CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
In retrospect, we can say, with Kinkead-Weekes, that 
Golding's novels are all "heavily patterned, uniformly 
intense (and) severely exclusive."(1) The patterning can be 
observed even in the externalities of length and chapter 
division, virtually the same in every novel. As Virginia 
Tiger observes, "he constructs rigorous structures and 
exclusive form to illuminate his own inconclusive vision."(2) 
And, we may note that this inconclusiveness is itself one of 
the features of the 'modern' in art, which tends, at best, 
to provisional affirmations and tentative conclusions. His 
novels are uniformly intense. The mood in which each is 
written hardly changes. The tone is always the same, even 
when there are violent shifts in the points of view. In his 
relentless pursuit of theme, Golding often avoids irrelevant 
material, which less "significant" writers often include in 
the name of interest. This is not to say that Golding's 
characters are spectres or his incidents a mere manipulation 
of situations for giving an opportunity to the writer to say 
what he has to say. His novels have too much life and

1 Mark Kinkead-Weekes, William Golding: A Critical Study 

2 Virginia Tiger, William Golding: The Dark Fields of 
immediacy to be discussed as symbolic or abstract patterns. His
characters and incidents are convincing, and they are
sufficient to generate suspense and hold our interest. One
can easily notice that Golding has not tried to develop
character or plot wholly for its own sake. In Golding, events
and scenes are presented not only because they are interesting
but because they tell us something important about human
beings. Intensity and significance seem to be as important
to Golding as interest. About the density of Golding's
fiction Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor aptly comment:

"Bringing these impressions together, we might say
that a Golding novel gives the effect of something
dedicatedly made, every strain and stress
calculated and overcome, so that the final product
leads us to think in terms of a sculpture." (3)

Golding is essentially a literary man who uses scene, character
and symbol to achieve imaginative effects. Each of Golding's
novels is a remarkable imaginative feat, "fertile in
imagination, powerful in drama, suggestive in its literary
and mythic overtones." (4)

In the matter of theme, all his five serious novels
can be treated as a piece. They are imaginative variations

3 Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, op. cit., p.240.
4 Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub, The Art of
on the same theme — the darkness of man's heart. But
Golding does not repeat because he strongly believes that
there is no point in writing a second novel to say the same
thing. In a way, each new book of Golding's is a trying on
of a new hat (a metaphor from *Free Fall*). In all the
fables we can see that man, in his fear, abstracts his own
brutality and projects it as a demon or ogre which will
destroy him. Golding is perhaps hinting at Original Sin in
these exercises. This irrational fear becomes overt for the
first time in *Lord of the Flies*. The boy with a mulberry-
 coloured birthmark speaks of snakes and beasts coming out of
the dark, and it is responsible for the tragedy on the island
leading to human sacrifice. The ritualistic "Kill the beast!
Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (5) is carried on to
*The Spire's* "Fill the pit! Fill the pit! Fill the pit!" (6)

*The Inheritors* locates this psychic and moral evasion
in prehistoric times, and uses it to account for the genesis
of guilt in man. The New Men project their fear upon the
Neanderthalers and take them for the ogre. They impart to the
pre-lapsarians their own "aggressive", "rupacious" natures.

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5 *Lord of the Flies*, p. 187.

6 *The Spire*, p. 81.
Pincher Martin (Pincher Martin) creates his own God. He tells Him:

"You are a projection of my mind." (7)

and Martin resists Nathaniel's "technique of dying into heaven". The book is given a religious atmosphere through Nathaniel. Free Fall also has an overt religious atmosphere. Both the protagonists, Martin and Mountjoy, are modern men convinced of their own self-sufficiency in a materialistic world. In both the cases, Golding dramatizes their rejection of the world of spirit and the protagonists create spectres from their own "malignant imagination", much in the way the New People created ogres in the dark forest in The Inheritors.

The Spire treats the notion of darkness in a new way. Jocelin, unlike the other protagonists of Golding, believes only in the world of the spirit. The world of Vision gradually dissolves in the acid of reality, and Jocelin confronts the facts. He descends from the proud world of Vision to one of reality and humility. As Virginia Tiger puts it, "He is brought to the dark pit where he comes through punishment to contrition and humility." (8)

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7 Pincher Martin, p.194.

