CHAPTER - II

PINCHER MARTIN : ENCOUNTER WITH DEATH

The theme of death has figured rather prominently in the writings of the existentialists. Amongst the pioneers of existentialism, there is some agreement regarding the significance of death, which is undoubtedly one of the most important themes. The uncertainty of death—that death might be 'so treacherous as to come tomorrow' leads Kierkegaard to the realisation that the whole of life must be made commensurate with the uncertainty that attends the coming of death. The fact that an individual will die is an occasion for living the possibility of death in one's thought—i.e. for becoming subjective in the Kierkegaardian terminology. For Heidegger, death remains as a liberating goal or a super possibility of a person. Death is the clue to authentic living, as death is the capital possibility, always in view from the outset, from which all other possibilities derive their status of radical contingency. The full-blooded acceptance (amor fati) of death by living in its presence, realising it to be immediately possible and as undermining everything, leads to authentic existence. According to Heidegger, the acceptance of death as the supreme possibility
inspires one not to be deceived by the day-to-day preoccupations with the realisation that all such like projects are worth nothing. With Camus it produces not despair but rebellion. Human insurrection is a prolonged protest against death, Camus is inspired by death to 'metaphysical rebellion'. For Sartre death is the final absurdity and it is 'the nihilation of all my possibilities'. However, Sartre also makes some acute observations regarding the moment of death, when being-for-itself (human consciousness) ceases to be there, which, in fact, are of primary interest in this chapter.

Pincher Martin (1956), according to Samuel Hynes, deals with 'the paradoxes of living death and dying into life'. Virginia Tiger highlights the novel as a treatise on death—"Commentators have started to consider the coda's contribution to the theme of death which the novel explores". In fact, there are kinds of dying that are more important than that instant of merely physiological change. What is considered as 'the after-death hallucination,' 'Pincher's post-mortem experience of himself' and 'a report of a soul in Purgatory', in fact, happen to be an encounter with death. The central point is that this story is about a dead man. After going through Pincher's flash-backs of his past life, the reader is made to learn by the end of the novel that 'he (Martin) didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots'. Hynes is
right in pointing out that this last-sentence reversal makes some readers feel that they have been 'cheated' regarding 'their assumptions about the nature of reality in the novel'.

As a matter of fact, a number of clues to this effect remain scattered and concealed like in a mystery novel. In the first chapter, Pincher kicks off his seaboots to avoid drowning and tears apart his already inflated life belt, whereas on the last page of the novel it is made clear that Pincher was drowned after he had inflated the life belt but before he had time to kick off his boots. On the basis of this reason, this fable is considered as the report of some after-death hallucination. The events narrated in the novel are said to be taking place in the mind of a dead man. Samuel Hynes refers to this state as something 'illusory'—'If Pincher didn't have time to kick off his seaboots, then the moment in the first chapter when he apparently did kick them off was illusory, and if that was illusory, then so was everything that came after, and we must go back and reinterpret what we have read'.

Golding is not concerned with the mere physiological change at the time of death. 'There are kinds of dying that are more important' and the American edition entitled The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin make the point clearer. Therefore, the novel is about the dead man, struggling hard
to maintain his identity, the exposition of the novel, where the protagonist is fighting not for the physical life but for the continuation of his identity is tenable only on a metaphysical level.

In fact, Golding leaves up to the reader to work out as to how all this can be possible. One sees the demarcation between the clinical death and the actual 'internal' death. It can also be assumed that a man who dies by drowning in water gets a few 'conscious' seconds, if not minutes, in which he is subjected to the onslaught of death. To quote V.V. Subbarao: 'How are we to make sense of Martin's experience of this story about the man who dies on the second page of the book? One might well exclaim that if there could ever be a case of a dead man fooling a reader, here is one! — It is only then that we find that the whole creation is, to use Aristotle's phrase, one of these "plausible impossibilities".'

