



CONCEPTUALIZING POWER RELATIONS IN WILLIAM GOLDING

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ABSTRACT

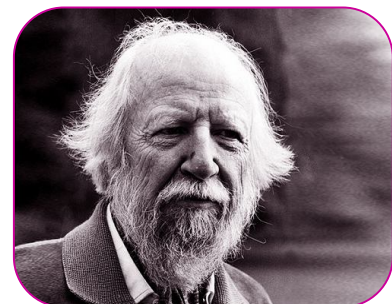
Golding's experimental novels differ from the main stream writings of the nineteen fifties. His participation in the Normandy invasion and service in the Royal Navy was an addition to his war experience which completely changed his attitude to life. This aspect has been reflected in his pessimistic novels characterized by motifs of darkness. His novels are often set in closed communities such as islands, villages, monasteries, groups of hunter-gatherers, ships at sea where power and domination are associated.

KEYWORDS: Power, Resistance, Discourse, Knowledge, Domination .

INTRODUCTION

Golding's fictions generally concentrate on human beings' moral and philosophical problems and the manifestations of their predicament. Golding's fiction scrutinizes man's innermost motives and feelings. A recurrent theme in William Golding's fiction is that humans are savage at heart and all pursuits of human beings nourish their evil and primitive nature. He exposes through his works that evil and darkness lurk in human nature. To Golding evil generates from the inside of humans rather than from outside. Golding's fiction, unlike most contemporary novels, is preoccupied with what is inherent in man's nature. His works depict humans not only in relation to a particular society but at humans in relation to the cosmic situation. The major topic of *Lord of the Flies* is the nature of human beings. All human beings have a dark side that can cause their breakdown.

An important theme in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is quest for power. These power relations are everywhere in the island, and are shown at different levels throughout the novel. Power relations are illustrated by symbols. Concentrated on describing the desire for power, the novel reflects Golding's own experience during the Second World War. With an unsuccessful struggle against barbarism and war, the novel manifests the ambiguity and fragility of civilization. It has also been said that it is an allegory of World War II. *The Inheritors*, is concerned with the theme of innocence and guilt exemplified in the modern and Neanderthal men. It also treats the concepts of sin, evil nature, and inhuman behaviour, and it shows how the wicked tribe of Homo sapiens superseded the gentle tribe of the Neanderthal men. In order to emphasize the simplicity of their society and people, Golding introduces the characters by such names as Fa, Lok and Ha. When the new tribe of more advanced people Homo-sapiens discover the Neanderthal whom they consider as devils and try to kill them. The Neanderthals are too innocent to realize the crooked motives of Homo-sapiens, the new people. Finally, all of the Neanderthals are brutally killed and the new people inherit the earth. The irony is that the more advanced the people are considered to be the most destructive and devilish. The innocent Neanderthals are peaceful and the new aggressive people survive the earth by their violence over the innocent people. According to Golding in each cycle of human evolution, the evil nature of man becomes more and more apparent.



The Spire follows the building of a huge spire onto a medieval cathedral; the church and the spire itself act as potent symbols both of the dean's highest spiritual aspirations and of his worldly vanities. *Pincher Martin* recalls the last moments of a sailor thrown into the north Atlantic ocean after his ship is attacked. *Pincher Martin* focuses on an individual. It describes the problematic life of a naval officer who is a castaway on an island and struggles for survival, again the symbolical motif of island appears. In *Pincher Martin*, Martin, refuses to die and chooses hell. In *Free Fall*, Sammy chooses evil instead of good. His novels echo the complicated evil nature of human beings. Golding highlights the flawed nature of mankind. Golding tries to fictionalize darkness in his works which leads to human pain and guilt. *Free Fall* is self-examination by an English painter, Samuel Mountjoy, from a German camp during World War Second. The novel is an investigation by Samuel Mountjoy, an English painter to find out how he lost his innocence and freedom and had to live a tormented life. In order to inflict torture Dr Halde locked him in a small store-room. Under the pressure of darkness, and isolation he recollects his past life and his loss of freedom. He was very happy in his childhood but when he was adopted by the local priest his life becomes tormented one. There he attends his day school, where he was taught two opposing topics; science by Nick Shales and religion by Rowena Pringle. In the meantime he falls in love with girl named Beatrice who is his classmate. Unfortunately she was not able to satisfy his wild passion and Samuel Mountjoy marries another woman. Some years later he comes to know that Beatrice has gone insane. Fall is the recurrent theme in Golding, Martin in *Pincher Martin*, Sammy in *Free Fall* and Jocelin in *The Spire* are different instances of the fallen man.