"Then the angel put away the two wings from the cloven hoof and struck him from arse to head with a whitehot flail."(9) He comes to recognise the existence of a dark cellarage within his own body. At this time, he is granted the momentary vision of a kingfisher, a "once-in-a-lifetime" bird. Perhaps it is intended to be a symbol of mysterious Mercy. Golding gives a new dimension to the basic unadorned vision of The Inheritors in The Spire. The waterfall in The Inheritors, an emblem of the Fall, becomes an "upward waterfall" in The Spire. As the infant in The Inheritors offers a kind of bridge between innocence and guilt the spire, the "upward waterfall" connects earth and heaven — evil and holiness — a symbol of wholeness.

Critics like R.J. Rees and Anthony Burgess fail to notice the positive aspects of Golding's work. Burgess regards him as a "novelist much concerned with Evil (though hardly at all with Good)."(10) However Leighton Hodson does not see Golding as a pessimist. He writes:

"In particular the novels share the twin themes of darkness in the heart of man and the idea that there is a 'grace' or salvation to be found in our becoming aware of our condition."(11)

9 The Spire, p.188.
It is useful to recall here that Golding's stated intention in all his fables is to "make man aware of his own humanity."

In each novel good exists side by side of evil. Simon's presence in *Lord of the Flies* gives a ray of hope to an otherwise bleak world. The New Men in *The Inheritors* row away with the Neanderthal infant. Nathaniel Walterson is a representative of all that is good. Samuel Mountjoy's doors open with his instinctive cry for help. And Jocelin finds Grace in his newly found humility. He is granted the vision of the kingfisher.

Yet, in all his works, we see a confrontation between the evil and the good. The power of all-pervading evil is immense. The conflict between the spiritual and the rational is apparent in each book. In fact *Free Fall* and *The Spire* dramatize this conflict in vivid detail. Always, the trouble seems to emanate from a lack of coordination between these two opposing views of life. The spiritual and the rational are two militant forces to be reconciled in man. A bridge (*Free Fall*'s metaphor) is to be erected between the two worlds. If Martin and Sammy are too materialistic, convinced of their own self-sufficiency, Jocelin is too spiritual. In both the cases man causes destruction and unhappiness. This idea is dramatized, in a different manner, in *The Pyramid*. Evie, the town crier's
daughter masochistically depends on sex for her happiness, which she fails to find. Miss Bounce, the music teacher, is "devoted" to music and hence shuns the calls of her body. Her attempts at suppressing the natural human instincts fail at times and, like a nymphomaniac, she exposes herself to attract men's attention. Golding obviously disapproves of both the ways through Oliver's words — "I never liked you! Never!" (12) Golding seems to suggest that a total commitment, whether to rationality or spirituality or to anything else, is unwholesome, and hence to be shunned. One might, by inference, see Golding as the advocate of the 'golden mean'.

Critics like Wayland Young have tried to identify Golding as a Christian novelist. His thematic concern is apparently religious — Original Sin, Damnation, Grace, Salvation — but it is not very accurate to label him a Christian novelist. He has not attempted to discuss a specific Christian doctrine in any novel. Even when the setting is religious, as in The Spire, the religious atmosphere highlights the protagonist's conflict without having anything particular to do with Christianity. The point of the novel is not a matter of doctrine but that much evil may lie concealed under the semblance of religious earnestness.

12 The Pyramid, p.213.
At best, we may say that Golding is a religious novelist who is interested in the fallen nature of man. In all of Golding's novels, the protagonists arrive at some religious awareness as an inexplicable mystery, at the dark centres of their being. To them the experience is "magical, mysterious, powerful, terrible, dangerous, awesome." (13) Golding appears to be in the Nonconformist English religious tradition which assumes mankind's fall from grace, but subscribes to no specific theological belief. His effort seems to emphasize the reality of the soul in the modern world of scientific rationalism.

