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THE NOVELS OF WILLIAM GOLDING

THE LAST DECADE has been marked by the revival of the English novel and, for the first time since the 'twenties and 'thirties when Hemingway, Faulkner, and other American writers dominated Anglo-Saxon literature, a group of English writers has come forward with something new and interesting to say. A number of them—for example John Braine, Kingsley Amis, and John Wain—have skilfully laid bare the follies of contemporary social institutions, while others such as Iris Murdoch and P. H. Newby have produced incisive studies of individual human relationships. But, of the many new English writers that have emerged within the last few years, no one has shown more daring and originality than has William Golding. Now in his late forties, Mr. Golding was extravagantly praised for his first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, but subsequently he has received less attention—partly because what he has since written has had little fashionable attraction and partly because each of his later novels has been quite different from its predecessor.

In his last novel, *Free Fall*, Mr. Golding showed that he could be quite at home in the contemporary world and that, had he so desired, he could have written novels of outright social criticism as topical as any written by his younger contemporaries. Yet he has apparently not been interested in doing so and has concerned himself instead with philosophical questions about the nature of man and his relationship to his surroundings. These themes do not always emerge clearly, however, because his novels cover a wide range of subjects and, superficially at least, seem disconnected. For this reason it is also difficult to assess Mr. Golding's work as a whole. All that is immediately discernible is the skill employed in literary experimentation, the extraordinarily vivid imagination, and the concern for contemporary preoccupations such as survival and identity. Having recognized these qualities, one is still a long way from understanding what Mr. Golding is trying to say and why he chooses the methods he has adopted. Some critics have dismissed the murkiness that undoubted-

ly exists in some of his novels as mere pretentiousness, but it is more likely that what Mr. Golding is trying to deal with is so difficult of expression that frequently he has to approach it obliquely.

That obliquity would help to explain, at least in part, why his four novels are written from such different points of view, and why they range from almost reportorial contemporaneity to fantasy and even parable. The first novel that he published, *Lord of the Flies*, is the most accessible of all. A kind of modern *Robinson Crusoe*, it deals with a group of small schoolboys who are stranded on a desert isle after their aircraft has crashed in wartime. All the adults have been killed or lost, and the children have to face the task of survival by themselves. Mr. Golding's reason for using children in this outlandish situation is quite simple, for children are normally considered to be unsullied by the uses of the world, and thus the possibility is raised of creating a miniature republic peopled only by innocents. Using this natural presupposition as a backdrop, Mr. Golding concocts a tale that is both terrifying and ironic, for in a short period of time these children retrace the whole history of the downfall of mankind. From initial innocence and camaraderie they relapse, first only through carelessness, but later by quite conscious means, into a state of complete savagery. Reason and intelligence give way to brutality and sadism so that, by the end of the novel, the children are behaving like wild beasts. A certain degree of suspended disbelief is necessary to swallow Mr. Golding's tale whole, but the story is so artfully told that it seems genuinely real and plausible. His children act like children, and his narrative is so lively that it sweeps the reader unquestioningly along.

Yet the terrifying element of the book is precisely the question whether Mr. Golding is exaggerating or not; for if he is not, then his picture of the universe is a very dismal and hopeless one indeed. Early in the book, the boys are faced with a choice that vitally influences all the subsequent action. Assembled on the beach, they are asked to select a leader. The choice is essentially between personality and intelligence and, quite typically, personality wins. Politics thus becomes the governing force amongst the boys, and political manipulation rather than dispassionate intelligence is what determines their fate. As a result, the situation soon deteriorates. A rival faction led by a young boy attracted to adventure and violence breaks away from the main group and, since rescue seems remote, it grows increasingly powerful because it at least is active. The children in this faction hunt for wild pig, the only solid food available on the island, and this activity gradually gives rise to certain rituals, certain taboos, and a feeling of solidarity behind the leader of the hunters.

What is here related in terms of children is in fact the history of any despotism that uses action for its own sake and that is based on elemental passion and on blood and violence.

As their condition worsens and their appearance deteriorates, the rational element amongst the children also grows weak. Intelligence is not glamorous, and the sensible day-to-day duties seem dull and pointless compared with the adventures of the hunters. Soon the democratic principles upon which the little settlement was founded begin to crumble, and the children's parliament soon dissolves. The voice of reason objects:

"The rules!" shouted Ralph, "You're breaking the rules!"

