AN ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM GOLDING'S FICTION

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VIRGINIA MARIE TIGER

This dissertation proposes an inclusive and extensive examination of the fiction of William Golding with regard to both theme and structure. Golding's essential view of man's nature, the dissertation contends, is that it is rationally inexplicable; his is essentially a religious vision, for he holds that man's nature contains a mystery or "darkness." Each fable is a variation on a common preoccupation, for in them Golding explores the dictum of Proverbs 23:18 that "where there is no vision, the people perish." In the five fables here examined the dissertation argues that Golding constructs a mythopoeia which he considers relevant to contemporary man.

In Golding's view, contemporary man lacks vision; he experiences mystery only as malignancy not holiness. Man abstracts from his violence and projects it as fear of a demon which will destroy him. Thus in the fiction the central symbol for the spiritual dimension is darkness and the central symbolic episode is the nightmare world where character undergoes atavistic reordering.

By use of the fable form, remote settings, circumscribed point of view, and an unusual structure, Golding strives to make the
life of the spirit become a reality, at least in the imaginative realm. The specific structure of a Golding fable involves two frames—pattern and counterpattern—and is described in the dissertation as "an ideographic structure." Following the plot's major movement there is in all the fables a coda ending which reverses the expectations of the first movement. Towards the end of each fable the reader moves from the protagonist's point of view and enters abruptly into another character's point of view on the same situation. Golding intends that the two perspectives are to be linked, not contradictory. The bridge between the apparently contradictory perspectives is to be built by the reader who is driven by the paradoxical structure of each fable to accept paradoxes of existence which are to Golding symptoms of the spiritual world. Other technical features contribute to the fiction's emphasis on the spiritual; chief among these are the subversion of literary models and the use of what is called "the confrontation scene." Each fable has its genesis in another writer's view of the same situation. Thus, for example, Lord of the Flies ironically subverts Ballantyne's Coral Island while Free Fall gives a sensual inversion of the spiritual values of Dante's Vita Nuova. Such a strategy of indirection informs the confrontation scene, a massively sculpted episode which functions in the individual fable as a single crystallisation of that fable's total ideographic structure. In it the protagonist is forced through some fearful but ambiguous purgation to encounter his own psychic landscape and thus the scene brings about the kind of thematic conjunction between
two worlds which occurs in structural terms in the specific fable.

The dissertation examines the validity of these propositions in the fiction up to and including The Spire. The "Introduction" and individual sections in subsequent chapters place Golding's notoriety in the context of contemporary criticism. Over the years a rigid interpretation has developed which sees the writer's engagement as a religious apologia where each new novel is a tour de force, showing by means of contrived allegory man's depravity sub specie aeternitatis. Such a literary cliché is damaging to a contemporary author, it is argued, since it makes him the victim rather than forger of his own reputation, forever feeding the doctrinaire orthodoxy of literary presuppositions. Golding's numerous comments in interviews indicate his unease here. There is a progressive evolution from an externally wrested structure where pattern sublates pattern to an internally realized structure. There is a parallel thematic development as the darkness of man's heart as represented in Lord of the Flies modulates into the central opacity of man's heart as represented in The Spire.

Throughout its seven chapters, the dissertation incorporates into discussion of the fables Golding's minor works—autobiographical essay in The Hot Gates; two short stories, "The Anglo Saxon" and "Miss Pulkinhorn"; the novella, Envoy Extraordinary; two unpublished plays, "Break My Heart" and "Miss Pulkinhorn," as well as extensive conversations which were conducted with Golding by the dissertation writer.
over a period of two years. Unpublished material such as this was made available by the author himself and represents, in the context of Golding criticism, the first instance of treatment to date. The "Conclusion" closes on a brief examination of The Pyramid and its modified use of some of the technical features already explored.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I

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 in the human dilemma. . . .

—Golding, "The Writer and His Age"^1

William Golding's fiction explores the dictum of Proverbs 23:18 that "Where there is no vision, the people perish." This is, in the widest sense, a religious^2 exploration and the fiction deals in the primordial patterns of human experience. The fiction is preoccupied with what is permanent in man's nature, looking not at men in relation to a particular society but man in relation to his cosmic situation: his evil in Lord of the Flies, his origins in The Inheritors, his destiny in Pincher Martin, his guilt in Free Fall, and his vision in The Spire. In the fiction,

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^2The term "religion" has, for our purposes, misleading theological overtones; in the pages that follow it refers to that ambiguous area of belief: the magical mysterious, powerful, terrible, dangerous, awesome.
Golding consciously tries to construct a religious mythopoeia relevant to contemporary man since he agrees generally with the anthropological notion that it is through myth that the imaginative substance of religious belief is expressed, communicated, and enhanced. As he remarks: "Myth is a story at which we can do nothing but wonder; it involves the roots of being and reverberates there."³ "Born from the inner most instinctive and emotional reaction to the most formidable and haunting ideas," myth is neither theology nor dogma because myths "never explain in any sense of the word; they always state a precedent which constitutes an ideal and a warrant for its continuance, and sometimes practical directions for the procedure."⁴

In Golding's view, contemporary man lacks vision. How is he not to perish? In each of the novels, there is the effort of bridge-building between the physical world which contemporary man accepts and the spiritual world which he ignores but which—in Golding's view—does not ignore him. In a century of disbelief, Golding's mythopoeia contends, mystery is experienced only as malignancy, not as holiness or wholeness. The spiritual is experienced not as individual or transcendent mercy, but as personal and universal guilt. 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. Thus, in the fiction, the central symbol for the spiritual dimension is "darkness" and the central symbolic episode involves the nightmare world where character undergoes atavistic reordering or, as in the case of Pincher Martin, death itself.

The contention is here, in the thesis, that seen with other eyes, Golding's eyes, the life of the spirit becomes a reality, at least in the imaginative realm. This Golding accomplishes through the use of an unorthodox ideographic structure in each novel. The thesis terms this structure an ideographic structure; it has five distinguishable features. First, the ideographic structure consists in two narrative movements, the second of which is termed the coda. Following the plot's major movement there is in all the novels a coda ending. Secondly, the ideographic structure involves two different perspectives on the same situation, that emerging from the first movement and that emerging from the coda. In the first narrative movement events are seen from one character's point of view while in the coda events are seen either from another character's point of view or (as in the case of The Spire) from the enlightened consciousness of the protagonist. The ideographic structure, therefore, moves the reader outside the world of sensation he has been inhabiting and abruptly puts him into another world of sensation. Thirdly, the ideographic structure seems, at first reading, to
create two **contradictory** perspectives on the same circumstance since the coda reverses the expectations which the first movement has built up. "I see or I bring myself to see a certain set of circumstances in a particular way . . . I was trying to say to people, 'Now look, I have a view, therefore, I must first put it so graphically in my way of thinking that you identify yourself with it, and then at the end I'm going to put you where you are looking at it from outside.'" 5

Fourthly, though superficially contradictory, the two perspectives can be linked together by the reader. For Golding intends that the two perspectives are to be complementary, not contradictory. Fifthly and finally, in forcing the reader to build the bridge between contradictory perspectives, the ideographic structure forces the reader to accept—at least in the imaginative realm—paradoxes of existence which the novel's characters are represented as being unable to perceive or accept. The bridge between the

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two perspectives is there to be built by the reader who is driven by the paradoxical structure of each novel to accept paradoxes of existence which are to Golding symptoms of the spiritual world. As one character comments: "The spiritual is to the material three times real."

In each of the novels, we, the readers, are the inheritors of the new conjunction, a conjunction that cannot be located in the fictional world except insofar as we, by hints collected and assembled, imaginatively construct the wider view. Related to this emphasis on the reader's discovery is another feature of Golding's fiction— its subversion of popular literary models. In varying degrees, each of the novels has its genesis in another writer's view of the same situation. It is Golding's intention that the reader judge the moral distance between Ballantyne's view of small boys in Coral Island and Golding's own recasting of that situation in Lord of the Flies. Similarly, the reader construes The Inheritors' ironic sublation of Wells' "The Grisly Folk" and Free Fall's sensual inversion of the spiritual values of Dante's Vita Nuova. This strategy of indirection informs other technical features: the limitations of points of view, the metaphoric weight of certain image-clusters, the mannered asides of various characters, the symbolic density of certain passages where the reader feels as though he is, in Golding's words, "against his will being pushed

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through fog." Its purpose is to make the reader encounter, by the imaginative impact of words, those experiences that conventionally words do not reach, formulate, communicate, or control: the primacy of spiritual experience itself. In recording the assault on the senses of facts, the moment of confrontation between "thing" and "darkness," Golding attempts to describe not terror and awe but to create them. "I don't simply describe something. I lead the reader round to discovering it anew." Golding would have his readers see the world of unresurrected fact the "thumbprint of mystery," where reality freed from learnt meanings and dreary systems occurs as a spiritual event: close, incommunicable—"like the taste of potatoes." Deriving from Golding's concern with the spiritual is another major feature of his fiction—the confrontation scene. Simon before the Head, Lok peering down at the reflection of himself in water, Pincher prostrate before the Dwarf, Sammy hunched before a monstrous "thing," Jocelin shrieking at the crossways "like a broken snake," and then staring at a church spire, each is a massively

7Golding, Personal communication.

8Golding's comment in an interview with Owen Webster, "Living with Chaos," Books and Art (March 1958), p. 16. And he added, "In all my books I have suggested a shape in the universe that may, as it were account for things."


10Golding, Free Fall, p. 6.

11Golding, The Spire (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 188.
sculpted episode which functions in the novel as a single crystallisation of that novel's total structure. Thus the confrontation scene brings about the kind of conjunction between the two worlds already described in structural terms above. In the confrontation scene, the protagonist is forced through some fearful but ambiguous purgation—often in darkness, often in water—to encounter his own Being, "the thing" in the centre of his "darkness," that which is his internal landscape. For example, in the case of Simon, the encounter with the Lord of the Flies Head transforms his innocent view of himself, by making him confront his own capacity for evil. And yet this confrontation permits him, even stimulates him, to act without evil. On the other hand, Sammy Mountjoy is incapacitated by the unwholesomeness of what he calls "the human nature inhabiting the centre of my awareness."\textsuperscript{12} As Simon puts it, man is both "heroic and sick";\textsuperscript{13} the confrontation scene dramatises this opposition in the darkness between what in conversation Golding calls the "My Godness"\textsuperscript{14} of man, that original spirit, the Scintillans Dei which flashes as momentarily as does the kingfisher in The Spire and the hardened criminality in man which is constantly overwhelming but never completely destroying him.

\textsuperscript{12}Golding, \textit{Free Fall}, p. 190.

\textsuperscript{13}Golding, \textit{Lord of the Flies} (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 128.

\textsuperscript{14}Golding's comment on nature of man in discussion of Pincher Martin with Frank Kermode, BBC Third Programme, August 28, 1959 (unpublished).
In this context, this thesis proposes to examine systematically the novels and other pertinent works. Before proceeding to this analysis, there follows a survey of the general criticism to date; since much of this information is new to readers, and remains scattered and inaccessible, uncatalogued, and in some cases, unpublished, it seems necessary at an early point to cover the ground which with less contemporary authors and literary subjects is part of the given. In order to achieve a relatively intense examination of Golding's fiction, a more extensive elaboration of Golding's position in English literature, particularly in the history of the novel, has been judged inadvisable. (Critical works which have touched on these matters are referred to throughout.)

This thesis sets out to demonstrate the validity of several propositions about Golding's fictional technique and themes as exemplified in his published work up to and including *The Spire*. After a

Where relevant, occasional works are alluded to and absorbed into the argument. Thus essays from *The Hot Gates*, passages from the novella, *Envoy Extraordinary*, and the play, "Miss Pulkinhorn," preface discussion in certain sections. The plays, "Miss Pulkinhorn" and "Break My Heart" as well as the short story, "The Anglo Saxon," and the essay "Our Way of Life" have been made available by the author himself.

For example, no adequate bibliography of relevant periodical literature exists. Annual lists have appeared in the *PMLA* since 1964; there are a few Selective Bibliographies of which James R. Baker's *William Golding, A Critical Study* (New York, 1965) is the fullest, despite its frequent errors and omissions. Obviously a bibliography of reviews is an indispensable tool in a study of an author whose reputation has been greatly determined by the press. Yet even Faber and Faber, the author's publisher, has incomplete files.
general "Introduction" of Chapter I, Chapters II to VI examine in turn each of the novels in terms of its critical reception, its thematic use of the notion of Darkness, and its consistent use of the technical features described above: point of view; the inversion of literary models; the confrontation scene; the ideographic structure. During the discussion the last term, "ideographic," is used to describe Golding's apparently intentional use of a specific and unusual structural form to make an essentially religious, though not necessarily Christian, statement in an historical time when such statements cannot be made explicitly.

As a synthetic summary of the argument throughout, the "Conclusion" briefly views the last published work to date, _The Pyramid_, and contends that there is a progressive evolution from externally wrested structures where pattern sublates pattern to internally realized structures. There is a parallel thematic development from the darkness of man's heart as represented in _Lord of the Flies_ to an opacity in _The Spire_: here is dramatized good as well as not-good.

II

... it is in some ways a melancholy thought that I have become a school textbook before I am properly dead and buried. To go on being a schoolmaster so that I should have time to write novels was a tactic I employed in the struggle of life. But life, clever life, has got back at me. My first novel ensured that I should be treated for the rest of my days as a schoolmaster....

—Golding, "Fable" 17

William Golding's fiction has received—indeed suffered—widespread critical attention and acclaim. At first, its reception was lukewarm. 18 Although most of the first reviews of Lord of the Flies, for example in 1954, 19 were favourable and by the end of the year E. M. Forster had chosen it as book of the year, 20 A. C. Marshall was the

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18 James R. Baker in William Golding, A Critical Study, p. xv, contends that Lord of the Flies was rejected by twenty-one publishers before accepted by Faber and Faber. Baker ascribes the information to "unpublished commentary" sent by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., in October 1962. Publicly Golding has not mentioned this but in a series of lunch-time lectures in Manchester, England, he said his first four novels were rejected. "Golding on Golding," Manchester Guardian, January 15, 1960, p. 7. The first novel he began, however, was at twelve years of age; it was to be in twelve volumes and was to incorporate a history, a history of the rise of the trade union movement. Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub, The Art of William Golding (New York, 1965), p. 7.


only one to detect its future popularity: "I suspect that *Lord of the Flies* is going to create its own public, a public which will possess the book." 21

Six years later, after the publication of four more novels, a play, *The Brass Butterfly*, an adaptation based on his novella *Envoy Extraordinary*, two obscurely published short stories, "Miss Pulkinhorn" and "The Anglo Saxon," and two British Broadcasting Corporation plays, "Miss Pulkinhorn" and "Break My Heart," it had become a critical commonplace that William Golding was a most significant writer: "No English novelist of his generation has dared—and achieved—so much." 22

By early 1960 when Golding's reputation had become quite firmly

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established and when post-war British fiction was dominated by the neo-classicism of John Wain, Kingsley Amis, Alan Sillitoe, and John Braine, Golding's effort seemed unique:

... it is in this engagement to what is constant in man's nature and in the correlative belief that a writer can make valid generalizations about the whole meaning of life that Mr. Golding stands most apart from his time—he is a writer who has designs on us, a moralist in an unmoralist age.

Even in the international context of contemporary fiction—Lawrence Durrell, J. D. Salinger, Bernard Malamud, Graham Greene, Jean Paul Sartre, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and Albert Camus—he was granted a position of conspicuous excellence. "He remains," Peter Green insisted, "the most powerful writer, the most original, the most profoundly imaginative, to have turned his hand to fiction ... since the

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23 In 1962, Time Magazine cited Lord of the Flies as "the most influential novel among U.S. undergraduates since Salinger's Catcher in the Rye." "Lord of the Campus," Time Magazine (June 22, 1962), p. 35. When originally published in the United States in 1955 it sold only 2,383 copies but in April 1965 Books and Bookmen reported: "Today it tops all American paperbacks and has become a standard text on the campus." Cited in John Ellerby, "Must the Good Guys Always Lose?" Anarchy, V (February 1965), 33.

war; and if he never wrote another word his place in English letters
would be secure."

Some critics were, by 1958, declaring Golding to be a major
novelist. In a contribution to a symposium on "greatness" and post-
war novelists held by The London Magazine, Frank Kermode wrote:
"He is our greatest comfort because he still writes as if the possibility
of greatness—of wholeness—still existed." In a recent study, one of

25 Peter Green, "The World of William Golding," Transactions
37-57; see also: John W. Aldridge, "Mr. Golding's Own Story," New
York Times Book Review, December 10, 1961, pp. 56-57; Walter Allen,
Tradition and Dream (London, 1964), pp. 288-292; W. J. Harvey, "The
Reviewing of Contemporary Criticism," Essays in Criticism, No. 8
(April 1958), pp. 182-187; Ralph Freedman, "The New Realism: The
Fancy of William Golding," Perspective (Summer-Autumn 1958), pp. 118-
128; Frederick Karl, A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English
Again," Partisan Review, XXIX (Spring 1962), 171-196; Frank McShane,
"Novels of William Golding," Dalhousie Review, XLII (Summer 1962),
171-186; V. S. Pritchett, "Secret Parables," New Statesman (August 2,
1958), pp. 146-147.

26 Frank Kermode, "The New Novelists, An Enquiry," The
London Magazine, p. 25. He adds: "I do not tire of writing about Mr.
Golding . . . he is about as grossly underestimated as A Passage to
India was by its Criterion reviewer": Michael Ayrton, "The Masters,
William Golding" (introduced by Arthur Calder Marshall), British
Broadcasting Corporation Third Programme, March 28, 1966 (unpub-
lished talk); Ian Gregor, "Built In," The Guardian, April 10, 1964,
p. 9; Samuel Hynes, William Golding, Columbia Essays on Modern
Writers No. 2 (New York, 1964); R. W. B. Lewis, "Golding's Original
Searching Novel," New York Herald Tribune Book Review, February 14,
1960, p. 5; Louis MacNeice, Varieties of Parable (Cambridge, 1965);
Walter Sullivan, "The Long Chronicle of Guilt: William Golding's The
Spire," The Hollins Critic, I (June 1964), 1-12; John Wain, "Lord of
the Agonies," Aspect, I (April 1963), 56-67; Wayland Young, "Letter
from London," Kenyon Review, XIX (Summer 1957), 478-482.
the three new critical works on Golding's fiction to appear since 1965, he is nominated "Dean of his generation of novelists" and a British Broadcasting Corporation Third Programme, one of the many devoted to his work, concluded that he should be considered "the outstanding novelist of today." Yet critical opinion is by no means agreed about


28 Besides conventional book reviews (see the appropriate section in the "Bibliography"), Golding has been the subject of several productions on English media. A film profile of the author shot at Bishop Wordsworth's School, Salisbury, where Golding taught grammar school from 1945 to 1961, appeared on "Monitor," BBC I, October 24, 1959; two interviews were conducted, one on "The Modern Novel," BBC Third Programme, October 23, 1956, and the other with Frank Kermode on the Third Programme, August 28, 1959. In 1964 he and Alain Robbe-Grillet shared a Third Programme Discussion which Rayner Heppenstall chaired. The producer of the radio version of Lord of the Flies, Archie Campbell, comments in a BBC pamphlet that Golding was a frequent television personality on "The Brains Trust" and "in sound radio"; he adds, "Golding has spoken on various occasions, mainly on literary subjects." Campbell, "William Golding's Pincher Martin," From the Fifties (BBC Sound Radio Drama, 1962), p. 35. All the works have been dramatized by the media. Prior to the film version of Lord of the Flies in July 1965, the novel was dramatized for radio by Giles Cooper in August 28, 1955; Pincher Martin was read on the Third Programme, March 27, 1958; Free Fall, January 27, 1960; The Spire on May 12, 1965. A short story, "Miss Pulkinhorn" was also read in 1959 and "Break My Heart," a radio play, which remains unpublished, was a 1962 Radio Feature Programme. Prior to the publication of The Spire, Golding himself read parts on the BBC Third Programme, March 15, 1964.

Golding's ultimate literary position. Despite ever-increasing critical attention—Kearns remarks acidly that "the novelist has attained a type of academic Valhalla in being catalogued in the 'PMLA Annual Bibliography'"—and the kind of public approbation indicated by such awards as a recent C.B.E. from Her Majesty, the Queen of Great Britain, there is a considerable divergence of critical and public opinion regarding the work. *Lord of the Flies* has been, and remains, the most popular of the novels; though as has been remarked, it is praised "on literary grounds much less than as a sociological, psychological, or religious tract." The critical reception of the fourth novel *Free Fall* (1959) was on the whole hostile; that of its predecessor *Pincher Martin* (1956) uncomprehending; that of the second novel

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31 Oldsey and Weintraub, p. 15.

32 An article by Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "The Strange Case of Mr. Golding and His Critics," *The Twentieth Century*, CLXVII (February 1960), 115-125, elaborates on its reception and assembles passages from the more unattractive reviews, many of which, pulled out of context, suffer from distortion.

The Inheritors (1955) indulgent as well as superficial. The Spire promoted the most controversy in the year that saw the publication of works by Beckett, Bowen, and Donleavy, but there were determined attacks as well as extended defences. Malcolm Bradbury, reviewing the novels written in 1964, remarked: "Certainly Golding's critical reputation is vastly higher than what it was a few years ago and his popularity as a writer has also increased." But as praise has mounted so has adverse criticism. The reception of The Hot Gates (1965) recapitulates all those critical clichés which had by this time accumulated about Golding's work. While recognizing the collections' literary merit—"even those occasional essays are enough to remind us that, in his day, there is not, at the moment, a writer to touch him!"—most reviewers found Golding's territory too limited: "A preadolescent world ... without the logic of the adult." Perhaps

34 With the exception of Samuel Hynes, Frank Kermode, and Irving Malin, very few critics have treated this with the respect Golding himself shows. In a discussion with B. F. Dick he said it was his favourite novel and "my best," an opinion with which this thesis is inclined to agree. William Golding in Bernard F. Dick, "The Novelist is a Displaced Person," An Interview with William Golding," College English, XXVI (March 1965), 481.


personal vindictiveness is the only new note to appear; one eminent critic accuses Golding of being "a middle aged man in a dry month" whose "tendentious proselytising" veers ignobly from the early "claustrophobic calvinist, twentieth century parable writer."\(^{38}\) Most commentaries on *The Hot Gates* notes a discrepancy in general outlook between the fable writer and the documentary essayist. As Anthony Burgess writes:

The fact is that Golding is one of those great men with a deep and narrow talent. He has made a kind of patent out of the reality of human evil and he possesses—which is rare—the skill of the true fabulist, but he has hardly an original idea in his head and once his prose loses the charge of a terrible message, he writes like Evelyn Waugh's father.\(^{39}\)

Golding's most recent critical reputation seems based on a

\(^{38}\)Christopher Ricks, "Ancient Egyptian," *New Statesman* (November 6, 1965), p. 699. Stanley Weintraub, "A Certain Significance," *New York Times Book Review*, March 27, 1966, p. 8. One of the literary myths launched and sustained about Golding concerns a morbidity and pessimism approaching the gloom and doom of a Calvinist seer. It is partially attributable to Golding's personal retreat from publicity but for the most part it is the result of American journalism's effort in several interviews given by the author during his year at a lecturing engagement in the United States. Baker terms it appropriately a "Newspaper Fable"; but this does not prevent him from contributing to the myth: "Product of wartime disillusionment, Golding retreated from modern problems to the art of allegory," Baker, p. xvii. But the British press and Sunday Supplement world was quick to pick up the American image; thus, one critic describes Golding as "a baroque bearded mythic visionary, frowning at some terrible landscape of the mind." Anthony Burgess, "Golding Unbuttoned," *The Listener*, LXXII (November 4, 1964), 717. Not the least interesting side of a study of William Golding's fiction is the window it opens on literary cults in the making, as well as the inter-connectedness of the mass media with the pure, if not puristic, media.

\(^{39}\)Burgess, p. 717.
number of critical hypotheses about the earlier novels. Thus a review of *The Pyramid* (1967) in *The London Magazine*, for example, makes the familiar assumption that each novel has literary origins in another writer's view of a similar situation: "The book has certain marked resemblances to Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1909), a collection of short stories describing the inhabitants of a small Middle West town. Specifically the respective germs of the Evie and Bounce episodes could have been two stories in that volume, 'Nobody Knows' and 'Adventure.'" A much more fruitful approach to this novel would be to see its relationship to the plays "Break My Heart," *The Brass Butterfly*, and the essays of childhood reminiscence, "Billy the Kid" and "The Ladder and the Tree." It is then clear that in this particular novel another method of narration exists, a tragicomic mode in which comedy predominates over but does not obliterate the tragic strain. However, John Wain, for example, completely ignores the book's deliberately comic thrust, and declares Golding "a fierce, all or nothing writer whose theme is the wickedness of man and the need for penitence." *The Pyramid* fails in his estimation because it screens out the metaphysical--after the "horrified recoil from unregenerate humanity" there is "no blast-off towards sanctity." And possibly because it was

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reviewed in terms of such a dogma of expectations. The Pyramid has been generally declared a failure; only A. S. Byatt in The New Statesman and Hilary Corke in The Listener commend the work and each of these reviewers treat it on its own merits.

There is no doubt that Golding's fiction is very different in form and content from most other contemporary fiction: the philosophy seems alien, the form obscure, and a good deal of recent influential criticism has attacked him on these grounds. Two particularly contentious features of Golding's method have been isolated in discussion: the "source" of a novel, and its "gimmick" ending. Thus James Gindin remarks: "In each novel the final 'gimmick' provides a twist that . . . palliates the force and the unity of the original metaphor." Golding's apparent denial of liberal-humanist assumptions is uncongenial, particularly since such attitudes are projected in modifications of more

42 Oldsey and Weintraub's major thesis is that Golding is a "reactive" writer whose novels invert other writers' versions of experience. The study cites "sources" for the novels, but the claims throughout are circumstantial and undocumented.

43 James Gindin, "Gimmick and Metaphor in the Novels of William Golding," Post War British Fiction, p. 204. However, it is Golding's own term: "it's a gimmick you see, it's an idea, it's a way of doing it." Unpublished comment in BBC Third Programme, August 28, 1959. This word has been radically altered in emphasis and import by critical commentary. Gindin uses it wholly in its derogatory sense. As late as 1964 Golding is being accused of "gimmickry": "The sudden transformation of the realistic and exciting physical detail into a metaphor, a metaphysical conceit, gives the effect of cheating." G. S. Fraser, The Modern Writer and His World, p. 171.
conventional novelistic techniques. Character and event seem denied autonomy in the interests of moral/metaphysical ideas: his method has been termed "allegorical" and "parabolic," therefore, and his vision reactionary. One writer accuses him of a "defection from reason." 44 another accuses him of "false profundity and false art." 45 George Steiner relates his popularity to a contemporary mystique: "my worry is, simply, that we are heading toward a religiosity," 46 a concern that Karl Miller, Geoffrey Featherhouse, and Frank McGuiness share: "A . . . disquieting feature of contemporary literature . . . is the growing obsession with religion and more particularly mystical experience that are plainly expected to furnish some clue to the mystery of man's wretched existence in this world and prevent his headlong flight into lunacy." 47

Kenneth Rexroth has denounced Golding and declared that the

44 Frank McGuiness, "Selected Books," The London Magazine, IV (August 1964), 86: "Golding's vision of decadence is as spiritually hollow and trite as a Jesuit disputation," he writes, adding that there is "highly contrived tendentious gilding of theological concepts, intrinsically banal onto potentially intriguing themes." Ibid., p. 87.


fiction's "truculent rhetoric" shared and gave full expression to "the lack of style" that characterizes the American parvenu, an absence of hope, and a predilection for untragic "coping" rather than tragic failure." Both Juliet Mitchell and Philip Toynbee maintain the themes are reactionary, the methods unscrupulous, even meretricious. In a similar vein, Martin Green derides the author's "attack on hygiene, liberalism, rationalism, progress, and the return to mysticism and dogma;" he concludes that "Golding is not importantly original in thought or feeling." 

Golding's defenders are often theologically committed persons or devotees of the religious novel. Those critics who detect a recent disintegration in the novel of liberal individualism support his work,

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acclaiming it as a new kind of "fable" which can make positive statements about the human condition, an abstract affirmation that liberal socio-moral novels can no longer make. C. B. Cox in his book The Free Spirit (A Study of Liberal Humanism) in the Novels of Eliot, James, Forster, Woolf and Angus Wilson argues that "the moral confusions of writers in the liberal-humanist tradition are reflected in structural weaknesses" and his final chapter surveys the contemporary novel, seeing in Golding "as a Christian and conservative writer" the promise of a new era.

III

This brief discussion of the critical reception that has already been accorded Golding's novels will have made it clear that certain terms, such as "allegory," "fable," and "parable" have frequently been applied to the novels by critics with various meanings. Since these terms will be referred to as the thesis continues, it was thought convenient to define the terms here both as they have been used by the critics and by Golding himself in the unpublished UCLA lectures of 1962.

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Golding's fiction eludes easy categorization. It has been called, for example, both allegory and parable. Understood as modalities of fiction, allegory and parable are both symbolic narratives. Whereas allegory traditionally employs four levels of meaning to imply correspondences between its fictional scheme and the wider conceptual truth it seeks to demonstrate, parable has only the one level of plot which brings out the parallel between its elements and a lesson. Both allegory and parable are didactic in intention. Thus, allegory converts a thesis—often a theological doctrine—into a narrative sequence whose agents are abstract personifications and whose setting represents as well a general concept. Parable, on the other hand, consists in what Louis MacNeice calls "an enigmatical or dark saying"; it is

54 In Summa Theologica, Aquinas cites St. Augustine and defines and distinguishes four levels of interpretation for Holy Scripture: the literal; typological; tropological; analogical. Thus with respect to Jerusalem, the literal correspondence is the actual city; the typological is the worldly symbolic meaning, viz., the Church; the tropological is the personal moral, viz., the believing soul; the analogical is the other-worldly symbolic meaning, viz., the City of God. Summa Theologica, I, q. 1, art. 10, ad m., trans. Anton Pegis, in The Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas (New York, 1945), I, 16-17. These levels become the basis for mediaeval commentary and Dante in Il Convivio and in Letter to Can Grande della Scalla, prefixed to the Paradisio, explicates the Commedia in terms of the four significations. Aquinas would, of course, deny the validity of finding typological, tropological or analogical meanings in secular poetry. For modern theories of the mode, see the following: Edward Bloom, "The Allegorical Principle," Journal of the English Literary History, XVIII (1951), 163-190; C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1936), 44-111; Angus Fletcher, Allegory, The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, 1964); Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, 1957), 89-92; and Edwin Honig, Dark Conceit, The Making of Allegory (Evanston, 1959).

predisposed to paradox and ambiguity rather than to drawing systems of correspondence between orders of reality. Nevertheless, in parable, character does not determine incident; rather incident is moral exemplum. In other words, in parable the whole action of the plot has significance only in the light of the moral idea it embodies. The story, then, becomes a direct and universal image of the content of the moral idea.

Fable has also been applied as a term to Golding's fiction. The thesis proposes to use it with Golding's conception of it in mind. For fable is the term Golding himself accepts for Lord of the Flies: "With all its drawbacks and difficulties, it was this method of presenting the truth as I saw it in fable which I adopted for the first of my novels which ever got published."\(^{56}\) Fable is a protean fictional device. In its broadest sense it is a story whose characters—traditionally animals as in Aesop's fables—all serve a moral design which manifests itself in fictional terms by marked formal clarity and coherence. In its elements of design at least, fable is obviously akin to allegory, with its precise correspondence between different levels of meaning. In the latter, however, "the cross reference between literal narrative and a body of abstractions is usually specific, sustained at length, and rather arbitrary."\(^{57}\)

In its element of moral didacticism fable is obviously akin to parable.

\(^{56}\)Golding, "Fable," The Hot Gates, p. 86.

("By the nature of his craft," Golding has remarked, "the fabulist is didactic, desires to inculcate a moral lesson.") In parable, however, the moral image is primary, while in fable the dramatic situation is primary.

No narrowly exclusive stipulated definition of fable is useful, for our purposes, however desirable such formal precision is. The term should be elastic enough to suggest common elements in very diverse works and writers themselves as diverse as Bunyan, Swift, Faulkner, Kafka, Orwell, and Donald Barthelme. For our purposes, it is not an exclusive fictional form but an imaginative direction which fiction may take. Thus it can range from very schematized stories such as Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, or cautionary tales like Beatrix Porter's *Tale of Johnny Town Mouse* to the rich exploration of ambiguous situation in such stories as Henry James' "Turn of the Screw." As a fictional tendency rather than a strict modality, the peculiar nature of the fable lies in the intellectual effort to bring together generalized significance and a direct rendering of life. To Angus Fletcher in his book *Allegory* the literal surface of fable suggests "a peculiar doubleness of intention":

Even the most deliberate fables, if read naively or carelessly, may seem mere stories, but what counts . . . is a structure that lends itself to a secondary reading, or rather, one that becomes stronger when given a secondary meaning as well as a primary meaning.  

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To Arnold Kettle in his Introduction to the English Novel, the fabulist is concerned with "illustrating an idea about life," though he makes the necessary modification that "idea" may imply anything from precept to a whole vision of experience. F. R. Leavis notes in his analysis of Hard Times that this intellectual control means that "the representative significance of everything in the fable—character, episode, and so on—is immediately apparent as we read." \(^{61}\)

Two points must be made about the fabulist's effort: first, he always tries to make his dramatic situation serve as an analogue of the world at large. Secondly, the fabulist always tries to let his dramatic situation be open to vitality and imaginative resonance in its own right. Two limitations of the fabulist's art follow directly from this: fable often suffers from narrowness of range since the subtler possibilities of dramatic and character development must be eliminated to allow an internally consistent intellectual distillation. Otherwise, the fable may, in Golding's phrase, imaginatively, "burst at the seams." \(^{62}\) The vitality of the life presented may well distort the arbitrary design. Golding puts the danger this way:

Fable, as a method, depends on two things neither of which can be relied on. First the writer has to have a coherent picture of the subject, his picture is likely to get a little dim at the edges. Next

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\(^{62}\) Golding, "Fable," p. 97.
a fable . . . like the small scale model cannot be exact in every
detail. It is because every sort of life, once referred to, brings
up associations of its own within its own limits which may have
no significant relationship with the matter under consideration.
. . . In other words, the fable must be under strict control. Yet
it is at this very point that the imagination can get out of hand. 63

The last sentence in this passage is entirely in keeping with
Golding's use of the fabulist's art. The "Ewing Lectures" focus on
this contentious matter of the role of the imagination in the fabulist's
art. Since the lectures are unpublished and to date have not been
treated critically, it is useful here to document them in some detail.
In them Golding outlines (perhaps too gnomically) an aesthetic con-
tinuum consisting of Allegory, Fable, and Myth in which the critical
terms signify aesthetic possibilities, directions, or trends rather
than discrete modes.

This continuum emerges from the author's firm belief that
"intellectualism is the enemy of living mythology," 64 a familiar enough
Romantic dictum. He has doubtless been influenced by Romantic con-
ceptions of the mind and the imagination. Coleridge's definition of
allegory, for example, makes possible the distinction between "organic"
and "mechanic" form, a distinction which Golding apparently accepts. 65

63 Ibid., p. 96.
64 Golding, Personal communication.
65 Allegory changes a phenomenon into a concept, a concept
into an image, but in such a way that the concept is still limited and
completely kept and held in the image and expressed by it [whereas
symbolism] changes the phenomenon into the idea, the idea into the
Coleridge writes:

The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of properties of the material—as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops, itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such as the life is, such is the form.66

For Golding, each of the imaginative tendencies (allegory, fable, myth) represents one step away from intellectual fabrication towards imaginative recreation. Allegory is first and basic: "it is an invented thing."67

The poet here arbitrarily chooses to represent a set of circumstances by a certain set of signs. Since the meaning of allegory can easily be sifted out from its story as a set of intellectual correspondences, "allegory is nothing more than exegesis." Didactic lesson is primary, story secondary.

Fable, in turn, depends for its success on a similar strict intellectual control and is most successful when the literary parallels between image and moralized world are as exact as possible. But it is

Image, in such a way that the idea remains always infinitely active and unapproachable in the image, and will remain inexpressible even though expressed in all languages." The point here is that allegory is capable of exegesis whereas symbolism—or myth, which is the heir of symbol in the older controversy over allegory and symbolism—is supra-linguistical. S. T. Coleridge, Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. T. M. Raysor (London, 1966), p. 29.

66 Coleridge, Essays and Lectures on Shakespeare and Some Other Old Poets and Dramatists (Everyman ed.; London, 1907), p. 46.

67 Golding, "Backgrounds," One Writer's World, I. Unless otherwise indicated subsequent citations will be drawn from this source.
the dilemma of the fabulist's art that a dramatic situation brings up its own associations. This Golding calls "achieving passion," by which he means apparently the force of primeval reality which infuses any story, but which the allegorist is under strict laws not to tap. When the imagination is liberated from intellectual bonds, however, and allowed to proceed according to its own logic, all sorts of private and communal reverberations may enter the story. These falsify the simplicity of the fable's situation but they do not falsify the human nature depicted. This experience is excellent for the novel that does not claim to be a fable declares Golding in "Fable," but it leads to a distortion of the fable. "Yet is it not the experience which we expect and hope the novelist to have?" Finally, the fabulous world is an invented thing; for Golding, it differs from allegory in that certain situations and figures cease to serve an analytic design. These figures—Golding cites Simon in *Lord of the Flies* here—defy critical analysis since they reverberate meaningfully on various levels. To the author himself they are discovered, not invented. "The point of the fable under imaginative consideration does not become more real than the real world, it shoves the real world on one side. The author becomes a spectator, appalled or delighted, but a spectator. At this moment, how can he be sure that he is keeping a relationship between the fable and the moralized world, when he is only conscious of one of them." This imaginative process

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68 Golding, "Fable," p. 97.

69 Ibid.
which involves, Golding explains, "merciless concentration" \(^{70}\) and a willed brooding on an impentrable target results in something which has its own "offbeat life and we [reader and author alike] cling to this without really understanding why." Symbolic action, such as this, when described at length becomes myth.

Golding's use of this term, "myth," is extremely difficult to fix. In an interview he commented that he would prefer to have his novels considered as myths rather than fables. Again he talks not of the aesthetic product but the imaginative process:

... I think a myth is a much profounder and more significant thing than a fable. I do feel fable as being an invented thing on the surface whereas myth is something which comes out from the roots of things in the ancient sense of being the key to existence, the whole meaning of life, and experience as a whole. \(^{71}\)

The term is made to describe (and eulogize) both a superior mode of perception akin to Coleridge's Secondary Imagination which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate" \(^{72}\) and to indicate an aesthetic landscape where the unchangeable patterns of human nature are celebrated. He would agree with Aristotle that the fundamental myth is the dramatic human tale, for "Myth is a story at which we can do nothing but wonder." Since Golding is not so much interested in myth

\(^{70}\) Ibid.

\(^{71}\) Golding to Kermode in "The Meaning of It All," p. 10.

as an aesthetic device but rather in the myth-making and myth-responding proclivity of the human imagination, myth is not a distinct mode or form. Myth is simply an imaginative tendency or "mode of perception to which all art struggles." Thus—and this is central to his own religious vision—myth cannot simply be invented or made; it must be discovered. A novel like Lawrence's *The Rainbow* or a parable like Samuel Beckett's *How It Is*, for example, both reach into such a mythic landscape and both defy analysis into equations; there is no philosophizing or explanation which is not absorbed, digested, and subdued by the story-spell. Myth carries its own powerful imaginative resonance, ambiguities, religious overtones, adaptations, and modulations "wrapped up within itself." Such a story can move in and out of overt reality without distorting life or meaning. And, Golding concludes, its power and meaning ultimately reside in and derive from the expectations people have of it.

At one pole in Golding's aesthetic continuum allegory exists, then, and at the other, myth. When allegory translates abstract

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73 For myth as an aesthetic device which presents recurrent irreducible "archetypal" patterns such as the dragon-slaying myth, see the following studies: K. Jung, "The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," in *Collected Works, IX* (New York, 1952-1961); Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York, 1949); Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (London, 1934); and *Myth*, ed. T. A. Seboek (Bloomington, 1958) where there are chapters by Claude Levi-Strauss, Lord Raglan, among the chapters on mythic patterns there.

74 Another Romantic poet's conception of this analytic/synthetic continuum seems entirely relevant here: William Blake writes: "the last Judgment is not Fable or Allegory but Vision. Fable or Allegory
notions into narrative episodes, the latter recreates (or discovers) eternally familiar human actions by finite concrete tales. Emphasis in the former rests on divergence and distinction—for its weapon is the intellect. In the latter, coalescence and reconciliation occur, for its wand is the imagination. Depending on their participation in invention or discovery, individual stories lean towards one fictional landscape or the other. Fable apparently sits in the centre of the continuum, sharing in part one landscape and the other. Thus, in terms of our discussion of fable on page 26, it is both intellectual analogue and dramatic situation.

IV

Science was busy clearing up the universe. There was no place in this exquisitely logical universe for the terrors of darkness. There was darkness, of course, but it was just darkness, the absence of light; had none of the looming terror. . . . God might have

are a totally distinct and inferior kind of Poetry. Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally exists, Really and Unchangeably. Fable or Allegory is Form'd by the Daughters of Memory. Imagination is surrounded by the daughters of Inspiration, who in the aggregate are call'd Jerusalem. Fable is Allegory, but what Critics call The Fable, is Vision itself. The Hebrew Bible & the Gospel of Jesus are not Allegory, but Eternal Vision or Imagination of All that Exists. Note here that Fable or Allegory is seldom without some Vision. Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1957), pp. 604-605.

75 Golding distinguishes between "daylight" and great art, claiming that the latter cannot be understood, only "wondered at" since it exhibits "the thumbprint of mystery." "Egypt From My Inside," p. 81.
been a help but we had thrown Him out along with Imperialism, Toryism, the Exploitation of Women, War. . . .

—Golding, "The Ladder and the Tree"  

Despite all the evident enthusiasm of criticism for labelling aspects of his work; Golding himself distrusts theoretical categories and discursive reasoning as crude impositions upon what is an essentially mysterious, magical, and ambiguous reality. "The job of the novelist," he commented to a journalist, is "to scrape the labels off things . . . to show the irrational where it exists"; ultimately he must offer a "recognizable picture of the mystery."  

Logical categories, particularly the scientific sort contemporary man uses, cannot by themselves comprehend reality; at best, they dismiss its confusions, as the boy in the essay "The Ladder and the Tree" discovers, making mystery into muddle, "looming terror" into "the absence of light." Empirically, discursive reasoning, on its own, is the instrument of those systems that strive to net down the world and explain away its wonder. Morally—and this often is where the fiction probes most intensely—such reasoning erects itself into stubborn dogmas which codify, and thus, insulate the essentially ambiguous nature of the moral life. Logical scientists, like archeologists, for example, may publish diagrams of digs, statistical analysis of pottery fragments  

77 Golding, Comment to Webster in "Living with Chaos," p. 16.
and photographs of sections of the earth with each stratum labelled,"78 but they do not tell us anything about the past. For, "history," Golding writes in "Digging for Pictures," "is not diagrams—however accurate—but pictures."79 The antiquarian, for whom "the land is aglow with every kind of picture" declines such denotative thinking: for him "there is a glossy darkness under the turf and against that background the people of the past play out their actions."80 The moral man must similarly eschew conceptual categories. It is his brooding effort, we are told in a companion essay, "Egypt From My Inside," to penetrate by a "one-pointedness of the will" and a vast act of imagination temporal boundaries and credit such historically interred creatures with humanity. "Man himself is present here, timelessly frozen and intimidating, an eternal question mark."81

In this plea for the imagination, there is the suggestion here that any deliberate exercise of logic dissociates person from place, subject from object, perceiver from perceived. For contemporary man, who lacks vision, this breakdown holds religious and moral implications as well. Our analytical consciousness—whose vigour Golding does not deny—severs us from our responsibility; instead of acknowledging in

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
history our own humanity—and possible depravity—we put an objective diagram there. Perhaps, then, "... 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 them." 82 Yet this very act of naming is man's passion and his despair, just as Golding shows us in The Inheritors that the Neanderthals are doomed to yearn for the New People and just as Pincher's formidable power to endure is rooted in his daemonic ego. Indeed, the point at which man acts from his consciousness is precisely the point at which he can fall, for the sources and gestures of power and dynamic creation may also be the sources and gestures of destruction. The ideal implied for man involves a tension between this creation and this destruction.

There is another way of knowing that penetrates and encounters mystery. Marked by passivity and instinctiveness this mode of perception often interpenetrates with self-consciousness. Golding employs wholly symbolic terms to describe this intuitive mode and that primordial and undifferentiated ultimate to which it is drawn for two reasons. First, he is trying to restore a lost dimension to the contemporary human understanding when there are no longer shared terms or relevant images for what Sophocles' Electra calls the All-seeing, what Plotinus calls the Fountain, what Aristotle calls the Mind, what the Christian calls God. Secondly, insofar as there is any shared intellectual climate

it is psychological in persuasion. Thus the terminology Golding uses to depict spirituality has to do with man's sense of his inner self. And throughout the fiction the terminology remains consistent and deliberately non-specific.

It is useful here to locate this one last term which will be used primarily in the discussion of Pincher Martin and Free Fall, as well as in the "Conclusion" of the thesis. It is argued that, in Golding's view, contemporary man experiences his spirituality as "darkness." His interior landscape contains "a central not comprehended dark" which is accessible but elusive. The "darker dark" or "centre" inhabiting that darkness constitutes the ding an sich, the ineradicable entity, or "isness" of the unique person, his central organizing principle or Being, and it controls man as it itself may be controlled by a "pattern" suspended there. Here Golding remains deliberately ambiguous, suggesting at one time the excessive isolation of the "thing" while, at other times, stressing the necessary interconnectedness of the microcosmic "thing" to the macrocosmic universe: "Our manipulation of the world has grown explosive. . . . Animals . . . are not ours. I do not know whose they are, nor whose we are, except that we do not belong to ourselves.

83 In a letter to John Peter whose article had criticized the cellar-metaphor of Pincher Martin for its obscurity, Golding agrees that the terminology is non-definitive: "Yes, the metaphor is very confused but surely legitimately confused at that depth these aren't ideas as much as feelings. "Postscript," William Golding's Lord of the Flies, A Source Book (New York, 1963), p. 34.
Once in a way, I smell purpose in the world and guess it may include not only Adam but also the delectable lamb and the loathsome spider."84

One element remains constant throughout the six fables: darkness itself is morally significant. As the protagonist of Free Fall puts it:

It is the unnameable, unfathomable and invisible darkness that sits at the centre of him, always awake, always different from what you believe it to be, always thinking and feeling what you can never know it thinks and feels, that hopes hopelessly to understand and to be understood. Our loneliness... is the loneliness of that dark thing.85

But the darkness cannot examine itself; it resists any concentration on the darkness that is itself. Further, something in the darkness threatens submersion of that simple, physical, and psychic identity that the individual, the "you" of the Free Fall passage above, asserts about its "dark thing." For there is some occasion when the "persona"—the term Golding employs in a Radio Times exegesis of Pincher Martin86—breaks away from its internal landscape, resisting something in its nature and directs itself to an external and commonplace landscape which it appropriates by intellectual patterns and controls. From this germinal dislocation other polarities evolve. All the fiction is directed at understanding why this loss of wholeness has occurred. In turning

84 Golding, "In My Ark," The Hot Gates, p. 103.
85 Golding, Free Fall, p. 8, italics added.
away from his given essential Being, Man posits some menacing demon there, the "thing" in the darkness becomes for him horrible. "God is the thing we turn away from into life, and therefore we hate and fear him and make a darkness there."\(^{87}\)

In moments of extreme psychic and physical danger direct confrontation may occur between the persona (roughly intelligence or "consciousness") and its darkness. What the adult remembers as a childhood terror of darkness he may experience at such moments as a threat posed by nonbeing to his "carefully hoarded personality." In such a confrontation, all that ostensibly makes a man a man—in particular language and thought—are purged until only a bar of identity remains. He has then a choice between two alternatives each—Golding implies—causally determined yet free. He may like Christopher Martin resist the darkness and suffer a slow but inevitable annihilation that, as the case of Pincher Martin demonstrates, the guilty will inflict upon themselves. Or he may in extremity rush through and down the darkness and emerge, like Sammy Mountjoy, momentarily into transfigured totality, or like Jocelin into the beatific vision that prefaces his death.

