

18. GOLDING AND THE CRIME OF BEING HUMAN

Golding's primary motivation as a novelist was indicated by one of his favourite quotations: 'Where there is no vision, the people perish' [*Proverbs* xxix 18]. Not people, but *the* people. Golding wrote for the race. The fates of individuals are of interest to him mainly in so far as they are representative of the fate of the race. And he was fully aware how close to perishing the race now is. The question Golding continually asked himself, and strained all the resources of his art to answer, was, surely, the largest and most urgent of all questions: What is the essential nature of man, and what is his proper relationship with this terrifying and beautiful universe in which he finds himself obliged to attempt not only to survive, but also to achieve his fullest humanity. Thus we can say of Golding what Lawrence said of Hardy, that he 'shares with the great writers, Shakespeare or Sophocles or Tolstoi, 'this setting behind the small action of his protagonists the terrific action of unfathomed nature, setting a smaller system of morality, the one grasped and formulated by the human consciousness within the vast, uncomprehended and incomprehensible morality of nature or of life itself, surpassing human consciousness' [*Phoenix* 419].

The writer who attempts this is obliged to substantiate his vision with an even deeper understanding of the human individual than is required in the predominantly social or psychological writer. He must peer into the dark heart of man's nature, far deeper than the level at which psychoanalysis operates, to the level where that small inner darkness is either dammed against or flooded by the Great Outer Darkness which is God.

Golding had, at the outset of his career, all the required errors waiting to be corrected by his imagination. His father was 'a Wellsian rationalist' - the science master Nick in *Free Fall* is a portrait of him. For a long time William half convinced himself that he too was a rationalist and an atheist. He was aware of himself as 'always having been pretty masculine ... I never have had a large component of the female in me' [176], and one way in which this manifested itself was in a burning desire to 'know'. Once convinced that science and rationalism could not explain the nature and condition of man, Golding found himself living in two worlds: 'There is this physical one, which is coherent, and there is a spiritual one. ... This experience of having two worlds to live in all the time ... is a vital one and is what living is like' [Carey 87]. The interrogator in *Free Fall* could be speaking of Golding himself when he says to Sammy Mountjoy: 'And between the poles of belief, I mean the belief in material things and the

belief in a world made and supported by a supreme being, you oscillate jerkily from day to day, from hour to hour' [144]. All Golding's novels were attempts to resolve this dualism, to establish that the spiritual dimension is not always, after all, elsewhere.

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Ralph, our representative in *Lord of the Flies*, faces a triple challenge: to survive; to confront, understand and come to terms with the Beast (which is a projection from that dark centre of human nature); and to bring his life into a viable relationship with outer nature in its most inhuman manifestations - the island and its surrounding sea. The island is a boat, the isolated and exposed human community, on which the boys must attempt to navigate this sea, with Ralph as captain. He receives conflicting advice and example from three quarters, from Piggy, Jack and Simon. These are, of course, very real, very believable boys; but they also function as externalizations of aspects of Ralph's own being, his highly-conditioned, highly-socialized common-sense materialism (Piggy), his primitive murderous selfishness (Jack), and his sensitive, imaginative openness (Simon).

It is in their contrasting attitudes to the natural world, its flora and fauna, that the boys are first distinguished. There is the conch, for example. Ralph's spontaneous response is to be fascinated by its beauty and strangeness. Piggy immediately tries to draw his attention to its monetary worth and its social usefulness: it becomes for him a symbol of order and civilization. It is of no interest to Jack. When Piggy and Ralph think his raiding party is after their precious conch, in fact it is after Piggy's glasses with their power of making fire. Simon, too, has little interest, presumably because his interest would have been in the creature which originally made and inhabited it. He does not, like the others, automatically appropriate things for human purposes.

Each boy has a different attitude to the island itself. For Ralph it is a 'good' island - 'the imagined but never fully realized place leaping into real life' [21]. But such a place has been imagined with the help of such falsifications of reality as *Coral Island*, *Treasure Island* or *Swallows and Amazons*. It leaps into life with the arrival of the boys because it is entirely a projection of their daydreams. Piggy, like Crusoe, is only interested in transforming the island into a replica of the familiar adult world he has left behind, though he falsifies that too by assuming it to have been a world of

order and goodwill and reason when it was in fact a world of nuclear war. For Jack it is a hunting-ground and potential kingdom. Only Simon responds to it openly, sensitively, for what it is:

He not only registers the heat, the urgency, the riot, the dampness and decay; he also registers the cool and mysterious submergence of the forest in darkness, the pure beauty and fragrance of starlight and nightflower, the peace. Finally he not only registers both, but accepts them equally, as two parts of the same reality. It is these qualities of acceptance and inclusion that give us the 'Simon-ness' of Simon.