The novel exists out of time, where a lifetime can be expressed in a moment, the moment of death. What does Pincher do at the moment of death—the point of intersection of the life time with the timeless? He invents a world in which the ego he will not relinquish can continue to exist. Mark Kindead-Weekes and Ian Gregor make an apposite comment:

In the split second of death, Pincher Martin conceives an image which gives him a world of consciousness into which he can try desperately to escape.
Initially, the protagonist is seen flaying about in a black sea and our primary imaginative experience is that of the physical stuff as experienced by a man immersed in water. While inflating a life belt, Pincher Martin struggles to stay afloat. He asks why he has removed his sea boots. Later, it has to be reviewed on the basis of the concluding sentence of the novel: 'He didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots' (p. 208). The novel, therefore, is about the Will, assisted by the ego, which doesn't want to 'die' inside the dead body.

Martin realises that 'eternity, inseparable from pain was there to be examined and experienced' (p. 14). Images from the past are flooded into his mind. The thoughts arising in his mind are 'laborious', 'disconnected' but 'vital' (p. 14). The reaction to the external limit of death is not of acceptance; rather it is that of defiance—'I won't die. I can't die. Not me—' (p. 14). It is the last desperate try—'Think. My last chance. Think what can be done' (p. 17).

Immediately afterwards, he is dashed against a barren rock, conjured by his imagination, on which he wants to pose his 'routine' as a mark of his identity—'I will impose my routine on it, my geography' (pp. 86-87). The rock, therefore, is to be seen as a part of his consciousness and 'an hour on this rock is a life time' (p. 45).
Pincher struggles to survive in this world for 'seven consecutive days' in imagination. He wants to tame the barren rock and thereby wants to maintain his sanity and health. He talks 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' (pp. 86-87). What follows is Pincher's attempt to provide himself a known human habitat in this alien world. While standing at the threshold of death, Pincher creates a world of his own, whereby he may continue to 'exist'. He feels time as a void, a 'ghastly interlude' (p. 81), in which the process to 'connect a future with the past' (p. 81) has been triggered. First, he raises a pillar of stone in hope that this will be seen by possible rescue flights. It is called Dwarf by him. After this he proceeds to civilise the land-scape; he names a prominent ledge as Look-out and a lower ledge as Safety Rock. He names certain place as Food Cliff where he expects mussels for his eating. Other blank spots in the mental map are captioned likewise—Oxford circus, Picadilly and Leicester Square. As a good British sailor, he even provides himself a pub—the Red Lion. Trying to be at ease, he gives a free hold to his mind—

Think about women then or eating. Think about eating women, eating men, crunching up Alfred, that other girl, that boy, that crude and unsatisfactory experiment, lie restful as a log and consider the gnawed tunnel of life right up to this uneasy intermission (p. 90).
On the First Day the Will creates the sea, the sky and the rock in juxtaposition with day and night. In a 'panic-shot blind leap of imagination', Pincher's body fantastically tries to climb on the top of the rock through the funnel by making use of two limpets like mountaineering wedges. The imaginative flight of a dying man with respect to its pain and intensity is essentially different from that of a living one. Painful consciousness enters his 'eye', which scans his brain like a needle through visual imagination; 'The pain in the corner of his eye went with him too. This was the most important of all the pains because it thrust a needle into the dark skull where he lived' (p. 42).

The Second Day of Creation (pp. 56-72) is directed to 'Food' and 'Water', the need to live and to the 'rules', setting the limit, within which he has to operate. At this stage 'hunger contracted under his clothes like a pair of hands' (p. 63). During the night of the second Day the Will wakes him from the dream of the past in which an encounter takes place with Nathaniel, who exhorts him to the technique of dying into heaven, against which he finds himself to be pathetically wanting.

Nathaniel Walterson, who is a thoroughly saintly figure and marries Mary, is inextricably linked with Pincher's consciousness. He not only stands in contrast to Pincher's personality
but also provides another variation of the theme of death within the novel itself. Pincher Martin doesn't pay any heed to Nathaniel's Technique of Dying into Heaven'. This aspect of 'dying into heaven' will be referred to a bit later.

