be a man of God" (p.226) in his "adornments of the Spiritual Man" (p.225). He naturally assumed that since "people ... judge a man by his uniform" (p.225), so they would "recognise that raiment ... and respect it" (p.245). But "the uniform does not make the man" (p.154) and events prove to him that he has wrongly laid emphasis on outward observance of rites and canonicals, thereby, obscuring the dark centre within or the well inside. Both his and Talbot's tales show how formal religion can, in the name of order, mislead one as much as any other outward systems adopted by man.

Colley has had, no doubt, "a momentary contact with reality" (Heart of Darkness p.61), but these "certainties of the Great Truths of the Christian religion" (p.241) is quickly dissipated by his experience of the absurd in the rituals of the 'badger bag'(p.79).

Unlike Talbot, not social heirarchy but community is the ideal for Colley :

> "a man (even if he makes the fullest use of the consolations of religion that are available to his individual nature), that a man, I say, requires human companionship" (p.193).

Search for security is basic to human nature. Like Hobbes, Golding too, advances an argument about our instinctive insecurity. Colley like Simon, occasionally breaks away from the group to go off on his own, but when he does so, like Simon he tries to think not just about the universe but also about people. His social sense never lapses. "Long live illusion". That is what society has provided mankind "with all the other benefits of civilization" (p.123). Golding celebrates the inviolable, sacred independence of the human mind to seek truth. Golding had commented once that "any great spiritual deed in human history has come through the mind of man."[20] The final requisite for success in the quest for truth, is to be able to "see without any disguise what happened." Colley perceptively comments :

> "There is much health in that phrase what happened. To clear away the, as it were, undergrowth of my own ... indignation, clears a path by which I have come to exercise a proper judgement" (pp.239-240).

Apart from reference to Christian ceremonies that accompany important human events, the word 'rite' (p.37) is also used to refer to the Captain's "Standing Orders" (p.201) in which are inscribed all the rites, practices and taboos relating to ship procedures. It is Colley's misfortune not to understand or heed such orders and thereby to become "an object to be humiliated." (p.202). His social sense is so strong that he has "tears of shame" (p.203) after being publicly rebuked by Anderson. He states with feeling :

> "On shore a man is punished at the last by the Crown. At sea the man is punsihed by the Captain who is visibly present as the Crown is not. At sea a person's manhood suffers. It is a kind of contest - is that not strange ?" (p.203)

Rites of Passage examines the central mystery of what actually occured in the fo'castle which resulted in Colley's death. An occurence which in turn affects Talbot and allows him to "pierce the mist so complacent, so self-satisfied" (p.158). The rites which are usually observed in a jovial spirit turn out to be most cruel and brutal : "It was horseplay and insolence at liberty in the fo'castle" (p.113). The report that Colley had written about the event where he is brought before the pagan god Neptune to be judged, condemned and punished, is a mirror of the moral deterioration of mankind. Golding presents the primary, unadorned realities of existence, in describing the lack of restraint displayed by people. The predominance of emotion in the absence of self-control is a principal theme treated by Golding in all his

works. According to Golding, human beings have repudiated traditonal checks on human nature without acquiring self-control and therefore the rise of unleashed madness, whenever the thin, dangerously fragile veneer provided by civilization crack. Whenever that happens man becomes one with the beasts again, falling back into the slime of the primeval abyss he prided himself on having climbed up from. And we too can question like Conrad's narrator in Heart of Darkness : "And why not ? - the mind of man is capable of anything - because everything is in it, all the past as well as the future" (p.52).

It seemed to Colley that he had entered the gloomy circle of some inferno, an unnatural and absurd world, where men had become inhuman. Even in such a situation his "fear is swallowed up in shame at appearing before the ladies and gentlemen, not to refine upon it half-naked" (p.237). What appalls him is, as he comments :

> "What I felt more nearly was the opinion of the ladies and gentlemen in regard to me" (p.240).

He is still living in an illusory world since he states :

> "It could not be so, of course. They were, it may be, hot with the devil's brew-they were led astray - it could not be so!" (pp.237-238).

But as he is eventually thrown with extreme violence into the paunch of filthy water, he gets to see

> "more of what was strange and terrible to (him) ... I had not harmed them. They had had their sport, their will with me ... nothing that men could do to each other can be compared with that snarling, lustful, storming appetite" (p.238).

The incident gives us an intensified awareness of how for Golding, the kingdom of Heaven and Hell is ultimately, experience stripped of illusion. There is no doubt that at this point, Colley is "more sinned against than sinning." (p.240). It was not the indignity during which Colley was bathed in ordure, that led him to hold fast the 'ringbolt' (p.127) and will himself to death. For he rightly states : "what a man does defiles him, not what is done by others." (p.235). He falls not because of Talbot's or "someone else's deliberate criminal behaviour" (p.259) or because he failed to observe the rituals of social class, but because of the division within the human psyche. He failed to unite the antagonistic elements within his self - the sensual and the spiritual. He had initially concealed from himself his true interest in Billy Rogers "a narrow waisted, slim-hipped yet broad-shouldered Child of Neptune" (p.216). He considered him as his "Young Hero ... whose boyish heart has not yet been touched with Grace." (p.227). He "yearned to kneel before him. My whole heart went out in a passionate longing to bring this young man to Our Saviour, first and surely richest fruit of the harvest I am sent forth to garner!" (p.218).