[Kinkead-Weekes 30-1]

The island presents the boys with the opportunity for a clean start. Here the crime against nature has not yet been committed and need not be. The island has the paradisaal abundance of Marvell's 'The Garden':

Flower and fruit grew together on the same tree and everywhere was the scent of ripeness and the booming of a million bees at pasture. [71]

Simon passes down to the littluns 'double handfuls of ripe fruit'. But all the boys except Simon assume that the island is there for them to do as they like with. One of the first decisions is that Jack's choir shall be hunters. The first exploration of the island begins with the unbalancing of a great rock:

The great rock loitered, poised on one toe, decided not to return, moved through the air, fell, struck, turned over, leapt droning through the air and smashed a deep hole in the canopy of the forest. Echoes and birds flew, white and pink dust floated, the forest further down shook as with the passage of an enraged monster: and then the island was still.

'Wacco!'

'Like a bomb!'

'Whee-aa-oo!'

Not for five minutes could they drag themselves away from this triumph. [37]

They leave a trail of destruction behind them. The culmination of this first expedition is the opportunity to kill an entangled piglet. Jack raises his knife, but does not bring it down:

They knew very well why he hadn't: because of the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood. ... Next time there would be no mercy. [41]

Next time there is not.

Piggy's glasses provide the gift of fire. The first time a fire is lit, it is allowed to get out of hand and swallow a whole swathe of forest. One of the littluns is never seen again. Fire is energy without vision, power without responsibility.

Jack is by no means the only boy with a compulsion to hurt and kill. Henry pokes with a stick among the tiny transparent creatures which lived in the last fling of the sea: 'He became absorbed beyond mere happiness as he felt himself exercising control over living things' [77]. (After the death of Simon it is these same creatures which exercise control, officiate like angels over the disposal of the body, receiving and reducing it back into the source.) Shortly Henry himself becomes the potential victim. Roger throws stones at him, but dare not hit him: 'Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law' [78]. What finally severs their bond with that civilization is their discovery of the liberating power of the mask and the chant. When a ship comes in sight, Jack's hunters, who were responsible for keeping the fire smoking, are killing their first pig, with a gratifying amount of blood. They are intoxicated with a new knowledge -

a knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink. [88]

Perhaps the most important difference between the boys is in their reaction to the Beast.

'You have doctors for everything, even the inside of your mind. You don't really mean that we got to be frightened all the time of nothing? Life,' said Piggy expansively, 'is scientific, that's what it is. In a year or two when the war's over they'll be travelling to Mars and back. I know there isn't no beast - not with claws and all that, I mean - but I know there isn't no fear, either.' [105]

Piggy goes some way towards an understanding of the Beast in that he knows it is no more than a projection of fear from the inside of their own minds; but that, for him, is to say that it is simply unreal, does not exist. It is for Simon to discover that it is no less than a projection of 'mankind's essential illness'. Jack wants to propitiate the Beast, offer sacrifices to it. Ralph denies the Beast as long as he can, but is finally confronted by it:

The skull regarded Ralph like one who knows all the answers and won't tell. A sick fear and rage swept him. Fiercely he hit out at the filthy thing in front of him that bobbed like a toy and came back, still grinning into his face, so that he lashed and cried out in loathing. [228]

He splits the skull in two, like Hughes' Crow:

Crow split his enemy's skull to the pineal gland.
Where is the Black Beast? ["The Black Beast"]

Crow is himself the Black Beast. All such monsters are projections from our own inner darkness. What we do not understand we fear, and what we fear we convert, psychically, into external monsters we can strike at and attempt to kill. The Beast speaks to Simon: 'Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! ... I'm part of you. ... I'm the reason why it's no go' [177]. What the children have converted into a Black Beast, an external locus of all evil and obscenity is in fact the goddess, one of whose avatars is the sow as Great Mother. Before the 'dreadful eruption' of the hunters into her paradise she had lain suckling, 'sunk in maternal bliss'. She runs terrified into a sanctuary, 'an open space where bright flowers grew and butterflies danced round each other' [167]; there she is in every way including the sexual, violated: 'The sow collapsed under them and they were heavy and fulfilled upon her'. When they have finished with her she is an image only of their ugliness.

We are no longer concerned with debunking children's books. Golding is accounting for all the failures, fiascos often, which have followed the persistent efforts of men, often the best men of their generation, to escape from a sick civilization to some unspoiled place in order to regain Paradise: the New World, the South Seas, Coleridge's Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna, Lawrence's Ranim ... None of these has succeeded or ever will succeed because the Black Beast

cannot be left behind, cannot be exterminated without exterminating man. Golding as a boy had been attracted by such utopias as Wells' *Men Like Gods*, had wondered why the world was not like that:

The cruel fact is that had that boy walked into the perfected society, to him would have come out of his blood the hates and loves - no, on a less epic scale, the antipathies and greeds, the jealousies and ambitions, the misdirected energies and deadening sloths; and not just his but those of other people all working with, through and against each other.
[*Moving Target* 19]

It is not because we are dealing with irresponsible children that the island is destroyed. Had Pincher Martin and the crew of his ship been wrecked on the same island, the result would have been the same. In any group of men, the crew in *Rites of Passage*, for example, or Matthew Paris' utopia in Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger*, there will emerge cruelties, perversions, evil. A ship or an island is only the world in little. We are in the process of doing to the world what the boys do to their island and for the same reasons.