For contemporary man, darkness holds the promise and danger of wholeness. This wholeness implies extinction as well as completeness since it transcends mere self-consciousness; only the saints, the Nathaniels and Simons, can embrace darkness and discover its "lighted centre." At a communal level these saints may play a purgative role,

\(^{87}\)Golding, in Peter's "Postscript," p. 34.
purging society of its ills. By their death as scapegoats they release regenerative powers once again. The man who must build a society seeks another ideal that consists in a tension, a state of uneasy suspension between the landscape of darkness and that of self-consciousness, which tension is then the point at which the "dark centre" endures an antique rhythm. Compelled to communicate, the dark centre is forced to act and control, to move outward from itself. The compulsion removed it sinks back into what is still its darkness, or guilt. It is that free fall the guilty inherit, a suspension between the worlds of wonder and fact: an admixture of past and present that Ralph, Tuami, Sammy, and Roger Mason share. It is not the innocence of Ma, the Neanderthals, and Beatrice where the centre is a "neutral point of observation,"88 "a gap in the middle,"89 "a negative personality,"90 any more than it is the solely rapacious ego of the evil Philip and Pincher. As Free Fall concludes:

The innocent and the wicked live each in one world. . . . But we are neither the innocent nor the wicked. We are the guilty. We fall down.91

The saintly condition differs from the innocent, the wicked, and the guilty condition. Since the saint overwhelms his evil by recognizing

88Golding, Free Fall, p. 17.
89Ibid.
90Ibid., p. 191.
91Ibid., p. 251.
it he has found the "lighted centre" of his darkness. Spirituality is, in consequence, no longer dark but light. The saint lives in the condition of sanctity, and is proof to the "illiterate of the existence of God."

V

In summary, then, the thesis seeks to build on the critical works which Golding's fiction has stimulated by exploring some of the central points of tension between the author's conception (and realization) of his work and those of his critics. Towards this analysis, the author's own writing about his novels and material from interviews with Mr. Golding have been assembled in the context of the critical material and employed in a relatively detailed probing of each of the novels. Inevitably, the thesis must touch on questions of the author's approach to fiction, reality, and to rather more philosophical issues. The general technical point of the thesis is to elucidate the relationship between the structure of fictional works and the wider world view of the writer, Golding. Inevitably, one is drawn to confront the problem throughout posed by the apparent paradox which David Lodge identifies: "It is the inevitable irony of our position as critics that we are obliged, whatever kind of imaginative work we examine, to paraphrase the unparaphrasable." 92 For this reason, the effort here has been to locate clues

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about the intention of a work in its relatively impersonal and austere structure—to discover the religious dimension towards which the technical devices of the structure (as well as other fictional features) are directed.
CHAPTER II

LORD OF THE FLIES

I

. . . a fable can only be taken as far as the parable, the parallel is exact; and these literary parallels between the fable and the underlying life do not extend to infinity . . . the fable must be under strict control. Yet it is at this very point, that the imagination can get out of hand.

—Golding, "Fable"  

Lord of the Flies, Golding's first fiction, is not nearly as long as all the critical commentary on its strong structural shape. Over the years many terms have been suggested to describe its mode—fable, parable, allegory, science fiction, and romance. Yet the book eludes any easy categorization. Golding's own preference is the term "fable,”

1Golding, "Fable," The Hot Gates, pp. 96-97.

2A brief survey of critical pronouncements is valuable here since it shows just how extensive and contradictory commentaries have been, and just how persuasive and resonant the book. Along with other devotees of science fiction, Kingsley Amis in his survey of recent science fiction, New Maps of Hell, categorizes Lord of the Flies' hybrid form as an "imaginative utopia of moral tendency involving the isolation, for characteristically science-fiction purposes, of a party of young children marooned without adult company on an uninhabited island." Kingsley Amis, New Maps of Hell, A Survey of Science Fiction (London, 1961),
which—for the purposes of this thesis—has been defined on page 26 of
the "Introduction" as a protean fictional mode whose peculiar nature
lies in the author's intellectual effort to bring together generalized sig-
nificance and a direct rendering of life. It is, then, an individual story

pressed by Lord of the Flies' structural similarities to novels such as
1984 and Brave New World where abstract ideas are embedded in a natural-
istic narrative, have termed it an anti-utopian satire. "It is in the tradi-
tion—best exemplified by Conrad, Cary, and Greene, in our century—that
examines our culture by transplanting it harshly to an exotic locale where
it prospers or withers depending upon its intrinsic value." Bernard
Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub, "The Lord of the Flies: Beezlebub Re-
visited," College English, XXV (November 1963), 91. See as well Philip
Drew, "Second Reading," The Cambridge Review, 78 (October 27, 1956),
79-84; Millar MacClure, "William Golding's Survivor Stories," Tamarack
Review, IV (Summer 1957), 60-68. Northrop Frye modifies this position
somewhat by relating its structural and thematic affinities to Gulliver's
Travels, whose intellectual mode he has defined as Menippean anatomy.
Radio dialogue with a Roman Catholic priest on contemporary literature.
For his definition of anatomy, see Chapter "Specific Continuous Forms,"

Focusing on its closed form and the ostensible non-human land-
scape that Lord of the Flies shares with Pincher Martin and The Inheritors,
several discussions have contended that the novel is a "parable" of human
existence. Thus Louis MacNeice in Varieties of Parable treats it along
with The Faerie Queen, Pilgrim's Progress, "The Ancient Mariner," and
Peer Gynt as "an enigmatical or dark saying": "Like other parabolists,
Golding is predisposed to 'paradox.'" Louis MacNeice, Varieties of
Parable (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 3 and 6. Lord of the Flies approaches
Kafka (but cf. fn. 4) he contends, "in that its island run by little boys
is a frightening parody of modern society," p. 7. See also Frank McShane,
"Novels of William Golding," Dalhouse Review, XLII (Summer 1962). For
him Lord of the Flies is the most accessible of the four non-Christian
parables of "contemporary preoccupations with survival and identity,"
p. 171. Mueller ("An Old Story Well Told") on the other hand sees the
novel as "a parable of fallen man" exhibiting essentially orthodox Christi-
anity, p. 1204. For one hostile critic, in fact, "All Golding's novels
have been little more than elaborately constructed parables illustrating
the evil consequences of man's fall from innocence." Frank McGuiness,
whose conceptual sequence runs parallel to but antedates its imaginative expression. The total effect of the fable is to suggest that powerful thematic conceptions govern the narrative action.

However, *Lord of the Flies* is to be distinguished from a fable like Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" by its "closed form." Its element of arbitrary design makes it obviously akin to allegory. In fable, however, the reader "senses his own freedom from [complete] iconographic control;" since the literal surface is also "sufficient unto itself," it may be taken in a completely literal way. *Lord of the Flies* is to be distinguished from parable also (George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, for example) the purpose of which is didactic and the agents and adjuncts of which are more often than not supernatural or preternatural.

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3 See the treatments of this concept in John Peter, "The Fables of William Golding," *The Kenyon Review*, XIX (Autumn 1957), 577-592; Margaret Walters, "Two Fabulists: Golding and Camus," *Melbourne Critical Review*, IV (1961), 18-19. And see especially Golding's own exploration in "Fable," *The Hot Gates*, pp. 85-101. This essay was originally a lecture delivered in 1962 to several American universities, "where it answered some of the standard questions which students were asking me."

4 Kermode's term in "The Case for William Golding," *New York Review of Books* (April 3, 1964), p. 3. *Lord of the Flies*, he argues, has a closed rather than "open" form like that of contemporary American novelists; it is to be seen in terms of "diagram."


6 Fletcher makes the interesting point here that though Orwell's 'animals are 'types' of human behaviour . . . by their restriction of character they become so narrowly human that they do not have what we usually call 'character.'" *Ibid.*, pp. 339-340.
own term for the mode is "allegory that has achieved passion," or fable. It is hoped that the term "allegorical fable" might suggest the peculiar conjunction of fictional freedom and contrived pattern that is Lord of the Flies.

Certainly, some kind of merging of fictional modes seems involved in Lord of the Flies' peculiar conjunction of sensuous detail and moral fantasy. Thus it is described by the introduction to a school edition as "fable and fiction simultaneously," while another discussion sees it "as fable and symbolic novel"; "Golding so patterns his narrative actions as to make them the images of ideas, the imaginative forms of generalizations; the form itself ... carries meaning apart from ... character." Analyzing the sustained admixture of naturalism and symbolic overtone in one passage involving Simon, one critic argues that the continuing popularity of Lord of the Flies and "its main source of power as a symbolic structure is that the novel operates so compellingly on a sheerly narrative level." And the donnée, virtually, of Oldsey and


9Samuel Hynes, William Golding, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, pp. 4 and 6. This is a thoughtful pamphlet, particularly in its discussion of the distinction between the moralist and the moral-maker. Ibid., p. 4.

Weintraub's *The Art of William Golding*, subsists in this recognition: "Golding's characters, like his setting, represent neither fictional reality nor fabulistic unreality, but, rather partake of the naturalistic and the allegorical at the same time."  

Another persistent classification, however, has attended to the book's intellectual schema—its affinity to neither Romance nor Realism, its definition as neither parable nor fable but its related to the Christian apologia. Fredericks Karl's discussion in *A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel* was first to suggest that Golding wrote "religious allegories" whose conceptual machinery undermines the "felt life" of the tale: "the idea . . . invariably is superior to the performance itself."  

The notion that *Lord of the Flies* in particular was somehow intellectually or philosophically contrived became, in fact, one of the major critical assumptions about the rest of his work. Ignoring the fictional landscape altogether, many commentators constructed explications of "meaning" more relevant to social and literary history than the analysis of fiction.  

A passage from one critic neatly

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12 Frederick Karl, "The Novel as Moral Allegory, The Fiction of William Golding," *A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel* (New York, 1962), pp. 244-261. This chapter, banefully trite, was responsible for a host of attacks on the fiction as ingenious tour de forces without significant content.

13 As late as 1967 the corpus was criticized in these terms; see James Gindin, "The Fable Begins to Break Down," *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, VII (Winter 1966), 1-4.

It is, in fact, a cannily constructed—perhaps contrived—allegory for a twentieth century doctrine of original sin and its social and political dynamics and it conforms essentially to a quite orthodox tradition not really more pessimistic than the Christian view of man.

Despite the numerous interpretations, religious, political, psychological, anthropological, the story itself seems rather simple. As Sir Herbert Read remarked, while the tale is not necessarily "proof of the doctrine of original sin, it does raise all sorts of thoughts." And it would seem that one of the main reasons for the many contradictory critical interpretations of this fable is that while the meaning of the fable is coherent at so many different levels critics have isolated for discussion only one or two of these levels. Against this we must put


16 "But the most important thought is that Mr. Golding is a writer of great power." Sir Herbert Read, unpublished letter to Mr. Peter du Sautoy of Faber and Faber, February 19, 1955.
Golding's own statement that "it was worked out very carefully in every possible way, this novel." 17

Since the fable has incited so many internally consistent but contradictory interpretations in the years of its critical treatment, it is relevant to consider several of these elucidations before examining the formal matter of the fable's structure (what this thesis terms the ideographic structure) as well as the confrontation scene. In the discussion which directly follows, critical analyses have been collated and arranged in an effort to show the wide range of explanation the story's rhetorical density has suggested yet not wholly endorsed. (Further it is hoped that a thorough coverage of critical estimations of Lord of the Flies in these terms will provide background to discussion of the fables in later chapters. For it is a significant fact that Golding's reputation has been established on the basis of Lord of the Flies: critics' judgments of the other works always adopt the first fable as the single prototype for excellence or failure.)

II

One remembers the lily. . . . Was it not a symbol that truth is beauty, knowledge and God? For knowledge displays no dichotomy at last, but is one . . . the intuition common to all great poets and all great scientists;

the need to simplify and deepen, until what seems diverse is seen to lie in the hollow of one hand.

—Golding, "Copernicus"  

Lord of the Flies tells a totally absorbing adventure story but like another sort of island story, Robinson Crusoe, it seems susceptible of various interpretations. It has been read as a moral fable examining personal disintegration, a social fable which explores social regression, and a religious fable which offers a variant account of the Fall of Man. As a moral fable, Lord of the Flies seems capable of endorsing a number of mechanico-psychological theories of behaviour; or at least commentators have argued so—and in discussion these have ranged from Aristotle's Ethics through Jung's Psychological Types.

It is possible to view the boys as representatives of various instincts or elements of the personality. "The catastrophe occurs because the qualities of intelligence, address, bravery, decency, organization, and insight are divided among Piggy, Jack, Ralph, and Simon. Each of them lacks some vital gift; none of them is a complete person."  

E. M. Forster declares that it is just this fragmentation that is responsible for their regression.  

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19Drew, p. 81.
20E. M. Forster, "Introduction," Lord of the Flies (New York; Coward McCann, 1962), pp. ix-xii. In his essentially sympathetic account, it is interesting that Forster prefers Piggy to the others, seeing him as symbolic of "the human spirit, aware that the universe has not been created for his convenience."
correspond to Plato's division of the human soul: "Golding is careful to point out that it is Ralph's administrative duties—an image of the soul's balance and power when governed by reason—that enable him to keep the anarchy that resides in his heart under control."\(^{21}\) Offering a variant schema, Epstein believes Freudian psychoanalytical theory is relevant: "The Devil is not present in any traditional religious sense; Golding's Beelzebub is the modern equivalent, the anarchic amoral, driving force that Freudians call the Id."\(^{22}\)

If seen as a moral fable, \textit{Lord of the Flies} appears to emphasize the inadequacy not the depravity of the solely human. In this light, the power and potential of individual human responsibility becomes a workable index for moral actions, and a legitimate abstraction from this

\(^{21}\)Robert J. White, "Butterfly and Beast in \textit{Lord of the Flies}," \textit{MFS}, X (Summer 1964), 165. This article was the first to suggest that \textit{Lord of the Flies} is built on Greek sources, in particular \textit{The Republic}, and Euripides' \textit{Bacchae} where Simon like Pentheus is a scapegoat. Baker's article, "Why It's No Go: A Study of William Golding's \textit{Lord of the Flies}," \textit{Arizona Quarterly}, XIX (Winter 1963), 293-305, is a fuller account of the \textit{Bacchae} source and its relation, in particular, to Simon's death. In fact, the argument of Baker's Study is that Golding is more influenced by Greek literature than Christian; "taken collectively," the Greeks "represent the most potent force in shaping... Golding's conception of human psychology and human fate." William Golding, A Critical Study, p. xvii. Finally, Robert C. Gordon's discussion of Homeric and Euripidean elements is very suggestive: "... the ending of \textit{Orestes} throws light on one of Golding's characteristic and most controversial devices—the gimmick ending." \textit{Orestes} provides the prototype for the naval officer; Apollo's entry is "one of the most flatly unprepared for uses of the deus ex machina in the history of drama." "Classical Themes in \textit{Lord of the Flies}," \textit{MFS}, XI (Winter 1965-1966), 424-427.

is that people are governable inasmuch as they are the authors of their own actions. Thus one reading concludes, "While the spreading evil emanates from the boys themselves, they deteriorate not under any inner compulsion of original sin, but through a failure of imagination and . . . a neglect of thought." 23 Simon is a "saint" 24 precisely because he tries to know comprehensively and inclusively; he possesses a quality of imagination which forces an "ancient, inescapable recognition." 25 Before the obscene decapitated pig on the spike he comes to acknowledge the existence of his own evil. In contrast, Ralph exhibits only a "fatal unreasoning knowledge" (226, italics added) of his approaching death which is directed towards his own survival not that of the community's.

On the island, then, there is a division between intelligence and unreason: in the conflict between imagination and passions, on the one hand, and common sense and reason, on the other, control means "rational self-awareness which exists only through the recognition of


24 Golding's term for Simon: "someone who in the last analysis voluntarily embraces his fate . . . he is for the illiterate a proof of the existence of God because the illiterate person who is not brought up on logic . . . says 'Well a person like this cannot exist without a good God.'" Golding in Kermode, "The Meaning of It All," p. 9.

25 William Golding, Lord of the Flies (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 171. All subsequent quotations will be taken from this edition and be indicated by textual parentheses.
that which is external to the self."

Such a moral account of the fable posits the duality of man: man is, in Swiftian terms, not *animale rationale* but only *rationis capax*. Individual recognition of unreason is symbolic of order; failure is symbolic of decay. A legitimate inference, one that Piggy and Ralph keep voicing, is that society—the *Noumos*—does not confine and deform but is man's only proper habitat: its "shaping influences, however imperfect, are the forces that free him from the savagery of unreason and disorder."  

Viewed from another perspective, which concerns itself generally with social correspondences, *Lord of the Flies* might be seen to shift from moral fable to social fable. Here it becomes what some commentators call an anti-Utopian satire. For the island society is microcosmically a human society, related all too ironically to the "grown-up" society that occasioned the original fall from the skies. Anthropologically the society is a mirror of the first, primitive societies of prehistoric man; its progress illustrates a biological maxim now fairly well discredited: that the development of the individual recapitulates in capsule time the development of the species (ontogony recapitulates phylogeny). It alludes implicitly ("as Golding, I think

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27. Herndl, p. 314.

could never do explicitly" to Frazer's *Golden Bough*, Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*: "Denied the sustaining and repressing authority of parents, church, and state, they form a new culture the development of which reflects that of the genuine primitive society, evolving its own gods, and demons (its myths), its rituals and taboos (its social norms)."

The critical danger in discussion of this sort is again to start treating the boys as men, since in their terms they appear less as autonomous characters than as images of social ideas. Thus one critic sees the tale in social psychological terms and decides it "shows how intelligence (Piggy) and common sense (Ralph) will always be overthrown in society by sadism (Roger) and the lure of totalitarianism (Jack)." Seen in political terms it is a dramatization of "the modern political nightmare" in which responsible democracy is destroyed by charismatic authoritarianism: "I hope," writes V. S. Pritchett, "this book is being read in Germany." Philip Drew relates its social political ethos to Orwell's *1984*, for it "examines the problem of how

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32 V. S. Pritchett, "Secret Parables," *New Statesman* (August 2, 1958), p. 146. Pritchett, by the way, was first to pick up the *Coral Island* re-enactment but he notes it merely in passing.
to maintain moderate liberal values and to pursue distant ends against pressure from extremists."\(^33\)

If seen as a social fable, *Lord of the Flies* appears to stress not the capabilities of the boys but their *depravity* and man's apparent inability to control aggression within a workable social order. Though morally speaking Piggy and Ralph do exercise good will and judgment, they are not simply inadequate politically. They also participate in the murder of Simon, a murder effected by the tribal *society* which Jack leads.

Many of the accounts of *Lord of the Flies* place the fable in a mythic frame, rather than a social or moral one, for ultimately "it derives from—displaces—a familiar myth, that of Earthly Paradise which it handles ironically."\(^34\) Here the Christian tradition has been by far the most popular mythic framework cited by critics, though the fable itself makes no immediate or direct allusion to orthodox Christianity. One critic writes that *Lord of the Flies* dramatizes the Fall of man and "the growth of savagery in the boys demonstrates the power of original sin."\(^35\) As Adam unparadised, the boys cradle within themselves the beast of evil, "Beelzebub" (the Hebraic original for its English translation, lord of the flies [*II Kings* i:2]; "the chief of the

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\(^{33}\)Drew, p. 79.

\(^{34}\)Kermode, "The Case for William Golding," p. 3.

\(^{35}\)Cox, p. 112.
devils" in Luke ii:15). They turn the Edenic island into a fiery hell. "But it does not close the door on fallen man; it entreats him to know himself and his Adversary, for he cannot do combat against an unrecognized force, especially when it lies within him."36 When he discussed his notion of the morally diseased creation in "Fable," Golding himself admitted that in "theological terms" Man is a "fallen being." "He is gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous."37 But this is just to describe metaphorically a general condition not to place it within a constricting metaphysic, a constricting scheme of theology. (It is interesting here to note in passing that the epigraph to The Pyramid—"If thou be among people make for thyself love, the beginning and end of the heart"—was taken from a deliberately non-Christian context, the Instructions of Ptah-Hotep, to show that while the Christian explanation may have diagnosed man's condition correctly, the condition itself predates the Christian apologia.) Ultimately the conceptions of innocence and original sin and guilt are great commonplace, central to man's conception of himself in more than one culture.

Other mythic contexts seem equally relevant to the image of evil in Lord of the Flies. One such commentary sees the titular lord of the flies as a primary archetype for the destructive element, a Dionysian irrationalism that Jack celebrates and Piggy ignores. Baker regards Piggy in what he takes as a Promethean aspect and argues

36Muller, p. 1206.

37Golding, "Fable," p. 88.
Piggy's empirical disavowal of the "beastie"—"Life . . . is scientific, that's what it is. In a year or two when the war's over they'll be travelling to Mars and back. I know there isn't no beast . . ." (105)—is evidence of intellectual hubris which must be punished. Greek myth is invoked: "The final punishment of those who denied the god of nature is to render them conscious of their awful crimes and to cast them out from their homeland as guilt-stricken exiles and wanderers upon the earth."^{38}

Suggestive analogies have also been seen in variant anthropological myths: thus the dead man is not so much an ironic parody of the Crucifixion as a parody of the fertility god of Frazer, the Hanged or Sacrificial god. And Simon is the ritual hero who is metaphorically swallowed by a serpent or dragon "whose belly is the underworld; he undergoes a symbolic death in order to gain the elixir to revitalize his stricken society, and returns with his knowledge to the timid world as a redeemer."^{39}

III

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.

—Golding, "The Writer and His Age"^{40}

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^{38}Baker, p. 8.

^{39}Rosenfield, p. 98.

Conceptual analyses of the sort collated above tend to obscure the primary strength of Golding's fable. For Lord of the Flies is first and foremost a gripping adventure story: "... it falls well within the main stream of several English literary traditions. It is a 'boys' book as are Treasure Island, The Wind in the Willows, High Wind in Jamaica and other books primarily about juvenile characters which transcend juvenile appeal; it is in the tradition of the survival narrative, along with Robinson Crusoe, The Swiss Family Robinson, and even Barrie's Admirable Crichton." Golding obviously wanted to explore the notion of the child living, as in Ballantyne's novel, in harmony with nature on a desert island. Golding chooses the same situation as Ballantyne's; his main characters are, like Ballantyne's, named Ralph and Jack—

41 Oldsey and Weintraub, p. 16.

42 Golding in Kermode, "The Meaning of It All," p. 9. Carl Niemeyer, in "The Coral Island Revisited," College English, XXII (January 1961), 241-245, makes full use of this hint and an earlier discussion of the parody features of the two books by Frank Kermode: "Coral Islands," The Spectator (August 22, 1958), p. 257. These two essays and Golding's comment on the genesis of The Inheritors have given rise to a plethora of source articles, among which appears the suggestion by S. Sternlicht, "A Source for Golding's Lord of the Flies, Peter Pan?" English Record, XIV (December 1963), 41-43. The possible parallel is based on the similarity between the rape of the sow and that of Wendy (sic).
though Ballantyne's third character, Peterkin, is recast into two boys: Peter and Simon. Whereas Ballantyne's boys lead civilized, even civilizing lives—for they are "Britons," a term with which they con­gratulate one another throughout—Golding's boys progressively deteriorate. When at the end a naval officer, surveying the hideous children before him, remarks: "I should have thought that a pack of British boys—you're all British aren't you?—would have been able to put up a better show than that—I mean. . . . Like the Coral Island" (248), Golding strikes the final blow at Ballantyne's conception of the child and by extrapolation of Man. Lord of the Flies represents in its recasting of the situation not only an inversion of a popular literary model—a strategy of reversal which Golding adopts in the three subsequent fables—but a refutation of Coral Island morality which Golding obviously regards as unrealistic.

Ballantyne's island is a nineteenth-century island inhabited by English boys in the full flush of Victorian smugness, ignorance, and prosperity. Carl Niemeyer's sketch of the book is useful here. He writes: "Ballantyne shipwrecks his three boys—Jack, eighteen; Ralph, the narrator, aged fifteen; and Peterkin Gay, a comic sort of boy, aged thirteen—somewhere in the South Seas on an uninhabited coral island. Jack is a natural leader, but both Ralph and Peterkin have abilities valuable for survival. Jack has the most common sense and foresight, but Peterkin turns out to be a skillful killer of pigs and Ralph, when
later in the book he is separated from his friends and alone on a schooner, coolly navigates back to Coral Island by dead reckoning. . . . The boys' life on the island is idyllic; and they are themselves without malice or wickedness, though there are a few curious episodes in which Ballantyne seems to hint at something he himself understands as little as do his characters. . . . Thus Ballantyne's story raises the problem of evil . . . which comes to the boys not from within themselves but from the outside world."

And Niemeyer continues: "Tropical nature to be sure, is kind, but the men of this non-Christian world are bad. For example, the island is visited by savage cannibals, one canoeful pursuing another, who fight a cruel and bloody battle, observed by the horrified boys and then go away. A little later, the island is again visited, this time by pirates (i.e., white men who have renounced or scorned their Christian heritage) who succeed in capturing Ralph. In due time the pirates are deservedly destroyed, and in the final episode of the book the natives undergo an unmotivated conversion to Christianity, which effects a total change in their nature just in time to rescue the boys from their clutches. Thus Ballantyne's view of man is seen to be optimistic, like his view of English boys' pluck and resourcefulness, which subdues tropical islands as triumphantly as England imposes empire and religion on lawless breeds of men."43

43 Niemeyer, p. 242.
By now the *Lord of the Flies* story is familiar. A group of schoolboys, stamped through with Britishness like seaside rock and trained by conventional schools in a system designed to run an Empire, are dropped on an Eden-like island in the Pacific or Indian Ocean. There, they are confronted with the task of survival. First the boys proceed to set up a rational society based on a "grown-up" model. They establish a government and laws; shelters are constructed, plumbing facilities and food supplies are arranged. Yet almost immediately the society disintegrates under two pressures—aggression and superstition. Their signal fire becomes a defensive hearth stoked by the matronly Piggy's twins, and then a ritualistic pig's spit fed by Jack's braves; the dark unknown which descends at night assumes a monstrous identity and is propitiated by totemic pig heads as a "beast." Hunting becomes killing as Jack's hunters break away from Ralph's fire-keepers to form a tribal society with gods, rituals, and territory at the island's end. When two of the boys from the original tribe invade this territory they are killed, one (Simon) ritually as a totemic beast and the other (Piggy) politically as an enemy or pseudo-species. Finally, a sacrificial

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44 No one has drawn the rather obvious allegorical correspondence between the island-ship with the island England and her traditional associations with sea-faring. The island-ship is gliding backwards just as post-Imperialist England is reverting to its nineteenth-century character under the guidance of Jack. The most contemporary character is Piggy, the fat boy with the short-sightedness of the caricature scientist, and he is more classless than the others and more feminine. But his wounds, his asthma, his matronly body, and his balding head disqualify him from captainship, just as the pre-World I tolerant rationalism disqualify Ralph from taking the seat of power.

45 Erik Erikson (*Young Man Luther* [New York, 1958]; *Childhood*
victim (Ralph) is hunted down in order to offer his head to the god
("Pig's head on a stick" [177]) when the adult world intervenes in the
person of a British naval officer. The fable concludes with the pathetic
image of Ralph crying for "the end of innocence, the darkness of man's
heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called
Piggy" (248).

Now obviously Golding's island is a twentieth-century island,
inhabited by English boys just as smug about their decency, just as
complacent and ignorant as the boys in Ballantyne's story. Talking
about its genesis in Coral Island, Golding explained: "What I'm saying
to myself is 'don't be such a fool you remember when you were a small
boy, how you lived on that island with Ralph and Peterkin,' who is
Simon by the way, Simon called Peter, . . . I said to myself finally
'Now you are grown up, now you are adult . . . you can see that people
are not like that, they would not behave like that if they were God­
fearing English gentlemen, and they went to an island like that, their
savagery would not be found in natives on an island. As like as not
they would find savages who were kindly, and uncomplicated, that the
devil would rise out of the intellectual complications of the three

and Society [New York, 1963]) has developed the concept of "pseudo­
species." He argues with respect to racial, class, or ideological war­
fare that combatants try to suggest that their opponents are not proper
members of the human race; as members of a different species they may
be killed with social impunity. Eríksson, Personal communication.
Consider Piggy's name and shape from this point of view.
It is Golding's intention in Lord of the Flies to tell a true story—to cite the beast within and tell a realistic story; as he put it: "a book about real boys on an island, showing what a mess they'd make." Ballantyne's children are children free of evil—as Kermode put it, they belong to the period when "boys were sent out of Arnoldian schools certified free of Original Sin." They embody the optimism, the certitude, and perhaps even the pompousness of the Nineteenth Century; they not only play at being empire-builders they are. Consider, for example, the following passage from Coral Island:

I have made up my mind that it's capital—first rate—the best thing that ever happened to us, and the most splendid prospect that ever lay before three jolly young tars. We've got an island all to ourselves. We'll take possession in the name of the king; we'll go and enter the service of its black inhabitants. Of course, we'll rise, naturally, to the top of affairs. White men always do in savage countries.

Instead of Ballantyne's implicit faith in the superiority of the white race, Golding underscores the superficiality of civilization itself; indeed it seems powerless against the innate brutality of man. While in The Coral Island the natives' faces "besides being tattooed, were

besmeared with red paint and streaked with white,"\textsuperscript{50} in \textit{Lord of the Flies} it is Jack's hunters who paint their faces so their primitive selves can be released from shame. "Jack began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling . . . the mask was a thing of its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness" (80).

To qualify Ballantyne's pastoral evocation of life on a tropical island where everything is glamorous, Golding stresses such things as the diarrhoea of the "littluns" who eat too much fruit, and who "suffer untold terrors in the dark and huddle together for comfort" (74); the densely hot and damp scratching heat of a real jungle; the remote and "brute obtuseness of the ocean" (137) which condemns the boys to the island; of the flies which cover the pig's head; and the hair grown lank—"with a convulsion of the mind, Ralph discovered dirt and decay; understood how much he disliked perpetually flicking the tangled hair out of his eyes" (96). Perhaps the most important recasting of \textit{Coral Island} optimism is Golding's inversion of Ballantyne's cheerful notion of the psychology of the child. One evening, Ballantyne's boys hear a distant but horrible cry; at the suggestion that it might be a ghost, Jack answers:

\begin{quote}
I neither believe in ghosts nor feel uneasy. I never saw a ghost myself and I never met anyone who had; and I have generally found that strange and unaccountable things have always been accounted for, and found to be quite simple on close examination. I certainly can't imagine what that sound is; but I'm quite sure I shall find out before long.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., p. 158. \\
\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., p. 69.
\end{flushright}
Golding's boys, of course, do grow frightened of the unknown. In fact, it is just this fear of a Beast—and its ambiguous existence on the island—which forms the dramatic and symbolic core of *Lord of the Flies*.

**IV**

Ralph found himself understanding the weariness of this life, where every oath was an improvisation and a considerable part of one's waking life was spent watching one's feet. He stopped... and remembering that first enthusiastic exploration as though it were part of a brighter childhood, he smiled jeeringly.

—Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (95)

*Lord of the Flies* is not a fable about children demonstrating Golding's belief that without the discipline of adults... children will deteriorate into savages. Both the occasion of the boys' landing on the island and the parachutist remind us that "the majesty of adult life" (117) is another childish delusion. There is no essential difference between the island-world and the adult one and it is the burden of the fable's structure—what is here called its ideographic structure—to make this clear to the reader. The structure consists in two movements; in the first the story is seen from the point of view of the protagonist, Ralph; in the second movement, the *coda* which concludes the fable, we see the events from a new point of view. The *coda* (in conjunction with such symbols as the parachutist) indicate that adulthood is in itself inadequate to prevent destruction. The dead parachutist shows man's inhumanity to man; he is a legacy of barbarism
in both ancient and contemporary civilization who, Golding says, represents history; thus he haunts the boys, a haunting appropriately represented by his uncanny position and motion: "the figure sat on the mountain-top and bowed and sank and bowed again" (119).

The children reveal the same nature as the grown-ups whom they invoke and the child's world on the island is a microcosm of the adult world. The ruin they bring upon themselves is universal. (Recall that it is atomic warfare in the air that brings about their initial descent to the island.) The cruel irony of the matter is made all the stronger by the sudden switch in perspective at the coda ending. Here the officer's failure to comprehend the "semi circle of little boys, their bodies streaked with coloured clay, sharp sticks in their hands" (246) is itself testimony to "the infinite cynicism of adult life" (170) and silent witness to the Lord of the Dung's general sway.

Yet the story is more striking since Golding chooses children as protagonists. The appearance of the officer at the end with its sudden shift from Ralph's point of view to that of the adult throws the story into a new light. The children are dwarfed to children again. The officer sees Jack this way:

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52 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 mountaintop and so prevents them keeping a fire alight there as a signal!" pp. 95-96.
A little boy who wore the remains of an extraordinary black cap on his red hair and who carried the remains of a pair of spectacles at his waist, started forward at the question, 'Who's boss,' then changed his mind and stood still. (247-248)

Throughout the narrative's first movement—and with appalling momentum—the children appear to have been adults dealing with adult problems. Now they are crying little boys held in control by the presence of an adult. Yet the reader cannot forget the cruelty of what has gone before. For the conch of order has been smashed; the spectacles of reason and rescue have been used to destroy the island. A tribal society has hunted down and killed two individuals. Nor can we forget that Ralph's piteous weeping at the end transcends the smug cynicism of the rescuer, for Ralph knows the real nature of the "pack of British boys" (248).

Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy. (248)

Ralph is saved only because the adult world intervenes; yet his rescuer is on the point of returning to "adult" war, a nuclear war infinitely more extravagant in its potential disaster. Given the barbaric chaos the boys have been reduced to, the officer appears to them (to us) as order. It is only on reflection that the reader remembers that the officer is involved in a nuclear war and yet is still "order." This brings up Golding's own explication of the thematic content of his fable:

The theme is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable. The whole book is symbolic in nature except the rescue in the end where
adult life appears, dignified and capable, but in reality enmeshed in the same evil as the symbolic life of the children on the island. The officer, having interrupted a man-hunt, prepares to take the children off the island in a cruiser which will presently be hunting its enemy in the same implacable way. And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?^3

Lord of the Flies' "meaning" is not allegorically simple but complex and symbolically suggestive. It is, however, the ideographic structure of the fable which makes such a symbolic density possible. For Lord of the Flies suggests a large scale of human values (social, political, moral, mythic) which are relevant in both universal and contemporary terms but it isolates and roots these concerns in a boy's world. Finally that child's view of things is crossed by an adult's view and the reader must join the two perspectives and probe the question Golding poses above: "who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?"

One allegorical point is unarguable: the innocence of the child is a fallacy, for man has by nature a terrible potentiality for evil. This potentiality cannot be eradicated by a humane political system. In the "Beast from the Water," the fable's most allegorical chapter, for example, the fundamental inadequacy of a parliamentary system to deal with superstition is portrayed. Here the scene's physical and psychological atmospheres are as schematically constructed as the major characters' different pronouncements on the "Beast." A parliamentary assembly begins at eventide; consequently the chief, Ralph, is merely

"a darkish figure" (96) to his tribe. Light is, at first, level and only Ralph stares into the island's darkness; his assembly faces the lagoon's bright promise. But light gradually vanishes, accompanied by increasing spiritual blindness and fear. The place of assembly on the beach is "roughly a triangle; but irregular and sketchy, like everything they made" (96). Obviously it is like a receding boat, a kind of mirror image of the island-boat itself. (Ralph remarked at the outset the island was "roughly boat-shaped" [38]; because of the tide's configuration he felt "the boat was moving steadily astern" [38].)

Since Ralph sits on "a dead tree" (96) that forms the base, no captain occupies the boat's rightful apex: where "the grass was thick again because no one sat there" (97). Like the island that appears to move backward, the assembly-boat is pointed to the darkness of the jungles not the brightness of the navigable lagoon behind. Hunters sit like hawks on the right of Ralph; to the left are the liberals, mostly children who giggle whenever their assembly seat, "an ill-balanced twister" (97), capsizes. And Piggy stands outside the triangle, ironically showing the moralizing ineffectuality of the liberal: "This indicated that he wished to listen but would not speak; and Piggy intended it as a gesture of disapproval" (98). Darkness descends on the shattered assembly, and for the first of many times the "beastie" is ritually appeased. Island boat, assembly boat, and the ship of civilization itself, rational government, all drift bleakly into blackness. The wail
of Percival Wemys Madison of the Vicarage, Harcourt St. Anthony, turns into an inarticulate gibber, the "dense black mass" (115) of mock hunters swirls and the "three blind mice" (116), Piggy, Ralph, and Simon sit "in the darkness, striving unsuccessfully to convey the majesty of adult life" (117).

V

What was that enemy? I cannot tell. He came with the darkness and he reduced me to a shuddering terror that was incurable because it was indescribable. In daylight I thought of the Roman remains that had been dug up under the church as the oldest things near, sane things from sane people like myself. But at night, the

54 The fifth chapter itself is an ironic allegorical gloss on the first, for it reintroduces earlier motifs and images but shifts their context so that they carry both their earlier carefree meaning and an ironic modification of this. The effect on the reader is to create a vague yet familiar threat, a sense of ambiguous doom which cannot be adequately located in the narrative's thrust until its conclusion. An obvious example of this is the reiterated motif "let's have fun" that Ralph as "liberal" leader introduces and which later the Head obscenely throws back at Simon. In the later fables Golding makes increasingly deft use of just this strategy: for a time the reader is lulled into unguarded ease and belief, then a reiteration with a change of emphasis forces him to try to reconsider what has earlier seemed innocuous. In Lord of the Flies it is one of the major structural devices. A sequence of repeated actions placed at intervals during the story—the heaving of logs by Sam 'eric, the rolling of larger and larger stones, the several gifts to the sea, the pig hunts, the two desperate races by Ralph—intensifies the ambiguous threat, and gives the illusion of a vastly speeded-up dénouement. In the case of the fifth chapter, "Beast from the Water," which brings to a close the tripartite fable's first structural and thematic movement (in the next chapter the airman floats to sea and a new Beast reigns), the effect is rather too insistent and technically contrived.
Norman door and pillar, even the flint wall of our cellar, were older, far older, were rooted in the darkness under the earth.

—Golding, "The Ladder and the Tree".

In the passage above, drawn from an autobiographical essay, Golding dramatizes an atavistic quest through darkness which is central to all his fiction. Pondering over the church graveyard at the foot of his garden, the child, Billy, grows terrified of some enemy he imagines is lurking there to harm him. A similar mythopoeia of a beast is central to Lord of the Flies though its implications are by no means fully worked out in this fable. Ultimately, the meaning of the fable depends on the meaning of the beast—the creature that haunts the children's imagination and which Jack hunts and tries to propitiate with a totemic beast. Simon's quest, then, is the fable's major pursuit, for he is used as a mouthpiece for what Golding, in conversation, has called "one of the conditions of existence, this awful thing." Simon, the strange, visionary child, encounters and recognizes the beast. In this confrontation scene he recognizes his own capacity for evil as well as his ability to act without evil. He is thus able to release


57 The criticism that Simon's role is over-explicit and schematized was a commonplace in most early commentary; see, for example, Cox, p. 116; Oldsey and Weintraub, pp. 32-33; Walters, p. 23.
the parachutist and try to tell the boys below about "mankind's essential illness" (111). "Whenever Simon thought of the beast, there rose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick" (128). The confrontation scene brings about a single crystallisation of the fable's total structure since it brings together as does the ideographic structure the concepts of evil-and-innocence.

At the heart of the fable's mythopoeia is the visual hieroglyphic or symbol of the severed Head of the pig, to which Simon turns in distaste and awe, and from which he tries to escape. Grinning cynically, its mouth gaping and its eyes half-closed, the Head is placed on a rock in a sea-like clearing, before Simon's cabin-island. 59

58 Golding's term in "Egypt From My Inside," p. 71. His imagination is engaged by "pictures," which by their physical suggestiveness evoke certain relevances. He tells us: "I... started to learn hieroglyphics; so that I cannot now remember when those sideways standing figures, those neat and pregnant symbols, were not obscurely familiar to me. My inward connection with Egypt has been deep for more than a generation." Ibid. (The term "picture" is employed consistently throughout the corpus, as well, to indicate the memory's tableau. See the autobiographical essay, "Billy the Kid," The Hot Gates, pp. 159-165, and discussion in Chapter V of this thesis.)

59 Simon's canopied bower is described in terms of the ship/island symbol. On the island/boat this bower is, ironically, the captain's "little cabin" (72), its "creepers dropped their ropes like the rigging of floundered ships" (71) with its centre occupied by a "patch of rock" (71) on which the foundered ship will strike. (Recall that on this rock a demonology not a church is built: Jack instructs his braves to "ram one end of the stick in the earth. Oh—it's rock. Jam it in the crack" [169].) With the advance of evening, Simon's cabin/island/ship is submerged by the sea: "Darkness poured out, submerging the ways between the trees til they were dim and strange as the bottom of the sea" (72, italics added).
Head here is like an island isolated by sea. The symbol operates macrocosmically as well as microcosmically. A larger macrocosm, the Castle Rock, at the island's end is like a severed head, it mirrors the pig's head. "A rock, almost detached" (38), this smaller landmass is separated—a point Golding makes repeatedly—from the island's main body, by a "narrow neck" (130). "Soon, in a matter of centuries" (130), this Head will be severed too. At the story's conclusion giggling black and green savages swarm around and over it as the black and green flies swarm around the Lord's head.

Piggy's death occurs at this Head; it is the slaughter of a pig for he is decapitated by "a glancing blow from chin to knee" (222, italics 60).

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60."Golding's symbols are not in fact clear, or wholly articulate, they are always the incarnation of more than can be extracted or translated from them." Gregor and Kinkead-Weeks, p. 19. Consider, for example, the initial symbol of the Island. It is a ship at sea, a civilization threatened with submergence, a tooth in a sucking mouth, a body dissociated from primal nature, consciousness divorced from the brute passivity of the subconscious. On it the boys are islanded by an ineluctable sea to which they turn in awe and distaste. The dominant symbol is woven into the narrative texture at various places, and by a technique of clustering suggestion engenders suggestion. By gathering to itself other images it evolves a logic of association, the organizing principle being recurrence with variation. Thus, Ralph's isolation at the tail-end of the Island—"He was surrounded on all sides by chasms of empty air. There was nowhere to hide, even if one did not have to go one" (130)—is the isolation of the despairing hero as well as the rupture of the self-conscious mind. And when Piggy is described as "islanded in a sea of meaningless colour" (91) while he embraces the rock with "ludicrous care above the sucking sea" (217), the microcosmic/macrocospic resonances are extremely rich. Since individual symbolic clusters are associated rather than syntactical or logical, at its best, meaning often hovers over several referrents, thought is in continuous dynamism. The whole book seems built on shapes that shift and re-settle, like cells under a microscope, stars at the end of a telescope.
added). Travelling through the air, with a grunt he lands on the square red rock in the sea, a sacrificial table. The sea, in its guise as a monster, sucks his body, which "like a pig's after it has been killed, twitched" (223). Presumably the emblematic name of the character is now pretty obvious. His head is smashed and Ralph, running along the rocky neck, jumps just in time to avoid "the headless body of the [sacrificial] sow" (223). The preparation is clear; a Head is needed.

Traditionally this symbolism suggests that the Head—the centre of reason—is destroyed with the death of Piggy; as the island society regresses, the "bridge" (134) between rationality and irrationality is cut. But rationality is, for Gölding, a suspicious concept. And the severed Head of the sow is a symbol of corrupt and corrupting consciousness. Now the Head itself is not the Lord of the Dung; it does not symbolize an evil external to the individual; it is a symbol for the malaise of the human consciousness which objectifies evil rather than recognizes its subjectivity. This intellectual complication is "man-kind's essential illness" which Simon discovers in the severed Head; it prospers on the island's Head, Castle Rock.

Three ambiguous confrontation scenes formulate the mythopoeia: Simon before the Head; Ralph before the skull of the pig; Ralph before a savage. However, the scenes function by symbolic cluster on a symbolic level and they have little dramatic necessity. Gölding himself, in "Fable," suggests a reason for this fragmentation: "I don't think the fable ever got right out of hand; but there are many places I am sure
where the fable splits at the seams and I would like to think . . . they rise from a plentitude of imagination."61 Clearly he cherishes these "splits" for he adds warmly: "May it not be that at the very moments when I felt the fable to come to its own life before me it may in fact have become something more valuable so that where I thought it was failing, it was really succeeding?" (100). And significantly he quotes the passage of Simon before the Head to illustrate these comments.

Simon alone recognizes the real Beast and like Moses with the tablets of the law brings the truth down from the mountain. What is the truth? As variant interpretations indicate, the major scenes are extremely ambiguous and diversely explicable. Simon broods before the "false god,"62 the totemic sow's Head, having witnessed the anal rape and decapitation. Suddenly the pig's head speaks in "the voice of a schoolmaster" (178) and delivers "something very much like a sermon to the boy."63 It insists that the island is corrupt and all is lost: "This is ridiculous. You know perfectly well you'll only meet me down there—so don't try to escape!" (178). Shifting by the ironic motif of "fun" into schoolboy language, the Head assures him: "We are going to have fun on this island" (178), (italics added) even though "everything" is "a bad business" (170). Such counselling of

62Golding term for the Head in "Fable," p. 98.
63Ibid.
acceptance of evil is "the infinite cynicism of adult life" (170), the cynicism of the conscious mind, the cynicism that can ignore even "the indignity of being spiked on a stick" (170), the cynicism that "grins" at the obscenities that even the butterflies must desert. (Recall that the butterflies "danced preoccupied in the centre of the clearing" [178] during the sow's mistreatment—the Head then represents something a great deal more obscene than simple blood-lust.) It is the cynicism and easy optimism of the naval officer at the end who "grinned cheerfully at the obscene savages while muttering 'fun and games'" (247, italics added).

But this Lord of the Dung is Simon: the Head that counsels acceptance is his own strategic consciousness. (Evil exists but not as a Beast. 65) The identity of the two is worked out very carefully indeed. Speaking in schoolboy language, the Lord's head has "half-shut eyes" (170) and Simon keeps "his eyes shut, then sheltered them with his hand" (171) so that his vision is partial. He sees things "without

64 Fragments of the confrontation scene between Simon and the Head inform "Egypt From My Inside," where a small boy broods on the face of an Egyptian mummy and a red-faced, smug scientist looks on with "an eternally uncheerful grin." "Egypt From My Inside," p. 76. Another such primal encounter is dramatized in "Digging for Pictures." Excavating for ruins in the chalk hills of Wiltshire, the Golding-persona discovers a victim of prehistoric murder, in a "dark and quiet pit": Its "jaws were wide open, grinning perhaps with cynicism." "Digging for Pictures," p. 60, italics added.