Ill-at-ease and lonely in the voyage, abandoned both by Talbot and the Captain, Colley was tempted with the very "devil's brew" (p.216) which he wanted to prohibit from use. It awakened in him the desires he hardly knew he possessed. He got "drunk as the butcher's boots" (p.113) when he went among the crew "to deliver a rebuke" (p.241) for the

"insult... to (his) cloth and through it to the... Master Himself." (p.240). He even openly urinated in front of the passengers and crew and sang lewd songs which might "be heard in an alehouse" (p.115). The "Spiritual Man" (p.237) as he returns looks "like some pigmy Polyphemus, like whatever is at once strange and disgusting" (p.116). Separated from human solidarity, he cannot escape, and staggers under the weight of his secret knowledge of the mystery of the universe, and the shocking peccancy of the human mind, especially his own. What was frightening about the whole incident was, perhaps, what Talbot saw and heard. He had seen the Parson emerge from the fo'castle "in a state of extreme and sunny enjoyment." He had heard him cry : "Joy! Joy! Joy!" (p.117) and walk "head up and with a smile as if already in heaven" (p.184). Whatever had happened in the fo'castle to destroy him, Colley had paradoxically found it joyous. Golding has given us, if only by way of hints and guesses, a sexual explanation for Colley's behaviour. For Colley," Joy was the power to make the universe anew, and when that was desecrated, then the universe turned into something monstrous."[21] The shame of his public denial of everything he hoped to be had broken his heart. He becomes conscious of his degradation. Colley discovers what he truly is and that experience is joyous, a liberation; but his true nature is something which both his society and his sober self rejects as vile. For, having broken the taboo, he passes judgement upon and punishes himself with death. The shock of the sudden, overpowering manifestation of what was repressed

in him is too great for recovery. No doubt, the awareness of the dichotomy within himself throws him into an abyss of despair. But it is not 'what happened' (p.239) which destroys his life. Colley cannot be easily categorized since he exists for us, and indeed for himself, more inwardly. He does not see the world, so much as sees through it. We are left looking at a hand clutching a ringbolt as he wills himself to die. He becomes almost literally paralysed. With his limited understanding of the complexities of self, he turns his back on the real world. The horror of the truth about himself puts him in a state of 'non-existence'. It is a "horror of bewildered life where he could understand nothing and nobody around him, where he could guide, control, comprehend nothing and no one - not even himself." [22]

Language gives way to "uninterpretable gesture",[23] that mysterious kind of "knowing" : "I perceived without seeing - I knew, but had no real means of knowing" (p.156). The mystery that attends his death, if it is to be expressed at all, perhaps, can be done through the shrill sound of the "... bosun's Pipe" (p.262) which accompanies Colley's dead body.

> "Their very harsh and shrill unmusicality ... seemed to voice something beyond words, religion, philosophy. It was the simple voice of Life mourning Death" (p.262)

- a voice beyond language and explanation.

The novel ends with an inquiry, a public necessity for an explanation of Colley's death. Talbot's decision to hold a court of enquiry to examine Colley's case and to identify responsibility is ostensibly a social duty. But the feeling of guilt, through Colley's letter, forces him to probe his own values and those of the society in which he lives. We are appalled at the civilized hypocrisy involved in the court enquiry. The thought of a heritage in common with the savages stuns them with "a kind of convulsion of the understanding." Talbot states : "I do not know that I thought anything at all for minutes together" (p.251). The inability to imagine evil as a part of human nature, is a consequence of the optimistic picture of civilized human beings. As Golding maintains ,"We suffer from a dangerous pride in our ant-like persistence in building a pyramid of information. It is entertaining information for the most part,but it does not answer any of the questions...We discount the possibility of the potentialities of the human spirit which may operate by other means in other modes to other ends" (Hot Gates p.81). Attention needs to be drawn away from such consoling dreams that "this is a happy ship" (p.250) towards the real "impenetrable human person"[24] or that it was a "Godless vessel" (p.227).

Verdicts are sought where Talbot blames Colley's own nature. Summer favours an equivocal explanation 'Intemperance' (p.250). Billy Rogers throws the suspicion on the officers of the ship "criminal (and indecent) assault"

(p.254). But by this time we are aware that no simple explanation is possible. Significantly therefore, the court inquiry brings no satisfactory results, a conscious lie is accepted as the official truth - "a low fever" (p.257).

The inconclusiveness of the court scene speaks of the ambiguity of life itself. The court inquiry simply makes it possible, perhaps, to see the sketch of what might have happened, bringing no significant result because "theory is a cold and lying tombstone of departed truth."[25]

Till the end, Talbot accepts one defined point of view as constituting the truth. He works out the facts about Colley's "fellatio" (p.277) from the meagre clues given by the gossipy Granham and Prettiman and their cryptic remarks. He thinks that when "pitiable, clownish Colley" (p.276) was "forced back towards his own kind" (p.277) he "made an equatorial fool" (p.277) of himself and "overcome by kindness and a gill or two of the intoxicant" (p.277), "infatuated with the king of my island" (p.276) "committed the fellatio" (p.277). "What a thing he stumbled over in himself." (p.278). Talbot places the blame much too squarely on Colley's shoulders and is lured into false understanding. To isolate Colley in this way, is to neglect the human nature all men share. It was Colley's error in thinking that life could be lived as pure spirit in contempt of things. In the appearance of living for the spirit in disregard of the material, he has in fact spiritualized the material - a typical modern malaise. Colley

died betrayed - whether by the evil in himself or by the circumstances beyond his control - Golding does not say.

