The Elements of Style
Chapter V

The Elements of Style

Golding started his literary career as a poet but having failed to gain eminence, started to write novels and through them his literary genius came to be recognized. Although his initial interest was in poetry, it is his unique prose style which has won the interest of his readers. However, his prose still possesses many affinities with poetry in its mellifluousness and metaphorical splendour which gives it a unique touch of artistic beauty.

A novel by Golding exudes rare individualism and power with the combined force of its technical virtuosity and remarkable prose style. Oldsey and Weintraub have rightly commented that Golding's "originality in prose is much like that of Eliot's in verse." In fact, his prose reflects a style which is self-consciously modern and excitingly protean in subject-matter. His is a form which transcends all artistic limitations revealing a range and intensity symptomatic of the writer's vision. For these reasons, the elements of style in Golding's diverse fictional works make interesting study. This chapter aims at a better understanding of his various devices in the handling of his prose style.

Style in literature is said to be the manner in which language is used. Carole Hurley has rightly commented that "Every writer, whether good or bad, possesses a literary style because what he says cannot be separated from how he expresses it." He adds that "The style of a story is the vehicle that
carries the reader on his imaginative journey, and if the language is faulty, the journey will be unsatisfactory." Golding's flexible prose style which at its best evokes an easy rapport between reader-narrator is a result of his quick adaptability to various divergent situational thrusts. Style is a dominant concern with Golding and he looks upon it as a question of content as well as execution. Structure, narration, vocabulary, syntax are substantive to him and there is no aspect of Golding's craft which does not brilliantly exhibit his genius. His reputation as a stylist is no doubt unrefutable — his achievement as a serious novelist with an enviable craftsmanship has won him the distinction of being one of the best prose writers of the century.

Style varies from author to author and with Golding his style varies from novel to novel, as for instance, the style he employs in Pincher Martin is not necessarily the same in The Spire as thematically the elements are modulated for their appropriate execution in individual novels. A particular characteristic which usually stands out in his prose style is its visual power — a prose which is graphic and vividly descriptive. From his first novel Lord of the Flies to Fire Down Below, Golding is so immaculate in his descriptions that reading becomes an art with the reader. The novel in which he has proved himself a descriptive writer par excellence is The Spire where he has used his remarkable imaginative power to narrate the construction of the spire, piece by piece. Although it is a complex account, yet by sheer force of his prose the reader gets the thrill of an almost "mathematical exactness of description." Walter Sullivan, regarding Golding's prose in this novel, aptly comments that Golding is even better than Dickens or Tolstoy. To quote his words: "In the sheer power to think, to mold [sic] intellectually, to grasp and keep straight a complex tapestry of profound ideas, he is certainly better than Dickens and probably better than Tolstoy." Sullivan further remarks
that "One gets the feeling that if the actual spire were to tumble, Golding could direct the rebuilding of it piece by piece." It thus becomes obvious that an intricate description like the building of a spire at once becomes a lucid work of art in his dexterous hands. An analytical study of the following passage from The Spire will show Golding's use of visual power in his prose:

Doomsday coming up; or the roof of hell down there. Perhaps the damned stirring, or the noseless men turning over and thrusting up; or the living, pagan earth, unbound at last and waking, Dia Mater. Jocelin found one hand coming up to his mouth; and all at once he was racked with spasms, and making the same sign over and over again.

There came a sharp scream from by the south west pillar. Goody Pangall stood there, her basket still rolling at her feet. From below the steps that led up to the wooden screen cutting off the choir, there came an imperious smack; and flicking or flinching that way, Jocelin saw bits of stone skittering out like pieces of smashed ice on the ice of a pond. One triangular piece the size of his palm slid to the edge of the pit and dropped in. And with the piece of stone, came something else; the high ringing of unbearable, unbelievable tension. It came from nowhere in particular, could not be placed, but sounded equally at the centre of things and at the periphery; it was needles in either ear. Another stone smacked down so that a leaping fragment clanged on the metal sheet.

