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Evil and Self-delusion in William Golding's Novels  
Bachelor Thesis

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Čeněk Cvešper

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## Introduction

In the post-war second half of the 20th century, writers were trying to understand what depraved parts of humanity were responsible for the horrors of the last two great wars and the rise of the totalitarian regimes. The people most affected were those who served in the warfare and had seen with their own eyes the ‘entirely different areas of indescribability’.<sup>1</sup> Naval officer William Golding’s war experience made him realise that the evil is inherent to man, as he noted in an interview with Jack Biles: ‘Man is a fallen being . . . gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous’.<sup>2</sup> His literary career was his search for the answer to the question of mankind’s evil.

Another theme prominent in his works is self-delusion, which acts as a defensive agent for the characters’ sanity and moral stability. But this defensive mechanism acts ambiguously – it at once protects yet also handicaps. The theme of self-delusion was evolving with his career and is more prominent in the latter books, thus will be focused on accordingly.

Ambiguity is central to Golding. His apparent refusal to moralise, as he prefers to show, not tell, offers multiple possible interpretations of his allegorical stories.

This thesis will try to decompose and analyse Golding’s work in order to get a clearer view of his ideas pertaining to humanity’s inner darkness and what role self-delusion plays in regards to it. Four novels – *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors*, *Pincher Martin*, and *The Spire* – will be examined. However, as Golding felt ‘that a writer’s books should be as different from each other as possible’<sup>3</sup>, it is preferable to look at each individually. Golding gazes into the abyss of the mind like a jeweller peers into the diamond, and each book, like each facet, offers a different perspective of the evil that hides inside the darkness at the core.

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<sup>1</sup> William Golding, “Crabbed Youth and Age,” in *A Moving Target*, 163.

<sup>2</sup> Jack. I. Biles, ed., *Talk: Conversations with William Golding*, 76.

<sup>3</sup> Golding, “Belief and Creativity,” in *A Moving Target*, 198.

# 1. William Golding

## 1.1 Golding's Childhood

William Golding was born in Cornwall in 1911. He grew up in Marlborough, where he and his brother attended Marlborough Grammar School where their father, Alec Golding, taught. As a child he was 'over-sensitive, timid, fearful, lonely, and imaginative to the point of hallucination'.<sup>4</sup> This imagination is connected with his ability to remember things since very early childhood, nearly to, and possibly including, his birth. This has greatly affected his work and personal philosophy, as sometimes the real and unreal merged together. This collision of the supernatural and spiritual with the rational were central to his creative life. Their house, being located near a cemetery, was to him a 'place of numinous dread'<sup>5</sup>, with its two dark ominous cellars and three filled in wells. Darkness and repulsion were what the house symbolised for Golding, and the house would stand tall and ominous in his nightmares. This darkness and mystery, however, would soon begin to fascinate him, as his interest in Egyptian culture began to flourish: 'I am, in fact, an Ancient Egyptian, with all their unreason, spiritual pragmatism, and capacity for ambiguous belief'.<sup>6</sup> Fascinated with darkness, not only physical but also the one behind our consciousness, he was mesmerised by a carved face on a sarcophagus:

I know that it is necessary to meet the stare, eye to eye. It is a portrait of a man himself . . . purified, secure, wise. . . . prepared to penetrate mysteries, to stand pure and unfrightened in the hall . . . where the god weighs his heart against a feather. . . . prepared to go down and through, in darkness.<sup>7</sup>

His loneliness was further strengthened by his relationship with his mother, which was a 'physical divorce'.<sup>8</sup> Overall, the family was not very fond of physical intimacies.

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<sup>4</sup> John Carey, *William Golding: The Man Who Wrote Lord of the Flies*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Carey, *William Golding*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Golding, "Egypt from My Inside," in *A Moving Target*, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Golding, "Egypt from My Inside," 53.

<sup>8</sup> Carey, *William Golding*, 20.

This is perhaps why his father influenced him so much. Watching him one evening while they were stargazing, Golding contrived the idea of “‘what man ought to be” – a watcher and a wonderer’.<sup>9</sup> His father influenced him greatly in other aspects as well, mainly religious and social beliefs. He too despised the rigid class system of their England, which to William was a source of feeling of social inadequacy. Witnessing and comparing himself every day to the privileged boys attending Marlborough College, he grew bitter towards people of higher social standing. This notion of inadequacy followed him his whole life, and the social question is more prominent in the second half of his literary career. Until his death, he disliked being examined by critics and, as John Fowles recollects, Golding found it absurd that there were more books written about him than he wrote himself.<sup>10</sup>

Where his father’s influence can be felt the most in his works is however the question of religion. Alec, a rational realist and a scientist, was an atheist. Golding, however, given his extraordinary faculty for imagination and the spiritual, would for years live in inner turmoil between atheism and theism. Golding himself said that while he was not a Christian he ‘like[s] to think of [himself] as a religious person’.<sup>11</sup>

This fascination with the theological, with God and Man, and his experiences from war would push Golding forward in his quest to understand the primordial evil innate to man and to explore the origin of sin.

## 1.2 William the Adult

He graduated from English at Oxford in 1934. In 1939 he became an English and Philosophy schoolmaster at Bishop Wordsworth’s School in Salisbury to provide for himself and his wife Ann, with whom he was soon to be expecting their first child David. A few years later, daughter Judy was born. In December 1940, Golding joined the Royal Navy, partly out of his love and admiration for the sea. The Second World War affected him like it did everyone else who took part in it. For Golding, however, it was exactly the war which prompted him to write *Lord of the Flies*:

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<sup>9</sup> Carey, *William Golding*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> John Fowles, “Golding and ‘Golding’,” in *William Golding: The Man and his Books: A Tribute on his 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, ed. John Carey, 149.

<sup>11</sup> Carey, *William Golding*, 122.

Before the Second World War my generation . . . [had] a liberal and naïve belief in the perfectibility of man. In the war we became if not physically hardened than at least morally and inevitably coarsened. After it we saw . . . what man could do to a man . . . The years that went into the book were . . . of feeling, years of wordless brooding . . . It was like lamenting the lost childhood of the world. . . . The theme of *Lord of the Flies* is grief, sheer grief . . . <sup>12</sup>

But it was also in the army where he met his first friends. Racing on dinghies during the few days of peace belonged to one of his most beloved memories. It was also during one such race that he discovered his ability for an almost child-like wonder at the nature and the world, which so prominently marks his authorial style. He realised how he missed the immediacy of real things since he spent most of his life buried in books.<sup>13</sup> Yet even these sunny days are shadowed by the horrors of the battlefield. The comrades lost to the sinking ships and mined submarines, to the explosions during the D-Day, burnt to ashes in the flames of the conflict: that was Golding's personal tragedy of the war. As John Carey says, Golding in his personal memoir *Men, Women & Now* writes that the war brought him 'a religious convulsion . . . [and] a kind of framework of principles'.<sup>14</sup>

When the war ended and Golding returned home, he resumed his post as a schoolmaster. He acquired a sort of bohemian, contrarian look: beard, at that time uncommon, and an unkempt fashion style. This was apparently a social protest against the higher classes, as well as him being rather poor. William disliked his occupation very much as he could not see the practical point of it, for which he felt ashamed. When he could finally resign from his teaching post in 1961 because his writing was sufficient to provide for his family, he felt elevated.

After the release of *Lord of the Flies* in 1954, he wrote another dozen novels, a play, and three non-fictional works. In 1980 he was awarded the Booker Prize and in

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<sup>12</sup> Golding, *A Moving Target*, 163.

<sup>13</sup> Carey, *William Golding*, 97.

<sup>14</sup> Carey, *William Golding*, 82.

1983 the Nobel Prize for Literature. A knighthood in 1988 completed the list of his social achievements.

William Golding died in June 1993. He left behind an unfinished draft of a novel *The Double Tongue* (1995), which was published posthumously. He remains a centrepiece of British post-war literature, and his *Lord of the Flies* is known to pupils not only in Britain, but around the world.

## 2. *Lord of the Flies*

When Golding decided to challenge the stereotypical narratives about a group of British boys stranded on an exotic island, he created a story that marked the literary world forever and a book that would haunt him as ‘the one book’ he was known for. This heavily allegorical work full of ambiguous and ambivalent symbolism marked the beginning of his literary search for the answer to the question of the original sin, setting down the foundations of his fundamental belief that evil is innate to man.

### 2.1 Evil in *Lord of the Flies*

The evil in *Lord of the Flies* is being developed jointly with the boys’ fall into savagery. At certain points of the story the boys either hunt or perform a sort of ritual dance, usually to celebrate the hunt, but also out of fear. During the ritual, the boys dance in a circle and chant: ‘Kill the Pig! Cut her throat! Bash her in!’<sup>15</sup> It merges man’s most primal emotions: fear and lust for violence.

The story opens with Ralph standing on a beach of an almost Eden-like island. The fair-haired boy stands for the common sense, the longing for civilisation, society based on rules, and for democracy. In Freudian terms, he represents Ego.

He immediately encounters Piggy, a fat, short-sighted boy with asthma who represents the voice of reason, intellect, and liberalism. Piggy represents Superego, and his role is to reprimand and act as a conscience. They discover a shell glistening in the water and decide to blow it.