"Who cares?"

Ralph summoned his wits.

"Because the rules are the only thing we've got!"

But Jack was shouting against him.

"Bollocks to the rules! We're strong—we hunt! If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat —!"

With the collapse of order comes further degeneration: the Lord of the Flies appears as the head of a pig stuck on the end of a stick by the hunters as a propitiation to the unknown and actually non-existent beast-god of the island. It thus becomes a symbol not only of the irrationality of the human race but a symbol too of what is most important to it—the brute business of killing in order to survive and of killing in order to maintain power. All human beings, Mr. Golding seems to be saying, are like the flies that buzz around this bloody head, fearfully paying tribute to their animal nature and providing an excuse for their bloody actions. The point is also made that not merely a portion but all of the human race is involved in this senseless round, for after a particularly horrific episode, the only two rational children left on the island sense their own guilt and involvement and try, pathetically, to rationalize themselves out of it. "That's right," says one of them. "We was on the outside. We never done nothing, we never seen nothing."

Overdrawn as Mr. Golding's parable may appear to some readers, it is nevertheless a horribly realistic story and a gruesome indictment of the bloody and brutal thing that society really is. Mr. Golding's view is black, and the little human decency and nobility that emerges in this book is soon defeated. Yet given a world in which countries such as Hungary and Tibet can be violated without recourse to justice and in which atom bombs can be exploded with little regard for their danger to human life, his attitude does not really seem exaggerated.

Having presented this bleak picture, Mr. Golding in his next novel, *The Inheritors*, seems concerned to find the moment at which the human race lost its decency and nobility and became savage and wilful. *The Inheritors* is no re-creation of the Biblical story, for in all his writings Mr. Golding seems to have discarded the Christian interpretation of life as inapplicable to actuality. Instead it is a story of primitive yet gentle beings who inhabit a vague kind of never-never land, following simple rules of custom and living a blameless existence in harmony with their natural surroundings. As a novel, *The Inheritors* is less satisfactory than *Lord of the Flies*, and one almost suspects that it was written earlier and published only after the success of his island parable. In some ways similar to *Green Mansions*, it nevertheless fails because it lacks the precision of detail or verisimilitude that made Hudson's book a success. Mr. Golding's characters are human, but only vaguely so. Apparently beings of a lost stone age, they worship a primitive earth-god called Oa, are equipped with a highly developed sense of smell, and "have pictures" instead of thoughts. Such characteristics might be plausible if the people themselves seemed at all real, but with their monosyllabic names, like Fa and Ha and Nil, they are easily confused with one another and on the whole fail to emerge in the round. This lack of characterization may have been intentional, since such innocents as these can hardly be expected to have interesting qualities, but the reader is not likely to have much concern for the actions of a people who themselves are so lacking in personality. The necessity of rendering the society of these people is also a hindrance to the novel and, although Mr. Golding attempts to work these aspects into his narrative, he is frequently more bewildering than enlightening to his readers.

Yet for all the rather obvious failures in *The Inheritors*, it is important for an understanding of his other works. To begin with, Mr. Golding's picture of innocent life stresses certain definite characteristics, of which the more important are a code of behaviour, a healthy respect for natural forces, and a sense of right and wrong. Good and evil are expressed as "blame" and "no blame", and the terminology indicates a sense of responsibility to natural surroundings. Mr. Golding's innocents also have a fairly well-developed sense of family feeling, refuse to mourn unnecessarily over the dead, and consider it wrong to kill animals for food. Their minds work on two levels: mostly they rely on natural perceptions, but they also have the rudiments of conscious picture-making or thought. This duality may be expressed, and is expressed in later novels, as emotion opposed to reason.

The story itself does not really begin until after the first seventy pages, when some other beings come into the territory. These others are apparently more "civil-

ized" in the sense that they have boats and other possessions, wear skins for clothes, and are equipped with the power to reason. They seem to have reached a level of development approximately equivalent to that of the American Indian.