All at once there was a tumult of human noises, shouts and curses and screams. There was movement too, which as it began, became at once violent and uncontrolled. There were many ways out of
the crossways and no two people seemed to have the same idea about how to go. As he got to his feet and backed hastily away from the pit, Jocelin saw hands and faces, feet, hair, cloth and leather — saw them momentarily without taking them in. The metal screen went down with a crash. He was jerked against a pillar and a mouth — but whose mouth? — screamed near him.

'The earth's creeping!'

He put his hands to fend off and somewhere the master builder was shouting.

'Still!'

And marvellously all the noise died away so there was nothing left but the high, mad ringing of tension. As it died, the master builder shouted again.

'Still! "Still!" I said! Get stone, any stone — fill the pit!'

Then the noises broke out once more, but this time in a kind of chant.

'Fill the pit! Fill the pit! Fill the pit!' [80-81]

The above passage shows Golding's skill in the handling of a serious situation. The passage conveys an abstract idea with "Doomsday" and "roof of hell." They indicate a symbolic foreshadowing of the calamity to take place. Here we find the devices which evoke an effect of abstraction. "Pagan earth" and "Dia Mater" allude to the elements of nature. The paragraphs following, however, offer the reader a concrete picture of movement and a general turmoil.

As the earth starts moving, chaos breaks out and there is fear and confusion everywhere, indicated by the phrasal verbs "a sharp scream", "imperious
smack" and "leaping fragment clanged". Golding makes use of alliteration like "flicking or flinching" and "unbearable, unbelievable" to lay emphasis on the mounting tension. Sentence structures are terse and punctuated with cryptic comments which bring alive a mental picture of hell breaking loose. The use of images like "pieces of smashed ice on the ice of a pond" is suggestive of synchronized sight and sound. The movement of stones falling into the pit and stones clanging on the metal sheet indicate the use of onomatopoeic sounds. These diverse sounds and movements make Golding's descriptions very vivid and realistic, and at the same time, they convey an effect of visual lyricism.

The third paragraph indicates movement and here sentence lengths vary from short to long. The phrase "a tumult of human noises" conveniently describes an onrush of people running around in terror and the urgency of the moment is reflected with the phrasal nouns "hands and faces, feet, hair, cloth and leather" suggestive of a phantasmagoric scene."— but whose mouth? — " is a stylistic device which indicates the narrative voice of the novel. Abruptly, after all the noise, Golding brings in an effect of contrast with a deep stillness setting in when "all the noise died away." He again repeats here "the high, mad ringing of tension" to intensify the cataclysmic moment. What remains is only the tension. But like a wave coming and going, the tumult of voices again breaks out as the chant "Fill the pit!" rises to a crescendo. The imperative verb form, "Get stone, any stone — fill the pit!" gives a sense of urgency which is immediately met by co-operative workers suggestive of the repetitive echo, "Fill the pit!"

The above passage is thus an exemplary piece of descriptive prose and it effectively highlights the rhythmic movement by allusions and repetitions. Golding's skilful use of language creates a heightened sense of drama and
urgency. His use of the right word is so effective that one actually gets the picture of staring into the pit in the mind's eye. Thus, the passage is an appropriate illustration of Golding's graphic prose style.

A sense of suggestiveness is quite obvious in Golding’s prose. This suggestiveness is created through the help of symbolism and imagery, and these completely blend in his works to give transparency in his allegorical works. His symbolism is a perennial crusade between good and evil, and on this aspect Walter Allen rightly comments that "... symbolism only works when it is integrated into the action, characters and tone of the novel."4 Golding apparently endorses symbolism as it completely integrates into the main action and characters in his novels. Through his landscapes, as well, a symbolic effect is also achieved. In almost all his novels, his prose works symbolically or metaphorically to give concreteness to his ideas. Dicken-Fuller on her detailed observation of Golding’s symbolism comments that it acts as a "tool for his investigations, as this allows him to explore the possibilities of his themes in many varied ways and in many different contexts."5 The various symbolism present in his works renders a heightened sense of meaning to individual incidents and sometimes to the novel as a whole. For example, in Lord of the Flies, the characters, action and landscape work symbolically — Simon is a symbol of goodness, he is a Christ-figure; Jack signifies evil whereas Piggy is depicted as a symbol of intelligence. The main action here is the struggle between good and evil. The landscape constitutes the sea, representing danger; significantly, Simon, Piggy and the airman are all washed away by the sea. The severed head of the pig is a symbol of evil which is dramatized in the confrontation scene. Likewise, Castle Rock also operates as a symbol of evil where Piggy’s death occurs. Thus Golding makes maximum use of symbolism in Lord of the Flies. Here he also makes use of suggestive
sentence structures like "the darkness was full of claws, full of the awful unknown and menace" [123], "skull-like coco-nuts" [15] and "The flames, as though they were a kind of wild life, crept as a jaguar creeps on its belly towards a line of birch-like saplings that fledged an outcrop of the pink rock" [57]. The above lines reflect Golding's command over language in laying bare the ramifications of a symbolical structure.

