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THEMES AND IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN CONDITIONS IN THE
WRITINGS OF WILLIAM GOLDING LORD OF FLIES AND THE INHERITORS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims at attempting to assess the themes and the human conditions in the novels written by William Golding. His first novel, *Lord of the Flies* (1954; film, 1963 and 1990; play, adapted by Nigel Williams, 1995), describes a group of boys stranded on a tropical island reverting to savagery. *The Inheritors* (1955) shows "new people" (generally identified with *Homo sapiens*), triumphing over a gentler race (generally identified with Neanderthals) by deceit and violence. His 1956 novel *Pincher Martin* records the thoughts of a drowning sailor. *Free Fall* (1959) explores the issue of free choice as a prisoner held in solitary confinement in a German POW camp during World War Two looks back over his life. *The Spire* (1964) follows the building (and near collapse) of a huge spire onto a medieval cathedral (generally assumed to be Salisbury Cathedral); the spire symbolizing both spiritual aspiration and worldly vanity. In his 1967 novel *The Pyramid* three separate stories in a shared setting (a small English town in the 1920s) are linked by a narrator, and *The Scorpion God* (1971) consists of three novellas, the first set in a prehistoric African hunter-gatherer band ('Clonk, Clonk'), the second in an ancient Egyptian court ('The Scorpion God') and the third in the court of a Roman emperor ('Envoy Extraordinary'). The last of these reworks his 1958 play *The Brass Butterfly*. His later novels include *Darkness Visible* (1979), which is about a terrorist group, a pedophile teacher, and a mysterious angel-like figure who survives a fire in *The Blitz*, *The Paper Men* (1984) which is about the conflict between a writer and his biographer, and a sea trilogy *To the Ends of the Earth*, which includes the *Rites of Passage* (1980), *Close Quarters* (1987), and *Fire Down Below* (1989), the first book of which won the Booker Prize.

Key Words: Lord flies, evil, evaluation, civilization, homo-sapiens, neanderthals

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INTRODUCTION

Sir William Gerald Golding was an English novelist, playwright, and poet. Best known for his novel *Lord of the Flies*, he won a Nobel Prize in Literature, and was also awarded the Booker Prize for literature in 1980 for his novel *Rites of Passage*, the first book in what became his sea trilogy, *To the Ends of the Earth*. The English Nobel laureate Sir William Gerald Golding was an English novelist, playwright, and poet. Best known for his

novel *Lord of the Flies*, he won a Nobel Prize in Literature, and was also awarded the Booker Prize for literature in 1980 for his novel *Rites of Passage*, the first book in what became his sea trilogy, *To the Ends of the Earth*. Golding was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1988. He was a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. In 2008, **The Times** ranked Golding third on their list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945". William Golding was born in his grandmother's house, 47 Mount Wise, New quay, Cornwall, and he spent many childhood holidays there. He grew up in Marlborough, Wiltshire, where his father (Alec Golding) was a science master at Marlborough Grammar School (1905 to retirement). Alec Golding was a teacher at the school the young Golding and his elder brother Joseph attended. His mother, Mildred (Conroe), kept house at 29, The Green, Marlborough, and was a campaigner for female suffrage. In 1930 Golding went to Brasenose College, Oxford, where he read Natural Sciences for two years before transferring to English Literature. Golding took his B.A. degree with Second Class Honors in the summer of 1934, and later that year a book of his poems was published by Macmillan & Co, with the help of his Oxford friend, the anthropologist Adam Bittleston. He was a schoolmaster teaching Philosophy and English in 1939, then just English from 1945 to 1961 at Bishop Wordsworth's School, Salisbury, Wiltshire. Golding married Ann Brookfield, an analytical chemist, on 30 September 1939. They had two children, Judith and David.

