CHAPTER II
THEMES-(1)
(1) LORD OF THE FLIES

Lord of the Flies was not a spectacular success when it was published in 1954, although the initial critical reception was good. But by 1959, Golding's novels were "becoming the subject of critical controversies in popular and scholarly publications." (1) Lord of the Flies was soon recognised widely. As Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor say, the recognition was caused by its "powerful and exciting qualities as narrative, ....... appearance of extreme clarity of meaning." (2)

Lord of the Flies is a retelling in realistic terms of R.M. Ballantyne's The Coral Island. Experience and intelligence had taught Golding that Victorian complacency was illfounded and civilization was leading us to no better land. He writes, in (the essay) 'Fable':

"Before the Second World War I believed in the perfectibility of social man; that a correct structure of society would produce good will and therefore you could remove all social ills by a reorganisation of society ..... but after

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the war..... I had discovered what one man could do to another....... They were done skillfully, coldly, by educated men, doctors, lawyers, by men with a civilization behind them, to beings of their own kind....... I must say that anyone who moved through those years without understanding that man produces evil as a bee produces honey must have been blind or wrong in the head.**(3)**

Golding's preoccupation in all his novels is with this 'essential illness of mankind' and **Lord of the Flies** occupies a unique position among his novels, not by virtue of its being the first but by virtue of its qualities of "narrative momentum and thematic clarity."**(4)**

R.M. Ballantyne, in **The Coral Island**, presented a 'clumsy moral tale', in which good is defined as being English and Christian, and evil is presented as unChristian, savage and adult. As Samuel Hynes says, "Golding regards **The Coral Island** morally unrealistic. One might say that **Lord of the Flies** is a refutation of **The Coral Island** and that Golding sets about to show us that the devil rises, not out of pirates and cannibals, and such alien creatures but out of the darkness of men's heart."**(5)**

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4 Mark Kinkead-Weeks and Ian Gregor, op. cit., p. 15.
This is a theme that recurs almost obsessively in all his later work.

Golding adopts the science fiction tradition of setting his action in the future. The background is a future fictional atomic war. A planeload of English boys are crashlanded in an uninhabited island. The exact location of the island is skillfully and deliberately kept vague. But, unlike Ballantyne's, it is a realistic tropical island where flowers and fruit grow together; an island where birds and harmless animals live harmoniously. The boys do not have to struggle for their existence since the environment presents no serious challenge. Their first response is one of The Coral Island glamour; a dream come true, freed from the rigorous control of the grown-ups. Everyone except Piggy was delighted, since they were all left to themselves.

Ralph and Piggy together fish out a shell from the ferny weeds of the nearby lagoon. The shell, later called the conch, serves an important symbolic function in the novel. It was "In colour..... deep cream, touched here and there with fading pink..... eighteen inches of shell with a spiral twist and covered with a delicate embossed pattern."

6 Lord of the Flies, p.16.
Piggy provides a social function for this shell. By blowing it, an assembly is immediately summoned. The boys on the island start well. They set out to create a rational society modelled on what grown-ups might do in such circumstances. They elect Ralph their leader, and this democratically elected leader decides to explore the place to find out if it is an island.

The exploration confirms what they feared, and Ralph tells the boys that they have to look after themselves till grown-ups come to fetch them. They found their society with the conch serving as the symbol of order and discipline. Everything goes on well. The assembly decides that, since they are on an island, they should assist their rescue by lighting a signal fire on a mountain. Huts are to be built on the beach for protection and shelter. Jack, the leader of the choir-boys, declares:

"This is our island. It's a good island. Until the grown-ups come to fetch us we'll have fun."(7)

The boys are all educated middle-class English boys ranging in age from five to twelve. We expect them to perform well. But their ideal society is not to last long, unlike the idyllic life of The Coral Island. Satan is the vile intruder in the guise of fear. A boy with a mulberry-

7 Lord of the Flies, p.38.
coloured birthmark poses the everlasting problem of the beast. He says he saw a "beastie", a "snake thing" coming in the dark. The problem of fear poses the first challenge to the democratic society. They seem to succeed in reasoning out that such a beast cannot exist. But Ralph's assertion that "there isn't a beast!"(8) does not carry conviction. The irrational fear is deep-rooted, and it cannot be dismissed by majority vote. Especially among the smaller boys, the 'littluns', there was, "the dubiety that required more than rational assurance."(9)

Jack proposes his hunting down the beast, if there is a beast. Not long after, the boys slip away from the discipline which they had wanted to impose upon themselves. The choir-boys, led by Jack, take up the role of hunters, and soon the hilarity of the hunt overwhelms the desire for rescue. The signal fire is neglected. A ship passes by but there is no fire on the mountain to attract it. Ralph realises the futility of his plan of building shelters. The boys are irresponsible and they cannot stick to any constructive design. They enjoy eating and playing.

The knowledge that a ship has passed by depresses

8 Lord of the Flies, p.40.
9 Ibid.
Ralph. He is sad at the lost opportunity. Had there been a fire on the mountain, the ship would, perhaps, have come for their rescue. Ralph blames Jack for his negligence and this irritates Jack. His disappointment in losing to Ralph in the election deepens and the antagonism between the two leaders becomes overt. Night after night the boys are scared, and Ralph fails to allay their fears. They wish for something, "a sign or so" from the adult world. The adult world obliges them with a dead parachutist who sits on the mountain. Tangled among the strings of the parachute, he attains the proportion of a huge beast. When the wind blows the head is lifted up and with the passing of the wind the head goes down again. Sam and Eric, the boys guarding the fire, succeed in convincing the others that they were chased by a huge beast. Ralph's democracy is inadequate to deal with the situation. Though Ralph, Jack and Roger set about to kill the beast, fear drives them back before they can understand what the beast is. Ashamed of themselves, they start blaming each other. Jack attempts, vainly, to replace Ralph as leader. Defeated for a second time, Jack abandons the society. Interestingly, most of the boys who had voted for Ralph follow Jack and soon they establish what may be called a tribal society with Jack as its chief. It is a perfect and complete tribal society with rituals and sacrifice. Jack is a terror with unlimited capacity for torture. The prefect turned chief
shrinks from no kind of cruelty. They kill a sow, and the head is sacrificed for the beast. They feel that danger can be escaped through ritual and sacrifice to propitiate the beast.

Ralph is left with a small group of boys. One of his associates, Simon, goes to a particular place in the forest and sees there the head of the sow planted on a stick. In an epileptic fit, Simon hears the sow's head, the Lord of the Flies, speak to him in unequivocal terms about the nature of evil:

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" (said the head)

"You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?...... I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" (10)

This is clearly meant to convey the idea that evil is not external to man but within him. Regaining consciousness, Simon goes to the mountain-top to unravel the mystery of the Beast. The rotten body of the parachutist sat there. The tangle of lines explained to him the mystery of the life-like movement. "He saw how pitilessly the layers of rubber and canvas held together the poor body that should be rotting away...... Then he took the lines in his hands, he freed them from the rocks and the figure from the wind's indignity." (11)

10 Lord of the Flies, p.158.
11 Ibid., pp.161-62.
With the newly acquired knowledge, he rushes to the boys to free them from the fear of the Beast. But unfortunately they were wild with excitement, chanting the ritualistic "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (12) after dinner. They were dancing in a circle and the circle soon became a horse-shoe. To the circle, or rather the horse-shoe, Simon comes in. To the excited and frightened boys Simon was unrecognizable and he was merely 'a thing'. "A thing was crawling out of the forest. It came darkly, uncertainly. The shrill screaming that rose before the beast was like a pain. The beast stumbled into the horse-shoe." (13) And immediately the beast was 'done in', but it happens to be Simon whom they had killed. The last opportunity of the boys to find the truth is missed, and they are attracted more and more towards the charm of ritual and violence. Ralph and Piggy are filled with remorse for having been a party to what was done. But Jack and his tribe are driven farther in their course of violence. When Piggy 'legitimately' claims his 'spectacle' stolen by Jack, Jack gets infuriated and sensing what the chief wants, Roger rolls down a big rock upon Piggy:

"The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist..... Piggy fell forty feet   

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12 Lord of the Flies, p.167.