This announces the coming of a man, or rather a fallen man, into the paradise, and shows the boys’ need for sociability. The motif of the Fall is not uncommon in Golding’s work and is tied to the original sin, but Golding develops it more in *The Inheritors*.

Another two central boys are Jack and Simon. Jack is the last piece of the Freudian triangle, he represents Id, the primal, instinctive consciousness. Jack is mostly responsible for the boys’ fall into savagery, he calls for order based on strength and leads the ‘revolt’ against civilisation and democracy. Politically, he represents a

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<sup>15</sup> William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 79.

totalitarian regime. His arrival is described as if ‘something dark was fumbling along’<sup>16</sup>, foreshadowing Jack’s role in the story.

The very last of the central boys is Simon. Simon is a Christ figure, a saint and a martyr, and represents the spiritual and religious nature of man.

The conch blown, the social call heard, Ralph and Piggy are joined by other boys. They vote for a chief. Jack’s attempt to immediately grasp the opportunity is however thwarted by Roger, who wants to vote, and Ralph, as the bearer of the conch, is elected. Jack is made the leader of the hunters instead. Thus the conch acquires its symbolism of democratic tool and of civil power. Exploring the island, the boys capture a piglet, but, still sheltered by their innocence, and because of the ‘enormity of the knife descending . . . of the unbearable blood’<sup>17</sup>, they cannot bring themselves to kill it. However, Jack’s ominous ‘Next time-!’<sup>17</sup> foreshadows dark prospects.

Another assembly brings two things. Firstly, Jack shows his totalitarian nature when he describes his society based on rules, but more importantly, punishment. Secondly, we are introduced to the Beast, an objectified fear of the children, taking on the appearance of a snake. Ralph refuses its existence, arguing that a small island as theirs could not contain a beast so big. Jack claims that if there was one, he and his hunters would hunt it down and kill it. They then decide to make a fire to help their rescuers in finding them. But the fire spreads and consumes a part of the island, killing one of the boys. This time it was only due to irresponsibility and for the time being the innocence is retained. As the children watch the fire consume the forest, creepers spring up above the jungle and then fall to the flames. The little boys’ cries: ‘Snakes! Snakes! Look at the snakes!’<sup>18</sup> only further prophesise the end of Eden: fallen man, death, and snake had appeared.

Returning from another unsuccessful hunt, Jack, who in the forest was ‘less a hunter, than a furtive thing, ape-like’<sup>19</sup>, meets Ralph who is building shelters with Simon. When pressed by Ralph as to why is he not helping, Jack utters: ‘I had to go on. I –’ as he tries to describe ‘the compulsion to track down and kill that was swallowing

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<sup>16</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 29

<sup>18</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 47.

<sup>19</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 49.

him up,<sup>20</sup> and his animalistic instinct clashes with Ralph's impulse for civilisation. The shelters are needed, however, as the little boys' fear grows.

While Piggy's body seemingly refuses to turn savage, his hair remaining short as it was the first day, Jack voluntarily banishes his humanity by hiding his face behind a mask of mud and manages to hunt a pig. Meanwhile, the signal fire went out when a ship was nearby. The boys favoured savagery over civilisation. The ritual is then conceived, as if a celebratory event for the disregarded humanity of the hunters. Furious Ralph calls for another assembly and on the way realises the importance of the ability to think, the value of Piggy.

This assembly is called to reprimand and to 'decide on the fear'.<sup>21</sup> Ralph again refuses the Beast's existence, so does Piggy for the lack of scientific support, and says that there is nothing to fear, unless they start to fear people, which is met with laughter. Jack again wants to fight the beast with force. A new perspective comes from Simon, who tries to 'explain mankind's essential illness: 'Maybe it's only us . . . we could be sort of...',<sup>22</sup> lack of words leads him to ask the dirtiest thing ever there is, and Jack's answer is 'one crude expressive syllable'<sup>22</sup>. Simon's perspective is important, as none of the others could accept and understand that the evil could, in fact, be hidden within them. However sound their arguments, only Jack's call for strength is heeded and the boys leave to perform their ritual. Disregarding Ralph's call for order, they scatter off, leaving him alone with Piggy and Simon. Piggy urges Ralph to blow the conch, but he is well aware and too scared of what would happen if they did not listen to its call. He is losing control over the tribe as the boys succumb to fear. Piggy then tells them about his fear of Jack, because he knows that Jack hates him, and that he hates Ralph too.

That night a sign from the world of grown-ups is sent. A fallen man, a dead parachutist, comes from the sky, landing next to their bonfire atop a hill, and is mistaken for the Beast. His foetal position and wobbling head resembles a sinner lamenting his ordeal, begging for forgiveness and grace.

Another assembly and another clash of wills. Jack again forces his totalitarian approach and urges them to hunt the Beast. Ralph refuses and calls for the rules to be

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<sup>20</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 88.

<sup>22</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 96

followed so that they can be rescued, but rescue no longer means anything to Jack<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, Jack refuses to follow the democratic principles and disregards the rule that only the one holding the conch can speak: ‘We know who ought to say things.’<sup>24</sup> They decide to track the Beast down in an uncharted part of the island.

On the way there, Simon meditates on the beast, and can only see ‘the picture of a human at once heroic and sick.’<sup>25</sup> Golding seems to imply that however sick the mankind is, it can achieve great things, yet no matter how great it becomes, it may never rid itself of its primeval sickness. Not Jack’s call for strength, neither Ralph’s call for rules and democracy, nor Piggy’s society based on scientific proofs and rationality, but the understanding and acceptance of humanity’s condition is the only possibility. As Weekes and Gregor argue, Simon’s theme is that of acceptance.<sup>26</sup> When he later on says to the Lord of the Flies: ‘What else is there to do [but meet the parachutist, the presumed Beast]’<sup>27</sup>, and goes, he can see it as it is – a dead man, sinful, shameful, pitiful – and accepts it. Only then he can surpass those who refuse it. It is exactly such a man that is responsible for the war and for violence, man who refuses to see and accept his sickness and, fearing it, hides it deep within himself.

Before he ventures up, however, two more hunts must take place first. Returning from Castle Rock, the uncharted part of the island, the boys hunt and kill a pig. Ralph for the first time tastes the thrill of the hunt, and the ritual becomes much less a game than a savage dance.

. . . Robert was screaming and struggling with the strength of frenzy. Jack had him by the hair and was brandishing his knife . . . The chant rose ritually. . . . “Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Kill the pig! Smash him in!” Ralph too was fighting to get near, to get a handful of the brown, vulnerable flesh. The desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 111.

<sup>25</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 112.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study*, 46.

<sup>27</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 141.

<sup>28</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 125.

When they find the Beast still on the mountain where their signal fire was, they run away, unable to fight it, let alone face it. During the assembly that night, Jack denounces Ralph as their chief, but no other boy is willing to join him, to publicly denounce civilisation. Jack childishly cries that he will not *play* with them anymore and leaves. Afterwards, however, most of the boys follow him to Castle Rock, where he establishes his society based on strength and order, and where the boys hide behind painted masks.

Some critics have argued whether the corruption spreads from Jack to other children, or whether it is innate.<sup>29</sup> A chapter near the beginning shows that it is innate. In the chapter, two boys are observed bullying the younger ones, one of whom is meanwhile practising his power over lesser creatures of the sea – the human desire to control and rule. Roger and Maurice throw stones at the smaller boys and kick sand in their eyes, but with the intention to miss, because the ‘littluns’ remain protected by an invisible force of the old world, of years of social and behavioural conditioning not to give in to their violent tendencies. According to Golding himself, children, in their selfishness, and vulnerability and ignorance, are the source of the original sin in man, and only through love can they learn unselfishness.<sup>30</sup> It is necessary, however, to point out that Golding’s theory of evil is not strictly rationally based. His works are full of ambiguous spirituality and evil seems to be at once an innate ability as well as a spiritual power ‘not ourselves’.<sup>31</sup>

The next hunt takes place immediately afterwards. Jack and his masked hunters hunt a pig as if ‘wedded to her in lust’ and in her final moments ‘they were heavy and fulfilled upon her,’<sup>32</sup> and decide to impale the pig’s head as an offering for the Beast on a stick sharpened at both ends. In this moment the Beast, the Evil, becomes God for the tribe and the sexual undertones of the hunt underline the depth of their savageness: the primal emotions – lust and violence – merged together. The pig’s head is the true Beast, is the Lord of the Flies – in Hebrew: Beelzebub – the Devil.

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<sup>29</sup> Stephen Medcalf, *William Golding*, ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Carey, “John Carey Talks to W.G.,” in *WG: The Man and his Books*, 174.

<sup>31</sup> Medcalf, *William Golding*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 148-149.

This impalement is witnessed by Simon, who is hiding inside his forest shrine. The head talks to him, but it is rather an inner monologue with the evil personified into the head, discouraging him from going to the dead parachutist:

Funny thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! . . . You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? . . . I'm the reason why it's no go? . . . We are going to have fun on this island!<sup>33</sup>

Here Golding reveals his ideology: evil is within man, it cannot be killed, it is not an external force. And it has swallowed the boys on the island. The embracing of the fear and evil means the fall to savagery.

