

Chapter IV

PINCHER MARTIN

In Pincher Martin, Golding investigates in detail an individual human being, fallible and tragic. He shows us a man who is alone with his own nature and isolated from society. Golding has said of Pincher:

"He is a fallen man, yes. Very much fallen - he's fallen more than most, you see.... I went out of my way to damn Pincher as much as I could by making him the most unpleasant, the nastiest type I could think of, and I was very interested to see how critics all over the place said, 'Well, yes. We are like that.'" 184

Golding seriously means it when he says that he has damned Pincher as much as possible. He has treated mercilessly a helpless 'civilized' man by leaving him alone with his agonizing struggle both in the sea and on the rock. For three chapters and a half Golding makes him crawl and creep on all fours with great torture and pain, like an animal, before he can get on his feet and gain back his personality and pride as an intelligent man.

Some critics are not satisfied with the narrowness of the story. The hero is put in such an isolated, limited situation that the story cannot, consequently, exercise its universality. Kingsley Amis writes of Pincher Martin: "...it is the narrowness and remoteness of that world... which rob the novel of the universality it appears to claim. Although Martin is in some sense doing duty for man, the context



of this performance is too remote from the world of man to excite that continuous recognition and self-recognition upon which depends the novelist's power to persuade."¹⁴⁵ But others consider such limitation as a kind of fictional form which is well suited to investigation of an individual nature. About this Michael Quinn has said, "In 'Pincher Martin', however, this limitation becomes almost a virtue for he turns directly towards his deepest concern, the soul of an individual man, and the potentialities within it for either salvation or damnation."¹⁴⁶ Samuel Hynes has appreciated 'Pincher Martin' as "a moral document that is also a work of art, in which moral meaning is entirely embodied in artistic form. But its excellence is also its limitation, and it is not an excellence that could be repeated."¹⁴⁷

The story of 'Pincher Martin' is as complicated as the history of the human race. It is like an allegory of the struggle for survival of mankind seeking for salvation since its creation until now. Man, proud of his own intelligence, education and civilization, thinks that he is able to control the world and nature. No matter what his situation, man is quite sure he can control it. And Pincher Martin whose real name is Christopher Hadley Martin is the representative of the whole human race.

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Kingsley Amis; Samuel Hynes, William Golding (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 33.

146

Michael Quinn, "An Unheroic Hero: William Golding's 'Pincher Martin'," The Critical Quarterly, Vol. 4, (Autumn 1962), p. 248.

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Samuel Hynes, op.cit., p. 32.

Golding begins the story with darkness, and, as it has always been, darkness is the symbol of evil. The hero is left forlorn in the dark ocean. This suggests that his life is spent swimming in the sea of evil. Its allegorical meaning is that the whole of mankind is swimming in the ocean of evil; the more they struggle, the deeper they sink into the bottomless ocean. Martin was a wartime officer who, after the torpedoing of his ship, finds himself struggling in the dark, inconceivable vastness of the Atlantic Ocean. Seized by panic, he shrieks for help and struggles in all directions against death. We have a first glimpse of his nature when he sees a glass bottle float near him. Even in his desperate hour he cannot help showing his ego, controlling other things. He stares at the bottle and recalls one of his childhood toys, a small rubber figure ~~which~~ suspended in water in a bottle; the figure could be surfaced or submerged at will by altering the pressure on the cap of the bottle. He murmurs: "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 steadily, slowly remorselessly down and down."¹⁴⁸ The floating glass bottle reminds him of his lifebelt. He kicks off his seaboots in order to reduce the weight and then blows up his lifebelt. He cries in vain for help. Nature is indifferent and cruel to him. He feels that his body is squeezed, crushed and tortured by the mysterious enormity of

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William Golding, Pincher Martin (Great Britain: Hazell & Viney Ltd., 1964), p. 6.

the sea. Yet he will not give up. His will to survive is very strong. In order to assert his superior ability over nature, he sets his mind to work: "I must move from one point to another. ... Presently it will be daylight ... I won't die. I can't die. Not me - "¹⁴⁹ Despite the weakening struggle of his body, his love for life is still too strong to surrender; he keeps encouraging himself, "I won't die! I won't!"¹⁵⁰ Being convinced by his own intelligence that it can bring survival, he tries his best to use his brain - "Think. My last chance. Think what can be done?"¹⁵¹

Amidst the wilderness of nature, his own inner darkness begins to respond to the external darkness. He sees through his mind's eye his producer when he was an actor, and the masks of seven sins, one of which he was asked to play the part. He is finally washed up on a barren, isolated rock. As soon as he gets on the rock he has gained back his personality and "at once he was master." This is the first step towards his supposed triumph over death.

With great difficulty and pain he tries to pull himself together to gather "the resources of his body together,"¹⁵² and has found that his body is "like a dead man!"¹⁵³ He forces himself to think because it is only by thinking that he can keep his personality and identity.