When we reach a 'truth' at the end of the novel, we discover that we must accept it in an ironical light. All we can do is exclaim with Goodchild, a character in Darkness Visible :

> "No one will ever know what happened. There's two much of it, too many people, a sprawling series of events that break apart under their own weight" (p.258).

Talbot has taken little heed of Brocklebank's discourse on the relationship between art and reality. The lithographer, skilled in reproducing the visual surface, can catch this 'reality' in his paintings, to perfection. But death is always hidden and alone. In reality "Lord Nelson died down below in some stinking part of the bilges," but "who... is going to make a picture of that"(p.169). Instead, a lithograph portrayed the "happy occasion "by depicting his expiry "on deck" with a "crowd of young officers ... kneeling round Lord Nelson in attitudes of sorrow and devotion" (p.169). Thus, the interplay between appearance and reality illustrates the great problems posed by the concept of truth. Therefore, too, the judgement on Colley passed by Rites of Passage, cannot be easily summarized, since Golding is concerned with the inner truth of experience. The act of narrating, of shaping the facts into a story, is one which necessarily distorts the truth, as Talbot hints in reporting with disappointment that he has failed to spin out the story

so that it neatly fits the journal his Godfather has given him.

> "All was of no avail. His was a real life and a real death and no more to be fitted into a given book than a misshapen foot into a given boot" (p. 264).

Talbot's narration or any narrative is a framework or net by which we may make some sense of what went on, but, once again, it does not "catch the ocean upon which it is cast."[26] Although we are given hints as to what might have happened to the parson - his self-degradation and the anguish it has entailed is only hinted at. Although his act of self-destruction appears a pointless gesture, perhaps, Golding seems to suggest through this obscurity, that, so long as the emphasis is on the outward observance of rituals and not on the spirit, there can be no real understanding of the concept of truth. Unlike Matty in Darkness Visible, and the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, Colley fails to embrace his fate. Perhaps, as M.H.Goldwyn asserts, "they perish from moral exhaustion, but, they manage at the end to achieve a kind of moral victory."[27] The 'epiphany' in Rites of Passage is therefore one of existential despair. All Colley managed to achieve, is knowledge of the presence of the irrational in man. There can at best be a supreme serenity of indifference to this inescapable fact of guilt and suffering like Colley's. What the world needs, however, is a "Matty-like concern, a concern for the good of all, a reaffirmation of faith in the principle of Grace."[28] But Talbot like Conrad's Marlow, goes back to being himself. His intention to

keep back the facts of Colley's tragedy from his sister reminds one of Marlow's lie to Kurtz "intended" (p.104) in Conrad's Heart of Darkness. In his habitual way, Talbot protests that to disclose the brutal truth about Colley, about human life, surely would have been "too - dark - too dark altogether" (p.111). Talbot takes cover in a lie, in an illusion, for the reality of existence is too menacing, too dangerous - "all that is monstrous under the sun and moon" (p.278). He fulfills his responsibility towards Colley and in telling a lie, he affirms those very simple ideas which give significance to human existence. The epigraph which Conrad chose for his novel Youth confirms this :

> "... but the Dwarf answered
> No - Something human is dearer
> to me than the wealth of all the world."

The characters still want to exalt what they take to be the protective powers of civilization against the unfixed powers of the human personality and of the natural order which governs the personality. Colley's experience, however, will live on in Talbot, and in many others who seek to discover a potential hell in the hearts of all men. Perhaps, like Colley and Talbot "man's intelligence and his passion" will be "swallowed up easily in this great unbroken solitude of waiting without faith," [29] but the attempt at self-awareness must carry on since our knowledge of life is "still in the egg" (p.146). This world may be a hell, but perhaps the hell which we see for all its horror and ugliness is only a part of a whole which is quite unimaginable and is maybe - I hope it

is - a world filled with goodness, beauty and truth! Through this novel Golding brings his art to bear upon the 'evil' he perceives in human nature. He shows us that "beneath the surface of our accomplished rationality there is a seething cauldron of untamed desire."[30]

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NOTES

1. Golding, William : "The Ladder and the Tree". **The Hot Gates**, p. 172.

2. Golding, William : "Belief and Creativity." **A Moving Target**, p. 199.

3. Golding at the Booker Prize Ceremony, B.B.C., TV, 16th October, 1980.

4. Baker, James R. : "An interview with William Golding." **Twentieth Century Literature**. Vol.28, No.2 (Summer,1982), p. 161.

5. Redpath, Philip : William Golding : **A Structural Reading** of his Fiction, p. 69.

6. Conrad, Joseph : **Heart of Darkness**, p. 101.

7. Boyd, William, **Op. cit.**, p. 94.

8. Quoted by Philip Redpath in the essay "Golding's Criticism : Perspectives Old and New" in **A Structural Reading of his Fiction**, p. 210.

9. Golding on the South Bank Show, as quoted by Philip Redpath p. 75.

10. Conrad, Joseph : **Lord Jim** (Penguin Modern Classics), p. 170.

11. Bala, Suman : **Joseph Conrad's Fiction : A Study in Existential Humanism** (Intellectual Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990), p. 176. (All subsequent citations are to this edition).