13 Ibid., p.168.
and landed on his back, ... Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed."(14)

Jack attacked Ralph viciously, with the full intention of killing him. The spear, "tore the skin and flesh over Ralph's ribs."(15) He ran fumbling, "feeling not pain but panic."(16) The manhunt continues for two days.

Disappointed, Jack orders the whole island to be set on fire. Seeing the smoke of this 'barbarous fury' a naval ship comes to the rescue. The boys are rescued before Ralph is brutally murdered. And 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."(17) From the children's world of hatred and violence they are rescued to inhabit a wider world of war and destruction.

How can we account for this degradation of the civilized, educated English boys? According to Golding, the aim of the narrative is to show that one lot of people is inherently like any other lot of people and that the enemy of man is inside him."(18)

14 Lord of the Flies, p.200.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p.201.
17 Ibid., p.223.
The boys start well. They create an ideal society with plenty of rules. But, Golding reveals how the inevitable decline of society is brought forward by the defects of human nature. He is very particular to show that the environment has nothing to do with their downfall. They are all civilized boys. But the civilization which has conditioned them does not know anything about their nature. It is a skin deep civilization and away from the protective rules of guardians and teachers and policemen it cannot continue to exist. They strip it as they strip their body. If the heat of the tropical island compels them to get rid of their clothes, the thrust of evil from within makes them revert to savagery. In *Lord of the Flies* physical darkness is always associated with the darkness within. The description of the appearance of the choir-boys is particularly interesting:

"Here, the eye was first attracted to a black, bat-like creature that danced on the sand. . . . . . . . The creature was a party of boys, marching approximately in step in two parallel lines and dressed in strangely eccentric clothing. Shorts, shirts, and different garments they carried in their hands; but each boy wore a square black cap with a silver badge in it. Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks which bore a long silver cross on the left breast and each neck was finished off with a hambone frill." (19)

It is these Christian boys who turn more violent than all others. Neither the Western civilization nor the Christian  

rearing is adequate to sustain the good qualities. Evil is
inborn however hard you may cloak it, Golding seems to suggest.
This is what happens to the ideal society of Orwell's Animal
Farm too. Greed and suspicion cannot rest long. Despite
Rousseau and Wordsworth, Golding seems to believe the
tendency of the child to come trailing clouds of darkness and
destruction. Having been a teacher for many years at Bishop
Wordsworth's School in Salisbury, Golding finds it hard to
believe in the Ballantyne-type of innocence and goodness of
children.

Jack, the leader of the choir, reaches the island
with a knife. The first assembly is conducted well in spite
of his possessing a knife. We see traces of the demagogue
in him. When the boys return from their first exploration
they see a piglet caught in the elastic creepers. The
immediate impulse of Jack is to stab it. But something
prevents him from doing so. After drawing his knife with a
flourish, he stops: "because of the enormity of the knife
descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the
unbearable blood."(20) Instead, he slams it into a tree
trunk. But the power of civilization to stop people from
such actions is temporary. Sooner or later they throw away
the restraints of civilization.

20 Lord of the Flies, p.34.
Roger, too, not much inferior to Jack in cruelty, is temporarily stopped. "Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed, and threw it at Henry—threw it to miss ....... there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw."(21) Golding gives the reason in very clear terms:

"Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law."(22)

But this civilization is not to last long. Golding explains why:

"Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins."(23)

To get away from the taboos of civilization Jack invents painting:

"Jack planned his new face. He made one cheek and one eye-socket white, then rubbed red over the other half of his face and slashed a black bar of charcoal across from right ear to left jaw."(24)

With the painted face he acknowledges that he is no more the old choir leader. His belligerence finds free play under the new mask. This war-paint liberates him from

21 Lord of the Flies, p.67.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p.69.
all shame and civilization. Soon they succeed in killing a pig. The excitement of killing is hilarious and the firekeepers neglect their duty. Exactly when the fire has gone out, a ship passes by unnoticed and unnoticing. Had they been more disciplined and less excited, they would have sustained the fire and enabled their early rescue. As Steven Marcus says, "the conventions, restraint and taboos of civilized society are gradually sloughed off."\(^{(25)}\) Shortly, hunting for food becomes killing for the pleasure of it. When Jack establishes his 'primitive', 'savage', 'orgiastic' society, the regression is final. They do not care, any more, for law and order as understood by Ralph and Piggy. Piggy makes his displeasure apparent through his disgusted remark: "like a crowd of kids."\(^{(26)}\) Apparently he represents good-will and common sense. But the primitive passion for hunting and killing which has been aroused in the others is too strong to be checked by Piggy's common sense. As Anthony Burgess puts it, "the good intentions of the few are overborne by the innate evil of many."\(^{(27)}\) The primitive society, with Jack as its head, unleashes unlimited cruelty. It is not very difficult to understand why the boys are attracted towards Jack's tribal society. Primarily, it is the


\(^{26}\) Lord of the Flies, p.42.

charisma of action. People always prefer doers to thinkers. Jack is the main 'doer' of the novel. Secondly, the boys are attracted by the immediate prospects of happiness. They enjoy playing, hunting and eating. They want to forget the serious problem of rescue. Even more, they want to forget the Beast. Ralph's democracy with its debates is not able to cope very well with the demands thrown up by the Beast. Instead, Jack's 'orgiastic' society has the advantage of rituals and sacrifice. Rituals are found to possess the power of easing tension.

With the chant "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" (23) they find it easier to kill the pig. Similarly, even Ralph and Piggy partake in the murder of Simon. This, too, was accompanied by a ritual dance. Thus we see primitivism overpowering civilization.

The novel can be read as a political allegory also.

It is a serious question mark to the permanence of democracy. Can democracy survive the threats of violence? Golding's answer seems to be a negative. Democracy is inadequate to deal with serious problems. It is a mockery of democracy when Ralph, the democratically elected leader, proposes to decide by voting "What's what", when the minds of the boys are haunted by an imaginary beast. It is ridiculous, Golding seems to suggest, that truth can be arrived at through voting.

28 Lord of the Flies, p. 205.
Despite the voting down of the beast, the boys never stop believing in the existence of the beast. Ralph himself is not convinced by what they have decided by voting. He is a 'confused democrat' with Piggy as his brains-trust. As Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor remark, "Ralph is forced to realize that fear cannot be dispelled by voting."\(^{(29)}\) Slowly, his grip on the boys loosens. Moreover, the defeated aspirant is ever bent upon overthrowing the authority of the elected. We see Jack trying twice to replace Ralph. When democracy is ineffective, the leader is blamed. The inability of democracy to crush dissent becomes fatal to the system itself. On the other hand, Jack's dictatorship has a firmer grip on the situation. The contemporary situation provides us with communism and dictatorship of the military as parallels to Jack's autocracy. It permits no dissent. Decisions are ruthlessly implemented, right or wrong. The merit of it is that it gives stability, however temporary. Jack succeeds in allaying the fears of the boys through ritual and sacrifice. The sacrifice made to propitiate the Beast becomes the Lord of the Flies. But we know that it is not a permanent solution. The boys will, certainly, get scared again, as it happens when they encounter the dead parachutist. Another very important truth about the

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29 Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, op.cit., p.35.
dictactorship of Jack is that even the most atrocious decision of the leader is scrupulously executed. What will the boys live on when the island with its fruit and pigs is burnt down? Is not this type of government self-destructive by its utter dependence on one person for its wisdom, or rather folly?