As Simon is ascending the mountain, a storm is coming and Jack's tribe decides to steal fire from Ralph's. An argument leads to the complete division into two tribes and, fearing the storm, they proceed to dance. Simon arrives just as the 'throb and stamp of a single organism'<sup>34</sup> reaches its bloodthirsty climax, is mistaken for the Beast and mauled to death. His funeral reminds us of his theme, acceptance, as his body is washed away by the waves and fluorescent organisms light up the darkness. He again became a part of nature.

To calm him down, Piggy tells Ralph that he remained himself through it all, but this is a costly mistake, which already caused one death and will lead to another. His conscience burns for Simon's death, and while Jack is adamant that it was the Beast in disguise and as such they could not kill it, Ralph is well aware of the reality. Only Piggy remained outside the circle and did not participate. From now on, Jack's tribe, hidden behind their masks, are referred to only as 'savages' by the narrator. They steal Piggy's glasses to make fire as he is foolishly gripping the, for the savages now an ordinary, conch. Ralph, Piggy, and the twins decide to retrieve them, but the liberation to savagery that the paint brings demolished the social conditioning and Roger kills Piggy by a giant stone. Jack and his tribe are now 'a single mass of menace,'<sup>35</sup> as Piggy's destroyed body only twitches like a pig's. The Beast was fed. The shell is destroyed, the savagery completed in all dimensions. Ralph flees and the twins are captured. He meets

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<sup>33</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 158.

<sup>34</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 168.

<sup>35</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 200.

the pig's head, but when he tries to destroy its grin, it only widens. Violence fuels violence and it makes the Beast happy. When Ralph sneaks to Castle Rock, the twins tell him that the tribe was ordered to throw spears at him as if he was a pig, and that Roger sharpened a stick on both ends. Next day they hunt him and what ensues is Ralph's escape for survival, during which the island is set on fire, the Beast's grin wider than ever.

Exhausted Ralph collapses on the beach. In that moment a naval officer appears before him. They are saved, but this rescue by an adult from the outside world which is at war and his cheerful: 'Fun and games . . . What have you been doing? Having a war or something?'<sup>36</sup> only underline the irony of their salvation. As the officer stands surrounded by a ring of what are no longer small boys, Ralph breaks down and begins to cry. When Ralph weeps for the end of innocence, he weeps for the whole mankind and for the violence it perpetrates on itself. When he weeps for the fall of Piggy, his true friend, he weeps for man's misuse of intelligence, and when he weeps for the darkness of man's heart, he is wiser than the uncomprehending naval officer could ever be.

*Lord of the Flies* is not a book about children's outburst of bad behaviour without parental supervision. Nor is it a book about children – it is about mankind. Gregor argues that since the protagonists are children, the book is rather about the potential of evil.<sup>37</sup> Yet had the officer not appeared, Ralph would have been ritually murdered and sacrificed to the Beast. In the minds of the savages, Ralph was as good as dead. To a degree, the potential was left unfulfilled, as children cannot properly utilise their faculties and intellect to achieve full descend into evil. This is what the juxtaposition with the naval officer, a man at war, symbolises. Yet while Roger may have been just a sadist who went too far when he killed Piggy, the tribe's final hunt proved that the potential was fulfilled in the whole children capacity.

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<sup>36</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 223.

<sup>37</sup> Ian Gregor, "He Wondered": The Religious Imagination of William Golding," in *WG: The Man and his Books*, 89.

## 2.2 Self-delusion in *Lord of the Flies*

From the beginning of the book, Piggy keeps reprimanding the children for behaving like kids. His parental approach and constant worrying about what the adults would think then comes off only as ironic, considering that the outside world is at war. The children are only mimicking the adult's game.

The naval officer's: 'I should have thought that a pack of a British boys . . . would've been able to put up a better show than that,'<sup>38</sup> and his comparison of the events to Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), which *Lord of the Flies* denounces as unrealistic and idealised picture of humanity, further enhances the ironic idealisation of children and their innocence. This 'innocence' is nothing less than ignorant and irresponsible behaviour socially conditioned in order not to deviate from the acceptable norm. The children resorted to the argument of their British origin too, however, this surrogate proved too fragile. In their self-delusion the boys and the naval officer believed that their heritage will defend them from turning savage. But the world war is a proof enough that, if one removes the artificial, man-made conditioning, humans are all the same, all sick.

An argument could be proposed: But what about Ralph and Simon and Piggy? Simon represents the spiritual nature of man, he accepted the evil like only a few could. Extending his symbolism, throughout the human history people acted upon certain values and principles established by and tied to a religion – be it Christianity or another – which were used to civilise or condition. For many religions, man is a sick creature and only God's embrace has the power to purify. In a way, they realise the inherent wickedness of mankind, but still turn to outer forces in order to shift the responsibility away from themselves (this fallacy is focused on more in *Pincher Martin* and *The Spire*).

Piggy's body refused to change and he did not take part in Simon's murder. It is as if Golding was trying to say that the intellect, Superego, distances itself from Id, but also, in a way, from its Ego, and refuses to change and adapt. This passivity and stubborn belief in the goodness of man and the rules of civilised society in the end cause Piggy's fall. Human's pride in their own intellect, superiority, and capacity is at the core of most of its conflicts throughout the history. A passive intellect is as good as dead, it

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<sup>38</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 224.

would seem, for Piggy, fat and short-sighted and with asthma, had little way of defending himself and forcing his way.

For that he had to use Ralph, who was fighting a battle within himself, battle between Id and Superego. At times, Ralph felt as if a curtain would flash and flicker within his mind and every time that happened he lost grip of his will to get home, to be civilised. He willingly participated in the ritual dances, yet it was also his ‘instinct that he did not know he possessed’<sup>39</sup>, his Id, that saved him in his final rush. Had it not been for Piggy, he would have succumbed to savagery and could probably offer little resistance, as ‘common sense’ is bound to the social norms and thus to conditioning and alone offers little defence. Yet had Piggy been more active and did not constantly hide behind Ralph, things could have been different. That does not mean that one should destroy one’s Id, as it ties one with nature, which, as Golding shows in *The Inheritors*, is necessary to be good. The common sense and intellect, the Ego and Superego, must work together if we are to overcome our sick nature. However, unless we accept it, like Simon did, we will never be able to step forward.

This is Beelzebub’s deception: Mankind in its self-delusion tries to externalise its evil. Unaware of the sin within and fuelled by fear, it is forced to destroy and suffer, and unless one accepts his nature, the cycle will never end.

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<sup>39</sup> Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, 201.

### 3. *The Inheritors*

If *Lord of the Flies* tried to uncover the origin of sin in man, *The Inheritors* was Golding's way of showing his Fall. As before, Golding decided to destroy the idealised version of man, this time from Wells' *The Outline of History* (1920), and offer an extraordinary look at the origin of the modern human, Homo sapiens, and his encounter with the Neanderthals.

While the childhood innocence in *Lord of the Flies* was only superficial and ultimately the origin of the sin, the innocence of the Neanderthals in *The Inheritors* is absolute. The group of probably the very last eight Neanderthals – or the people – return from their sea cave to their summer home. However, as their elder male Mal is old and senile and the ice age nearing its end causes climate changes, they arrive early. The Neanderthals are led by Mal and an elder female only referred to as the old woman, she is the flame-bearer and lore-keeper. They immediately encounter a problem, as they cannot cross the river because the log they used for it in the past is gone. Mal 'pictures' a falling tree and a river and Ha, male successor to Mal, after a while understands that they are to search another log to bridge the water with.

As the scene shows, the people are incapable of thought, they can only 'have pictures', and are heavily limited in their lives: they cannot logically infer, they do not know metaphor. Their inventing capacity is limited to using shells as jugs when at sea, but in their summer home they only drink straight from the river. When they want to use an implement, such as stone for an axe, they find a rock which fits their hand. They cannot impose their will on nature, they are incapable of moralisation, and thus, of conception of evil and good. This is the source of their innocence. To transfer meaning, they share a picture, almost as if telepathically, while also using mime and basic vocabulary. They live in an absolute connection with nature, which they revere as Oa, and from whose belly everything came, so everything is good.

Their reverence for Oa, for nature (and as such for life and death), is so strong that they do not kill, and when they do obtain meat (killed by a predator), they ask the dead animal for forgiveness. Their moral standpoints are limited to just good and bad (and even then they accept the existence of bad as natural), removing the inherent moralisation, thus liberating them from the dichotomic perception of the world.

Their innocence, however, will be their doom. Their limited ability to think means lack of progress and defence. Again, like with Piggy, passivity kills. Fa's 'to-day is like yesterday and to-morrow,'<sup>40</sup> encapsulates their conception of time and life:

Life was fulfilled, there was no need to look farther for food, to-morrow was secure and the day after so remote that no one would bother to think of it.<sup>41</sup>

The people are incapable of even thinking about the future, let alone take place in it. Their understanding of time works almost as if on an animalistic instinct, rather than a concrete conception.