12. See Henry James : **Modern Judgements**, edited by Tony Tanner (Macmillan, 1968), p. 54.

13. Quoted by John Carey in **Wiliam Golding : The Man and his Books**, p. 115.

14. Quoted by Baker, "An interview with William Golding." **Twentieth Century Literature**, p. 162.

15. Redpath, Philip : **William Golding : A Structural Reading of his Fiction**, p. 171.

16. Bala, Suman : **Joseph Conrad's Fiction : A study in Existential Humanism**, p. 19.

17. See Alexander Pope, Essay on Man, **Alexander Pope's**

collected poems, edited by Bonamy Dobree (London : Dent, 1963), Epistle 1, pp. 247-50.

> "...if each system in gradation roll...
> The least confusion but in one, not all
> That system only,but the whole must fall."

18. Quoted by Suman Bala, A Study in Existential Humanism, p. 207.

19. The lines are quoted in the final poem in The Cave Birds "The Risen" by Ted Hughes (London : Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 40.

20. Golding on the South Bank Show as quoted by Redpath, p. 178.

21. Quoted by Weekes and Gregor, William Golding : A critical study, p. 277.

22. Conrad, Joseph : An Outcast of the Islands (Garden City, New York. Doubleday Page, 1925), p. 149.

23. Weekes and Gregor, William Golding : A critical study. "The Later Golding," p. 278.

24. Bradbury, Malcolm : The Novel Today (Fontana Collins 1977), p. 30.

25. See G. Jean Aubry : Joseph Conrad : Life and Letters, 1, p. 216.

26. Quoted by S.J. Boyd, The Novels of William Golding, p. 159.

27. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Conrad's "Heart of Darkness." Conradiana, XVI (1984), p. 73.

28. See William Golding : A Study by V.V. Subbarao (Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi, 1987), p. 139.

29. Conrad, Joseph : Nostromo (Garden City, New York. Doubleday page, 1925), p. 298.

30. Quoted by S.S. Babbage, The Mark of Cain, p. 28.

CONCLUSION

The Possibility of Affirmation

At the end of such a survey as this, one wonders, of course, if one has built up one's critical observations, into a pattern of any general significance. It will probably be expected after so much insistence on the moral pattern of Golding's work, that something will be said about the total significance of his novels. The aim of art, is however quite different from the "clear logic of a truimphant conclusion",[1] sought by the scientists or philosophers. Golding is not one of those writers, who clears up their fundamental attitudes for themselves in such a way that we may reasonably in talking of them, label these ideas as "a philosophy." He does best to discourage any such enterprise. We only sense in his narrative, an intense and sustained thoughtfulness, whose larger tenor may indeed as Forster says, sometimes seem obscure, but whose seriousness, nevertheless, persuades us that we are in the presence of something beyond mere "opinion" or philosophical issues. It simply achieves the resonance Golding aimed at. Chords are struck in the mind like music. No wonder Barbara Everett perceptively described his novels as, "paper boxes but with things inside - corners, secrets, allusions, perspectives and the things stay in the mind, with their own glowing solidity."[2] The self reflectiveness of his novels suggest usefully why Golding's work can be difficult to talk about critically.

It is worth remembering the dying writer in James' story "The Middle Years" : "He sat and stared at the sea, which appeared all surface and twinkle, far shallower than the

spirit of man. It was the abyss of human illusion that was the real, the tideless deep."[3]

Only the greatest minds, the greatest imagination can comprehend something of that "tideless deep" which is the spirit of man or as Golding termed, the "My Godness" of man. With a writer like Golding, there is and can be, no question of anything like a final definitive appropriation of his work. As every Golding reader, would testify, there inheres in his philosophical stance, a fundamental ambiguity, especially when what the novels show is typical human reaction and motivation. Such works do not make for easy reading - just rewarding reading!

Alan Friedman has perceptively commented in The turn of the Novel, that every resolution precedes another dissatisfaction, another urge to make forays into the unknown. Each of Golding's novel has been a radical attempt to "look at life anew, in a word for intransigence."[4] As long as Golding goes on writing, this "intransigence", the concern for truth, the fitting together of image into patterns of great constancy, the reduction of concept to experience and the recreation of language, will go on. One might as well hope that Golding will be the father of a recovered freshness in English language and its literature.

In the sunny optimism of the late nineteenth century, which embraced a "rational optimist philosophy",[5] it was easy for C.E.M.Joad and others of his generation, to forget the

truth about man's deep depravity, in the confidence that every day, in every way man was getting better and better. It was the war which shattered their belief. Golding like Dostoevsky knew better. He knew that within every man, there is a strange streak of perversity, a strain of stubborn irrationality, an impulse of destructiveness. Golding is scornful of those who subscribe,in simple naivety, to the belief that, man is rational and good. Golding emphatically rejects Rousseau's, doctrine that the corruption of man and the sickness of society is to be attributed to the evils of civilization. It is Golding's supreme literary achievement that he succeeds in persuading us that "evil is endemic in man, (and) that the Christian doctrine of original sin expresses a deep and essential insight into human nature."[6] For too long, Golding insists, we "have never looked further than the rash appearing on the skin;" it is time we began to look "for the root of the disease instead of describing the symptoms."[7]

That the seat of evil in Golding is the human heart or the human psyche, may be illustrated from any of his works. Such an evil, as is represented by his protagonists, is necessarily rooted in individual consciousness. It may therefore, even be, possible, to view the emergence of "conscience" in Golding's protagonist as a success. It is the protagonists' behaviour which makes one fail and the other succeed in his spiritual quest. We have seen, that Simon and Matty succeed, whereas, Piggy, Pangall and to some extent

Colley fail because of their wrong actions and assumptions. They become scapegoats. A scapegoat is sacrificed against his will and as Golding has argued : "a saint isn't just a scapegoat, a saint is somebody who in the last analysis voluntarily embraces his fate."[8] Matty and Simon are therefore saints, and the others fail to make the grade. The texts we have dealt with, emphasize with greater clarity not just the methods of success or failure to introduce a spiritual dimension into one's existence, but also the large amount of obscurity that lies behind success as well as failure to open oneself to the spiritual realm.