The Third Day of Creation (pp. 72-96) reveals how he is able to come out 'of his curious isolation inside the globe of his head' in order to live the tangible existence' on the surface of his eyes' (p. 76). He seeks a bond of relationship with his own self and fabricates an identity disc in his pocket, providing a calm assurance to his lost self: 'Christopher Hadley Martin. Martin Chris. I am what I always was!' ' (p. 76). He wants to exert 'health and education and intelligence' to promote 'determination to survive' (p. 79).

There are moments when he admits that he has been in a state of mind vulnerable from all angles, encompassing 'madness', 'hallucinations' and 'loss of identity':

I must not let madness steal up on me and take me by surprise. Already—I must expect hallucinations. That is the real battle. That is why I shall talk out loud for all the blotting-paper. In normal life to talk out loud is a sign of insanity. Here it is proof of identity (p. 81).

The Fourth Imaginative Day of Creation (pp. 96-122) is what he feels it to be 'a thinking day'. He has only to think and the object of his desire is within his reach—'He thought of chocolate instead and the silver paper came into his mind'
What appears to be an exercise in imagination to us, in fact, is his total submergence in it, for he starts 'chewing mechanically' (p. 97) that chocolate which he gets this way.

He finds himself cursing Nathaniel, 'invisible Nat' (p. 102), on whom Mary showers her love. He fails to comprehend as to why 'anyone so good as Nat' should become the object of his 'quivering hate' as if 'he were the only enemy' (p. 103). A new realisation dawns upon him that all emotions have become one emotion to him: 'There was amazement that to love and to hate were now one thing and one emotion' (p. 103). He experiences the 'smouldering fires' of hell engulfing the universe and 'he oscillated between moments of hanging in space, observing them' (p. 122).

The Fifth Day of his mental creation (pp. 122-67) adumbrates how in the flux of images, moods and imaginative flights he starts losing the maintained distinctions. Day and Night are no more distinct: time seems to have stopped. He tries to 'remember the quality of this time that had suddenly fore-shortened itself' (p. 123). He stands at a threshold where the situation and his mental state get out of control and he is 'in danger of losing definition' (p. 132).

The gradual loss of consciousness is the yardstick with
which the novelist studies the theme of death. It is not a freak observation in the narrative when it is pointed out: 'The bladder of the life-belt was two-thirds full' (p. 165). It is as if 'something was taken away' (p. 167). For a moment he finds himself 'falling' and then 'there came a gap of darkness in which there was no one' (p. 167).

The five-day creation collapses in the abyss of nothingness on the sixth day. There is 'disconnection' inside, for, 'something was coming up to the surface' which was 'disorganized in pieces' (p. 167). It is the moment of intersection of the time with the timeless—'There was a separating between now, whenever now was, and the instant of terror' (p. 167). The point of intersection is darkness, 'the darkness of separation', which, in its effect, is 'deeper than that of sleep' (p. 168). Golding terms the gap between Pincher's life and death as 'not-being' (p. 169).

The darkness of 'not-being' is deeper than one seen in this world because it is the cosmic darkness when time comes to a stop. Pincher Martin loses the control and even the assertion of identity becomes a distant voice. As he loses his fight for survival, his personality begins to disintegrate. He becomes utterly 'nothing' (p. 181) and 'alone' (p. 181) and he is surrounded by one vast entity—'Back' (p. 181).

The Seventh Day, if it exists at all, is total Nothingness—
the lines of absolute blackness felt forward' (p. 201) with 'absolute nothingness' (p. 201). His self, his dark centre and his vision begin to merge. A bit earlier, an apparition arises, which he thinks to be the Projection of his mind. The apparition asks, ' "What do you believe in?" '. Martin asserts: ' "The thread of my life" ' (p. 196). He is not ready to relinquish his ego and he says to the apparition ' "I spit on your compassion! " ' (p. 199); ' "I shit on your heaven!" ' (p. 200). By asserting so, Pincher has lost his last chance of coming to terms with the apparition, which has also the undertones of the Immanent Spirit. He refuses to accept God's mercy and he meets his death—'The lightning crept in. The centre was unaware of anything but the claws and the threat' (p. 201).