65 To interpret incorrectly the Head as an objective symbol for Evil, independent of consciousness, would be to make the same mistake as Jack of externalizing and objectifying one's own evil.
definition and illusively" (171) behind a "luminous veil." Simon feels his own savagery: he "licks his dry lips" and feels the weight of his hair. Later, after his epileptic fit, the blood "dries around his mouth and chin" (180) in the manner of the "blood-blackened" (170) grinning mouth of the Head. The flies, now that the butterflies have dismissed them, detect the identity and—though they are sated—leave the guts and "alight by Simon's runnels of sweat" (171) and drink at his head. The Head grins at this indignity. By a profound effort of will, Simon forces himself to penetrate his own loathing and break through his own consciousness: "At last Simon gave up and looked back; saw the white teeth and dim eyes, the blood—and his gaze was held by that ancient, inescapable recognition" (171).

It is himself he is looking at. His face (i.e., the Head) grins at the flies of corruption and he acknowledges it as himself. Rather like Golding's Egyptian mummy, he prepares "to penetrate mysteries" and "go down and through in darkness." He looks into the vast mouth of Hell, and thereby submits to the terror of his own evil.

Simon found he was looking into a vast mouth. There was blackness within, a blackness that spread. . . . He fell down and lost consciousness. (178)

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66 Basic to this level is the exploration of sight and its ambiguities. Paradoxically things are seen correctly in darkness when the spiritual eye is opened. For example, the green (fly-like) shadows that shift and crawl across the boys' bodies during the day are reversed at night "so that the shadows were where they ought to be" (97) and faces are lit from the top. And of course these green tinted faces would make the boys look like the demon creatures they become.

67 Golding, "Egypt From My Inside," p. 79.
He penetrates his own evil. Returning from non-being, he awakens next to "the dark earth close by his cheek" (179) and knows that he must "do something." He approaches the beast on the hill and discovers that "this parody," ringed as well by green flies, is nothing more "harmless and horrible" (181) than the Head. Both are man as he is. In releasing the figure "from the rocks and . . . the wind's indignity" (181) he frees himself.

Twice Ralph is confronted with just such a primal confrontation, face to face, eye to eye. We earlier see that he cannot connect with primal nature. For example, standing at the island's rocky shore "on a level with the sea" (136), he follows "the ceaseless, bulging passage" (136) of the waves and feels "clamped down," "helpless," and "condemned" (137) by a "leviathan" (131) monster with "arms of surf" and "fingers of spray" (137). Nor can he accept Simon's faith, when the latter whispers "you'll get back all right" (137), that man can escape the "brute obtuseness" (137) of nature. Much later, after the deaths of Simon and Piggy, Ralph stands in the clearing confronted by the same offensive Head. He looks steadily at the skull that "seemed to jeer at him cynically" (227). Once again the darkness rests "about on a level with his face" (228) and the skull's "empty sockets seemed to hold his gaze masterfully and without effort" (228). But he turns away from acknowledging his own nature and makes a monster there:

A sick fear and rage swept him. Fiercely he hit out at the filthy thing in front of him that bobbed like a toy and came back, still
grinning also into his face, so that he lashed and cried out in loathing. (228, italics added)

And no more than Jack can recognize his own image behind the "awesome stranger's" (80) mask of warpaint when he looks into the water-filled coconut, can Ralph recognize his own face, though he keeps "his face to the skull that lay grinning at the sky" (228).

For Ralph cannot penetrate this "parody thing" which in its motion amalgamates the parachutist's bowing, the "black ball['s]" (180) bobbing, and the sea's "breathing" (131). All three motions are those of an ancient primal rhythm that does not so much "progress" as endure "a momentous rise and fall" (137). It is the rhythm of man's darkness, "this minute-long fall and rise and fall" (131), and man's history. It is the rhythm that transfigures Simon in death, that engulfs the parachutist on its way to sea: "on the mountain-top the parachute filled and moved; the figure slid, rose to its feet, falling, still falling, it sank towards the beach . . ." (189) and the rhythm that imparts to Piggy some beauty: the water becomes "luminous round the rock forty feet below, where Piggy had fallen" (234). Yet for Ralph, the ordinary man, it is a terrifying rhythm, "the age-long nightmares of falling and death" (235) that occur in darkness, intimating the "horrors of death" (228).

Golding seems to be indicating that once atavistically in contact with this dark rhythm, at the centre of the self, man will no longer be, in Ralph's words, "cramped into this bit of island, always on the
lookout" (125). If man is prepared to face his face, he may escape the Island.

Ralph, in fact, is given just such an opportunity. In his last desperate race (depicted in the penultimate scene where all the earlier symbols are recapitulated) Ralph hides himself in Simon's cell, "the darkest hole" (242) of the island. Like Simon he connects in terror with primal nature: "He laid his cheek against the chocolate-coloured earth, licked his dry lips and closed his eyes" and feels the ancient rhythm: "Under the thicket, the earth was vibrating very slightly" (243). Jerking his head from the earth, he peers into the "dulled light" and sees a body slowly approaching: waist, knee, two knees, two hands, a spear sharpened at both ends.

A head. Ralph and someone called a "savage" (244) peer through the obscurity at each other repeating in their action Simon's scrutiny before the Head:

You could tell that he saw light on this side and on that, but not in the middle—there. In the middle was a blob of dark and the savage wrinkled up his face, trying to decipher the darkness. (245, italics added)

Just at the moment his eyes connect with those of the savage, Ralph repeats Simon's early admonition "you'll get back" (245) and with this partial acknowledgment of his own savagery he breaks through the cell. Expecting nothing he strikes out, screaming:

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68 Cf. Simon's loss of innocence which is figured by his dull eyes: "The usual brightness was gone from his [Simon's] eyes and he walked with a sort of glum determination like an old man" (80).
He forgot his wounds, his hunger and thirst, and became fear; hopeless fear on flying feet, rushing through the forest towards the open beach. (245)

Rushing, screaming through the fire that undulates "forward like a tide" (245), screaming and rushing and "trying to cry for mercy" (246, italics added), he trips, and fallen on the ground, sees, before him, the officer. In a manner of speaking he is saved; in a manner of speaking he is given mercy.

VI

For I have shifted somewhat from the position I held when I wrote the book. I no longer believe that the author has a sort of patria potestas over his brainchildren. . . . Once they are printed . . . the author has no more authority over them . . . perhaps knows less about them than the critic who . . . sees them not as the author hoped they would be, but as what they are.

—Golding, "Fable" (100)

A germinal eschatology of the scapegoat/sacrificial victim seems to be emerging here. Simon's recognition of evil—and all mankind's complicity—occasions his ritual death. He meets the fate of those who remind society of its guilt; man prefers to destroy the objectification of his fears than recognize the dark terrors and evil of himself. In "Fable" Golding declares this a "failure of human sympathy" which amounts to "the objectivizing of our own inadequacies so as to make a scapegoat" (94, italics added). (It is by the way the only time he has mentioned the term.) Thus the ritual enacts the
confinement and destruction of the boys' own terrors. They kill Simon as a beast; yet paradoxically his death exorcizes (for a short while at least) their fears. Piggy is killed on the other hand because he is an alien, a pseudo-species. And his death marks the essential inadequacy of the rational, logical world; the conch is smashed as the blind Piggy falls into the sea. But Ralph, the ordinary man, can only operate within the community's pattern; he cannot exorcize it. There is no way for him to release fully the fear even in himself. He can weep "for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart" (248).

Now while this eschatology is implicit in the narrative texture, little of it is explicit in the narrative plot. True, Simon's encounter with the airman brings about his death, while unravelling the mystery of the bobbing figure. Ralph's foray with the savage does release the dénouement; the fire sweeps through the island thus signalling the naval ship—a not implausible arrival given the earlier ship—and the ultimate ironic rescue. Nevertheless, charges of "gimmickry," technical manipulation, obscurity, and inconsistency seem not ill-considered. Such lengthy and tonally weighted episodes as those before the Head do not contribute directly to the drama nor do they adequately suggest the rather simple dictum that mankind is evil.

Experienced at the level of sensation, however, these episodes are extremely significant. By their density and ambiguity, and yet familiarity, these confrontation scenes all draw the reader
into the imaginative act the characters themselves make. For the confrontation scenes construct a parallel between the focusing of the individual character's vision and the focusing of the reader's vision. Point of view is handled here so that what Simon recognizes, when he affirms his face, the reader recognizes. The total structure brings about a similar fusion in the readers' focusing of events. By means of its ideographic structure, *Lord of the Flies* portrays its thematic meaning.
CHAPTER III

THE INHERITORS

I

We stand, then, on the shore, not as our Victorian fathers stood, lassoing phenomena with Latin names, listing, docketing and systematizing. Belsen and Hiroshima have gone some way towards teaching us humility. . . . It is not the complete specimen for the collector's cabinet that excites us. It is the fragment, the hint. For the universe has blown wide open, is a door from which man does not know whether blessing or menace will come. We pore, therefore, over the natural language of nature. . . . We know nothing. We look daily at the appalling mystery of plain stuff. We stand where any upright food-gatherer has stood, on the edge of our own unconscious, and hope, perhaps, for the terror and excitement of the print of a single foot.

―Golding, "In My Ark" ¹

Much more explicitly than Lord of the Flies, The Inheritors endorses Golding's view that the proper end of literature is imaginative discovery; it is not the level of knowledge that literature can raise, but the level of knowing. ² In this fable, Golding explores the possible origins

¹Golding, "In My Ark," The Hot Gates, p. 105.

²When novels, plays, and poems "do not draw" the reader "forward the way he is growing," they are sterile, despite devoted and meticulous craftsmanship. Golding, "Children's Books," The Listener, LXIV (December 5, 1957), 953.
of man's guilt and violence in the evolutionary appearance of Homo sapiens but the fable consciously tries to construct a mythopoeia relevant to contemporary man by using anthropological conventions in the same way as Lord of the Flies used the literary convention of the desert island narrative. The Inheritors is mythic in its impulse; it is here described as a mythic fable which consciously strives towards that sort of mythic dimension which was described in the "Introduction" as an aesthetic landscape where the unchangeable patterns of human nature are imaginatively depicted in a finite concrete story. (See "Introduction," pages 31 and 32.) However, this fable presents its version of the loss of Eden not by a full and rich recreation of life but by exactly the opposite technique: there is a tight funneling of character, episode, image, and motif. Furthermore, there is the initial rigorous structure—which has been described as an ideographic structure—which is intended to illustrate by its contradictory perspectives, imaginative truths which are themselves complex, mysterious, even incomplete.

In The Inheritors as much as Pincher Martin there is a severe formalism of structure; both fables are rigorously restrictive in mood, tone, and setting for Golding's imagination works away at a single focus—an island, a droning fall—yet it discovers, as its spirit shapes, and scrapes, and polishes the mystery of that single focus how that focus must be translated from incoherence into coherence. Each fable constructs "an uncountry," a landscape only archetypally connected to the overt world; each seems to be a discrete independent universe with laws
provided by the author—and perhaps most significantly—by the verbal resonances of language itself. Looking in The Inheritors at the origins of man and in Pincher Martin at his end, the two fables may be said to construct important fragments of Golding's personal mythopoeia, a mythopoeia he intends to be relevant to contemporary man.

In The Inheritors (as well as in Pincher Martin) an initial narrative pattern is imposed and, by the abrupt conjunction with the coda's alter pattern it is released, reformulated and in its reinterpretation transcended. We, the readers, build the bridge between the two views, and thus we are the inheritors of the new conjunction. It is the reader, not either of the characters Tuami or Lok, who sees in the confrontation of the "prelapsarian" People and the "post adamite" New People the inadequacies of both species of consciousness. Point of view is handled in such a way that we construct the wider view; we know both people; within the protagonist, Lok's mind and limited point of view, we gradually lose our innocence, but throughout the loss we experience, almost as an after-image, the abstractions of guilt of the antagonist, Tuami. We knit up the two perspectives, seeing from the inside and the outside simultaneously, until the two fragmentations merge in the wider perspective of what Golding would call myth: "something which comes out from the roots of things in the ancient sense of being the key to existence." (See his full


definition on page 31 of the "Introduction.") The mythic reconciliation here in *The Inheritors* would consist in the integration of good and evil, fire and water, light and dark, forest and plain. The bridge which the ideographic structure is intended to secure is between innocence and guilt, just as in *Pincher Martin* the fable's ideographic structure bridges the spiritual and physical worlds.

The ability to focus good and evil in this way is the vision not of Lok, though he longs towards it in bafflement and love, nor that of Tuami, though he as artist does capture intimations of it as he starts to sculpt the death-weapon into a new shape at the story's close. It is discovered by the reader as he takes hold of the complexity of the total experience and understands that the downward path of the innocent and the surmounting movement of the guilty are essentially related.

II

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

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Prefixed to *The Inheritors* is the passage above from *Outline of History*; as Golding himself remarked to a BBC commentator, the epigraph was the initial springboard for his own fable about the encounter between Neanderthalis and his immediate descendant Cro Magnon man.

*The Outline* seems first to have been a source of information and narrative detail. The geographical setting of *The Inheritors* as well as the physical characteristics of the two species—with some modifications—derive from Wells' account. However, as earlier in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding intended another ironic rebuff to nineteenth-century smugness: "The very core of the book is ironic, for its purpose is to play off against our smug prejudices—like those of the epigraph—a representation of their grounds that is as humiliating as it is unexpected." Golding himself explicated the ironic inversion:

> Wells' *Outline of History* is the rationalist gospel in excelsis. . . . It seemed to me to be too neat and too

1961), p. 7. All subsequent textual citations will be taken from this edition and be indicated by textual parentheses.

6"Anyone who has read *The Inheritors* and wants to play literary detective," write Oldsey and Weintraub in their summary of parallels, "can find plenty of clues in the drawings and figures reproduced on pages . . . of *The Outline*. Items: ivory and bone knife points—of the sort Tuami makes at the novel's close; a large horned animal—of the kind Tuami draws on the ground; an antlered stag head done on ivory—like the totemic device of Marlan's tribe; and a small rotund female figure ripened as though in pregnancy—resembling the Oa figure of Lok's tribe." Oldsey and Weintraub, *The Art of William Golding*, p. 50.

slick. And when I re-read it as an adult I came across his picture of Neanderthal man, our immediate predecessors, as being these gross brutal creatures who were possibly the basis of the mythological bad man . . . the ogre. I thought to myself that this is just absurd. What we're doing is externalizing our own inside.  

In what has since been (incorrectly) interpreted as a characteristically pessimistic response, Golding rejected Wells' optimistic belief that the "fact" of evolution presumed a similar ethical evolution in man; he suggests instead that the coming of *Homo sapiens* represented a falling away from a state of comparative innocence. In this view, man's biological and evolutionary superiority in consciousness is an incalculable asset gained at an enormous price: "The price of human consciousness, of technical and linguistic power, is guilt."  

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9 Recent evidence, reported in *The Times*, indicates that contrary to Wells' hypothesis Neanderthal might well have been a gentle creature. Petrified flowers, for one thing, were discovered beside Neanderthal bones in a newly excavated grave. *London Times*, August 6, 1967, p. 11. In Iraq, skeletal fragments were unearthed on what proved to be a bed of flowers. Skulls, placed in a cuplike position, indicate a libation ritual and a concern for the individual and his life after death. Alberto C. Blanc, "Some Evidence for the Ideologies of Early Man," in S. L. Washburn, *Social Life of Early Man* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1961), pp. 124-132.

10 Frank Kermode, "Coral Islands," *The Spectator* (August 22, 1958), p. 257. It has been recently proposed that a critical factor in the enlargement of the brain was a development of higher-brain inhibitions of lower-brain patterns—"the development of 'tameness' [is] the suggested basis upon which co-operative social life can emerge in hunting communities." Such an inhibitory pattern has been called guilt. M. R. A. Chance, "The Nature and Special Features of the Instinctive Bond of Primates," *The Social Life of Early Man*, ed. S. L. Washburn, pp. 29-32.
Taking its plot in large measure from Wells' semi-documentary adventure story, "The Grisly Folk,"[11] The Inheritors re-explores the encounter between the two species, and in doing so reverses the moral values of The Outline. First, the moral natures of the two species are reversed: Wells portrays the Neanderthals as monsters easily outwitted by a cleverer species; Golding's People are a gentle and harmonious tribe, unable to conceive of the New People's violence, rapaciousness, and corruption. 12 A number of critics have thought that Golding overemphasizes the Neanderthal's primal innocence; for example, Peter Green writes: "With a last flick of malice at Wells, Golding ends his story by making the New Men abduct a Neanderthal baby,"[13] thus reversing exactly Wells' story where the Neanderthals snatch a baby from the other tribe. A related criticism has been that Golding's story reveals some anthropological inaccuracies. 14

11 Peter Green detected this parallel first. "There is little doubt that he also had in mind Wells' own short story of the meeting of Neanderthal Man and Homo Sapiens, The Grisly Folk." "The World of William Golding," Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Literature, 32 (1963), p. 45. In their chapter on The Inheritors, Oldsey and Weintraub give a satisfactory outline of the short story. (See especially pp. 50-53.) But their claim that Conrad and Ford Madox Ford's The Inheritors is also a "source" is completely unsubstantiated.

12 'Wells' 'ogre' then proves to be nothing more than another projection of the beast within the dark heart of man; he is a 'mythological bad man' an incarnation of the demon which has always haunted our species." James R. Baker, William Golding (New York, 1965), p. 21.

13 Green, p. 47.

14 'Modern paleontology does not support Golding's picture of Neanderthal man or of his relation to Cro-Magnon man. . . . We know
Of course, it might be argued that such criticisms are aesthetically irrelevant. However, there was a tendency in much of the early reviewing to interpret the book not as a work of art but as either just pseudo-science fiction or as an attempt merely to recreate the prehistoric past. Even when aesthetic criteria were applied judgment was rarely very positive. *The Inheritors'* virtuosity was highly praised; nothing about the relations between Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal man. There is no evidence that the second race exterminated the first. More likely Neanderthal man was over-evolved, overspecialized for the peculiar conditions of the late Pleistocene, and died of disease. . . . Nor do we know enough about Cro-Magnon man to justify Golding's picture of him." Kenneth Rexroth, "William Golding," *Atlantic*, 215 (May 1965), 98. See also Green, p. 48; Samuel Hynes, *William Golding*, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers (New York, 1964), p. 32. But see the more recent evidence noted in n. 9. In addition, Golding's "Other People" would appear to have many of the attributes which Henri V. Vallois describes the Upper Paleolithic tribal society as possessing: sharp division of labour, articulated hunting patterns, warfare, ceremonial and hunting rites, body ornamentation, developed language, control of fire and water, ritual self-mutilation, extensive use of bow and arrow, and cave art with ochre. Henri V. Vallois, "The Social Life of Early Man: The Evidence of Skeletons," in S. L. Washburn, *The Social Life of Early Man*, p. 229.

15 Thus one critic saw the novel as a fictional essay in pre-history: "Where others have reconstructed a prehistoric past, Mr. Golding has created it." Isabel Quigly, "New Novels," *The Spectator* (September 30, 1955), p. 428. Others wrote the book off as science fiction. Guy Davenport, "Jungles of the Imagination," *The National Review*, XIII (October 9, 1962), 273; ______, "False Dawn," *Time Magazine* (July 27, 1962), p. 64; Kingsley Amis, *New Maps of Hell* (London, 1961), p. 24. There was a general tendency to disregard the novel's serious imaginative intent—since the Neanderthal minds were simple, then it followed, they were defective as well and naturally to be vanquished by a superior species. "In a way this is a sort of animal story with Lok and Fa as faithful and trustworthy and loving as horse and dog." W. G. Rogers, "Once Upon a Time," *Saturday Review*, LV (August 25, 1962), 25.
a number of critics thought it a "most brilliant tour de force"; yet this very originality was taken as the novel's major limitation: "The novel is at best a trivial exercise of Golding's imagination," Newsweek commented. Various critics, feeling the book's limited point of view obscured the narrative, had little hesitation in supplying their own episodes when they were in doubt.

It is true that point of view does (deliberately) obscure narrative impulse. As has been noted on page 86, the fable itself exhibits an ideographic structure: it is built in two unequal sections: Chapters I-X and XI-XII. The first part constitutes most of the novel's action while the slighter final coda section is, in part, a meditation on the preceding drama. In the first part, events are viewed from the limited perspective


18 Unaccountably, a "pulmonary disorder" is assigned to Mal as a cause of death by Oldsey and Weintraub, p. 59. For George Plimpton, it is a "howling death throe" which closes the first part of the fable. George Plimpton, "Without the Evil to Endure," New York Times Book Review, July 29, 1962, p. 4. Arthur Broes decides Lok is left "dying, the victim of a human's arrow as the 'others,' their 'supremacy' now established ride off down the river. Arthur Broes, "The Two Worlds of William Golding," Carnegie Series in English, No. 7 (Pittsburgh, 1963), p. 8. It should be pointed out that the New People leave the river and proceed towards a plain and lake. Lok silently hunches himself into the overhang while hyenas await his exhausted sleep. Death may be imminent, but it has not yet occurred.
of the Neanderthal mind, a mind that cannot reason beyond sense data. We participate as readers in a world in which idea and communications are a series of image stills, not a function of speech and causality. Thus, The Inheritors differs dramatically from Lord of the Flies where at first the island is viewed through the comparatively broad scope of Ralph's rational mind, then, seen from a more and more restricted angle as the "curtain" of memory drops and Ralph fumbles for rationality. In The Inheritors, rather than shrinking, understanding expands; gradually and simultaneously with the Neanderthal protagonist the reader is made aware of Other People occupying the Neanderthals' territory. (Hynes remarks astutely that the manner in which this dim, vague awareness grows in the Neanderthals' mind imparts to The Inheritors, "some of the excitement of other fictional forms involving unknown antagonists—mystery novels, for instance, and ghost stories use similar devices of dramatic anticipation."19)

In fact, narrative interest derives solely from this gradual intrusion. There is a scent, then an obscurely familiar sound which Lok cannot place, "from the foot of the fall, a noise that the thunder robbed of echo and resonance" (43), then a horrifying shape moves up a tree, and finally white boned figures with tufted heads appear. In these figures we gradually recognize ourselves. "For most of the novel we see these new creatures from the outside, with the eyes of innocence. But not really—rather, we receive the data of those innocent eyes, and interpret it as

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19 Hynes, p. 19.
Towards the conclusion of Chapter XI a shift from the Neanderthal angle of vision to that of the Cro-Magnon occurs. This remarkable transition—"one of the best things Golding has written"—is brought about by tonal alterations as the style modulates into a scientific cumulative objective rhetoric. Third person singular is abandoned at exactly the moment when the last Oa-priestess drops over the fall caught in the dead tree. The omniscient author seems to retreat away from the figure of Lok who becomes, in the distance, simply an impersonal creature: "The red creature stood on the edge of the terrace and did nothing. . . . Water was cascading down the rocks beyond the terrace from the melting ice in the mountains. . . . It was a strange creature, smallish, and bowed. The legs and thighs were bent and there was a whole thatch of curls on the outside of the legs and the arms." (216-219). It is the first time we have seen Lok as an animal; the description recalls Wells' epigraph. But divesting Lok of his humanness paradoxically deepens his pathos. He becomes a tiny bent creature overwhelmed by the immensity of his loss, and the immensity of gloom, cold moonlight, and the long curved fall of water that heralds the New Ice Age and the end of his species.

Emotional understatement is superbly used in the whole transition section and is coupled with quite extraordinary visual stillness and

\[20\text{Ibid., p. 20.}\]
\[21\text{Oldsey and Weintraub, p. 64.}\]
linguistic precision; one passage, for example, describes the physical business of weeping water, but not by denoting that the red creature is crying. The reader becomes simply the observer of a natural occurrence—until the point in the rhythmic repetition where the reader imparts meaning (and thus pain) to the action. "The lights increased, acquired definition, brightened, lay each sparkling at the lower edge of a cavern. Suddenly, noiselessly, the lights became thin crescents, went out, and streaks glistened on each cheek. The lights appeared again, caught among the silvered curls of the beard. They hung, elongated, dropped from curl to curl . . . one drop detached itself and fell in a silver flash, striking a withered leaf with a sharp pat" (220). The passage is characteristic of the best of Golding's style—one thinks of the poetic description of Simon in death here—where things are anthropomorphized, while that to which we normally impart humanity is figured in non-human architectural/natural terms. Pincher Martin makes especially successful use of this device.

In The Inheritors' final chapter a coda brings about a dramatic reversal. (Gindin, by the way, thinks the reversal breaks the fable's unity without adding a relevant perspective—"the switch in point of view merely repeats what the novel has already demonstrated."22 But quite the contrary is true; the reversal is vital both to the dramatic outcome of the narrative and to the larger mythopoeia The Inheritors constructs.)

Suddenly we are placed in the pragmatic minds of the Cro-Magnons, the opposing tribe, and the tone shifts from emotive lyricism to nautical gruffness: "A fair wind, steerage-way, and plenty of water all round—what more could a man want. . . . Forrard there under the sail was what looked like lower land, plains perhaps where men could hunt in the open, not stumble among dark trees or on hard, haunted rocks" (224), Tuami mutters to himself as he broods on the "devils' which have hindered the passage of his people from island and fall to the lake's upper regions. The subtle effect is to make us now revise our unsympathetic assumptions about the wholly evil nature of the New People, and by an act of imaginative extension, to understand their part in the furor.

Six days have elapsed since the Neanderthals' joyous arrival at their summer quarters; it is the dawn of the seventh day "but ages have passed by with respect of man's problems. We watch the departure of a new tribe. Lok's people have given way to Tuami's. . . . Darkness, thunder, the tremors of shifting ice have replaced 'the drift of vivid buds,' which Lok brushed aside as he ran. Liku has been replaced by Tanakil, who lies in a near coma, victim of the trauma experienced in having seen her primitive friend cannibalized. Fa is dead and so is Tanakil's father, the man Lok had ironically dubbed 'Chestnut-head.' The parental love of Twal, for Tanakil, supplants that of Fa and Lok for Liku. The 'new one'  

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23 Oldsey and Weintraub, pp. 65-67. Perhaps the commentators here are too anxious to indicate the careful balancing of roles as one tribe gives way to the other; textual evidence for Chestnut-head being Tanakil's father is rather slight.
now rides on Vivani's back, holding on to her hair. And the unsettled pictures in Lok's mind give way to the 'swirling sand' in Tuami's tumultuous mind."

Many critics have ignored the coda's amplification and relocation of the fable's theme. Consequently, The Inheritors has been often interpreted as an allegory of the Fall of Man, specifically a reworking of the Christian myth of loss of Eden: "Lok and Fa thus become anthropological analogues of Adam and Eve; but it is man himself whom Golding identifies with the Serpent." Green sees it as a "blazing heretical version of the Paradisial Legend," while Hynes and others who contest its Christian context agree that the fable dramatizes the mythic annihilation of innocence by sophisticated corruption. In this view, then, The Inheritors is an "anthropological version of the Fall of man." Its "root idea" constitutes a "variant of the Fall, transplanted from theology." In this view, the destruction of the Neanderthals would become a symbolic representation of the destruction of all innocence. In this context, Millar MacClure makes the interesting point

25 Green, p. 47.
26 Ibid., p. 48.
27 Hynes, p. 18.
that like other contemporary novelists, Golding seems "to be attracted by the fundamental paradox that consciousness is an aberration from nature."  

Frank McShane shares a similar notion; for him The Inheritors' myth is an 'evocation of the lost continent of Atlantis whose legacy much transformed has yet tantalizingly been perpetuated in the human race."  

If one treats the book as an elegiac parable about lost innocence one ignores the very pointed evidence Golding provides that, though to be regretted, the Neanderthals' extinction is necessary and inevitable. In fact, The Inheritors is no more simply an Edenic legend than is Mal's story about the times before the Great Fire. "For a time," Baker explains, "the mothering earth offered a garden world in which innocence could thrive; but helpless in the throes of her own evolution she no longer provides for the offspring of that perishing age.

The Neanderthals therefore were doomed from the very beginning by their trust in the changing earth and their naïve faith in the benevolence of their goddess Oa. If she once gave them fruit and flowers on the same branch, the steadfast sun of paradise, ultimately she would betray them by producing the radical seasons and the cunning, upright beasts.  

The final preoccupation of The Inheritors, then, is with the nature of Evolution. In this sense, The Inheritors shares the wide

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30 Frank McShane, "Novels of William Golding," Dalhousie Review, XLII (Summer 1962), 175.

31 Baker, p. 25.
mythic sweep of *The Spire*, for both fables explore not simply the loss of one way of life, the fall of one kind of perception, but the loss-and-gain, the fall-and-rise as one form of life takes over from another, willy nilly, despite itself and just because that is the nature of the cosmos: to change.

This is not to say that Golding is restating the smug Myth of Progress; neither is he endorsing the rival myth of unregenerate evil. Somewhere, in the ideal world of the imagination—the golden land Golding calls myth—the whole truth of the two partial views is accessible and discoverable. The truth that resides here is not in competition with historical or scientific truth; it derives from them and is supplementary to them. To this end, it matters little that *The Inheritors'* picture of Neanderthal man may be technically inaccurate; it does matter that the fable gives a translucent image of that possible time. And any novel that succeeds in uniting the real historical scientific truth with its imaginatively ideal partner will have arrived at the inclusive destination of myth, the place concerned with the primary, primeval, ancient situation of man, his life, mystery and death, his guilt and sense of wonder.

III

I'd say I'm passionately interested in description, the exact description of a phenomenon. When I know what a wave looks like or a flame or a tree, I hug that to me or carry the thought agreeably as a man might carry a flower round with him.

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32Golding, Personal communication, April 22, 1967, unpublished letter.
Onyx marsh water, hard haunted rock, the shock head of a dead tree, a droning fall, the prolonged harsh bellow of a rutting stag, the sea white bitter smell of salt: the world of *The Inheritors* is anchored, like its statement on the Fall, in the substantial world. Its inception resulted, according to Golding, from a vision of such a fact: "when I discovered Lok running in I was able to introduce the rest of the characters and the thing wrote itself—in a month."\(^3\) The fable begins and ends in utterly solid surfaces, and sensuous shapes, smells, sounds, sights. Partially because so delimited, its landscape (the physical patch of the land itself with beech trees, stepping stones, two paths, sheer cliffs from a terrace, an island, a river, and a fall, and the relationship between the parts) become intimately known. The reader seems to lie with the character up against the face of real things, confusedly caught in these things: stationary with these things.

By his face there had grown a twig: a twig that smelt of other, and of goose, and of the bitter berries that Lok's stomach told him he must not eat. This twig had a white bone at the end. There were hooks in the bone and sticky brown stuff hung in the crooks. His nose examined this stuff and did not like it. He smelled along the shaft of the twig. The leaves on the twig were red feathers and reminded him of goose. He was lost in a generalized astonishment and excitement. (106)

Though the point of view here is technically omniscient, as in *Lord of the Flies*, sustaining for three quarters of the book primitivistic, anthropomorphic descriptions and perspectives, the formal mode consists

\(^3\)Golding, Personal communication, May 9, 1967, unpublished letter.
in something very different, a technical feat that Frank Kermode has hailed as wholly original. For we see most events, the activities of Homo sapiens, over the shoulder of a pre-rational mind. In Lord of the Flies, Pincher Martin, The Spire, even Free Fall, we enter rational minds which gradually grow obscured and a-rational—there to be upset by the coda's reversal; here the reader shares Lok's perspective, inhabiting at times a creature whose sensory equipment perceives, but does not understand. (In the other fables, the protagonists 'understand' as it were but they do not "perceive"; this is especially true of The Spire where Jocelin must learn, with a new clarity of eye: "what's this called? And this?" (147.) But in The Inheritors there is an interesting variation for "Perception is itself, no more; not what we normally expect it to be, a stepping stone to an idea rapidly transferred from the eye to the mind.").

Everything, the part by part shape of the arrow sunk in the tree beside Lok's face, is rendered through the physical sensations, about which he is wholly unconscious. As he is bombarded by arrows, smells, associating in his first fall the smell of the island with the fire and old woman, Lok attends scrupulously to the concrete, and can no more abstract from a twig to an arrow than import hostility to the New Men shooting an arrow at him: "Suddenly Lok understood that the man was holding the stick out

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34 Kermode's comment in BBC Third Programme, August 28, 1959, unpublished.

to him but neither he nor Lok could reach across the river. He would have laughed if it were not for the echo of the screaming in his head" (106). Lok's senses merely report a series of inexplicable events: an ominously missing log, the old woman's bundle that mysteriously moves to the island, yet remains—he discovers when he falls at the terrace—in her hands beside him, a smell without a "picture" which brings him "blank amazement" (62). "All primary human activities are filtered through the polarized lens of Lok's unfamiliarity: sympathetic hunting magic, ritual mimesis (the magician in a stag's head), the use of artifacts such as dug-out canoes; murder; religious heave-offerings, intoxication, the conscious and deliberate pursuit of pleasure in the act of love." 36 His senses simply report a dislocation of self that not only tears him from the People but fragments him between an inside-Lok with a "tidal feeling" and an outside-Lok that grows tight fear like another skin, and finally, gruesomely, a New People with bone faces, log bodies, bird-fluttering language who "walked upright . . . as though something that Lok could not see were supporting them, holding up their heads, thrusting them slowly and irresistibly forward" (144).

For a long time, the epigraph from H. G. Wells' Outline (suggesting that the "ogre" of folklore may derive from a racial memory of "gorilla-like monsters" 37 ) remains the only clue to the identity of the

36 Green, p. 47.

37 Golding turns another conventional idea around: Wells sees the encounter between true man and his hairy predecessor as the source for
story’s actors, because until the invaders, "the People of the Fall" (195), enter the frontal ground at the coda, freed of Lok’s frame, the reader is locked in the double-screen of the projection of his primitive vision.

Yet the plot, a dramatic account of the extermination of one species by another, is extremely simple. We follow the migration of a small band of "People" (31) from their winter quarters by the sea to their summer quarters in coastal mountains at the edge of a river and fall. (The band of eight is the only Neanderthal group to have survived a Great Fire.) Coming to a marshy stretch of water, they discover a log-bridge is missing—an ominous fact since in the past it has always been there and should still remain: "To-day is like yesterday and to­morrow" (46), they console themselves. But this faith is to be bitterly shattered. The leader of the band, Mal the old man with all the memo­ries of sweeter times, falls into the dreaded water. The tribe tortuously climbs up a cliff, forced to make a new passage to their ancient "over­hang." They set about finding food, but it gradually becomes clear that for some inexplicable reason Mal has miscalculated the seasons and they have arrived at their summer quarters too early. Then Ha falls victim to some unknown calamity—in swift succession Mal dies of "the legends of ogres and man-eating giants that haunt the childhood of the world." ("The Grisly Folk," The Time Machine and Other Stories [London, 1927], p. 689.) The Inheritors demonstrates just the opposite: the ogre is simply a construct of man's own brain, what is called man's "darkness" in Pincher Martin and Free Fall.
overexposure: Nil and the old woman are killed, perhaps by some creature; the two children, Liku and the new one, are kidnapped. Only Lok and Fa remain, frantically trying to rescue the children whose kidnapping they simply cannot understand.

From this point on, the narrative focuses on the activities of the New People; the hunger-thin tribe is gradually introduced: the fierce magician Marlan and the beautiful Vivani;³⁸ the artist Tuami; Pine-tree, Chestnut-head, Bush, Tuft, the four braves; Twal and her daughter, Tanakil. From the vantage point of a dead tree, we watch through Neanderthal eyes the mysterious gestures of this tribe, their mimetic rituals, their rapacious orgies, their terrified brutal efforts to escape from some unknown danger. A last crucial episode occurs at the overhang; the New People are confusedly trying to accomplish the portage

³⁸ Marlan and Vivani have their literary origin in Tennyson's *Idylls*. Marlan, the witchdoctor of the totemic cult of the Stag, brings to mind the twelfth century Arthurian enchanter Merlin. Golding's enchanter is forced to take a perilous journey to a devil-infested forest, Tuami tells us at the end, because he is fleeing the wrath of another tribe from whom he kidnapped Vivani. Like the wily Vivien in the *Idyll* who wins magic from the aging enchanter Merlin and uses the charm to leave him spellbound in a tangled tree, Vivani accompanies Marlan to the island. Against his better judgment—for by now Marlan is losing credence among the starved tribe—Marlan is beguiled by Vivani into capturing two forest devils: Liku and the new one. The results are disastrous for both species. At the novel's close Marlan lies stupefied in the hollow hull of an oak canoe, smaller and much weaker. Other names have special significance. While the invaders bear names like Tanakil, Vakiti, and Tuami that correspond to the species' linguistic complexity, the others—Fa, Ha, Nil, and Mal—possess names whose monosyllabic simplicity accentuates the People's intellectual primitiveness. Onomatopoeic shading also operates: Liku, the small Neanderthal, is indeed "like-you" and Tuami is one "you-love"; it is the burden of the narrative to make these puns morally pertinent.
of their canoes past the waterfall: "There was an hysterical speed in the efforts of Tuami and in the screaming voice of the old man. They were retreating up the slope as though cats with their evil teeth were after them, as though the river itself were flowing uphill" (209, italics added). Lok and Fa make one last desperate effort to rescue the children, Fa distracting attention so that Lok can rush for the new one. The attempt fails; several of the New People fall over the fall while Tuami draws a savage totemic figure. "It was some kind of man. Its arms and legs were contracted. . . . There was hair standing out on all sides of the head as the hair of the old man had stood out when he was enraged or frightened" (215). A confused scuffle ensues and Fa is chased to a log. The log spills over the cascading waters of the fall

39 A variation on this verbal paradox of falling upward closes The Spire when Jocelin glimpses the tower as an "upward waterfall." The ideographic significance of this is examined in Chapter VI of this thesis.

40 The Inheritors dramatizes the evolution of totemic demonology; but unlike Lord of the Flies where Simon's recognition of the "beast" is technically contrived, in The Inheritors the ironic juxtaposition of similar images viewed from the novel's two points of view makes the point without authorial interruption. The textual passage describes Lok's bewildered staring at Tuami's drawing: it is a totemic image of the Neanderthals as Homo sapiens sees them. Lok does not, of course, recognize himself in the fierce red figure; it is merely "some kind of man." In a later passage the novel's real "beast" is portrayed. Tuami (for point of view has now switched to that of the New People) stares fixedly at Marian who lies sprawled asleep in the canoe. "The sun was blazing on the red sail and Marlan was red. His arms and legs were contracted, his hair stood out and his beard, his teeth were wolf's teeth and his eyes like blind stones" (229). The figure is a mirror image of the totemic beast Tuami has drawn. Thus when Tuami attributes devilish qualities to the Neanderthals he is really, like the boys' creation of the "beast," commenting on his own moral evasion.
and she is carried as the other People were to her death-by-water.

At just this point the objective transition is placed: we watch Lok's dumb pain as he scurries back and forth looking for Liku; finally he unearths her Oa-doll and with this folds himself into a foetal position at the ancient grave in the overhang. At the fable's close one solitary canoe is seen carrying the tormented New People upward toward some new camp. Tuami broods on the change and his bedevilled irrational grief, "as though the portage of the boats . . . from that forest to the top of the Fall had taken them all onto a new level not only of land but of experience and emotions" (225). As he studies the tribe before him, their history is swiftly reviewed. They too have been overcome by water; Tuami thinks: "I am like a pool . . . some tide has filled me, the sand is swirling, the waters are obscured and strange . . ." (227). And The Inheritors ends with Tuami staring out at a "line of darkness" (233) apparently without end.

Both Lok's primitive perspective and the omniscient authorial descriptions deliberately limit any formulation or deduction or interpretation of events. The latter Golding contrives to make work by concealing

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41 Though he has not read Lévi-Strauss' recent book, The Savage Mind, Golding, by an act of imagination, has intuited many of the recent findings of anthropologists and ethologists on the nature of the primitive mind. Lévi-Strauss argues that "savage thought is definable both by a consuming symbolic ambition . . . and by scrupulous attention directed entirely towards the concrete, and finally by the implicit conviction that these two attitudes are one." Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 220. It could be a description of Lok's mental processes.
familiar elements in anthropomorphic images. Thus the cliff is described as leaning out "looking for its own feet in the water," the island "rearing" against the fall is a "seated giant" whose "thigh that should have supported a body like a mountain lay in the sliding water of the gap," and the river "sleeps" and "fell over on both sides of the island" (23). The reader becomes, through these sorts of metaphors, immersed in reality, with the trick of abstraction blanked out.

The first four chapters of *The Inheritors* where we follow the "People" in their movement upstream from their winter quarters to their summer quarters in the overhang, directly adjacent to the fall, are static, "working not through incident but through description," a mode fundamental to the growth of the fable. For what is encountered, indeed discovered, by the reader in these chapters—the tree by the clearing where Lok swings Liku, the ice cavern beyond the fall, where "the drone of the fall diminishes to a sigh" (81), the fall itself with logs slowly descending—these physical phenomena assume a dramatic then symbolic role as the tale proceeds. As substantial phenomena they are, first of all, points in the actual narrative scene which, by introduction and reintroduction during the course of the developing narrative, begin

42 This term is significant; at one point Lok says, "People understand each other" (72) indicating, in the Golding corpus, the essential understanding between men, necessary for moral life. *Free Fall*, for example, concludes with the riddle "the Herr Doctor does not understand Peoples."

to assume a symbolic import, much in the way it was argued the island
and the Head did in *Lord of the Flies*. Furthermore, they absorb
verbal echoes as they grow out of the fabric of each event. The use of
trees is a case in point where not only do falling trees, falling over the
fall, result, at each point, in disaster but the New People are made to
resemble (in the People's view) their awful nature. Lok thinks that they
are trees and calls one Chestnut-head. Of course, people can in no way
be identified with trees, but if they share in the food of the Dead Tree,
if they send the old woman over the fall like a log, if they in turn utilize
trees to get beyond what for them is the terror of the dark forest and
the ringing fall, then they participate in the nature of the Fallen Tree.
In all Golding's fables dramatic structure, imagery, and the created
language operate in this way; they are both their literal selves and the
symbolic embodiment of an idea.

Basically, then, our sense of the People—their code of ethics,
their solicitous community, their common emotions, their deep rever­
ence for and awe of life—is a matter of accumulated physical sensation.
Moreover the symbolic nature of the fable's first movement becomes
our immersion in their substantial world and through it in a very real
sense (unique to this fable) we may be said to enact the return of the
characters with them. An ingenious device and integral unit in this
regard is "the picture," for it allows Golding to move away from the
immediate and constant present. It is as though the focus of the lens
camera were widened so as to take in the past. The People communicate
by "sharing pictures," or imagining simultaneously images of events. Through these "pictures" the reader has access to the Neanderthals' past and tradition. Mai has a memory, what he calls a "picture," of a time of perpetual summer "and the flowers and fruit hung on the same branch" (35), an Edenic myth that was destroyed by a "Great Fire," (a nightmare of which begins to recur in Lok's mind, when he hears the droning of the fall and its hated water). Lok's only picture, "a picture of finding the little Oa" (33), introduces us to the People's religion, a concept of the numinous, the power dwelling in the caverns of the glacier—the loins of the ice woman—and in the blackened woman-shaped root cuddled by the child Liku:

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

Likewise, we learn of the old woman's dreadful but unfearful sanctity. Oa's earthly representative, she carries the fire, breathing into the clay like her Greek counterpart and "awakening" the flame, -the ruddy sunset, and those points of fire-love in the People's eyes. To Lok her own eyes are those of the visionary; she wraps things in understanding, compassion, and remote stillness. "He remembered the old woman, so close to Oa, knowing so indescribably much, the doorkeeper to whom all secrets were open. He felt awed and happy and witless again" (61).

When the People are together their emotions, like their sexual partners, are common; they either share a picture spontaneously or exert themselves to get another to share a picture. This becomes the
major device for Lok's characterization and it is a mark of the tragedy
that Lok, the witless but innocent clown, as the last surviving adult
male, has many words but few pictures. Words, however,—and this
is central to the book's exploration of our linguistic inheritance—are
indefinite; some members occasionally emit them more or less at
random to express excitement, joy, or terror. But before the old
woman's hearth, they sink into a kind of undifferentiated darkness, a
communal whole without speech, without identity, without thought.
Golding wonderfully visualizes this slow bonding in both microcosmic
and macrocosmic terms. As the flame wavers, nursed by a creature
of "mixed fire and moonlight" (72), their skins grow ruddy "and the
deep caverns beneath their brows" are inhabited "by replicas of the
fire and all their fires danced together" (33). The scene is one of the
most poignantly realized in the book; significantly, it relates to Gold­
ing's own pictorial conception of the origins of myth where he sees a
tribe sitting before a fire, joined in and tied to one story that is sifted
and resifted, told and retold, adapted through successive stages of re­
jection and coalescence, in his word "mulching" down in the very
fabric of the community's existence.

44Golding, personal communication, May 9, 1967, unpublished
letter. "Mulch," a horticulturalist's term, is the protective covering,
often rotting straw, placed upon the earth's surface to enrich the soil.
Golding's use of the word involves the organic notion of an imaginative
compost containing many stories, all of which celebrate the unchangeable
patterns of human nature; new stories place their roots in this enriched
soil and grow from it. See the discussion of myth in the "Introduction,"
pp. 31-33.
The "pictures are, of course, visualizations not conceptualizations, telepathic snapshots not of an idea but of an entire event." Significance mysteriously resides in them inasmuch as they represent by their "floating motionlessness" some rounded aspect of a whole truth, unfragmented and unabstracted. Thus for Lok even a smell is accompanied by a picture, "a sort of living but qualified presence" (74); alternatively he can, at great expense of energy, evolve a new picture "not by reasoned deduction but because in every place the scent told him—do this!" (77). Such intuition amounts to a comprehensive understanding of a new (viz. unexperienced) phenomenon; unlike deduction from a thing to its essential nature, this mode of consciousness makes the knower, in knowing, become that which is known:

... the scent turned Lok into the thing that had gone before him. He was beginning to know the other without understanding how it was that he knew. Lok-other crouched at the lip of the cliff and stared across the rocks of the mountain. ... He threw himself into the shadow of a rock snarling and waiting. (77)

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45 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, William Golding, p. 73.

46 One of Golding's criteria for great art, "Egypt From My Inside," p. 81.

47 The total submission here to Lok-other, a subjection of selfhood—if the term indeed can be employed when discussing such a pre-rational mentality—is strongly reminiscent of Simon's faint before the Head where the "darkness" or the knowledge of the destructive principle is simultaneously a losing of personality and a capturing of the Other. Simon becomes the Head, as later in Free Fall Sammy, by encountering the darkness of the cell, becomes Sammy-Other, thus breaking open the prison of self-hood. In several of the essays a similar fierce brooding on the unknown—Leonides before the pass, a phantom Roman family crouched over their murdered grandmother—results in an imaginative, but no less true, assimilation into personal awareness of the unknown. Thus
Technically the "picture" is a fine instrument for revealing the Neanderthal's incapacity for abstract thought, thus distinguishing them from the more advanced evolutionary species.