J. A. Ward in his perceptive and wide-ranging book on the subject "The Imagination of Disaster," adds : "Evil partakes of the forms of civilization" (p.5). In Golding's novels, evil has sought refuge in the very sanctuary of society and has assumed an aspect of social necessity. Of course, Golding was not just a naive idealist. He knew well that civilized society was essential. The problems besetting man's precarious life necessitated the establishing of customs, principles and standards of behaviour. But he wanted to sound the warning and the reminder, that to give oneself up to any institution was to lose something of one's independence, to run the danger of becoming a kind of "hollowmen" who are locked in the prison of self-absorption, finding no way out of this "hollow man's twilit world, death's dream kingdom."[9]

The ultimate value is always the individual and not such symbols like the "conch" and other symbols of authority provided by civilized society. An individual must learn to adapt conventional manners to himself, in such a way as to have them express himself truly and nobly. Lord of the Flies, we have noticed critizes collectivity and celebrates the inviolable, sacred independence of the human mind to seek truth. The progress of the narration is symbolically directed toward the human interior, stripping away what Golding sees as the falsity of confidence in civilization, the representative illusions of Ballantyne and approaching the evil and detailing the "grief" he finds central to human experience.

Not surprisingly then, the novels sound that recurrent theme of the seeming sanctuary of civilization, rationality or order which proves to be a baited trap. What is obvious from the novels, is the distrust of human nature, the sense that society at best, holds in check the ever present tendencies to disruption. Infact, Golding's distrust of human nature, is in a very ancient sceptical tradition, which can be traced back to such philosophers as Schopenhauer and Voltaire to Hobbes. Golding questions a whole tradition embodying man's simplistic and optimistic formulations about himself. Golding has not evolved new moral values, rather he has reaffirmed man's oldest ones. It is their basis which is new - a basis not in abstraction but hard won through actual experience in a universe which is at best indifferent to man and his values. "Man", says Golding with T.E.Hulme, "is in no sense perfect,

but a wretched creature, who can yet apprehend perfection."[10] The theological expression of this paradox is the doctrine of original sin which Golding explores. Thus, although not everyone of his numerous novels is specifically discussed in this analysis of human nature, there is a pattern that we can only call mythic and which is ultimately responsible for the profound appeal of his works. This mythic pattern of man's fall from Grace is deeply embedded in the very fabric of the story's surface. "There are," Baudelaire explains "in every man, always, two simultaneous allegiances, one to God, the other to Satan. Invocation of God, or Spirituality, is a desire to climb higher; that of Satan, or animality, is delight in descent."[11] Golding, for his part, shows us what man is like when the "beast is let off the chain. To change the metaphor: he lifts the lid. He shows us that beneath the surface of our accomplished rationality, there is a seething cauldron of untamed desire."[12] It is no wonder that Golding's depiction of evil, especially in the later novels, appear loose, formless, incoherent and inexplicable. Infact, even absolutes of morality are in the end viewed with suspicion by him. This is because he enables us to explore through his novels what Robert Penn Warren, in an expressive phrase, calls "the tractlessness of the human heart."[13]

"Whether seen in a convex or concave mirror," contemporary man only has "a vain and floating appearance."[14] There is only the consciousness of ourselves - the superficial self which motivates us. It may be noticed that there is a

striking resemblance between Golding's presentation of the civilized hypocrisy of mankind and Sartre's term for them as "Salauds, who live surrounded by institutions and borne up by a consciousness of his own claim and virtues."[15] Golding, like Sartre, denounces in vehement terms the false sense of security of these men, who try to become important enough to believe in themselves - in their superficial lives - and therby eludes the fundamental question of existence.

Infact, it has always been man's habit to give his longings and his anxieties palpable form. Hence came witches, beasts in the jungle or the symbolic discovery of new worlds and because Golding needed perspectives, he accepted these basic traditional concepts about man and his place in the world : "Men became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images, resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles."[16]

Real value of life consists in the quest of full experience, in the facing of life secure in full knowledge and with eyes wide open - especially to see all that life can offer of both good and evil.

We have seen, that a central theme that is developed by Golding is his concern for areas of existence beyond the economic, social or political being of man. For Golding, to adopt a phrase from Nietzsche, "Art is not an imitation of

nature but its metaphysical supplement."[17] Peter Green rightly calls Golding a "spiritual cosmologist,"[18] who wants to "scrape the labels off things, to take nothing for granted, to show the irrational where it exists."[19] In other words to destroy the artificial patterns erected by man through the constant probing of civilized illusion. A writers' task is to make the mind receptive to new ways of seeing or feeling. Golding has made it his task to break down these false illusions, to illuminate contemporary human nature. Man, Golding says, has grown away both from nature and himself. So the creed today, is that of the Delphic Oracle, "know yourself."[20] What Matty writes in his journal in the Darkness Visible is relevant here :

> "What good is not directly breathed into the world by the Holy Spirit must come down by and through the nature of man"(p.237-238).