The Pyramid comprises of three separate stories linked by a common setting and narrator. *The Scorpion God* is a volume of three novellas set in a prehistoric African hunter-gatherer band, an ancient Egyptian court and the court of a Roman emperor. Golding's later novels include *Darkness Visible* (1979), *The Paper Men* (1984), and the comic-historical sea trilogy, *Rites of Passage* (1980), *Close Quarters* (1987), *Fire Down Below* (1989) and *Double Tongue* (1995).

In contrast with Golding's other novels, *The Paper Men* represents a radical shift. In this novel the characters, situations and events are not mythical or allegorical. It is a sharp and direct attack on critics and criticism. The novel is based on his experiences after the award of the Nobel Prize. The novel focuses mainly on the academic world and its problems, issues and interests.

The Spire depicts Man's irresistible impulse for the will to power. *The Spire* begins with the Dean, Joceline, the protagonist who is obsessed with the idea of constructing an immense spire on top of his cathedral which is a symbol of his quest for power. *The Scorpion God*, set in ancient Egypt in Pre-Pharaonic times, explores the quest for royal power. *The Inheritors* delineates how the Homo-sapiens outlast the Neanderthals through their superior knowledge of violence.

As far as Golding's novels are concerned, the main theme deals with the problem of good and evil in human beings and with their sinful nature. The moral perspective is perfectly constructed in his novels so that the reader might find them original. The pessimism and disillusionment are symbolically expressed by the motifs of evil and darkness are discernible the majority of his novels. Many times, Golding uses symbols, presumably in order to make his novels more attractive. His work, on the whole, is based on the symbolical and allegorical meanings. He also discusses human existence, problems of the civilization, and one's own identity. His concept of evil is always projected into human beings, but the humans usually consider it an external factor until they comprehend the truth.

In the present, the study of power relations becomes very relevant and challenging where people are governed by the quest for domination and power. The frequent disputes among nations and encroachment upon other nations' territory are nothing but the quest to dominate others. Everywhere the powerful use different strategies to dominate the powerless. There is no power relation that is devoid of counter power or resistance. William Golding's novels explore the subtle elements of power immanent in every human being. He makes use of symbols to convey that the quest for power and domination are innate in every human being whether he or she is in an island, monastery or in a town.

The objective of the study is to explore the power relations that are perceptible in William Golding. This is an attempt to examine primarily the Foucauldian concept of power and how it is related in the fields of knowledge, violence, war and religion. The study is relevant in the contemporary situation where many divisions and conflicts exist on the basis of class, race, gender and economy. His novels depict the innate quest of human beings for power and domination.

Through his novels, William Golding deconstructs the opposition between history and fiction. It justifies that history is not a logical representation of the past. There is no connection between the events. In his novels, the distinction between history and fiction merge. There is no perfect history, every historical fact is filtered thrice. Golding's novels justify that history is a construct where power plays a vital role. His works present the subtle elements of power in all human relationships irrespective of place, child or adult and priest or king. Majority of his characters are restless due to the quest for power to dominate others. His novels namely *Lord of the Flies*, *The Spire* and *The Pyramid* are symbols that represent how power and domination exist in the various realms of society. Golding in his novels especially, *Lord of the Flies* and *Inheritors*, stresses the relation between power and knowledge and how knowledge reproduces power similar to the power's reproduction of knowledge. Power is based on knowledge and utilizes knowledge thereby reproducing knowledge by shaping it in accordance with its anonymous intentions.

Resistance co-exists with power. Wherever power is exercised, there has to be someone who resists. Foucault goes as far as to argue that where there is no resistance it is not, in effect, a power relation. Resistance is the hallmark of Golding's novels. His novels prove that the urge for resistance is endowed with all human beings. *Lord of the Flies* reveals that the quest for resistance is innate, even the children are not exempted from resisting the powerful. Throughout the novel, the major characters Ralph and Jack desire to over power each other and other boys too. In the beginning of the novel, when Ralph is elected as the leader of the group, Jack resists Ralph through different ways. Jack resists Ralph by questioning his commands and disobeying him. When Ralph orders Jack to keep the fire lit so that they can be rescued Jack does the opposite as he goes out hunting to Ralph's displeasure. Throughout the novel, Jack resists Ralph doing the opposite of Ralph's will. Ralph provides the boys fruits and vegetables but Jack gives pork to his friends.