Flashbacks and dream sequences also give a symbolic meaning to his varied works since they bring into focus the complex inner mind of the characters. For instance, the reader comes to know about Jocelin's physical craving for Goody Pangall only after the revelation of his dream in The Spire. The following is an extract:

But as if to keep him humble, Satan was permitted to torment him during the night by a meaningless and hopeless dream. It seemed to Jocelin that he lay on his back in his bed; and then he was lying on his back in the marshes, crucified, and his arms were the transepts with Pangall's kingdom nestled by his left side. People came to jeer and torment him, there was Rachel, there was Roger, there was Pangall, and they knew the church had no spire nor could have any. Only Satan himself, rising out of the west, clad in nothing but blazing hair stood over his nave and worked at the building, tormenting him so that he writhed on the marsh in the warm water, and cried out aloud. He woke in the darkness, full of loathing.

[64-65]

The above passage reveals Jocelin's subconscious state of mind. Golding's prose is matter-of-fact, his diction and sentence patterns reveal a disturbed frame of mind and the repetitive "there was" heightens the tension in the pas-
sage. The dream is suggestive of Jocelin's sexual yearnings as well as his fears. In this way, Golding's language exposes the intricacies of the subconscious mind of the protagonist.

Through imagery Golding is able to make palpable the abstract or intangible objects present in his novels. In Pincher Martin, for instance, it is imagery alone that gives the novel its unprecedented qualities of a great piece of artistic work. The imagery here forms an intricate and complex pattern in the novel. In fact, the novel reads like a difficult poem which Oldsey and Weintraub describe as "the emotional and intellectual intensity of poetry."6 Here, an inanimate object like a rock is given much significance through sheer style. Besides the rock, the sea, the sky, pebbles, lobsters and limpets, the black lightning, the dark cellarage, flying reptiles are oft repeated images which find prominence in the novel. Apart from Pincher Martin, Lord of the Flies, The Inheritors, The Spire and The Paper Men also abound in imagery. Imagery intensifies the poetic quality in Golding's prose style and gives a synaesthetic effect.

An analysis of his prose would remain incomplete without taking into consideration the poetic style used by him. His poetic style is a highly spontaneous device used basically to express a mental state of mind. The Inheritors moves by its sheer force of poetic beauty; its artistic triumph lies in Golding's ability to carry us into a world of imagination where our forefathers lived under strange conditions. In the words of Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, "The adventure of style escapes mere limitation and begins to carry us imaginatively into a strangeness of living."7 To make the story authentic, Golding's use of language is most relevant with its blend of poetic intensity and sensibility. The following passage illustrates Golding's poetic finesse:
The water rat concluded from the creature's stillness that it was not dangerous. It came with a quick rush from under the bush and began to cross the open space, it forgot the silent figure and searched busily for something to eat.

There was light now in each cavern, lights faint as the starlight reflected in the crystals of a granite cliff. The lights increased, acquired definition, brightened, lay each sparkling at the lower edge of a cavern. Suddenly, noiselessly, the lights became thin crescents, went out, and streaks glistened on each cheek. The lights appeared again, caught among the silvered curls of the beard. They hung, elongated, dropped from curl to curl and gathered at the lowest tip. The streaks on the cheeks pulsed as the drops swam down them, a great drop swelled at the end of a hair of the beard, shivering and bright. It detached itself and fell in a silver flash, striking a withered leaf with a sharp pat. The water rat scurried away and plopped into the river. [220]