The basic problem of modern man is "learning to live fearlessly, with the natural chaos of existence without forcing artificial patterns on it."[21] Golding's fiction focuses on this significant aspect of man's nature, questing for order on various levels, and encountering in the process chaos within and without. Golding demonstrates typical human responses to the "natural chaos of existence." As a means of rescuing himself from the patternlessness of life, man became a mythmaker, creating his own designs, making his own laws, erecting a cardboard bulwark to shut out the fearful mystery of existence. "The challenge of composing order constitutes

the very essence of human situation."[22] But the structures devised by the human mind are finite and therefore fallible. It is only when the mind keeps at bay the idea-making patterning intellect, or when "the mind had touched for once on the nature of the things" (Darkness Visible p.16), that all that lies "in the situation or object can come through - the thing - perceived -in-itself." [23]

In the process of seeking order, man imposes his will on others or exploits the universe egotistically. This instinct of "aggrandizement is basically a bio-psychological necessity, it is in other words, part of the subterranean evil in man."[24] This "evil of manipulation" as we have noticed, is a major motif in Golding's fiction. The type of deception and manipulation practised by Golding's protagonists, is all the more difficult to perceive in that social appearances and forms are scrupulously maintained. This chaos, therefore, mainfests itself in various forms. It is finally an aspect of evil and seen as resulting from irrational faith in the appearance of reason as in Lord of the Flies, over-assertion of the ego as in The Spire, and the patternlessness of life as pointed out by Talbot at the end of his agonizing quest for a pattern as in Rites of passage. Whether it is Ralph's idea of rescue, Talbot's quest or Jocelin's big dare, it is conceived in a rational mind allied to a voracious ego.

Another variant of this chaos, is the notion of "darkness" of man's heart glimpsed by Ralph, Jocelin and Colley, in their search for truth. It may well be asserted

with Karl Jaspers, that at each given moment our truth has the quality of the "encompassing"[25] horizon, and yet its completeness is but illusory. The horizon moves with us and we keep recreating our truths. Truth lies in chasing the truth. The search for truth is no mean task : "One must explore deep and believe the incredible to find the few particles of truth floating in an ocean of insignificance"[26]. All Golding's protagonists' seek these "few particles" and experience in the end a sense of their own "complicity with evil,"[27] an awakening to the limitations of one's own nature. Golding's attempts, to awaken the mind of man to this mysterious realm, those "sheer cliffs of fall" to which I alluded in my introduction is significant in this respect.

Dostoyevsky's "man is mystery," [28] is a dictum of profound meaning reflecting an unfailing interest in the study of man. All of man's conscious history is, infact, concerned with just that - a search for a solution to that mystery. Now, that mystery is by no means seen as a single property, definable in just one particular way, which once solved would offer a key to all and every problem related to man. The mystery which knowledge seeks to disclose includes all the various aspects of human nature, a unique phenomenon created out of the complexity and variety of forms of existence. It was no accident that the great philosopher Hegel, when touching on the subject matter of the truth that man strives to find wrote : "The simplest and most intelligible answer to this question ... Truth is a noble word, and the thing is

nobler still. So long as man is sound at heart and in spirit, the search for truth must awake all the enthusiasm of his nature."[29]

In The Spire, Jocelin's progress from ignorance to tragic knowledge, carries him along the same line of development followed by all Golding's protagonists. Jocelin errs as an idealist and the destruction of this mental image by reality gives him a deeper knowledge of himself, his distorted values, his egotism. What he attains is a new vision and the most important kind of freedom - an internal one. He is liberated *from* his twisted vision and his confused values. His consolation - and it is the supreme one in Golding - is a truer vision or what I've called "restructured vision." Looking back from such an enlightened position, a protagonist can see that what he took for reality at a given time and in a particular situation was only illusion. Jocelin comes out of the Garden of Eden of illusion and is tremulous with awe as he sees the "upward waterfall" (p.223). We move away from human malignancy in the early novels, to a symbol of wholeness as seen by Jocelin. Unfortunately, a person does not always fully realize his spiritual and moral resource and his capabilities.

In Lord of the Flies, the childern commit an error as they attempt to impose a rational order or pattern instead of seeking for a moral order. Inevitably, they gather to hunt the molesting 'beast', and the intolerable frustration of the

hunt remains always as it must - within the circle formed by the searchers. The hunt on Golding's island emerges spontaneously out of childish play, but it comes to serve as a key to the psychology underlying the bloody game or adult conflict played throughout our history. Here too, a legendary beast has emerged and men have gathered for the communion of the hunt. The rebirth of evil is made certain by the fatal defects inherent in human nature : "Why drag in good and evil, when the serpent lies coiled in my own body ?"(Pincher Martin p.163). Ralph, at the end of the novel, becomes a man without illusion. The primal innocence he knew in the goodness of natural man is forever lost. Through tears and agonies and most instant perils, he learns the nature of "mankind's essential illness" (p. 97). Yet something precious remains to him : the wonder and terror of being in a universe which is measureless and unpredictable. To trace through a boy's eyes, as Golding does, the dawning understanding of man's fallen nature, is the more disturbing because childhood is such an apt emblem of the increasing loss of innocence. Incidentally, Dickens beautifully exemplifies this in his works.