According to Sartre, the death is an end of all the expectations and the possibilities for which the being-for-itself stands for; as soon as a man dies, he disappears into the being-in-itself and becomes a matter of the past, which belongs to the other living human beings. Wilfrid Desan sums up Sartre's point of view in relation to death in the following words—

For Sartre, then, death is completely absurd. The For-itself is perpetual desire, and death is the end of all desire. The For-itself is permanent expectation, and death is the end of all expectation. Death does not really belong to the For-itself, it does not fit the For-itself, it lies outside, belonging to the Other. This last is the important point in Sartre's view on death. The question now is, why? The answer, that death is the external limit of my consciousness: the For-itself disappears forever when death appears. The result: is
that I die—not to myself, but to the Other. As soon as I die, I disappear into the In-itself: I become some sort of solidified being, a past, which belongs to the other living human beings.12

So far being-in-itself is concerned, it is massive, full, dense and compact, without history or past, present or future. It merely is (non-human-consciousness). There is no knowledge or desire in being-in-itself. It is through being-for-itself (human existence) that the world of knowledge and desire comes into being. This attributes to the power of 'nihilation' or 'negation' which is a specific activity of being-for-itself. The negating capacity of being-for-itself in relation to being-in-itself, according to Sartre, is carried out only in interrogation, destruction and negative judgment but also in every act of knowledge. In fact, ontologically, Sartre demarcates the whole of this universe on the basis of this two-pronged entity—being-for-itself and being-in-itself. Implicitly or explicitly, it is the interplay of these two entities on the basis of which Sartre analyses life as well as death.

Pincher Martin's movement from life to death is the existential voyage in which his being-for-itself (human consciousness) tries to assert in its last bid before it disappear into the being-in-itself and becomes some sort of solidified being, a past, which belongs to the other living human beings. Pincher Martin's 'living' death can be viewed in terms of the point of intersection between being-for-itself and being-in-itself.
The juxtaposition of the three temporal perspectives, viz., the past, the present and the future, provide a glimpse of Pincher's being-for-itself in the novel. Memories of childhood, the rock, the flight of the ego, the greed of the actor, the fear of the future, the actual death itself, all coalesce to result in the vision of the fleeting moment when human consciousness gets ready for its inevitable voyage. Sartre comments:

So long as the for-itself is "in life" it surpasses its past toward its future, and the past is that which the for-itself has to be. When the for-itself "ceases to live", this past is not thereby abolished. The disappearance of the nihilating being does not touch that part of its being which is of the type of the in-itself, it is engulfed in the in-itself. My whole life is. This means not that it is a harmonious totality but that it has ceased to be its own suspense and that it can no longer change itself by the simple consciousness which it has of itself.13

In fact, being-for-itself, human consciousness, has three-dimensional temporality of past, present and future. Being-for-itself is a carrier of the past in a typical way—'As for the past of the For-itself itself, Sartre considers this past as a "solidification" of the For-itself. When I say "I was tired", this fatigue is something in which no possible can find a place: my past becomes an In-itself, I face it as I face the In-itself of an external thing. I am not my past, but I was it, I could not be my past, otherwise I should no longer be what I am, namely the For-itself with its intimate and absolute
freedom, full of possibles.\textsuperscript{14} In its journey from life to
death, being-for-itself is carrier of the past in this way.

Before embracing death, Pincher Martin undergoes a process
through which his past brings out the succession of images,
stored in human consciousness, in all its intensity, just as
a flickering candle-light gathers all its luminosity to make
a last flicker. In the \textit{Gita} (Chapter 8, Verse 6)\textsuperscript{15} it is said
that man attains those very \textit{bhavas}, the stance, after death
what he thinks at the last moment of death and that only those
thoughts come at that time which are carried predominantly in
the life-time.