But most importantly the "picture" renders, as no other device could, the life of the senses and instinct since the impression the reader receives of the outside world is of a series of image-stills. "This is a world where past and future are both little more than extensions of the present; where ideas and communication are a series of separate 'pictures,' like a lantern-lecture; where neither action nor its corollary, speech, contains any subordinate clauses." Thus we are confused and frightened in a way which we cannot quite grasp. For example, fearsome suspense and tension are built into the description of the last activity on the terrace, precisely because—though there is intense and concentrated action—it is pictured by Lok as a series of stills, each devoid of motion like moments caught in past-time. They appear to be random events without the causality of one action leading to another.

"The fat woman was screaming. . . . The old man was running. . . . Chestnut-head was coming from where Lok was" (210). Each short sentence conveys the impression of arrested speed, yet each operates

Golding reports himself penetrating the temporal and historical and phenomenal boundaries to identify himself with a prehistoric corpse in the Wiltshire downs: "There is a sense in which I share the guilt buried beneath the runway, a sense in which my imagination has locked me to them." "Digging for Pictures," The Hot Gates, p. 70.

48 Green, p. 46.
like the beginning of a tale—an action caught immediately; in fact, they recall the beginning of *The Inheritors* itself: "Lok was running as fast as he could" (11). One action is apart from another: each is finishing and static: none is connected to another, not even by the simple connective "and." So there is nothing Lok can imagine to do to either connect the actions together or stop them. Thus Tanakil is dropped by Lok. Chestnut-head is travelling through the air, "fitting the delicate curve of the descent" (211) over the fall. Marlan is flinging an arrow. Fa is jumping at the gully. A canoe is falling and splitting in two.

Of course, all the actions are related but lacking the rational perspective that makes a pattern of random events they impress the reader as individual assaults. As the Neanderthals slowly begin to formulate—and, as we shall see, this is most wonderfully done during the ritual stag dance—Golding can depict, by making us bring into focus the foreground of the story, the nature of innocence. For Golding sees the alogical, undifferentiated mentality—what Sammy Mountjoy has in abundance as a child—as essentially innocent. "I picture the Neanderthals," he has said, "as a primitive but good race that existed before the Fall, wiped out by *Homo sapiens* simply because it wasn't evil enough to survive. Its animal innocence was no match for our capacity for surviving at all cost."49 We not only experience a consciousness that twentieth-century man has lost in which instinct, intuition, and

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49 Golding comment to Webster, "Living with Chaos," p. 15.
pictorialization predominate; we participate in its loss. Further, we "stand between primitive responses and enlightened consciousness. We are the battled inheritors of the battle in the novel."50

The Inheritors' total effort is to implicate the reader in the experience of and responsibility for this loss of innocence; in this way the fable's ideographic structure forces the reader to know that the innocence lost is our own innocence. We proceed within the innocent's consciousness until the penultimate chapter where, after the objective anthropological transition, we enter the New People's minds: "After the restriction of primitive mentality . . . the reader frankly luxuriates in the comparatively broad scope of the helmsman mind,"51 but it is a luxury that brings with it pain. For the knot binding the people together "by a thousand invisible strings" (104) has been supplanted by the "strips of skin" (208) tying the groaning Men to their log/canoes and by the "long piece of skin" (159) which leashes Liku to Tanakil. And in the fragmentations between inside-Lok and outside-Lok which so intensifies his alienation both from himself and Fa we recognize the very image of our own dissociated and pluralized sensibilities. The change to Cro-Magnon man's point of view, with its gain in intellectual grasp and apprehensive imagination, involves the painful loss of Neanderthal man's intuitive, disconnected thinking.


51Plimpton, p. 4.
Point of view, then, is employed so as to depict the ironic evolution from People to Men, from pre-lapsarian to post-adamite, from a primitive to "modern" mentality. Not only does the reader's mentality emerge from Lok's mind to Tuami's, it comes with the Neanderthals to the "place of the Fall"; it leaves with *Homo sapiens*. From the point of view of innocence, the biological evolution is a moral devolution, as ironic a turning as the Wells epigraph or the Beatitude referred to in the title that the "meek shall inherit the earth." The departure is a departure from innocence; the light of dawn that touches the sailors, like the new spring and new age that the melting ice hails, seems essentially bleak.

IV

But I quite agree that the parallelism between intelligence and evil does come out in my books because it is our . . . particular sin—to explain away our own shortcomings rather than remedy them.

—Golding

A new kind of darkness shadows the world; as the epigraph above suggests with intelligence comes the capacity to avoid our essential selves, what the "Introduction" terms our "darkness." Thus, in *The Inheritors* "Lok felt himself secure in the darkness" (185) while the new creatures are terrified of it. Golding's point is fundamental

52 Golding's comment to Kermode in BBC Third Programme, August 28, 1959, unpublished discussion.
to his moral diagnosis: man abstracts from his own evil—something his nature possesses—and projects it as a fear of something Other which will haunt or destroy him. The mythopoeia is often rendered imagistically. As Vivani stands fearfully stroking the new one, the others attempt to placate their own fear by stroking the new one (whom they regard as a totemic figure) and stoking the fire which is already excessive; they all face "outward at the darkness of the forest" (185, italics added). But their Promethean fire itself metamorphoses: darkness, makes the island so impenetrably dark that the night-sight of Lok and Fa is temporally lost. In Lok's mind the fire and the fall become associated so that the clearing below the tree is beaten with a "fountain of flame" (171), not warm light but fierce, white-red and blinding' (171). The firelight (symbolically intelligence) intensifies the darkness, in fact, makes it hideous. Precisely the same light/dark image is repeated at the fable's close. The New People's canoes sail forward on shining water (viz., water that is imagistically associated with light), yet it also seems hemmed in by darkness. In fact, it is projecting outward the moral darkness of the sailors. In the fable's very last line, Tuami is made to remark that "there was such a flashing from the water" (233) that he "cannot see if the line of darkness had an ending" (233). Obviously Golding is making, by the symbolic extension of optical illusion, the point that intense light obscures—man's intelligence projects its

53 Water is the New People's element thus in this passage it represents symbolically their moral and intellectual nature.
own internal darkness outward. Man's mind, Golding is saying, deceives itself; he imagines devils who "live in darkness under the trees" (233) and then tries to destroy the fantasies he has himself created.

Yet this fear of "tree-darkness" (231) drives Man forward—it is, in fact, the very basis of his strength, as Lok understands when he knows "the impervious power of the people in the light" (185). "Haunted, bedevilled, full of strange irrational grief" (225), man carries his fear with him.  

By sharing the perspective of each tribe, the reader participates actively in the nature of both creatures, moving from the "innocent and hardboiled" mentality of Lok to the guilty angle of Tuami. From a stasis of calm description at the fable's opening to the frantic and confused dramatic action at its close, the reader comes gradually to experience imaginatively the loss of innocence and the genesis of guilt that Golding holds is rooted in our linguistic inheritance. For "The Inheritors is about the accumulation of guilt that necessarily attended the historical success of Homo sapiens; the intellectual superiority of Man over his simian victim is precisely measured by the cruelty and guilt which dominated his life." And precisely because of Golding's ideographic technique we know imaginatively before we interpret:

54 Cf. the discussion in n. 40.

55 Golding's term in BBC Third Programme discussion.

Lok's incomprehension is our incomprehension; Tuami's doubt is our doubt.

Golding lets the primitive mind tell itself, instead of telling the reader about the primitive mind. And the narrative then becomes an objective rendering of a specific subject. Thus what, in the "Introduction" (page 8) has been called the confrontation scene in this fable, in which Lok sees the "thing" in the dark water, is projected through this technique and hence without the interpretation that attends the similar scene in, for example, *Lord of the Flies*, in which Simon confronts the Head of the Pig.

Hanging from what will be the tree of knowledge, having just learned a knowledge of the tree, Lok leans out over the dreaded water trying to reach out towards the kidnapped Liku. He strains and balances, noticing that the water under him darkens as he stretches forward. Just as he notices the water-fall the branches begin to bend under him. Gibbering in fright, he sinks and a "Lok-face" (107) comes up at him as the water appears to rise. It is the moment when the unknown, something Other and apart, confronts Lok's mind. "Pictures, even fear, disappear yet he cannot connect the Lok-face with himself, for he is experiencing the overturning of his physical world and the release of a "nightmare spectre in the deep waters of his own mind."57 Slowly he "comes to know how upside-down is essentially related to the deep water

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57 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 91. Their analysis here is most suggestive.
and the Fall." The confrontation scene brings about the conjunction of innocence and what is in this fable its perfect opposite, guilt. Lok sees something Other which (we know) is also himself, but to him it is a threatening image of "teeth grinning in the water"! (108).

The weed-tail was shortening. The green tip was withdrawing up river. There was a darkness that was consuming the other end. The darkness became a thing of complex shape, of sluggish and dreamlike movement. Like the specks of dirt, it turned over but not aimlessly. It was touching near the root of the weed-tail, bending the tail, turning over, rolling up the tail towards him. The arms moved a little and the eyes shone as dully as the stones. They revolved with the body, gazing at the surface, at the width of deep water and the hidden bottom with no trace of life or speculation. A skein of weed drew across the face and the eyes did not blink. The body turned with the same smooth and heavy motion as the river itself until its back was towards him rising along the weed-tail. The head turned towards him with dreamlike slowness, rose in the water, came towards his face. (108-109)

Lok sees the old woman, like one of the logs that keeps falling off the fall, drifting towards him, in the water from the fall. The body is a nightmarish thing in dark water and its knowing eyes are scraped and affronted by the weed-tails. The eyes sweep across his face, "looked through him without seeing him, rolled away and were gone" (109); the eyes that once saw into the mystery of things no longer have any power in the world Homo sapiens has created. And innocence, which before had been characterized by wholeness, becomes aware of deepwater within itself, some part of the self inescapably fragmented from itself and uncontrollable. The encounter, then, results in a psychic fragmentation not unlike similar confrontation scenes in

\[^{58}\text{Ibid.}\]
Lord of the Flies and Free Fall, which, however, bring about psychic unification.

While there are similarities between this and other confrontation scenes in the fiction, here the episode reverberates, for the reader, with a kind of energy and terror that seems rationally inexplicit. For something horrendous happens in Lok (in us) as well as to him. It is as though a "formless thing disengages itself from the depths of the mind, becomes a dark spectre, rises with dreadful slowness . . . reveals sudden intimations of terror; hides them. Then slowly, relentlessly, it turns towards us the full horror of its face." We respond primarily to the rhythm of nightmare—recalling that same disturbing motion was used to describe the bowing corpse and the bouncing Head in Lord of the Flies.

The entire episode is a kind of epiphany, a radically compressed symbol of the action of the book. It seems virtually an inclusive account of the theme since it connects the two psychic conditions of innocence and guilt, and shows how the latter emerges from the former, as indeed Cro-Magnon man emerges from Neanderthal man. But its resonance functions at a level not analytically obvious. Certain motifs, simple physical phenomena, inhabit the scene: "wetness down there, mysterious

59 Ibid., p. 89.

60 In Pincher Martin there is a toy doll, a "Cartesian Diver," whose motion is similar; in The Spire, Jocelin atop the spire waves left and right with the same dreadful slowness.
and pierced everywhere by the dark and bending stems" (107), the pillars of spray from the fall, the rising water—Lok's weight pulls the tree to the water but his experience is that the water comes to him—the fluttering weed tails that regularly "eclipse," the stuff rising towards the surface, turning over and over, floating in circles as his own teeth grin in the water. "He experienced Lok, upside down over deep water with a twig to save him" (108). But each of these motifs operates with a kind of total recall because it has been prefigured in the narrative texture and will be repeated throughout, in a kind of endless interwound dance. Actual phenomena—river, tree, water, weed—are invested and charged with an energy that operates at a synaesthetic and symbolic level though they still maintain physical credibility.

Lok's incomprehension becomes finally our comprehension; if like the presentation of the mystic in Golding's short story "Miss Pulkinhorn" the presentation of the New People is by indirection, that indirection is dehumanizing. We see them less ambiguously as the tale proceeds until finally we are ripped out of the Neanderthal perspective in the coda. We look at inexplicable events from the inside and from the outside. The technique is essentially an adaptation of the Jamesian device of a central intelligence: the reader is expected, as he goes along, to deduce significance and to connect details into meaningful constructs which the simplified Lok is incapable of formulating. Thus we deduce, as Lok and Fa stare incredulously,—in what is perhaps the most obscure chapter of the book—the magic-religion of the New People, the totem
cult of the Stag. The witch doctor, Marlan, and the tribal artist, Tuami, have the tribe build a stockade to keep the ogres out, its back being protected by the river which they know the ogres fear. To ensure success in finding food for their half-starved tribe, Tuami paints a totemic image of the Stag. Looking down Lok thinks: "There was another stag in the clearing. It lay where the marks had been, flat on the ground; it was racing along and yet, like the men's voices and the water below the fall, it stayed in the same place" (146). The others chant, clap, and the witch doctor, Marlan, mimics the Stag's motion as he dances over the image in his stag's pelt. Then the Stag is ritually killed, Pine-tree has a finger cut off as a sacrifice: "Tuami struck hard and there was now a glistening stone biting into the wood. Pine-tree stood still for a moment or two. Then he removed his hand carefully from the polished wood and a finger remained stretched out on the branch" (147). Now containing the power of the god, Chestnut-head and Bush set out to find food and exterminate the last of the People; they intend to liberate the tribe from their hunger and fear. The New People's "religion is a death-religion, which gives man the power to impose his will on nature, at the cost of blood-sacrifice"; it is radically polarized to the Cathedral of the Ice-Woman that celebrates the life principle and its reverence is born of fear, not dread.

We begin to appreciate that though we discover the events from

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61 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 98.
the vantage point of "tree-bound innocence" by way of the passive un-
corrupt senses of Lok and Fa, we belong below in the clearing, our
corrupt consciousness's place is at the Dead Tree's base. The entire
long episode from the tree, with the fall droning in Lok's ears, the
wood pigeons pecking, the light of the fire blinding, the water shivering,
has a kind of fierce imaginative power hardly surpassed in Golding's
fiction. At a very basic level there is a simple wonder in the minute
rendering of sensuality: "She lifted her arms to the back of her head,
bowed, and began to work at the pattern in her hair. All at once the
petals fell in black snakes that hung over her shoulders and breasts.
She shook her head like a horse and the snakes flew back till they could
see her breasts again" (154). Then, in turn, the point of view is so
realized that we can discover ourselves below and understand both the
sour-smelling "wobbling animal" and the complicated and engrossing
pleasure "hunted down" by the Bacchanals. Using our corrupt con-
sciousness, we even guess the most shocking event in the book: Lok
smells Liku all around the campfire because she has been killed and
eaten.

Golding himself takes the putting to sleep of Lok just at this
juncture as an example of his ability to make the best he can out of the
limitations of the fabulist's art. 62 It is not merely an intellectual trick,
however. For inasmuch as we guess from Fa's "dead eyes" what has

occurred, we in a sense share in the act by discovering the act. The point is fundamental to Golding's moral scheme: knowledge makes one participate in responsibility. The guilty may make a darkness, some blank fear or some totem of fear but knowledge is recognition and it brings with it the necessity to acknowledge in our own nature, the Beast. The problem that The Inheritors, Lord of the Flies and The Spire raises is the contemporary gap between knowledge and that knowledge put into action, the whole impulse of a creature who transforms darkness of the unknown into a threatening ogre, or devil, or external force of evil.

V

What nonsense to say that man is reduced to insignificance before the galaxies. The stars are a common brightness in every eye. What 'out there' have you that does not correspond to an 'in here.' The mind of man is the biggest thing in the universe, it is throughout the universe.... We are a foolish and ignorant race and have got ourselves tied up in a tape-measure.

—Golding, "All or Nothing"

With the single exception of The Pyramid, The Inheritors is the one novel of his own Golding will reread: it is his "favourite" and

63 In private conversation Golding has remarked that one thing no journalist would ever print, though he insisted on the point in every Lord of the Flies interview, was that when he looked into himself he saw the fascist, the nazi, the killer. Golding, Personal communication, n. 40.

64 Golding, "All or Nothing," The Spectator, 206 (March 24, 1961), 410.

65 Golding, Personal communication.
"my finest."  The curious history of its genesis brings into radical question the notion of Golding as an allegorist, writing "from clear and strong moral assumptions . . . that give form and direction to his fiction." For The Inheritors is something more than an allegorical fable, a mode he regards as being "an invented thing on the surface." It aspires to the condition of myth, "something which comes out from the roots of things in the ancient sense of being the key to existence, the whole meaning of life, and experience as a whole." The first manuscript version of The Inheritors differs significantly from the published book: it contains no last chapter, closes on (what is now) the archeological cum anthropological transition, has very little exploration of the divided consciousness and, most significantly, no waterfall. Like Lord of the Flies it started as a simple argument with the smug nineteenth-century doctrine of progress: Wells' Outline, he commented, is "the rationalist gospel, in execelsis" —and proceeded to show, through the tragedy of the People alone, the genesis of the "mythological bad man" in the human skull: "What we're doing is externalizing

66 Golding's comment to Bernard Dick, "The Novelist is a Displaced Person," College English, XXVI (March 1965), 481.
70 Ibid., p. 9.
our own inside. We're saying, 'Well he must have been like that because I don't want to believe it although I know I am like it.'" After finishing the first draft Golding made an inspired discovery; he began to see what the tale was really about and started from scratch again. Within a month he completed the present and final version.

Two different but metaphorically associated strains brought about the rewriting. Feeling that the Second Law of Thermodynamics—which claims that when change, such as the transfer of heat energy, occurs in a physical body the succession of changes results in the return of a substance to its original condition—had a peculiar inverted relevance to the psychological climate of the twentieth century, he brooded on its great example, water, the energy of which moves from a state of high organization to a state of low organization. Concomitant with this was the certainty that man is "the local contradiction of this rule"; in him "the cosmos is organizing energy back to sunlight level." As

71 Ibid., p. 9.

72 Like his semi-personal Oliver in The Pyramid, Golding had chemistry as his assigned ladder to Oxford, though he changed in midstream and read Literature. "The Ladder and the Tree," where Latin jostles medieval romances, furnishes similar biographical information on his intellectual background. Nevertheless, the modern's fusing of physical sciences—and anthropological and archeological data—with poetic truths is typical of Golding's method and the texture of his imagination. Consider the scientific and religious synthesis in Free Fall's title.

73 Golding, Personal communication.

74 Ibid.
he argues in a consideration of Yeats:

The Satan of our cosmology is the second Law of Thermodynamics which implies that everything is running down and will finally stop like an unwound clock. Life is in some sense a local contradiction of this law . . . we should be cheered when life refuses to submit to a general leveling down of energy and simply winds itself up again. 75

This imaginative reworking of the Law gradually fused with Heraclitus' dictum that multiplicity and unity, the existence of opposites in eternal flux, depends on the balancing of the motion of "the way downwards" while harmony and peace lead back to unity by "the way upwards." 76

It became imaginatively clear, Golding explained, that the downward path of the innocent was essentially related to the surmounting path of the guilty. Nature is constantly dividing and uniting herself; as fire changes into air, then earth changes back to air and again to fire: "For what begins in fire is resolved in fire." An ultimate and constant dynamic exists between phenomena and epochs: death is not a final defeat.

All this brooding settled down, he explained, into "the perfect image" of the Law: "a river with a fall," a log going over the fall, and men, with huge ganglia and enlarged skulls travelling up the river over the fall, pushed by some new intensity, some vision. 77 Thus in The

75 William Golding, "Irish Poets and Their Poetry," Holiday, XXXIII (April 1963), 16.


77 Golding, Personal communication.
Inheritors, Lok, the prelapsarian, amazedly discovers that, "They did not look up at the earth but straight ahead" (143) when he sees the post-adamite New People swaying upright, "It was as though something that Lok could not see were supporting them, holding up their heads, thrusting them slowly and irresistibly forward" (144).

Then the island imaginatively placed itself in the landscape, reared against the fall because, Golding has explained, it was necessary technically for the New People to leave this "impenetrable dark" (127) shelter; they had to retreat up the slope "as though [instead of falling] the river itself were flowing uphill" towards the plains and the mountains. Thus at the beginning, the bulk of the island, which is shielded by loathsome falling water, seems to Lok as remote as the skies. "Only some creature more agile and frightened" (41) than the People could reach it. Some larger creature with larger intelligence would explore its strange-ness, a creature whose daring power is inconceivable to innocence. And, the island becomes a macrocosmic image of Man's nature, divorced by his enlarged skull from brute nature: isolated at the foot of the Fall divided by two falls from the mainland and forest, a "seated giant" (40) which "interrupts the sill of the waterfall" (40). It is a symbolic image of the "People of the Fall" who will go against the Fall.

The final destruction of the people by Homo sapiens would occur at the waterfall. Thus in a sunset river of blood, Fa drops over the

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78 Golding, Personal communication.
79 An alternate but highly articulate system of metaphors.
fall, as indifferently as the logs that repeatedly drop over, sitting limply among the branches of a "whole tree from some forest over the horizon . . . a colony of budding twigs and branches, a vast half-hidden trunk, and roots that spread above the water and held enough earth between them to make a hearth for all the people in the world" (212).

Golding takes this woman of the "hearth" to the brink of the fall; she can never pass beyond it because her nature cannot conceive of those weapons of destruction and survival that *Homo sapiens* possesses. Thus her innocence seen against the ritual killing, the blood sacrifice, destructive river, the murderous Fall-nature, is caught in a Dead Tree whose relentless power she cannot avoid; drowned she is carried back below the fall. But the evolutionary life force drives the New People upwards—the word that always attends their description in the book—and onwards, at a higher level of energy than that which the People possessed. Something thrusts the New People up the river, some pained need to widen the world, perhaps: "The force that got them on to their hind legs and made them invent the boats that can explore and cross deep water." 80

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introduces a new phase in the evolution of species. Water begins to be described as "flaming" as the fire of the hearth disappears. The old woman's bright eyes connect no more with the numinous. The last scene shows a water, bloody with the sun's reflection and the combined murders, and a glaring red totemic devil; glittering mountains are welcoming the sun, a sun that ends this ice age, a second fire that eats up the Neanderthal landscape.

80 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 102.
Our last view of Fa is of her rolling over and over in the river while the fall's current thrusts her back towards the sea. The whole "dreamlike" motion and direction superbly repeats that of the old woman's frightening descent to the sea in the deep waters of the river. In contrast to both, the New People's dugout canoes, the "logs" which Lok first sees on the river pointing "up towards the fall" (115, italics added), can remain stationary, fighting and victorious over the current that urges them downstream. And the navigators move steadily upwards, away from the sea, up beyond the fall, meeting as they ascend towards the plain, thunder like an angry god, which heralds the end of the Ice Age. The fear-driven Tuami feels:

... as though the portage of the boats... from that forest to the top of the fall had taken them on to a new level not only of land but of experience and emotion. The world with the boat moving slowly at the centre was dark amid the light. . . . (225)

The New People have moved to a new level, then. "Man is on his way; he has conquered the water which the People so feared; a new complexity, a new refinement, a new beauty, and a new viciousness are launched."81

VI

It is possible to abstract from The Inheritors Golding's own conviction that where man is godlike is precisely where he can fall.

The old community possesses love and reverence, not hatred, and they

81 Quigly, p. 428.
are irrevocably drawn by dread and joy to the New People in the latter's capacity as blazing fire and terrible water: the honey "repelled and attracted" like the People. Lok, because his nature is innocent and loving, cannot obey Fa and ignore Liku; even when Fa has worked out a plan of strategy, Lok has to ask Tanakil where Liku is. He keeps being drawn to his destruction, as he knows the old woman, Ha, and Nil were. Both "outside-and inside-Lok yearned with a terrified love as creatures who would kill him if they could" (191). The New People have art and hunting weapons and a potent honey drink, but the artistic masks can be worn for savagery, the weapons can be turned against men, and the drink can stupify. Their extended communication and control like the rationality of Pincher on his island is both creative and destructive.

The sources and means of power and active creation are also the sources and means of destruction. This is for Golding man's tragic tension: man's primary nature is given and where it seems most formidable it may also be most vulnerable. It is a relatively simple conviction. But the process whereby Golding arrived at its expression in The Inheritors is a much more complex matter. Certain "pictures" and, significantly, clusters of "pictures," emerged after Golding's thinking coalesced around the waterfall as the image of the Law of Thermodynamics. Thus the People's first displacement occurs because a "fallen log" has been removed from its habitual place across the river. Their first knowledge of "a new thing" involves the Tree: Mal makes
them run—it is described as "falling across" (17) a new log. Similarly the drone of the fall inhabits their ears when they first stop by the Dead Tree. It becomes the place where, the droning in their ears, Fa and Lok watch the antics of the Fallen People.

Now clearly the Tree and the Fall and the Water operate symbolically within the context of the story; they were not "invented" by Golding so much as "discovered." While we can say that the water-world in *The Inheritors* is a destructive world, and the fall's moaning insinuates this destruction, we cannot grasp the actual force these have on the reader when we wrench them out of the continuum of the story.

Symbol like myth defies simple classifications and analysis—both are ________

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82. The description operates both symbolically and realistically, as do much of Golding's descriptions. Running is in a way a falling, since the body is hunched over while pressing against the atmosphere. See Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes' discussion of symbol in their chapter on *Lord of the Flies* in *William Golding*, pp. 15-64.

83. Golding distinguishes between the symbol and the sign, and understands the symbol as "having an offbeat life and we cling to it without really understanding why." Golding's distinction between sign and symbol is like that between allegory and myth; it involves the distinction between that which is "invented" and that which discovers itself. Golding, "Backgrounds," One Writer's World, I, unpublished. See the discussion in the first section of this chapter, pp. 84-87.

84. To say that isolation, extraction, and exegesis kill the mystery is to make a point about all criticism. As David Lodge appropriately remarks: "It is the inevitable irony of our position as critics that we are obliged, whatever kind of imaginative work we examine, to paraphrase the unparaphrasable." *Language of Fiction* (New York, 1966), p. 35. The critic is obliged to state his analytical appreciation by putting poetic "meaning" in other words. One must sympathize with Golding's distrust of critics and accept I. A. Richards' admonition that, "There can be no pretense, of course, that how language works can be fully explained." *Interpretation in Teaching* (New York, 1938), p. 7.
in Golding's words "directions and tendencies, not distinct places." Indeed, for him the very power that symbol and myth possess is the power to evade analysis.

Therefore at one level The Inheritors seems a network of things, of actions repeated, reintroduced, and expanded. Thus packed into a simple phrase, "The people are like the river and the fall; they are a people of the Fall; nothing stands against them" (195), is something like a "total recall" of the book's mythopoeia. Phrases are charged with expressive force because they echo previous passages. The phrases share in turn a kind of micro-macrocosmic intensity but not because they are deliberately denoted that way—this would make them "signs"—but because like the cell in Free Fall, the Castle Rock in Lord of the Flies, the cathedral in The Spire, the island in Pincher Martin, they image man's nature. These congruent, hologram-like symbols compress the theme, yet have concrete and dramatic value, as in a dream or dream-odyssey we are guided through and experience on the way to insight. Lok's first view from the tree of the Other is a splendid illustration. Here all kinds of resonances from various familiar legends seem to converge and create a moment of sheer terror:

The blob of darkness seemed to coagulate round the stem like a drop of blood on a stick. It lengthened, thickened again, lengthened. It moved up . . . with sloth-like deliberation, it hung in the air high above the island and the fall. It made no noise and at last hung motionless. (79)

The darkness that spells evil, the blood that revuls, the motion of thickening and lengthening that brings to mind the snake, the picture of it hanging above the island and even the Fall, identified with the two but somehow powerful enough to transcend the two—all reverberate atavistically. Finally, all occurs in silence and from a limited point of view that reports action, step by step, without interpreting it. It seems arrested, stilled. In fact, the passage illustrates the sensuous flexibility of the fable's language: restricted to a relatively narrow range of symbols—Tree, Fall, fire, darkness—it moves from the literal to the symbolic to the literal without any sense of strain. It has verbal intensity on every level, but it grows naturally out of the literal base of the tale. Language is condensed so that a great variety of meanings are implicit in the same phrases. And Golding's conscious myth-striving achieves specificity precisely because of its tight condensation.

The Inheritors, then, finally arrives at a mythopoeic perspective in which a fable of the fall approaches a "myth of total explanation." The abstract motion upwards of the New People and the motion downwards of the Neanderthals mirrors another cosmic rhythm, that of birth and death. One episode beautifully realizes this; it functions as a kind of epiphany of the mythopoeic perspective. At the death of Mal we see,

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86 Often in Golding's fiction the real moments of terror like real horror occur in silence. Jocelin is silent throughout, though he can hear through the walls of his obsession the singing pillars.
in the burial ground, the evidence of all ages. Digging, the group comes across skulls and bones which have faded beyond their emotional interest. Liku plays with skulls at the side of the grave; Mal’s body is folded in a foetal position and he returns to his home. Oa takes him into her belly. The new one, playing at the side of the grave, extracts "itself arse backwards from the hole" (88). The "dominant note is acceptance. . . . As Lok digs the grave beside the dying man, the layers of hearth after hearth bear witness both to Time the destroyer; and to the continuity of life." The creatures embrace death and worship life. The skull is as much a plaything as the root-shaped toy which resembles Oa —life and death are brought to the point at which each outstares infinity. Appropriately, at the end, Lok draws himself quietly back into Oa’s belly. "It [Lok] made no noise, but seemed to be growing into the earth, drawing the soft flesh of its body into a contact so close that the movements of pulse and breathing were inhibited" (221).

Such promise of wholeness is held out to the New People too. As they move to the "new level" of "experience and emotion," Tuami and the tribe laugh with a kind of fear as the new one extracts itself from Vivani’s hood (surely this recalls Ha’s fur where the new one earlier hid) "arse upwards his little rump pushing against the nape of her neck" (233).

The solution that fear-haunted Tuami gropes toward shaping

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87 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 73.
in ivory, at the fable's close, is in a sense manifested already in the reader's own experience throughout the story. For if structure is ideographic, so too is point of view. Judgment is kept at bay so that the reader can grasp with his whole imaginative self an unanalytical mystery—the drone of the Fall, the stink of honey, the ultimate cannibalism that even Fa turns dead eyes on. The reconciliation of opposites is often difficult to grasp, but clearly the difficulty is deliberate and instructive. Two sets of action are set before the reader without authorial interpretation. Events take place in the landscape and within the protagonist Lok's mind. We alternate between one and the other. Using Lok's eyes we see what he sees and more. Later events take place in the landscape and within the protagonist Tuami's mind. The real matter, then, is that which lies between Lok's perception and Tuami's perception: we can share the tidal waves of terror and pain, the two tidal waves that enter the two protagonists. As Golding noted, "we are like them [the Neanderthals] and as I am a propagandist for Neanderthal man it is—it can only work so far as Homo sapiens has a certain amount in common with Neanderthal Man." 88

Mind and body, communication and sensuous life, are the alternatives which are dramatized here in The Inheritors as the tension between two different stages of human growth. In Pincher Martin and Free Fall, the opposition will become a dualism within a single human being. It is the tension of Lord of the Flies between those who think

88 Golding's comment to Kermode in BBC Third Programme.
and talk and those who act and hunt, between Piggy and Jack. But in *The Inheritors* the tension is sustained in the structure of the fable. Its ideographic structure pictures both man's guilt-consciousness and his innocence. We share Lok's disconnected "pictures" for most of the time and then see him from the outside as a grotesque red creature. The focus shifts to the newer tribe and the final objectification of Lok is meant to withdraw him from us at the same time as winning enormous sympathy for his dying. Later our sense of Tuami is similarly modified. The effect is to deliberately complicate the possibility of a choice between the two communities: the sensuous innocence of the subhuman and the intellectual guilt of the human one. Through language the reader experiences the sense of loss and the sense of gain—both. By means of the ideographic structure, as well as point of view and symbolic episodes such as the confrontation scene the reader reconciles dark and light, moving beyond simple experience/guilt or simple innocence/love to an idea of the possibility of reconciliation of good and evil.
CHAPTER IV

PINCHER MARTIN

I

... the sea appeals to the English on at least two levels. It attracts the adventurous practical men who make a career out of it until the sea becomes known and ordinary. But it also attracts the other pole of our character, the visionaries, the rebels, the misfits who are seldom conscious of their own nature. It is these ... who have a grudge or an ideal.

—Golding, "Our Way of Life"¹

Much more markedly than The Inheritors, Pincher Martin reveals Golding's personal conception of contemporary man's consciousness and the condition of his Being. In this fable, Golding treats a more explicitly theological subject than in Lord of the Flies. Unlike Free Fall where religious claims are secularized so that the reader can choose between spiritual and material explanations, Pincher Martin offers a detailed programme of the necessity for religious belief. Unlike The Spire this religious truth is stated by a calculated distortion

since some sorts of truths have to be stated by negation or distortion. As Golding himself has written: "Pincher Martin is based on not merely a psychological impossibility but a theological one too." It is about a dead body and an indestructible consciousness; yet the protagonist's particular history of guilt and greed is intended to stand as a fable for contemporary man.

Nevertheless, the line from this fable to Golding's other works even minor ones like a short story, "The Anglo Saxon," is a direct and important one. His own familiarity with the sea, his own intimations of dread at sea, even his own childhood nightmares, have been transmuted and transmitted into a modern Promethean fable about the

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2Golding, Personal communication, letter, July 8, 1970.

3Golding, "The Anglo Saxon," London Queen Magazine (December 22, 1959), pp. 12-14. This uncollected short story, "The Anglo Saxon," is a kind of minor Inheritors where innocent, "animal," non-conceptualizing man—and his country by extension—is superseded by machines of destruction that a new world invents. The story concerns a rural cattle driver whose habits of forty-odd years are rudely interrupted by soldiers from the American Army as armaments are installed in the English countryside. Like Lok, George sees noises as shapes, "like a drumroll, like a circular saw" (to Pincher words "and sounds were sometimes visible as shapes," like pebbles hard and enduring); in the pub noises come out of his mouth: "the words jumped out from the background and jerked him as they passed through his mouth." George blinks out of his own "warped window" like Pincher who must peer at the world through "arches" of eyebrows and "fringes" of eyelash. Again like Pincher, George sifts for a thought among "the six hundred and fifty words" hanging "on hooks in George's dark cupboard"; "blunt words broken and worn, clung to out of custom like a chipped cup." His mouth "quacks" on meaning as it tries to shape thought.

nature of man. Ironic universality is achieved by identifying the protagonist with figures from literature and myth: thus Pincher is associated with Lear and Hamlet; Norse culture enters through Thor's lightning; Greek through allusion to Ajax; and Roman through allusions to the Claudian well. 5 But the fable's focus is a bleak and radically delimited one, for it studies a man alone on a rock in mid-Atlantic. The tale is much slighter in terms of dramatic action than even that of The Inheritors: "there is little one could call plot in the book. The sequence of events is determined, not by the interaction of character and environment as in conventional novels but by the necessities of the symbolic form in which Golding has expressed his theme." 6 It concerns a naval officer, Christopher Hadley Martin, who is blown off the bridge of a destroyer during World War II, and his subsequent battle with the Zeus of his own universe: the natural idiocy of water, the indifference of rock and sky and sun and rain. Thus for the first time Golding fashions a protagonist who is an individual character; his stamp and identity economically suggested by his nickname, Pincher. 7 (It is

5 The fable may also be a grim parody of Prometheus Bound, as well as a parody of Robinson Crusoe. Possibly even an evolutionary context is involved in Pincher's evolution from the sea: note that his emergence on the rock is like the emergence from the birth canal. "The cleft narrowed until his head projected through an opening, not much wider than his body" (34). See Maclure's discussion of the Prometheus parody: "William Golding's Survivor Stories," Tamarack Review, IV (Summer 1957), 65-68.

6 Names are emblematically relevant in Golding's fiction. See discussion of Sammy Moontjoy's name, for example, pp. 215-216.
a characteristically happy invention—all Martins in the British Navy are called Pincher, just as all Clarks are nicknamed Nobby.) And the course of the novel consists in the illumination of this Pincher's thieving and cosmic greed.

We first encounter the protagonist flaying about in a black sea. Our primary imaginative experience is of the physical stuff as experienced by a man immersed in water; he struggles to inflate a lifebelt, trying to keep the salt sea from his screaming mouth and stay afloat. Almost immediately he is dashed against a barren rock\(^8\)—"A single point of rock, peak of a mountain range, one tooth set in the ancient jaw of a sunken world, projecting through the inconceivable vastness of the whole [Atlantic] ocean."\(^9\) At enormous pain and with enormous difficulty he crawls up this rock using limpets as climbing pegs; the


water beats against him washing him back mercilessly but with a final
titanic thrust he pulls his body into a rocky trench: "The man was in-
side two crevices. There was first the rock, closed and not warm but
at least not cold with the coldness of sea or air . . . his body was a
second and interior crevice which he inhabited. Under each knee, then,
there was a little fire. . . . But the man was intelligent. He endured
these fires although they gave not heat but pain" (48). For seven con-
secutive days Pincher struggles to survive; struggles to maintain his
sanity and health; struggles to tame the barren rock. He reasons to
himself: "I am busy surviving. I am netting down this rock with names.
. . . If this rock tries to adapt me to its ways I will refuse and adapt it
to mine. I will impose my routine on it" (86-87). First, he raises a
pillar of stone in hopes that this will be seen by possible rescue flights;
this he calls Dwarf. He proceeds to civilize the landscape; a prominent
ledge he calls Lookout, a lower ledge, Safety Rock; where he finds
mussels to eat he calls Food Cliff; other points in the map he names
Piccadilly, Leicester Square, and Oxford Circus. A good British
sailor, he even provides himself a pub, the Red Lion.

But panic and fatigue overcome him intermittently. Interrupting
his effort at survival, memories from the past torment him and invade
his consciousness, pestering him with some message that he cannot
(or will not) grasp. "But the centre of the globe was moving and flinch-
ing from isolated outcrops of knowledge. It averted attention from one
only to discover another" (173). As the narrative proceeds what appears
to be the heroic aspect of Pincher's endurance becomes increasingly modified by what we learn about his past life. Memory flashbacks reveal episodes in the life of what could only be an arrogant and profoundly greedy man. Pincher is a pincher, a robber, a thief for he eats everything he can lay his hands on; he was "born with his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab" (120), as a rival actor says of him.

In fact, the memory flashbacks depict him as just such a grasping devourer: he maims a friend to avoid being beaten in a motor cycle race; he steals another man's woman and invites the latter to watch her in his own bed; he tries unsuccessfully to seduce a woman called Mary (whom, incidently, he loves despite himself). As an actor in civilian life, Chris Martin also has fought for success and this willed domination and greedy assertion is what all his adult life has expressed.

The only value in the world is his own personality; that which does not serve him, he tries to dominate. Moments before his submersion in the sea his true criminality appeared. Aboard the Wildebeeste, he decides to effect the drowning of a generous friend (whom he has not earlier been able to control) by having the ship turn suddenly.

On the rock Pincher can gradually solidify his identity. He reassures himself of his own precise existence with a faded identity disc, using the photograph to give back his own image as in civilian

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10 The irony of the matter is that the order, "Hard a-starboard" (186), is the right order, for at exactly that moment Wildebeeste is torpedoed; the suggestion is that only Pincher is the sea's victim, the rest of the crew may have survived.
life he uses mirrors. When he cries triumphantly, "Christopher Hadley Martin. Martin. Chris I am what I always was!" (76), the rock diminishes from an island to a thing, a simple, meaningless mechanism. But as strong as Martin's conscious determination is, he cannot maintain life alone on the island; his own ego is not sufficient to overwhelm the rock, and the globe begins to be invaded by imagined horrors. Memory and hallucination merge.

The narrative, then, shows Pincher gradually dissolving again into fragments: a rational mind, itself divorced from its knowing centre, and around all a pain-wracked body. The "pictures" or memory flashbacks become more insistent. At a crucial moment he relives a childhood experience where he dared (or imagined he dared) to descend steps into a cellar at night, there to encounter the feet and knees of some appalling god-like effigy. This childhood terror fuses with a more awesome hallucination. The Dwarf becomes the cellar-god. A confrontation scene occurs, then, between the seemingly mad Pincher and some kind of godhead with "immovable, black feet" (196). Just as Simon hears the Head speak to him, Pincher hears this god say, "Have you had enough, Christopher?"—they are, by the way, the first true lines of direct speech in the narrative so far. But Pincher resists what he takes to be a nightmare or an hallucination, yelling

11 As Pincher solidifies his personality, dehumanizing images such as the mind as a "globe" indicate he is actually dead. See the discussion of similar image techniques in the chapter on The Inheritors, p. 95.
demonically, "I shit on your heaven" (200). A storm begins to overwhelm the sailor who still resists. At the end of the tale, Chapter XI, we still do not know whether he is alive or dead.

But though the story of survival on the rock has finished, the narrative is not yet complete, for like The Inheritors, Pincher Martin has an ideographic structure. The last Chapter, XII, offers a coda ending to Pincher Martin and as in The Inheritors, there is a change in perspective. We find ourselves on a remote island in the Hebrides where two men are talking; a body has been washed ashore. Having lived beside the rotting corpse for a week while awaiting the official who will record its identity, Campbell, a crofter, sadly asks: "Would you say there was any—surviving? Or is that all?" (208). Davidson instantly replies that Martin (for the corpse bears Pincher's identity disc) could not have suffered, if that is what Campbell is wondering, since "he [Martin] didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots" (208). It is the novel's last line.

"The essential point," John Peter writes, "is that this is a story about a dead man." In the first chapter, Pincher kicks off his seaboots to avoid drowning and later tears apart his already inflated lifebelt to give himself a Wagnerian enema; on the last page it is made clear that Pincher was drowned after he had inflated the lifebelt, but

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13 Golding intends a double irony to be implicit in the word
before he had time to kick off his boots. The fable then is the report of some after-death hallucination; its events are taking place in the mind of a dead man.

Clearly, Pincher Martin is the most vigorously experimental of all Golding's fables. A number of critics think it is formally and intellectually the most impressive as well: "in the intensity of its imaginings, its minute technical control," and above all in its compassion, Kermode decides, it is "greatly superior to the other novels." An American critic thinks this superiority extends to the wider context of contemporary fiction; it is "one of the most remarkable books of recent years." However, its initial reception was a good deal less happy. While it was often called a "tour de force," reviewers generally were unspecific and cautious in their commendations. The familiar source-hunting occurred again. Thus the technical device in the novel of having memories sweep through a drowning man was thought to have its origins in Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek." "lifebelt." Thus Campbell looks at the corpse on the stretcher and says, "they are wicked things those lifebelts. They give a man hope when there is no longer any call for it" (207). Furthermore a corpse does not need a lifebelt to keep it afloat, after a few days.


In each tale the protagonists sustain their illusory life when drowning. Golding has declared emphatically that it was not his intention to explore the legend about seeing one's whole past in the moment of death—Pincher was drowned on page two of the tale. Other sources were suggested, among them R. M. Ballantyne's *Coral Island* and Ernest Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," but one critic has rather cleverly worked out the scenario of the possible inversion of another nineteenth-century popular novel. Ian Blake claims that *Pincher Martin* is a reworking of Taffrail's 1916 survival tale, *Pincher Martin, OD*. Taffrail's Pincher is torpedoed as is Golding's character; flung into the sea he remembers his seaboats and as he removes one, death comes. Not only is he obedient to his fate—one he automatically assumes is predetermined by his "Maker"—but Taffrail's Martin experiences "a feeling of relief" that "the struggle" in the sea is "hopeless." Taffrail writes: "Pincher Martin committed his soul to his Maker . . . [as] the most trivial events and the most important happenings of his short life crowded before him onto his overwrought brain. . . ." The situation

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17 Golding to Webster, p. 519. "The rest of the tale is concerned with his life in purgatory . . . and his reluctance to surrender to his destiny."

18 Edwin Morgan, "Pincher Martin and Coral Island," *Notes and Queries*, VII (April 1960), 150; Oldsey and Weintraub, p. 78, suggest the Hemingway parallel though with what may be appropriate hesitation.

19 Ian Blake, " 'Pincher Martin,' William Golding, and ' 'Taffrail,' " *Notes and Queries*, IX (August 1962), 309-310.

is identical, then, but the responses of the two Pinchers is directly contrary. There is a similar inversion at the end. In Taffrail's story, Martin is rescued by a fisherman; in the hackneyed phrase of Taffrail —"from the very jaws of death Pincher Martin stepped ashore." In Golding's version, another sort of Fisherman tries to bring about another sort of survival, but there is none. For a while a teacup controversy was waged in the TLS regarding the credibility and veracity of this source, but while the textual evidence would seem rather strong that some deliberate inversion occurred Golding himself has insisted that he "got nothing from it but the name." 21

Some critics prefer to interpret Pincher Martin as a straightforward survival story, thus ignoring the genuine difficulties that arise from the coda. 22 Hynes' point here is relevant: "Golding has used the 'man-against the sea' convention just as he used the desert island convention in Lord of the Flies to provide a system of expectations against which to construct a personal and different version of the shape of things." 23 But many commentaries refuse such critical attention, admitting total incomprehension: "What exactly has happened?" Wayland Young wonders. "He [Pincher] has somehow got his seaboots back on

again. Is it therefore a symbol of the supernatural? Are the seaboots
the grace of God?"\textsuperscript{24} Confusion abounds throughout much of the com-
mentary in fact: Millar MacClure thinks Martin dives into the sea;\textsuperscript{25}
Perry Anderson misreads the image of the praying mantis as referring
to Pincher and elaborates its relevance;\textsuperscript{26} Frederick Karl believes the
fable involves some kind of repentance.\textsuperscript{27}

But the most persistent dissatisfaction has been with the abrupt-
ness and astonishing revelation that the \textit{coda} imparts. "It cheapens the
book and belies its finest values. Besides, that precise, particular
trick has already been pulled by O. Henry long ago."\textsuperscript{28} Either it is
considered "a gratuitous puzzle"\textsuperscript{29} or a feature of Golding's technical
ineptitude: "The trick ending is a flaw, an unnecessary gimmick; the
story would stand triumphantly without it."\textsuperscript{30} Many commentators,

\textsuperscript{24} Wayland Young, "Letter from London," \textit{Kenyon Review}, XIX
(Summer 1957), 482; see also John Davenport, "New Novels," \textit{The

\textsuperscript{25} Millar MacClure, "William Golding's Survivor Stories,"
\textit{Tamarack Review}, IV (Summer 1957), 61.

\textsuperscript{26} Perry Anderson, "The Singleton," \textit{The Isis} (May 14, 1958),
p. 11.

\textsuperscript{27} Frederick Karl, "The Novel as Moral Allegory: The Fiction
pp. 258-259.

\textsuperscript{28} Hilary Corke, "The Maggot and the Chinaman," \textit{Encounter},
XLI (February 1957), 80.

\textsuperscript{29} Francis Wyndham, "Book Reviews," \textit{The London Magazine},
III (December 1956), 79.

\textsuperscript{30} Richard Mayne, "New Fiction," \textit{New Statesman and Nation}
(October 27, 1956), p. 521; see as well:: J. Gindin, "Gimmick and
similarly dissatisfied with the coda, overlook the ironies within the island-narrative itself; the consummately ironic parody of Lear, for example, when Pincher is contriving his survival by pretending madness. Consequently, some commentators convert Pincher's villainy into heroism. Thus Ralph Freedman argues: "If his first life had been marked by moral degradation, his second life reconstitutes the self in moral awareness." A variant interpretation, such as John Davenport's, sees the solitary struggle as an existential fable, a view which ignores the book's theological core that Pincher's suffering is self-imposed.