The above extract from The Inheritors reveals Golding's prose with an exceptional sharpness of detail; the lines contain a poetic texture which lends a quality of graceful serenity to the act of weeping. Golding brings in the image of a water rat in motion to contrast Lok's absolute stillness. Thus, there is a convenient antithetical image between "quick rush" and "silent figure." The contrast helps one realise the lonely figure of Lok. The next paragraph emphasises the reaction of Lok after his discovery of Liku's remains and her doll. In perfect detail, Golding narrates the act of weeping and gives it a poetic dimension by his use of periphrasis. He does not describe tears in a direct way but does it elegantly with an enviable range of poetic diction.
"...lights faint as the starlight reflected in the crystals of a granite cliff" suggests the tears of Lok. To distinguish the tears, Golding brings in some adjectival and adverbial phrases like "thin crescents", "silvered curls", "shivering and bright", "a silver flash" and "a sharp pat." The prolonged description of Lok's weeping thus gives the reader an idea about Golding's linguistic range.

Golding's prose is basically of a serious kind and only rarely are there situations of wit, comedy and humour. Scenes of high comedy give a comic effect which helps in easing out the tension. In Rites of Passage Colley's story takes up the major part of the novel where he is initially focused as a comic character but ends up mysteriously as a tragic one. Although the comic scenes here are limited, they help in the exposure of characters. As for instance, the scene when a meal of marrow bones enjoyed at the Captain's table by Talbot, Summers and Oldmeadow, is described in a light and humorous vein. The following is an instance:

Now there occurred a scene of farce. Brocklebank had not remained at the door but was inside it and advancing. Either he had mistaken the captain's message for such an invitation as had been issued to me, or he was tipsy, or both. Summers had pushed back his chair and stood up. As if the first lieutenant had been a footman, Brocklebank sank into it.

"Thankee, thankee. Marrow bones! How the devil did you know, sir? I don't doubt one of my gals told you. Confusion to the French!"

He drained Summers's glass at a draught. He had a voice like some fruit which combines the qualities — if there be such a fruit — of peach and plum. He stuck his little finger in his ear, bored for a moment, inspected the result on the end of it while no one said
anything. The servant was at a loss. Brocklebank caught a clearer sight of Summers and beamed at him. [166]

The above extract is a classic example of a comic scene. Here the target of humour is Brocklebank who provokes laughter by his fatuousness. The language is varied, witty, and precise; and the style animated. It is humour of the farcical kind which makes the whole scene ludicrous as sinking into the chair vacated by Summers makes the latter appear like a footman. The reader cannot fail to discover a satirical tone in the author regarding the ungainly mannerisms of Brocklebank. Moreover, the scene is also a kind of aberration from a more serious situation at the other end of the ship where poor Colley is dying.

Another novel where the comic element finds predominance is The Pyramid. It is, in fact, a novel which has the qualities of almost a social comedy and at times even borders on farce. It abounds in humorous scenes which, according to Crompton, are "sometimes hilariously so, displaying not only a pointed verbal wit but a delight in the comic potential of awkward situations." The first section itself has some awkward situations; for example, when Evie forces Oliver to make love in the escarpment in full view of the inhabitants below, in the town of Stilbourne. Golding uses a very exact and prosaic style in this novel revealing a lightness of tone which is quite refreshing. John Whitehead, regarding the style in The Pyramid observes that it is "a hard sculptural prose" which he thinks "owes something to Hemingway at his best"; the words striking the reader, "each one as if they were pebbles fetched fresh from a brook." The following is an illustration of the prosaic style used in The Pyramid:

She was our local phenomenon, and every male for miles round
was aware of her. Perhaps it was not the breathlessness of perpetual sex that kept her lips always apart and everted, but her nose, so inadequate for breathing through, yet so perfect for pertness. Her hair would toss cloudily in a dark, shoulder length bob, as she paced, thighs motionless, legs only moving beneath the knee, her body trim and female in its walking-out uniform — a cotton frock, white socks and sandals. I had never had the luck to inspect her closely in daylight, but my furtive glances, as she passed had acquainted me with her eyelashes, too. Pounding through the darkness and rain towards the Old Bridge, I found myself thinking of paint brushes — not the delicately smoothed instrument of the artist, but the childhood one, scrubbed so hard in the dish of colour that the matted hairs are spiky and stick out all round. As I thought of those furtively glimpsed eyelashes — no, those handfuls of small paint brushes that flickered so delectably round Evie's eyes — I pounded harder. [16]