Critics like Wayland Young have tried to read the novel as a religious allegory. The island gives the semblance of the Garden of Eden with its complete harmony of life. The ideal life of the boys is destroyed by the snake. The boy with a mulberry-coloured birthmark says that he has seen snakes. This talk of snakes attains greater significance as the story moves further. With fear entering their hearts they are no more the old boys. It is fear, more than anything else, that precipitates the tragedy on the island. We see, in the degradation of the boys, a dim parallel to the fall of man. However, Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub rightly warn us against carrying the parallel too far:

"Ralph makes only a tenuous Adam; the sow is a sorry Eve and Piggy, the sightless sage has no comfortable place in Christian myth." (30)

The novel could be considered richly suggestive instead of as an allegory. Even though there are mild religious undertones here and there, the novel cannot be

taken for a Biblical allegory. Wayland Young attempts to see a neat Biblical allegory in *Lord of the Flies* when he sees "the first coming in the episode of the dead airman and the parachute." (31) Further, he substitutes the arrival of the naval officer at the end for the second coming of Jesus Christ. One is compelled to ask, "Is the naval officer a Saviour?"

The officer with "white drill, epaulettes, a revolver, a row of gilt buttons down the front of a uniform" (32) is no better than the boys themselves since he is engaged in a larger man-hunt. The parachutist also is a symbol of adult evil, not a reminder of Christ's first coming. It is an externalization of the innate evil. As Golding says:

"It is a dead thing handed on, but dead though it is, it will not lie down. It is a monstrous creature descending to us from our ancestors producing nothing but disunity, chaos..... something that was dead but had a kind of life." (33)

Evidently, it is a sign of what Golding calls "off-campus history", history "felt in the blood and bones." (34) This is a thing we inherit from the earlier generation. Here, the

32 *Lord of the Flies*, p.221.
33 William Golding, 'Fable', *op.cit.*, p.94.
parachutist, a symbol of adult evil, is provided to the boys on the island by their older counterparts in the mainland. Golding wanted it to mean 'off-campus history', as he has said in the essay 'Fable'. But it is at least two things simultaneously — a confirmation that the island is a microcosm of the outer world and it explains the nature of the irrational fear which, by turn, is the nature of the beast.

Golding wanted Simon to be a Christ-figure. He himself has said:

"I included a Christ-figure in my fable. This is the little boy Simon, solitary, stammering, a lover of mankind, a visionary, who reaches common sense attitudes not by reason but by intuition.... He is really turning a part of the jungle into a church, not a physical one, perhaps, but a spiritual one."(35)

This Simon has been a point of controversy among Golding critics. Some, like John Peter, argue that he is not convincing. Oldsey and Weintraub consider his characterization a big achievement by Golding. One thing that no one fails to note about him is that he has been over explicit. When the boys debate the existence or otherwise of the beast, Simon, rather hesitantly, says:

"May be...... may be there is a beast."
"What I mean is...... may be it's only us."

Simon went on.
"We could be sort of......."
Simon became inarticulate in his effort to express mankind's essential illness."(36)

What he says is true, as the novel reveals. He knows more than any other boy. When compared to Piggy, he personifies human being's only hope. Piggy's common sense and scientific attitude carry us nowhere. But the intuitive power of Simon would have been a great help had the boys listened to what he had to say. He brings that immense knowledge from the mountain-top that the beast is only a parachutist. But before he could convey the news, the boys beat him to death. He is Christ-like in possessing the intuitive knowledge that would save the world. But, no doubt, he is a limited Christ-figure. The novel speaks a lot about evil. But little about salvation. Christianity accepts a fall. But not without redemption.

The novel can be read as a challenge to rationalism. Apparently, Piggy is a symbol of the scientific attitude. He is superior to all the other boys, both in intelligence and in common sense. The myth that spectacles are a sign of superior intelligence is used here symbolically. Jack breaks one of the lenses of his spectacles in the fight that ensues after the passing of the first ship. Hereafter Piggy

36 Lord of the Flies, p.97.
is one-eyed. His asthma, myopia and diarrhoea, in addition to his short fat body, make him an unattractive figure. The superiority suggested by his intelligence is nullified by his physical deficiencies. He is no match for Jack. Even Ralph, who depends on Piggy in intellectual matters does not like him. His murder is symbolic of how ineffective science is in solving human problems. Man needs something more than rational thinking. Can we say that violence wins over common sense?

Though Golding does not make anything explicit in this regard, he suggests enough. The tribal society itself is self-destroying in its utter lack of common sense. What would they live on when the whole island is burnt down?

There is the first death on the island which is also very important, though from the point of view of the narrative it seems insignificant and casual. The boy with the mulberry-coloured birthmark, who first talks of the 'beastie', never again appears after the first fire. The signal fire that the boys light on a mountain top gets out of hand and consumes a part of the island, and the boy too. The fire of reason and science swallows the irrational boy. The power of science to deal with the irrational working of the mind is limited in scope. The boy is killed. But the irrational fear is not limited to that boy alone. Reason alone is inadequate to banish the innate fear.

By no stretch of imagination can we call the ending
happy. The boys are initiated into a 'malevolent adult world.' The naval officer who comes to the rescue of the boys is an "attitude" a 'mentality'; entirely blind to the moral realities of the situation. He is a smug Victorian when he says: "Fun and games.," (37) looking at the blood-thirsty boys. He chides the boys for not behaving decently:

"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 —" (38)

He can think only of: "Jolly good show. Like the Coral Island."
This is the same attitude Jack had projected when he said:

"We're English; and the English are best at everything. We've got to do the right things." (39)

And we have seen what Jack did. The officer's statement winds up what Jack introduced. The irony springs from the gap between this attitude and the reality. The officer fails to sense the "residual savagery that lies barely below the surface." (40)

Instead of the Coral Island glamour with which they start, the boys turn "amoral, vicious, chaotic and murderous." (41)

37 Lord of the Flies, p.221.
38 Ibid., p.222.
39 Ibid., p.47.
41 Ibid.
confirming the idea that "man's irrationality and urge for destruction are enduring." (42)

On balance, it is a nightmarish tale with a pessimistic ending. The feeble and occasional capacity for reason is incapable of sustaining and preserving civilized existence which is constantly threatened and often overwhelmed by the essentially irrational, savage quality of men in general.

(11) THE INHERITORS

In Lord of the Flies, Golding tried to trace the defects of society back to human nature and in The Inheritors he goes one step further and condemns the claims of rational man. The Victorians believed that logic and reason were adequate to carry society forward and that the Biblical millenium was a scientific certainty. H.G. Wells was one of the foremost among those who held that progress and rationalism led to the betterment of society. His Outline of History is a "rationalist gospel in excelsis", as described by William Golding. Many, including Golding's father, took rationalism neat. The Inheritors reverses this idea as Lord of the Flies reverses the idea behind The Coral Island.

Golding has ironically chosen the epigraph from Wells's Outline of History. Anthropologists had discovered that the Neanderthal men had hairy bodies, and they were very unattractive in appearance. And Wells had tried to show that the 'ogre in folklore' dwelt in a hairy body and behind a repulsive appearance, which cannot be associated with the homo sapiens.
Another source of Golding's novel may be a novel with the same title by Joseph Conrad, which was published by Ford Madox Hœffeur in 1901. Yet another of the sources is again *The Coral Island*. Ballantyne's book assumes white as the symbol of a superior civilization and black as the colour of savagery. It is precisely this Victorian complacence which Golding reacts against.

Golding's task in *The Inheritors* is difficult as he sets about to write the novel from the point of view of the Neanderthal men — "presenting things and events as they might be apprehended by the subhuman, subrational intelligence." It is a highly original and richly imaginative work. "The originality lies in the fictional conception rather than in the theology", as James Baker says. The initial difficulty is the result of the point of view; but once we have caught the idiom, as it were, the story begins to make sense.

*The Inheritors* is, at the simplest level, the story of the extermination of the Neanderthal men, partly by nature and partly by *homo sapiens*. During the course of the novel, we are made aware of the wide gap between the two groups;

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and our attention is drawn to this gap. The Neanderthalers here are a group of eight people who have survived a huge forest fire. We get an anthropologically correct picture of the Neanderthalers who lived in natural surroundings. As we start to live in their consciousness, the quality of their intelligence and the quality of their innocence attract us much more than the physical details.