Ralph's rules demand civilization and discipline among the boys but Jack and his group indulge in savagery such as hunting, painting the faces and wild dancing. Jack's ventures in the novel are aimed at resisting Ralph's domination. He is even ready to kill the boys, he kills Simon and Piggy only to resist Ralph's power and end his domination among the group. Even Piggy resists Ralph's domination in him by forcing his intellectual views on Ralph and carrying it out. Consciously or unconsciously, Piggy feels that he is not under the domination of Ralph but that Ralph is controlled by him. Thus, throughout the novel, power and its resistance can be perceptible in myriad forms which make the novel lively and vibrant.

The Spire portrays the resistance of the laity over the clergy. Jocelin, the dean of Salisbury Cathedral forces Roger Mason to construct a spire in order to glorify his name. As a lay man and a mason, Roger is subordinated by the dean Jocelin who is the authority of the Cathedral. The Dean always believes that he is perfect and no one is able to challenge against his will, such a predicament paves the way for resistance from the laity. Through different strategies, Roger Mason resists Jocelin's power. Though Jocelin forces Roger to complete the construction of the spire, he disobeys Jocelin by arguing that the foundations are not strong enough to support the spire. Disobedience is an effective strategy by which Roger resists Jocelin's power and it is an effective tool to challenge the dominance of the other. He has sound arguments to disobey the demand of the dean and asserts:

You'll see how I shall thrust you upward by my will. It's God's will in this business. The master builder had stopped smiling. He spoke angrily. If they had intended a spire they'd have laid the foundations for it! (1965:19)

Resistance takes place through different self destructive methods such as suicide and alcoholism. Roger Mason's suicide attempt is equal to the destruction of his professional life. Jocelin needs him because he is a mason and can construct the spire. His suicide attempt is a warning to Jocelin that he cannot

complete the construction of the spire. At the end of the novel, Roger becomes a drunkard and that distorts his harmonious life. It is either knowingly or unknowingly that Roger resists Jocelin by drinking alcohol which gives him a feeling of challenging the power of the dean. It releases him from the clutches of Jocelin and provides a feeling of freedom. Thus, suicide and alcoholism becomes an effective strategy of resistance in the novel.

In *The Pyramid*, Evie Babbacombe, the Town crier's daughter, who is ranked low in the social hierarchy, is very often sexually misused by higher class men. They treat her as an object for their sexual gratification and in such a predicament, she produces counter power to resist the domination of higher class men. The novel states:

The misunderstood revelation occurs shortly after Evie has told Oliver that she is not pregnant, "mimicked . . . savagely" his "Thank God," and declared, "That's all you want, just my damned body, not me," to all of which Oliver responds in a kind of parody of mutual involvement, "wanting her to share" his delicious sense of "joy and freedom". (1969:70)

Evie Babbacombe resists by exploring the hypocrisy of the higher class men. When she says that she is pregnant, nobody is actually interested in her, later she reveals to Oliver that her pregnancy was a lie, to measure the sincerity and explore the hypocrisy of the men.

Power and religion are related to each other. The history of religion is as old as human civilization existed in different forms. The main idea that led to the formation of religion is human beings' adherence to the powerful. The primitive man started to worship and adores the phenomenon mightier than him. Thus, power is the source of all types of religious formation and rituals performed in order to appease the most powerful. Religion and rituals play a major role in Golding's novels. In *Lord of the Flies* rituals have a significant meaning; Jack thinks that evil and destruction are live forces and attributes them to the Beast, Devil, or God who are more powerful than man and can be won over only by ritual, ceremony, and sacrifice. In *Inheritors*, the religion of the New People is different and their rituals are cruel and violent as illustrated in their sacrifice of the finger. The rituals and murders connected with religious sacrifice are more intentional that please the terrible forces of which they are afraid of.

Foucault intends to show that the self is a construct and produced by those techniques that shape it. Foucault's point is that the subject is a product of discourse rather than being prior to discourse. The subject's conscience or self-knowledge is an imposed one, but the individual experiences it as what he or she is. Adoption of the imposed construal is redefinition of one's subjectivity. Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, Foucault labels such bodies as docile bodies which can be very easily controlled.