The above passage describes vividly the appearance of Evie Babbacombe. The lines have a mock-serious tone which at once insinuates that Oliver is not besotted with the girl in a truly serious manner. It also suggests a relationship which would not last long because of its unusually casual manner of treatment. The eye-lashes of Evie being compared to "handfuls of small paint brushes" is in itself a frivolous simile.

A marked quality of Golding's comic situations is that there is usually a tragic vein running underneath it. In The Pyramid when Bounce Dawlish walks to the streets with nothing on except her hat and gloves, the reader is not concerned with the comical aspect but the tragedy of the situation.
Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor comments that "The art is of the surface, comic, but the haunting concern is to make it reveal 'the undiscovered person.'" 10 Golding here satirises a section of the society which heartlessly exploits the old and the lonely for their own selfish ends. Therefore, although the comic predominates in *The Pyramid*, tragedy or a serious note underlies it. Another novel where Golding has dealt with farce and humour is *The Paper Men* where the hero, Wilfred Barclay, is regarded as a clown with his "trousers always falling down at precisely the wrong moment" [49].

While Ben Jonson, through the comedy of humour, satirised the follies and foibles of man, Golding, through the comedy of manners, has satirised class structure and the hypocrites in society. Satire, then, forms an integral element in the prose of Golding. It is said that "prose is the proper vehicle of satire" which is "based on a method of contrast." 11 In fact, each novel of Golding is a sort of satire on contemporary society which primarily revolves around profligate human beings. In *The Paper Men*, he uses a lack-lustre and an inanimated style to satirise the present state of academics. S.J. Boyd concisely comments that the prose is "weary and wearisome, cynical and cynically unconcerned at its own clumsy and cliche-ridden nature" and that it is a "tired, couldn't-care-less style." 12 Indeed, *The Paper Men* reminds one of the overt satirical tone present in Pope's "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. *Darkness Visible* is another important novel where Golding satirises crime and violence that characterise the late twentieth century. *The Pyramid* and *Rites of Passage* are satires on class structure. Again, because of an underlying level of meaning, his novels are mostly allegorical.

Irony is often used by Golding to suggest a difference between what is expressed and what is actually the case and it is found in most of his novels
especially in his first seven works which he wrote between 1954 and 1971. Golding creates an ironic texture through the very basis of his plot construction. As for instance, in The Pyramid, the inscription on the tomb of Bounce Dawlish reads "Heaven is music" which in itself is ironic, considering that Bounce had a very frustrated life as a result of her indulgence in music. Similarly, The Scorpion God is also an excellent example written in the spirit of ironic comedy. Another case in point is the narration of The Inheritors which is an ironic one as it turns out that the Neanderthalers are meek unlike the Homo sapiens who are cruel and blood-thirsty. This is an indirect antithesis to the epigraph which makes the Neanderthal man "germ of the ogre in folklore . . ." John Peter rightly claims that "Ironic of this kind is always valuable to an author who wishes to be challenging." In this way, Golding creates an implicit tone of irony in his novels.

A characteristic of Golding's prose style is an element of suspense. Until the end of the story the reader is kept in painful suspense as to how it would end; and the ending is often unusual with the proverbial "twist" to it. For instance, in The Paper Men, the reader is taken unawares when the narrator-protagonist, Barclay, is shot dead by Rick Tucker. In Darkness Visible, too, the suspense is kept alive till the end regarding the kidnapping plot instigated by Sophy; and also on how Matty's life would end. There is a shroud of mystery surrounding the world of Golding so that he makes the reader forget himself and get immersed in the dense mysteries present in his novels. His introspective prose with its blend of suspense fits perfectly the needs of his narrative.