The novel starts with their abandoning of the winter caves near the sea for the overhang at the mountains near a fall. The first crisis is precipitated by the absence of the log they had been using as a bridge to cross the marshy waters. The 'people' cannot understand what has become of the log. They get the 'picture' that "the log has gone away" (3), and nothing more. They have not developed the power of thought and abstract conceptualization even of the simplest kind. The old man, Mal, falls while crossing the marsh, and succumbs to his already apparent pulmonary disorder. Death is not a disaster to these people; they accept it as a simple fact. It is this quiet acceptance which evokes our surprise and claims our sympathy.

Mal's successor, Ha, and Nil go into the forest for gathering wood. Nil returns without Ha, and reports that Ha is missing:

3 The Inheritors, p. 12.
"There is a smell on the cliff. Two. Ha and another.... There is another smell of a nobody."
"There is the end of the Ha scent."

They are too ignorant to suspect or imagine the presence of other people in the world. And hence, this 'another smell of a nobody' is beyond their comprehension. We soon learn the presence of *homo sapiens* on the scene.

Lok and Fa set out in search of Ha. When they return, they see the sad spectacle of murdered Nil and the old woman, Liku and the new born have been carried away by the new men. Even this does not make Lok and Fa afraid of the *homo sapiens*. A single passage is enough to illustrate the limited comprehension of Lok. The new people, frightened, are shooting arrows at Lok. He gets a series of visual impressions but no coherent picture:

"The man turned sideways in the bushes and looked at Lok along his shoulder. A stick rose upright and there was a lump of bone in the middle......... Suddenly Lok understood that the man was holding the stick out to him but neither he nor Lok could reach across the river......... The stick began to grow shorter at both ends. Then it shot out to full length again."(5)

The arrows that are shot are received by Lok as if they are some gift from the new men. Left alone with Fá, Lok had to take up the leadership with his 'fewer pictures and more words.' Lok, the 'mighty jumper', was a clown

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with his very meagre power of thought. He never knew how to connect one picture with another as Mal could. Lok is often assisted and sometimes guided by Fa, as Piggy assisted Ralph with intellectual resolutions in Lord of the Flies. But Fa differs from Piggy. Piggy is blind or, at best, myopic. "Fa perceives things within her limited intelligence." (6) She shows a marked improvement upon all others of her tribe. Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor suggest that Fa invented agriculture. Even though we cannot take this suggestion seriously we have to accept that she shows the primary signs of the power of invention. She is developing the power to connect one picture with another and through it the power to predict action.

None of the critics seems to have noticed the symbolic significance of Fa's end. One gets the impression that Golding has worked out everything with great care. For example, it is interesting to note how each Neanderthal man dies: Mal dies a natural death, though the new men have contributed something to speed it up. Mil and the old woman are brutally murdered by the *homo sapiens*. Liku is killed and eaten by them while the infant is carried away.

The significance of the old man's death is in the light it throws on the way of life the 'people' lead. They

take death as naturally as they do a birth. The note of acceptance is obvious from the simple comment of the old woman:

"Oa has taken Mal into her belly." (7)

They have perfect faith in the benevolence of their mother goddess Oa. We do not see them crying and weeping for the dead. The dead one is no more an object of worry and sorrow. They respect the living not the dead. From Mal's dying words we gather that they have a habit of breaking open the skull of the dead one and eating off the brain, an anthropologically correct picture.

The murder of Nil and the old woman helps to aggravate our antipathy towards the new men. The sight of blood and milk on the rock fills us with horror and a deep hatred for the killers. The circumstances in which Ha disappears are mysterious and there is no direct textual evidence for the feeling that he has been killed by the new men. Yet, his disappearance is, certainly, associated with the new men, and we infer that he has either fallen into the water or has been killed by them.

The last three deaths invite more detailed consideration. Lok and Fa set out to save Liku and, in the course of their effort, observe the behaviour of the new men from a hide-out.

7 The Inheritors, p.91.
on a tree. This tree of bitter knowledge resembles the biblical tree of knowledge. While Lok's incomprehension of what he sees bores him and he yawns and aleeps, Fa understands everything. She sees the horrible act of the killing and eating of Liku by the new men. Fa is too shocked to reveal it to Lok. Till the last few pages of the novel, Lok remains unaware of it.

Before Lok and Fa die, they undergo certain changes in their state of innocence. This is the result of contact with the new men. "The effect of contact with knowledge", says Hynes, "is necessarily the loss of innocence."(8) After they have witnessed the drunken orgy of the new men, they decide to rescue the stolen infant. In the confusion that follows, Fa is injured and the night ends in shambles. Lok, unaware of the fate of Liku, looks for her and hence fails to rescue the infant. Terror-stricken, the new people pack their things and leave in a hurry. After they have left, Lok and Fa search the deserted camp. The alcoholic drink left by the *homo sapiens* is honey to the Neanderthalers. Soon they get drunk and reenact what the new people had done. Contact with the new men is disastrous for the 'people'. The drink takes away much of their harmony and they fight without knowing what they are doing. Lok and Fa are changed now, having tasted the drink:

"Lok discovered the power of the new people in him. He was one of them. There was nothing he could not do."(9)

Fa becomes cunning, having lost her innocence. She devises a scheme to rescue Liku:

"Here is a picture. Lok goes up the path by the cliff where the people cannot see him. Fa goes round and climbs the mountain above the people. They will follow. The men will follow. Then Lok takes the new one from the fat woman and runs."(10)

All their efforts turn futile and the new men row away in their boat with the infant. Meanwhile we have been getting sounds from the background which proclaim the end of the ice-age and the beginning of the new age. Ice crowns have been melting and the river is flooded. In the powerful thrust of the water, big trees are uprooted and carried away. One such tree takes away Fa who was sitting, on the bank of the river, feeling miserable. She is carried over the fall, making her one with the fallen new men.

Her fall reminds us of Eve's fall. Once she has experienced knowledge she is not fit for the innocent life of the Neanderthal men above the fall. The fall is a recurring image in the novel always reminding us that the prelapsarians lived above the fall and the postlapsarians below it. Whenever we see the new men, the fall is always roaring in the background.

10 Ibid., pp.206-7.
Golding seems to make it clear that knowledge and cunning go hand in hand, and they are associated with man's fall. It is interesting to note that Fa is injured by the new men while nature, the external nature, is too big for her.

Experience teaches even Lok to think. Lok grows a little out of his state of innocence when associated with the new men. He says:

"With the scent of other I am other. I creep like a cat. I am frightened and greedy. I am strong."(11)

"Lok" as described in the novel, "discovered 'like'. He had used likeness all his life without being aware of it. Fungi on a tree were ears, the word was the same but acquired a distinction by circumstances that could never apply to the sensitive things on the side of his head. Now in a convulsion of understanding Lok found himself using likeness as a tool as surely as ever he had used a stone to hack at sticks or meat. Likeness could grasp the white-faced hunters with a hand, could put them into the world where they were thinkable and not a random and unrelated irruption."(12)

With the acquisition of this power for analogical thought Lok is a different creature. When he announces: "I am one

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11 The Inheritors, p.197.
12 Ibid., p.194.
of the new people"(13) the novelist is trying to drive the point home that man's capacity to think and connect things is directly related to his fall. Left alone, Lok searches, again, the new men's camp and he discovers the burnt fingers of Liku. This discovery is too big for him. Thereafter we do not see Lok but a very different and immensely shocked creature. And,

"The creature wrestled with a rock that was lying on a mound of earth but was too weak to move it. At last it gave up and crawled round the hollow by the remains of a fire. It came close to the ashes and lay on its side. It pulled its legs up, knees against the chest. It folded its hands under its cheek and lay still......... It 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."(14)

The agony of this last scene is apparent and then "the tremendous noise that sets the hyenas shivering back to the cliff"(15) was declaring the end of the ice age and the state of Lok's mind. The shape of the universe and the nature of human beings are more terrible and more extensive than Lok can grasp. As Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor say, "Innocence cannot hope for continuity, it must change or be destroyed."(16)

13 The Inheritors, p.204.
14 Ibid., p.221.
15 Ibid.
The novel does not end with Lok's death in the change of seasons but goes on to narrate, from the point of view of Tuami, the terrified flight of the new men. We get Tuami's explanations for murdering the Neanderthalers.