Simon attempts to understand nature not in order to control or manipulate it, but in order to be atoned with it, to heal the split within himself and bring his healing wisdom, his clear-sightedness, back for the race. But Simon, like so many of his kind, is ignored, then persecuted, then used as scapegoat. The blows fall on the one place where the Black Beast is not to be found. But there is a strong contrast between the deaths of Simon and Piggy. Each is equally violent and purposeless. But the death of Piggy is recorded in single vision (as through the one lens of Piggy's broken glasses):

His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed. Then the sea breathed again in a long, slow sigh, the water boiled white and pink over the rock; and when it went, sucking back again, the body of Piggy was gone.
[222-3]

Single vision reduces the human mind to 'stuff', and a dead man is no more than his own corpse. Death obliterates life. The death of Simon is not the end of Simon, any more than the death of Cordelia is the obliteration of all that she had been. Rather, the death affirms, validates, sets the seal on all

she had embodied and stood for. In death as in life she remains part of sustaining and redemptive nature.

External nature at its most inhuman and intimidating is most evident in *Lord of the Flies*, as in other Golding novels, as the sea. Ralph is troubled by this 'sleeping Leviathan', which reduces and alienates him, threatens to swamp his sense of his own reality and centrality:

Down here, almost on a level with the sea, you could follow with your eye the ceaseless, bulging passage of the deep sea waves. They were miles wide, apparently not breakers or the banked ridges of shallow water. They travelled the length of the island with an air of disregarding it and being set on other business; they were less a progress than a momentous rise and fall of the whole ocean. ... Wave after wave, Ralph followed the rise and fall until something of the remoteness of the sea numbed his brain. Then gradually the almost infinite size of this water forced itself on his attention. This was the divider, the barrier. On the other side of the island, swathed at midday with mirage, defended by the shield of the quiet lagoon, one might dream of rescue; but here, faced with the brute obtuseness of the ocean, the miles of division, one was clamped down, one was helpless, one was condemned, one was - [136-7]

The continuation of that sentence would have been *Pincher Martin*.

Only Simon's vision is wide enough to include the sea, and with it his own not extinction but transfiguration, his own minute but indestructible participation in the vast and mysterious processes of the world:

Somewhere over the darkened curve of the world the sun and moon were pulling; and the film of water on the earth planet was held, bulging slightly on one side while the solid core turned. The great wave of the tide moved further along the island and the water lifted. Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea. [190]

In spite of this, *Lord of the Flies* is a bleak book. Golding seems to have little hope that man is redeemable, unless he happens to be born with the equipment of a saint or seer. None of the boys, not even Simon, seems to have much free choice. We are, it seems, in Golding's words, 'born to

sorrow as the sparks fly upward' [Carey 173]. The novel ends with Ralph weeping 'for the end of innocence' and 'the darkness of man's heart'. Golding has recorded that he wrote the book in 'sheer grief': 'It was like lamenting the lost childhood of the world' [*A Moving Target* 163]. The loss of innocence seems to be our biological inheritance as a species. Indeed, the next novel, *The Inheritors*, is about the moment in our evolutionary history when, it seemed to Golding, this fall took place.

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H.G. Wells' *Outline of History* was published in 1919. It presented the evolution of man as a steady progress from Neanderthal men (repulsive 'gorilla-like monsters') to ourselves. The few known facts about Neanderthal man were distorted and augmented to fit this preconception. Wells had studied biology with T.H. Huxley, and shared Huxley's belief that the human race was involved in 'a constant struggle to maintain and improve, in opposition to the State of Nature, the State of Art' [*Evolution* 44-5]. Lawrence had a different idea of what constituted progress: 'Hadn't somebody better write Mr Wells' History backwards, to prove how we've degenerated, in our stupid visionlessness, since the cave-men?' [*Phoenix* 2, 434]. Thirty years later somebody did. The result was *The Inheritors*.

Golding has described himself as 'a propagandist for Neanderthal man'. Golding had more facts to go on. His imaginative reconstruction of their lives (like Lawrence's of the Etruscans) was so sensitive to those clues that subsequent evidence has shown that he could safely have gone even further in his claims for their kindness and gentleness. It is now known, for example, that they looked after their cripples and that they buried their dead in flowers. Golding sees them as the last men who could lay claim to innocence. They did not attempt to impose their will on the world: they could not, since they did not differentiate between themselves and the world created and maintained by Oa. It is perhaps Golding's greatest single achievement as a novelist to enable us to share this form of consciousness, without dualism, without conceptual thought, without our sense of the separate and overriding importance of the individual.