At first the primitives wish to be friendly and to greet the new arrivals because they naturally assume goodness of heart in their fellow beings. Soon, however, they change their attitude, for arrows are shot at them, their camp is raided, and their children are kidnapped. Most of the rest of the book is concerned with various incidents between the two peoples. The strangers are revealed as cruel and barbaric; for all their possessions and skills, they are often drunk and unruly, and their political structure causes them more harm than good. The primitives grow to distrust them and, despite the kinship they feel for these fellow creatures, they finally realize that evil is being done to them. In this sense, *The Inheritors* parallels Genesis, for it is with this knowledge or pseudo-knowledge of good and evil that the book ends. Yet even more sinister is the basic misunderstanding that exists between the two peoples. Each considers the other evil, and in the final chapter, which is an abrupt reversal of point of view, the new arrivals refer to the innocents of the early chapters of the book as "devils".

What precisely Mr. Golding is getting at in this novel is not entirely clear, and his ending appears to muddle rather than clarify the issue. In a way, his book is a satire on the history of the empires of the new world and an evocation of the lost continent of Atlantis, whose legacy, much transformed, has yet tantalizingly been perpetuated in the present human race. But compared with his other novels, *The Inheritors* seems to emphasize that the basis for our human predicament is precisely the failure of reason and passion or of reason and mystic custom to sit calmly side by side. Before reason, when nature ruled by custom alone, man was innocent and essentially decent. His Eden was not particularly delightful, for he was afraid of many things and was often hungry and cold. Yet there was at least a certain harmony. The world fell to pieces, however, when man became political and possessive and abandoned natural custom for the use of reason, which consequently constrained and twisted the free play of natural emotions.

Pincher Martin, Mr. Golding's third book, is far more successful as a novel than its predecessor. It is also utterly different. In brief, it is an account of the experiences of a naval officer who, having survived shipwreck, lives out his days completely alone on a barren rock in the empty Atlantic. Except for a few subsidiary people who appear in memory, the only character in the novel is Christopher Martin, a man engaged in the most primitive struggle for survival that could be

conceived. With his customary vivid imagination, Mr. Golding has created the atmosphere of survival in every detail, from the soaked oilskins Martin wears and the raw shellfish he eats to the gradual deterioration of his mind and the delusions that overcome him as the days go by.

Much could be made of the heroic or epic quality of the book, picturing it as a parable of man's fate in an essentially hostile universe. Pincher Martin might easily be compared to Job, with the vital exception that in his plight he does not continually praise God but curses him: "I spit on your compassion", he cries out towards the end. "I spit on your heaven." Yet to read this novel wholly in these terms would be to misinterpret its intention and to stress the obvious. Fitted in beside Mr. Golding's other books, it has more subtle and more interesting things to say.

In the first place, it is worth noting that Christopher Hadley Martin is *un homme moyen sensuel*; he is not a very good man nor is he notoriously evil. An actor in civilian life, he had frequently lost control of his passions and had hurt other people badly. At the same time he was intelligent and resourceful and courageous, so that the good in him at least balances the evil.

In the second place, it is clear from the beginning that Mr. Golding intends to consider the plight of his character as a symbol of the role mankind in general has to play in life. "Pincher" Martin—the actor who pinched other men's women—now has to pinch out his own existence in the most basic possible way. Early in the novel, there is a passage in which Martin recalls a childhood toy, a glass jar:

The jar was nearly full of clear water and a tiny glass figure floated upright in it. The top of the jar was covered with a thin membrane—white rubber The pleasure of the jar lay in the fact that the little glass figure was so delicately balanced between opposing forces. Lay a finger on the membrane and you would compress the air below it which in turn would press more strongly on the water. Then the water would force itself further up the little tube in the figure, and it would begin to sink. By varying the pressure on the membrane you could do anything you liked with the glass figure which was wholly in your power. You could mutter, —sink now! And down it would go, down, down; you could steady it and relent. You could let it struggle towards the surface, give it almost a bit of air then send it down steadily, slowly, remorselessly down and down.

The parallel between the glass man and Martin is immediately obvious, and at this point it might seem likely that Mr. Golding is merely enlarging on Gloucester's lament in *King Lear* that "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods./They kill us for their sport." Certainly this theme underlies much of the novel, and when

Martin begins to crack, he mutters his own fate to himself: "Lie down, rat. Accept your cage."

This is clearly an essential element in the book, but what is interesting is the way in which it is developed. The situation presented is of an averagely sensual man thrown into a desperate situation. His only hope is to be rescued, for on his barren rock he can do nothing for himself—he cannot rescue himself. He is thus entirely reliant on the chance appearance of an outside agent. At the same time, given his condition as a human being, the only way he can make rescue appear at all likely is to rely on his intelligence—that very quality that destroyed the life of the primitives in *The Inheritors*. And so again and again Martin repeats his belief: "The solution lies in intelligence", he says. "That is what distinguishes us from the helpless animals that are caught in their patterns of behaviour, both mental and physical."