The novel uses a contrastive technique and we see the gap between the two groups. The narrative is filled with irony, and in fact irony starts right from the epigraph, as has been suggested earlier here, Golding's purpose is to show who is the devil and who is not. "Though The Inheritors uses a Wellsian technique, that is, presenting human behaviour from some outsider's point of view as in Wells's tale 'The Grisly Folk', it flatly rejects his attitude" (17) as James Baker says. He does not agree with the Victorian optimists who thought that reason and progress go hand in hand, and that civilization guarantees sensible or decent behaviour. We see how different prelapsarian and postlapsarian men are, and our findings are in favour of the former.

The Neanderthalers lead a natural life without anything that we can call a home. But they live in groups, and they always feel a group consciousness. When one of them suffers, all of them share his suffering. As,

"The group of people crouched round Mal and shared his shivers." (18)

18 The Inheritors, p.14.
Again,

"Then there was silence again and one mind or no mind in the overhang." (19)

They live in complete harmony with the old man as the head of the group. Once the old man says anything, it is as good as executed:

"When the word had been said it was as though the action was already alive in performance...." (20)

Not having developed personalities, they lack the antagonism aroused by personalities. It is a perfect group with an unquestioned leader.

They worship the mother-goddess Oa, and have full faith in her benevolence. They are so naive that female-shaped ice formations and roots are Oa to them. When Mal dies, they believe that "Oa has taken Mal into her belly." (21)

They live without many emotional upheavals, and sex never reaches the quality of lust. It is a natural impulse, and they do not have marked mates. Women are communal property as suggested by Plato to his Republic.

More than anything else, what makes them attractive is their reverence for life. They have a code of ethics that forbids them from killing and eating animals. They are not pure vegetarians as suspected by some anthropologists. But

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19 The Inheritors, p.21.
20 Ibid., p.33.
21 Ibid., p.91.
they are not cannibals either. They eat flesh if they get it in a dead animal. Shedding of blood is strictly taboo. The scene of their eating a dead deer throws light on this. One of them says:

"This is bad. But a cat killed you. So there is no blame."(22)

What they respect is blood. Even a human being has no respect among them when he is dead. They are accustomed to the habit of breaking open the head and bones of the dead and eating the brain and marrow. It is not true to say that the Neanderthal men "lack among them the idea of sin."(23) Is it not their adherence to a code of ethics that stops them from violence? It is not because they are incapable of violence that they do not attack and kill. The scene of their cutting open the body of the dead deer pictures them as surely capable of violence:

"The doe was wrecked and scattered. Fa split open her belly, slit the complicated stomach and split the sour cropped grass and broken shoots on the earth. Lok beat in the skull to get at the brain and levered open the mouth to wrench away the tongue....."

"Fa muttered through her clenched teeth as her hands tore."

"......eating the rich warm liver till her jaws ached." (24)

22 The Inheritors, p.54.
24 The Inheritors, p.54.
And, above all, if the people lacked the idea of sin, they could not say:

"But a cat killed you. So there is no blame."(25)

Their idea of blame is synonymous with our concept of sin.

Likewise, they are aware of the emotion of fear, though it is very different from the fear of the new men. Fear to them is a 'physical response to a physical threat'. They know how to keep away from ferocious animals like cats and bears and from poisonous berries and the fall.

The new men, homo sapiens, stand in sharp contrast with the Neanderthalers. What strikes us most is their capacity for violence. The new men are the tribe of Marlan who is fleeing the enemies from whom he has stolen a woman. Interestingly enough, we witness the passion surging in Tuami for the same woman, Vivani. She is an object of lust. The new men are fallen, guilty, and often engaged in sin, as against the primal innocence of the 'people'. They are ingenious at creation — they travel in big dug-outs, use bows and arrows, and live in thatched huts; they have alcoholic drinks and they eat cooked food. Their religion is totemic and they use magic to become successful in their search for food. Briefly, they are far more advanced in the line of evolution. There is a marked improvement in their personality. The two terms 'people' and 'New Men'

25 The Inheritors, p.54.
suggest enough for us. The postlapsarians, referred to as 'New Men', here are individuals with capacity for greed and sin.

With their ability to apply their minds more systematically we expect a higher level of life. But what we observe is a 'sad replica of the modern man'. Golding is, perhaps, stressing the point that advancement in consciousness and physical appearance is no guarantee of civilized behaviour. As Clive Bell says:

"All civilized people have a sense of values which is not the same as saying that they have a system of ethics." (26)

What we notice in the new men is a set of values but without a supporting system of ethics. This, certainly, necessitates guilt and unhappiness. Another point that Golding seems to make in the novel is about the sexual morality or, rather, immorality of Homo sapiens. Their adherence to personal mates leads to lust and we witness their stealing one another's mates at night.

Greed is presented with some elaboration in the novel. The Homo sapiens are hungry, and their two attempts to kill a stag fail. Then Lok throws a piece of meat to Liku which is grabbed by Marlan. Soon he is caught by the tribe devouring it in greed. This, immediately, prompts a revolt, and the

leader has to tax his wits to suppress it. Unable to appease the hungry hunters, he promises to kill and serve Liku. Cannibalism is one of the evil traits Golding ascribes to *homo sapiens*.

As the novel progresses we are more and more horrified by the cruelty and wickedness of our own ancestors. We saw in *Lord of the Flies* how external circumstances are unnecessary for human evil. Similarly, in *The Inheritors* we find nothing that can justify the brutal killing of the Neanderthalers by the new men. We hate them in horror when they kill the helpless women-folk — Né and the old woman. This action is obviously prompted by their own innate fear. If we saw in *Lord of the Flies* the reversion of the educated civilized children to savagery at the slightest pretext, the new men in *The Inheritors* are highly ritualistic. Their attempt to propitiate the Neanderthal men by offering a human sacrifice echoes the incident of the sow's head in *Lord of the Flies*. Their totemic religion necessitates the sacrifice of a cut finger from a victim chosen by lots.

The sophistication of *homo sapiens* provides us with no better civilization. Civilization, which is an offspring of reason, should have prompted them to behave more rationally. But what we see sharply contradict what we might expect theoretically. The more evolutionally advanced exhibit more and more traits of darkness of heart. The
motif of darkness is woven into the plot artistically. It is interesting to recall here that Golding himself had a fear of the darkness when he was a child. For scientific people darkness may merely be the absence of light, but man entertains an irrational fear of the darkness, the unknown. In Lord of the Flies darkness brings forth beasts and snakes and here the \textit{homo sapiens} are terribly afraid of the darkness. Marlan encourages his men in a strange way: 

"They keep to the mountains or the darkness under the trees. We will keep to the water and the plains. We shall be safe from the tree-darkness."