The subject's conscience or self-knowledge is an imposed one, but the individual experiences it as what he or she is. Adoption of the imposed construal is redefinition of one's subjectivity. Golding's novel, *Darkness Visible* underlines this notion of subject:

We're wrapped in illusions, delusions, confusions about the penetrability of partitions, we're all mad and in solitary confinement. We think we *know*. Know? That's worse than an atom bomb, and always was. (1980: 261)

Golding tries to show that the self is a construct and produced by those techniques that shape it. He justifies the Foucauldian notion of subject that is the subject is a product of discourse rather than being prior to discourse. Discourse generates the subject rather than it manifests thinking, knowing and speaking subject. In *Darkness Visible* the protagonist Matty has a split and divided personality:

Matty is split or divided. The doubleness and even greater division and fragmentation that he experiences in front of mirrors in Hanrahan's house resembles a similar double or mirror motif in *The Four-Gated City* when Martha and the schizophrenic Lynda discuss difficulties of self-recognition in mirror images. Matty has a "bicoloured" face, "split personality," and a "bicameral or double brain" and is caught between madness and rationality, the material and the spiritual. (1980: 49)

Through Matty's split personality, Golding depicts the de-stabilizing social developments in postmodern England and how it affects the individual. The cultural pluralism has imposed several opposing

cultural construct on Matty. In such a predicament Matty gets confused and is mentally tortured. His self is split because he is not able to fix his personality.

The protagonist in *Free Fall* Sammy Mounjoy, is captured by the Germans during the World War Second. In his prison camp, he recalls his past freedom and his failures in life. Sammy describes his life by exploring his memories and tries to find his loss of innocence and freedom. He asks "When did I lose my freedom?" (1961:5). He knows that somewhere, sometime, he made a choice of freedom and lost his freedom. Afterwards he defines this freedom. He tries to trace his personality through his surroundings and his society. Sammy presents his state of being in the very first paragraph of the novel:

I have walked by stalks in the market- place where books, dog-eared and faded from their purple, have burst with a white hosanna. I have seen people crowned with a double crown, holding in either hand the crook and flail, the power and the glory- I have understood how the scar becomes a star, I have felt the flake of fire fall, miraculous and Pentecostal. My yesterdays walk with me. They keep step, they are grey faces that peer over my shoulder. I live on paradise Hill, ten minutes from the station, thirty seconds from the shops and the local. Yet I am a burning amateur torn by the irrational and incoherent, violently searching and self-condemned. (1961:5)

This opening paragraph is a remarkable prelude to Sammy's life. It depicts the crucial problem of Sammy's condition. He has lived a peaceful childhood in Rotten Row. He remembers his feckless mother, absence of father, his adoption at the rectory and his two teachers. Sammy's Mounjoy wants to seduce Beatrice and imagines he can convince her of his love. "Help me" he cries. "I have gone mad. I want to be you" (1961:105). Beatrice is reluctant to his demands. Exasperated by the girl's quiet indifference, Sammy seduces her but he loses his freedom. Sammy has internalized the sexual guilt, there is no judge other than himself. He faints at this discovery and admits later: "Yes it is my entire fault" (1961: 246). In the course of the novel, the hero of *Free Fall* arrives at an answer to the question of his loss of freedom. Having gained insight into his earlier sins and their consequences, Sammy Mounjoy turns his back on the past and looks forward to the future.

The protagonist Sammy Mounjoy's guilt consciousness is formed out of his Christian Religious backgrounds. The Christian theology negates the basic needs of human beings and labels it as a mortal sin. It encourages suppression of human basic drives and proclaims chastity as the greatest virtue. The guilt consciousness torments Sammy's personality. He loses his mental equilibrium and peace of mind. He admits that he has lost his freedom and later realizes that he lost his freedom when he had sex with Beatrice who was his girl friend and classmate. The mere sexual act has induced guilt in Sammy, this is due to the Christian moral background in which he was brought up. Here, Sammy's guilt consciousness is a construct due to the strong clutches of his religious morality. His own identity has been amalgamated with the imposed religious construct. In such a predicament, Sammy cannot even discern which is imposed or constructed and his genuine identity. When the imposed identity destroyed his genuine identity that then it is moment that he loses his freedom. Sammy's loss of identity paved the way for the loss of his freedom but his metamorphosed mind cannot recognize the fact due to his agony.

The culture is even a construct and imposed one. Golding depicts the situation in *Darkness Visible*. To him the media has a vital role in the production and distribution of culture. Paul Crawford states In *Politics and History in William Golding: The World Turned Upside Down*:

Yet perhaps the most "destabilizing" postwar development represented in *Darkness Visible* is the intense consumerism and mass communications of television, radio, magazines, and newspapers that, Robert Hewison maintains, "contributed to the notion that Britain was undergoing perpetual and perilous change, where former conceptions of authority and social value were being challenged." Such cultural destabilization was influenced by U.S. mass media. (2002: 166)

Darkness Visible represents the cultural destabilization due to the intervention of mass media. Traditional concepts and the authority has been challenged, replaced and reproduced by mass media. Even culture of a nation can be seen as a construct, alien and imposed one. In *Darkness Visible* Edwin insists on writing a book and the act of writing a book is equal to producing or constructing a truth:

When Edwin insists on writing a book that gets to the “truth” about events surrounding Matty and the kidnap attempt, while Sim scoffs at the possibility of achieving “History”: No one will ever know what happened.