Their cave is located near a large waterfall, which Golding uses to symbolise the figurative Fall as well. Mal issues orders: he sends Nil and Ha with their child, the new one, to gather wood, and Lok with his daughter Liku and mate Fa to gather food. Fa immediately questions Mal's decision to send Liku, considering it dangerous. Even though everyone knows he is senile, the rigid hierarchy and traditions will not bend. Though couples, the people are completely communal and absolutely unselfish; Nil even dreams of lying together with Ha and Lok to banish her fears and feel closer to the community, and Liku's mother is Nil. The community is everything to the Neanderthals: 'The strings [connecting Lok with the people] were not the ornament of life but its substance. If they broke, a man would die.'<sup>42</sup>

Nil returns from her quest and says that Ha has met 'the other' and fell to his death. Lok decides to investigate. While tracking his scent, he essentially merges with the other and feels 'frightened and greedy . . . strong'.<sup>43</sup> That is the nature of the new people, the Homo sapiens. His journey only confirms Nil's fear and they mourn Ha. For the first time the new people are seen, but only as a dark shapeshifting shadow, a blob of darkness moving across the terrain like a cat and climbing the trees like a bear. As with Jack, Golding foreshadows: the new people brought darkness, but unlike the Neanderthals they can adapt and change.

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<sup>40</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 51.

<sup>42</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 68.

<sup>43</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 87.

A day later Mal dies. In his final moments we are made aware that the community practises cannibalism. Yet it is just another form of bonding, and when Mal says: ‘Do not open my head and my bones. You would only taste weakness,’<sup>44</sup> he means well and is afraid that his sickness would spread. Lok, the least worthy candidate, becomes the elder male of the tribe. Unlike Fa who seems to be moving on the evolutionary steps and begins to think logically, even imagining agriculture (yet unable to properly convey her idea to the others), Lok ‘has a mouthful of words and no pictures.’<sup>45</sup> The people mourn his death, but accept it as something inevitable, as it is a part of nature.

Fa’s ability to conceptualise agriculture, but more importantly the old woman’s reaction to her idea of a system of irrigation, hints at Golding’s definition of the Fall: ‘[the old woman’s] face changed to that face she would make if Liku strayed too near the flaunting colours of the poison berry’.<sup>46</sup> Weekes and Gregor argue that the old woman considers thinking a gateway to evil, she understands Fa’s idea, but sees imposing of will as something possibly dangerous.<sup>47</sup> This would be in accordance with their religion, as imposing will on nature would mean rejecting Oa, as well as with Golding’s idea that ‘The Fall is thought’.<sup>48</sup>

Whenever Lok observes the new people, the (water)fall gets louder and more powerful in his head. However, when he and his group sit around fire, the presence of the fall diminishes:

One of the deep silences fell on them . . . in which there were at first many minds in the overhang; and then perhaps no mind at all. So fully discounted was the roar of the water . . .<sup>49</sup>

Likewise, watching the new people being merry and loving quietens the fall and he feels good about them.

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<sup>44</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 77.

<sup>45</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 28.

<sup>46</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 53.

<sup>47</sup> Weekes and Gregor, *William Golding*, 82-83.

<sup>48</sup> John Carey, introduction to *The Inheritors*, by William Golding, v.

<sup>49</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 24.

Lok ventures to the island from where the new people's smoke is rising, an island inaccessible to the water-fearing Neanderthals. He fearlessly calls onto the new people from a tree, oblivious of any danger. One of their hunters shoots a poisoned arrow at him, which Lok considers a gift, as he does not understand the concept of a bow. His innocence for the first time hints at how vulnerable these creatures actually are. Meanwhile, his cavern is raided, the old woman and Nil are killed, and the new one and Liku, who screams as if 'at the slow advance of a snake'<sup>50</sup>, are taken to the new people's island. When he and Fa sneak into their camp, he throws them meat and foolishly says that it is for Liku, which causes the new people to attack them. In his innocence he cannot realise they would want to hurt him, unlike the new people, who, themselves invested with evil and fear, expect Lok and Fa to be aggressive.

They hide in the crown of a tree from which they then observe the new people. When these appear properly visible for the first time, their coming is announced by a roar of shaman in a mask of stag, similarly to Ralph's blowing of the conch in *Lord of the Flies*:

The noise was harsh and furious, full of pain and desire. . . . of the greatest of the stags and the world was not wide enough for him. . . . [the stag] was looking up, past the new people, past Fa and Lok . . . <sup>51</sup>

The roar tells of mankind's will for greatness, of their always looking beyond the horizon. Yet it is also full of pain which this desire brings and causes. And as in *Lord of the Flies*, it symbolises the end of Eden: death of Ha and the others, Liku screaming as if at a snake, and the appearance of the fallen man.

The new people can cross the water, which signals their unnatural state of being, their ability to go over the fall and against the river stream – the time stream. They can use implements and shape their surroundings to fit their need – build cottages, clear a clearing – they can impose their will on nature. They destroy, but also create. Unlike the Neanderthals, they are not at home in nature – they need pelts and shoes. Their rituals reveal that their religion is that of blood when one of the hunters has his finger cut off in order to strengthen them and help them hunt the 'forest devils', as they call the

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<sup>50</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 95.

<sup>51</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 118.

Neanderthals. They are individual – while the people all look the same, the new people distinguish themselves from each other by their hairstyles. They are selfish and greedy: the new people are starving and when their leader Marlan is caught eating Lok’s meat alone, they get angry and he pacifies them with mead. They want more, rush at Marlan, and in their greediness break the bottle.

Meanwhile, Liku was given to Tanakil, a little girl of the new people. Just as Lok is constantly at once drawn to and afraid of the new people, Liku ‘gazes at the thin girl with adoration’.<sup>52</sup> The Neanderthals are fascinated by the new people’s intelligence, their strength and power to create. But they will use it to destroy them. And Tanakil shows another human trait: when Liku disobeys her, she is quick to get angry and even violent.

When Lok falls asleep, Fa witnesses the new people eating Liku. According to Dickson<sup>53</sup>, this was cannibalism. However, as the Neanderthals’ description resembles *Homo habilis*, which looked much more ape-like than *Homo neanderthalensis* actually did, the *Homo sapiens* could not draw many connections between themselves and their progenitors. If it was cannibalism, it was caused by ignorance, a pitiful reminder of the original sin. Fa never tells Lok as she knows it would hurt him too much, and until the end he remains oblivious. When she tells him to retrieve the new one as she makes a diversion, he still wants to rescue Liku too. They are discovered and separated while fleeing. Lok, believing himself to have lost Fa, discovers likeness, and experiences an almost evolutionary step in thinking, which puts him on the position of Mal and beyond. It is only ironic that this surge of brain power was caused by the suffering caused by the new people and we again see the connection between evil and thought. He likens the new people to ‘the fall, nothing stands against them . . . They are like Oa.’<sup>54</sup> He is frightened of them but also ‘sorry for them as for a woman who has the sickness.’<sup>55</sup> When he meets with Fa again, she likens them to an all-consuming fire. The new people can create and destroy, like Oa, but they are like fire, preferring destruction.

They return to the new people’s encampment, but only find an altar with gifts and sacrifices for them, for the forest devils. Again the evil acquired a celestial status. They

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<sup>52</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 146.

<sup>53</sup> L.L. Dickson, *The Modern Allegories of William Golding*, 34.

<sup>54</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 185.

<sup>55</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 183.

get drunk and discover what it feels like to be the new people, the fall roaring in their heads louder than ever before: they discover greed, violence, and sickness to their stomach. Fa wakes Lok up and tells him that the new people are ascending the mountain to get over the fall. They try to retrieve the new one, but are unsuccessful. They retreat to their cave where they find a statue of devil made by the new people, which to Lok ironically reminds of Marlan when he was angry, rather than himself. To the statue is tied Tanakil who is to be sacrificed to the forest devils.

Once again, Golding works with the theme of self-delusional externalisation of inner evil, which the new people shift onto the innocent Neanderthals. When Fa woke up Lok, she said that the new people are frightened, 'but there is no danger in the forest'.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, the Neanderthals cannot even think of themselves as dangerous to the new people, nor would they want to hurt them. It is the fallen man who, afraid of the darkness and evil, and blind to their true form, looks outside and destroys in defence. Lok and Fa return Tanakil to the new people and ask for Liku, but are attacked, and Fa is tangled in a tree and falls over the waterfall. The Neanderthals cannot go over the Fall, they are the people of the past.

What follows is Golding's masterful artistic stroke – a final look at Lok is given to us through an outside point of view: scientific, objective, emotionless. We witness Lok searching the river, returning to the clearing, where he discovers Liku's bones, and his return to their cave, where he lies down and dies of loneliness. The world is changing: the ice age is ending, the spring has finally arrived, but the people will not be a part of it anymore. Through this impersonal camera the pity for the Neanderthals reaches its climax.

Just like in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding again introduces juxtaposition of contrasting views to allow the reader a distance and deeper understanding. The final chapter is narrated by Tuami, the artist of the Homo sapiens. The new people's leader Marlan stole his current wife, Vivani, and with his followers is escaping and searching for a new home. Tuami sees Marlan's wife as vain, but lusts for her and is creating ivory dagger to kill him with. Tuami perceives world as untidy and hopeless, compared to the people's perception through their reverence for nature. The horizon, their future, is only a line of darkness to him to which leads an immense body of glistening water, so that he cannot tell what the path holds for them.

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<sup>56</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 196.