Both the Neanderthalers and the \textit{homo sapiens} are unattractive in their own particular ways. The most important point that Golding seems to make in the novel is the cause of unhappiness of the modern man. Prelapsarian men have been exterminated mainly because of their poor survival skills and partly because of the cruelty of postlapsarian men. They lived in innocence free from guilt and sin. Their sufferings are largely a consequence of their own inadequacies. On the contrary, the \textit{homo sapiens} suffer and make others suffer because of their own evil. The incident of Marlan's stealing another's wife leads to their flight from the other tribe. They are perpetually haunted by the fear of being attacked. They cannot escape guilt. Though we read the novel from the point

27 \textit{The Inheritors}, p.231.
of view of Lok we understand, certainly, much more than the *homo sapiens*. The innocent, wholly harmless 'people' are always looked upon with suspicion by them. They are technically advanced and intellectually superior. But they fail to understand the humanity of the Neanderthals, and instead of befriending them, they behave with suspicion and ill-will. This is a severe criticism of modern man who glories in his intellect. The point is clear. They not only lack humanity, but are incapable of understanding it when it is exhibited by other creatures. Intelligence and reason are no check on the innate evil. In fact, as Diana Neill says:

"Loss of innocence is the price of knowledge and the development of human consciousness." (28)

Towards the end of the novel, the point of view changes, and we no more inhabit Lok's unperceptive mind. This sudden shift in the point of view has invited sharp reactions from critics. James Gindin calls this trick ending a 'gimmick' and feels that it spoils the unity of the work "without adding relevant perspective." (29) One is tempted to believe that the shift in the point of view mars the artistic unity of the work. "But, is it unnecessary?" "Does it simply mar the unity of the work?" "Is there no


gain? These are questions one should try to answer before indicting the writer.

Virginia Tiger, in her brilliant study on William Golding, is very emphatic in defending Golding against such attacks. She contends, "... the reversal is vital both to the dramatic outcome of the narrative and to the larger mythopoeia The Inheritors constructs."(30) However, the shift, certainly, helps us to understand the postadamite men better. The primary concern of the novelist is obviously to show that Wells and other Victorians were wrong in supposing that the Neanderthalers, "with cunning brains, shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and possibly cannibalistic tendencies, may be the germ of the orgre in folklore."(31) But Golding wants also to show where the root of the disease lies. As has been mentioned earlier, Golding is not simply interested in the reactions of certain men to a given situation. His primary concern is with what is basic in human nature. The Inheritors in a way treats the origin of sin. With the development of personality, antagonism begins. Consciousness leads to guilt, and man's power to think and predict actions—at least up to a certain point—breeds violence. We have

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31 From the epigraph to The Inheritors.
seen Marlan, the magician and leader of the tribe, fleeing another tribe with the wife of another man. This incident is mainly responsible for their isolation from other men and for their plight of extreme hunger. Marlan is obliged to sacrifice Liku when his magic and other efforts fail.

With the shift in the point of view, we get Marlan's explanation for killing the Mousterians (Neanderthals). He explains to them:

"If we had not we should have died." (32)

And we know how true it is. Marlan is externalising his own inside. It is a projection of his own inside as a fear of 'something Other'. The innocent 'people', certainly, did not pose a threat to the 'new men'. They were wholly harmless.

Throughout the night, Tuami, the artist, has been grinding an ivory piece to a sharp dagger point. His idea of releasing the tribe from the clutches of the evil Marlan undergoes a change—- even Tuami himself is much changed:

"He thought in panic: they have given me back a changed Tuami; what shall I do? Only Marlan is the same — smaller, weaker but the same." (33)

The whole tribe is different now:

"They were as different from the group of bold hunters

32 The Inheritors, p. 228.
33 Ibid., p. 229.
and magicians who had sailed up the river towards the fall as a soaked feather is from a dry one." (34)

And in his newly acquired enlightenment Tuami asks himself:

"What was the use of sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world?" (35)

He has been obsessed with this darkness:

"Holding the ivory firmly in his hands, feeling the onset of sleep, Tuami looked at the line of darkness...... he could not see if the line of darkness had an ending." (36)

Tuami sees the future of the world as a confusion.

The *homo sapiens* carrying away a Neanderthal infant invites our attention. They wanted to kill and eat the 'devil' but the motherly hands of Vivani snatch the child away.

Their reaction to the child is ambivalent:

"In spite of them there was a well of feeling opened in love and fear. They made adoring and submissive sounds, reached out their hands, and at the same time they shuddered in repulsion at the too nimble feet and the red, curly hair." (37)

34 The Inheritors, p.231.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p.233.
37 Ibid., p.231.
The message of the novel is clear — "evolution does not guarantee civilized acts." (38) In the struggle for survival, as Conrad and Neuffer suggest, the cunning and mighty destroy the meek. Hence, it is not the meek who inherit but "the men folk with their tools and arts and taboos." (39) The inheritance goes to "the strong, the intelligent and the emotionally cold." (40) As Babbs observes,

"The new men are indeed inheritors, inheritors of their terrifying experience with the Neanderthal people. The experience persists in the continuing fears of them all, in their ambiguous reactions to the baby they take with them, in the reality of the mad Tanakils possession by the memory of Liku." (41)

Thus the action of the story is the inheriting of the earth by the new men who can just as well be described as usurpers, and the book dramatizes a significant landmark in the history of mankind, a period of transition during which the "old" has yielded place to a not very attractive "new".


39 Ibid., p.53.

40 Ibid., p.55.

(iii) PINCHER MARTIN

"And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who
knoweth the mysteries of will, with its vigour? For God
is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its
intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels,
nor unto death — utterly, save only through the weakness
of his feeble will." —

Joseph Glanville

_Pincher Martin_ is an intriguing story with a
surprise ending, or, rather a shock ending. The reader
gets the feeling that he has been deceived all along. The
novel poses a difficult problem of understanding. After
sympathetically and anxiously following the Prometheus-like
struggles of the protagonist, one learns at the end of the
novel that he had really died on the second page. How to
account for it is the major problem that is likely to vex
any reader. One can ask several questions, like "Is the
novel an expansion of those few seconds prior to death?"
Or, "Is it a record of post-mortem consciousness as in
Ambrose Bierce's _An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge_ or
Hemingway's _Snow of Kilimanjaro_?"

_Pincher Martin_, when the novel opens, is a naval
officer on a torpedoed ship, struggling for survival. We see him kicking the seaboots off and inflating the lifebelt and then swimming and eventually climbing a rock in the Atlantic. The last chapter reverses this when it declares in very unambiguous terms that, "He didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots."(1)

The narrative sequence shows Martin on the rock whereas the flashbacks reveal fragments from Martin's past. Proud of his intelligence, Martin appoints himself master of the rock as soon as he climbs on to it. The image of the jam jar gives us a foretaste of what is going to happen. While struggling in the water Martin remembers the jam jar that he had in his room. He imagines himself the glass figure which was wholly controllable. It reveals a miniature world that you can control. Sensible in his own way, he understands that, in his present situation, what he has to ensure are: (a) immediate physical survival, (b) maintaining his sanity and (c) planning for his rescue. At the realistic level his behaviour is all that we expect from a lonely person on a rock in mid-Atlantic. He is man facing adversity. He is man pitted against nature. He is Prometheus tortured by the elements. The protagonist, who struggles against the elements, deserves to be praised.

1 Pincher Martin, p. 208.
He manages for his food and shelter on the barren rock. He knows that the only way he can hasten his rescue is by making himself visible. Since he does not have even a shirt to hoist, he makes a dwarf by piling stones to suggest a human shape and giving it a shiny head with silver-paper. Pincher Martin is heroic, in his survival efforts until he reveals himself otherwise.

We start doubting his integrity when he glories in his intelligence. Convinced of his 'health, education and intelligence' he consciously sets about organising the routine. He tries to master the rock by netting it down with names:

"I am netting down this rock with names and taming it. Some people would be incapable of understanding the importance of that. 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. I will impose my routine on it, my geography."(2)

The difference between the jam jar and the rock is not difficult to understand. The jam jar is closed and the pressure of the atmosphere is not felt in it. But, nature is the master on the rock. Time and weather are forces stronger and more powerful than Martin, and Martin experiences acute agony on the rock. The heat

2 Pincher Martin, pp.86-87.
becomes unbearable to him, the wind is too strong and the raw food upsets his stomach, though he comes very near outwitting nature when he invents his own enema.