However, the existential view of Pincher's recapitulation
of the past near death is different from one which is enunciated
in the \textit{Gita} or in the \textit{Bible}. According to the scriptural verdict,
Martin's reminiscences of lust in relation to Mary Lovell and
his other pursuits of greed serve as an irrevocable background
for the determination of his future life. No doubt, Sartre also
considers past to be present at the moment of death, but an
individual is in so way bound by it. Sartre doesn't think that
past plays its role for settling the account at the time of
death the way it is expressed in Christianity—'In short, the
account would be closed. Christians have tried to take death
as this final term. The reverend father Boisselot in a private
conversation with me gave me to understand that the "Last Judgment"
was precisely this closing of the account which renders one unable any longer to recover his stroke and which makes one finally be what one has been—irremediably. But there is an error here..."16.

The way the past fashions itself before Pincher's mind in all its kaleidoscopic range, before his being-for-itself ceases to be there, only reminds one of Sartre's categorical statement—"When the for-itself "ceases to live", this past is not thereby abolished". It is in accordance with this that the fountain of the past secretes itself somewhere in the dark black jar of Pincher's knowing: 'Sensations Coffee. Hock. Gin. Wood. Velvet. Nylon. Mouth. Warm. Wetnakedness. Caves, slack like a crevice or tight like the mouth of a red anemone. Full of stings. Domination, identity' (p. 191). The pull of the past works slowly but surely, trying to swallow everything within itself. Pincher, mutely in a tableau of colours and form, sees the drama of the past enacted before him and when it comes to sex, he remembers its volcanic eruption without any feeling—'Those nights of imagined copulation, when one thought not of love nor sensation nor comfort nor triumph, but of torture rather, the very rhythm of the body reinforced by hissed ejaculations—take that and that!' (p. 149).

The moment of death is a multi-dimensional project. The whole of the past flashes in Pincher's mind; the being-for-itself makes its last desperate effort not to relinquish its entity and
there is some kind of unseen thrust from outside to engulf all. Pincher Martin's imaginative cycle of seven days is the subtle mean through which the novelist is able to present the flimsy structure of life and death.

In fact, according to Sartre, human consciousness has the potential to negate the massive, dull being-in-itself (non-human consciousness). This potentiality remains intact till death and death, in fact, is only nihilation of this power of being-for-itself by virtue of which it is able to negate the non-human consciousness. Sartre states in this context—

Death, in fact, is only on its negative side the nihilation of my possibilities; since indeed I am my possibilities only through the nihilation of being-in-itself which I have to be, death as the nihilation of a nihilation is a positing of my being as in-itself—\(^{17}\).

In Pincher Martin, the creation of a personal world at the time of death is only an assertion of Pincher's consciousness through which he exhibits Sartrean potential of negation. It is the negation of the oncoming onslaught of death. During lifetime this potentiality of negation of human consciousness results in all its various desires and pursuits in regard to which human consciousness can always adopt a changing free attitude. After death, according to Sartre, human consciousness 'can no longer change itself by the simple consciousness which it has of itself'\(^{18}\).
Therefore, Pincher's capability of imagining even in the face of death is the final attempt of his consciousness to assert its potential of negation. Imagination, according to Sartre, is only one important aspect through which human consciousness reveals its power of nihilation. Mary Warnock points out: 'In Being and Nothingness he (Sartre) argues that the freedom of the imagination consists in the fact that it freely withdraws itself from the real, and chooses to envisage the possible or the ideal. An ideal state is always proposed as a negation of an existent state, and the act of disengaging oneself from one's present moment in time to envisage a future in one of an infinite number of possible ways is a free act.'

In this context, the stuff of Pincher Martin's imagination at the time of death is not important, rather the exercise of imagination in itself reveals his faculty of assertion. Therefore, so far two points have been referred to in regard to Martin's inherent faculty till the point of death. It is regarding the existential exposition of the presence of the past in Pincher's mind in his encounter with death and his inherent power of negation through his extensively applied imagination, as revealed in his imaginative cycle of seven days prior to his real death.