Tanakil is traumatised by the events, and Tuami feels that it has changed him too. As he meditates on their bleak fate and ‘what sacrifice would they be forced to perform to a world of confusion,’<sup>57</sup> the new one wakes up and ‘a well of feeling open[s] in love and fear,’<sup>57</sup> from the new people. Even they can feel love for the new one, albeit mixed with fear, but unfortunately the love came only after the annihilation of the innocent Neanderthals. Tuami, seeing the new one and Vivani, feels that everything is suddenly alright:

They were the answer, the frightened, angry love of the woman, and the ridiculous, intimidating rump that was wagging at her head . . . and he could feel in his fingers how Vivani and her devil fitted [the ivory].<sup>58</sup>

The ivory dagger in the end changes into an ornament of love. The Homo sapiens, sinful and fallen they may be, inherit from the Neanderthals deeper understanding of love, as well as fear.

Their very nature led the Homo sapiens to annihilate the innocent Neanderthals, from whom they could have learnt so much. The tragedy is not only the Neanderthals’, but also Homo sapiens’, who cannot but obey their nature and destroy. In the end, they inherit the Earth and the readers inherit the knowledge of the first man’s Fall – of their disconnect from nature, misuse of intelligence, and their voyage towards darkness that may not have an end. Golding describes man as essentially sick, his nature compels him to destroy, and in his self-delusion he casts inner evil outwards. But a hint of answer seems to lie in mutual understanding and acceptance, and love.

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<sup>57</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 221.

<sup>58</sup> Golding, *The Inheritors*, 223.

#### 4. *Pincher Martin*

*Pincher Martin* revolves around a shipwrecked navy soldier who lands on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic, where he has to brave the elements as well as his mind as he fights food poisoning induced fever to preserve his sanity. In the end, Golding reveals that he died on page two.

Golding shifts his focus from a group representative of the whole mankind to an individual, but the subject is purposefully as despicable as humanly possible. Christopher Hadley Martin is Greed reincarnated, hence his nickname 'Pincher'. He was born 'with his mouth and his flaps open and both hands out to grab,'<sup>59</sup> and people to him are only steps for his feet on his way.

The book opens with a phrase which symbolises his existence: 'he was the centre'.<sup>60</sup> In his egotism Martin refuses to die and creates a heaven for himself. He considers himself precious and refuses to give away his whole existence and identity, and pass on. He creates an island in his mind, a bare white rock. From now on he uses self-delusion in order to fight the truth and continue living, or rather, being.

His heaven is very crude, almost a purgatory. A rock with mussels and anemones and an unquenching water, fierce sea stretching to the horizon in all directions, his shelter a tunnel into which he backs 'like a lobster'.<sup>61</sup> His mind will have to stretch itself in order to keep the illusion going as he begins to realise the horrific truth. At one point, his will slips, and he decides to call the rocks he is on the Teeth. He begins to shudder, gripping onto his lifebelt, and utters: 'No! Not the Teeth!'<sup>62</sup> The rocky formation of white, uncommonly hard stone is in fact his jaw: only fitting for a man who devoured everything and everyone to build his heaven inside his mouth. The constant battle between his will and reality spans across the whole narrative. He sees red lobsters (lobsters are red only in hot water) moving around, the seagulls become reptiles, seals are men. In his delusion, however, he creates an excuse that would account for all these: he is suffering from food poisoning, hence his mind is playing tricks on him and his false reality upholds. But not for long. Soon after the illusion breaks again when the will

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<sup>59</sup> William Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 127.

<sup>60</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 44.

<sup>62</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 95.

realises the mistakes it has made and shatters into nothingness. When he composes himself again, Martin tries to convince himself that he is mad: “It was something I remembered. I’d better not remember it again. . . . Madness?” Worse than madness. Sanity.’<sup>63</sup> Because sanity would mean death.

Golding again incorporates the theme of man’s misuse of intelligence. Martin repeatedly states that he will outwit the machinery that is the nature to save himself. As he becomes a self-appointed God of his realm, Golding ironically reverses the biblical creation of the world.

On the first day, Martin creates his island. On the second day, he wills his food and water into existence, and builds a rocky formation in the shape of a man, which he decides to call Dwarf. The third day brings the creation of Martin himself: he materialises his body as it should be, battered by the sea and stones, finds his identity disc and the illusion is stronger than ever. The fourth day he calls ‘the thinking day’ and decides to strap a piece of silver paper onto the Dwarf to attract ships, and to create a cross formation on the ground with the seaweed for the planes to see. However he overtaxes his body and the will begins to weaken.

On the fifth day he wakes up realising he never slept at all. The reality seems fake and the will is from now on in highly defensive mode. He creates an aqueduct which will lead rainwater to the pool he drinks from, but as he is working the white rock seems much harder than it should be and so familiar. The exhaustion brings about a mistake and Martin’s illusion begins to crumble. He convinces himself that he is sick of food poisoning and feverish. He sets to dispose of the ‘poisonous serpent’ in his body, meaning the poison-clogged intestines, unaware that the serpent is his own evil. In a heroic scene he gives himself an enema and defecates for the first time in a week, all the while the music of Wagner and Beethoven plays in the background. In this pathetic image, Martin sees himself as a hero who defeated nature. However, not even this lasts long and his mind will try to convince itself it is mad, rather than sane and thus accept reality.

On the sixth day, Martin creates God.

Since his stranding on the rock, Martin’s memories resurface occasionally. Through those Golding reveals parts of his past, however they never show *why* he is the way he is, only *who* he was. It is not exactly Martin who searches through the

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<sup>63</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 180.

memories, but something called ‘the centre’. Martin breaks into two beings: the mouth, which frantically talks on in an attempt to prolong the illusion, and the centre, which is Martin’s essence, hiding inside his skull – the globe.

We learn that he was an actor, seduced his producer’s wife, when younger he caused his friend to have a bike accident out of envy. The producer reveals the philosophy behind Martin’s world when he tells him a story about the Chinese box: a tin box with dead fish inside buried underground, where maggots first eat the fish, then each other, until only one remains, who is then eaten by people. Martin sees the world as a tin box and claims himself to be ‘bigger maggot than you are.’<sup>64</sup> As the book is nearing its end, Martin occasionally hears hammering, as if a spade was hitting the box, as someone or something bigger is trying to unbury and eat Martin.

The memories reveal his attempt at raping Mary, a virtuous religious woman who would not succumb to his will. The imagined copulation is full of pain and torture for Mary as it is not out of love, but out of spite, out of frustration that he cannot conquer her. He threatens her with death, and is repulsed by the ‘pretences and evasion’ of the ‘artificial woman’ and her unwillingness to admit ‘her own crude, human body’.<sup>65</sup>

Martin clearly despises religion, considers it useless. It is important, then, that his best friend, Nathaniel, is the epitome of a religious man: void of humour, virtuous, philosophical, dutiful, uncomprehending, and ‘waiting for his aeons’.<sup>66</sup> It is Nathaniel whose words offer the hardest threat to Martin’s self-delusion and explain why he resists death so:

The sort of heaven we invented for ourselves after death, if we aren’t ready for the real one. . . . Take us as we are now, and heaven would be sheer negation. Without form and void. You see? A sort of black lightning, destroying everything that we call life . . .<sup>67</sup>

For Martin, life meant greed and power, thus his heaven that he had created – the barren rock void of people and everything bar the utmost essentials, single man against

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<sup>64</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 163.

<sup>65</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 162.

<sup>66</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 49.

<sup>67</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 195.

the overwhelming power of nature – is also a negation of everything, and it seems more like hell, or purgatory. Yet it is still place which he willed, he is its God, and he can retain his identity – his greatest treasure.

Incidentally, the hammering of spade on the tin box sounds like thunder, announcing the coming of the black lightning.

Nathaniel, his only friend, the only one he really loved, is also one of the two sources of his hate. He is to marry Mary, the woman Martin could never have, the woman who causes acid to fill Martin's whole being by imposing herself onto his world so unconquerably, and Martin plans to kill Nathaniel. But the centre examines the memory and realises that it was not Nathaniel, but Mary he wanted to kill. He possibly may have been afraid of Mary taking Nat away from him. Martin and Nat serve on the same ship, and when he shouts for the ship to quickly change direction, causing praying Nathaniel to fall over the rail to the sea, the ship is torpedoed. As such, Martin is trying to rid himself of his guilt by convincing himself that it would have been the right order, had he issued it 10 seconds earlier.

Martin's attitude towards religion is at the very core of the book. When he at one point realises the acoustics do not correspond to reality and his illusion cracks again, the centre hides inside the skull – the globe – and 'the hole under his window' – the mouth – begins to talk about his childhood fear of darkness:

. . . because if I didn't go on thinking I'd remember whatever it was in the cellar down there, and my mind would go . . . down the terrible steps to where the coffin ends were crushed in the walls of the cellar . . . <sup>68</sup>

The cellar is hidden deep within his mind. He talks about a corner of double dark, where a crone stands and from where she would advance at him. He will have to go down there, to the 'well of darkness' to 'meet the thing he turned from when he was created,'<sup>69</sup> – God and Death.

The sixth day, the day when he created God, the centre and the mouth are divided. The mouth is trying to keep the self-delusion going, while the centre faces the reality and Martin, thinking the old woman is with him on the rock, kills her. Yet the centre

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<sup>68</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 147.