Like Jakob Boehme Golding sees the fall as a fall into selfhood, which Norman O. Brown describes as 'a vain project of the part to become independent of the totality conceived as a mother-principle'. Brown quotes Boehme:

Every will which enters into self-hood and seeks the ground of its life-form breaks itself off from the mystery and enters into a capriciousness. It cannot do otherwise for its fellow members stir up dying and death. It lies, and denies union with the Will of God and sets self-hood in its place, so that it goes out from unity into a desire for self. If it knew that all things have brought it forth and are its mothers, and if it did not hold its mother's substance for its own, but in common, then greed, envy, strife and a contrary will would not arise. [130]

The Neanderthals are a People. A person is as useless as a severed limb. They are incapable of invention, and are consequently without tools and weapons. Such language as they have is pictorial (wonderfully conveyed in their exchange of 'pictures'). It is poetic, highly metaphorical speech in which metaphor is not comparison but identity. The language Golding invents for the Neanderthals has attracted the attention of linguists interested in 'mind-style', a term coined by Fowler to indicate the way in which linguistic choices made by characters in novels reflect their world-view. For example, as Mike Short points out:

Grammatically, Lok tends to choose intransitive structures where we would normally use transitives, and does not reserve the subject slot of dynamic (often intentional) verbs for animates. Hence 'the stick began to grow shorter at both ends' is used where we might normally say 'the man drew back the bow', thus making it seem as if the way in which Lok categorizes the world does not take proper account of agency and the process of cause and effect, crucial matters in the inability of Lok's tribe to withstand the intruders. [31]

Fowler concentrates on Lok's 'conceptual deficiencies', but Short points out that

it is possible to see some aspects of the linguistic behaviour pointed to, not as deficiencies, but as positive qualities we have lost. For example, the use of animates and inanimates in the same grammatical positions could be seen as correlates of a sense of oneness with inanimate nature which we no longer have. [32]

The People live largely through their senses, but Golding is at pains to establish that this is not mere deprivation or savagery. Their rich physical life is inseparable from their rich spiritual life. Their highly developed senses enable them to relate fully to all other life animistically, sacramentally.

The new people, Cro-Magnon, are both immeasurably inferior and immeasurably superior to the Neanderthals. They are superior in that the Neanderthals are a stagnant species, unable to adapt or progress. The People have no spirit of adventure. All they need is a summer home and a winter home and a trail between them, fire, and enough to eat. They ask no more than that tomorrow should be like today and yesterday. They do not fear death as something separate from and inimical to life. Oa means to them life as it is, including death. Therefore they fear change, and, however long they had survived, they would have had no history. The New Men are individualists who do fear death and attempt to defeat it by responding aggressively to the world as it is, attempting to change it so as to acquire both personal and cultural immortality. Their raid on the future is the rape of Oa and the beginning of history.

They are inferior in many ways. Their sensory equipment is crude in comparison. They are characterized by possessiveness, rivalry and guilt. The baby is specifically Vivani's, not the race's New One. Tuami cannot share Vivani with Marlan, as the People share their women. The fight for unequal shares of wine results in the bursting of the wineskin. Marlan uses his power to satisfy his own lust and greed, and buys his safety with atrocity. There is no sanction against killing the Old Man. The New Men, unlike the People, seek to destroy what they fear and cannot understand. This invariably leads to the replacement of sympathetic magic and the worship of the stag as horned god by human sacrifice and the concept of Nature as external devil or ogre to be killed if possible, otherwise placated with the sacrifice of scapegoats. The red devil they flee from is poor uncomprehending, loving Lok, cut off, isolated, dying.

They are prepared to use their own innocent child as offering:

The religion is a death-religion, which gives man the power to impose his will on nature, at the cost of blood-sacrifice. It contains reverence, but born of fear not dread; and because its whole business is with results, it must succeed or bring rebellion from devotees who have sacrificed in vain.

[Kinkead-Weekes 98]

What reverence they have is not for living things or nature's resources. The New Men do not husband resources, since they do not regard this place as home. Therefore each stopping place is merely a place to be exploited, stripped of its resources, before moving on. They have no responsibility for it. They do not use trails, but blunder through the vegetation leaving swathes of wreckage. They even destroy existing trails by removing log bridges for their fires. They build fires far larger than are needed for warmth. Marlan kills the cave-bear not for meat or self-protection, but to impress Vivani with his bravery and procure her a fur-coat as a love-token and to set her above other women. The New Men have utensils, but they also have weapons. It is but a short step to the Trojan War. The theft of Vivani prefigures

The broken wall, the burning roof and towers
And Agamemnon dead. [Yeats, 'Leda and the Swan']

Tuami fashions a beautiful ivory haft, but he intends to use the dagger to kill his rival in love, and his descendents will massacre elephants and human beings for more and more ivory.

The New Men are recognizably ourselves. Golding is encapsulating here the evolutionary moment when humanity as we know it -intelligent, articulate, inventive, adventurous, aggressive, greedy, individualistic, split, fear and guilt-ridden humanity - came into existence and took over. It is not just a tour-de-force. It is his attempt to locate the origin of original sin, the source of our inherited predisposition to wickedness and guilt, to find an organic and historical basis for the theories of the psychologists and for the myths of the fall.