The background and atmosphere which Golding creates in his novels is another of his stylistic devices. Golding, as is his wont, is attracted towards
the darker side of life, not because it is his penchant but because through this negative attitude he draws the reader’s attention to the sublime and the spiritual in an indirect way. In Free Fall, The Pyramid and Darkness Visible he depicts a contemporary setting, a typical 20th century society where a modern English social life is depicted. It is a "world of sin and redemption, of showings and conviction, of love in the mud" [Free Fall, p.13]. Gindin has rightly observed that "Mud, slime, faeces, waste of all sorts are points of focus in Golding's fictional landscapes, which often seem to resemble a massive lavatory."15 In The Pyramid it is made quite obvious when he compares "clean" Imogen with "dirty" Evie who originates from "an earth that smelt of decay, with picked bones and natural cruelty — life's lavatory" [91].

Golding's use of a wide variety of sentence patterns reveal his focus on background and atmosphere; his use of abstract terms like "decay" and "natural cruelty" suggests his mood in his novels.

The background of war is also present in a few of Golding's novels. In Lord of the Flies he uses the backdrop of a war to create the story of a group of boys on a tropical island. The following lines allude to a war:

... but there were other lights in the sky, that moved fast, winked, or went out, though not even a faint popping came down from the battle fought at ten miles' height. [Lord of the Flies, p.118]

The mention of a battle is casually dropped by Golding with not even a sound of "faint popping" to alarm the boys. Pincher Martin, Free Fall and Darkness Visible have war as a background. However, Golding is not primarily concerned with war in itself but only as an element which impinges on human life and brings a spiritual vacuum.

There is always a difference in the language of prose and poetry. As
T.E. Hulme once observed, "Verse is a pedestrian taking you over the ground" whereas prose is "a train which delivers you at a destination." This is quite true of Golding's prose. He is a serious artist who is deeply concerned to tell a story and for whom a good meaningful story is the main criterion. His prose has a profound meaning relating to contemporary society and his novels like *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall*, *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* have considerable relevance to reality pertaining to modern life rather than his evolutionary novels like *The Inheritors* and *The Spire*. Golding's prose, when properly analysed, is found to be profoundly philosophical with an underlying strain of realism. The following is an extract from *The Paper Men* which reveals Golding as a serious artist:

"Thank you for not having me! The pathetic idiocy, the vulnerability of the girl, the gross, insulting imperceptivity of the man! Yet he had not been so very far out after all. Had that skin been warm and given back the faintest signal, how different it would all have been! Neither of us, critic and author, we knew nothing about people or not enough. We knew about paper, that was all. The poor girl was the human one." [76]

The above passage insinuates emotional intensity which is not exactly Golding's forte as he mostly maintains a stoical attitude to life. The excerpt reflects the "imperceptivity of the man!" Today most people have become like machines and their only preoccupation is to amass wealth by selfish means. In this case, Barclay's character is contrasted with Mary Lou's who is the "human one." Golding's italicized words emphasize his much relieved feelings at being left alone by the lady; the inner musings of the protagonist make him a man with a conscience unlike Pincher Martin. Barclay's feelings oscill-
late between what could have taken place and what did not and his use of adjectives in the second sentence have a sharp edge signifying the shallow gratuitous sequence of vulgar events. Barclay becomes conscious of the fact that he has strayed away, from nature's holy plan and has existed only for a flimsy "paper." Thus Golding's concern to render an experience to inculcate a moral problem is apparent here. Herein lies his seriousness in his narration of an unusual event in a style of arid realism.

Alastair Niven has rightly observed that "As a writer of modern English prose Golding demonstrates excellently how complex philosophical and moral themes can be handled in unaffected language."17 His mental aptitude is remarkable and he has the uncanny knack of moulding a tapestry of thoughts and ideas according to the needs of his style. He is a very intellectual writer and sometimes one feels that a little animation and warmth would have made his prose better although his language is mostly functional rather than ornamental. The following excerpt from Free Fall reflects Golding's deeply philosophical and introspective mind and at the same time it is a language bereft of any ornaments:

"I'll tell you something which may be of value. I believe it to be true and powerful — therefore dangerous. If you want something enough, you can always get it provided you are willing to make the appropriate sacrifice. Something, anything. But what you get is never quite what you thought; and sooner or later the sacrifice is always regretted." [235]

The short, abrupt sentences spoken by Nick Shales are reminiscent of Hemingway's unembellished and simple prose style. Golding's artistic economy is illustrated here; at the same time his words are catchy and effec-
tive. Bernard F. Dick describes Golding's prose in these words:

Golding's prose at its best is comparable to a mosaic, each part delicately set off against the other, and the whole produces a dazzling configuration... This economy of words has found its fullest expression in the "diamond-hard, diamond-exact" kind of novel of which Golding is so fond...  