<sup>69</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 202.

and the mouth are now one, and as he curses her: 'That'll teach you to chase me out of the cellar through cars and pubs and beds, you at the back and me running, running after my identity . . . '<sup>70</sup> he knows that the blood is just a seawater, the body his vest. His whole life, Martin was running away from Death and from God. Both just died by his hands.

The delusion cannot hold, the last resistance, his will, surrenders, and in front of Martin appears a person. The person is Martin himself, but with his sea boots still on, sea boots which he kicked off on page two in order to prevent drowning and death. Sea boots which make the rock behind them seem like a painted cartoon. Martin cannot look the illusion in the face, can only inspect it piece by piece, the whole picture would mean death. The other Martin, God who he had created in his image, asks him if he had enough – enough of hanging on. 'I spit on your compassion . . . I s[\*]t on your heaven!'<sup>71</sup> replies Martin as tempest rocks his island. He prefers his own heaven to the black lightning that would be God's, the self-less giving oneself into God's care, leaving everything behind. He calls God a torturer, says that no matter what he would have done in his life, he would always end up in the same spot. It was God who gave him his greed, so why would he now torture him for using it to climb out of the cellar, even if it meant using others?

The stage begins to crumble and a black lightning spreads across it, tearing it apart. In the end, Martin disintegrates and his heaven turns into void. Only the core and two claws protecting it remain, fighting an eternal battle with the black lightning, which pries the claws open 'in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy'.<sup>72</sup> Only someone like Martin, unable to love and afraid of love, could consider compassion to be merciless. When he was drowning, he saw a toy of a soldier suspended inside a tube of water. If one would apply pressure on the membrane on top, the soldier would go down. As Martin watches it, he can only think about drowning the soldier inside. This toy is a god-metaphor, and Martin considers God to be cruel and power-hungry. As his will begins to weaken, he is at times aware of a pressure from the sky – in the likeness of the toy he conceived his heaven. Likewise, thinking about Mary and the acid she had filled

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<sup>70</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 207.

<sup>71</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 213-214.

<sup>72</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 216.

him with, he wished to be surrounded by that acid inside the toy, so no one could reach him. Martin is afraid to be loved, thus he could never unlearn his selfishness.

There is another possible explanation, however, as Weekes and Gregor point out.<sup>73</sup> Reversing the theological concept, Golding's work withstands a philosophical one too. The old woman stands for Death and God, but she could also symbolise Death and Void. In that case, the black lightning is not God's heaven, but a nothingness opening to Martin after his life. For Martin, both would mean total loss of himself, however, had Martin been presented with Void, his struggle would seem heroic: man's final stand against the nothingness of afterlife. The fact that the book can stand for all three of these explanations – stranded soldier, the theological, and the philosophical – shows Golding's capability as a novelist.

Before he sees the old woman on the rock, the centre is frightened by an appearance of the black lightning engraved where the aqueduct should be. It is described as an upside-down charred apple tree – the tree of knowledge. For Martin that would be the true revelatory symbol to destroy his illusion – the knowledge of his fate and nature, and his self-delusional playing God. In both the theological and the philosophical modes, however, Martin is a pitiful despicable man who cannot but obey his nature. His final words as he was drowning was a pathetic call for mother – Martin never grew up from the scared child in the cellar unable to face his darkness.

Martin is an extreme version of the fallen man, however not unrealistic. It is a self-portrait of Golding himself – the cellar of his house is the cellar of Martin's, with the same darkness hiding inside, the woman Martin wanted to rape were two women from Golding's life merged together – one virtuous and void of sexual lust, the other actually raped by Golding. Martin shifts his evil outside, deluding himself to be forced by some outside force, God in his case. His self-delusion is so strong that in his selfishness and greed, he decided to resist death. While it may seem that Martin accepted his nature, it is not true. In fact, he only shifted the responsibility onto an external force, utilising his wickedness in order to achieve his goals.

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<sup>73</sup> Weekes and Gregor, *William Golding*, 154.

## 5. *The Spire*

*The Spire* was in a way conclusion to the first half of Golding's career. The work contains all the imagery that has become common to his works: the fall, sinful man, inner evil, religious motif, fear. The protagonist is Jocelin, the dean of the Salisbury Cathedral. If Martin was a man of no religion, Jocelin is its embodiment as the head of the church.

Jocelin is an all-loving devoted member of the church. However, it is not hard to see that he is as egotistic as Martin: he believes that he had a vision of a beautiful spire that would glorify the cathedral, and that at his back is his guardian angel, filling him with warmth and supporting him in his direst hours. This guardian angel is a tuberculosis slowly eating away at his spine, and the spire represents his repressed sexuality.

Jocelin is first seen observing the model of the cathedral, which he compares to a man lying on his back, with the spire 'springing, projecting, bursting, erupting from the heart of the building.'<sup>74</sup> Already the feeling is rather sensual. Juxtaposed to this image is his encounter with Goody Pangall, the object of his secret desire. Jocelin arranged her marriage with Pangall, the impotent caretaker, convincing himself that it is a marriage between two servants of God. Only at the end will he acknowledge to himself that he knew about his impotence, thus securing her so that no one else could have her.

Jocelin's egotism is revealed immediately afterwards when he sees a dumb man whom he treats lovingly, but sees him looking at him 'doglike'. He even compares himself to the four pillars supporting the spire – he believes the whole building to be literally supported by his will. He is stopped by Pangall, who is being made fun of by workers for his impotence, but to them making fun of a fool is only a custom to repel bad luck. When Pangall begins to cry, Jocelin does not understand and leaves. He meets father Adam, who he calls father Anonymous because of his expressionless face, but also because Jocelin has yet to see with his eyes. He keeps looking upwards, the most physical thing for him is (God's) light. Only at the end will he learn to see and exchanges 'vision [spiritual] for vision [physical]'<sup>75</sup>, as Weekes and Gregor note.

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<sup>74</sup> William Golding, *The Spire*, 8.

<sup>75</sup> Weekes and Gregor, *William Golding*, 229.

At the site the master builder Roger Mason shows him an excavated pit to prove that the cathedral lacks proper foundations and says that it is already amazing for it to be standing as is. Jocelin replies that it is a miracle and that the spire will be built because the original builders intended for it to be built. Roger's demand to see the plans of the building is countered by Jocelin's arrogance: 'There aren't any plans . . . But I know what they intended. . . . I shall thrust you up by my will. It's God's will in this business.'<sup>76</sup> Roger leaves and father Adam tells Jocelin that Rome will not be sending more money but a Holy Nail instead, which Jocelin in his devotion considers better than money or foundations. It is necessary to point out, however, that Jocelin is not arrogant for the sake of arrogance, as he even thanks the lord for keeping him humble. In his self-delusion he believes to be the messenger of God, and his arrogance is to him a general observations, for when he weighs God's vision against anything profane, or even secular, the vision is bound to win. His belief in God is unconditional.

His spire, or Jocelin's Folly as the people call it, is not popular. When he overhears two deacons badmouthing someone as arrogant and self-appointed saint, he never connects these words with himself and reprimands them on the poor man's behalf instead. When he complains about the workers defiling the church with their blasphemous singing, father Anselm replies: 'At least they don't destroy it.'<sup>77</sup> Anselm and Jocelin used to be close, but Jocelin's arrogant behaviour and his devotion to his vision led to their estrangement. Yet Jocelin is willing to accept even this sacrifice of old friendship in order to fulfil God's will. Additionally, almost everyone believes that the spire will collapse before being finished, but only Roger tells it to Jocelin openly. As the dean of the cathedral, he is untouchable to the lower-ranking members. Furthermore, his aunt is a rich woman of powerful connections.

When the rain season comes, the water leaks into the pit and fills the whole cathedral with the stench of corpses and graves. The building smells of death, a worker falls to his death, boys have nightmares, and the church services are postponed and then cease completely. The building of the spire brings only darkness and destruction. A plague appears in the city, but Jocelin feels protected by his angel, ironically one could say, as he may have been one of its first victims.

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<sup>76</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 41.

<sup>77</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 32.

When he comes to the site next time, he meets Roger's wife Rachel, a talkative and energetic woman, who tells him that she and Roger cannot have sex as she starts laughing at the worst possible moments. Jocelin, with the model of his folly in his hands, gets angry at her as her womanhood arouses him. 'Filth! Filth!'<sup>78</sup> he cries. He then sees Roger looking at Goody. He realises that Goody will keep Roger there, working on the Spire, if the two of them were brought together. Still unaware of his feelings for Goody, he returns to his cell where he cries, thinking it to be sorrow for his arousal. In his dream he lies crucified, resembling the cathedral, but the people, the four pillars of the spire – Pangall, Goody, Roger, Rachel – mock him because 'the church had no spire, could not have any. Only Satan . . . clad in nothing but blazen hair stood over his nave and worked at the building.'<sup>79</sup> The blazen hair belongs to the redheaded Goody. It is clear that the nightmare is caused by his sexual frustration. As the people laugh at the absence and impossibility of the spire, they mock the clerical dogma of celibacy, hence Jocelin's inability to love Goody. The self-delusion is beginning to crack, the sexual desire awakening.