Golding is not simply making another myth. It would be valuable as such even if its scientific content were fanciful. But in fact it is scientifically impeccable. In the popular mind the evolution of man was simply a matter of the brain getting gradually bigger and bigger; but this was not the case. Man has three distinct brains, which Paul MacLean has named the archicortex, the mesocortex and the neocortex. The archicortex, or old brain is the brain we have in common with all vertebrates. We have brought it with us all the long evolutionary journey from the reptilian stage. It is very like the brain of a crocodile. Its function is to control all instinctive and involuntary behaviour. The mesocortex is the brain we share with all other mammals. It is similar to the brain of a horse. (In *St Mawr* Lawrence dramatizes the rehabilitation of that brain in the relationship between a

woman and her horse). In MacLean's words, this brain 'plays a fundamental role in emotional behaviour... It has a greater capacity than the reptilian brain for learning new approaches and solutions to problems on the basis of immediate experience. But like the reptilian brain, it does not have the ability to put its feelings into words.'

The neocortex, which distinguishes man from the other primates, developed, in evolutionary terms, suddenly. According to MacLean:

During the phylogeny of the mammal, one of the most striking events of all evolution occurs. This is the great ballooning out of the neocortex. In the process, the archicortex and the greater part of the mesocortex are folded like two concentric rings into the limbic lobe and are relegated, as it were, to the cellar of the brain.

[quoted by Koestler, 80]

That cellar, in all Golding's works, is the source of all our terrors, the lair of the Black Beast.

The limbic cortex and the neocortex have each retained a high degree of autonomy, and each has a completely different mode of functioning which might well produce different, indeed opposite, responses to the same situation. This would have led to the rapid extinction of the species had not the neocortex been able to push the limbic cortex into the cellar, the unconscious, and lock the door. The neocortex is able to jam the signals coming from the limbic cortex except in sleep, under drugs, in moments of crisis, in mental breakdown, and perhaps, in moments of fourfold vision achieved by poets and seers. If we think of the limbic cortex as the home not of the Black Beast but of our innermost demon which gives us our vitality and our contact with the powers of the world, then what we are doing is disowning, exiling, torturing and trying to kill that demon, and that is the cause of our obscure guilt.

More recently we have come to speak of the duality of the human brain in terms of the different functioning of the left and right sides. As Ted Hughes puts it:

The limbic system, which is the old mammalian brain governing the basic emotion and monitoring internal conditions, tends to associate itself with the language of sensuous images, intuitive assessments, total patterns. The activity of the cortex, the 'new' brain, which supervises all activities, refines interpretations and controls the behaviour

according to 'reason', tends to associate itself with the analytical language of words. This tends to ally the deep subjective life of the animal with the right side, and the objective self-control of the animal with the left side. These are only broad and general tendencies - where 'left' and 'right' are not the physically different two halves of the brain, but simply the modes of communication (abstract, conceptual, verbal symbols versus sensuous or concrete, image-patterned symbols) favoured by left side and right side respectively, according to research.
[Shakespeare 158]

Hughes concedes that 'lifting the left side into dominance literally by suppressing the right, seems desirable in some situations'. But where it becomes habitual and automatic 'it removes the individual from the "inner life" of the right side, which produces the sensation of living removed from oneself ... In some enclaves (particularly familiar in Western Protestant society) where the cultural incentives promoting the rational tendencies of language are extreme, the activity of the right side can be discredited and suppressed almost to extinction' [157-8]. Wells' *Outline of History* is an extreme symptom of this process. And the extinction of the Neanderthals in *The Inheritors* is Golding's mythic dramatization of it.

The feature of the New Men which most amazes Lok is their grotesquely enlarged heads. That enlargement could more properly be regarded as an evolutionary disaster. The new brain was an unwanted present, like giving a child or a tribesman the latest computer without an instruction book. It was too big and complex. It came too quickly. It was impossible to coordinate it with the old brain. We are still living with and still failing to cope with the consequences. Hughes calls *The Inheritors* 'a visionary dream projected from a calamity which is happening at this moment, in the inner life of the reader, before and during and after his reading' [Carey 162]. He describes the New Men as 'a totally new kind of creature: born outside the laws, detached from them and with no direct means of learning them: the first animal to be out of phase with life on earth' [167]. Arthur Koestler says:

When one contemplates the streak of insanity running through human history, it appears highly probable that *homo sapiens* is a biological freak, the result of some remarkable mistake in the evolutionary process. The ancient doctrine of original sin, variants of which occur independently in the mythologies of diverse cultures, could be a

reflection of man's awareness of his own inadequacy, of the intuitive hunch that somewhere along the line of his ascent something has gone wrong. [267]

Perhaps the first scientist to address this problem direct, to follow up that hunch systematically, was the South African zoologist Eugène Marais, who spent several years living with baboons in the second decade of this century. Out of this field research came his revolutionary book *The Soul of the Ape*. Marais demonstrated that sense degeneration had reached an extreme point in man, but that this was not an organic change, since it could to a large extent be reversed under hypnosis. He found that intelligence developed at the expense of instinct, so that the most intelligent baboons had the least idea of how to live as baboons. Hughes comments:

In Marais' definition, the 'subconscious' became the contained but for the most part inaccessible world not only of the 'brute' components of instinct but of instinct's positive attributes as well - those superior senses, superior intuitions, and that superior grasp of reality. ... He had really defined the subconscious as the lost, natural Paradise, where the lack of intellectual enquiry and adaptive ingenuity coincided with a perfect awareness of being alive in the moment, and in reality, (an awareness approaching, maybe, a state of blessedness), and an inborn understanding of 'how to live'. He had explained, in a sense, man's perplexed feeling of being everywhere an exile, everywhere separated from his true being. And without saying that his smarter baboons had suffered something like The Fall, he had brought zoological evidence to the argument that the free intelligence is man's original enemy.