To date, only a handful of commentaries have seriously considered the coda's contribution to the theme of death which the novel explores. Howard Babb makes the interesting point in this context that symbolically Davidson could represent Death; Campbell then is left in the position of all of us, confronted with the profound question of survival. Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, on the other hand, convert Campbell's question about suffering into the larger question about

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Eternity itself: "How do we tell the truth about death? No matter what any of us believes officially about surviving, in our minds there obstinately lurks the opposite spectre." Noting that the American title for Pincher Martin was The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin, Samuel Hynes declares that "the physical death is passed over; there are kinds of dying that are more important than that instant of merely physiological change." For him it is "the paradoxes of living death and dying into life that [ultimately] inform the novel." But he agrees with most critics that Pincher Martin is a most difficult fable, a view which this thesis also shares.

This thesis contends that the struggle on the rock is a physically dead man's hallucination; in Golding's view, that the struggle is hallucinatory makes it no less real, but rather more real. Martin's hallucination—his "present" struggle—is intended, first, as a recapitulation of his "past" career on earth. Secondly, the "present" resistance to death is intended as an eschatological prognosis about Pincher's future career in eternity. Golding himself has said: "Just to be Pincher is Purgatory;

36 Hynes, p. 27. See also Kermode; S. Stallings, "Golding's Stunningly Powerful Novel of a Castaway Doomed to Face Himself," New York Herald Tribune Book Review, September 1, 1957, p. 3.
to be Pincher for eternity is Hell."37 Thus, in Pincher Martin Golding is exploring imaginatively the moment of Purgatory38—a moment which contains the present, the past, and the future—in order to make a simple fabulist's point about the "ordinary universe which on the whole I believe likely to be the right one." And Golding adds, to this end "I went out of my way to damn Pincher as much as I could."39

Pincher Martin, then, is a fable which allocates Golding's perennial religious theme—the necessity of vision as a preliminary step to salvation—in the purgatorial moment. The story is intended as only an analogue for the real world because in itself it is both a "psychological impossibility" and a "theological one."40 Pincher's inability to achieve salvation, therefore, is to be read as an excessive warning on contemporary man's inability to achieve any kind of spiritual vision. As was the case in The Inheritors, Pincher Martin uses an ideographic structure to make its religious comment; contradictory perspectives are turned on the one circumstance of the shipwrecked


38 Though gnomic and unorthodox, there is a distinction drawn by Golding between Purgatory and Hell. Whereas the latter, like its counterpart, Heaven, exists infinitely, the former is a finite state entered and departed from according to an individual choice.


sailor. First, we have Martin's view of his own horrendous plight; then, in the *coda*, we have Davidson's and Campbell's view of it. (In their implications, these differ.) We are moved from the fevered world of Pincher's mind to the apparently objective and sane conversation about the "lean-to" (208). Here, the naval officer interprets survival as a question about physical suffering while the crofter's bewilderment suggests that, in his view at least, there might be some spiritual dimension to it. He makes the point, significantly, that Davidson does not know about his "official beliefs" (208).

The perspectives of the rock-narrative and the *coda* are not intended to contradict each other. By evidence of the seaboots, the sailor is certainly not "physically" alive on Rockall during seven days of diminishing strength. Most certainly he is not just a corpse either. He most certainly suffered and—according to the fable's theology—this suffering will now continue eternally. It is continuing in some dimension as the crofter and officer brood over the corpse. The reader builds the bridge between the contradictory views and discovers, by imaginative extension, that Man is both more than Davidson's literalism would decide yet less than Pincher's monumental endurance would seem to indicate. This process of understanding takes place outside the fable proper when we snap the several "official" views across each other, assembling all the views, to arrive at something approaching an *eschatologically inclusive* perspective in which the "sad harvest!" Mr. Campbell alludes to sadly, gently, and brokenly becomes significant.
The stars spin ever in the sky
The moon leaps up again and again
And ceaselessly the seasons fall
Over the rock like steady rain.

The winds fight by the clouds and turn
And turn about, the Night and Day
Are tiny blows of the hammer of time
Wearing the ancient rock away.

Only once in a thousand years,
From hanging cliffs and desolate streams
A crag falls into the moving sea
And a sea-bird screams.

—Golding, "The Lonely Isle"  

Pincher Martin is a report of a soul in Purgatory, not the tale of a shipwrecked sailor on a solitary rock. Golding has said he intends it as a vast illustration of one complex law: "where there is no vision the people perish." In the after-death hallucination, Pincher himself creates the rock out of the memory of an aching and now missing tooth, and gropes to control what is in fact an illusion of his mind. As the children in terror of themselves formulate the Beast, as the new people make the Neanderthals into hairy demons, so Pincher out of fear of death creates a demonic Adversary: the sea, the rock, the sky, even a dreadful Theophany. The "real," viz., naturalistic story, is effectively


recounted in Chapter I: the protagonist’s immersion, the few flickering impressions he has as the gun’s tracer explodes and "green sparks flew out from the centre" (7), the water thrusting in "without mercy" (7, italics added), and the moment of his death. "The green tracer that flew from the centre began to spin into a disc. The throat at such a distance from the snarling man vomited water . . . [but] the hard lumps of water no longer hurt. There was no face but there was a snarl" (8). 43

The last chapter confirms the death: a body is picked up, two men discuss the "sad harvest" (208), and Davidson, the literalist, says there was little pain because Pincher’s seaboots were still on. Now, on the rock Pincher keeps imagining his feet hurt and are cold because he has got rid of these boots, yet he also keeps being haunted by the enormous black-booted feet of the gods. 44

The whole experience on the rock is Pincher’s post mortem experience of himself; the survival tale is concerned with his life in Purgatory and his reluctance to surrender to his destiny. Because the reader, even before the coda’s reversal, has a peculiar access to

43 This distinction between death as a "face" and Purgatory as a "snarl" informs the rest of the book. Pincher is hidden somewhere behind the snarl, just as his consciousness is floating somewhere beyond his body, in his skull. The notion of someone’s "face" as, on the one hand, the disguise that can be rearranged whatever the treachery behind, and, on the other, as the very seat of truth is used often in the work. See The Pyramid and Free Fall in particular.

44 This association has biographical origins. Golding remarked that the feet of some British Museum stone statues appeared to his child’s eye, when he peered up at them, like seaboots. Personal communication.
Pincher's consciousness while on the rock, he can work with the hints that Pincher keeps turning away from. Thus, everytime Pincher comes close to realizing his death he turns away—at one point he leaves a sentence unfinished: "Strange that bristles go on growing even when the rest of you is—" (125), and the reader supplies the conclusion "dead." Similarly, he repeatedly flinches from calling the trailing rocks, "the Teeth" (91) since again "to lie on a row of teeth in the middle of the sea—" (91) is to be "dead." On another occasion he mutters "the process is so slow it has no relevance to—" (78). Again the reader supplies "death." Indeed, evidence for his death is unmistakably present in certain repeated motifs, particularly those involving guano, his lobster/hands, the rock/teeth, as well as certain reiterated symbols including a maggot-box and a curious experimental tool.

The technique is similar to that deliberate obscuration in *The Inheritors*. In that fable the reader had to make intelligible Neanderthal perceptions; here the reader is even further limited, in this case through distortion. Within the tormented hero, consciousness shrinks and expands; his senses report and distort, his memory intermittently corrupts. Until the coda we are never fully outside of him; we stare through the windows of his eyes, "curtains of hair and flesh" (161).

45 See as well *Pincher Martin*, pp. 59; 77; 91; 124; 129; 169; 172; 174.

46 See as well *Pincher Martin*, pp. 112; 130; 131; 134; 141; 142; 167; 179.
Towards the end of the survival narrative delirium invades Pincher's consciousness and crushes his identity; the reader suffers the distortion. But at a special vantage point.

As was the case in The Inheritors when the reader peered down with Lok at the Bacchanals but recognized himself in the figures in the clearing, so in Pincher Martin we are both inside and outside the consciousness of the protagonist. We experience the classic battle of man against the elements and acknowledge Promethean nobility while we simultaneously know at another level that the Promethean energy is cosmically irrelevant. Like the structure, point of view is so handled in this novel that the reader discovers—first with growing dismay during the survival tale and then with conviction in the coda—that Pincher's predicament is illusory and self-induced. "Mr. Golding's triumph is that he gives Christopher Martin everything that could possibly arouse our deepest, most primitive compassion (lone man against the elements) and yet forces us to be critical of this compassion." 47

It is not Pincher's ability to survive that is being tested but his belief that will and intelligence by themselves define the value of the human species. After all the elementary achievements of building a shelter, designing a water trough, and using his one weapon, 48 a knife, 

47 Podhoretz, p. 177.

48 This weapon, the only tool Pincher possesses aside from his lifebelt, is emblematic of his island as much as the conch and glasses are of the Lord of the Flies' island.
to get his food and drink, after all that these represent of the expenditure of will and the strenuous assertion of mind, there is not enough evidence to support Martin's conviction of the uniqueness and superiority of his individuality which, given his lack of faith in any other value, he is compelled to assert throughout.

The tale on the rock, this story within a story, is a "religious" one, and as was argued on page one of this chapter, this fable is a good deal more theological than the other works. It is a "fairly objective exercise in finding out what happens to Greed when all things that surround it and give it its food are taken away and it has nothing to prey on but itself." 49

... to achieve salvation, the persona must be destroyed. But suppose the man is nothing but greed? His original spirit, God-given the Scintillans Dei, is hopelessly obscured by his thirst for separate individual life. What can he do but refuse to be destroyed. 50

The ultimate perspective, however, is apocalyptic, for the "exact programme" 51 which Golding mentions to Kermode is one that involves

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51 Golding tries to be explicit about the relation of his tale to overt reality. "I fell over backwards making that novel explicit. I said to myself, 'Now here is going to be a novel, it's going to be a blow on behalf of the ordinary universe, which I think on the whole likely to be the right one, and I'm going to write it so vividly and accurately and with such an exact programme that nobody can possibly mistake exactly what I mean.'" Golding in Kermode, "The Meaning of It All," p. 10. But
all-time. Pincher's experience on the rock, his ostensible "present" exactly parallels the pattern of his past life: memory flashbacks keep cutting across the "present" and at certain points the "past" is gripped in the "present." Similarly his "future" pricks at his consciousness. Nathaniel Walterson is a creature of the past, but his lectures when recalled insinuate the very future that possesses Pincher/Christopher, his "dying into heaven" (71). The hands which Pincher mistakes for red (therefore illusory) lobsters are the fists that grabbed "the penny and someone else's bun" (120); they are also the claws that the black lightning of the storm pries and picks and plays with infinitely. Thus they are emblematic of Pincher's nature, in the past, in the present, in the future. They represent symbolically the rapacious nature which the black lightning plays over, pricks at, "prying for a weakness, wearing them away in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy" (201, italics added). In the past, in the present, in the future, for all time, Pincher has been greedy. All the paths of the fable lead back to his "centre," the ding en sich, the irreducible Being that

compare the admission implicit in Golding's 1958 Radio Times' exegesis: "A number of people who read my novel Pincher Martin found the theme difficult to grasp. Now that the Third Programme is presenting a radio version . . . my own account . . . may be useful . . . as a sort of mental lifeline." "Pincher Martin," Radio Times, p. 8.

52 This is just one example of the density of cross-references and juxtapositions of similar motifs that comprise Pincher Martin's verbal surface. When the sailor falls into the sea, as Pincher is suspended "between life and death," the water pushes in "without mercy," the exact phrase that will close the survival tale.
constitutes this man's nature. And as Lok is reduced to perception, the "inside-Lok"; as Jack is reduced to savagery, the "furtive thing"; as Sammy Mountjoy is reduced to irrational terror, the "frantic thing"; so Martin is reduced to the abstraction Greed, the two claws. Yet at this point, there is still some option, a terrible one: "The terrible option is up to him, choice between Purgatory and Hell." 53

The survival narrative of the rock begins and ends the moment of physical death. Past, present, and future all are tied into an image of all-time (or no-time). Golding intends to show, here, that time is not a sequence but a simultaneity with past, present, and future existing at the same instant, and it is this paradoxical invention that gives the fable its subject and its form. In the remainder of this chapter the "action" on the rock will be divided into three distinct temporal strands or time-modes. Then the techniques by which these modes are induced may be examined: the first, time-present in Section III; the second, time-past, in Section IV; the third, time-future, in Section V. Finally, Section VI suggests briefly that all three strands are located in individual episodes where the supposedly real situation on the rock is mixed with memories of the past and fears of the future. Christopher Hadley Martin's life can be viewed from three distinct temporal angles; each angle possesses an appropriate narrative technique and operates from a separate temporal perspective. In the "present," the tale of Pincher's

survival and extinction on the rock is an image of Promethean man patterning into civilized shapes a hostile Nature. Here an identity gradually evolves and is destroyed by brute Nature as a storm over­comes the fever-ridden body. One possible definition of Man emerges based on his wholly physical solitude: he is a creature caught between the two forces of consciousness and of a mute unconscious environment. As Pincher says, man "is a freak, an ejected foetus robbed of his natural development, thrown out in the world with a naked covering of parchment, with too little room for his teeth and a soft bulging skull like a bubble. But nature stirs a pudding there..." (190). We experience Pincher's "present" as an accumulation of physical details, giving the predicament of a man alone on an island. There is the ex­pectation that his situation will change.

Running beside the survival tale is the "morality play"; "Pincher isn't a man, really; he is Greed. That's why he's called Pincher. It's a straightforward morality play." From the second temporal per­spective we have another view of Chris Hadley Martin, a particular man, from his past actions. As Pincher lapses in and out of consciousness, "pictures" in the form of flashbacks disturb and impinge upon him. The pattern of their impingement appears to be random and Pincher can no more connect them than he can note the intellectual discrepancies in his fantastical world. As he had to do in the first part of The Inheritors

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the reader must himself connect the stills and the quality of the reader's attention will decide the density of his conception of Chris Hadley Martin as a twentieth-century actor. Pincher is what he was; just as he crawled up the rock-face using the limpets, so he crawled over people's face to get where he wanted to go. This point, for example, is nicely made in one of Pincher's hallucinatory flashbacks where he relives a childhood dream/escape from a dark monster by rushing up some stairs. The stairs metamorphose into trodden faces: "They appeared to be made of some chalky material for when he put his weight on them they would break away so that only by constant movement upward was he able to keep up at all" (145). As (he imagines) he ascends, he screams: "I am! I am! I am!"

There is a third temporal perspective in which the eschatological reality of Christopher subsists in a "future" that is Purgatory or Hell. The rock is a remembered missing tooth, the black lightning the bolts of the godhead, the witch the Fisherman King that Christopher-turned-Pincher has made into an image of himself. The technique here is perhaps the most complex of the three. Flashback and stream-of-consciousness merge. Once again the reader sews together significance, detecting that the "window" (163) through which Pincher gazes at his world is not so much an impaired eye as it might be in the "present" as a telescope into a different world "where the invisible is visible."

At this level, however, much that the author intended to be rendered by details in the narrative has not been realized; one must depend on
We experience the Purgatorial moment at first as an accumulation of physical details, but detail as experienced by a man in a state of fragmentation. From the perspective of the "present" a man in a state of physical exhaustion lies squinting through a damaged eye at an alien shape, inches from his eyeball. "He came upon the mouldering bones of fish and a dead gull, its upturned breast-bone like the keel of a derelict boat. He found patches of grey and yellow lichen, traces even of earth, a button of moss" (59). The landscape seems profoundly dislocated and unfamiliar; further, we are intended to grope through general words like "window," "wall," and "centre" to the confusion that Pincher himself feels; thus, it is "the centre" which knows that "Christopher and Hadley and Martin were fragments far off" (162) while "a curtain of hair and flesh" obscures the rock and the sea. (Several passages in Pincher Martin, in fact, are condensed statements of Golding’s theory of human consciousness as examined on pages 37-41 of the "Introduction"; its relevance will be explored here.) Golding’s view involves the radical dislocation of body and soul, matter and spirit, sensation and perception since Pincher appears, in the "present," to be a private individual shut inside his cranium and beaten by sensations
from outside. Consequently, he is depicted as suffering overt reality as a physical event, an event either seriously dislocated from the pattern-making consciousness or hopelessly twisted and jumbled, glimpsed in detail only through the inward weather of the inner-skull. On the rock, Pincher sustains a triple alienation, first between his own consciousness and the world; then between his consciousness and thought. (Thoughts form like pieces of "sculpture" behind his eyes but "in front of the unexamined centre" [162].) Finally, there is the separation between thought and language. Pincher's gropings towards some mode of rational perception imply, then, something more severely disturbed than Lok's stumblings through "pictures."

After his ascent up the rock it is first physical pain, "a deep communion with the solidity" (25) of the crevice which brings Pincher back to a single unit. Pain organizes into physical unity, but not conscious awareness. Then like an animal, consciousness must poke around meaningless impressions; at an enormous effort which approximates physical action, it must dispense with some fragments to discover the few significant ones: "among the shape-sounds and disregarded feelings . . . it was looking for a thought. . . . It found the thought, separated it from the junk, lifted it and used the apparatus of the body to give it force and importance" (32, italics added). "A valuable thought," for Pincher is one that "gives him back his personality" (27); when Pincher can say, "I am what I always was" (76), he stops being isolated
"inside of the globe of his head" and extends normally through his limbs. He begins to live "on the surface of his eyes" (76), not behind windows and shades. The rock becomes a coherent object: it diminishes, in his phrase, from "an island to a thing" (77). Thus Pincher makes the island rationally coherent and, in his terms, civilized: "I am busy surviving," he intones, "I am netting down this rock with names and taming it. . . . What is given a name is given a seal, a chain. If this rock tries to adapt me to its ways I will refuse and adapt it to mine . . . ." (86). And the ultimate truth of things is physical rock: wetness, hardness, and movement, "with no mercy but no intelligence either" (115). Pincher believes like the new people in The Inheritors that he can survive by his linguistic appropriation of the world. Reduced to a thing, this island is no threat to his carefully hoarded and enjoyed personality" (91).

Central, then, to Martin's situation is the dislocation of mind and body, a dislocation which he admits exists—"I was always two things, mind and body. Nothing has altered" (176)—while at the same time resisting the implications of such a division, for to acknowledge those would be to admit some truth about his own body's state. A "silent indisputable creature" sits at the innermost centre of Pincher, looking out from his "dark skull" into the "inscrutable darkness" of the rock landscape. It stares through the window. At other times, his consciousness is described in metaphors appropriate to a creature immersed in water; the irony is intentional, of course: Golding writes, "it floated in the middle of this globe like a waterlogged body." The consciousness is
balanced between two pressures in the manner of the ingenious doll of the memory flashback, a symbol which will be examined on pages 189-191. It is sufficient here to see that the ineradicable "isness" of Pincher is suspended in his physical body and the suggestion one draws from comments about Nat is that every man contains such an observational point. Nat's centre is disconnected from his body as well; we learn that at the binnacle of the ship Nat rests inside "attached by accident to life with all its touches, tastes, sights and sounds . . . at a distance from him" (51). Pincher decides that Nat's mind inside prayed and waited to meet his aeons" (51).

When in pain, Pincher strives for "some particular mode of inactive being" (49, italics added), the kind of interior balance (ironically like Nat's) that will allow him to "float" inside "the bone globe of the world" (48) and his own "globe" or cranium. He strives for just that suspension between pain and passivity, consciousness and nothingness that will neither eject him back into the world of the fever-five nor thrust him away from his "hoarded personality." Of course, it is the "interior balance" or inactive mode that a waterlogged body would possess. Note the deliberate micro- and macrocosmic correspondences in the following passage which describes Pincher's effort as he tries to sleep:

55 From the perspective of the future, the fire here is hell-fire; it is also a fine description of bruised, fever-ridden flesh.
He became small, and the globe larger until the burning extensions were interplanetary. But this universe was subject to convulsions that began in deep space and came like a wave. Then he was large again, filling every corner... and the needle jabbed through the corner of his right eye straight into the darkness of his head. Dimly he would see one white hand while the pain stabbed. Then slowly he would sink back into the centre of the globe, shrink and float in the middle of a dark world. This became a rhythm that had obtained from all ages and would endure so. (49-50)

This describes the delirium of a fever-ridden body which trembles involuntarily. The sense of the delirium is conveyed by the inanimate metaphors of "globe"; limbs which extend and then contract; a body so engaged in its pain that it seems a universe subject to arbitrary motions of nature. The third sentence's repetition—and reversal—of the first dramatizes the state of delirium as well. At the same time as rendering a feverish state, the passage is a fine description of a waterlogged body; the convulsions which begin in deep space wash through the globe with a rhythm "that had obtained from all ages and would endure" like the "minute rise and fall of the sea" which Ralph in *Lord of the Flies* stares at numbly. As in other passages, for example those involving the Dwarf, the reader can operate in the simply physical world (as Pincher tries to) or detect that this physical world is no more than the mind's extension of its own spirit.

Of course, Pincher cannot admit this. Yet his centre is restless and active, seldom passive. Like Sammy's point of awareness in

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56 The rhythm recalls that of the relentless sea that Ralph stares at numbly, a motion that does not progress so much as "rise and fall." See discussion in *Lord of the Flies*, Chapter II, pp. 78-80 and *The Inheritors*, Chapter III, pp. 119-120.
the dark cell, the activity of Pincher's centre necessarily leads him to one sort of horror or another. This is the essential point Golding makes about human intelligence. Gradually the centre by itself forces itself to encounter its knowledge of death. The mouth "quacks" on meaning and lectures ease but the "centre was moving and flinching from isolated outcrops of knowledge" (173). Pincher dodges the knowledge but then is forced back again, haunted by something he makes into a Hag, haunted in fact, by all the \textit{rational} answers the intelligence provides. Each step towards intelligent acquisition on the rock makes him remember his true state. For example, while he is cutting seaweed for an SOS signal he comes to see the island/thing is somehow evasively familiar: "He looked solemnly at the line of rocks and found himself thinking of them as teeth . . . they were emerging gradually from the jaw—but that was not the truth. They were sinking; or rather they were being worn away in infinite slow motion. . . . A lifetime of the world had blunted them, was reducing them as they ground what food rocks eat" (78). At other times, through his memory float nagging elusive pictures of eating, Chinese boxes, death again as he associates the maggot box with a coffin. When he decides he will call the Rocks, the Teeth, he is suddenly terrified and must run from the incipient knowledge that "to lie on a row of teeth in the middle of the sea" (91) is to be dead. Understanding makes Pincher confront \textit{himself} and that is to confront the fact of his death. At every stage, even in the sanctuary of madness, an intelligent action brings him back to reality.
Nor can he sleep; he realizes with horror that he is afraid to sleep for sleep is a "consenting to die" in which the centre may slip into unconscious bleakness. At one point towards the end Pincher (recalling Ralph and Simon in different circumstances) "falls into a gap of darkness" (67). "It was a gap of not-being, a well opening out of the world" (168). Coming back to consciousness the centre knows that "something" (169) has started to emerge, a pattern that he does not want to obey, "a pattern now crossed by the gritted mark of teeth" (169), a pattern of another sort than he can control, over which his intelligence cannot dominate. Suddenly Pincher recalls a childhood dream of something coming out of a cellar corner and "squeezing tormenting darkness, smoke thick" (138) into which he descends "three stories defenceless, down the dark stairs... down the terrible steps to where the coffin ends were crushed in walls of the cellar—and I'd be held helpless on the stone floor, trying to run back, run away, climb up" (138). In the "night world" there are gods sitting behind the "terrible knees and feet of black stone" (145). As in the autobiographical fragment, "The Ladder and the Tree," this is the cellar of boyhood home fronting the graveyard seen with an imagination inspired by Poe's "Tales of Mystery and Imagination" and the stairs are the tree to which the same boy escaped. But though it is a "night world" where terror mysteriously can heal and renew, for Pincher it is just terror without joy.

Out of bed on the carpet with no shoes. Creep through the dark room not because you want to but because you've got to. ... No safety
behind me. Round the corner now to the stairs. Down pad. Down pad. The hall, but grown. Darkness sitting in every corner . . . everything different, a pattern emerging, forced to go down to meet the thing I turned my back on. . . . Past the kitchen door. Drawn back the bolt of the vault. Well of darkness. Down pad, down. Coffin ends crushed in the wall. Under the churchyard back through the death door to meet the master. (178, italics added.)

"The master" from whom the child tries to escape is "an unknown looming" (178), "the heart and being of all imaginable terror." More than any other passage in the fable, this one depends for its "meaning" on the very impact it produces since here the reader has no point of view outside of the protagonist. The ambiguous "night world" is created by, first, unspecific terms such as "pattern," "the thing," and then the apparently specific house where the descent occurs. Then there is the rhythmic repetition of "down pad" as the reluctant child/man, victimized by an urgency he does not understand, creeps down past the paraphernalia of ghost tales—coffins, vaults, churchyards. Like Lok's view of the other in The Inheritors, the encounter here operates in silence so that the unlocking of the bolt seems to resound in the black emptiness before the death door and "the master." For the child it is the Apotheosis of Nothing; for the adult the Apotheosis of Death. "The child's horror is the man's; it exactly expresses (while veiling itself, if only just, as a 'memory') the way he is being forced to confront what is there in the inmost darkness of his mind." The atavistic Apotheosis is, Golding suggests tentatively, "a pattern repeated from the beginning of time" (179),

57 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 143.
the approach of an "unknown thing" from which the dark centre turns away. The pattern is the thing that created it and from which it struggled to escape. Golding sees this "unknown thing" as a god though he does not employ the term in Pincher Martin. As he explains warily: "The cellar in Pincher Martin represents more than childhood terrors; a whole philosophy in fact—suggesting that God is the thing we turn away from into life, and therefore we hate and fear him and make a darkness there."⁵⁸ (In Free Fall the archetype is much less explicit than in Pincher Martin though no less central to the narrative.) But the conflict between the remembered cellar and the centre is in miniature the conflict of the entire book. "The man in the tunnel trying to escape the god's fury and tears by trampling the faces, the drowning sailor inventing a world, the madman invoking the Hag, all simply reorchestrates the child's rejection of the cellar. The cellar connects with the tunnel, the tunnel to the rock and the rock back to the cellar."⁵⁹ The cellar then with its opaque centre is a microcosmic image of Pincher's own moral life.

IV

"PAST"

To fully understand the "meaning" of the cellar we must turn


to Pincher's past. The Purgatorial "present" contains "the past" for as he is busy netting down the rock, the past strikes across Pincher's efforts with intermittent clarity; increasingly "the past" becomes associated and intermingled with "the present." In the moments when he is conscious, Pincher's centre is plagued not only with the truth of his condition but also with memories: fragmentary snapshots, inclusive pictures of a woman's body, a boy's body, a box office, the bridge of a ship, "an order picked out across a far sky in neon lightning" (26), and, most important, "a man hanging in the sea like a glass sailor in a jam jar" (26). Out of these few memory-fragments Golding constructs not only a kind of delirium state wholly appropriate for a man so isolated (where the past bombards, but the impressions appear as sets of stills) but also a past history that goes someway to explaining the particular nature of Christopher Hadley Martin.

This introduction of the past through the characteristic device of the "picture" is dramatically justified as well as technically rather skilled. At the fable's opening Pincher is flung into the sea; turbines scream and the "green sparks" (7, italics added) of a bomb tracer puncture the blackness of the seascape. The only lights cutting the

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60 See the discussion of this device in the Free Fall chapter (V), pp. 208-210.

61 Golding admitted that the green tracer seen in water was associated with his own sensation on fainting when green lights seem to split. The image is often used in the fables: see Sammy as he falls unconscious in the cell, and the boys on the mountain top as they glimpse the parachutist.
night's darkness, then, are those from the tracer; as he dies the brain/centre "lit a neon track" (8) and the green sparks merge with "luminous pictures" (8) that shuffle before him like a sheaf of snapshots, "drenched in light" (8). The green tracer continues to flicker and spin and Pincher's centre, terrified of nothingness, clings to these tracers as, when thrust against the imagined pebbled island before him, it clings to the "pattern in front of him that occupied all the space under the arches" (23). Inside his head pebbles shake, outside at the right side of his face pebbles nag like "an aching tooth" (24). As we have seen Pincher then proceeds to construct an illusory "present" out of the memory of this missing tooth. 62 From the tracer lights, he constructs an illusory past. "Golding clearly wants the memories to have only the same relation to real life as photography has: they must seem framed all round, artificially lit and polished, stills rather than motion pictures . . . [so as] to emphasize their artificiality." 63

Gradually there emerges a truncated narration of Chris Martin's

62 Thus the importance of the island—Teeth; when Pincher's tongue feels along the barrier of his own teeth—the pinchers in his eating mouth—he feels a gap. "His tongue was remembering. It pried into the gap between the teeth and recreated the old, aching shape. It touched the rough edge of the cliff, traced the slope down . . . towards the smooth surface where the Red Lion was . . . understood what was so hauntingly familiar and painful about an isolated and decaying rock in the middle of the sea" (174). Rockall's entire topography is an imaginary tooth in the mouth of the ravenous Pincher. An interesting gloss here is Golding's comment in his review of Treasure Island: "An island must be built, and have an organic structure, like a tooth." "Islands," The Hot Gates, p. 109.

63 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 130.
past life that bears strong connection to his predicament on the rock.

An actor in civilian life, he took things—including women as things—not as ideals to be reached but as items to be achieved. "You're not a person, my sweet," he remembers muttering, "you're an instrument of pleasure" (95). Embodied in several symbols, the Chinese maggot box in particular, is Pincher's particular sin of Gluttony. A producer of a morality play first makes the identification as he introduces Pincher to the masks of the seven deadly sins and the one he will wear. "Chris—Greed. Greed—Chris. Know each other" (119). Rather in the manner of a dossier case the identification is extensively documented throughout the memory-flashbacks in one episode after another. An actor friend says of him, for example:

This painted bastard here takes anything he can lay his hands on. Not food, Chris, that's far too simple. He takes the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman. He was born with his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab. He's a cosmic case of the bugger who gets his penny and someone else's bun. (120)

Significantly the "random trailers" pointing to this identification are disconnected snapshots. Until the moment of delirium they remain so just as the Chinese box and the suspended doll remain unexplained. But at that moment, the reader is able to forge a meaningful and coherent pattern, first about Martin's nature, his determined Being, and by extension about the nature of the Golding universe. Point of view again is managed such that the reader attends to and reconstructs what the protagonist is deliberately made to ignore.
Internal evidence indicates that Pincher—despite his hardened criminality—has been attracted to goodness; had he on any of these occasions when grace-abounded acted from charity not greed he might well have been granted the consolation of companionship, perhaps love. Several of the memory flashbacks focus on two important characters from Martin's past: his spiritualist friend, Nathaniel Walterson, and the woman Nat marries, Mary Lovell. Mary is a magnificent but contradictory figure to Pincher; as her emblematic name suggests onomatopoeically she is both sensual and virginal, like her successor, Beatrice Ifor in *Free Fall*. Yet Pincher could never possess her and her unconquered mystery obsesses him, and eats away at it just as Beatrice's mystery torments Sammy. Pincher associates Mary with "summer lightning" (151)—a rather too neat inversion of the black lightning which plays such an important part in the fable's outcome—her eyes and impregnable silences make her "a madness, not so much in the loins as in the pride, the need to assert and break" (148). He cannot understand why she should occupy his *centre* when the only real feeling he has for her is hate. Occupying his cherished centre she calls his whole egoistic view of life into question.

So too does Nat, to whom other "pictures" revert. Walterson with his lectures on "the technique of dying into heaven" (70) is the saint figure; like Simon in *Lord of the Flies* he carries the fable's "ideas." We see him both on the Wildebeeste and in Martin's digs at Oxford, and it is clear that Martin loves him "unwillingly . . . for the face that was
always rearranged from within, for the serious attention, for love given without thought"; at the same time Martin hates him "quiveringly . . . as though he were the . . . enemy" (103). Since contemporary man lacks vision, Nat argues, since he is unable at the moment to image his Scintillans Dei in a positive mythological context, the sort of heaven he might posit for himself would be construed negatively. It would be without form or void, Nat instructs, "a sort of black lightning, destroying everything that we call life" (183). Pincher, of course, ignores Nat's sermonizing; yet he is overwhelmed by the generosity of the man: "evidence of sheer niceness that made the breath come short with maddened liking and rage" (55). At a deep level Pincher is offended by Nat's notion that he has 'an extraordinary capacity to endure" (71) and repelled by Nat's gnomic prediction that soon he will die. Above all Pincher realizes with spite that both Nat and Mary stand "in the lighted centre of my [his] darkness" (158). Both because his dark centre is lit and because he is drawn to them, they interrupt the consistent pattern of his malice. The autonomy of his greedy ego is threatened by goodness; he must destroy that goodness or be destroyed. As he repeats to himself: "But what can the last maggot but one do? Lose

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64 Golding put the matter in another way during an interview: "My point is really this you see: that you meet a Christian—he thinks that when he dies that he will either have devils with three-pronged forks and forked tails or angels with wings and palms. If you're not a Christian and die, then if the universe is as the Christian sees it, you will still go to heaven or hell or purgatory. But your purgatory, or your heaven, or your hell won't have the Christian attributes . . . they'll be things that you make yourself." "The Meaning of It All," p. 10.
his identity?" (184).

Despite himself he was drawn to goodness in the past; ironically when he is flung into the water, Pincher starts to swim towards the light, not the darkness. "The riven rock face with tongues of spray" (22) towards which he swims, then, might be the implacable visage of a compassionate god; the thunderbolts splaying from its hand, might well be the golden bough of Aeneas which could take the wanderer to the earth's belly and bring him back. There would seem to be partial evidence for this bough in the elaborate description of lightning as a tree, which the "mad" Pincher pretends is an "engraving":

> It was like a tree upside down and growing down from the old edge where the leaves were weathered by wind and rain. The trunk was a deep perpendicular groove with flaky edges. Lower down, the trunk divided into three branches and these again into a complication of twigs like the ramifications of bookworm. The trunk and the branches and the twigs were terrible black. Round the twigs was an apple blossom of grey and silver stain. (177)

But Pincher can no more interpret the lightning as a golden bough than he can accept a potential My-godness in himself. Thus at the end of Chapter I, Pincher is described as interpreting the "pattern in front of him... which meant nothing" (23) to be the merciless Rockall, beaten by seawater and lost in Atlantic waste.

Pincher has been offered ways of breaking his own pattern of greed; he is offered this in the "present" as well. Confronted with choice he chooses not to break his pattern. His torture then is self-inflicted; a point of the utmost importance since the island is his own
invention. Furthermore the pressure which he feels and the black lightning which descends to extinguish him is the heaven he chooses. Because he is bereft of love, he turns away from love and makes a darkness there; his body decays, but the god-resisting centre survives to tear at its own self, rather than submit.

V

"FUTURE"

Like a tormented corpse foretasting hell
He lay eternities stretched out, and stark
Swore like a mangy parrot 'till he fell
Into the sinking limbo of the dark.

—Golding, "Baudelaire" 65

The third temporal perspective of Pincher Martin is the projection into an unrealized but nevertheless infinite future. Technically the perspective is realized through memory flashback merging with certain symbolic episodes which themselves have been modified by hallucination and stream of consciousness. Chief among these is the descent into the cellar, the recurrent memory which merges with Pincher's more recent past as an actor and his illusory present—his fever-ridden body sweating in the crevice of an illusory rock. In the following passage, for example, Golding has interlocked the three temporal perspectives that make up, in Golding's view, the Purgatorial moment: memories of childhood, the actual death itself, the rock,

65 William Golding, "Baudelaire," Poems, p. 27.
the fight of the ego, the fear of the future, the greed of the actor, all are bound together. On one level, the passage depicts the hallucinations of a man lying in the real crevice of a rock and being enveloped by his own sweat which he converts to tears, being shed—Pincher indulgently imagines—endlessly for him.

They wept tears that turned them to stone faces in a hall, masks hung in rows in a corridor without beginning or end. There were notices that said No Smoking, Gentlemen, Ladies, Exit. . . . Down there was the other room, to be avoided, because there the gods sat behind their terrible knees and feet of black stone, but here the stone faces wept. . . . Their tears made a pool on the stone floor so that his feet were burned to the ankles. He scrabbled to climb up the wall and the scalding stuff welled up his ankles to his calves, his knees. He was struggling, half-swimming, half-climbing. . . . The tears were no longer running down the stone to join the burning sea. They were falling freely, dropping on him. . . . He began to scream. He was inside the ball of water that was burning him to the bone and past. It consumed him utterly. He was dissolved and spread throughout the tear an extension of sheer, disembodied pain. (144-145)

Pincher is enacting the escape from death. Via the weeping figures, his memory swings back to his past as an actor, and then farther back—to his recurrent terror of the cellar where there was a force uncontrollable by his ego. Simultaneously, he looks forward in "the feet of black stone" to the insistent black seaboots Pincher will see on a figure with whom he will speak. Obliquely, then, he is again aware of his dead state, so he proceeds to try to escape it again by climbing up the faces. But as he climbs, the tears/fever-sweat metamorphose into water and he relives again his death by drowning: "The tears were no longer running down . . . but dropping on him." Inside "the ball of water" he is burned "to the bone and past." What identity he has is "sheer
The centre is intent on avoiding what will obliterate it; but it must suffer the escape from death eternally. Only when the final coda occurs does it become clear that Pincher Martin is about the paradox of eternal dying. Golding intends that if Pincher's bodily death is accepted, "the paradox implies all the rest." Antecedent, theoretically, to the ideographic structure is the premise that the Augustinian view of the world might possibly be the correct one. "Given a cosmos of physical and spiritual duality, God (love) creates man in his own image—since love needs an object. Man (who is free because he is God-like) can either turn outwards or away from this love." He can possess charity or lust. "Charity is the motion of the soul whose purpose is to enjoy God for His own sake and one's self, and one's neighbour for the sake of God. Lust, on the other hand, is a motion of the soul bent upon enjoying one's self, one's neighbour and any other creature without reference to God." From the evidence of the "past" Pincher obviously adopts lust; turning towards himself he is "Greed which has no spiritual sight." Thus in his "present" he creates his own world

66 Golding's comment to Kermode in BBC Third Programme, August 28, 1959 (unpublished discussion).
which "love tries to destroy . . . . Love appears to Pincher as black lightning for Pincher has perverted his original spirit and what is light is darkness, what is heaven—the black lightning—is hell."  

The black lightning can destroy the island-world but not Pincher: this is the essential point. Man contains a duality with body counterpointing spirit; there is a related antimony between his god-nature (his My-godness) and his self-nature. At one time Pincher Martin's nature might have been so intermingled though the fable itself does not show him as anything but the prototype of Greed, and never investigates (as Free Fall does) the process by which Chris becomes Pincher. Golding has commented that Pincher is what he became because of what he did to the people: "Christopher, Christopolus—he who bears the Christ in him—was what he was at the hands of God."  

Thus at the end, he is not addressed as Pincher, but as Christopher: "Have you had enough, Christopher?" (194), a seabooted figure questions. From this slight and obscure dialogue, the reader is intended to surmise that Pincher is being offered—even at the last moment of his desperate escape-from-death—the choice of operating from his My-godness. But just as he has refused to confront the cellar-god in the past and the dying-into-extinction that Nat teaches, so here he rejects this last mercy. He yells his Satanic dismissal of divine pattern:

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70 Ibid.
71 Golding's comment to Kermode in BBC Third Programme (unpublished discussion).
"I spit on your compassion!" (199). And the compassion (because doctrinally this god is love) has to attack and destroy.

The lightning came forward. Some of the lines pointed to the centre . . . waiting for the moment when they could pierce it. Others lay against the claws, playing over them, prying for a weakness, wearing them away in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy. (201)

The "compassion" of god tries ceaselessly to open him up but it cannot force him open since that would violate the given free will. Having dismissed mercy, Pincher, now reduced to his essential Being, claws and centre, will suffer eternally and never be destroyed. He has left Purgatory and entered Hell.

We may fairly ask whether this theology is rendered in fictional terms. Some kind of divine pattern interferes in Pincher's petty designs, though there is no explicit image for this cosmic force. It is simply "a pattern" or an "engraving" which if Pincher admits, amounts to "a split in the nature of things" (177). Pincher, of course, makes several images, all of them horrendous and malignant. "She [the old Hag] is loose on the rock. Now she is out of the cellar and in daylight" (192) he screams to himself knowing simultaneously that this hallucination is none other than the Dwarf with the silver head, a pile of stones animated by atavistic dreams of childhood and delirium, an ironic signal for rescue. She is the cellar-master as well, a threat which looms in opening darkness, the Adversary that lies in the cellar, the only sort of god that Pincher is capable of imagining. Pincher's mind cannot
create a providential island, only a barren bleak rock; when he tries to encompass something greater than himself, his created world contracts. The god that he makes in his own image, on the sixth day of his parody Creation, is the only kind of god he can invent in his terms; facing his own face he yells: "On the sixth day he created God. Therefore I permit you to use nothing but my own vocabulary. In his own image created he Him" (196). The confrontation scene which follows is more dreadful than in the Flies because the man here is so cunning that he can claim the apparition is a projection of his own mind.

Yet it may be more. If Nat is right, "the black lightning can be converted into the everlasting arms of the real heaven, and the pit of nothing into the face of the Living God."72 There is evidence in the description of the figure that Golding intends it to represent God, but met in "the accidents of Pincher's own culture."73 First of all, he is a sailor:

The clothing was difficult to pin down . . . there was an oilskin—belted, because the buttons had fetched away. There was a woolen pullover inside it, with a roll-neck. The sou'wester was back a little. The hands were resting one on either knee, above the seaboot stockings. Then there were the seaboots, good and shiny and wet and solid. They made the rock behind them seem like a cardboard, like a painted flat. (195)

Secondly, this is Pincher's garb as well; the laboured point of the seaboots and their unmistakeable presence may well be to indicate that


Pincher encounters his real (i.e., dead) self in the apparition, a point all the stronger since the seaboots make the rock behind into the "painted flat" which actually it is. The encounter, then, reorchestrates that interview between Simon and the Head; as Simon before him, Pincher confronts the truth of his condition. But the description of the sea-booted figure is more elaborate than this; furthermore, there is Pincher's appalled realization that he could not have "invented" the question addressed him when the figure asks, "Have you had enough Christopher?" (194). In dismay he stares fixedly past the boots and the knees to the face:

The eye nearest the look-out was bloodshot at the outer corner. Behind it or beside it a red strip of sunset ran down out of sight behind the rock. . . . You could look at the sunset or the eye but you could not do both. You could not look at the eye and the mouth together. He saw the nose was shiny and leathery brown and full of pores. The left cheek would need a shave soon, for he could see the individual bristles. But he could not look at the whole face together. It was a face that perhaps could be remembered later. It did not move. It merely had this quality of refusing overall inspection. One feature at a time. (195)

The features, like the clothing, suggest the apparition is Pincher: the bloodshot eye refers back to Pincher's own eye where a needle seemed to be nagging whenever he dipped into the watertrough; and the figure's left cheek (behind which would have sat the significant missing tooth) grows the bristle which Pincher commented upon earlier when he muttered: "Strange that bristles go on growing even when the rest of you is—" (125). Even the leathery brown skin could well be his own flesh in a decomposed state. In fact, the three features referred to in
the passage recapitulate what were earlier clues to Pincher's death. The figure, then, is exactly like the dead Pincher Martin, but with one exception. The total face is conspicuously absent; the dominant quality of the face—it seems to Pincher—is that it "refuses overall inspection." Pincher fixes on certain features (the sort, given his illusory world, he would focus upon). Yet he realizes that "you could not look at the eye and the mouth together." Nor can the sunset and the eye be seen simultaneously; one removes the other. "It was a face that perhaps could be remembered later." Could it not be that the ineluctable and hidden face, if seen with other eyes, the eyes of the spirit, is the face of God, whose place is the setting sun? Questioned as to this matter Golding has replied: "My intention was to make this a visualisation of the thesis that God can be known only in part. Dionysios Areopagitikos says that no matter how profound contemplation is, or how perfect the beatific vision is, there remains that secret part of God that can never be known." In the abstract terms of the thesis' argument there is an unseen world which interpenetrates the visible. Pincher's vision is partial indeed; perhaps what he does not see, by choice and nature, the reader is intended to infer. Perhaps the effort here is to make the

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74 Golding, Personal communication, letter, July 8, 1970 (unpublished). Saint Dionysios the Areopagite was an Athenian Christian in first century A.D. St. Paul converted him (Acts 17:34). Tradition has it that he was a martyr and first bishop of Rome; in the Middle Ages he was erroneously revered as the author of Neoplatonic treatises which influenced medieval Scholasticism, particularly through St. Thomas Aquinas.
reader discover what Pincher himself refuses to discover: the pro-
found reality of the spiritual world. Pincher then sees god in the ac-
dents of his own culture; nevertheless he is being offered the choice of
making Thor's black thunderbolts into the setting sun of the Fisherman
King. 75

VI

Much more strictly than the other fables, Pincher Martin
tries to insist on the spiritual dimension. The coda confirms what
ironic undercurrents during the survival-narrative have moved towards.
The fable is about a dead man. Or, at another level, the fable is about
the nature of man, since the implications of the three temporal per-
spectives—past, present, and future—suggest that Pincher-dead is
Pincher-alive. Pincher Martin is, in no sense, concerned with Be-
coming, but rather with Being. Its starting point is not the past life
of Christopher Hadley Martin and how he became greedy, but with the

75 Golding intends the figure in the seaboots to be associated
with several transcultural accounts of gods. Pincher sees the figure
as a sailor, viz., "in the accidents of his own culture," but he might
have been seen as the Fisherman King. Golding writes (letter, August
24, 1970, unpublished) "the Fisher King is a type of sacrifice occurring
in the Rigveda," one of the sacred Hindu books which praises different
gods. "He is also tied up with the Rock at Scylla and Charybdis-fig
tree" and thus would reflect details of Sir James Frazer's account of
gods figuring as sacrificial victims in The Golden Bough. In the legends
of the Holy Grail, furthermore, the Fisherman King is the uncle of
Percival, and dweller in the Castle of the Grail, where the holy vessel
is enshrined. The figure then is deliberately ambiguous, representing
simultaneously the godhead as it has appeared in the "accidents" of
Hindu, Greek and Christian myth, and the wise old man who asks ques-
tions for the purpose of inducing self-reflection.
given nature of Pincher, the Maggot, and the demonstration of that nature in the past, in the present, and in the future.

Since in this world the self seems to stand created, the action of the fable does not consist in the process of the protagonist's developing awareness, but the reader's recapitulation and recognition of truths which already exist. The mind depicted re-examines static moments in the past which themselves are sometimes intimations of the future. The reader is given access to a perspective that Pincher himself rejects. (Though, of course, rejection is a kind of inverted recognition.) The coda insists on a new interpretation of the survival-narrative but earlier clues as we have seen have been "scattered and concealed like the clues in a mystery novel, in order that the reader should discover the truth late in the book."  

The fable, then, is built very carefully; at crucial moments the plot's significance resides in internal details of symbolic episodes, not overt dramatic actions. In a given passage several different levels of reality—childhood memory, atavistic submersion, actual physical drowning, hallucinatory imaginings—all interlock as we saw in the passage examined on page 179. Further, the "values of any given image," as Babb comments, "are multiple as well as constantly shifting."  

The fable focuses on things in the way The Inheritors does;


Golding himself said he started with the picture of a man drowning in the sea and, he added in characteristically pictorial terms, that for him it was a book of colour: "a pair of red claws locked against black lightning." The image is informative, for it arrests in a static picture the whole "meaning" of the fable. In a real sense the fable is about red claws, black lightning, and the sea, just as *The Inheritors* is about the fall, the river, and the island.