During World War II, Golding joined the Royal Navy in 1940. He fought (on board a destroyer) and was briefly involved in the pursuit and sinking of the German battleship *Bismarck*. He also participated in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day, commanding a landing ship that fired salvoes of rockets onto the beaches, and was in action at Walcheren in which 23 out of 24 assault crafts were sunk. In 1985, Golding and his wife moved to Tullimaar House at Perranarworthal, near Truro, Cornwall. He died of heart failure eight years later, on 19 June 1993. He was buried in the village churchyard at Bowerchalke, South Wiltshire (near the Hampshire and Dorset county boundaries). He left the draft of a novel, ***The Double Tongue***, set in ancient Delphi, which was published posthumously. His son David continues to live at Tullimaar House. In September 1953, after many rejections from other publishers, Golding sent a manuscript to Faber & Faber and was initially rejected by their reader. His book however was championed by Charles Monteith, a new editor at the firm. Monteith asked for some changes to the text and the novel was published in September 1954 as *Lord of the Flies*. After moving in 1958 from Salisbury to nearby Bowerchalke, he met his fellow villager and walking companion James Lovelock. The two discussed Lovelock's hypothesis that the living matter of the planet Earth functions like a single organism and Golding suggested naming this hypothesis after Gaia, the goddess of the earth in Greek mythology. His publishing success made it possible for Golding to resign his teaching post at Bishop Wordsworth's School in 1961, and he spent that academic year in the United States as writer-in-residence at Hollins College, near Roanoke, Virginia.

Golding won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1979, and the Booker Prize in 1980. In 1983 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and was according to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* "an unexpected and even contentious choice". In 1988 Golding was appointed a Knight Bachelor. In September 1993, only a few months after his sudden death, the First International William Golding Conference was held in France, where Golding's presence had been promised and eagerly anticipated.

Themes and The Importance Of Human Conditions In William Gold Writings -'The nature of the brute' is the main theme of Golding's first three novels; and to view the brute divested of the trappings of civilization, Golding creates paradigmatic conditions of existence. When he puts his protagonists in extreme peril, or "boundary situation," it is to make them act from the loneliness of soul, and without the crutches of the social structure. What gets revealed, then, is the basic human condition — man under the aspect of heaven; man's 'ancient, inescapable recognition' (*Lord of the Flies*, p. 152).

He discovered that the evil in the world lay not in the facts of race, economics or social heredity but in the human consciousness, and so was timeless and space less. He said: "I believed that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creation and the best job I could do at the time, was to trace the connection between his diseased nature and the international mess he gets himself into. He deduced that the aggressiveness in the human world was not a consequence of the right having a tough time with the wrong, but an outcome of two wrongs fighting for supremacy.

The theme in *Lord of the Flies* like that of most of the other novels by the same author, revolves around the concept of the emergence of evil and its conflict with that which is good. This leitmotif has been presented very well through a well-knit plot, the universality of the myth, realistic portrayal of characters, apt and perceptible symbolism, thematic imagery, graphic and imaginative descriptions and last but not least, his unique narrative style which makes the story gripping and full of suspense. As the story progresses, the thematic concern of the novel is enhanced and integrated by so many motifs intertwining in the novel including, loss of civilization, the motif of power, the fate of intellectuals, the uncertainty of life, rules and orders, loss of innocence, primitivism, symbolic imagery, and the tone of pessimism prevailing to the very end of the novel.

In the *Lord of the Flies* Golding tried to trace the defects of society back to human nature and in *The Inheritors* he goes one step further and condemns the claims of rational man. The Victorians believed that logic and reason were adequate to carry society forward and that the Biblical millennium was a scientific certainty. His novel *The Inheritors* is a work of prehistoric fiction and the novel is an imaginative reconstruction of the life of a band of Neanderthals. It is written in such a way that the reader might assume the group to be modern *Homo sapiens* as they gesture and speak simply among themselves, and bury their dead with heartfelt, solemn rituals. They also have powerful sense impressions and feelings, and appear sometimes to share thoughts in a near-telepathic way. As the novel progresses it becomes more and more apparent that they live very simply, using their considerable mental abilities to connect to one another without extensive vocabulary or the kinds of memories that create culture. They have wide knowledge of food sources, mostly roots and vegetables. They chase hyenas from a larger beast's kill and eat meat, but they don't kill mammals themselves. They have a spiritual system centering on a female principle of bringing forth, but their lives are lived so much in the present that the reader realizes they are very different from us, living in something like an eternal present, or at most a present broken and shaped by seasons.