One of the defects of Golding's novels, as it were, is that they invite interpretation. This should really be a virtue, for it means that the events and persons are not only interesting in themselves but that they have an underlying significance. But what really happens is that, in the process of interpretation, there is a tendency to over-emphasize what it is about and ignore the literary and artistic qualities. But it must be said in Golding's favour that he provides what may be called an interesting surface — interesting people and interesting events — and does not allow thematic considerations to overwhelm artistic requirements. Our analysis

of the plots and plot-situations and the characters and characterization in Golding's novels, clearly shows that he has been able to provide, for his criticism of life, an interesting and more than adequate framework. In the context, it is difficult to accept the rather patronizing comment of Frederick R. Karl that "when literary values overcome the moralist, Golding's potential may well be realised, and he will become an outstanding novelist."(14)

Golding's fables obviously invite varied interpretations. Hence they impart a paradoxical impression of simultaneous simplicity and complexity. There are, for Golding, it seems, no simple straightforward answers to the question of what is man's nature. In spite of the apparent paradoxes and complexities, Golding's message is clear. David Skilton aptly remarks:

"The various interpretations merely are different ways of looking at the central reality it presents. Interpret the novels how we will, there remains Golding's vision, which is unassailable in terms of message and meaning. His persons and things are primarily persons and things and do not stand for something else."(15)

Golding's technique balances his "eccentric themes". His novels are ostensibly realistic and beneath the surface


action and realism are to be found cosmic meanings. As a result, his novels are deceptively simple and an inattentive reader gets the impression at the end of each novel that he had been tricked and deceived all along. The merit of *Lord of the Flies* does not lie simply in its creating a microcosmic island where the behaviour of the boys is significant "merely (because of) their similarity to adults."(16) The book is compelling because of its analysis of inborn human nature. As C.B. Cox observes, "it is a gripping story which will appeal to generations of readers."(17)

All his novels use an ideographic structure where the action is seen from two different perspectives. This is an original device invented by Golding to drive his point home more sharply. James Gindin has discounted this device on the ground that it mars the unity of the work without adding relevant perspective. But, it is not difficult to see that the books are organic wholes despite this narrative coda. Unlike Gindin's contention the two different perspectives are not contradictory, but they are complementary. The second narrative movement fortifies the metaphorical structure of the first. It is, always, action seen from a different point.

of view with the focus unaltered, with a sudden shift to another world of sensation. The difficulty lies in the reader's inability to connect the two different perspectives. Virginia Tiger discusses at length, Golding's use of this device. She comments:

"...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 presented as being unable to perceive or accept. The bridge between the two perspectives is 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."(18)

Another device that Golding has successfully used is the inversion of popular literary models. In varying degrees, Golding subverts other writers' view of the same situation. In his imaginative reconstruction Golding creates a new myth, Lord of the Flies reverses the Victorian attitude of complacency presented in Ballantyne's Coral Island. The Inheritors, presents the same situation as that in H.G.Wells's Outline of History and ci the story 'The Grisly Folk'. Unlike Wells, Golding locates the origin of the ogre within modern man. Pincher Martin uses the same situation as Taffrail's Pincher Martin, O.D., Free Fall and Camus's The Fall are

18 Virginia Tiger, op.cit., p. 17.
similar in many respects, but Golding and Camus differ in their conclusions about man's existential situation. The Spire does not invert any literary model but is imaginatively recast out of many works like Ibsen's The Master Builder and Brand, Eliot's The Rock and Dorothy L. Sayers' The Zeal of Thy House and many medieval legends.

Golding himself has called his novels fables. The fable is a form of didactic fiction which does not care for verisimilitude. Swift's and Orwell's animals do not behave like animals. We do not object to it because the tradition is deep-rooted in literature. From the time of Aesop many writers have been writing in this vein. What is most remarkable about Golding's fables is that while they conform to the fabulistic tradition, they are convincing realistic novels on the surface, so that literary critic hesitate to accept them as fables. Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub comment:

"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." (19)

When writers who are greatly concerned with significance write in realistic tradition, they are exposed to certain

dangers. Since they have something very significant to say, they tend to neglect characterization and plot. Characters may tend to become too abstract and situations too symbolic to have any substance. It is a pleasure to be able to say that Golding has been very largely successful in steering clear of these dangers. Nearly all of his characters are people, and the events are credible and fit neatly into the story.

William Golding is a strictly contemporary novelist who is, in V.S. Pritchett's words, "the most original imagination among living English novelists". (20) He is a significant writer with an adequate mastery of the technique, and many consider him "the 'dean' of living British novelists." (21) At least two of his novels — Lord of the Flies and The Spire — are sure to stand the test of time because of the compelling nature of the narrative and the depth of penetration into character, apart from being criticisms of life, as Arnold would put it, under the conditions of art.