The fable, then, is built pictorially though it is designed to demonstrate the relevance of the Augustinian view of the world in order to make the fabulist's point about the necessity for vision as understood in the discussion on pages 138 and 139 of this Chapter. At certain points, the narrative works through a series of static images which, by juxtaposition and association, and above all compression, inform the three temporal perspectives simultaneously. Thus the evasive Chinese box which comes from a story applied to Martin by one of his friends—it contains one huge maggot that has fed on all the others but will itself be eaten—symbolizes not only Pincher's view of the universe but Chris's demeanor on stage in the past. It reveals him in the present as Pincher-like he nets down the island, and in the future as he grasps his own claws, refusing the mercy of extinction. In madness, Martin fuses the box with a coffin as he hears the spade/lightning knocking against it: Martin cries out in terror at one point: "I am alone on

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78 Golding, Personal communication.
a rock in the middle of a tin box" (144). Through such symbolic images, the three orders of time collapse over one another, revealing, like the Chinese boxes that fit into each other, one chemically pure state of Being: the cosmic maggot.

Density of suggestion is here achieved not by a rich embroidery of image upon image, but as was the case in The Inheritors by a tight condensation where one symbolic image can operate successfully at different levels. Take for example the first "picture" which Pincher sees of an ingenious toy, the Cartesian-Diver, while he struggles for breath in the sea.

The jam jar was standing on a table . . . one could see into a little world there which was quite separate but which one could control. The jar was nearly full of clear water and a tiny glass figure floated upright in it. The top of the jar was covered with a thin membrane. . . . The pleasure of the jar lay in the fact that the little glass figure was so delicately balanced between opposing forces. Lay a finger on the membrane and you would compress the air below it which in turn would press more strongly on the water . . . and it would begin to sink. By varying the pressure . . . you could do anything you like with the glass figure which was wholly in your power. (9)

It is now possible to see that the jam jar is symbolic of the whole fable's

79 The ingenious toy doll between two pressures is very possibly an experimental tool, the "Cartesian Diver": "a small hollow glass figure placed in a vessel of water that has an elastic cover so arranged that by an increase of pressure the water can be forced into the figure producing the effects of suspension, sinking and floating as the pressure varies." Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Springfield, 1964), p. 344. Golding's imaginative extension of a scientific postulate parallels his use of "free fall" in Free Fall and the Law of Thermodynamics in The Inheritors. Pincher Martin, then, would represent an ironic sublation of the Descartes dictum: cogito ergo sum.
meaning. It focuses evasively and importantly on Being and Pincher must come to understand that the Cartesian-Diver's predicament represents his own reality. As the figure floats, sinks and rises "in the little world that was quite separate" Pincher's consciousness floats in the globe of his skull; his waterlogged body floats in the sea: "down it would go, down, down" (9). He is forced to descend atavistically, down, down to some cellarage in his own mind and then struggle towards the surface. One can also see in the jam jar's peculiar isolation Pincher's physical experience on the island where he feels pressed down upon by the atmosphere (the membrane of the jar) and pressed into and up by the riven, harsh, hard rock (the water of the jar). And ultimately, the delicate balance of the floating figure represents the condition of man, \textit{sub specie aeternitatis}.

Man floats between two forces—the pressure of some divine cosmic power and the pressure of the merely selfish. Man is controlled inasmuch as he operates within "a little world." "You could let it struggle towards the surface, give it almost a bit of air, then send it steadily, slowly, remorselessly down and down" (9). After the fable, the reader discovers that all the memory flashbacks, all the symbolic images—even the cosmic symbol of man alone on a rock surrounded by sea—are pictorial definitions of a creation whose essence is to be "delicately balanced between two opposing forces." Indeed, the reader discovers what Pincher, as well as Davidson and Campbell, cannot
know. The Antagonist's "pressure" is not simply a "remorseless" cruelty; it might easily be a merciful compassion. And the "sad harvest" (208) would then be harvest indeed.
CHAPTER V

FREE FALL

I

When I make by black pictures, when I inspect chaos, I must remember that such [merciful] places are as real as Belsen. They, too, exist, they are part of this enigma, this living. They are brick walls like any others. . . . But remembered, they shine.

—Golding, Free Fall

The Inheritors and Pincher Martin show Golding as a pattern-maker for whom pattern is inadequate; structural pattern is used to invalidate thematic pattern. It has been argued that structurally the fables create an ideogram for the truth by setting up a tension between two contradictory and inadequate patterns, one of which is represented in the first narrative movement, while the other is represented in the coda's reversal. While, after Lord of the Flies, the novels forbid any simple or 'right' interpretation the emphasis in all three is on the criminality of man. With Free Fall's appearance in 1959 definitive thematic changes occur. The work's neat progression from mankind's collective evil which

1William Golding, Free Fall (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 77. All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition and be indicated in textual parentheses.
Inheritors dramatized to the perdition of Being in Pincher Martin narrows further in Free Fall to the exploration of one guilty person, enigmatic and individual. Unlike the others this novel concerns itself with the rehabilitation of a damned soul. Yet Free Fall must be declared a dramatic failure; it is The Spire which brings its thematic preoccupations to structural fruition.

*Pincher Martin*, we have seen, implies and seeks to demonstrate the presence of a spiritual reality, an unseen world which interpenetrates the visible one. But it is the nature of the protagonist's cosmos that the presence has to be inferred negatively by the reader. With Free Fall changes in technique, focus, and authorial tone—for here Golding approaches a more traditional reader/author relationship by narrating the tale from the first person point of view—all combine to allow a narrative rendering of religious ecstasy and moments of vision. Thus Free Fall offers one vision of sanctity, not merely the "heaven of sheer negation" which can be construed from the blackness of Pincher's hell. To achieve this "heaven" Pincher has to surrender his own personality to God's love and pity: the purgatory he occupies is a specifically theological one (albeit unorthodox). Free Fall, on the other hand, posits the possibility of another mode of existence, a world of magic and terror, spirit and miracle: suggests a place to which Sammy Mountjoy, the protagonist, can direct what he describes as his "need to worship" (109). And furthermore the novel seeks to liberate this imaginative mode in the reader.
Indeed the whole book's effort is not to define, reduce, or recast mystery but to rediscover it. *Free Fall* affirms a magically potent brilliance or dramatic force in the world and a scene of transfiguration balances the confrontation scene, that familiar extreme situation in which character is tested by destruction. A dynamism and vibrancy exists in the world within which the child, the innocent, and the saint live by nature. Except at certain moments when the sensuous immediacy of the past comes flooding back and fuses with the present, the guilty adult (he who, in the novel's theology, has lost by his own free choice his freedom) has no access to this celestial mode. Yet his paradox is to be troubled by its beauty and simultaneously tormented by his own defilement. "I am a burning amateur torn by the irrational and incoherent, violently searching and self-condemned" (5) remarks Sammy as he explores his condition of "free fall." For "we are neither the innocent nor the wicked. We are the guilty. We fall down" (251).

The theme is, of course, unmistakable and perennial: the nature of fallen man, adam unparadised, the loss of innocence. Yet the novel counterpoints at least two explications of man, the scientific and the religious, its title alluding not simply to Milton's *Paradise Lost* ("Sufficient to have stood/ But free to fall") but to the physical condition of free fall, a condition of unrestrained motion in a gravitational field.  

2Golding's remark in a review of Jules Verne's *Round the Moon* is relevant here: "It is a, or rather the, moment of free fall—not the modern sort which can be endless, but the nineteenth-century sort, the point where earth and moon gravity is equal." William Golding, "Astronaut by Gaslight," *The Hot Gates*, p. 115.
Furthermore the novel breaks away from the remote settings and narrow focus of the earlier fables, taking as its subject the circuitous reflection by a twentieth-century painter upon the events of his past, events which involve a detail of social texture that was new in Golding's fiction to that date.

II

And who are you anyway? Are you on the inside, have you a proof-copy? Am I a job to do? Do I exasperate you by translating incoherence into incoherence?

Free Fall (8)

Critical response to Free Fall has, for the most part, been hostile, as one article, "The Strange Case of Mr. Golding and His Critics," notes its immediate reception was extremely negative. "It was possible to read eight reviews of the novel and be left with the


4 Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "The Strange Case of Mr. Golding and His Critics," The Twentieth Century, CLXVII (February 1960), 115-125. A useful compendium of immediate reviews concludes this article.
impression that Mr. Golding had written an ambitious incoherent novel, written it badly and injected it . . . with gratuitous difficulties."\(^5\)

Certainly most reviewers ignored or neglected to apply Golding's barbed admonition in the passage quoted above. Commenting on the chronological irregularities, reviewers interpreted these distortions as proof of Golding's penchant for obscurity and fortuitous cleverness. Samuel Hynes, for example, thought the gaps in the narrative seemed willful, and the style meretricious, \(^6\) a judgment echoed by Philip Toynbee who declared that "the machinery of language is pretentious, form is large and noisy out of all proportion to the work."\(^7\) Except for two analyses of rhetorical techniques, \(^8\) style was attacked as self-conscious and grandiloquent. \(^9\) Though Pincher Martin's verbal texture with its multiple shifting meanings had been admired, stylistic innovations in *Free Fall* were read as blunders and evidence of failing imaginative power, especially in the mock-heroic parody of courtly love language in the

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 124.


\(^7\)Philip Toynbee, "Down to Earth," *The London Observer*, October 25, 1959, p. 22.


Sammy/Beatrice sequences. Nowhere has it been suggested that the novel's mixtures of styles—angular colloquialisms are poised between scientific jargon, sensuous imagisms, and lyrical rhythmic cadences—are intended as verbal counterparts to the thematic distinction drawn between the world of flesh and the world of spirit.

The *New Yorker* found the novel "bewildering"\(^{10}\) and ultimately "dreary," and a number of commentators were unsure of the plot's final outcome; some decided that Sammy broke out of the cell physically while others decided the journal itself was being written in the cell.\(^{11}\) Few articles were as belligerent as that of Martin Green who concluded that "every line of *Free Fall*" exposed "a poverty of experience [and] a poverty of imagination."\(^{12}\) Yet it was generally agreed that the novel sank under that weight of its philosophical quest, unable to bear the weight of its ramifying theme. Thus in an otherwise sensitive study, Martin Price accused it of "ideas bombast" and made the curious suggestion that Golding's personality might need "gimmickry" but "his craft" did not.\(^{13}\) While commending the novel's substance—"In a sense the novel is about delivery from the body of death; there is more to it

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\(^{12}\) Martin Green, "Distaste for the Contemporary," *The Nation*, XCX (May 21, 1960), 452.

\(^{13}\) Price, p. 618.
than the Fall . . . because it contains also regeneration"—Kermode decided that "pseudo-theology" was the centre of the book's weakness. Ultimately judgments concurred that *Free Fall* consisted of "arresting parts that never form a satisfactory whole."  

*Free Fall* is a difficult work, yet rewarding and obscure in ways new to the canon. In a real sense it amounts to what Golding himself remarked to an interviewer was, "a confession of growth or a confession of failure." In fact, Golding has insisted that with *Free Fall* he was "moving much more towards novels where I don't understand what everything is about," a declaration in keeping with his distrust of conceptual categories and his romantic affirmation of metaphor and myth as vehicles which find but do not impose order and coherence in the world. Thus Sammy Mountjoy seeks desperately to find pattern not to impose it. And Golding's problem is to avoid imposing pattern while creating a metaphor that implies the order of mystery. For "to name is to destroy, to suggest is to create." Thus Golding explained:


16 Golding in Kermode and Golding, BBC Third Programme, August 28, 1959, unpublished discussion.


I'm trying to get what one might call the immediacy of inexplicable living more firmly into my work. 19

Its intention was "to give a picture of the patternlessness of man's existence in the west at the moment" 20 when no system of reference, no spiritual gravity, no creeds or codes operate to sustain the individual.

Consequently the novel takes as its protagonist an artist who has "hung all systems on the wall like a row of useless hats" (6) having worn a Marxist cap, a Christian beret, a rationalist bowler and "a school cap" (6) and then thrown them all down. Yet despite this indifference, on his crucial encounter with the German psychologist (the demonic/angelic Interrogator) he is driven, by his own nature, 21 that "mystery" that Halde believes "opaque" (145), to find "some indications of a pattern that will include me, even if the outer edges tail off into ignorance" (9).

From the quest for a pattern, a quest which determines the book's spiritual outline, and the experience of a patternless world,

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19 Golding in Webster, p. 7.

20 Ibid.

21 Golding's insistent point in an unpublished interview with Kermode: "he is forced to commit that sin by his nature when he is young, and because he commits it he chooses in freedom to commit this sin, he then loses his freedom, and it leads him into a most complicated set of circumstances, out of which ... he then comes again to a point where he can choose freedom . . . ." Kermode, BBC Third Programme, unpublished discussion. The significance will be explored later in the Chapter.
the story emerges. Once again Golding's strategy is one of indirection, for as Kermode remarks against Sammy's "assertion of uniqueness and discontinuity we have to set the patterns, the elaborate echoes, the profoundly organized plotting of the novel itself. Between what the hero says and what the book says there is a relation which you might call contrapuntal."22 Sammy is brought back to the point where he can choose freedom, a freedom he has lost in youth when he chose freely, but because of his given nature, to commit a sin. The consequences of his new found freedom is to discover a pattern emerging from the events of his past, a pattern whose shape the fable's structure follows. And the pattern is one of guilt.

III

Essentially Free Fall remains ambiguous in its vision. Like Pincher Martin it aims at bridging two sorts of explanations of existence, the religious and the materialist, and fusing the two. To this end it employs the ideographic structure and the confrontation scene where ego atavistically encounters its psychic darkness. Furthermore, Free Fall employs another feature common to the other fables: the inversion of a literary model, in this case, Dante's Vita Nuova. (Here the model is taken as the "right" explanation while its reallocation is intended to be "wrong"; in the cases of the inversions which precede Free Fall the

literary model is corrected by Golding's recasting of the story.)

In *Free Fall* time shifts, chronological discontinuities, and elaborate verbal echoes are designed to show the religious significance of a man's life while at the same time accounting dramatically for his loss of the world of miracle. It is argued that ambiguity results because two independent quests operate throughout the fable: the quest for Being *qua* Being, and the quest for the bridge between the worlds of the flesh and the spirit. Put another way, can can see that the resolution implied by the confrontation scene and the coda's reversal relates thematically but not dramatically to the fable's religious core. Consequently the fable's vision never coalesces, and in the end becomes merely notes toward a problem, not the solution of one. The major quest involves Sammy's search for freedom in realms transcending twentieth-century social chaos: this is particularized as an effort to discover that bridge between the world of the indestructible burning bush and the world of the bell-jar candle where matter is neither destroyed nor created. Thematically the quest has affinities with other religious patterns of transformation like the Dantean analogue which it relates to ironically and contrapuntally. It is overtly theological (though again not orthodox in nature) and in a sense the impasse to which this journey finally comes is a *rational* one. The suggestion, and this is at a thematical level only, is that since freedom *is* experienced as well as guilt, 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" (187). This place is closed to the eye of logic. The riddle posed in the coda is intended to resurrect this dead eye of logic in order to make Sammy and the reader cast the new eye of the spirit back over all that has occurred before the riddle is posed. It fails to accomplish this difficult task.

There are other flaws in the fable; it aims at merging two methods of narration by grounding the inexplicability of felt life in some search for transcendent value. As one commentator has it, *Free Fall* is an attempt "to marry a fiction with a myth," to illuminate the particular by pursuit of the general. Thus Sammy Mountjoy is given a strong and specific social context; we see him at school with Philip fighting for his fag cards of the Kings of Egypt, we see him playing bombers on the gray chalk hills of Kent with another friend Johnny, we watch him swagger histrionically before Beatrice Ifor as she leaves a training college in East London. And yet Golding would have Mountjoy's particular repudiation of the spiritual in his desecration of Beatrice identified with both its historical implications and its cosmic one as well. Thus the episode between Sammy and Halde in the prison camp recalls the interrogations Beatrice suffers under Sammy's fervent questionings: "Don't you feel anything?" Certain motifs reverberate:

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answering Halde's crucial probings as Beatrice answered his, Sammy mutters "maybe." "Do you feel nothing then?" Halde questions, and Sammy replies, "Maybe" (142). And the implication is that Sammy's failure to accept responsibility and his inability to live within a coherent world is that of contemporary man. "For maybe was sign of all our times. We were certain of nothing" (108).

I welcomed the destruction that war entails, the deaths and terror. . . . There was anarchy in the mind where I lived and anarchy in the world at large, two states so similar that one might have produced the other. The shattered houses, the refugees, the deaths and torture—accept them as a pattern of the world and one's behaviour is little enough disease. (131-132)

Throughout the fable, however, psychological motivation wars with the formal demands that Sammy's pursuit imposes upon the structure. Several times he appears to be engaged in moral dilemmas whose outcome is in the balance; his fortune appears to be affected by recognizable social gradations (removal from Rotten Row to the rectory brings physical comfort but a loss of creature comfort); and yet he seems to be influenced by forces beyond his immediate understanding. Still, social matters are diminished often by metaphoric clusters; this is especially true at the important juncture when Sammy chooses Nick's rational universe. The world of symbols, especially the metaphor of the door, formulates Sammy's predicament rather than any social or cultural matter.

This was a moment of such importance to me that I must examine it completely. For an instant of time, the two worlds existed side by side. The one I inhabited by nature, the world of miracle drew me strongly. To give up the burning bush, the water from
the rock, the spittle on the eyes was to give up a portion of myself, a dark and inward and fruitful portion. Yet looking at me from the bush was the fat and freckled face of Miss Pringle. . . . I hung for an instant between two pictures of the universe; then the ripple passed over the burning bush and I ran towards my friend [Nick]. In that moment a door closed behind me. I slammed it shut on Moses and Jehovah. I was not to knock on that door again, until in a Nazi prison camp I lay huddled against it half crazed with terror and despair. (217)

The conventions of actuality are twice violated by a deliberate blurring of action. In fact, narrative method shifts between autobiographical mediation where character encounters event and dramatically atavistic episodes where ego confronts psychic darkness. (If Pincher Martin in alternating "past" and "present" places greatest emphasis on the latter by striking fragments of memories across Pincher's efforts, then Free Fall almost exactly inverts the method: Sammy's past predominates though its presentation as a set of expanded "pictures" is no more than a development of the montage effect of Pincher Martin.)

Again in Free Fall as in Pincher Martin the revelation of character in retrospect is a manifestation of character not as process but as state. Sammy is no more self-creating (viz., capable of moulding his own consciousness) than Pincher was seen to be. The change in Sammy after his "sin" is not an alteration of what previously existed but merely the fulfillment of a latent possibility. "Now I have been back in these pages to find out why I am frightened of the dark and I cannot tell. Once upon a time I was not frightened of the dark and later on I was" (165). Reality in Free Fall is a closed and static system: man carries his destiny within him; it confronts him from without only
because his acts externalize his nature. Yet Sammy is looking beyond those closed walls, seeking the freedom that is experienced and known as acutely as "the taste of potatoes."

What men believe is a function of that they are; and what they are is in part what has happened to them. And yet here and there in all that riot of compulsion comes the clear taste of potatoes, element so rare the isotope of uranium is abundant by comparison. (212)

IV

I have walked by stalls in the market-place where books, dog-eared and faded from their purple, have burst with a white hosanna. I have seen people crowned with a double crown, holding in either hand the crook and flail, the power and the glory. I have understood how the scar becomes a star, I have felt the flake of fire fall, miraculous and pentecostal. My yesterdays walk with me. They keep step, they are grey faces that peer over my shoulder. I live on Paradise Hill, ten minutes from the station, thirty seconds from the shops and local. Yet I am a burning amateur, torn by the irrational and incoherent, violently searching and self-condemned. (5)

*Free Fall*’s opening paragraph sounds the thematic dichotomy between the world of flesh and the world of spirit that the book will explore. "To get the point of this paragraph," as one notable article remarks, "is to get the point of the whole book." 24 The world of

24 Gregor and Kinkead-Weeks, p. 118. The sense of this passage in relation to *Free Fall* is discussed at some length by Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes though their contention that "the first paragraph presents 252 of *Free Fall*’s 253 pages in miniature" is perhaps too sweeping, since in fact many minor motifs—notably the darkness conception—do not enter the paragraph.
empirical observation and the world of imaginative vision, both exist and both are "real." Sammy has perceived hosannas and pentecostal fire; he has witnessed the miraculous transmutation of scar into star; yet he lives "ten minutes from the station, thirty seconds from the shops and local." And the stylistic counterpointing of this secular colloquialism with those biblical echoes and rhythms of alliterative phrases such as "I have felt the flake of fire fall" connotes the separation of the two worlds. In childhood the two worlds interlocked but, for the adult Sammy, the past follows to condemn like grey faces forever unreconciled. There is no bridge. There is no forgiveness; the world of the spirit is experienced only as a condemnation of guilt, not as holiness or wholeness.

The fable opens with a prologue, reminiscent in many ways of a dramatic monologue in which the listener is directly confronted by the narrator as a participant in the unfolding confession, invoked, cajoled, and then asked to sit in judgment on actions. Sammy comments: "My darkness reaches out and fumbles at a typewriter with its tongs. Your darkness reaches out with your tongs and grasps a book" (8). The metaphor of darkness here represents the internal landscape of psyche as it does in Pincher Martin's case, and the chapter is a logical development from the montage technique of Pincher Martin where Pincher while drowning sees the
essential factors of his life as neon lights and expands them. Sammy, in fact, is a kind of repentant Pincher with whom he has several traits in common, especially sensuality and egocentricity. Unlike Pincher who imposes a pattern on the Rock, naming things Piccadilly Circus and Regent Street in order to bring them within his control, Mountjoy is seeking desperately to discover a pattern. He organizes and reorganizes past events not as they occurred but in the order of their affective significance.

For time is not to be laid out endlessly like a row of bricks. That straight line from the first hiccup to the last gasp is a dead thing. Time is two modes. The one is an effortless perception... The other is memory, a sense of shuffle fold and coil, of that day nearer than that because more important, of that event mirroring this, or those three set apart, exceptional and out of the straight line altogether. (6)

The distinction—well within the Romantic tradition involving as it does the affective memory—gives Free Fall its principle of composition and, not unexpectedly, its metaphor for truth. Thus chronology is distorted deliberately. Unscrambled, the story involves the childhood of Sammy Mountjoy, born of a whore in a Kentish slum, Rotten Row; his schooling and friends, his adoption by the High Anglican homosexual rector, Father Watts Watt; his seduction of the fairheaded but impotent Beatrice

25 There is even a verbal echo: elucidating the conservation of energy to the young Sammy, Nick says it holds both mentally as well as physically. "You can't have your penny and your bun" (216). However, in conversation Golding remarked that "in a real sense Sammy took off from the point where Tuami sat, brooding over his ivory dagger."
Ifor; his abandonment of her and marriage to a Communist comrade; Taffy; his experience in a German prison camp; his subsequent guilt; and finally his postwar experience when he returns to Kent to encounter the mad Beatrice and revisit his "spiritual" (194) parents, the school teachers Nick and Miss Pringle. In temporal chronology the final "event" is the narration of the story as Sammy's "darkness" "fumbles at a typewriter" (8). But the novel closes with a flashback to the prison and the German commandant's ambiguous "Sphinx's riddle" (253) and reference to Dr. Halde who in the words of the novel's very last sentence "Does not know about peoples" (253).

The narrative proper then is all retrospect. Instead of submerging character in development—presenting Sammy Mountjoy progressively—various snapshots of character at various ages are displayed. In one sense, the reader, in juxtaposing the motionless images, experiences the effect of the passage of time as the narrator has experienced it. Take for example the sequence at the end of the fable when Sammy faces the insane Beatrice, and he surveys the consequences of his desecration. The asylum stands at the peak of Paradise Hill, yet it has around it the sense of institution like the "greyness of a prison camp" (238; italics added). 26 Originally

26 The elaborate echoes deliberately recall many motifs established earlier in the story; Beatrice's nittering recapitulates the lodger's bird-like breathing ("She was jerking round like the figure in a cathedral clock" [243; italics added]), as well as Sammy's dream of a dying cat where
it was the General's "magic house" (45) whose apocalyptic cedar tree, fairy lights, and dark Gardens of Persephone had bathed the youthful interlopers, Johnny and Sammy, in wonder as they "wander in paradise" (45). Now it is merely "the grey house of factual succession" (237) unredeemed by spirit because denied of spirit, where the mindless and wholly physical Beatrice pees in panic like the only minimally human Minnie of childhood memory. Just as the consequences of denying a cosmic spiritual dimension had robbed the mansion of its beauty, so the consequences of choosing physically lubricity with Beatrice—then "I could not paint her face; but her body I painted" (123)—is to reinforce the reality of physical life and further to make it contemptible. "Her face was in the shadow of her body; but a little light was reflected from the institutional wall and showed some of the moulding" (242). The parallel is neatly pointed out by the analogy between the architecture of a building and that of physiognomy—a microcosmic-macrocosmic technique, by the way, Golding uses in The Spire as well as in Pincher Martin.

"marsh-birds" are crying (cf. 130 with 243). Of course, the central recapitulation is the madness itself, for Sammy had pretended madness in order to seduce Beatrice. Thus he remembers her saying, "You musn't ever say such a thing, Sammy" (240) as he watches her in the asylum.

27Another system of images involves the electric light and its polar opposite, the light that comes from flame and warms. Thus Ma's nature is symbolized by the "red glow" (11) from the fire while Nick even in death has the material "light from a bulb" scour his "curved cranium," and hangs"whitely in the eaves over his eyes" (251).
In another sense, however, since the narrator himself is commenting and assembling episodes, time itself is arrested and the character can be viewed as a continuous being. "Pictures" of the past are not altogether random, Mountjoy concludes, as he surveys himself:

They are important simply because they emerge. I am the sum of them. I carry round with me this load of memories. Man is not an instantaneous creature, nothing but a physical body and the reaction of the moment. He is an incredible bundle of miscellaneous memories and feelings, of fossils and coral growths. I am not a man who was a boy looking at a tree. I am a man who remembers being a boy looking at a tree. (46, italics added.)

Several episodes are constructed, in fact, with formal echoes of earlier episodes to make just this point, that man (Mountjoy specifically) is not so much a creature of the moment as a "continent" of "miscellaneous memories and feelings."

_Free Fall's_ formal narrative consists of seven sequences, each involving these pictures from the past. Chapters I to III involve early childhood; when Sammy has freedom. Chapters IV to VI his youth and manhood when he has lost his freedom. The conclusion of both presents the same dilemma: once there was freedom; once it was lost. Chapters VII to IX involve the central episode in the book and of Sammy's life; it is itself subdivided into three panels, like a triptych, with the two outer concerning Sammy's interrogation in the prison camp and his nightmarish experience in the cell. The middle panel reverts back to his childhood and deals in preparation for the following chapter with the question (one that evidently holds Golding's imagination
in a vise), "How did I come to be so frightened of the dark?" (154).

Chapters X to XII give the climax of the narrative proper, moving from a transitional episode in the prison yard back to Sammy's childhood tutelage under Nick and Rowena. Chapter XII outlines the act of possession which costs "everything" (236) and the choice of physicality. The fifth section, Chapters XIII and XIV, elaborates the "everything" that his choice had sacrificed and gives the reversal that gathers the whole fable together. Throughout, Sammy returns intermittently to the present. One system of rhetorical leitmotifs—"Here? Not Here"—makes the transition and marks the climax of the narrative quest for that point at which Sammy physically crossed the bridge to East London and lost his freedom, a loss of the bridge between the flesh and the spirit. Various running images bind the fragments as well, chief among which are those associated with Sammy's coveted fag-cards, the Kings of Egypt. The heroic aspect of man is conveyed by the traditional metaphor of royalty so "abashed before the kingship of the human face" (150), Sammy captures the transfigured prison camp in his "smuggled sketches of the haggard, unshaven kings of Egypt" (188). 28

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28 "Egypt From My Insides" is, of course, a relevant essay here. The dead of Rotten Row are "Pharaohs bandaged and with a belly full of spices" (27) and since death was a time of ritual and spectacle Sammy, in hindsight, adds the tag "royal" to it. But the agents of the imagination are draped in symbolic majesty too: Ma's most private fantasy is that Sammy's errant father was the Prince of Wales, a progenitor that Sammy reluctantly disbelieves. Evie, whose ribbons


But the narrative method is retrospective meditation. It consists in brooding on some time spot which will bring about a total recall of a certain epoch, not as a faint memory but as an intimately relived experience containing its own significance. Thus Sammy, as he grogves to capture the essential nature of Ma whom he experiences as "warm darkness" (15) and a blocking of "the tunnel" (15), remarks to the reader: "And now something happens in my head. Let me catch the picture before the perception vanishes" (15). He proceeds then to reconstruct the Epic Bog Brawl when Ma defends her "throne" (21), her voice bouncing "off the sky in brazen thunder" (19). And he concludes, "I have no memory of majesty to match that one from Rotten Row" (21). If he sets aside theoretical categories acquired by the guilty man, Sammy can see in the static image some rounded aspect of a whole truth, unfragmented and unabstrackted. Or he can try to. Thus the comic yet awesome death of the lodger is seen through the "mind's eye" (29) when the adult Sammy stoops to knee height and becomes the small child, "the empty bubble" (29), who confuses the cessation of a clock ticking with the lodger's death. The lodger too is an agent of

and hair confirm her majesty, tells Sammy she is a "stolen princess" (31) who will be rescued by the duke encased in the armour suit; Johnny Spragg is a "prince" (so too is Sammy) (48) who is "enchanted" by the "gods of the airfield" (47) flying their DHs. One Easter "on the sacred and forbidden ground" (39) of the airfield they witness the fall of one of these gods.
imagination and hence a bridge to the world of miracle; thus Sammy is suddenly haunted by a "moustache of white swan's feather" (176) when he is cringing in the cell but he cannot be armoured against death anymore than he could be in Rotten Row. "And the shape of life loomed [in Rotten Row] that I was insufficient for our lodger's thatch, for that swan-white seal of ultimate knowing" (29). He is (as Golding puts it many times in *Free Fall* as well as *The Pyramid*) "on the pavement"; he believes testimonies of miracles, he sustains a "worried faith in the kings of Egypt" (149) but he himself is insufficient to inhabit that world.

Death rolled by me in the high black car behind panes of chased and frosted glass. Then, as always, I stood, only partly comprehending, on the pavement. But Evie . . . was a fantasist. . . . She had a variety of immense and brilliant hair ribbons; and I adored these and desired them with hopeless cupidity. . . . For what was the good of that symbol without the majesty and central authority of Ma and Evie? (28-29)

On the other hand, Mountjoy has "the capacity to live in a divided world without denying its whole range." He is, as he himself realizes before Halde, "not an ordinary man. I was at once more than most and less" (150). The lesson the "mind's eye" (29, italics added) seeks to discover is the point at which his inadequate being opted for one of those two worlds. Golding seems to be suggesting that Mountjoy might

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29 Price, p. 624.

30 Nick is an innocent even though he lives in the world of matter; in other words, his nature remains complete even though his vision is confined to one mode. Sammy alone extends the materialism to its moral field.
always have kept his double vision but that he was also free to decide for egocentric and sensual reasons that it was unimportant. As his headmaster advises: "If you want something enough, you can always get it provided you are willing to make the appropriate sacrifice. . . . But what you get is never quite what you thought; and sooner or later the sacrifice is always regretted" (235). Sammy makes the appropriate sacrifice; wanting Beatrice Ifor's white body he turns his back on the world of spirit and loses his freedom and ability to enjoy both worlds.

V

. . . again this is trying to move on a level of revealed religion, a rather sordid kind of twentieth century beginning which might lead to a pilgrim's progress. But the pilgrim has got his feet in the mud. There are no trumpets sounding for him on the other side: the trumpets are a long way off.

—Golding

Though he justifies it as the logical outcome of his adopted materialism, Samuel Mountjoy's worship of the sensual is a manifestation of his inherent spiritualism: "At the moment I was deciding that right and wrong were nominal and relative, I felt [and] I saw the beauty of holiness and tasted evil in my mouth like the taste of vomit" (226).

31Golding’s comment in Kermode and Golding, BBC Third Programme (unpublished discussion).

Though he purposely disregards the spirit in seducing Beatrice he is trembling to contact her beyond the "shoddy temple" (108) of sex: "a sadness reached out of me that did not know what it wanted; for it is part of my nature that I should need to worship, and this was not in the textbooks, not in the behaviour of those I had chosen and so without knowing I had thrown it away" (109). Ironically, he denies the spirit by means of the spirit, a point illustrated neatly by his Tate painting celebrating Beatrice's body imaginatively in a way he never touches her physically. Indeed, he captures her nature despite himself and despite his negation of it: "I added the electric light-shades of Guernica to catch the terror, but there was no terror to catch. . . . The electric light that ought to sear like a public prostitution seems an irrelevance. There is gold, rather, scattered from the window" (124).\(^{33}\) In the very first instance of denial he adopts materialism as an expression of his heart's affection for the kindly Nick. Indeed it is Nick's kindness not his materialist system which makes Sammy forsake the world of the symbol made intolerable by Miss Pringle's obsessive cruelty. In the final instance, when his physical eye cannot function in the cell's darkness and the world of the senses—the world he declares real—is no longer available, his mind's eye creates monster after monster. His own darkness is not still; it forces him to explore the centre both of the cell and his own internal darkness and ultimately his cry for mercy is an affirmation of Spirit.

\(^{33}\text{Cf. fn. 27.}\)
His very name suggests this paradox, for it has essentially religious connotations. In the first phase of his career, fragments of biblical patterns are relevant. The Old Testament prophet Samuel is conceived by Hannah through the ministerings of a priest; Sammy's parentage is associated with a church since Ma's favourite fiction (and the one Sammy finds most attractive) is that his father was a parson. As a child he is brought to the altar to do service under the guardianship of old Eli; Sammy, in turn, is drawn to the altar by Philip to defile it and spends his adolescence deflecting Father Watts-Watt's delusions. If the biblical allusions are, in part, ironic, Sammy does at least become a judge over himself and a proclaimer of kings. While to some degree religious, Sammy's nature is predominately hedonistic, a point made obvious by the pun associated with his second name. Here one kind of mount-into-joy is replaced by another and if the infant Samuel

34 Commentators have remarked on the Edenic myth. See Peter Green, p. 55; Gregor and Kinkead-Weeks; Kermode, "Adam's Image." But also relevant is the Mosaic motif: Sammy the child is drawn to the burning bush and his intense preoccupation with Moses brings him into conflict with Miss Pringle. Cf. Chapter XI, Free Fall.

35 Golding is explicit about this influence since it defines the kind of creature Mountjoy is. It was in Sammy's nature to respond to the Machiavellian Philip rather than the "prince" Johnny: "neither the general nor the god on the airfield, nor Johnny Spragg, nor Evie nor Ma, altered my life as Philip altered it" (47).

36 Wendell Harris discusses the allegorical names of Free Fall's major characters suggesting that the symbolism of Mountjoy is double: "Mountjoy's suffering is a means of mounting towards the joys of heaven." Alternatively it can be transcribed as one who "puts his own desire before other considerations." "Golding's Free Fall," Explicator, XXIII:1 (September 1964), item 76.
is banished from Paradise Hill, then the post-pubescent Mountjoy conquers (as it has been happily phrased) the Mons Veneris. 37

In the second phase of Sammy's career—"the whole time of the other school" (192)—another literary allusion is ironically inverted. It is Beatrice whose name hints at the Dantean pattern underlying this quest for the bridge between the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit. She is seen first before a drawing class, "a palladian bridge" (221) behind her transparent and illuminated face. Issuing from the girl’s brow Sammy perceives "a metaphorical light that none the less seemed to me to be an objective phenomenon, a real thing" (222). Living in freedom (a state defined as unconscious undifferentiated perception 38) he looks upon Beatrice and experiences two worlds simultaneously; they interlock and since he does not appropriate them, he experiences the bridge. The light is of course the light of Paradise, for Golding intends Beatrice to refer back to the exalted Beatrice of Dante’s Vita Nuova. Further, Golding intends his own fable as an ironic inversion of Dante’s sublime sequence, a collection of thirty-one lyrical poems celebrating the beloved woman, interspersed with a prose narrative which comments upon the course of the developing devotion. Aside from the

37 He "... is not only an inhabitant of the Paradisal Mountain but the Infant Samuel and, in another sense, the sex-obsessed devotee of Mons Veneris." Peter Green, p. 55.

38 See especially the dramatic portrayal of this in the Garden scene with Johnny and Sammy (Chapter II, Free Fall). Also Sammy's definition of consciousness: "Perhaps consciousness and the guilt which is unhappiness go together; and heaven is truly the Buddhist Nirvana" (78).
heroine's emblematic name and the representation of Sammy's sensual desire as a parody of all the torments, intolerable ecstasies, and anguished mortifications attendant upon a courtly lover's unrequited love, there are numerous scenes in *Free Fall* which correspond to ones described in the prose chapters of the *Vita Nuova*. Dante unexpectedly sees Beatrice for the second time since her girlhood as she walks down a street in Florence accompanied by two women (III); Sammy, in turn, manipulates events so that he can happen upon Beatrice as she leaves the training college in South London accompanied by two girlfriends. Dante, soon after, writes a *ballata* to justify his love in Beatrice's eyes (XII); Sammy sends a heady letter declaring his ensnarement. The crucial moment in the transformation of Dante's despair to active praise—which issues in the famous *canzone*, "Ladies who know by insight what Love is"—occurs as Dante walks in the country beside a stream of very clear water (XIX). Similarly, Sammy's devotion undergoes a crucial transformation as he wades through a cathedral-like woods; passing through a stream of "providential waters" (235), he feels his manhood strong and decides to sacrifice everything for "the white unseen body of Beatrice Ifor" (235).

Beatrice is to Sammy, then, what Beatrice is to Dante, a creature wholly superior to himself, wholly Other. But whereas to Dante Beatrice becomes an instrument of contemplation, exaltation, and finally salvation (in the *Paradiso* she leads him through Heaven), to Sammy she is merely an instrument of lust. He confuses her
mysterious, baffling beauty with simple salt sex—"I love you, I want to be you!" (105), he intones. By a deliberate act of the will he makes that Otherness a servant of his passion and egoism: sex becomes his "shoddy temple" (108) of worship. By a positive act of the will hedamns himself and rejects in that damnation the possibility of living by vision.

Golding put the ironic inversion this way:

But where Dante, presented with a coherent cosmos, was able to fit her into it, Sammy's confused cosmos ended by putting her through the whole mill of seduction—a scientific, rationalistic approach so to speak, so that Beatrice who took Dante up to the vision of God becomes a clog to Sammy and a skeleton in his cupboard. 39

This Dantean analogue operates only in one phase of the protagonist's journey, specifically Chapter XII, where Beatrice is introduced in the context of the art class. It is not employed as a literary inversion consistently through the entire fable as, for example, is Coral Island in Lord of the Flies where not only do the characters represent ironic inversions of Ballantyne's boys but the officer himself, in the coda, refers to its title in his admonition of the savages before him. Golding obviously intends us to look back at the Sammy of the Van Gogh seduction room and re-evaluate Beatrice's "opaqueness" (113) not as the "avoidance of the deep and muddy pool where others lived" (112), 40

39Golding's personal comment to Peter Green. Quoted by Green, p. 54.

40The images unmistakably hark back and relate to those of The Inheritors, the muddy pool holding all the horror and confusion that water held for the Neanderthals. Cf. Chapter III, esp. pp.105; 118-119.
but as the clear presence of generosity. The Dantean inversion, however, is not grounded in the total ideographic shape of the fable's structure; it has no significance in the coda's reversal of Sammy's destiny nor does it have any relevance to Sammy's purgation which occurs in the confrontation scene. Golding is forced to resort to explanatory comments, in fact, because the symbolic aspect of Beatrice is not grounded in dramatic feasibility and particularization. Beatrice (unlike Taffy) is never a character in her own right but rather a focus on Sammy; Golding is forced to resort to explanatory comments. A characteristic metaphor from optics is employed: "Just as the substance of the living cell comes shining into focus as you turn the screw by the microscope, so I now saw that being of Beatrice which had once shone out of her face" (191). (This sort of obtrusive argumentation occasioned many of the hostile comments about "ideas bombast"; yet the intrusion occurs only in the section devoted to the Dantean parallel.)

Nevertheless, this Dantean inversion is posited as the answer to the book's question: "where did I lose my freedom?" Further, it is given as the explanation for error. Sammy might have taken Beatrice as the ideal (and been led presumably to the twentieth-century mystic Rose). But he takes her as the opposite, "the very concrete present to be achieved, conquered and beaten." He confuses her miraculous Being—what he experiences as "metaphorical light"—with his own lust; his greed seeks to appropriate her mystery and possess it by a physical act.

41Golding's comment in Golding and Kermode, BBC Third Programme, (unpublished discussion).
What had been love on my part, passionate and reverent, what was to be a triumphant sharing, a fusion, the penetration of a secret, raising of my life to the enigmatic and holy level of hers became a desperately shoddy and cruel attempt to force a response from her somehow. Step by step we descended the path of sexual exploitation until the projected sharing had become an infliction. (123)

Whereas Dante places Beatrice in heaven in his last vision of her, Sammy (in words recasting Milton's Satan—"Musk, shameful and heady, be thou my good" [232]) decides his heaven will be sex; and since, of course, Beatrice is frigid, she becomes Sammy's hell, not his heaven at all.

Mountjoy, unlike Johnny Spragg and Nick, is no innocent. Nor is he, like Rowena Pringle and Philip, one of the wicked. "The innocent and wicked live in one world" (251); each operates in mutually exclusive but existentially inclusive spheres. Mountjoy belongs to a third category; he is one of the guilty and his sentence is to live in both worlds, suffering "the mode which we call the spirit" (253) as self-condemnation.

Cause and effect. The law of succession. Statistical probability. The moral order. Sin and remorse. They are all true. Both worlds exist side by side. They meet in me. We have to satisfy the examiners in both worlds at once. (244)

There is no bridge.

VI

"What we know is not what we see or learn but what we realize." (149)

Yet the sources and means of evil are also the sources and means of power and active creation; Sammy's shabby victory over Beatrice nevertheless and paradoxically complements his mysterious
victory over the bleakness of the cell and the darkness of his centre. Each manifests his special power, that reverence for beauty, that intense sensitivity, that "nightmare knowledge" (28) that lets him "see unusually far through a brick wall" (133). Both *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin* conclude that the point at which man becomes godlike is precisely the point at which he can fall. What ultimately makes a specific action 'good' or 'bad' is what one *Being* affirms or denies; what in fact one Being does with the ideal. The Neanderthals can do nothing but love; Pincher can do nothing but desecrate; yet both are drawn by an ideal—one in the figure of the People of the Fall, the other in the person of the (fragmentary) Nathaniel. The implication is that there is a certain crucial occasion where the test occurs and what a man has carried within him confronts him in the lineaments of choice. And Golding seems to be saying that at this point there is evidence—he would take it literally—that freedom exists. At this point one is not determined by one's predetermined nature. Thus Fa, unlike Lok, can understand that the Other People are dangerous: she remains awake and witnessing their transgressions. Furthermore, she possesses in her being something of Oa (since she is woman) which Lok does not possess. At the crucial point when he might have obeyed Fa's instructions to ignore Liku's absence and recapture only the new one, he reverts to (or, more precisely, remains with) his original nature. He tries

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42 Understood in the sense outlined in the discussion of character, p.204. Cf. as well the discussion in Chapter IV, pp. 186-187.
desperately to find Liku, simply because he is unable to imagine that the New People are evil enough to sacrifice her. His innocent nature contributes to Fa's death, his own death, and by extension that of the Neanderthal species. Similarly Christopher Martin's particular power is his ability to survive; and it is precisely this endurance (Christopher under the aspect of Christopolus, the Christ bearer) that Martin under the aspect of Pincher corrupts. Both The Inheritors and Pincher Martin offer this mythopoeia in structural terms. What is described as the ideographic structure of each fable allows an initial interpretation to be revised by the reader. Free Fall modifies this device; the technique and intent are still clear in the coda as well as the confrontation scene, the nightmarish experience in the cell. However the technique of reversal plays no consistent part: for example, it plays no part in revising the reader's conception of Sammy's early childhood. The important question why he grew frightened of the dark, a question Sammy poses to himself in the cell, is not answered. It has been the contention of this thesis that darkness represents the spiritual dimension which Golding contends contemporary man is incapable of conceiving of except in terms of guilt and malignancy. But Free Fall does not locate the reason why darkness should suddenly be something that terrifies; why darkness should be imagined as malignant. It just is.

Sammy may be, like his confused cosmos, unable to experience spirit except as guilt; he still escapes from "the forcing chamber of the cell" (190) into a kind of merciful freedom. Golding himself remarked
that the flashback at the novel's close was like the "handprint on the canvas that changes the whole thing," bringing it all into a true focus. The "key to it was that the door of the cell opened. I suddenly saw that, and it became [for me] the first genuine passion I felt about the book."  

Another theme can then be detected in the novel; one might well hazard the guess that this second pursuit is the one which most vividly engages Golding's imagination, for it grows from a radically anti-historical view of man as does Pincher Martin. In the prison camp, Sammy is deprived of institutions, society, even memories, and is reduced under Halde's interrogation to his elements: fear and conjecture. As Halde puts it to Sammy: "For you and me, reality is this room" (140), a comment which Sammy enlarges on symbolically when he mutters in the cell:

I? I? Too many I's, but what else was there in this thick, impenetrable cosmos? What else? A wooden door and how many shapes of walls? (169-170)

And given Sammy's adolescent choice of a material world, all that the cosmos is can be imagined as an impenetrable dark prison with a wooden door and no exit. As the ironic Dante, Sammy represents a twentieth-century figure living in society, but in the heart of the fable, "the forcing chamber of the cell," he is a moral being facing some kind of god,

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43 Golding, Personal communication. Compare the genesis of Free Fall, where Golding discovered significance at the novel's conclusion, with a similar discovery in the genesis of The Inheritors (cf. Chapter III, pp. 125-126). In the case of Free Fall there was, Golding maintains, no rewriting. He admits it being so close to him still that he has not reread it—the many technical errors in the text attest to this.
that inevitable thrust or bar of steel, that "god without mercy" which operates in and on him. Thus, in the confrontation scene action flows inward as Sammy retreats into himself to explore his fear.

It is a quest in search of Being qua Being then that occupies Free Fall's centre, not the quest for a philosophical bridge between two worlds. Its terms are inexplicit though they recall imagistically Pincher's purgatorial surrender; its end, like Sammy's definition of art, is "partly communication but only partly. The rest is discovery" (102). The experience proceeds out of what Sammy calls his "painful obsession with discovery and identification" (103), for he is portrayed throughout the fable as wanting to make what is outside himself inside himself. Finally, the journey bears similarities to archetypal journeys underground and the imagery of door, wall, darkness, and encirclement all are metamorphic: they suggest that a total change of being follows when the separating medium between consciousness and the Other is broken through. The process involves stripping the protagonist down to that very last thing which cannot be destroyed. This Golding takes as a definition of the human: an impenetrable target that will not buckle under pressure.

In the dark, Sammy first finds some comfort in the wooden door that his back rests against since it is a still and familiar point in the maze of imagined walls. But once he discovers that the shape of the confining room is a cell, he realizes that the door, though wooden,

\[44\] A phrase used to describe a minor character in The Pyramid, p. 159.
only allows him to suffer in a recognized corner. For the cell is an objective counterpart of the material cosmos that exists outside it: even if the door is breakable no escape follows its collapse since outside of the cell waits Halde, the avenging judge, and "prison inside prison" (171). To unlock the door is not to escape as Christian and Faithful did from Giant Despair's dungeon, for in a century of disbelief, it is matter, not a supreme and merciful principle which supports the world. To escape is simply to return where one has started. And with vistas turning back on each other Sammy admits "total defeat" knowing that this view of life both blights man's "will and [is] self-perpetuating" (171).