This nineteenth-century doctrine lies at the bottom of Martin's conscious actions. It is the only thing he can depend on for getting through life. On the other hand, the enigma of life itself cannot be penetrated by intellect alone: one can only be rescued from life, and one's rescue is heaven, a place where one presumably will still be able to exercise one's intellect, but without any dangerous consequences. This concept of heaven is closely related to the idea of heaven expressed by Martin's mystical friend, Nick, and recalled in memory by Martin on his rock. Nick has been lecturing on "The sort of heaven we invent for ourselves after death, if we aren't ready for the real one." Pressed for an explanation, he continues: "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—"

The immediate connexion of this notion with the novel itself is only revealed in the last chapter when it is made clear that Martin has been dead all along. All his experience of endurance on the rock is a mere invention—perhaps created in the act of dying while still floating in his lifebelt, perhaps a heaven forged for himself during his lifetime. At any rate, this heaven is hardly "the real one."

From the Christian point of view it might be argued that Martin is getting his just deserts, having in his life behaved in a manner somewhat less exemplary than that of a god. But that finally is Mr. Golding's point. Man is no god but man: given free will, he has yet no control over his emotional or physical nature. In another sequence recalled in memory, this point is heavily stressed. Martin's theatrical producer, drunk and therefore careless of restraint, speaks bitterly of human nature: "Y'see when the Chinese want to prepare a very rare dish they bury a fish in a tin box. Presently all the lil' maggots peep out and start to eat. Presently

no fish. Only maggots. It's no bloody joke being a maggot Well, when they've finished the fish, Chris, they start on each other The little ones eat the tiny ones. The middle-sized ones eat the little ones. The big ones eat the middle-sized ones. Then the big ones eat each other. Then there are two and then where there was a fish there is now one huge, successful maggot. Rare dish."

This fable, which has obvious implications in both private and political life, is used by Mr. Golding to illustrate the essentially hopeless role which man is called upon to play. Even the little maggots who are themselves later consumed are guilty because they had mouths with which to eat: they, like all men, have appetites that are perfectly natural to them. Man may be rational, but he also feels, and it is this dichotomy that drives him inevitably to insanity, if he bothers to think about the matter at all.

In one of the final sections of the novel, in which Martin has reached and indeed passed the cracking point, he has an imaginary dialogue with his creator. He is suffering terribly, but he cries out:

"I prefer it. You gave me the power to choose and all my life you led me carefully to this suffering because my choice was my own. Oh yes! I understand the pattern. All my life, whatever I had done I should have found myself in the end on that same bridge, giving the same order—the right order, the wrong order. Yet, suppose I climbed away from the cellar over the bodies of used and defeated people, broke them to make steps on the road away from you, why should you torture me? If I ate them, who gave me a mouth?"

No solution is provided here for the person who, like Pincher Martin, finds religion to be a niminy-piminy sort of affair, a backboneless kowtowing to the inscrutable, or for the person who finds his religious or spiritual inclinations contradicted by his intellect. There is only suffering, and Jonah stays in his whale, enduring the same fate as that of most intelligent human beings today.

In his last novel, *Free Fall*, Mr. Golding pursues the question, apparently in hopes of finding some way to bridge the gap that separates these independent elements. The conclusions reached in *Pincher Martin* are so essentially nihilistic that the only way out is to question further the assertions made by his central character. In his dialogue with God, Christopher Martin said that he had freedom to choose and that it was this God-given freedom that had brought him to his present state. In *Free Fall*, Mr. Golding proceeds to question that statement. Did Martin really have freedom or did something happen at some time that made him a slave?