Martin's dwarf crumbles to pieces, first, and then Martin himself disintegrates. He loses his sanity and, at moments, is himself aware of it, tries to find refuge in madness. As he tells himself:

"There is always madness, a refuge like a crevice in the rock. A man who has no more defence can always creep into madness like one of those armoured things that scuttle among weed down where the mussels are."(3)

And later,

"Madness would account for everything....."(4)

He sees red lobsters swimming and flying sea-gulls as lizards. He feels that the rock has started revolving. A man who sees such things will naturally consider himself mad.

The final chapter is a hallucination, a sick man's delirium. He sees another creature, God, moving on the island, but it is nothing but the dwarf figure he had constructed, shaken by the raging wind. In the projected

3 Pincher Martin, p.186.
4 Ibid.
dialogue with God Martin refuses divine compassion. He never gives in. He triumphs, in his own way by giving the ultimate retort to God:

"Yet, suppose I climbed away from the cellar over the bodies of used and defeated people, broke them to make steps on the road away from you, why should you torture me? If I ate them, who gave me a mouth?"(5)

Later we hear him shouting:

"I spit on your compassion!"(6)

And,

"I shit on your heaven!"(7)

Thus we see not "his repentance for an amoral life",(8) but a proud assertion of his evil life. Finally, when the furious wind sweeps him away from the rock, he refuses to loosen his grip and undergoes a metamorphosis into "clutching claws". And the rock between the claws was gone. The claws became, "huge and strong and inflamed to red. They closed on each other. The serrations of the claws

5 Pincher Martin, p.197.
6 Ibid., p.199.
7 Ibid., p.200.
broke. They were lambent and real and locked.\(^{(9)}\)

The flashbacks help us understand the narrative better. Without them one may entertain the illusion that Martin is another Prometheus or Robinson Crusoe. The final scene where Martin encounters the fury of nature recalls the storm scene in *King Lear*. Some of the critics, in *spite* of the flashbacks, have seen Martin's struggle for survival as a kind of existential fable. The flashbacks and the imagery used in the novel give a cumulative effect, in the direction wanted by Golding. As James Baker puts it,

"The fragments of the past recalled on the rock expose a despicable moral history."\(^{(10)}\)

Golding wanted to make the protagonist "the most unpleasant, the nastiest type (he) could think of.\(^{(11)}\)

Martin had been a professional actor in the Ivy Street before he was conscripted to the navy. Though some of his friends loved him, they recognized him for what he was — a greedy sensualist. They know that he can

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9 *Fincher Martin*, p.201.


play any of the Seven Deadly Sins "without a mask and just stylized make-up."(12) His director tells him,

"Chris-Greed. Greed-Chris. Know each other."(13)

Martin's greed is not simply limited to food. It ranges further as the director says:

"Let me make you two better acquainted. 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 flaps open and both hands out to grab. He is a cosmic case of the bugger who gets his penny and someone else's bun."(14)

Some time, after the novel was published, Golding said: "Just to be pincher is purgatory, to be pincher for eternity is hell."(15) Christopher Hadley Martin became Pincher Martin, as all Martins are nicknamed 'pincher' in the navy. But our Martin is a real pincher.

His greed can be traced to his egocentricity, which, in turn, springs from his pride. This nasty sensualist "stops at no depravity, no betrayal of love and friendship.

12 Pincher Martin, p. 119.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., p.120.
to nourish his ego.\(^\text{16}\) The qualities that keep him alive on the rock, otherwise heroic, make him morally repulsive as well, since we know that his efforts are simply those of an animal engaged in the task of self-preservation. He knows only one love — the love of the self. He is the exact antithesis to his friend Nathaniel who can love 'selflessly and without thought.' Like a melodramatic villain he outrages the modesty of Mary whom he lusts after. She was "a treasure of demoniac and musky attractiveness that was all the more terrible because she was almost unconscious of it."\(^\text{17}\) But Pincher was not so excited by her attractiveness as by his "need to assert and break" her. Anyone who rebuffs his advances should be annihilated since his need to conquer and break is paramount. When Mary refuses to surrender to his designs, he treats her:

"Where the road forks at the whitewashed tree, I'll hit it with your side. You'll be burst and bitched."\(^\text{15}\)

He actually breaks the leg of his friend Peter by deceiving him into riding a fraction of a second longer

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16 Samuel Hynes, op.cit., p.25.
17 Pincher Martin, p.148.
18 Ibid., p.151.
before he could have safely taken the turning. The only
provocation seems to be the possibility of Peter's over-
taking him. We shudder to look at the man who seduces his
friend's wife Sybil. Even when they are discovered in
compromising circumstances, Martin, never for a moment,
feels the shame of his situation. This 'cuckolding' incident
with Sybil and his 'crude and unsatisfactory experiments'
on the boy, all show the evil nature of the man. Concerned
only about himself, he never has the least hesitation or
compunction in destroying the lives of others.

His cruelty reaches its climax when he gives the
order to change the course of the ship expectedly so
that Nathaniel, who is praying, leaning at the railings,
unsuspected, would be thrown into the sea. A torpedo hits
the ship before the order is executed.

Golding suggests, perhaps, that God, who watches
carefully over the scheme of things will not tolerate evil
beyond a certain point. Had the order been given ten
seconds earlier, Nathaniel would have been killed through
Pincher Martin's design.

Alongwith the flashbacks we should analyse the
imagery to get a fuller view of Martin's personality.
Martin, in one of his pre-navy days, tells a friend:
"Y' see when the Chinese want to prepare a very rare dish they bury a fish in a tin box. Presently all the lil' maggots peep out and start to eat. Presently no fish. Only maggots........ then they start on each other. The little ones eat the tiny ones. The middle-sized ones eat the little ones. The big ones eat the middle-sized ones..... then one and where there was a fish there is now one huge, successful maggot."(19)

The thematic relevance of this metaphor is not very difficult to deduce. Martin is the last successful maggot — he himself acknowledges it repeatedly. He tells himself on the rock:

"I'll live if I have to eat everything else on this bloody box."(20)

He remembers:

"Good-bye, Nat, I loved you and it is not in my nature to love much. But what can the last maggot but one do? Lose his identity?"(21)

Again,

"That is because they know I am alone on a rock in the middle of a tin box."(22)

At the last flicker of Martin's consciousness, he hears the thunder, and the all-destroying black lightning winds up the story. Then Martin knows:

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19 Pincher Martin, pp. 135-36.
20 Ibid., p. 159.
21 Ibid., p. 184.
22 Ibid., p. 144.
"The noise was the grating and thump of a spade against an enormous tin box that had been buried." (23)

The Chinese box is a recurring metaphor in the novel. It is a set of boxes one inside another. That way, all other boxes are contained by a bigger box. The smaller boxes lose their identity. One of the metaphors that is likely to attract any reader is that of the jam jar. A jam jar, with a floating glass figure in it is covered with a membrane. The glass figure is completely in the control of man. By varying the pressure on the membrane it can be sunk or raised in the jar. It is not difficult to see that Martin lives a life in which anything outside himself has no place. He has been a proud sensualist, a rationalist who believed in the existence of nothing outside himself. When we compare Golding's Pincher Martin with H.P.Dorling's Pincher Martin O.D., this egocentricity becomes more discernible. In Dorling's story the good seaman, in spite of his nickname, surrenders his soul to 'his Maker' and suffers no torture. It was almost with a feeling of relief that he gives up the struggle as hopeless. Nevertheless, this Martin is rescued from the sea by fishermen. But, we have witnessed that Golding's Martin "does not swade the very jaws of death." (24)

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23 Pincher Martin, p.189.

If Taffrail's Martin believes in God, Golding's Martin believes only in himself. So, the act of submitting his soul to his maker is beyond his nature. He can only tell himself:

"I won't die."

"I can't die."