Yet this is only the first step in Sammy's torture, a torture he rapidly realizes is self-inflicted. Though he cautions himself to "Accept what you have found and no more" (174), some interior thrust compels him to leave the door and investigate the cell's centre: "The centre was the secret" (173). Another sort of prison encircles him—and this one is wholly of the spirit: "One way you take the next step and suffer for it. The other way, you do not take it but suffer on your own rack trying not to think what the next step is" (177). He begins to populate the centre with imagined demons. He cannot just stay by the door; he must deduce that something exists in the centre: he forces himself to guess, wonder, invent. It boils with shapes. Then "compelled

\[45\text{Cf. "They said the damned in hell were forced to torture the innocent live people with disease. But I know now that life is perhaps more terrible than that innocent medieval misconception. We are forced here and now to torture each other" (115).}\]
helplessly deprived of will, sterile, wounded, diseased, sick of his
nature, pierced" (173-174), he stretches out his hand. He touches
something wet, imagines: snake, acid, coffin, dead slug, gnarled body
then sum of all terror, a dismembered phallus.

Sammy Mountjoy screams. He screams, expecting nothing
beyond the threshold of his own consciousness but pain and perhaps its
cessation, accepting "a shut door, darkness and a shut sky" (184). The
wholly physical organ in the centre makes him scream in terror. It is
the instinctive un-conscious scream of a rat or captive animal but it be-
comes a human plea (Golding claims) because directed toward some
place for "the very act of crying changed the thing that cried" (184).
Instinctively "the thing" or point of consciousness that is Sammy searches
for a place where help may be found, and that pursuit Golding posits as
a unique characteristic of the human. Since the external and substantial
present offers only a twitching body and the concrete of the cell, it (the
point of consciousness) looks with "not physical eyes" (184) into an in-
terior world. But the internal and unsubstantial world offers no com-
fort either; if the present is only "the physical world . . . and no escape"
(185), then the past, against which the thing pitches, holds "some for-
gotten thing" under layers of concrete 46 which cannot be unearthed in

46 Cf. Pincher Martin: "Pattern repeated from the beginning
of time, approach of the unknown thing, a dark centre that turned its
back on the thing that created it and struggled to escape" (179). This is
the pattern that Sammy, again like Pincher, deliberately turns away
from and is to be understood as the presence (in absentia) of God.
the urgency of terror. A thing against "an absolute helplessness" (184), screaming for mercy, it can only pitch toward the future, hurling itself along a purgatorial furnace, experienced as a flight of steps from horror to horror. Flesh, language, thought, present perceptions, and past memories, rind by rind, the identifying skins of Mountjoy's person are pared away; finally even the refuge of madness (which for Pincher was the last proof of singular identity) is destroyed. Then and at this point the thing comes up against something which does not capitulate, an "entry where death is close as darkness against the eyeballs" (185). And breaks through that veil: "And burst that door" (185).

Though "all living has been left behind" (185) in its rush through time the thing is still alive. From blackness it appears to escape through the veil into a world transformed by spiritual freedom, but this thing, what the dead Samuel sees as "the human nature inhabiting the centre of my awareness" (190), has not been destroyed.

To die is easy enough in the forcing chamber of a cell. . . . But when the eyes of Sammy were turned in on myself . . . what they saw was not beautiful but fearsome. Dying, after all, then was not one tenth complete—for must not complete death be to get out of the way of that shining, singing cosmos and let it shine and sing? And here was a point, a single point which was my own interior identity, without shape or size but only position. (190)

With innocent eyes, he perceives the prisoners as burning bushes and the dust and camp as brilliant and fantastic jewels; Sammy accepts its spirit whose source is "a place . . . I did not know existed but which I had forgotten merely" (187). It is a Traherne-like cosmos whose

\[47\]Golding admitted that Sammy's vision of a felicitous universe bore strong similarities to Thomas Traherne's ecstatic vision of the
door is "sometimes open and sometimes shut" (187) but always there. Yet he must also accept living with his own "unendurable" (190) identity. For though the door has been burst open—a spiritual and physical door—and opens back on to the world of mystery, the inadequate Being that is Sammy's centre still persists.

The cell then with its opaque centre is a microcosmic image of Sammy's own moral life as the Rock was Pincher's interior landscape. The Nazis, Sammy conjectures, are psychologists of suffering and appropriate to each man the terror that is "most helpful and necessary to his case" (173) and for such a hedonist as Sammy it seems appropriate that a phallus occupies the dark middle. Thus in this horror, central to the cell, Sammy recognizes his own interior identity: it is an objective counterpart for his own centre, an odious and mutilated organ. Later

New Jerusalem which the Third Century in Centuries of Meditation (London, 1908) celebrates (Golding, Personal communication). Elsewhere in Free Fall Golding's kinship with the Seventeenth Century Devotionals is evident, particularly in such common themes as childhood's unique apprehension of the world, the primacy of Love, the necessity for a permanent awareness of the Spirit, and the notion of Musica Mundana, where the world's harmony and vibrancy is figured as a musical instrument. While wandering in the prison yard Sammy hears mountains singing: "They were not all that sang. Everything is related to everything else and all relationship is either discord or harmony. The power of gravity, dimension and space, the movement of the earth and sun and unseen stars, these made what might be called music and I heard it" (186-187).

Golding is deliberately ambiguous about the door's opening, leaving it to the reader to decide, depending on his religious sensibility. The commandant comes "late" (186, italics added) and opens it physically but in one sense Sammy has opened it by his spirit since the physical fact that it is closed is no longer relevant to the transformed Sammy.
in the coda we learn that, as the Commandant was releasing him from the cell, Sammy turned backwards and noticed a wet rag in the cell's centre, not a mutilated penis.

The method used here is the characteristic one of the ideographic structure—a delayed disclosure for in this, the coda's flashback, the reader discovers the odious fragment is nothing more or less than a damp floorcloth. While conscribed in the cell Sammy's imagination invested the fragment with shape and infection—he decides it is a penis when he imagines that Halde will choose the appropriate punishment for such a hedonistic man as he. The reader now judges (as Sammy himself has not by the story's close) that what Sammy perceived as his unendurable identity (when he turned the eyes of the spirit inwards) may be similarly innocuous. Furthermore, depending on how Sammy (and man by extension) judges himself, he may discover some release from guilt, from darkness, some opening door. Were he not blinded by his own guilt—his conviction of his unendurable identity—he might see the Redeemer in the Judge.

Thus the Sphinx's riddle which closes the fable—"The Herr Doctor does not know about peoples" (253) we might translate as a short-hand negation of mechanistic assumptions about morality which ignore the fact that even creatures as guilty as Sammy can experience moments of freedom, still are offered release from the cosmic prison by creatures apparently as guilty as Halde. Golding intends this reversal of perspective and the puzzle to operate back through the entire fable; in reality
it primarily touches only on the atavistic journey. It hardly answers
the question of the bridge.

Now the bridge between the gray world of flesh and the golden
world of spirit might have been the darkened cell with its reductive
process, a kind of flagellation which releases moral energies from
their malignant agency. For like the nightmare fragmentations of
Pincher's illusory "present," this atavistic exploration concerns itself
with the Darkness that spells Magic, Horror, Wonder. The Darkness,
then, is a kind of preternatural world that Sammy the younger (like the
boy in "The Ladder and the Tree") "inhabits by nature" (217). It is the
source of his real creativity: "Sometimes I would feel myself connected
to the well inside me. . . . There would come into my whole body a feel­
ing of passionate certainty. . . . Then I would stand the world of ap­
pearance on its head, would reach in and down, would destroy savagely
and recreate" (102, italics added). Decidedly this Darkness (and its
incomprehensible relation between the sources of power and destruction)
bears little relation to "the world of miracle" (189), the Traherne-like
singing universe. Nor is it the detached, understandable, and usable
universe of cause and effect. It simply is; "it reveals though we cannot
explain what it reveals."49 And Golding would leave the discovery
there. And while Free Fall does not achieve the "miracle of implication"

49 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes' comment on the "meaning" of
the spire. William Golding, p. 255.
which Sammy/Golding cites as the aesthetic end of any portrait where "the viewer's eye" and not the artist's pen creates a completed line and brings itself "slap up against another view of the world" (102), on the other hand it is no mean example of "laborious portraiture," a confession of failure and a confession of growth.
CHAPTER VI

THE SPIRE

I

To begin with there is a deep desire in the minds of people to break out of the globe of their own skulls, and find the significance in the cosmos that mere measurement misses. Any man who claims to have found a bridge between the world of the physical sciences and the world of the spirit is sure of a hearing. Is this not because most of us have an unexpressed faith that the bridge exists. . . .

—Golding, "All or Nothing" ¹

Free Fall's final page challenges the reductiveness of pattern. Though ultimately the novel remains bifocal in its vision, ambiguity rather than prescription informs the divided world which Sammy Mountjoy inhabits. The coda indicates that Mountjoy's certitudes about moral guilt and the undiscovered bridge collapse internally simply because such a pattern is too blunt to express (or reveal) the complexities of truth. Abstractly then, and at the expense of its own unity, Free Fall comes to essentially the same point as do the other fables of insisting that any

¹William Golding, "All or Nothing," The Spectator, 206 (March 24, 1961), 410.
scheme is self-contradictory because in some sense it is a metaphor. Nonetheless, there is the urgent search or as Golding puts it in one essay "the overriding human necessity to find a link between separate phenomena." The Spire takes precisely this paradox as its subject: the world it invokes is pluralistic, intermingling, complex, yet it places a willful and unrelenting patternmaker as its central intelligence. Out of the confrontation and inevitably intense collision of the two emerges what The Critical Quarterly has described as "the greatest of Golding's novels so far, but [also] one of the most ambitious and fascinating novels of the century." 3

The Spire represents, in fact, the completion of one phase in Golding's development as a fabulist. It recapitulates many of the features of the preceding fables. Again Golding has written a fable in which character is presented not only in torment but through torment. A crisis brings about the meeting of two worlds, a meeting which is represented in the confrontation scene. Here conscience and circumstances fuse in judgment of crime, and a painful purgation eliminates all but the essential ding an sich of the major character, that bar of identity that does not buckle. The protagonist seeks explanations and


3 An uncompromising claim but the article continues: "Great claims such as this demand a careful defence, and what follows is . . . based on the general proposition that the book's impressiveness resides not only in the rich complexity of its themes but in the poetic intensity by which these themes are realised." D. W. Crompton, "The Spire," Critical Quarterly, IX (Spring 1967), 64-65.
justification for his action in one pattern after another, one at each stage of the building; he is left staring out of a window at the physical spire whose one symbolic focus reveals its mysterious centre.

The plot line is simple enough, and like the narrative that extends chronologically over a two-year period, moderately straightforward. To this extent the novel represents a return to the manner of Lord of the Flies, but it resembles Pincher Martin and Free Fall in that the action is steeped in the inner consciousness of its leading character—though presented from the third person point of view rather than the first. Again structure is bare, severe, and formalized, taking its shape from the gradual erection and evolution of a cathedral spire. What excess there is exists at the level of language not of action which is economic throughout.

The fable is isolated temporarily and spatially; its action takes place in a setting as delimited as that of the island in Lord of the Flies, for it is confined within the cathedral walls, particularly the expanding stone flesh of the rising structure. Events move out into the close and village only after the spire has been constructed and then sparingly in the coda of the narrative. Psychologically, action is even more intensely confined within the increasingly unreliable consciousness of the protagonist, Jocelin. Here The Spire recalls Pincher Martin. As events that comprise the plot line become blurred, the physical boards, struts, nails, ropes of the tower are fiercely realized. "This
is a great strength in Golding," one critic remarks, "and an absolutely essential one here . . . since the hero sweats with every stone and joist as if he were putting it personally into place."  

Minor characters—and there are a number masterfully sketched, including a dumb sculptor, a jabbering, clacking wife, a flippant courtesan—exist as they pass in and out of Jocelin's obsession. If the huddled roofs of the city are viewed solely from the spire's high vantage point, shrugging their shapes into it, then the spire and its builders are looked at almost completely from Jocelin's perspective. Social context in the manner of Free Fall has been abandoned and when the reader sees Jocelin from the outside (as he does at several important junctures) it is with the sense of jolted strangeness that recalls the transition to Tuami's view of Lok in The Inheritors. As the narrative continues these jolts become more and more powerful since the reader occupies Jocelin's mind that is itself increasingly, obsessively closed.

The fable is built on two movements: Chapters I-X and Chapters X-XII: the building of the spire is followed by an examination of motive. On the completion of the spire's construction a dramatic reversal occurs which shatters the protagonist's illusions; Jocelin is forced to review his own motives and acknowledge his own deceptions. This inspection comprises the fable's second movement and here

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Jocelin comes up against the cellarage of his own mind, those things which he has deliberately repressed. In terms of *The Spire*’s ideo­

ographic structure this movement is an extension of the characteristic concluding coda that in all other fables hinted at a mythic integration to be accomplished by the reader when various clues were assembled. Peculiar to *The Spire* is the protagonist’s own realization of the full import of his actions; Jocelin accomplishes the fusion of alternate explanations. In his last cryptic cry, "It’s like the appletree," the fragmentations of pagan and Christin, cellarage and sky, panic-shot darkness and bluebird-over-water and all that these elements represent are brought into essential relationship.

The story concerns a Dean of a fourteenth-century English cathedral who is convinced in a vision that he is chosen by God to cap the magnificence of his cathedral with a four hundred foot spire. One morning lying at the church’s crossways, he feels himself initiated into a "newfound humility and newfound knowledge" 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

5 A related point is made independently by Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes: "Following the pattern of the earlier novels, Golding alters the viewpoint when the action is completed. But the change marked by the arrival of the Visitor and his Commission is not obtrusive; and much more a starting point for a farther journey than a milestone showing how far we have travelled." Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, *William Golding, A Critical Study*, p. 219.

6 William Golding, *The Spire* (London: Faber and Faber, 1694), p. 223. All subsequent quotations will be taken from this edition and be indicated by textual parentheses.
of me for Thee—" (193). At the novel's opening a physical spire, what Jocelin calls his ultimate "diagram of prayer" (120), is in the first stages of construction: the nave is filled with dust, a hole has been torn through the church's side to bring through wood and stone, and Jocelin is laughing in "holy mirth" (8) while the sunlight throws the coloured refraction of the Abraham and Isaac window on his shining face.

Jocelin now meets opposition to his plan from both his friend and confessor, Sacrist Anselm, and from the master builder, Roger Mason, who finds that the foundations are scarcely adequate for the cathedral's existing structure. By force of Jocelin's will the spire continues to be constructed, though now against the judgment of the clergy, the teams of masons who risk their lives at each level, and above all Roger who counsels the folly of the enterprise. Jocelin is reflective in his remark: "The net isn't mine, Roger, and the folly isn't mine. It's God's Folly" (121).

The building is a diagram of prayer; and our spire will be a diagram of the highest prayer of all. God revealed it to me in a vision, his unprofitable servant. 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. (120)

Faith overrules advice; Jocelin trusts his vision, is reassured by a warmth at his spine that he calls his guardian angel, and finds encouragement in the promise of a Holy Nail from Rome. Then it becomes clear that foundations do not exist. A breakdown in Christian
faith coincides with the threatened destruction of the Cathedral. Pagan riots ensue and the Verger, Pangall, vanishes.

Jocelin's fanaticism is now so intense that he deliberately exploits the masterbuilder's desertion of his wife and illegal attachment to the Verger's wife, Goody Pangall. As in Free Fall, the decision to use adultery to further one's own end becomes the moment when freedom is lost. Jocelin thinks to himself:

... Goody and Roger, both in the tent that would expand with them wherever they might go. And so distinct that it might have been written... there was the thought. It was so terrible that it went beyond feeling, and left him inspecting it with a kind of stark detachment, while the edge of the spire burned into his cheek. . . . 'She will keep him here.' (64)

Her horrible death in childbirth, the master builder's drunkenness and attempted suicide, even the changed countryside whose landscape is altered by the tower "laying a hand" (107) and enforcing a new pattern of streets, roads, migrations—"The countryside was shrugging itself obediently into a new shape" (108)—all are the costs and the sacrifices, and the lessons of the holy exploit.

This pattern ends with the arrival of ecclesiastical authorities from Rome to hear the complaints against the Dean. A Visitor brings the Holy Nail. Seeing Jocelin deranged, his skirt tied high for climbing, his Services abandoned, his hair filled with carpenter's chips, the Commission indicts him, and relieves him of his Deanship. Jocelin's only concern is that the spire should be nailed securely to the heavens. In the midst of a raging storm he ascends the tower and performs the last
It is the conclusion of the first and major movement. The spire stands. In the extended coda, Chapters X-XII, menacing facts begin to emerge: Jocelin finds his appointment was due to a debased aunt, the mistress of the King; he discovers his clergy loathe him for his arrogance and pomposity; Father Adam denounces the record of his original vision of the spire as spire naïve. Even the mighty pillars are hollow, they were filled with rubble by "the giants who had been on the earth in those days" (188). The world seems corrupt, a whirligig of grinning noseless men. In despair Jocelin flings himself down on the crossways, his place of vision and "his place of sacrifice" (189), and there like a broken snake he is scourged: "Then his angel put away the two wings from the cloven hoof and struck him from arse to the head with a whitehot flail" (188).

But his angel may be a delusion too—spinal tuberculosis which has wasted away his body. During the six months left him to live, Jocelin inspects the falsity of all that has gone before. The two sorts of cellars, his hidden nature and the pit at the spire's base, each is surveyed. Slowly he acknowledges his repressed lust for Goody that made him marry his daughter-in-god to the impotent, aging Verger; he acknowledges Pangall's murder, for the pagan workmen had used the Verger as a ritual scapegoat for their fears, burying him in the pit at the crossways. Jocelin then knows himself responsible for four destroyed lives. And all that remains is the spire, "an ungainly,
crumbling thing" (193), a monument to his error once an act of worship, then the sublimation of sexual energy and the crude expression of lust, now a cruel hammer of vengeance pressing down on the world. Crawling back from Roger's den the townsfolk attack him, just as earlier Pangall had been reviled by the workmen.

Moments before his death and the giving of the Last Host, however, Jocelin suffers another vision. Through the window he glimpses a thing surpassing in beauty any other vision: "It was slim as a girl, translucent. It had grown from some seed of rosecoloured substance that glittered like a waterfall, an upward waterfall. The substance was one thing, that broke all the way to infinity in cascades of exultation that nothing could trammel" (223). It is the spire, still standing, and the fable takes this as the moment of truth as Jocelin dying whispers his beatitude: "It's like the appletree."

II

Few reviewers committed themselves solidly to the support of The Spire when it appeared in 1964. For several reasons the book's appearance amounted to a literary watershed for Golding's reputation, a verification of the earlier accomplishments, a kind of test case for the "white hope" of the English novel. Several years had intervened between its publication and that of Free Fall and while Golding had

7R. W. B. Lewis claims in his review that The Spire took five years to write, though Golding has neither confirmed nor denied the rumour. "The High Cost of Piety," New York The Sunday Herald Tribune Book Week, April 26, 1964, p. 10.
written a substantial number of reviews and articles for British and American journals, with the increasing popularity of Lord of the Flies he sought personal isolation, refusing interviews by the media, and generally avoiding the kind of literary conviviality expected of him.\(^8\) The Spire received, then, the kind of attention that placed it immediately in an area between notoriety and critical recognition: a best seller, grudgingly credited but often discredited. Thus a critic no less perceptive than V. S. Pritchett could write that Golding had succumbed to the "underworld of fashionable paranoia" and the consequences were "obscurity, monotony and strain. His inventiveness is dulled. His clean narrative is choked and his sense of character and human conflict is paralysed."\(^9\) Others argued that allegory and ambitious design overwhelmed concrete novelistic features: "... the whole fabrication creaks; the allegory nags one with elaborate reminders of phallism, witchcraft and meteorology; the fine images suddenly disperse in clouds of hysterical dialogue; the prose as well as its meaning is willfully tough to read."\(^{10}\) In fact most commentators responded to

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\(^8\) See, for example, Golding's brusque statement at the conference of European writers at Leningrad in the summer of 1963 transcribed in "The Condition of the Novel, New Left Review, No. 29 (January-February 1965), pp. 34-35.


the fable's concentrated energy as though it were (as The New York Times suggested) "a strongly physical act." 11

Style was assailed much in the manner Free Fall's verbal texture had been attacked as rhetorical, obscure, and needlessly constricted. "The fantastically mannered writing," John Wain comments, "never confers a plain sentence if an odd-shaped one can be found and never tells a story without first removing all the clues." 12 In fact strain and obscurity were the key critical terms and few articles suggested that gothic excess operated as an ironic and descriptive analogue of character, event, and theme. Nor was there much analysis of style, though it shows some interesting innovations appropriate to its mediaeval spirit.

Two critics analyzed the peculiar amalgam of modernity and archaism that characterizes the style. Kermode argues persuasively that a colloquial English slightly archaic yet fully idiomatic emerges from The Spire, "a dry hot urgency of prose yet "free of any slang"


and also without "any trace of god wottery." It is, he thinks, a prose for violence. Furbank makes the interesting point that "the whole uneasy style of Anglican manners," which he detects throughout the book, is used deliberately "as an expression of the falsity of Jocelin's own human relationships—which is one of the things he has to be made to realize and this constitutes an essential feature of the plot."  

On the whole most criticism misapprehended the increasing egoism of the obsessive Jocelin and interpreted his isolation (and in turn the fable's theme) as necessitated by Golding's weakness in presenting human relationships. A related point was that the fable lacks humanity, that both the integrity and inviolability of the individual consciousness are sacrificed in the interests of moral and metaphysical ideas. "Lacking inner life these figures tend to approximate to the clichés of the historical novel," one critic insists; furthermore, the book's sensational treatment does little to redeem it from sentimentality. "The death of a fallen woman in childbirth is one of the commonplaces of romantic fiction." It is held, rather consistently, that Golding is


14 Furbank, p. 60.

inhibited from handling any but adolescent or pre-adolescent relationships, a point more irrelevant than accurate to The Spire since it transpires that Golding abandoned whole sections of narrative devoted to the early relationships between Jocelin and Anselm, and Jocelin and Alison, in a strict paring down of the fable's structure so that both relationships could become the instruments of ironic reversals in the protagonist's fortune. 16 Thus in the fable's final version Jocelin discovers that the origins of his funds and Deanship are soiled by human corruption only after the spire's construction is completed.

An inordinate amount of discussion of The Spire focuses on the historical/literary source for the tower and its tale; it has been assumed that since the earlier novels used simple-minded literary ancestors as their starting point, then The Spire too must be a reversal of some other writer's version of hubris attendant on cathedral construction; and if not this, then a popular tale, some church record or legend. Thus Kermode wonders where Golding "got the facts about the mason's craft," 17 and assumes some "useful" point of departure might exist there. As a matter of fact Golding has said he briefly consulted an architectural book on tower building in the Harvard University Library, but then abandoned it preferring his own (considerable) knowledge of seamanship: "I did the whole thing in sailor's terms." 18

16 Golding, Personal communication.
18 Golding, Personal communication, letter, July 8, 1970 (unpublished). "Seamanship has been defined as the art of moving heavy
(This accounts for one system of images where the cathedral is a "stone ship" [10] "fitted with a mast" [107], its pillars "float" [95] and its foundations are a "raft" [39] on which the "ark" [95] rests.)

Other critics have been markedly less cautious than Kermode in their speculations about the origins of The Spire. Thus Furbank offers a popular nineteenth-century novel, The Nebuly Coat by J. Meade Falkner, as a possible springboard. It is a wholly secular novel about a Gothic tower built on Norman arches not designed to carry so considerable a weight, and which is allowed to fall owing to a rector's pretensions. 19 On the crudest of parallels numerous critics have adopted Ibsen's The Masterbuilder as the primary "source" for The Spire. 20 This Golding has adamantly denied. It is worth quoting a long passage from Oldsey and Weintraub since it reveals just how circumstantial and uncritical is the evidence used throughout the Study to support its thesis that all Golding's work is "reactive."

Much of The Spire seems a reactive impulse from Ibsen. . . . The spire susceptible to Freudian glosses, the young man involved in

weights—with the implication that you only use most primitive means: blocks, tackles, levers. I know about that." Ibid.

19Furbank, p. 59.

20See D. W. Crompton, pp. 66-67; W. G. Elman, William Golding, A Critical Essay, Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective, ed. Roderick Jellem (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William G. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1967), p. 36; Steiner, p. 39. The argument here is that since Solness, the master builder of the play's title, falls to death in the attempt to scale the spire of his own house that he is a prototype for Jocelin who does not fall to death, and who is not the master builder of the cathedral's spire.
the obsession over the spire, the vertigo symptoms of both master
builders (as well as Jocelin) [sic] the Christian pagan symbolism
of the topping rituals, the visitations by angels and .devils, the
wholesale ruin of lives and careers by forceful men who see other
human beings only as their instruments these . . . relate the spires
of Ibsen and Golding. And coincidently, in the light of the cathedral
setting of Golding's novel, The Master Builder has been called
"a great cathedral of a play."21

Similar whimsy construes the following sources as well: Ibsen's Brand
(both protagonists are obsessive zealots who build spires); Eliot's The
Rock (vulgar workmen construct foundations in churches); Browning's
"The Bishop Orders His Tomb as St. Praxed's" (both works have priests
named Anselm).22 Golding adamantly denies any literary predecessor:
"no work comes out of another unless it is stillborn."23

Perhaps such debates about The Spire's derivativeness are
significant more in what they reveal about the state of reviewing than
in any accurate judgment on the fable's originality or value. Some

21 Oldsey and Weintraub, The Art of William Golding, p. 158.
Other documented hypotheses in The Art of William Golding include such
"sources" as: Ford Madox Ford's The Inheritors for Golding's The
Inheritors; Camus' The Fall for Free Fall; Shaw's Androcles and the
Lion, Caesar and Cleopatra for The Brass Butterfly. Of these "sources"
Golding has read only Shaw's plays and these long before the short story
"Envoy Extraordinary" (from which The Brass Butterfly derived) was
written. Golding, Personal communication.

22 Crompton cites the poem as relevant too, but it seems more
likely that Golding had an ironic echo in mind when choosing the name
Anselm, for there was a twelfth-century Archbishop of Canterbury,
Anselm, who was attacked as a hypocrite, concealing"behind a veil of
simplicity" his position as a Realist Schoolman. G. Crosse and S. L.
Ollard, A Dictionary of English Church History, 3rd ed. (London,
1948), p. 57.

opposition is legitimate, of course. Such seems to be the case of appraisals like those of Sullivan or McGuiness who see any radical modifications of novelistic techniques as fundamentally a violation of the genuine business of the novel whose rise they interpret historically in terms of religious, economic, and philosophical individualism. 24 It is the opinion of this thesis that a substantial number of _The Spire_ critiques now seem ill-advised, if not hastily considered, where literary reviewing functions as a kind of trend-spotting. Thus a review like that of Granville Hicks, "The Evil that Lurks in the Heart," works solely in terms of the standing clichés about Golding's fiction. 25 This of course does disservice to authors since it makes them victims not forgers of their own reputations, forever feeding the doctrinaire orthodoxy of critical expectations. This is very much the case in the matter of the influences on Golding's fiction where a sharp distinction must be drawn between source, allusion, and association. Golding has admitted, however, that Trollope's Barchester series were used or "sewn in negatively" to the extent that precisely what Trollope's secular age avoided, Jocelin has foremost before him. ("Trollope included everything but the church," 26 [viz., everything but the spirit and its cor-

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26 Golding, Personal communication. It is rumoured that Golding "toyed half-seriously with the idea of titling his novel _An
ruption] Golding has remarked.) Presumably then Golding would agree
with Lodge's point that, "Instead of Trollope's world of secularized
religion, inhabited by intriguing ecclesiastical careerists, we have the
age of faith, just as disedifying in its own way, when Christianity was
still in rivalry with pagan devil-worship and when worldly desires
sublimated into religious zeal could have terrifying consequences." 27

III

The truth is, we have a primitive belief that
virtue, force, power—what the anthropologists
might call mana—lie in the original stones and
nowhere else. . . . Our old churches are full
of this power. I do not refer to their specifically
religious function or influence. There is a whole
range of other feelings that . . . coagulated
around them. . . . The historians of religion
might mutter about the stones that they were
"relics by contact." But contact with what? It
was mana, indescribable, unaccountable, inde-
finable, impossible mana.

—"An Affection for Cathedrals" 28

Erection in Barchester but his publishers rejected it as offensive.
Oldsey and Weintraub, p. 136.

mediaeval corruption by reference not only to Alison whose money builds
the spire but also by reference to Ivo who owes his position as chancellor
simply to the fact that his father owned forests from which the beams of
the cathedral were made. Golding alludes to this corruption by having
Ivo's installation occur ironically in the qualified sunlight cast through
the St. Aldhelm window. St. Aldhelm was a seventh-century Bishop,
a traditionalist, who insisted that faith was only granted in the tradition
and that the duty of accepting derives solely from Peter and the tradi-
tion of the Roman church.

28 William Golding, "An Affection for Cathedrals," Holiday,
XXXVIII (December 1965), 35-42.
No simple source or scenario underpins *The Spire*. Rather, diverse fragments contributed to its genesis, coalescing according to the logic of imagination, from whose final soil the fable has grown organically. "The Ladder and the Tree," for example, with its antitheses represented by the ascending ladder to the tree-house and the dark fearsome graveyard at its base seems entirely relevant to the symbolic opposition of pit and tower in *The Spire*. Jocelin climbs away from the crossway's stirring earth; as he divests himself of its "confusion" (100) he feels "the same appalled delight as a small boy feels when first he climbs too high in a forbidden tree" (101). Similarly, *The Spire* adapts the cellar metaphor which occupies *Pincher Martin*'s thematic core; there the metaphor invoked that morbidity and nastiness beneath the conscious mind which the conscious mind itself had substituted for some good (Golding's letter called it "god") that formerly rested in the darkness. Jocelin is described as "a building about to fall" (222) in the fable's *coda*. And as he interrogates the drunken Mason about the contents of the cathedral's pit, he asks, "What's a man's mind, Roger? Is it the whole building, cellarage and all?" (213, italics added).

Several occasional works are germane. The BBC play "Miss Pulkinson" and the short story from which it derives (published in 1960 by *Encounter*) show Golding preoccupied with the problem of faith and guilt several years before *The Spire*'s appearance. Setting a
conventionally religious but perniciously bigoted spinster against a religious eccentric who prays ecstatically before an illuminated window, the play explores the inevitable opposition between orthodox belief and the unaccountable certitude the mystic possesses which defies reason, reasonableness, and the data of the empirical world. It is significant that the church within which all the action occurs is Salisbury Cathedral and the Abraham and Isaac window plays a dramatic and thematic role in the development of the play's eschatology of the sacrificial victim. The Spire elaborates on the notion of the scapegoat and sacrificial victim—in fact the theme is introduced in the fable's very first paragraph when a complex image describes the Dean's face illuminated by the Abraham window: "He was laughing, chin up . . . God the Father was exploding in his face with a glory of sunlight through painted glass, a glory that moved with his movements to consume and exalt Abraham and Isaac and God again" (7). Certain motifs from "Miss Pulkinhorn" reappear in the fable, including the early English hymnal, "Tomorrow Must be My Dancing Day" with its enigmatic refrain, "Sing O my love, O my love, my love, my love/This have I done for my true love".29 and the metaphor of the growing tree to represent the entanglement of human motives and fortunes. Perhaps the most important similarity between the fable and the play is in the characterization of the Man, 

29. In the play and fable this refrain alternates between the regular church ritual of Mass though with less justification in "Miss Pulkinhorn" than in The Spire where it nicely reveals Jocelin's confusion of motives and love objects. The Spire, p. 137.
for though he is in the line of the Nat/Simon visionary figure he is more complex. He is a believer yet self-deluded, living on the very fringe of lunacy "but his deceit had a kind of innocence about it." 30

Among Golding's occasional pieces, another relevant document is "In Retreat," a 1960 review of Trevelyan's A Hermit Disclosed. Quite possibly this book suggested to Golding the dramatic possibilities of having Jocelin feel physically his vision as the angel of God at his spine, a delusion which allows the alternate motives of sexuality and spinal tuberculosis to enter the story and function as alternate explanations for "vision." Golding shows considerable psychological insight into the innocent, Jimmy Mason, whose diary Trevelyan had unearthed but what is interesting is the lyrical tone which pervades the review, and Golding's singular interest in Jimmy's religious conversion. The following passage is the sole portion of Jimmy's diary Golding quotes in his review:

'Went to bed at half past eleven, and not lain many minutes before felt something so strange come down from heaven. It seemed as if come so many times and would never go away. How bad it made me feel I cried and prayed to God. Directly it went I felt no more. It could never be anything evil, but good as one of the angels of God.' 31

The prose rhythms of the dream/vision are unmistakably sexual as the


experience itself might possibly have been since contextually this part of the diary was written at a time when Jimmy Mason was bewilderingly attracted to a woman. Jocelin's first phallic dream has striking similarities to the one recorded in the diary; waking in loathing Jocelin lashes himself "seven times, hard across the back in his pride of the angel, one time for each devil" (65). If indeed this remote diary suggested certain elements of Jocelin's mysticism and its connection to repressed sexuality, then it combined with another germinal figure, adamant in its energy. Golding has mentioned a mediaeval sculpture as one of the imaginative seeds for the ravenlike egoism of Jocelin's nature. 32 This is the Charlemagne monument which outrides Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, a formalized and immensely powerful horseman in flight, clothes whipped by wind as its horse rushes forward.

Now despite its historical setting and temporal isolation The Spire is not a historical novel: "Golding has not attempted to recreate the age of Edward III or to fill his pages with the kind of contemporary detail that most historical novelists depend on for verisimilitude." 33 Nevertheless, historical realities and their attendant fictitious legends are relevant to The Spire's genesis. Of course there are a host of legends surrounding Gothic cathedrals that anyone living in England—the country which experienced the apotheosis of mediaeval construction—

32 Golding, Personal communication.

could not help but absorb in part. It is a matter of historical record that in 1322 the tower of Ely Cathedral fell; Canterbury Cathedral's builder, William of Sens, fell from scaffolding and broke his back; in 1646 the central spire of Lichfield Cathedral was demolished by Royalist forces such was its symbolic arrogance; the spire of Chichester fell in 1861, tumbling in February after singing during the Christmas services; Peterborough Cathedral was built on a peat bog; Bath on ruins of successive Roman baths; Carlisle has two streams flowing beneath its central tower; Wells rises from a ring of pools; and Salisbury Cathedral, the country's tallest and most extraordinary spire surmounting its top, rises from marshland. Golding's essay, "An Affection for Cathedrals," on Salisbury and Winchester, shows his delicate familiarity with many of their chronicles. He seems attracted imaginatively by the element of irrationality which overrides practical confirmation and sanctions. Thus writing on Salisbury Cathedral's legendary origin he celebrates the victory of faith over technological commonsense.

Round about the year 1200, Bishop Poore was standing on a hill overlooking the confluence of the local rivers, according to legend, when the mother of Jesus appeared to him, told him to shoot an arrow and build her a church where the arrow fell. The arrow flew more than a mile and fell in the middle of a swamp. There with complete indifference to such things as health, foundations, access and general practicability, the cathedral was built. Eighty years later with a technological gamble which makes space travel seem child's play, the builders erected the highest spire in the country on top of it, thousands of tons of lead and iron and wood and stone. Yet the whole building still stands. 34

So it is likely these legends or known fragments of them have—to use his own figure—rotted to compost; have "mulched down" in the fertile soil of his imagination over the years.

There is the added and absolutely essential matter that Golding has passed much of his life under the twin towers of Salisbury Cathedral and Stonehenge, teaching beneath one and living very close to the other. For him the high chalk Downs of Wessex that surround the two monuments are alight with legends. As an autobiographical essay, "Digging for Pictures," records: "the whole of this area is sown thick with the remains of ancient peoples,"\(^\text{35}\) Roman, Norman, Saxon, and Celt.

Salisbury Cathedral, then, is the historical original for Dean Jocelin's "bible in stone" (51). It is clear that the main story is based upon the actual construction of the spire in Salisbury Cathedral, for many of its features are borrowed. Begun in 1220, a century later a 404-foot spire (Jocelin's stretches 400 feet) was added, its apex topped by a capstone all of which rests on four pillars whose diminishing thickness thrusts appalling weight into a marshy bog on which the whole edifice is supported. As in the fable, one of the pillars slipped out of perpendicular, despite thick iron bands which had been used to strengthen the spire's structure: "It leans. It totters. It bends. But it still stands,"\(^\text{36}\) writes Golding. Until recently the whole structure was a


source of considerable anxiety: "We know now that this river-bounded meadow conceals one of the finest weight-bearing geological formations in the world," one architect observes. But the builders' faith (or foolhardiness) and their astonishing engineering feat still amount to little less than a miracle, since they could not possibly have suspected such a stratum. "It is a miracle of faith," Golding has declared, "A definite act of faith."  

Not far from Salisbury Cathedral itself lies Old Sarum. A rather formidable symbol of continuity, it is the site successively of a British and possibly Roman camp, of a Saxon and Norman town. Its cathedral was the bishopric of two twelfth-century bishops, Jocelin and Roger, and at the end of the fourteenth century its stones were raised to provide materials for Salisbury Cathedral close. Earlier, stern Roman roads crossed Salisbury plain and converged at what used to be a prehistoric metropolis whose "cathedral" (Golding's word) was Stonehenge with its monolithic stone slabs, its burial sites (the ritual

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39 Both Jocelin and Roger have historical originals who figured in Salisbury's history being respectively second and third Bishops of Old Sarum: Roger Le Poer (d. 1139) "Lived openly with a concubine" and Jocelin De Bohun (d. 1184) sought to reconcile Beckett and Henry. Statutes and Customs of the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Salisbury, eds. C. Wordsworth and D. Macleane (London; 1915), p. 541.

40 Golding, "Digging for Pictures," p. 61.
The monuments, their ruins and annals and legends, the soil itself represent a rather complicated metaphor for human effort it would seem, for they confirm mutely an ancient repetition of creation and destruction in historical as well as geological times. Their presence speaks both of the anonymity of human enterprise and its essential autocratic origin so much so that: "The very stones cry out." They possess mana.

IV

It was so simple at first. On the purely human level of course, it's a story of shame and folly — Jocelin's Folly, they call it. I had a vision you see, a clear and explicit vision. It was so simple! It was to be my work. I was chosen for it. But then the complications began. A single green shoot at first, then clinging tendrils, then branches, then at last a riotous confusion—

—The Spire (168)

41 Ibid., p. 62.
The Spire represents a major development in Golding’s technical strategy. First it does not invert a conventional or popular model to arrive at its theme. No simple scenario underpins the fable though several associative strands are relevant to the book’s imaginative growth. Secondly, though the structural shape of The Spire functions ideographically, reversal occurs at a dramatic level not just by the juxtaposition of two structural frames. The fable is divided into two movements, the second of which corresponds to the slighter codas of the earlier fables since it consists in several important disclosures that throw into suspicion all that has preceded it. It differs from the earlier codas in that the new perspective is not a new point of view but rather the enlightened viewpoint of the protagonist himself as he looks back upon events with different eyes. Consequently the resolution of those alternate patterns the fable has set in motion is accomplished by the protagonist, not the reader alone, as is the case in the earlier fables. Inasmuch as there is no other consciousness which views the events we share Jocelin’s perspective throughout the fable.

It is true that point of view is handled so that certain ironic asides, as well as the symbolic patterns certain metaphors assume as they are reiterated throughout the text, are intended to hint at Jocelin’s folly, the purity of his dedication, and complexity of his motives.

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42 This change may explain the comment that there is no such thing as a "gimmick ending" in The Spire. Bernard F. Dick, "The Novelist is a Displaced Person," An Interview with William Golding," College English, XXVI (March 1965), 481.
Among these the tent, the mayflower, the kingfisher and raven, and above all the burgeoning tree are relevant, the latter especially so since one of the major thematic preoccupations of the book is the nature of the generative process. Thus we interpret the dreams in their sexual context whereas Jocelin deliberately denies them their sexual origin, even when the buried creatures haunt him. Consider, for example, the careful identification of Goody with the dumb sculptor where the red-haired "devil" (178) of his dream's "uncountry" hums from an empty mouth. Both figures are, of course, objects of Jocelin's suppressed desire, silent servants to his prurience and prudery but he prefers to interpret them as bewitchments or bad angels (thus creating a demon from the stuff of his own mind in the manner of the New People and Pincher). A similar identification between the cathedral and a man's body with the obvious phallic symbolism of the spire is made (on the whole fairly decorously) at several junctures in the fable. In the very first chapter Jocelin surveys the model of the cathedral which resembles, he thinks:

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 . . . was his head. And now also springing projecting bursting erupting from the heart of the building, there was his crown and majesty, the new spire. (8)

Asleep the cathedral/Body analogue undergoes another modulation as the spire becomes the phallus of Jocelin's loathsome dreams:

It seemed to Jocelin that he lay on his back in his bed; and then he was lying on his back in the marshes, crucified and his arms
were the transepts with Pangall's kingdom nestled on his left side. People came to jeer. . . . Only Satan himself, rising out of the west, clad in nothing but blazing hair stood over his nave and worked at the building. . . . (74-75, italics added)

The analogy has a triple application then between the cathedral and Man in general and the cathedral and the representative of man in particular. Characteristically the metaphoric referents of the cathedral (like the cellarerage and the spire) have microcosmic and macrocosmic corresp­ondences. 43

It would be an oversimplification, however, to interpret the whole of the spire's construction as "the phallic sublimation of Jocelin's repressed yearning for the red-haired wife of a cathedral worker" as one reviewer does. 44 (In fact, the construction lends itself to a wide range of metaphoric treatment: it is successively the "mast" [158] of a ship, "a dunce's cap" [119], a "stone hammer" [183] waiting to strike, and the stone diagram of the highest prayer of all.) Kermode's remark, that "It gives one some idea of the nature of this writer's gift that he has written a book about an expressly phallic symbol to which Freudian glosses seem irrelevant," 45 seems much more to the point.

For the element of phallism operates as just one aspect of the primordial,

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43 Thus "Jocelin's crisis of body and spirit corresponds precisely with that of the building" as Lewis notes, p. 10. And Jocelin speaks of himself as a "building about to fall" (222) just as the spire seems to be splitting apart.


that ritual terror, barbarism and magical awe that exist within the civilized psyche. The whole ambiguous continuum is imaged here by the pit/cellarage where again the metaphor of seething water and darkness conveys the horror implicit in death, decay, and destruction. To Jocelin it is "Doomsday coming up . . . the damned stirring or the noseless men turning over and thrusting up" (80).

Some form of life; that which ought not to be seen or touched, the darkness under the earth, turning seething coming to the boil. (79)

It is a dimension of his nature that Jocelin has always denied thus like Pincher and the children in *Lord of the Flies* he comes to regard the dimension as darkness and evil. During the crucial episode at the pit, the symbolism of the cathedral model assumes this larger relevance when Jocelin "in an apocalyptic glimpse of seeing" catches the impotent Pangall being mocked by a workman dancing "the model of the spire projecting obscenely from between his legs" (90). Jocelin turns away in disgust. In fact, Jocelin is disgusted by any relationship between flesh and spirit; in a sense he is the obverse of Sammy, rejecting the flesh in lieu of the spirit. "Renewing life" (58) horrifies him—it is like mud overcoming his body; Rachel is "a furious womb [that] had acquired a tongue," woman (or in words of the fable

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46 An important identification is drawn between Pangall and Jocelin: the latter is mocked by the workmen in one instance when he rushes "out of a hole with his folly [the model] held in both hands" (58). See as well the dream quoted on page 260 where Pangall's kingdom is stationed at Jocelin's side. This will be explored in Section V.
Beldame) strips the sparkling honeybars and phantom light of existence down to where "horror and Farce" take over. He tries to escape into free air and light away from darkness and marsh, where creation is "not the burgeoning evil thing, from birth to senility with its complex strength between" (62-63).

He tries to move away from "all this confusion" but each new level brings a new effect, a new cause, a new lesson. A funnel is built over the crossways, the pit is filled in, yet a new pit emerges on the higher level in the swallow's nest that Goody and Roger occupy. There is a lesson for each height; like "dark waters in his belly" he feels that he brings "essential evil" (106) with him all the way to the "stork's nest" (124), a third kind of pit at the head of the tower. Yet something new is learned, something that could not have been predicted. "We're mayfly. We can't tell what it'll be like up there from foot to foot; but we must live from morning to evening every minute with a new thing" (117). And though Roger insists that Jocelin should "Look down . . . look down" (117) the bird in flight dreads the dull factual pavement. He longs to be the raven "that knows what the sunrise is like" and have "some knowledge of yesterday and the day before" (117).

When he can control his thoughts, Jocelin suppresses the images of red hair, mistletoe, wolf-howl, and burning fires. The reader's understanding suffers a similar suspension. Indeed, for the reader these images sustain their ambiguity and threatening power
because they are inexplicable to Jocelin—what, at this point in the narrative, for example, is the hideous obscene berry Jocelin scrapes from his foot/ why does the memory of the pit, "A grave made ready for some notable" (13), erupt in his memory as he scans the shuddering bale fires in the Valley of the Hanging Stones/ what "devils from hell" torment him, swooping with scaly wings past his spine as he mounts the corkscrew stairs/ what plant with strange flowers and fruit, complex, twining and caught with red hair does he see? Obviously they are the imagining of an obsessed mind, but their very insistent repetition and elaborate interweaving with each other suggest "a pattern" (187) that is being deliberately ignored. "There it came again," Jocelin ponders, "the notsong, the absence of remembering, the overriding thing—" (166). Point of view is managed so that the reader must experience the terror before he understands it: he is confined within a confining mind. Baker's metaphor for this angle of observation is pertinent: the protagonist's "eye is like the shutter of a camera: it opens on this perspective and on that perspective, admitting to the 'central darkness' within a confusing multiplicity of 'pictures' which the fumbling and limited intelligence tries to arrange in meaningful patterns." 47 However, the actual physical sense the fable imparts is more arduous than this since the reader, at times, has access to the wider angle of the third person omniscient point of view. To use Kermode's phrase, we see the action "not so much through the eyes

47 Baker, William Golding, p. 93.
as over the shoulder of Jocelin." Things come marginally into focus so that we get exactly the same impression of Alison's face as does Jocelin—to him she appears enormous. But we also have our own perception. Thus point of view is managed so that the reader can construe some of the social and moral implications of Jocelin's obsession as he himself cannot: Roger is terrified of heights and is being driven by an unrelenting will; his wife is churlishly dismissed when she requires sympathy; Alison is no more or less wanton than the Dean whose position she established by a boudoir giggle; Anselm's "stately head" is steeped in petty malice.

On the other hand, the reader identifies with the protagonist so strongly that when Jocelin's motives are inspected by his interrogators it is impossible not to find the questions repellent in their simplicity. During these interrogations and questionings the reader finds himself sharing Jocelin's total conviction of the inadequacy of words to explain the entangled course of events: "That's too simple, like every other explanation. That gets nowhere near the root" (195). We understand Jocelin's point that there seems no way of tracing all the complications back to their root, no way of disentangling the anguished faces from the fact of the creation. The reader is caught—and this is a frequent metaphor in the book—between the outside and the inside of things, unable to make a judgment. We are never allowed to settle into one view.