Again quite different from its predecessors, *Free Fall* is set in modern London and is the story of a successful painter called Samuel Mountjoy. Ostensibly

the novel is concerned with the question quoted on the first page: "When did I lose my freedom? For once, I was free. I had power to choose." The novel is apparently concerned with looking through Mountjoy's past for the moment when he lost this freedom, but in actuality it is a search for something of far greater import. As the story unfolds, we find that Mountjoy is the product of a slum area and that as he gradually rises from this condition to become a painter, what most counts in his existence are the personalities which have conditioned and influenced him. This gallery of portraits is an impressive literary creation, and all of them, from his immensely fat charwoman mother to the dim but beautiful girl he seduced only to drive her ultimately to madness, are important to him because they either had something to offer him or because they were possessed by some vital element of human life that made them loom large over the anonymous passers-by he met in the streets. They were all in Mountjoy's mind like the kings of Egypt whose pictures he used to collect as a child. "I have seen people crowned with a double crown", he writes in the first paragraph, "holding in either hand the crook and the flail, the power and the glory." During his youth Mountjoy moves through this group, at first accepting them as they come and generally remaining free from damaging contact with them. But later on he becomes involved. He falls in love with Beatrice Ifor, for example, and worshipfully adores her for her innocent beauty. This quality which she emanates becomes an ideal for him, both as painter and human being, but in time their relationship changes and she becomes his mistress. Soon the situation changes again: Beatrice now appears to be entirely vacuous and given only to clinging to him in a desperate doggy way. Bored and bewildered, Mountjoy finally deserts her.

And so his life goes on. To Mountjoy human contact seems only to bring bruises, and happy lives are soon twisted into misery. Maggot eats maggot. "We are forced here and now to torture each other", he says. "We can watch ourselves becoming automats; feel only terror as our alienated arms lift the instrument of their passion towards those we love."

Then, during the war, Mountjoy undergoes an experience in a German prison camp that finally brings him a certain amount of release. Interrogated concerning the escape of some fellow-prisoners, he quite easily cracks when placed in a small cell that is wholly devoid of light. With his painter's perceptions gone, he imagines every sort of horror, and in a sense he dies as Pincher Martin does on his rock. Upon his release, however, he receives what can only be called a mystic experience. The chapter in which this occurs is difficult, but what appears to be happening is that

Mountjoy, once freed from utter darkness, now looks round the prison yard and discovers that life—all of life, vegetable and mineral as well as animal—is glorious and complete. The experience has the ring of truth and is substantiated, for example, in Jiro Osaragi's novel of Japan during and after the war, in the course of which one of the minor characters recounts that during the extremities of the war the only thing that saved his sanity was memory of the natural contours of his homeland. "People vanish first, and only scenery, nature, is left in your mind, is that it? You'd think it would be your family you'd think most of at a time like that. But with me it was just the opposite."

This new dimension of perception, described as miraculous and pentecostal, changes Mountjoy utterly. His kings of Egypt are now the poor unshaven prisoners, and his rejected Beatrice comes back to haunt him: "That negative personality, the clear absence of being, that vacuum which I had finally deduced from her silences, I now saw to have been full She was simple and loving and generous and humble; qualities which have no political importance and do not commonly bring their owners much success."

Yet still the problem remains. Beatrice may have been generous and loving, but she was also a bore. How then do you live with her? Do you suppress your intellect and accept her vacuities like a Christian martyr, or do you consciously and rationally get up and walk out? When Mountjoy was a schoolboy he was especially influenced by two of his school instructors. The one, Miss Pringle, was officially religious and mystical but was also quite rationally and consciously evil. The other, Nick Shales, was a rationalist scientist who was quite irrationally good. A negative answer to the question therefore seems to be that neither mysticism nor rationalism will by itself suffice. "At the moment I was deciding that right and wrong were nominal and relative", says Mountjoy. "I felt, I saw the beauty of holiness and tasted evil in my mouth like the taste of vomit."

But what is the positive answer? In the final chapter, when he sees his deserted Beatrice now gone mad in a county asylum, Mountjoy remarks bitterly that "People don't seem to be able to move without killing each other." This then is the problem—a vital and personal one and not merely a philosophical comparison of systems, not merely mysticism on the one hand or rationalism on the other. When Mountjoy emerged into the prison yard from his dark cell he sensed that the only hope—to prevent people from killing each other when they move—lay in the order he now saw, almost for the first time, in the natural universe:

This substance was a kind of vital morality, not the relationship of a man to remote

posterity nor even to a social system, but the relationship of individual man to individual man—once an irrelevance but now seen to be the forge in which all change, all value, all life is beaten out into a good or bad shape. This live mortality was, to change the metaphor, if not the gold at least the silver of the new world.