**Free Fall** abounds in a number of aphorisms. The protagonist Sammy Mountjoy himself claims: "I am almost tempted into an aphorism: love selflessly and you cannot come to harm" [33]. Another aphorism mentioned by Nick Shales, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might" [232] — is likely to remind one of Bacon.

It can thus be seen that Golding has a flair for writing a plain style without embellishment. He is never pedantic, nor does he exhibit his intellectual prowess. Yet Golding has earned the reputation of being an obscure writer. His obscurity, however, is not at all deliberate; it is precisely because he puts in much wit and wisdom in a very few words, and this practice makes his style highly systolic rather than diastolic. Therefore, Golding's prose is to be read with care and once the reader masters the art of reading between the lines, his books can be thoroughly enjoyed. So if critics find his prose "strenuous, compact, angular, extremely oblique and elliptical" [19], it would possibly do well to go for a fresh review of his works. Golding's purpose has always been clear. As for instance, he would not have taken so much pain to make his intentions understandable in "Radio Times" regarding the novel Pincher Martin had he really wanted to remain "obscure" to his valuable reader. It is definitely true, as Kermode notes, that a novel by Golding demands "unremitting attention." [20] This is so because Golding does not call a spade a spade.
He unobtrusively likes to play on the imagination of the reader, and an intelligent one at that, who can grasp his suggestive and, at times, equivocal prose style. To make the point clear, an example from *The Inheritors* is cited below:

The creature's attention seemed to gather and focus in the leg and the foot began to pick and search in the earth like a hand. The big toe bored and gripped and the toes folded round an object that had been almost completely buried in the churned soil. The foot rose, the leg bent and presented an object to the lowered hand. The head came down a little, the gaze swept inward from that invisible point and regarded what was in the hand. It was a root, old and rotted, worn away at both ends but preserving the exaggerated contours of a female body. [219]

The above passage, almost in the form of a slow motion film, is on Liku's doll, buried deep into the ground, which is called "a root, old and rotted". As E.W.F. Tomlin rightly comments "In prose we first become aware of the distinction between what is said and what is meant..."21

Golding's use of dialogue is constrained within short, staccato sentences and he is always generous in his use of colloquialisms. The trilogy, *To the Ends of the Earth* contains some witty and animated conversational passages. The following words of Phillips from *Close Quarters*: "Oh", said he, with great cheerfulness, "you was struck with a rope's end — what we call a starter, sir. It's what the last man down gets across his back or his bum, begging your pardon, sir. That don't hardly more than bruise, sir" [24].

The excerpt shows Golding's skill in using dialect belonging to one from a lower class of society; at the same time he is equally at home in the conversational passages of Talbot or Deverel.
In his trilogy, Golding has also successfully used the language of the sea or the "Tarpaulin" as it is called. As for instance: "If the gudgeons were not too badly drawn — if she was not too severely wrung." (Close Quarters, p.21). To quote another example: ' "I had had a couple of glassess of brandy. Nothing out of the way. I was turning him end for end —" ' (Fire Down Below, p.155) (underlined for emphasis).

Golding's use of language with its rhythmic beauty and a variety of subtle nuances keep his scenes moving one after another. His use of assonance is quite varied in his works, as can be observed in the examples: "They laughed and tumbled and shouted . . ." (Lord of the Flies, p.39) and "The noise swept and plunged and twisted . . ." (The Inheritors, p.145). His language at times is also quite euphonious giving it an aesthetic touch. The following line is a case in point: "The new one woke again, passed a pink tongue over his lips like a kitten and peered out from the curls by Fa's car" (The Inheritors, p.28). Moreover, his "feeling for words has something synaesthetic, something visual rather than auditory about it" and the above sentence-structures amply exemplify it.