How Martin's power of negation gradually comes to an end and gets engulfed by a thing-like being (in-itself) is
another crucial point of existential significance. Speaking of death, Sartre states—

The disappearance of the nihilating being does not touch that part of its being which is of the type of the in-itself, it is engulfed in the in-itself\(^{20}\) (Italics Mine).

This point is of utmost significance in Sartre's approach to death and it has a special relevance in the context of Pincher Martin. According to Sartre, when death comes, human-consciousness (for-itself) is only engulfed by non-consciousness being (in-itself) and in this metamorphic moment, human-consciousness never touches non-conscious being.

In Pincher Martin, when Martin is no more able to exercise his imagination, there comes an interval of darkness. It is the moment of terror to him in which there is anticipation of the cessation of consciousness and the engulfment by thing-like being. At this stage, Golding pin-points that the gap between Pincher's life and death is that of 'not-being'—'Then the gap of not-being' (p. 169): 'It's like when you've finished a lights rehearsal and they cut. Then where there was bright, solid scenery is now only painted stuff, grey under the pilot light. It's like chess. You've got an exultant attack moving but overlooked a check and now the game is a fight. An you're tied down' (p. 169). Also this gap is the
demarcating point between the time and the timeless— 'And then, the gap of dark, dividing that brighter time from this. On the other side of the gap was something that had happened. It was something that must not be remembered; but how could you control if you deliberately forgot? It was something about a pattern that was emerging' (p. 172).

Here, in fact, the study of Martin's theme of death can be made through existentialist point of view to show how consciousness is only engulfed by nonconscious being at the time of death, without ever mingling with it. On the Seventh Day of creation, if it is there at all, there is darkness all around Pincher Martin's consciousness and his second real death takes place in accordance with the caption of the American edition of this novel— The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin. Martin's consciousness is only engulfed by darkness, which has been symbolically depicted at the conclusion of the novel—

The lines of absolute blackness felt forward.... There was nothing but the centre and the claws. They were huge and strong and inflamed to red. They closed on each other. They contracted. They were outlined like a night sign against the absolute nothingness and they gripped their whole strength into each other (p. 201).

The engulfing of Pincher's consciousness by 'the lines of absolute blackness' and 'absolute nothingness' at the time of death ascertains that point when Pincher Martin's consciousness ceases to be there, only to be engulfed by nonconscious
being. It is both symbolic and metaphorical. What other more befitting symbol of death can convey this abstract phenomena in a better way? Even in the prevalent Indian myth there is a frequent reference to darkness at the time of death. In many of the Indian stories, when it comes to the description of the last moments of death, it is often said that the darkness engulfs at that time. Incidentally, even in the Puranas, an important scripture of India, there is a reference that there was Darkness all around before the creation of the cosmos.

This is one angle of looking at Martin's death. It can also be juxtaposed with an important statement of Golding, which he stated in an interview in regard to Pincher Martin:

.... 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 destroyed21.

Actually persona is the outward mask of the ego. The way Golding uses the term is more in consonance with the verdict of the Gita where it is stated that who-so-ever is able to sublimate his ego in God at the time of death is entitled to salvation (Chapter 8, Verse 5).

When Golding says that Pincher Martin would have attained
salvation in case he had 'destroyed' his 'persona' at the
time of death, it will only mean according to Sartrean
analysis that Martin would have become God-like, or would have
attained salvation, if his consciousness had become both
consciousness and inertness at the time of death (which is
only a utopia according to Sartre). Wilfrid Desan sums up
Sartre's position on this point quite clearly—

Sartre himself proposes the hypothesis of a third
possibility, namely a "Being-for-itself-in-itself"—
some kind of synthesis of both which could be
called God. This being could explain the origin of
things, and give us the so much desired metaphysical
foundation of the world. He calls it in Spinozistic
terminology Ens Causa sin, but discards it as soon
as he has stated it. There is no such thing as
"Being-for-itself-in-itself". The reason is that
an identification of consciousness and massive being
results inevitably in the extinction of consciousness
itself......