The next day Roger calls him to the pit and shows him that the foundations are moving. The stones are crumbling, and as the earth begins to creep, he orders to immediately fill up the pit. Jocelin runs to pray and shoots his spirit into the columns, which started to ring under the weight of the spire, to support them. Roger's quick rational thinking saved them, but Jocelin believes he did just as much, if not more. Roger then talks to him, persuading him to cease building, but as Goody dances in Jocelin's mind, he says that the vision is stronger than ever and the spire will and must be built: 'I see now it'll destroy us of course. What are we, after all?'<sup>80</sup> Jocelin is willing to sacrifice not only himself and his friendship with Anselm, but everyone else in order for the vision to be realised, regardless of their will. He likens himself to Abraham, whom God ordered to kill his son, and to Noe, who was to build the ark – he sees himself as the messenger of God who is to build a monument in faith and prove his devotion, even if it meant the death of him and others. The monument must rise and the whole world must see the glory of God.

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<sup>78</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 60.

<sup>79</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 65.

<sup>80</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 88.

The workers in their panic kill Pangall and bury him in the pit to ward off the bad luck. Jocelin only sees the fight, and as a seizure claims him, he sees Goody standing nearby with torn dress and red hair covering her breasts. He notices Roger and Goody looking at each other, and consents in defeat to their love.

When he wakes up, he is told that Pangall ran away. Moreover, whenever he tries to pray from this moment, the red hair fills his mind. It is more and more clear that the vision of spire is but a manifestation of his repressed lust for Goody. When he sees the dumb man looking at him like a good dog, he regrets that Goody never looked at him in such a way.

Jocelin begins to become of his title less and less. He rolls up his robe to climb a ladder, sexual desire blocks his ability to pray, and the construction limits services at the cathedral. Yet his self-delusion holds and when Roger asks: 'Can't you see what you've done?' he joyously replies: 'I know! Indeed I know!'<sup>81</sup> blissfully ignorant of Pangall's death. Frustrated Roger leaves and Jocelin in anger remembers as one of the workers danced obscenely with the model of the spire between his legs the day before, and immediately red hair appears in his mind. As he is climbing the spire he feels like a boy climbing a forbidden tree. And for Jocelin, the spire will become the tree of knowledge. When up, he wishes for the spire to be a thousand feet high so he could *oversee* the whole land. He looks lovingly at the small people but also judges them, and the reader can clearly see that this is just another man playing God. However, the spire is no longer a joy but longing for peace, and the joy of a new day is gone, with every tomorrow an unescapable day that must be endured.

Another knowledge the spire brings to him is that of Goody's and Roger's romance. When he one day climbs up, he sees Goody being intimate with Roger in a swallow's nest built there. Goody is pregnant with Roger, and when Rachel finds out, she confronts her just as Jocelin is about to give Goody money to send her away from the church, from Roger. When Goody sees him, she breaks down and gives birth during which both her and the child die. 'It was when she saw me . . . I was the church in her mind, I was the accuser . . .'<sup>82</sup> Jocelin's vocation not only prevented him from loving her, but also caused her death.

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<sup>81</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 103.

<sup>82</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 137.

Afterwards, his monomaniacal obsession with the spire becomes his haven from the cellarage of his mind where the truth hides which the self-delusion cannot withstand – the truth about Pangall, about Goody, and about the spire. He begins to ignore the ground level completely and dedicates himself to the spire where he joins the workmen. He becomes even less worthy of his title, yet he is learning and becoming more human. He considers the men he works with to be good, to be bold, disregarding their lack of faith in God. For the first time Jocelin openly speaks against a religious dogma, and is completely unselfish, when he cries: ‘They are good men! I say so!’<sup>83</sup> after he realises that they are pagans. They treat him jocularly as he tries to understand their work and like a child questions what is this and that. After Goody’s death, Jocelin is ‘reborn’ and begins to truly learn. He becomes wiser than his fellow church members, who in the end become childlike to him, as they never grew as he did.

Roger begins to drink and when they discover that the pillars are bending, he leaves. Jocelin’s self-delusion cracks further as his feet burn when he stands where the pit used to be and where now Pangall’s body lies. Incidentally, it was there where his vision came to him. His mind fights the real reason behind the spire, and he decides that he was bewitched by Goody, rather than admitting his human lust.

As the storm rages outside, the spire is finished, and only the Holy Nail is missing. The Visitor from Rome comes and Jocelin hurries for the Nail, believing that the devil cast the tempest to destroy the spire. The Visitor questions Jocelin instead. He asks why have there been no services for two years, but Jocelin replies that it is not true, because he was there – his building, the highest tribute to God, overshadowed even the secular. Jocelin says that because no men of faith would help him, he had to rely on the workmen, who are revealed as criminals and atheists. Still, he believes they were good and bold men – his judgement is not blinded by the dogma like the others’. He then talks about Goody and to the reader this is his confession:

She’s woven into it everywhere. She died and then she came alive in my mind. . . . She wasn’t alive before, not in that way. And I must have known about him [Pangall’s impotency and death] before, you see down in the vaults, the cellarage of my mind. But it was all necessary . . . <sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 155.

<sup>84</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 166.

It was because of her that he built the spire, the sexual frustration caused by his faith and the dogma of denying one's own body and needs, this unnatural state, caused the death of innocent people and destroyed lives of others. In his self-delusion he acted as best as he could, because he was never taught otherwise, only to rely on outside force, God, onto whom he shifted his 'evil' masked as holy.

When he leaves and drives the Nail inside the roof of the spire, he does so workmanlike. He is no longer a dean. He has changed and is more human and understanding than the rest of the hypocritical members of the church. After collapsing outside in the storm, he has a feverish dream caused by exhaustion:

In this uncountryside there was . . . consent and no sin. She came towards him naked in her red hair. She was smiling and humming . . . removed all hurt and all concealment . . . there was a wave of ineffable good sweetness . . . and an atonement.<sup>85</sup>

When he wakes up, he utters, 'I should have known.'<sup>85</sup> It is now clear even to Jocelin. In religious term, uncountryside is a euphemism for heaven or the afterlife. If he saw uncountryside, he may have thought it to be his hell. But like Martin, he too created his own heaven, and unlike Martin's, his heaven was real – it negated everything, but for Jocelin who was bound by religious dogmas, this for the first time ever meant true freedom as a human. There was consent and no sin, for Jocelin saw sexuality as something sinful, yet in his heaven, the fulfilment of his human needs brought atonement. The cellarage is now open, the truth is out, and Jocelin's self-delusion is over. For Jocelin, this means peace, unlike for Martin.

Again a new perspective is offered to allow the reader for a distance, but this time it is still Jocelin's. Yet this is a new Jocelin, strapped of his pride and self-delusion. His pride is lost completely when his aunt visits him. He says that he was chosen by God, but she only laughs and says that his ascend in the ranks was nothing more than a whim of the king, whose mistress she was. He tries to at least comfort himself with the thought of the Holy Nail, but his aunt was apparently the mistress to the bishop in Rome as well, and understands that the Nail was nothing more than a cruel joke.

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<sup>85</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 178 – 179.

He begs father Anselm for forgiveness not only for his deeds, but also for what he is. He laments the deaths and destroyed lives and begs to be built in (the Spire) with the rest of them. And on his death bed, he finally uses his eyes to see. In father Adam he sees the fragility of man, yet for the first time he also sees him not as father Anonymous, but as a human, a being so rich and profound, he calls him Saint. A picture of the whole humanity opens to him, and he sees God among people, but to him he believes he is hidden by witchcraft – by his love for Goody – and by his sins.

Before he dies, he sees outside the window ‘the great club of his spire lifted towards it [the red hair]’.<sup>86</sup> The phallic symbolism is now clear even to Jocelin.

Like Mary in *Pincher Martin*, Jocelin refuses his ‘crude, human body.’<sup>87</sup> But unlike Martin, Jocelin is oblivious of his nature, and if Martin was running away from God and embracing his personal darkness, Jocelin is running away from himself, hiding behind God. They are polar opposites, yet they are the same. Both represent humanity’s sickness and self-delusion, shifting their inner evil outside and looking for external force, both tragic anti-heroes. But Jocelin’s self-delusion was innocent, only his conditioning rendered him unable to truly love. Simon may have accepted and understood the nature of man, but Jocelin is the only protagonist who managed to understand and accept his nature and learn from it.

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<sup>86</sup> Golding, *The Spire*, 221.

<sup>87</sup> Golding, *Pincher Martin*, 162.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyse and decompose four of William Golding's novels and to try to understand his perception of evil and self-delusion. As a World War II veteran, Golding had a first-hand experience of what people are willing and able to do, and his conclusion, which he tried to convey in his work, was that humanity as a whole is sick. In his first two novels, he established foundations upon which he built his following work, where he focused on the individual, rather than a group representing the whole mankind.

In *Lord of the Flies* he showed that the innocence so often attributed to children is nothing more than an artificial and fragile conditioning, which cannot resist man's immersion in nature. When his natural savageness comes forward, the evil inherent to man is liberated. The boys' attempt at democratic and peaceful society is quickly thwarted as their human nature leads to the creation of avatar of their fear and evil, the Beast. The boy's salvation by the uncomprehending naval officer at the end of the book, just as they are hunting Ralph down in order to ritually kill him, can only be seen as ironic: a group of boys, whose plane was shot down when they were escaping from war, land on an island where they replicate the conflict, only to be returned to the war-torn world by their 'saviours'.