[Carey 164]

But Golding is not simply wailing for our lost innocence, or advocating universal lobotomy. There can be no going back. Even without the New Men to exterminate them, we feel that the People are doomed. The Ice Age is ending. They are helpless against water, lacking boats. Energy, agility, daring, free intelligence and fear superior to theirs is needed to get the new men up the fall, in defiance of brute nature. The new men need the fall, in both senses, to provide them with their greatest challenge. It is the price they must pay for their achievement of freedom and consciousness. They are embarking on the great adventure in consciousness, into the dark. Aeons are telescoped into that final chapter as man leaps forward to the

Ulyssean adventure with hungry heart. It is all there in the sentence in which the drunken Lok expresses his sense of what it must be like to be a New Man: 'There is nothing he could not do'. Here is the glory and the crime of Homo sapiens, the dangerous freedom and power, the fatal hubris.

Hughes concludes his essay on this novel:

The Cro-Magnons begin to look less like demons of original depravity, more like helplessly processed and forlorn castaways, who are full of plans and plots and enterprise, but do not know 'how to live'. Figures who are, by their very nature, tragic. Subjects, maybe, for Golding's later books. [168]

The challenge for us, the latest inheritors, is to pass through experience, and in full consciousness recover our vision and wholeness. But the decision that the world was to be ruled by man rather than Oa was disastrous. Oa *is* the world. Never again will it be possible for man to relate to Oa with the unselfconscious innocence of the Neanderthals. But the Neanderthals had an inadequate conception of Oa, inadequate for their survival and for ours. It is not the rejection of Oa that evolution demands, but a more inclusive perception of her. Oa is neither beneficent, a loving mother, nor invulnerable. She is not only in the fire and the ice and the People. She is in everything they most fear and hate: the hyenas, the fanged wolves, the big cats, the cave bears, the mire and deep water, the face and the dead eyes under the water. She is in Behemoth and Leviathan, the hawk which sucks up blood, the vulture which tears Prometheus, the lightning and cactus spines and pack-rats of the New Mexico Rockies.

The Inheritors is not entirely tragic or defeatist. The New Men take with them the Neanderthal baby, as we have brought with us our old brains. Already, before the end of the book, they are beginning to see that baby not as red devil to be feared or infant Caliban to be persecuted, but as something they need to recognize and accept as an essential part of themselves. It is their only hope.

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All Golding's subsequent heroes are victims of this split, this schizophysisiology as MacLean calls it. It is the price we have had to pay for freedom and consciousness. But freedom easily degenerates into being 'at sea' or in free fall, that is, utterly without bearings, ties or supports.

Pincher Martin embodies the very worst symptoms of the disease. He assumes the purpose of evolution has been to produce him. He is the inheritor of everything. If the rule is survival of the fittest, then his capacity to survive is proof of his fitness to do so. He is totally solipsistic. That is, his universe is, literally, self-centred. He is determined to be the biggest maggot in the box, which is to say the last and only maggot in the box. Golding's fable, like Lawrence's 'The Man Who Loved Islands', finds a perfect objective correlative for solipsism: the man who thinks he is an island unto himself is consigned to an uninhabited island, a mere rock, where he undergoes a spiritual death.

Hell is everlasting life without God; and God is relatedness, interdependence, one's vital connection with the not-self, the whole. He compares himself with Prometheus, but is more like Faust, not only claiming independence from God, but arrogating to himself many of the prerogatives of God, including the right to be immortal and the right to create his own universe to go on living in. The universe he creates has to fulfil two requirements - it has to be rational, to satisfy his own intelligence as a place he might have escaped to and a *real* place which is why the rock and its flora and fauna have to be so laboriously and rigorously and concretely realized, and why the few mistakes he makes, the red lobsters and the soluble guano for example, are so devastating - glaring rips in the trompe-l'oeil backcloth; and it has to be a projection of his own inner, psychic and physiological world, since he has nothing else out of which to make it.

Thus we recognize that his world must always have been essentially what it is on the rock. His life has been, like Odysseus', a continual struggle to make the universe recognize his own centrality and permanence. He has been surrounded by inimical beings daring to refuse to conform to his needs and wishes. These he clammers over, ruthlessly reshapes for his purposes, destroys if necessary. Pincher is defined by his name: 'He was born with his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab'. Those grabbing hands lead him into his first mistake in creating his island by suggesting to his imagination the claws of a red lobster (forgetting that they become red only when boiled). Lok, as we saw, was a unified being, both within himself and in relation to the not-self. When the last string broke which connected him to his world, he died. To have survived alone would have been inconceivable to him. He folds himself back into Oa. Pincher is exactly the opposite, a fragmented being: 'I was always two things, mind and body'. Being both split and cut off he can live only by extreme self-assertion, a

constant struggle to maintain identity at all costs, crucified upon his own body. We are reminded of Eliot's Prufrock, impaled by his own self-consciousness like an insect writhing on a pin. Prufrock's last cry before he gives up the struggle for selfhood is: 'I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas'. Pincher is a pair of ragged claws which, as his rock dissolves, have nothing left to close on but each other - 'And appetite, an universal wolf, at last eats up himself'.