Sartre's position concerning the origin of the world
and the existence of God (both are metaphysical
questions in his terminology) can thus be summarized
as follows:
There are only two sorts of beings—the Being-in-
itself and the Being-for-itself. The real being is
the In-itself (let us call it X); the secondary being
is human consciousness or For-itself, which in fact
is nothing but a negation of the real being (let us
call it Y). X cannot be God, for it is massive and
dumb "packed-togetherness". Y cannot be God for it is
essentially incomplete and comes ontologically after
X. Neither can the sum X + Y gives us the notion of
God, for X + Y is the destruction of X. An unconscious
God is not God22 (Italics Mine).

During lifetime human consciousness only vaguely aspires
to be both consciousness and inertness, without ever becoming so.
At the time of death, Martin is directly near that state of mind where consciousness and inertness are pitched together. But true to existentialist exposition, this state of mind—i.e., Sartre's equivalent to Golding's conjecture of Martin's salvation through the 'destruction' of 'persona'—eludes him even in the moment of death.

Martin remains in the state of 'becoming' till death. Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor opine that Golding's pre-occupation is with Martin's Being in its totality—'He is interested in the Being of Pincher and its implications;'

For this purpose, the flow of the narrative is kept subsidiary to the primary focus of the novel, as Samuel Hynes also points out: '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.'

Golding's own account of the theme clarifies some of the points to us, as he himself deemed fit to elaborate, seeing that many readers found this form difficult when the novel was dramatised on the B.B.C. Third Programme:

Christopher Hadley Martin had no belief in anything but the importance of his own life; no love, no God. Because he was created in the image of God he had a freedom of choice which he used to centre the world on himself. He did not believe in purgatory and therefore when he died it was not presented to him in overtly theological terms. The greed for life which had been the mainspring of his nature, forced him to refuse the selfless act of dying.... His drowned body
lies rolling in the Atlantic but the revenous ego invents a rock for him to endure on. He is not fighting for bodily survival but for his continuing identity.

'The selfless act of dying', which Golding refers to in the above quote, is propounded by the novelist through Nathaniel, while he reveals it to Pincher Martin: 'Take us as we are now and heaven would be sheer negation. Without form and void. You see? A sort of black lightning destroying everything that we call life' (p. 70).

Human consciousness always tries to seek the firmness of thing-like being along with the transparency of consciousness, which is a state of complete lucidity and complete changelessness. This is an existential improbability and 'the technique of dying into heaven' (pp. 70-71) has its undertone of similarity to this existential improbability.

As the novel concludes, it enables us to see Pincher Martin in the light of another important existential perspective. Davidson, whose job is to gather and register the bodies of the dead, arrives on the islands on a drifter. He recovers Martin identity disc and his recollection appears to be that of another and distant world. Davidson's conversation with another person, Campbell, who wants to get rid of Martin's dead body at the earliest possible, reveals the attitude of the Other toward the dead—a point of special reference in
Sartrean analysis:

Mr. Campbell paused so that Davidson turned towards him again. Mr. Campbell did not immediately meet his eye.

"—We are the type of human intercourse. We meet here, apparently by chance, a meeting unpredictable and never to be repeated. Therefore, I should like to ask you a question with perhaps a brutal answer". Davidson pushed his cap back on his head and frowned. Mr. Campbell looked at the lean-to.

"Broken, defiled, Returning to the earth, the rafters rotted, the roof fallen in—a wreck, Would you believe that anything ever lived there?" Now the frown was bewildered.

"I simply don't follow you, I'm afraid".

"All those poor people"

"The men I—?"

"The harvest. The sad harvest. You know nothing of my—shall I say—official beliefs, Mr. Davidson; but living for all these days next to that poor derelict—Mr. Davidson. Would you say there was any—surviving? Or is that all? Like the lean-to?"