*The Inheritors* offered a peek at the origin of Homo sapiens' and their encounter with their progenitors and the epitome of innocence Homo neanderthalensis. The nature of the new people – the selfishness, greed, violence, and fear so inherent to man – causes the annihilation of the defenceless Neanderthals. The Fall of the mankind lies in its disconnection from nature and the inability to overcome its inner fear and evil, which they shift onto the innocent creatures. It is their misuse of intelligence which they used to destroy the inferior people, who felt only adoration for the superior beings.

In *Pincher Martin* Golding showed a man without any believe in God, whom he feared and from whom he kept running away his whole life. A man who succumbs to the mankind's sickness with no alternative but to prey upon the others in order to become the 'biggest maggot'. Unable to love, he wants to reign over everyone so as to protect himself from pain, and if something threatens his conception of the world, he can only destroy it. For such a man, even the compassion of God is without mercy.

*The Spire* demonstrated that religion itself is not the answer and that Martin would not succeed as a human even had he been the head of a church. Jocelin's folly and tragedy lies largely in his conditioning, which prevented him from accepting his own humanity. The frustration of a single unchecked person resulting from the love-forbidding dogma leads to the destruction of many lives. An individual who cannot love, not even accept his love, is bound to destroy. It was only in the end, when Jocelin realised the truth, that he managed to find peace.

An individual is the answer. For the society to improve, each person must understand and accept their inherent sickness. All the novels contained an image or a symbol of the tree of knowledge, which offered to the protagonists the wisdom necessary to trigger the breakdown of their self-delusion. Simon in *Lord of the Flies*, ascended the mountain in order to see the pathetic image of humanity claimed by its sickness. In *The Inheritors*, Lok and Fa observed the fallen new people from a literal tree. The black lightning carved where the aqueduct should have been resembled to Martin a burnt apple tree with apples still in the treetop – a fitting image for someone who accepted his wickedness and for whom the truth meant death. Jocelin built his tree of knowledge, the spire, himself. As the building grew, every level offered to Jocelin wisdom which helped him overcome the religious dogmas and accept his humanity. However, as Golding shows, humanity tends to use self-delusion in order to remain ignorant of their sickness and shifts its evil onto external forces.

In all the books, the evil acquired a celestial, if not godlike, status. The Beast became a god to the boys, the Neanderthals forest devils to the Homo sapiens. For Jocelin, the Devil took on the appearance of Goody to agonize him, and for Martin, God himself is the epitome of evil. But Martin's case is important, for Martin's God was created in Martin's – in human's – image. Subconsciously, Martin was in a crooked way aware of the truth (that the evil, the external force, is within himself), but the self-delusion and fear were too strong. Only Simon and Jocelin really realised the evil to be within them, and Jocelin saw the God to be among men.

Golding has been called an 'anti-humanist' for his pessimistic view of humanity. Yet apart from Martin, none of the characters is despicable for the sake of the narrative or to prove a point. They are all humans, and as such they are imperfect. If one criticises Golding's work, he criticises what it means to be human.

## Resumé

Cílem této práce byla analýza a rozbor čtyř románů Williama Goldinga s cílem porozumět jeho pojetí zla a sebeklamu. Jakožto voják v druhé světové válce měl Golding osobní zkušenost s tím, co jsou lidé ochotni a schopni spáchat, a jeho závěr, který se snažil v jeho díle sdělit, byl takový, že lidstvo jakožto celek je nemocné a zkažené. V prvních dvou románech položil základy, na kterých pak stavěl v jeho další práci, ve které přemístil svou pozornost ze skupiny na jedince.

V knize *Pán much* ukázal, že nevinnost, která je tak často přisuzována dětem, není nic jiného, než uměle vytvořené chování, které neobstojí proti přirozené lidské povaze. Člověk navracený do přírodního stavu se neokáže ubránit a v něm zakořeněné zlo se dostane na povrch. Kvůli jejich povaze se chlapcům prvotní pokus o demokratickou a poklidnou společnost nevydaří. Ta je vede k vytvoření avatara svého strachu a zla Obludu. Konečná záchrana chlapců, kteří právě lovili Ralphi, aby jej mohli rituálně zavraždit, je nanejvýš ironická: chlapci, jejichž letadlo bylo sestřeleno, když je přemísťovalo z válečné zóny, ztroskotají na ostrově, kde konflikt napodobí, jen aby byli navraceni nazpět do válkou zmítaného světa svými ‚zachránci‘.

*Dědicové* poskytli pohled na příchod Homo sapiens a jeho setkání s vlastním předchůdcem a zosobněním nevinnosti Homo neanderthalensis. Povaha nových lidí – sobectví, chamtivost, sklon k násilí, a strach, které jsou člověku tak vlastní – vedla k vyhlazení bezbranných neandrtalců. Pád lidstva vězí v jeho odloučení od přírody a neschopnosti překonat vnitřní zlo a strach a ve zneužívání inteligence, kterou použili ke zničení slabších neandrtalců, jež k nim zbožně vzhlíželi.

Ve *Ztroskotání Christophera Martina* Golding představil muže bez jakékoliv víry v Boha, jehož se bál a před nímž utíkal celý svůj život. Obraz muže, který podlehl lidské zkaženosti bez jakékoliv volby než požírat druhé, aby se stal ‚největším červem‘. Neschopen milovat, Christopher chce ovládat všechny, aby se ubránil bolesti, a pokud něco ohrozí jeho představu světa, nemůže jinak, než to zničit. Pro takového člověka je i boží soucit nemilosrdný.

*Věž* poté ukázala, že ani jakožto představitel církve by někdo jako Marin neuspěl jako člověk. Jocelinova pošetilost a tragédie byly způsobeny jeho výchovou, která mu znemožnila přijmout vlastní lidskost. Frustrace nekontrolovaného člověka, kterou toto způsobilo, vedla ke zničení mnoha životů. Člověk, který nemůže milovat, nebo dokonce

ani přijmout lásku, nemůže než ničit. Pouze na konci, když si uvědomil pravdu, našel Jocelin klid.

Odpověď je v jednotlivci. Aby se společnost mohla zlepšit, každý jedinec musí porozumět své zkaženosti a přijmout ji. Ve všech románech se vyskytuje obraz či symbol stromu poznání, skrze který získají hrdinové moudrost, jež způsobí krach sebeklamu. Simon v Pánovi much zlezl horu, aby uzřel žalostný obraz člověka, jenž podlehl nemoci a zkaženosti. Lok a Fa v románu *Dědicové* pozorovali padlého člověka z opravdového stromu. Černý blesk, vyrytý na místě, kde měl být akvadukt, Martinovi připomínal ohořelou jablň s jablky stále v koruně – patřičný výjev pro někoho, kdo přijal své zlo a pro koho by pravda znamenala smrt. Jocelin si svůj strom postavil sám ve formě věže. Jak budova rostla, každá úroveň poskytla Jocelinovi vědomosti, díky kterým mohl překonat církevní dogma a přijmout svou lidskost. Avšak jak Golding poukazuje, lidé užívají sebeklamu a zaslepeně přemísťují své zlo ven.

Ve všech knihách nabylo zlo svatého, až božského, statutu. Obluda se pro chlapce stala bohem, pro Homo sapiens pak neandrtálci lesními d'ábly. Jocelinův d'ábel na sebe vzal podobu Goody a trápil ho, a pro Martina byl Bůh ztělesněním zla. Ale Martinova představa Boha je důležitá, protože Martin vytvořil svého Boha k obrazu svému – k obrazu člověka. Martin si podvědomě uvědomoval pokřivenou verzi pravdy, ale jeho sebeklam a strach byli příliš silní. Jen Simon a Jocelin si doopravdy uvědomili, že zlo se nachází v nich samých, a Jocelin dokonce viděl Boha mezi lidmi.

Za svůj pesimistický pohled na lidstvo byl Golding označen za anti-humanistu. Avšak kromě Martina není žádná postava opovržením hodná pouze kvůli příběhu nebo k prokázání nějakého záměru. Všichni jsou lidé, a jakožto takoví, jsou nedokonalí. Pokud někdo kritizuje Goldingovu práci, kritizuje, co to znamená být člověkem.

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## Annotation

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Abstract: This thesis is concerned with evil in selected works of William Goldin, a recurring and central theme of his novels. Furthermore, self-delusion, which is inherently connected with Golding's notion of evil, is analysed and the connection between these two elements established. The research primarily focuses on the novels *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors*, *Pincher Martin*, and *The Spire* which showcase Golding's prevailing idea that the faults of society can be traced to the faults of an individual and the nature of human race.

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Abstrakt: Tato práce se zabývá zlem ve vybraných dílech Williama Goldinga, které je ústředním motivem jeho románů. Dále analyzuje sebeklam, který hraje důležitou roli ve vztahu ke Goldingově pojetí zla a ustanovuje spojitost mezi nimi. Pozornost je věnována především románům *Pán Much*, *Dědicové*, *Ztroskotání Christophera Martina*, a *Věž*, ve kterých je zřetelné Goldingovo přesvědčení, že za nedostatky společnosti můžou chyby jednotlivců a povaha lidstva.