Yet Pincher's effort to hold on to such a pitiful corrupt identity at such cost becomes at length heroic, like the 'senseless trial of strength' of 'The Contender' in Hughes' poem of that name:

He gritted his teeth like a cliff.
Though his body was sweeling away like a torrent on a cliff
Smoking towards dark gorges
There he nailed himself with nails of nothing.

There is no possible redemption in mere resistance. Hughes and Golding both know that if a man cannot open himself, he must be broken. He must die to the old corrupt self before he can be reborn to a new wholeness. Only thus can pain be converted into vision, as it is with Hughes' Prometheus and the hero of *Cave Birds*, and as it is to be with Sammy Mountjoy and Jocelin. Pincher Martin stops just short of being a tragic figure because we do not see him broken. The last we see of him, though reduced to a pair of ragged claws, he is still resisting. Also, he lacks full existential responsibility. To have acted differently he would have to have *been* different - been someone else. We feel that he was born Pincher Martin rather than that he earned his name by freely taken moral acts or decisions at some earlier stage of his life. There is nothing in the novel to suggest that he ever had any innocence to lose. Hence the invitation to him at the end to 'consider' is somewhat empty. There is nothing for him to consider but whether he has yet had enough of being Pincher Martin. It is not suggested that at that late stage he is capable of becoming someone else.

Pincher Martin is, like *Lord of the Flies*, a static, fatalistic novel, revealing the sickness at the heart of man, but offering no hope of any cure.

* * *

Sammy Mountjoy in *Free Fall* is a very similar character to Pincher Martin but different questions are asked about him, both by himself and by

his creator. The free fall of the title is the condition in which Sammy, in middle life, finds himself, the condition described so graphically by Lawrence in the poem 'Only Man':

... self-consciousness wriggling
 writhing deeper and deeper in all the minutiae of self-
 knowledge, downwards, exhaustive,
yet never, never coming to the bottom, for there is no bottom;
... so it wriggles its way even further down, further down
at last in sheer horror of not being able to leave off
knowing itself, knowing itself apart from God, falling.

But it is not assumed that Sammy merely inherited this fallen state. Perhaps the individual recapitulates the history of the race and has to re-enact the loss of innocence at some early stage of his life. Mountjoy spends much of the novel seeking to locate such a moment. He eventually succeeds.

The moment he closes in on was the moment when, at about the time he left school, he had been granted a vision of the divine Beatrice flanked by two of her fellows. The rest of Dante's life - *La Vita Nuova* - was determined by his decision to devote himself henceforth to the spiritual service of his Beatrice. He achieves Paradise, in the *Divine Comedy* through her intercession. Sammy sees his Beatrice as 'divine' only in the slang sense (since he has already rejected spirit as a good rationalist). His decision is to devote himself henceforth, at all costs, to the attainment of Beatrice's body. His name again tells all. He seeks to mount Joy, to attain paradise, not by spiritual aspiration but by fucking. He destroys Beatrice's innocence and, ultimately, her sanity.

But if Golding now thinks of innocence as something which may be lost afresh within each individual life, perhaps it may also be regained. The first stage is to become aware of the equal reality of the world of spirit, equal, that is, with the world of matter, the world mediated to Sammy by his materialistic Science master Nick (it is also the world of Piggy). But the second, much more difficult stage is to unify these two apparently alternative worlds.

All day long the trains run on rails. Eclipses are predictable. Penicillin cures pneumonia and the atom splits to order. All day long, year in, year out, the daylight explanation drives back the mystery and reveals a reality usable, understandable and detached. The scalpel and the

microscope fail, the oscilloscope moves closer to behaviour. The gorgeous dance is self-contained, then; does not need the music which in my mad moments I have heard. Nick's universe if real.

All day long action is weighed in the balance and found not opportune nor fortunate or ill-advised, but good or evil. For this mode which we must call the spirit breathes through the universe and does not touch it; touches only the dark things, held prisoner, incommunicado, touches, judges, sentences and passes on.

Her world was real, both worlds are real. There is no bridge. [252-3]

(Between *Free Fall* and *The Spire* Golding wrote:

Any man who claims to have found a bridge between the world of the physical sciences and the world of the spirit is sure of a hearing. Is this not because most of us have an unexpressed faith that the bridge exists? [All or Nothing]

After his breakdown in the cell, where Sammy has been forced to admit his deepest fears and his inadequacy, he is, in his own words, 'visited by a flake of fire, miraculous and pentecostal'. In his 'complete and luminous sanity', he sees everything as related to everything else, transfigured, glorified, in a 'shining, singing cosmos'. In 1799 Blake wrote to Trussler: 'A tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way'. Sammy has suddenly acquired this fourfold vision:

Those crowded shapes extending up into the air and down into the rich earth, those deeds of far space and deep earth were aflame at the surface and daunting by right of their own natures though a day before I should have disguised them as trees. [186]

Though this section of the book, chapter ten, is well enough written, it does not seem to be a necessary consequence of what has gone before. It seems theoretical and arbitrary, and only deepens our confusion in our attempts to understand a character who never manages to grip our imagination as Pincher Martin and Jocelin do, who remains, in the last analysis, rather boring.