Each of Golding's novels is densely metaphorical thereby enhancing its imaginative appeal. Golding himself had once commented: "Originally I think in metaphor." His power to use metaphor and to perceive an interconnecting link is by far an essential characteristic of Golding's style. He is a serious artist who means to go deep into the reality of human nature; he is deeply aware of the darkness beneath consciousness. For example, in Free Fall Sammy Mountjoy's confinement within the four walls of a prison cell suggests physical torture, but on the level of metaphor, it implies the protagonist's extreme restlessness regarding his spiritual life. The line:
The thing that cried fled forward over those steps because there was no other way to go, was shot forward screaming as into a furnace, as over unimaginable steps that were all that might be borne, were more, were too searing for the refuge of madness, were destructive of the centre (Free Fall, p.185) suggests a language which is highly metaphorical. The phrasal words "screaming as into a furnace" signifies that Sammy is trapped in the darkness of his own mind.

Besides being a metaphorical writer, Golding makes wide use of similes which suggests a binary principle of coherent sequential pictures. Here are a few examples: "Philip crouched like a rabbit under a hawk." (Free Fall, p.47), "The sound of indrawn breath was like the flyby hiss of a monstrous arrow." (The Scorpion God, p.31), "There was a moving and endearing pathos about their attention as in a dog that watches a conversation it cannot possibly understand." (Rites of Passage, p.38). Golding's short sentences have some deliberate paradoxical statements like "... their feet were deliberately unclever." (The Inheritors, p.23). A similar line is found in Free Fall : "... my feet were unclever"[63]; and "He went away and left me unfrightened." (Free Fall, p.161).

Traditionally, Golding uses quite short sentences unlike Lawrence. Repetitions, also a singularly common habit with him, suggest more than their own determinate significance. Here are a few examples : "... and her eyes, open, open for ever watching." (The Inheritors, p.169). "Pain. Pain. Pain." (Pincher Martin, p.142); "... she thought 'rowdily' of that other thing, that arc, that stone, that fluff as no more than a slice of luck, luck, that was what it was, luck explained everything!" (Darkness Visible, p.109) (underlined
for focus). His repetitions are an example of a highly conscious poetic style and they are used dramatically to express the inner workings of a mind. Golding thus modulates his repetitions as a stylistic device.

Golding is a metaphysical writer and his penchant for abstract thoughts and metaphysics are resplendent in most of his works. Here is a fine example:

The verger had me cornered literally in an angle and when he let me go I slid all the way down the wall and was a boneless heap. Life had suddenly rearranged itself. On one side of my head life was bigger and more portentous than on the other. The sky, with stars of infinite velocity and remote noise that patterned their travel had opened into me on the right. Infinity, darkness and space had invaded my island. (Free Fall, p.62)

The above quoted lines imply states of being and convey an excellent example of Golding's abstract diction. Regarding Golding's use of metaphysics, Redpath has ingeniously observed that:

The problem of language and its relationship to the physical and metaphysical world is a theme Golding continually returns to . . . One of the great strengths of his writing is that he can, through words, make us aware of areas of existence which are beyond the limits of language.24

An equally important aspect of Golding's style and technique is the employment of parody which is a significant tendency of modernist writing. In Lord of the Flies, Golding parodies the happy domestic world the boys have left behind in Europe. Pincher Martin, to cite another example, is a parody of a heroic struggle.
From the above, it can be easily deduced that Golding's potential as a writer cannot be under-rated. Indeed, he has earned a name for himself in the fictional world of post-modernist writers. He is "grandly ambitious" and his works are a mirror of the present times which are in close propinquity to anguish and mental stress. His art, to quote Redpath again, "is an art of discovery, but not an art that seeks to explain." Golding is seldom in the habit of giving elaborate explanations, and he leaves the reader to discover the hidden truth. Perhaps it is this mythic nature of Golding that makes him so special. Above all, rarely is Golding's prose dull and, on most occasions, it sparkles with the ingenuity of a rare genius.

Notes and References


6. Same as Note 1, p.97.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Same as Note 7</td>
<td>p.268.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