The point then of the episodes concerning Miss Pringle and Nick Shales is that Miss Pringle for all her religious outlook consciously abused her power over the young so that it was due to her that Mountjoy really lost his power to choose, while Nick Shales, in spite of his antiquated nineteenth-century rationalism, was a man of natural generosity and decency. The old opposites of reason and mysticism or emotionalism are now therefore boiled down to power on the one hand and natural decency on the other. One therefore neither walks out on Beatrice nor sits opposite her, suppressing yawns. Rather one treats her imaginatively as a human being, remembering that ordinary human beings are not any more to be collected for one's pleasure than are the glamorous but dangerous Pharaohs of Egypt.

This solution away from politics and systems is not a novel one, and other writers—Faulkner and Hemingway, for example—have been saying similar things for some years. But its lack of novelty does not in any way vitiate its value, and the way in which the conclusion has been reached, from a search for the nature of evil to a consideration both of the loss of innocence and of the fateful role man has played in order to exist at all, gives it a depth and substance which, when baldly stated, it might appear to lack. Mr. Golding thus presents in his four novels a vision of humanity that is at once sombre and sensible. Recognizing that organized religion is as useless as sheer rationality, he as a Westerner seems to have imbibed some of the teachings of the Hindus to suggest a way of behaving which, if not glamorous, is at least free of the murderous implications all the other systems contain. For after all, we in the West have relied almost entirely on the human intelligence to solve our problems, whereas the East has virtually ridden mysticism to death. And still neither side has reached a satisfactory conclusion or is the least bit contented—so that the only solution seems to be for each to adopt something of the methods of the other and to use Mr. Golding's solution as a bridge between the two.

Except for a few passing references, little has been said of the techniques adopted by Mr. Golding for his novels. It may be set down as axiomatic that he is at once naturally gifted in the use of words and that he has an imagination and inventiveness that seem to be extremely rare in contemporary fiction. He is, in short, a poet. Yet this very poetical nature appears at times to have got between

himself and his novels. His perceptions are very fine, but frequently his conception of the novel as form has vitiated this fineness. He almost always, for example, uses endings that surprise, regardless of whether surprise is germane to his theme. As a result, these Bierce-like twists frequently undermine the effectiveness of what has gone before rather than strengthen it. These curious endings also give rise to the suspicion that perhaps Mr. Golding has started to write his books just a trifle too soon, before having worked out his total effects satisfactorily. It is difficult to be precise about these matters, but one might phrase it by saying that although there is plenty of inevitability in the details and even in the plot structure, the situation as a whole is not always inevitably true.

Another fault traceable to Mr. Golding's poetical nature is the obtrusion of philosophic remarks in the course of his narrative. Sometimes, as in the first sentence of *Free Fall*, the language appears to be merely pretentious: "I have walked by stalls in the market place where books, dog-eared and faded from their purple, have burst with a white hosanna." What is meant by this sentence becomes clear by page 200, but in the meantime there is a considerable loss of clarity. The danger that arises from the use of such language is that Mr. Golding may end up either by writing books for the occult or by writing philosophical discourse instead of fiction.

At the same time one can trace in Mr. Golding's novels what almost amounts to a history of contemporary fiction. *The Inheritors*, for example, is a straightforward impressionistic novel. The task he there presented himself—of trying to trick his readers into believing in a make-believe situation—was enormous, and he failed. Yet he also showed himself to be skilled in the techniques of the impressionistic novelist: his situation is revealed by means of the merest hints, his characters are created out of dialogue, and his background comes into existence only through allusions made in the narrative.

In *Pincher Martin* and *Free Fall* Mr. Golding's method is largely determined by his theme and by the notions of time dependent upon it. In *Free Fall*, Mountjoy states that time "is not laid out endlessly like a row of bricks. That straight line from the first hiccup to the last gasp is a dead thing. Time is two modes. The one is an effortless perception native to us as water to the mackerel. The other is memory, a sense of shuffle fold and coil, of that day nearer than that because more important, of that event mirroring this, or these three set apart, exceptional and out of the straight line altogether."

This attitude, as well as the fictional method adopted to illustrate it, is familiar enough in contemporary literature, but the point is that while Mr. Golding

may be indebted to Ford Madox Ford for the time-shift and to James Joyce for the interior monologue, he combines both these techniques with an ease and readability that is in itself an original achievement.

Where Mr. Golding will go next is impossible to know, for unlike most writers he refuses to repeat himself. All one can be sure of is that his next novel will be full of invention and interest and beauty.