There’s too much of it, too many people, a sprawling series of events that break apart under their own weight. (1980: 258)

The duty of a historiographer or writer is to link the fragmented events as inter connected events and stories. It is explicitly stated in the novel nobody knows what actually happened but everything should be written from a witnessed point of view. In fact “No one, not the headmaster nor the solicitor, nor the judge ever knew the real story” (1980: 18). Historiographer inter-weaves fact and fiction so that no one can discern what fact is and what fiction is.

In *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph’s deployment of rules and regulations among the boys is to gain control over them, so as to make his administration easier. Often he reminds the boys about the importance of being civilized and disciplined. The main aim is to convert the boys as mechanical or practiced docile bodies. In order to perpetuate his power over the boys, there is no other method than transforming them as docile bodies. Docility avoids the possibility for revolution and it can cultivate obedience without questioning the authority. Howard S. Babb in *The Novels of William Golding* states:

Stilbourne itself is the central power in *The Pyramid*, influencing all its inhabitants after some fashion and often shaping Oliver more thoroughly than he realizes. One indication of its dominance over him is that Oliver frequently returns to the town imagining himself somehow changed, yet rapidly sinking back into the ways of Stilbourne again. (1970:191)

Golding’s *The Pyramid* portrays how social hierarchy places individuals in a particular position and transforms them as docile bodies. The typical English town Stilbourne is divided on the basis of class and everything is pre-determined here according to the class division. Individuals cannot go beyond the social status. In the novel, the protagonist Oliver’s life is confined only to the expectation of his class for fun, friends and sex. His desires are constantly determined by his social milieu. Even his thinking process is conditioned by his class conscience. As the norm of his society, he is compelled to fulfill his sexual urge clandestinely with a woman from a lower class. The strong clutches of social hierarchy convert the individual’s uniqueness to uniformity and mechanization. In the novel, Evie the lower class woman works among higher class men and her position is fixed in the society as a secret sexual object for higher class men.

Foucault challenges the progressive view of history that interprets history as a linear, uniform process that operates according to universal laws. He criticizes the concept of truth that transcends history and argues that truth is conditioned by human history. He rejects the central ideas of the Enlightenment, such as the concept of universal rationality, and belief in the progress of human history. The ideas of the Enlightenment are built upon the presuppositions that there is only one kind of rationality applicable to all people and cultures and that human history is a linear process of progress whose pattern of development was the same for all.

Golding proves through his novels that history does not operate in a linear process and he rejects the belief in the progress of human history. *The Inheritors* explores the notion of discontinuity in history and question the modern assumption that humans are progressing, in a linear fashion, away from primitive forms of violence. The novel delineates the survival of Homo-sapiens who are labeled as the new people by outlasting the peaceful Neanderthals by violence and terror. To Golding, the notion of the progress of human beings from savagery to civilization is a deceptive concept and discontinuity or break is the hallmark of human historical processes. He proves that the evolution of human history can be traced from civilization to savagery. The extinction of Neanderthals symbolizes the destruction of civilization and innocence. In *Rites of Passage*, history is not presented as objective reality, but as a human construct. His works problematize the historical knowledge and its authenticity. In his construction, the powerful are placed in a dominant position and the powerless are ignored and re-writes the past in the light of the present.

In order to perpetuate power and domination, a means of communication is very necessary. In the formation of truth and knowledge, the means of communication plays a vital role. With its aid the powerful distribute their views as universal and accurate. Therefore, the constructions of truth and knowledge, normal and abnormal, right and wrong are plotted and distributed by the powerful who own the means of communication. The all-pervasive nature of power is assured throughout Golding's novels. Very often his novels are set in islands, cathedrals, courts, forests, towns, etc. In such different spaces, power relations are present and it is the motivating force in all types of existence. The quest for domination exists irrespective of time such as the pre-historic period or the twentieth century and space such as the island or the cathedral. Priests or monks are not free from the quest to dominate the other. In the same way, child or adult is equally fantasized to administer power over others. Power and the quest for domination are the basic factors immanent in William Golding's world and by which the society becomes vibrant and lively.

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