Amidst the welter of possible interpretations, Golding makes us experience mystery in the universe, by making us experience mystery in his work of art. This was his way of making us aware of dimensions beyond the material world. Through the structure of the novel, Golding makes it impossible for us to deny with certainty the existence of a spiritual dimension crossing our material dimension. In Rites

of Passage, we are made to experience the same events twice in completely dissimilar ways. Whereas we might have felt certain about Talbot's scientific perspective of reality, Golding makes us shift our view by opening such seams of doubt in our minds, when we view the reality from Colley's point of view. The convergence of these two perspectives become a diagram or representation of our 'restructured vison.' Rites of Passage thereby, becomes a blueprint of our perception of the universe in terms of both the spiritual and the material in interaction with each other. Golding "suggests a shape in the universe which may ... account for things,"[30] by refracting our perception through the very structure of the novel. This does not alter the shape of the universe, but it does alter the shape of our perception. The "mystic meaning"[31] of events is not in the events themselves or determined by them, but in the observer. It would seem that Golding, in his own way, came to share Goethe's reflection that "the acting man is always without conscience, no one has conscience but the observing man."[32] If nothing else, the novels at least show the birth of a conscience. The new view that thereby arises, is not yet knowledge. Michael Polanyi remarks : "It is less than knowledge, for it is a guess, but it is more than knowledge, for it is foreknowledge of things yet unknown and at present perhaps inconceivable."[33]

Golding's art, finally, not only involves an examination and diagnosis of man's condition, it also constitutes within itself an act of healing, awakening man to the sources of

experience that he has neglected or forgotten, but without which existence is partial. An important component of this mystery Golding is depicting, is therefore health. Health is a basic property in the set of human qualities which must be taken into account if our understanding and explanation of man is to be complete or at least correct. When Golding wrote Lord of the Flies, he felt that man was sick and that the sickness should be exposed and diagnosed. A lot has been done both on the theoretical and practical levels, to discover the nature of disease, the mechanism of illness. Yet, the achievements are patently insufficient. Mankind's schemes of radical reforms too, have been misguided by the desire of reforming the impossible - institution. since, "into the noblest cause men manages to put something of their baseness... and every cause is tainted ..."[34] What needs reformation is human nature. And that is what lies behind the desire to unravel the mystery of one's existence. To put it differently, what is needed is a "continuous transformation of human nature."[35] With this view in mind, we can judge Golding's novels correctly. His art, it might well be argued can reveal man to himself and enable him to see where his being is in need of cure or healing; in other words, his art possesses a "therapeutic value"[36] essential for the modern malaise he has been depicting all along. It must be noted, however, that he is not offering us a handbook on the process of becoming spiritually whole. Unlike, Matty or Simon, the other protagonists are not "aware of a sense of rightness and truth" (Darkness Visible p.48) or in Golding's own words, are

unable to make "value judgements unscientific assessment, the power to decide that this is right and that is wrong"(The Hot Gates p.130). Golding seems to believe that it is difficult to achieve wholeness in life, though he does not dissuade man to attempt it. Men and not ideals are the subject of his scepticism. Therefore, he simply found the appropriate form in which man's own nature may be embodied that he may learn to know it. The most Golding does, is makes us aware "as though the possibilities of greatness - of wholeness - still existed."[37]

By opening these vistas in his works, Golding brings out the entire human potential embodied in the ideal of a harmoniously developed individual. Wholeness can be achieved then, not at the cost of morality and not through wounding others, but through realizing one's human essence. The most striking characteristic of this century is therefore the "maturing of our consciousness - seeing more deeply into the mechanism of existence"[38] - which will open our eyes to that truth or that illusion, and will clear the issues. The suggestion, and this is at a thematical level only, is that, there may be some place where the two worlds intersect, a place:

> "sometimes open and sometimes shut, the business of the universe proceeding there in its own mode, different, indescribable" (Free Fall p.187).

This place is closed to the eye of logic. In The Spire vision or consciousness, Jocelin realizes is pure only when it is

disinterested, when it is motivated by the desire for knowing rather than getting.

Reading a Golding novel will not magically transform us or the world. It might simply alter our perceptions and make us act differently. No wonder, Golding warned the readers, that if they had "detected contradictions and some screaming fallacies in what I have said ... I am unrepentant ... I claim the privilege of the storyteller; which is to be mystifying, inconsistent, impenetrable"(A Moving Target p.202). One might recall in this connection, Anthony Burgess' description of Golding as "a baroque bearded mythic visionary, frowning at some terrible landscape of the mind."[39] "Fishing in the deep and treacherous shoals of life he has found more evil than good."[40] A list of the salient features of Golding's work would include pessimism. When, however, one looks for what is implied in his work, one finds that Golding's vision is not negative, but coupled with some very ancient and traditional moral affirmations. Like Conrad, he is a "janiform"[41] writer, that is, he looks in opposite ways at the same time. He sees language as truth-revealing or truth-concealing. Morally he may seem radically paradoxical or self-contradictory, but, on the whole, he is a probing and challenging writer. Any consideration of the sources of his pessimism should be prefaced by a reminder that there are times when a pessimistic emphasis can be seen as tactical; as an attempt to offer a pessimistic voice to a discussion in which, in the world at large, optimistic tones have sounded too often. Golding

presents a philosophy of life with hope among grim facts of life. Stumpf's words for Sartre's philosophy is relevant here: "if man expresses genuine humanity in all his behaviour, he will never deceive himself, and honesty will then become not his ideal but rather his very being."[42]