William Golding's novels are based on various human conditions. 'The nature of the brute' is the main theme of Golding's first three novels; and to view the brute divested of the trappings of civilization, Golding creates paradigmatic conditions of existence. When he puts his protagonists in extreme peril, or "boundary situation," it is to make them act from the loneliness of soul, and without the crutches of the social structure. What gets revealed, then, is the basic human condition — man under the aspect of heaven; man's 'ancient, inescapable recognition'".

While Golding continues to do his investigation of the meanness in the human condition in the novels of the middle phase, viz. *Free Fall*, *The Spire*, *The Pyramid*, and the novella *The Scorpion God*, he introduces a new parameter. The element of guilt, its awareness and the ways in which man can utilize it for a spiritual rebirth are his dominant concerns now. He discovered that the evil in the world lay not in the facts of race, economics or social heredity but in the human consciousness, and so was timeless and space less. He said: "I believed that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creation and the best job I could do at the time, was to trace the connection between his diseased nature and the international mess he gets himself into. He deduced that the aggressiveness in the human world was not a consequence of the right having a tough time with the wrong, but an outcome of two wrongs fighting for supremacy.

His novel *Lord of the Flies* reflects quite effectively the social and cultural conditions of the contemporary times. It revolves around the idea of the evil which is inherent specifically in human nature and in society at large. The author asserts the view that man is evil by nature. It is that culture and pressure of civilization which stops that evil from emerging sometimes, but as soon as that sociological and civilization barrier has been removed, then the human heart comes out in its true shape and shows the bestial instinct quite fearlessly.

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CONCLUSION

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William Golding's concern with human suffering and his commitment to humanity have lent his novels of the human condition vitality, a complexity and a universality not many among the contemporary novelists have achieved in their novels. The novel in his hands is a weapon he uses to excavate the dead crust of habits, to scrape the labels of things and to blast man out of a callous indifference towards his condition. The job of the writer, he insists, is to "get people to understand their own humanity." Golding tells and shows that all is not lost, that there is much more to man than sheer malignancy, violence and cunningness. His religious sensitiveness, his belief in man and commitment to God is too strong to be clouded by the darkness's of Belsen and Hiroshima. Golding views this ignoble, worthless quantity from close distances and under the aspect of heaven, he digs into the sands of time and also imagines a future time. All this he does to see, to know, to understand what man is, why he is, how he is. He brings himself to view this "marvel of creation" and the earth, "set like a jewel in space.

"But the sight baffles him as it did Jung. He is unable to understand why man must always use his knowledge and skill to "diminish" the world of God and man in a universe ablaze with all the glories that contradict that" Diminution."

For the truth is that beyond the darkness of evil and sin, passions and desires, stands a world which gives man hope and life if only he would leave the procession of sinners and take the road to reach the God out there and in his own soul also. Some do. Simon has always been doing it. Nathaniel suggests how this can be performed; Jocelin's and Matty's performances are no mean achievements. Talbot too is led to a point where he feels the opposing forces of the hell and heaven and makes his choice.

The quest novels of Golding ask questions few have dared to address themselves to. At the same time he, not just a critic of the human condition, helps us answer them. In the essay "Belief and Creativity," Golding quotes St. Augustine as saying "Woe unto me if I speak of the things of God, but woe unto me if I do not speak of the things of God." Golding too has spoken of God and his thing, the man and his condition and woe unto man if he does not listen to Golding.

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