* * *

In essays and interviews Golding frequently testified to his belief in original sin and the fallen condition of man; to his sense of living in two worlds, the physical and the metaphysical. This led others, if not Golding himself, to claim that he was a Christian. But if we trust the tales rather than the artist, we shall find that the fall, as it appears in all of them, could be seen as a fall from the physical into the metaphysical as easily as the contrary. Or rather, that the fallen state of his protagonists expresses itself as a desacralization of the physical world and of their own bodies, such as is encouraged not only by the egotistical sensuality of a Pincher Martin, but equally by the kind of world-rejecting transcendental religion which fires Jocelin in *The Spire*.

Jocelin is the opposite of Pincher Martin and Sammy Mountjoy in that he has chosen the life of the spirit rather than that of the body; but he is a victim of the same split. Unable to find the bridge, he can only maintain his dedication to spirit by denying the world of matter and people and his own body. His determination to build the impossible spire is a perfect image of his repudiation of the earth and its limitations. He is like Hughes' Adam:

Too little lifted from mud
He dreamed the tower of light. ...

Wrapped in peach-skin and bruise
He dreamed the religion of the diamond body. ...

Open as a leafless bush to wind and rain
He shook and he wept, he creaked and shivered. ['Adam']

Jocelin builds his crazy dream - but at what cost?

He believes in the reality of prayer, but not in the reality of stone or flesh. He would exclude from his cathedral, if he could, everything that is not pure spirit. Even the gargoyles he interprets as spewing out all impurities, the opposite interpretation from Lawrence's:

There was, however, in the Cathedrals, already the denial of the Monism which the Whole uttered. All the little figures, the gargoyles, the imps, the human faces, whilst subordinated within the Great Conclusion of the Whole, still, from their obscurity, jeered their mockery of the Absolute, and declared for multiplicity, polygeny.

To Jocelin it seems that 'the renewing life of the world was a filthy thing, a rising tide of muck'. What seethes where the firm foundations of his church and his faith should be he interprets as

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*. [80]

He has refused to acknowledge *Oa*, the *Dia Mater*, thrust her into the darkness of the pit, both as woman and as nature, so that she becomes the devil gnawing at the foundations of his life and troubling his libidinous dreams. His own motives are impure, half faith and prayer and humility, half unacknowledged pride and lust and callousness. Though he abominates the human sacrifices still practised in the pagan temples (including nearby Stonehenge), he blindly sacrifices four human lives to his own spire.

He makes, also, impossible demands upon himself, trying to support the whole enterprise on his own back. His tubercular spine breaks. His spire must fall, founded, as it is, in sin. Yet it does not fall; it stands to this day. Out of Jocelin's pain comes true humility and illumination: 'There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be.' God may be in the sinner, in the pagan earth itself and its creatures. An appletree is not only the source of all our sin, a reminder of the fall; it is also, in bloom, a cloud of angels, a miracle. Christ is not only in holy nails, but plays in ten thousand places. In Hopkins' words, God's smile's not wrung' but revealed at 'unforeseen times'. And mortal beauty

...keeps warm

Men's wits to the things that are; what good means - where a glance

Master more may than gaze, gaze out of countenance.

['To what serves Mortal Beauty']

Jocelin glimpses a kingfisher:

He saw all the blue of the sky condensed to a winged sapphire, that flashed once.

He cried out.

'Come back!'

But the bird was gone, an arrow shot once. It will never come back, he thought, not if I sat here all day. He began to play with the thought that the bird might return, to sit on a post only a few yards away in all its splendour, but his heart knew better.

'No kingfisher will return for me.'

All the same, he said to himself, I was lucky to see it. [205]

We could not believe in Sammy Mountjoy's sudden access of vision, since it seemed to be not fully paid for, a product of mere panic. But we feel that Jocelin's suffering necessarily releases a vision which had got itself separated off from love, and is now at last reunified. The last thing he sees is the spire through the window, not seen now as a one-way ladder out of the filth, but as a bridge between two worlds, an atonement, redeeming the world of substance and substantiating the world of spirit:

It was the window, bright and open. Something divided it. Round the division was the blue of the sky. The division was still and silent, but rushing upward to some point at the sky's end, and with a silent cry. It was slim as a girl, translucent. It had grown from some seed of rosecoloured substance that glittered like a waterfall, an upward waterfall. The substance was one thing, that broke all the way to infinity in cascades of exultation that nothing could trammel. [223]

In *The Spire*, Golding demonstrated the possibility of recovering the vision and reversing the fall.