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Everything in the novel seems to point two ways. The workmen are "good men" (155) yet infidels and blasphemous; the cathedral is rich with the "Fabric of Constant Praise" (165) yet seems a "pagan temple" (10); Jocelin is a brutal self-deluded egoist, nevertheless when exalted by vision—whether God-inspired, flesh-inspired, or disease-inspired—he accomplishes the concrete construction of a spire that "joins earth to heaven" (69). Its very stones are windows by which men look at the infinite, yet "they cry out" (223). Everything in the fable is like this, double-edged, ambiguous. An ostensibly sturdy Christian cathedral rests on the uncertain foundations of "the living, pagan earth" (80). Its four pillars are less majestic saints than human lovers; they dance over slime and stirring grubs. And exultant prayer is supported by the corrupt money of an adulterous aunt and a murdered man, who "crouched beneath the crossways with a sliver of mistletoe between his ribs" (212). Creation brings with it violence and death.

The man of God rejects God: "How proud their hope of hell is. There

The allusion here to Luke 19:40 ("I tell you if these the disciples were silent the very stones would cry out/And rejoice.") is a motif woven through the fable's verbal texture as part of the complicated metaphor for human effort that is one of the novel's major preoccupations. In a sense Jocelin in death becomes himself such a stone monument: he is a "building about to fall" (222), his ribs are like the stone vaulting which he inspects during delirium, breathing he pulls himself "down into the stone mouth, [which] would break up the stone, and eject a puff of shaped air" (218, italics added). His memory is constantly pricked by "the cellarage and the rats" that rustle through his mind. And, of course, his death effigy sculpted by Gilbert is a stone skeleton lapped in skin: a momento mori and a momento vivere.
is no innocent work. God knows where God may be" (222), Jocelin cries out on his death-bed, convinced of his own guilt. Moments later we learn that a sexual explanation for sin is as inadequate as that Calvinist-like religious one. Through his burning delirium Jocelin fumbles towards a formula for his murderous folly and decides his spire was nothing but "a great [phallic] club" lifted towards a tangle of hair blazing in the sky. He mutters aloud, "Berenice." But no single conception of corruption suffices either, for the physical and spiritual are perpetually interfused. Golding makes this point by having Father Adam (who is anxious to help Jocelin into heaven) read the Berenice of the Catullus poem to which Jocelin refers as the obscure early Christian martyr, Berenice.

Seconds later, at the moment of his death, Jocelin glimpses the physical spire through the window and this physical sight leads him into the spiritual vision which will close the fable. In fact, in this the confrontation scene, the oppositions of the fable are resolved and in that resolution, Jocelin is released from his sense of guilt. Like Pincher before the Dwarf and Sammy before the rag, Jocelin confronts an object, emblematic of his own guilty self: for him it is the "stone

hammer" that he has "traded for four lives" (221). Unlike Sammy and unlike Pincher, Jocelin experiences not just purgative panic but astonishment and joy which "split the darkness" (222) into light. Mystery is experienced not as malignancy but as terror-and-joy. Before him there is an object which rushes towards infinity but glitters like a fountain that falls. It is an "upward waterfall," and that verbal paradox images a multifarious dynamic reality where nevertheless pattern can be perceived. The truth it embodies is one composed not of sets of opposition—profane/sacred; sexual/ascetic; physical/spiritual; innocence/guilt—but as a suspension of perpetually interfused antimonies: a bluebird/over/panic-shot darkness. To extend the vision to moral terms, then, human acts may be seen to have elements of innocence and guilt, each modifying, each creating the other. As was the case in Free Fall, pattern emerges; it cannot be imposed.

Appropriately, then, the Church Triumphant immediately modifies Jocelin's affirmation of the spire (and all that that entails!) in his final cry, "It's like the appletree," into a gesture of Christian assent when Father Adam reads the tremor and joy and exalation on the dying man's lips as "God, God, God." The protagonist, however, has reconciled the upward unstoppable thrust of the unruly member to the seething underside, panic-shot darkness to struggling kingfisher by relating them. Like the Original Tree itself, the "long, black springing thing" (204), Jocelin had noticed among the scatter of angelbuds is blighting plant,
destructive snake but bursting apple blossom too. 51

Now possibly Conclusion may seem too strong a word for the notions about terror-and-joy that close the fable. But the senuous resolution invoked by the ongoing rhetoric—"In the tide, flying like a bluebird struggling, shouting, screaming to leave the words of magic and incomprehension—" (222) is, by necessity, oblique and compressed. The rubic's "meaning" cannot be decoded and put into conceptual terms. ("We cannot translate imaginative analogies into conceptual terms."52) Words that seek to embody "magic and incomprehension" can only be presented through sensuous images, by some linguistic ultimate that will invoke all the earlier associations that have been planted to grow. Since the burden of Jocelin's story is that all things do grow and twine with each other, his ultimate vision of kingfisher/over/deepwater does nevertheless emerge from multiplicity as a unified focus.

V

It is not too much to say that man invented war at the very earliest moment possible.
It is not too much to say that as soon as he

51 The reference here to the appletree draws together all the other trees and growing plants of the fable including the oak and the cedar trees brought by Ivo and by which he secures his position. Though there is insufficient space here for an adequate explication, another tree is relevant to the image system. At the book's opening Jocelin stands by a window and sees sunlight as "an important dimension" (10). The figure used to describe the sun blossoming against the workmen and the dust-filled nave, when inspected closely, is that of a branching tree.

52 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 233.
could leave an interpretable sign of anything, he left a sign of his belief in God.

—Golding, "Before the Beginning".

The two signs of man are a capacity to kill and a belief in God.

—Golding

All Golding's fables move towards an inclusive vision. The Spire differs in that the inheritor of this integrated vision is the protagonist. We have seen as well that The Spire confines its technique of reversal to the dramatic overturning of fortune, rather than the kind of thematic inversion the Beatrice/Dante analogue represented in Free Fall or the use of "The Grisly Folk" in The Inheritors. This stronger emphasis on character and narrative resolution of theme can be detected in Free Fall's atavistic quest which was described as the imaginative centre of that fable; though the reversal was confused in the coda's shorthand it grew out of Sammy Mountjoy's atavistic journey through darkness. The Spire develops and completes just this new structural element by making the delayed disclosures that constitute the fable's extended coda spring directly from Jocelin's self-deception. Specifically the delayed disclosure of Pangall's death coincides with Jocelin's revelation about his own repressed lust. Throughout the spire's


building Jocelin tries to avoid the "whole train of memories and worries and associations which were altogether random" (95). Yet there are urgent memories buried away in his head; he is happy, for example, when perched at the top of the spire 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" (105). And Jocelin's recognition of the "cellarage" of his mind in the coda corresponds to the larger theme of the "cellarage" of all human activity.

At a dramatic level the connection between Pangall and Jocelin is clear enough—Pangall's mismarriage to a young woman, arranged by Jocelin himself so as to keep his daughter-in-God pure, is the springboard for one of the book's major complications, the liaison between Roger and Goody. Furthermore, the counterpointing of a celibate Dean with an impotent Verger has a certain deft economy in a fable investigating the varieties and ironies of progeniture. But other facts about Pangall are given rather stronger emphasis than normally a minor character would require. The fable seems at pains to locate his significance in the distant past; Pangall is the last of a line who has served the Cathedral for four generations and he is associated through these ancestors with oak out of which the beams were fashioned, and incidentally the wood on which mistletoe flourishes when the tree is green. 55 Thus

55Golding may or may not be aware of other legends about the oak. It was thought to be the tree from which sprang all the human race. Beneath its spreading branches Abraham is said to have received the angels. Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore and Mythology and Legend, II, ed. Maria Leach (New York, 1959), 806-807.
Pangall's warning about unseasoned and burning wood has a symbolic as well as dramatic relevance when one recalls the omnipresent metaphor of a plant with "strange flowers . . . engulfing, destroying, strangling" (194).

Then there is the matter of Pangall's cottage resting against the Cathedral side—this even appears in one of Jocelin's dreams. It is a "Kingdom" and built like a "monument against the architect's intentions" (17). In fact, some of its fatigued piecemeal construction predates the Cathedral, and the Normans themselves by over "a thousand years," presumably then sewn into its decaying fabric are fragments of Roman origin. (One recalls the ironic proximity of the two "monuments," Salisbury and Stonehenge, at this point, and the historical density of this landscape.) It is this Kingdom that is actually and symbolically invaded by the pagan workmen as they taunt Pangall and insolently pile the rubble of construction around the cottage. It is this Kingdom that is vanquished as the whole town and Cathedral undergo a convulsion of change. So perhaps "Pangall's kingdom stands for

56 Cf. textual italics in passage quoted on p.260.

57 In conversation, Golding elaborated upon this historical point. "The intention was simply that the Pangalls picked up what was lying about and also 'won' building material. The Saxon wayfarers, by the way, used Roman ruins as shelter, thus calling them Cold Harbours. Where you get the name, Cold Harbour, you get or had got a ruin, probably Roman. There are, for example, reused Roman Tiles in a Milden-hall church near Marlborough. I put a Cold Harbour in The Spire to render the whole concept critic-proof." Golding, Personal communication, letter, July 8, 1970 (unpublished).
something very similar to that which the Neanderthal's kingdom stands for in The Inheritors—a state of religious innocence... as much to be regretted in its passing as was that other kingdom... yet equally as in The Inheritors as much to be accepted."58 One way of life lost another grows from its place; Pangall and his line testify to that ancient repetition of rise and fall, growth and decay-and-growth. They witness the cycle figured in the "upward waterfall" that Jocelin affirms at the fable's close.

From the outset Pangall, dusty brown and "dung coloured" (20) with his devil-broom and deformity, is identified with the earth that Jocelin rejects. As the knave/fool sheds tears of humiliation, sunlight draws the Dean's eye away from the "sharp tap on the instep of Jocelin's shoe" (20), an incident adroitly prefiguring the crucial episode at the pit. Here Jocelin scrapes from his instep the brown obscene berry of mistletoe and tries to close eyes and ears to the long wolf-howl and "hunting noise of the pack that raced after" (90) the vanishing Pangall. In fact, Pangall has not fled from his persecutions but is murdered and buried in the pit's earth.59 "Misshapenness and Impotence are ritually murdered. The sacrificial victim is built into the pit to strengthen the inadequate foundations."60 The whole incident is covertly handled,

58 Crompton, p. 79. To date this article offers the most thoughtful and enlightening analysis of The Spire.

59 A number of reviewers and commentators did not detect this; for example, Sullivan thinks Pangall is simply "driven away," p. 8.

60 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 211.
for the same reasons as, but rather more skillfully, than those ritual murders in *The Inheritors* and *Lord of the Flies* of Liku and Simon, both of whom functioned as religious scapegoats sacrificed to ensure the groups' solidarity. Drawing on the evidence of Pangall's death by mistletoe, and Jocelin's aside when at Solstice he thinks the pit is "a grave made ready for some notable" (13, italics added), Crompton maintains the Balder myth is as essential to *The Spire* 's construction as the Grail legend to "The Wasteland"; he argues that it underlies Pangall's murder. 61 (Balder, the central figure of many Norse myths, is invulnerable to everything but mistletoe out of which an arrow is fashioned by his rival Hodhr; during a struggle for possession of the beautiful Nanna, Balder is slain. 62) It is true Pangall is convinced he will die (see pp. 19-20) as some kind of scapegoat for the vengeance of the workmen and the disrepair of his Kingdom.

It seems more likely that Golding had in mind rather more general folklore; he specifically employs the site of Stonehenge (Stangheist or 'Hanging Stones') where the sun was worshipped, and the oak tree was venerated, and the mistletoe performed a specific

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61 Crompton, p. 66. To date this discussion is the only one to touch on the matter of pagan folklore as a structural principle in *The Spire* and though the evidence given is inadequate to support any structural exposition, this chapter is indebted to Crompton's insight into the paganism of the ritual and its relation to the monument at Stonehenge.

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part of ritual attached to the monument. The sacred oak could not be felled nor a human proxy slain before a ritual cutting of mistletoe from the tree on Midsummer's eve. 63 Graves argues that this ritual cutting and sacrifice symbolized the emasculation of the old king by his successor. 64 In anthropological and mythic terms, then, the death of Misshapenness and Sterility constitutes the necessary antecedent to a release of generative powers in the New Kingdom. At this level Pangall is both scapegoat and fertility god; the terrors of the cellarage contain their own paradoxical "joy," for the grave possesses as it does in The Inheritors the mystic power to renew.

The pestilence is, of course, not entirely dispelled, only the painful evolution from one religious variant to another occurs, though this transition involves, it would appear, a measure of fortunate advance. Golding appears to place the religious impulse in an evolutionary scheme whereby historically it undergoes refinements. Commenting upon the matter, he has said:

The fact is primitive religion is (all, of course, really) contradictory and at the same time conservative. So the religion of my Masons would have much in common with whatever went on at Stonehenge—and indeed with what went on in caves and clearings; but its systematisation would be partial, shifting. The workmen would kill Pangall . . . because of a generalized feeling that he might make a good guardian of the foundations—and a conservative feeling that the job can only be done really decorously with flint or mistletoe. 65

63 Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore . . , p. 723.
65 Golding, Personal communication, letter, July 8, 1970 (unpublished). An interesting cross-reference here is the comment upon
Pagan scapegoat is supervened by Christian Fool and while one is murdered the other is merely taunted. High in the "wooden dunce's cap" (159) the workers adopt Jocelin as their totemic figure. He will ward off their superstitions about heights: "no one at the top tried to drive him off, and he could not think why this was until one day he asked Jehan who answered him simply: "You bring us luck" (151). In some senses Jocelin already supports the pillars as much as does Pangall's body, for the first set of his sculpted heads are flung into the pit to steady the foundations. These heads were to have been "built in" to the cathedral. Originally they were intended to surmount the spire, exhibiting on four corners a "Nose like an eagle's beak. Mouth open . . ." (23) proclaiming the Holy Spirit, Jocelin thinks, day and night till doomsday, spouting their Hosannahs as the gargoyles spout rain. Obviously, in one sense, their dramatic burial in the earth's seething bowels has the dramatic and symbolic value of prefiguring the (necessary) eradication of willful pride. But a whole set of associations cluster around Jocelin's physiognomy, and the image of the raven jostles that of the eagle as he appears under the guise of Devouring Will. Though he

Greek religion as a thing that comes in layers, "each age superimposing on an obscurer and more savage one." Golding, "Delphi, The Oracle Revealed," Holiday, LII (August 1967), 88.

66 To Anselm his movement seems "flying like a great bird" (201); to Alison he resembles "a great bird hunched in the rain" (184). But the whole image system is more complex than this since along with the raven/eagle antitheses there is the dark/light angel, the devil-birds he imagines swooping at him during the storm, and finally the kingfisher at the fable's conclusion.
believes that Gilbert is sculpting a stone image of an Eagle—up in the
tower he mutters "as far as I'm concerned it's an eagle" (107)—he
squats among the ravens (154), the bird traditionally associated with
the devil. Jocelin is associated also with another primordial figure of
disintegration and decay, for his physiognomy resembles the "diseased"
(67) gargoyles who spout rain during plague and flood. With straining
mouth and blank eyes they "yell soundless blasphemies and derisions
in the wind" (67). Yet against the cathedral they perform the purgative
role, "some infinite complexity of punishment" (97), that Jocelin him-
self adopts:

> what accuracy and inspiration those giants had built the place,
because the gargoyles seemed cast out of the stone, burst out
of the stone like boils or pimples, purging the body of sickness,
ensuring by their self-damnation, the purity of the whole. (67)

Jocelin's attack by the townsfolk at the fable's close is clearly
meant to duplicate Pangall's persecution and ritual function: lying in
the filth of the gutter, his stinking rotten body stripped of clothes,
Jocelin hears "hound noises," braying and yelpings. The tribal mob
"created their own mouths fanged and slavering" (215) as they pound
the beast into the earth. "What Jocelin hears above everything else
is laughter. He has become a re-embodiment of Pangall, re-enacting
his death. We are in at the beginning of another hunt to the death as the
clown becomes the scapegoat."67 He is saved from Simon's fate, however.

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67 Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, p. 228.
It gradually becomes clear that central to Golding's vision is an eschatology of the sacrificial victim, the deity or saint who performs the necessary exorcism of fears. Speaking in Free Fall of "that man who reached out both arms and gathered the spears into his own body," Golding suggests tentatively that "the nature of our universe is such that the strong and crystalline adult action heals a wound and takes away a scar not out of today but out of the future. The wound that might have gone on bleeding and suppurating becomes healthy flesh." At each evolutionary stage of religious impulse there is this scapegoat-figure, a "saint," though Golding would deny the specifically Christian attributes of that word, who performs the necessary exorcism of fears by taking on the attributes of those fears. Of course they then often meet the fate of those who remind society of its guilt; man prefers to destroy the objectification of his fears rather than recognize the dark terrors of his own "cellarage." But by performing action that like Jocelin's ultimately goes beyond personal gain such a figure becomes an instrument not of his own egoism but the executor of some implacable cosmic pattern. Golding implies that such behavior is no less severe at a qualitative level of Being for men like Ralph or Sammy Mountjoy. Golding's point is that it is open to every man to affirm/assent in the mind's

68 Golding, Free Fall, p. 75.

69 See the discussion of the concept of levels of Being in Free Fall, Chapter V, pp. 221-222 and Pincher Martin, Chapter IV, pp. 175-178.
dark cellar the god that is both creator and destroyer. This as Nat puts it in *Pincher Martin* is the "technique of dying into heaven," a phrase Father Adam only slightly modifies when he instructs the dying Jocelin that the priests are "going to help you into heaven" (222).

The *Spire*, it has been said, is about "vision and cost." Creation involves bloodshed, sacrifice, and murder; the crossways over which the spire grows, for example, is "a grave for some notable" yet "a pit to catch a dean" (39). It is the place of sacrifice yet the place of vision too; "here where the pit stinks, I received what [vision] I received" (58), Jocelin ruminates. Like *The Inheritors*, *The Spire* dramatizes a chronicle of one phase in what Golding takes as the ancient repetition of rise and fall—and rise again: one phase in man's "upward waterfall." Its first page opens on a substantial manifestation of both triumph and sacrifice as the story of Abraham and Isaac window fuses with the joy on the Dean's face. Its last page closes on another substantial manifestation of triumph and sacrifice in Jocelin's sight of the rose-coloured spire. 71

It was slim as a girl, translucent. It had grown from some seed of rosecoloured substance that glittered like a waterfall, an upward waterfall. The substance was one thing, that broke all the way to infinity in cascades of exultation that nothing could trammel. (223)

Here the extended metaphor combines the physical and the spiritual, the primordial and the divine; like the appletree with "its long, black

70 Kermode, "The Case for William Golding," p. 3.

71 Both the colour of the mystic rose and blood sacrifice.
springing thing" (204) it records Jocelin's final fusion of those apparent opposites subsumed under the phrase "vision and cost"—outlined on pages 265 and 267 of this chapter.

The fable's closing pages present this theme obliquely. Jocelin's vision of the spire as "an upward waterfall" is crucial to the book's overriding meaning and especially crucial to the condition which Jocelin finally reaches—just as Free Fall's final focus on the rag at the cell's centre is crucial to the condition which Sammy Mountjoy has been striving to reach.

The comparison is an instructive one for there is a major difference between the two protagonists. At the fable's conclusion, Sammy remains burdened with a profound conviction of his own guilt. In the second narrative movement of The Spire, Jocelin also experiences the world of the spirit as self-condemnation. The coda of the ideographic structure consists in a series of disclosures which force Jocelin to accept the "cellarage" of his own mind and its part in vision; he admits his responsibility for the anguished faces which cannot be disentangled from the riotous confusion of the Spire's growth. While he abandons his spiritual arrogance, at the same time, he despairs of his own guilt and thus abandons, for a time, the possibility of merciful miracle. Like Sammy, Jocelin's eyes are turned in upon his own darkness:

Heaven and hell and purgatory are small and bright as a jewel in someone's pocket only to be taken out and worn on feast days. This

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See the discussion in Chapter V, p. 221.
is a grey, successive day for dying on. And what is heaven to me unless I go in holding him by one hand and her by the other? (222)

Since, however, Jocelin dies at the fable's conclusion with the Host being lain upon his lips by Father Adam, the reader is put in the position of concluding that Jocelin, unlike Sammy, is granted forgiveness. The confrontation scene on the last page, in fact, dramatizes Jocelin's release from punishment as his primary guilty perception of the spire transforms itself into one of transfigured astonishment. Implicit in Jocelin's initial perception of the spire as two eyes looking at him, "an eye for an eye" (222) is an allusion to the revengeful, punishing Judge of the Old Testament. It is as though Jocelin is encountering in these eyes his own loathsome vision of himself; the encounter recalls similar ones in Lord of the Flies and Pincher Martin where Simon and Pincher brood before a face which is both their own and a god's. As Jocelin concentrates, however, the two eyes slide together and become the figure of the physical spire; we watch the Judge metamorphose into triumphant "flashes of thought which split the darkness" (223, italics added). Jocelin's last words which relate the divine exultation to the appletree complete his spiritual regeneration and they may be interpreted (though in a different context) in the way in which Father Adam interprets them as evidence of Jocelin's atonement and God's mercy. Thus just as The Inheritors offered the hint of sanctity in the level of the plain beyond the Fall as the artist Tuami sculpted the death-weapon into the life-image, so too at The Spire's conclusion there is
suggested, in the fabric of the "upward waterfall" connecting earth and heaven, the promise of a new heaven and a new earth.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

I

PENNYFEATHER: No. You're all so godlike—(laughter) you go on day after
day—you know about boys. I
don't. You can call me dedi-
cated if you like; or, if you
like, you can call me a rather
dull middle-aged man with
little more than one interest.
... But I've never understood
a boy yet. There is always a
central opacity.

BALHAM: What a muddle-headed lot you
religious chaps are!

MACPHERSON: You believe in original sin and
free will but you can't take it
when a boy endowed with the
first thinks fit to exercise the
second.

PENNYFEATHER: I know I'm not very clever—
(laughter)—but—no, I can't say
what I mean.

—Golding, "Break My Heart"  

One of the present commonplaces of critical commentary is that

contemporary writers can no longer write Big Books; that no modern

1Golding, "Break My Heart," British Broadcasting Corporation
mind can embrace the terror and malignity which the twentieth century
has wrought and experienced, so fragmented is society and its mores, so inured to depravity is modern man. From this it might follow that
"only a maladjusted psychotic personality can faithfully interpret the maladjusted personality of the age in which we live. The truth about ourselves and about the Zeitgeist is not available to those who cling to traditional outmoded concepts of order and normality."² In this view, contemporary writers must therefore turn to violence and perversity, and excess since that which overwhelms man comes not from without but from within. Formal decorum must be rejected as an inadequate vehicle for the representation of psychic and social disorder.

Quite possibly Golding encountered such a creative dilemma; he has commented in several places that before World War II he trusted in the efficacy of social and political effort. Afterwards, he profoundly distrusted man's potential for progress.³ Not that the basic nature of man has changed in the half-century since the bomb, for "surely the hydrogen bomb is only an efficient way of wiping out the other tribe—a pastime we've always been prone to."⁴ Quite simply the war


witnessed again man's inhumanity to man. "I have observed the world,"
Golding remarked to a Leningrad conference of European writers. "I
started to write late—and I have reached certain conclusions. I have
always been struck by the thing which men do to other men. I know of
deeds which took place during the war, about which I still cannot think
without feeling physically ill." 5 A direct consequence of this sort of
pessimistic, "Aesychelean preoccupation with the human tragedy" 6 is
a fable like *Lord of the Flies* which portrays the malignity of man's heart.

Significantly, Golding comes to tackle the moral wretchedness
the twentieth century has re-ratified by moving away from, as it were
insulating himself from, twentieth-century influences. He agrees with
one critic that recent discoveries in biology, astronomy, and psychology
are a necessary part of any mind's equipment, but that his own fables
have very little genesis outside himself. 7 "To a large extent I've cut
myself off from contemporary literary life, and gained in one sense by
it though I may have lost in another." 8 The sturdiest furniture of his
imagination dates from the nineteenth century—Wells, Dickens,
Thackeray and the robust popular tradition of Henty, Ballantyne, and

5Golding, "The Condition of the Novel," *New Left Review*, No. 29
(January–February 1965), p. 34.


7Golding, Personal communication.

8Golding in Frank Kermode, "The Meaning of It All," *Books
and Bookmen*, V (October 1959), 10.
Burroughs—while the most influential derives from his serious commitment to Greek drama and poetry. 9

To Golding, man appears to be a much more important matter than men; this thesis has therefore adopted Golding's own term for his fiction and maintained that Golding writes fables. (See the discussion in the "Introduction," pp. 25-28.) The five fables are isolated temporally and spatially while their action is steeped in the inner consciousness of the leading personage whose character is closed and determined rather than being open and capable of change. (See the discussion in Chapter IV pp. 186-187.) He admits, of course, to thinking in terms of the fabulistic rather than the immediate human situation. From the beginning he has written under the influence of "dominant ideas rather than of dominant people." 10 "Partly by nature and partly by upbringing I was doomed to take no immediate delight in people for their own sakes." 11 This retirement from the battle of social life has left him —indeed, leaves him—free to explore "a lifelong preoccupation with the nature of the universe." 12

9 The English Romantic poets are favourite readings; Free Fall often reveals their influence (Blake in particular) but space forbids any detailed treatment.

10 Golding, Personal communication.


12 Golding, Personal communication.
However, as a questing and accomplished writer, he knows all too well that the novelist seldom needs the "god's eye view." It is the novelist's job to "count the hairs on the individual human head in the human way rather than in the divine way." In one sense each new book of Golding's represents a trying on of new hats (to borrow Free Fall's happy metaphor); each new "book" arises from the breakdown of an earlier coherent pattern, a set of expectations which have collapsed under the pressure of that inexplicable life the book has created. Thus Golding's insistence that each new fable should spring from new ground: "I don't think there's any point in writing two books that are like each other."  

This is not to claim that the fables themselves are self-sufficient; it has been argued, for example, that the mythopoeia of The Inheritors breeds that of The Spire. One often detects strong structural similarities and symbols, even phrases, which one fable


14 Ibid.


16 Thus in the crucial scene at the circular pit in The Spire when "the earth creeps" (81) there is a chant: "Fill the pit! Fill the pit! Fill the pit!" which recalls a similar call for a scapegoat in Lord of the Flies. As "the centre of the ring yawned emptily" (187), its mouth opens for Simon: "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" the boys chant.
derives from another. A telling pattern develops, for example, in the various escapes from atavistic horror that inform *Lord of the Flies*, *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall*, and *The Pyramid*. In the last book the protagonist's "running away" from the revulsion of an eccentric's gravestone, "as though he found himself once more in the long corridor between the empty rooms," reiterates but modifies by muting Pincher's hysterical race through "the endless corridor" away from terrible gods.

It has been argued that Golding's achievement represents a continuous progress, indeed continuous development. He appears to have the creative conviction that he must move away from morally dogmatic fables. Wedded to this is his effort to arrive at the sort of story in which the human being is treated in his abundant totality, beyond the threshold of merely moral judgments. Because of this effort Golding does not avoid the vital large questions about man. He chooses difficult fictional material—the sea-tossed body of a sailor,

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17 Golding, *The Pyramid* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 213. All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition and will be indicated by textual parentheses.


19 Golding's tribute to Tolstoy's sense of character is instructive here: "We know [Natasha, Prince Bolkonsky, Pierre] and we do not understand them, nor did Tolstoy. Is not the greatness of the book measurable by the number of circumstances in which he implicitly admits his own defeat?" (125). "Tolstoy's Mountain," *The Hot Gates*, p. 125.

20 Even so commonplace an image of contemporary life as that portrayed in (the unpublished play) "Break My Heart" (1962) where a
the origins of man's guilt, the essentially autocratic nature of vision—and writes "as though the possibilities of greatness—of wholeness—still existed."^{21}

It has been the intention of this thesis to view Golding's achievement in the light of such a comment. In particular, the thesis has set out to demonstrate the validity of several propositions about Golding's fictional techniques and themes as exemplified in his published work up to and including *The Spire*. Where relevant, occasional works such as individual essays from *The Hot Gates*, unpublished and published interviews with the author, published and unpublished plays, have been alluded to and absorbed into the argument. Though it is touched upon here at the end of the "Conclusion," *The Pyramid* has not been included in the thesis' argument for the following reasons. Its status as a novel is debatable: before its publication by Faber and Faber in the summer of 1967 two of its three episodes appeared separately in different publications, one in *The Kenyon Review* and the other in *Esquire Magazine*.^{22}

...schoolboy's misdemeanours index ironically his schoolmasters' cynicism and imaginative inadequacies, involves the exploration of fundamentally philosophical matters. Such is the case as well in the novella, *Envoy Extraordinary* (1956), and its dramatization in the play, "The Brass Butterfly" (1958). Here there is the comic yet serious exploration of the consequences of technological inventions as Phanocles, a Greek inventor, brings models of three inventions—a steamboat, gunpowder, and pressure cooker—to the court of one of the Caesars in Imperial Rome.


Golding commented that in some sense it was an ironic *jeux to demon*strate that he could write something "limpidly" simple, though of course its thematic preoccupation with social class and spiritual en-tombment implied by the title is fundamentally serious. Initially, it was not conceived of as a fable, but arose from two short stories, the "Bounce" and "Evie" episodes in the present book, to which a third was added and structural binds then introduced. For the purposes of this study, the culmination of various technical preoccupations in _The Spire_ seemed the appropriate if regrettable _terminus ad quem_. Since other fables may appear—*the author has mentioned one work that is in progress at present*_24—the decision not to treat _The Pyramid_ at length is less a remark on its importance or lack of importance than the recognition that Golding may write other works of which _The Pyramid_ may be the first of a new mutation.

II

_Pyrrha's Pebbles, Jehovah's Spontaneous Creation or the Red Clay of Thoth_: but it has always appeared to me that some god found man on all fours, put a knee in the small of his back and jerked him upright. The sensualist relies on this. The wise man remem-bers it.

—Golding, *Envoy Extraordinary* _25_

This thesis has argued that Golding's preoccupations are widely

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23 Golding, Personal communication.

24 Ibid.

religious ones—he treats such perennial themes as innocence, guilt, mystery, and malignancy quite purposefully in their antique religious sense. He consciously tries to construct a religious mythopeia relevant to contemporary man. In Golding's view contemporary man lacks vision; he discounts the spiritual world but it—in Golding's view—does not discount him. Thus contemporary man experiences mystery as a dark thing.

In the first fable, *Lord of the Flies*, Golding focuses on the innate brutality of boys lost on a desert island and when Ralph cries, at the end, for "the darkness of man's heart," he weeps for the forces of violence on the island whose triumph has been averted only by the chance arrival of a ship. Simon, alone among the boys, acts with the intuitive belief that some rescue may be possible. In his encounter with the emblem of violence and fear, the Head on the stick, there is the first appearance of a theme which the later fables elaborate and extend. Man, in fear, abstracts from his own brutality, and projects it as a demon or ogre which will destroy him. *The Inheritors* locates this psychic and moral evasion in prehistoric times and uses it to account for the genesis of guilt in man. In the fable's action can be seen strong outlines of what this thesis calls the notion of Darkness. The New People project their terror and uncertainty upon the Neanderthals and in doing so impart to the prelapsarians their own aggressive,

rapacious natures. Thus when Tuami broods upon "the line of darkness" at the end, he is brooding upon his own internal landscape, his own guilty darkness.

Pincher Martin develops this notion of Darkness in considerable detail and through the book's saint figure, Nat Walterson, gives it the religious context which Free Fall employs in its own investigation of loss of innocence and emergence of guilt. The protagonists of both fables are convinced of their own viability as self-sufficient creatures in a materialistic cosmos. This is represented as a rejection of the world of spirit and an attendant fear of physical darkness which seems mysteriously to threaten their persons or "centres" with extinction. At crucial moments, both refuse to investigate this irrational fear of darkness; indeed, each populates his world with spectres from his own malignant imagination, much in the way the New People created ogres in the dark forest before the waterfall. Thus to Martin, heaven—since it extinguishes his centre—can be nothing but "sheer negation, the black lightning destroying everything that we call life"; to Sammy, "the central not-comprehended dark" is occupied by odious objects. Pincher imagines that he faces a bully and an Executioner while Sammy despairs of the Judge, who he imagines stands on the other side of the cell's door preparing to punish him for his guilt. In both fables, however,

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28 Golding, Pincher Martin, p. 70.
Golding makes it evident that the merciless punishment which each protagonist imagines is the projection of that character's darkness. Mercy operates in the world—though it is hidden to the eye which rejects such goodness. The Spire begins in vision—the obsessed vision of the egoist Jocelin—and proceeds by correcting that vision, refracting it through the physical world; thus, it treats the notion of Darkness in a new manner. Jocelin, unlike other characters, believes in and trusts only the eye of the spirit; he is brought to the pit of seething darkness where through punishment he comes to contrition and humility. "Then the angel put away the two wings from the cloven hoof and struck him from arse to head with a whitehot flail."\(^{30}\) Having before rejected his own physical nature, humility now consists in recognizing the witch who haunts him as a creature of that "cellarage." Thus he is carried to the place where he can admit the eye of lust and then he is granted the momentary sight of a kingfisher and appletree, which Golding intends to represent the My-godness of man and evidence of mysterious Mercy.

In the light of this theme, we can detect a steady progression through the five fables away from the insistence on human malignancy. Just as The Inheritors offers some bridge between innocence and guilt in the Neanderthal infant with which the inheritors sail away, so in Free Fall, Sammy's conviction of his own responsibility for Beatrice's

\(^{30}\) Golding, The Spire, p. 188.
insanity is counterpointed by those moments of joy in the prison camp. It is significant that The Spire concludes on exultation and love as the dying Jocelin sights the spire, built in stone, in faith, in sin, and presumption, yet knows nevertheless that it is "an upward waterfall," connecting earth and heaven, a symbol of malignancy-and-holiness: in fact, a symbol of wholeness.

In order to bring about the reader's imaginative participation in the events and insights of his fables, Golding has devised numerous fictional techniques based on technical compression. He constructs rigorous structures and exclusive forms to illuminate his own inconclusive vision. The thesis has examined two of these strategies of indirection: the deliberate obscurcation of point of view and the inversion of literary models. In varying degrees and with increasingly less reliance Golding subverts other writers' view of the same situation. It is Golding's intention that the reader judge the moral distance between Ballantyne's view of small boys in Coral Island and his own recasting in Lord of the Flies. (See Chapter II, pp. 58-64.) Important to The Inheritors, then, is Wells' Outline of History as well as a short story, "The Grisly Folk." (See Chapter III, pp. 87-91.) Pincher Martin finds at least its title, if not certain other symbolic details, in a nineteenth-century survival story, Taffrail's Pincher Martin, OD. (See Chapter IV, pp. 147-148.) With Free Fall there is a significant variation in the use and ironic abuse of a literary model,

31 Ibid., p. 223.
for here Dante's *Vita Nuova* is taken as the morally correct pattern while its twentieth-century recasting is intended to represent a corruption of these values. (See Chapter V, pp. 163-167.) In *The Spire* several works have been important but no single one appears to have been inverted; rather numerous legends and commonplaces about the medieaval world have, in Golding's phrase, "mulched down" to an imaginative compost. From this fertile soil *The Spire* has grown. (See Chapter VI, pp. 249-257.)

Deriving from Golding's concern with the spiritual and contemporary man's apparent rejection of this realm is the unorthodox structure of each of the fables. It has been argued throughout the thesis that Golding creates an ideographic structure in each fable to allow two contradictory perspectives on one circumstance. Following the plot's major movement there is a *coda* ending in each of the fables which reverses and often contradicts the implications of the first movement. Golding intends the two perspectives to be linked, not contradictory, thus the *coda's* surprise is integral to the final theme of each fable. The bridge between the two perspectives is there to be built by the reader who is driven by the paradoxical structure of each fable to accept paradoxes of existence which are to Golding symptoms of the spiritual world.

Thus in *Lord of the Flies* just as the children assume demonic proportions in their regression, there is a *coda* ending where they are cut down to child-size since they are viewed by an adult. But there is
the further paradox that the officer who rescues the children is himself involved in an "adult" war, a good deal more violent and widespread than that of the children. Therefore, the compassion Ralph achieves represents a hard-won knowledge which the officer himself does not possess. In *The Inheritors* there are two perspectives on the same events, that of the innocent Neanderthals and that of the inheritors themselves, the violent New People who demonstrate in their efficient skill that the meek do not inherit the earth. Yet neither do the violent, for the New People have been irrevocably altered by their fear of the tree-ogres; guilt and introspection have evolved. In *Pincher Martin*, the coda's reversal of the initial survival story consists in the shocking discovery that the tale has concerned a dead man in Purgatory, not a hero struggling through tenacious will power and intelligence to survive on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic. Once again it is the intention of the author to force the reader to fuse the two contradictory patterns and see, for example, that spiritual survival is more than Davidson's literalism would seem to suggest. In *Free Fall* the ideographic structure is only partially realized, for the coda ending with its sphinx' riddle is not so much a dramatic shift to another character's point of view as the presentation of a final clue towards the interpretation of the whole fable. Nevertheless the reversal—with its news of the innocuous centre of the cell—is intended to cast into new light all the story which has gone before. In *The Spire*, the coda ending has been
extended considerably and now consists in a dramatic disclosure and the protagonist's discovery (as well as the reader's) of the fusion between apparently contradictory explanations for vision.

Throughout the fiction, one can detect a progressive evolution in the structural shape of the fables. They evolve from an externally wrested structure where pattern sublates pattern and the reader profits from the imaginative discovery of the bridge to an internally realized structure which grounds its final fusion in the narrative's total movement, allowing its protagonist to suffer the implications of wholeness. It is argued, therefore, that *The Spire* represents the completion of one phase of Golding's technical evolution. Nevertheless, its themes and ideographic structure still grow from Golding's belief that "where there is no vision the people perish."

III

There is nothing quite so real as the eyes of a primitive carving . . . . I know that it is necessary to meet that [Egyptian mummy's] stare, eye to eye. It is a portrait of the man himself as his friends thought he should be—purified, secure, wise. It is the face prepared to penetrate mysteries, to stand pure and unfrightened in the hall where the thirty-two judges ask their questions of the dead man, and the god weighs his heart against a feather. It is the face prepared to go down and through in darkness . . . . It dwells with a darkness that is light.

—Golding, "Egypt from My Inside".

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Golding, "Egypt from My Inside," p. 79, italics added.
The passage above dramatizes, in the encounter between a boy and the Egyptian mummy upon which he broods, one example of what the thesis has called the confrontation scene, a scene which functions in the fables as a single crystallisation of that fable's ideographic structure. To Golding, contemporary man appears ill at ease with the ambiguous, the obscurely meaningful, the mysterious, the unspecific, the tentative, the unexorcised—all that is not a modern pyramid of collected information. He must be positioned, somehow, to feel on his pulses, not as a supposition but as an imaginative experience, the unseen world, that Egyptian pyramid which is "at once alive-dead," which suggests "mysteries with no solution," which mixes "the strange, the gruesome and the beautiful." At the heart of each fable there is a psychic and purgative episode where a reductive process is enacted. Here character is presented in extremis not only through torment but in torment. In this process the protagonist is stripped down to that very last thing which cannot be destroyed; this Golding takes as a definition of the particular Being. In the confrontation scene which precedes the atavistic reduction the character is forced to accept or reject the darkness that inhabits his internal landscape.

In Lord of the Flies and Pincher Martin this encounter takes the form of an interview with an ambiguous but obscurely animated object: a pig's Head and a pile of stones, respectively. Following his conversation with the Head, Simon falls inside its vast mouth and the

33 Ibid., p. 80.
"blackness within, a blackness that spread." On regaining consciousness, he is able to recognize himself in the Head and thus having admitted evil is able to act without evil. (See discussion in Chapter II, pp. 72-78.) In contrast, following his fall into "a gap of darkness" which he experiences as "a gap of not-being, a well opening out of the world," Pincher composes a horrific god from his own murderous nature. The figure in the seaboots is a figment of his own imagination but when this figure asks, "Have you had enough Christopher?" Pincher knows in the recesses of his self that he could not have simply invented it. He is still defying his own darkness as the fable closes; yet we know that he is in Hell. (See discussion in Chapter IV, pp. 182-186.)

The confrontation scene in *The Inheritors* occurs when a nightmare spectre emerges in the world of water as Lok leans out across the river, suspended from a tree branch. Though it is a reflection of his own face, symbolically the Lok-face represents a formless thing, a terrifying Other, disengaged and alienated from his own psyche. When the body of the old woman descends the river and drifts past him, the two spectres merge and it becomes clear that what is being dramatized here is the opposition of the two worlds of innocence and guilt. (See discussion in Chapter III, pp.118-121.) Deep-waters exist in *Free Fall's*

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protagonist as well and the confrontation scene occurs in the cell when Sammy imparts shape to the shapeless thing at the centre of the dark cell. He then undergoes an atavistic reduction as he rushes "awash in a sea" through "generalized and irrational terror," to the "entry where death is close as darkness against the eyeballs." Here, darkness represents a preternatural world with its incomprehensible relation between the sources of power and the sources of destruction. Flagellation releases moral energies from their malignant agency so that Sammy can momentarily enter a world transfigured by vision. (See the discussion in Chapter V, pp. 225-230.) A similar metamorphic transformation occurs in The Spire. After Jocelin has learned to accept the "rising tide of muck," the unspeakable feelings and seething darkness associated with his cellarage, he confronts the spire and unites terror and joy. The darkness is "panicshot" but above it struggles the kingfisher. (See the discussion in Chapter VI, pp. 266-268.) In this confrontation scene, Jocelin, alone among Golding's fictional heroes, is granted release from the conviction of his own guilt.

37 Golding, Free Fall, p. 156, italics added.
38 Ibid., p. 165.
39 Ibid., p. 185.
40 Golding, The Spire, p. 58.
The Pyramid, the last published work to date, signals a new direction. Here religious themes are deliberately blocked out and the world's spiritual dimension becomes simply "the sky over Stilbourne [which] lifted to infinite distance" (196) and "an unnameable thing" that "blackened the sun" (213) when the narrator broods in grief that "we were all known, all food for each other, all clothed and ashamed in our clothing" (205). Yet the day-to-day life depicted represents no mean achievement. The Pyramid wryly observes the warped respectability and genteel passions of a very English provincial town, a placid, suffocating town with its town square, hiccuping gas lamps, Amateur Operatic Society, and precisely gradated social pyramid. "In Stilbourne we might not be educated, cultured, inventive, compassionate or even energetic; but from Lady Hamilton-Smythe down to the Poor Man . . . we were fitted with delicate antennae which

41 Golding has remarked that he toyed with the idea of subtitling The Pyramid "The Pyramid Or As You Like It" as an ironic quip to reviewers. Personal communication.

42 Each of three episodes culminates in a display of post-lapsarian nakedness. Oliver has Evie, the local phenomenon, on an open ridge. . . . Evelyn de Tracy, producer of the local opera, when asked by Oliver for truth, produces a sheaf of photographs of himself dressed as a ballerina. The respectable ugly music teacher walks out naked and smiling into the street." A. S. Byatt, "Of Things I Sing," New Statesman (June 2, 1967), p. 761.

43 Golding commented that he has always wanted to write something about an English town called Stilbourne.
vibrated to the exact wave length of the social crystal. Our most delicate perceptions—perhaps our only perceptions—were social ones."  

Placed in the 1920's, the plot consists of a first person narration of three interconnected but distinct stories. Golding regards the structure as the literary equivalent of the sonata form in music, where the two themes of social class and love are successively set forth, developed, and restated; the scherzo or comic interlude (where appropriately enough the deadly serious antics of an amateur Musical Society are spoofed) treats farcically the motif of musical entombment while the first and third episodes treat it more seriously. Its "newness" consists in the fact that for the first time in Golding's fiction we watch a protagonist developing through time and frustration, change and professional success. Thus three outsiders—Evie Babbacombe, Evelyn De Tracy, and Bounce Dawlish—help Oliver, the chemist's son, to transcend the limitations imposed by the town. Oliver learns to unharden his heart (the lesson the epigraph from the Instructions of Ptah-Hotep instructs: "If thou be among people make for thyself love, the beginning and end of the heart") and observe the pain in others which we have watched grow infinitesimally as the years pass. The

44 Golding, "Inside a Pyramid," Esquire (December 1966), p. 167. This has been edited from the version appearing in the Bounce episode of The Pyramid.

45 Golding, Personal communication.
method of narration is very accomplished indeed, particularly in the Bounce episode where it employs but transforms the elements of the ideographic structure. For there are two perspectives to which the reader has access throughout the developing story. Oliver sees events with the immediate eyes of childhood—"primary, ignorant perceptions" (165)—with the eyes of "gradual sophistication" as adolescence sharpens class prejudices and in retrospect, with the eyes of middle age. (The episode opens with the successful Oliver, armoured by his car of "superior description" [159], returning to the Old Bridge, "gliding down the spur to all those years of my life" [158]. It closes with him driving back over the Old Bridge towards the motorway and "concentrating resolutely on my driving" [217].) The fusion of the developing point of view with the developed point of view is accomplished by the protagonist-narrator through the device of recollection and meditation.

As Oliver looks Henry Williams "in the eye; and saw my own face" (217),

46 Change in Stilbourne over the years is subtly documented by the introduction and growing significance of the car. It is not irrelevant that Henry Williams, Bounce's chauffeur, shows his inadequate affection for Bounce by polishing and attending to her car. The commercial success of his garage (and the means by which he climbs the slippery pyramid) comes to alter the face of Stilbourne, "the small huddle of houses by a minimal river—a place surprised by the motor road" (157) in ways completely irrevocable.

47 "Inside a Pyramid" closed with lines which Golding (quite appropriately) deletes from The Pyramid. They recall, however, Tuami's brooding on distance. "... I concentrated resolutely on my driving, lest I should discover to how wide an area and to what people my grief and indignation extended," p. 302.

48 Of course this encounter recalls Simon's before the Head,
(a reorchestration of the confrontation scene) the reader discovers
simultaneously with Oliver that the latter has paid the same price of
love for success as Henry.

The entire book is written with acute sensitivity and penetration,
written movingly, gently, even genially. Glancing back from The Pyramid
to Lord of the Flies (another book about England) we can now see that the
latter's stark, fierce, implacable, even luminous denunciation is in a pro­
found sense untrue. For Golding too, since the darkness of man's heart
has modulated into a central opacity, good as well as not-good. At the
moment it is Golding's major and overriding intention to write a novel
about England ('"not about Britain, about England"'; The Pyramid goes
a long way towards suggesting that such a work may be accomplished
with the complex, wondering sense of the potential richness of life, and
also of opportunities irrevocably,—antiquely, because that is the nature
of the universe—destroyed. One trusts for just such a vast book, bear­
ing on its surface "the print of a more than human thumb."" but here the understatement marks the extent to which Golding has ceased
manipulating his fiction overtly. The car as a symbolic device is
another case in point; compare its spare and subtle use with that of the
conch in Lord of the Flies.

Golding claims that Lord of the Flies was first and foremost
intended as a novel about England, an intention that most criticism has
not commented upon. See footnote 44 in the chapter on Lord of the Flies.

Golding, Personal communication.

The phrase is Golding's ("Tolstoy's Mountain," p. 125). It
is used here in just the eulogistic sense in which Golding applies it to
Tolstoy.
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