"Not me — "

"Precious." (25)

Moreover, he knows his condition and tells himself:

"I'm damned if I'll die!" (26)

Though Martin's names, Christopher and Martin, are associated with saints, we see in him none of the endearing qualities of St. Martin or St. Christopher, the bearer of God. He is an identity-preserver, and his nature is one of unalloyed selfishness. Narcissus-like, he is in love with his own image seen in different photographs. On the rock, Martin tells himself:

"Once I was a man with twenty photographs of myself — myself as this and that with the signature scrawled across the bottom right-hand corner.......... There were mirrors too, triple mirrors,.......... I could arrange the side ones so that there was a double reflection and spy


26 Ibid., p.72.
myself from the side or back in the reflected mirror. . . . . I could spy myself and assess the impact of Christopher Hadley Martin on the world." (27)

But now, on the rock, he is "in danger of losing definition." (28)

This identity-preserver, even at the time of death, cannot surrender his ego. He invents his own heaven, incapable of accepting the heaven and hell of God. Martin is evil—proud, greedy and egocentric. In Christian terms, pride is at the root of the other two sins. It leads to self-deification which has the effect of devaluing, if not denying, God Himself.

Critics like Frederick R. Karl, have tried to interpret the story of Pincher Martin, as a projection of the split-second prior to Martin's death. But it is very difficult to understand the book simply as "an expansion of those few seconds prior to death." (29)

E.C. Bufkin argues, rightly, that "the action on the rock is post-mortem drama...... the real conflict is spiritual". (30) Golding himself comments at the

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27 Pincher Martin, p.132.
28 Ibid.
29 H.S. Babb; The Novels of William Golding (Columbus, 1970), p.66.
technical tour de force:

"The greed for life which had been the mainspring of his nature, forced him to refuse the selfless act of dying. He continued to exist in a world composed of his own nature. His drowned body lies rotting in the Atlantic but the ravenous ego invents a rock for him to endure on. Ostensibly and rationally he is a survivor from a torpedoed destroyer, but deep down he knows the truth."(31)

There is no evidence to disbelieve that Pincher Martin lives on on the rock after his physical death by drowning. When the novel was published in America it was titled The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin, perhaps with the intention of providing an explanation for the book. An attentive reading of the book provides us evidence sufficient for us to conclude that Martin himself knows his condition. Passages like,

"I wish I hadn't kicked off my seaboots when I was in the water."

The centre told itself to pretend and keep on pretending.

The mouth had its own wisdom."(33)

"I must be careful when I look round at the wind. I don't want to die again."(34)

33 Pincher Martin, p.186.
34 Ibid., p.176.
He put his hands on either cheek to think but the touch of hair distracted him.

"I must have a beard pretty well. Bristles, anyway. Strange that bristles go on growing even when the rest of you is —" (35)

cannot escape us. In the last quoted passage he controls himself and stops himself from uttering 'dead'.

We perceive, gradually, that Martin is afraid to die. In *Lord of the Flies* the theme itself is fear and its devastating effects. Here it occurs as a recurrent motif. Martin, on the rock is afraid to sleep. Sleep and death are sisters, the latter being more powerful as the metaphysical poets have told us. On the island Martin asks himself:

"Oh God! Why can't I sleep?" (36)

He whispered the answer to his own question:

"I am afraid to." (37)

Sleep involves a surrender of the self, and so, characteristically, Pincher Martin cannot sleep.

Martin has not undergone any change on the rock. He assures us:

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35 *Pincher Martin*, p.125.
"Christopher Hadley Martin...... I am what I always was!" (38)

"I am who I was." (39)

As a child he was afraid of the cellar, the dark room. Both in the cellar and in sleep one surrenders one's identity. An identity preserver like Martin can never relinquish his identity willingly. Because of his obsession with himself he can love no one else. A person who has this type of unalloyed selfishness feels either exhilaration or utter loneliness. Martin, on the rock, experiences only loneliness. He cries out:

"I'm so alone! Christ! I'm so alone!" (40)

"Because of what I did I am an outsider and alone." (41)

"I am so alone. I am so alone!" (42)

As Hynes says,

"It is a novel with a moral programme which deals thematically with the problem of evil and its consequences." (43)

38 Pincher Martin, p.76.
39 Ibid., p.131.
40 Ibid., p.181.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
Martin creates not only his heaven, that is, the rock but God also as 'a projection of his mind'. "On the sixth day he created God...... In his own image created he Him."(44)

Martin suffers guilt, and he knows he is damned. The memory of all the evil deeds he had committed is haunting him and, since he can't give in to God, the ultimate compassion of God too is rejected. He 'spits' and 'shits' on God's compassion. The final scene when he faces the raging wind is a parallel to the last scene of King Lear, the suffering being brought forward by the wrong choice. Had not Lear chosen wrongly the last scene would have been totally different. Martin, all through his life, has made the wrong choices and he realizes it when he says: "the right order, the wrong order". (45) Many of the things he chose to do, were morally wrong. Martin tries to prove himself right by arguing that, if he ate, it was because God gave him a mouth. That is true of the maggot. Martin is less than human, as we understand humanity. He has been brought up in the world of morality, makes him all the more repugnant as he was an actor in Morality plays. He had for company the good man

44 Pincher Martin, p.196.
Nathaniel who lectured on the 'technique of dying into heaven'. If Martin's nature was evil, how could he be changed by these influences? He cannot consider what is good and what is evil, as he realizes, "...the serpent lies coiled in my own body."(46)

Golding's success in this novel lies in its embodying the moral meaning in artistic form. The novel, in spite of its difficulty in understanding, has attracted critics as well as common readers.

What are we to make of this story? We learn, with a shock, that the efforts of Pincher Martin on the deserted island, which we had watched with a certain fascination if not sympathy, had all been a hallucination, something which might have been but was not, that he had died almost instantly with his hitting the water. Apart from the theme of Pincher Martin as a predator, an epitome of the completely selfish person obsessed with himself, we seem to be told that even those who cling most greedily to life must give it up some day. The identity disc is there but not an identity, and it serves only for the purposes of a record of the sketchiest kind. The concluding scene by itself becomes intriguing because of its obvious metaphysical implications. The officer,

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46 Pincher Martin, p.163.
Mr. Davidson, who comes to list the dead and collect the bodies and Campbell have a conversation which seems significant in the circumstances. H.S. Babb feels that Davidson could be symbolic of Death itself—his appearance, "Grey, lined face with eyes that did not blink and were just a fraction too wide open"—his statement that he is busy with this sort of thing seven days a week and the apparently unemotional approach to his work as a sort of routine—all these suggest that he might possibly stand for Death. And when Campbell remarks, "A sad harvest for you, Captain"(47) the certainty increases. But it would seem rather untenable to think of him as an allegorical figure. Campbell is rather upset by the whole thing and when he remarks, "I do not know, sir. I am older than you but I do not know."(48) Davidson asks with obvious irony, "Don't you have second sight here?"(49) Again Campbell remarks: "They are wicked things, those lifbelts. They give a man hope when there is no longer any call for it....."(50) He seems, in the vein of Sir Thomas Browne, to be commenting on the vanity and futility of man's efforts at

47 Pincher Martin, p.203.
48 Ibid., p.206.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p.207.
self-preservation. Once again Campbell says, "....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."(51) Davidson frowns apparently puzzled. Campbell continues: "Broken, defiled. Returning to the earth, the rafters rotted, the roof fallen in — a wreck. Would you believe that anything ever lived there?"(52) The question obviously goes beyond the immediate situation though not beyond the context. He seems to be asking the question about all mortals and not only about Pincher Martin. The seriousness of the question becomes clearer when Campbell phrases it differently again to ask: "..... Would you say there was any surviving? Or is that all? Like the lean-to?"(53) But Davidson misunderstands, perhaps deliberately, and interprets the question narrowly to suggest that Campbell is perhaps worried about whether Martin had survived the accident to the ship and suffered before his end. Campbell too shy or too tired to make himself clearer, says that he had meant 'just that'. There is no real answer to the question about whether there was

51 Pincher Martin, p.207.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., p.208.
any surviving — any surviving beyond the apparent end, represented by death. Perhaps, more could be given; and, in any case Mr. Davidson is not any kind of special 'being' like Death, capable of answering it. We are left with the same doubt that is obviously there in Golding's mind.