However, man has the "gift of incisive vision, never of the whole of reality, but of surfaces and fragments."[43] Therefore, the other clear point to emerge from his writings is that, good which is ultimate and absolute, does not arise from the exercise of reason, nor from any easily won religious consolation. It involves an act of daring to open oneself to the spiritual realm and its mysteries. That is why, the 'peak' experiences of his characters in the confrontation scene are very important. During these privileged moments of revelation, we have seen that Jocelin's, Ralph's or Simon's mind seem to flicker helplessly between joy and terror. They are confronted with a prospect too complex to be fathomed. The highly condensed images, they form can offer no more than a vague impression. Poe rightly says: "I know that indefiniteness is an element of the true musical expression... a suggestive indefiniteness of vague, and therefore, of spiritual effect."[44] There is a light of "magic suggestiveness which is brought to play for an evanescent instant,"[45] over the commonplace surface of words. This accounts for the very varied atmosphere, tones and attitudes present in Golding's work. Sometimes, the language is deeply pessimistic, as in Rites of Passage or The Pyramid, and

sometimes it is illuminated by a faith that derives from the memories of that "evanescent instant," as in The Spire or Darkness Visible. In such moments one can only gesture beyond oneself to silence, to the blank page, to something that cannot be captured in print, something that exists beyond the human limitations of text altogether. For example, the "uninterpretable gesture", of Colley holding to a ringbolt or the sound of the "bosum's pipe" (p.262) which "seemed to voice something beyond words, religion, philosophy" (p.262) - a voice beyond language and explanation.

The structure that Golding creates here, is not the framework upon which he builds his plot, characters, theme or style. It is rather the organizing principle that is internal and articulated by the text, like the orchestration of music or what Conrad calls the "magic suggestiveness" of music. The leading strains in these orchestrations are a perfectly valid and exhaustive interpretation of Golding's philosophical conception of the nature of man; a sharply imagined account, a new clear outline of what one vaguely knew.

Golding is therefore, happier to generate and dramatize paradoxes than to resolve them. So what he ultimately offers is a pseudo - resolution : a dramatic statement like Jocelin's "It's like the appletree"(p.223) or Simon's "maybe ... it's only us",(p.97) which seems to promise that grand finale of revelation but which, on closer examination proves to be itself a compressed paradox, "an oxymoron - a statement which mirrors, and does not reduce, the extreme ambiguity of the

characterization."[46] The ending of the novel, thus, preserves the enigma, even as Golding makes a profound but only intuitively glimpsed truth clear to us. His novels can be regarded as an expanding metaphor like Yeats' "great-rooted blossomer" whose "leaf" and "blossom" and "bole" formed an "indivisible unity."[47] We live along the lines of the book and feel in its pattern a total explanation. Yet not everyone sees the same outlines, hence, the various opinions; the result is self-evidently like that of poetry.

By such means, Golding usefully focuses and throws into relief the problems of human nature that this work has tried to explore.

At the end of a survey like this, I suppose we can say "And now to sum up," (p. 160) with Bernard in the last section of Virginia Woolf's The Waves (1931). That I cannot do, for reasons already given; the material is so rich and contradictory and ours is not a good vintage year for judgments. I have gone from point to point as best as I could. But how are all the points to be combined? What is the pattern resultant? The best I can do is quote Bernard again "The illusion is upon me," he says, "that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed." This, for the moment, seems to be the real life. Bernard certainly puts it well.

Golding more than any other novelist, brings before us, the sense, that the little prospect of man's existence, is

ringed by a landscape which, while it exists apart, yet confers a deep and solemn beauty upon man's life. I'll conclude by quoting John Middleton Murray's memorable saying which is applicable to Golding : "A truly great novel is a tale to the simple, a parable to the wise and a direct revelation of reality to the man who has made it a part of his being"[48].

The least didactic of writers, Golding has left us a world of prose fiction, that affords an important education of our sensibilities which corresponds to our deepest contemporary needs and hopes - the creation of an intelligent mind and heart, without which there is little hope for a humane civilized world.

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5. Quoted by C.E.M. Joad in **The Recovery of Belief** (London : Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 47.

6. Ibid., p. 87.

7. I am indebted to Harry Beverly for this observation. See Columbia Theological Seminary. **Bulletin**, Vol.LVII, No. 5, December 1964, p. 15f.

8. Golding to Kermode, "The Meaning of it All," p. 9.

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14. See G. Jean Aubry, **Joseph Conrad : Life and Letters**, 1, p. 226.

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19. Golding's comment to Owen Webster as quoted by Virginia Tiger, **The Dark Fields of Discovery**, p. 30.

20. See **Modern Judgements** by Norman Page, p. 78.

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24. Quoted by D.S. Maini, Henry James : **The Indirect Vision,** pp. 112-113.

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30. Golding in an interview with Owen Webster 'Living with Chaos.' **Books and Art** (March 1958), p. 16.

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32. See Henry James. **Modern Judgements** edited by Tony Tanner, p. 159.

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