"If you're worried about Martin—whether he suffered or not—They paused for a while, Beyond the drifter the sun sank like a burning ship, went down, left nothing for a reminder but clouds like smoke. Mr. Campbell sighed.

"Aye", he said, "I meant just that"

"Then don't worry about him. You saw the body. He didn't even have time to kick off his sea boots" (pp. 207-8).

The attitude of Davidson and Campbell toward the dead Pincher Martin corroborates Sartre's view: 'The unique characteristic of a dead life is that it is a life of which the Other makes himself the guardian'. Just like now that Martin's death becomes our concern.

According to Sartre, there can be varying possible attitudes of the Other in relation to the dead—'the deceased
can be in the midst of the family through the memories of relatives' or he can become some 'particular destiny which is going to make some lives'²⁷, may be in the historic environment. Even to 'pass into oblivion' is also the result of the attitude of the Other, which makes the dead 'resolutely apprehended forever as one element dissolved into a mass'²⁸.

People only see the dead body of the person without having an iota of idea as to how an individual may have to struggle for the continuation of identity even in the face of death. If an ordinary person like Pincher Martin can maintain his identity for some time after death, there is no wonder in case a yogi or an ascetic survives for a longer time. There is a well known historical record of Sri Yogananda's conscious exit from the body on March 7, 1952 and it is worth noting that there was no sign of decay in his body even twenty days after death, as it has been mentioned in the notarised letter of Mr. Harry T. Rowe, Los Angeles Mortuary Director: ' "The absence of any visual signs of decay in the dead body of Paramahansa Yogananda offers the most extraordinary case in our experience.... No physical disintegration was visible in his body even twenty days after death----. This state of perfect preservation of a body is, so far as we know from mortuary annals, an unparalleled one---- No odor of decay emanated from his body at any time"²⁹.

In the Gita, death has been studied in relation to the
the Solar Path and the Lunar Path. The death during the Solar phase leads to salvation, whereas the person dying in the Lunar phase is subjected to the cycle of birth and death, as it has been stated by Lord Krishna to Arjuna—

Arjuna, I shall now tell you to time (path) departing when Yogis do not return, and also the time (path) departing when they do return (I shall describe to you both the paths (of the two paths) that in which are located the all-effulgent fire-god and the gods presiding over day-time, the bright fortnight, and the six months of the northward course of the sun, proceeding along it after death, Yogis, who have known Brahma, are successively led by the above gods, and finally reach Brahma.

Again, the path in which are located the gods presiding over smoke, night, the dark fortnight, and the six months of the southward course of the sun—the Yogi (devoted to action with a motive), taking to this path after death, is led by the above gods, one after another, and attaining the lustre of the moon (and enjoying the fruit of his meritorious deeds in heaven) returns to this mortal world.

These two paths of the world, the bright and the dark, are considered to be eternal. Proceedings by one of them, one reaches the supreme state from which there is no return; and proceeding by the other, one returns to the mortal world, and becomes subject to birth and death once more (Chapter VIII, Verses 23-26).

Life continues. People adopt various attitudes toward the dead but they always think their own death as a remote possibility. One is reminded of Yudhisthira, the hero of the Mahabharta, who says that the greatest wonder on this earth is that people continuously see others dying around them but they always live as if they are not going to die.
Perhaps, if one can develop the awareness of death in one's life, it can surely enable one to rise above the petty way of life. At least, this is the message of Heidegger—

The authentic being toward death arouses us and makes for a new life. It is similar to the old precept— in order to live one has to die—in the sense, however, that one has to become aware of the essential finitude of existence. Thus, Heidegger does not actually give an answer to death, but merely summons man to change his life, to live "authentically". It is only in the realization of our existence as essentially and necessarily "being toward death" that man can rise above the petty day-to-day life and becomes truly himself and truly free.
Notes


17. Ibid., p. 540.

18. Ibid., pp. 540-41.


27. Ibid., p. 541.

28. Ibid., p. 542.