149

Ibid., p. 11.

150

Ibid., p. 14.

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Ibid.

152

Ibid., p. 28.

153

Ibid., p. 29.

"Think, you bloody fool, think."

"Think."

"I am intelligent."

In order to reduce his pain he tries to keep his mind busy, thinking of the causes of his pain:

"I have tumbled in a trench. My head is jammed against the further side and my neck is twisted. My legs must be up in the air over the other wall. My thighs are hurting because the weight of my legs is pushing against the edge of the wall as a fulcrum ... My hand is doubled under me and that is why I feel the localized pain in my ribs."¹⁵⁴

Pain and his subconsciousness tell him to give up life, to surrender to death: "Give up the thought of return, the thought of living. Break up, leave go ... An hour on this rock is a lifetime. What have you to lose? There is nothing here but torture. Give up. Leave go."¹⁵⁵ But Fincher will not give up. He cannot let go his beloved life. His soul which is "a darker dark, self-existent and indestructible,"¹⁵⁶ which is the only strength within him, will not let him give up his body. And gradually it gives him strength in both body and mind to find all means to fight against and to overcome desperate circumstance. He, then, very consciously, sets to do everything he can to increase chances of

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Ibid., p. 36.

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Ibid., p. 39.

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Ibid., p. 40.

survival and rescue. Realizing that his delicate body must be destroyed soon by exposure, he thinks first about the shelter; "Shelter. Must have shelter."¹⁵⁷ He moves to lie inside the crevices and then finds water to quench his thirst. The next thing is "Rescue. See about rescue."¹⁵⁸ He builds a big stone figure and puts silver paper (which he has found in his pocket) on its head in order to attract the ships that might pass by. Then his hunger reminds him of "Food?" and suddenly he begins to collect food consisting of mussels, limpets, snails and jelly anemones.

He keeps talking to himself, calling his own name in order to keep his identity. The identity disc round his neck assures him of his existence, of his being, and makes him feel that he is not a castaway, nor isolated from the world since it identifies him as "Christopher Hadley Martin, Ty. Lieut., R.N.V.R., C. of E."¹⁵⁹ He talks to himself, sings a song, recites a poem and even gives a lecture to the stone figure, beginning "Ladies and Gentlemen - ,"¹⁶⁰ although he knows that "in normal life to talk out loud is a sign of insanity. Here it is proof of identity."¹⁶¹

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Ibid.

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Ibid., p. 54.

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Ibid., p. 69.

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Ibid., p. 79.

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Ibid., p. 74.

Being spoiled by civilization and convinced by his intelligence, he means to overcome the situation. "I don't claim to be a hero. But I've got health and education and intelligence. I'll beat you."¹⁶² Although he does not claim to be a hero, his ego is such that he assumes the rock to be his estate and gives names to parts of the rock such as Safety Rock, Look-out, Food Cliff, each name signifying its importance:-- Safety Rock for instance is where he was first cast up from the sea.

With education and intelligence he preserves a rational control through which he thinks identity and existence can be maintained. He puts what he plans to do in order: "I must keep this body going ... Point one. Point two. I must expect to fall sick... Point three: I must watch my mind. I must not let madness steal up on me and take me by surprise ... Point four. I must help myself to be rescued ... All I have to do is live and wait. I must keep my grip on reality."¹⁶³ His longing for civilized life strengthens his will to survive because he wants to be back in that civilized world. Here on the barren rock he misses "a bed with sheets ... a pint or two and a hot meal ... a hot bath."¹⁶⁴ The influence of civilization makes him create his own abridged civilized world on the rock, "Dress and eat. Dress for dinner."¹⁶⁵ He has his own Oxford Circus, Piccadilly and Leicester Square. He gives the rock names because he wants to tame it, to adapt it to his way instead

162

Ibid., p. 70.

163

Ibid., p. 74.

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Ibid., p. 76.

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Ibid., p. 77.

of being adapted to its way. According to him "what is given a name is given a seal, a chain. If this rock tries to adapt me to its way I will refuse and adapt it to mine. I will impose my routine on it, my geography. I will tie it down with names. If it tries to annihilate me with blotting-paper, then I will speak in here where my words resound and significant sounds assure me of my own identity."¹⁶⁶ He determines to use his brain as an instrument that can produce everything he wants on this barren rock including comfort, safety and rescue.

But little by little, he is threatened by the menace of the primitive power of nature under the image of becalmed and indifferent conditions. The rock is negative and "non-committal" and against him. He feels its hardnesses which become "vicious in their insistence like the nag of an aching tooth."¹⁶⁷ Now and then he imagines and sees the rock as a tooth that will grind him to pieces - "A simple point of rock, peak of a mountain range, one tooth set in the ancient jaw of a sunken world, projecting through the inconceivable vastness of the whole ocean."¹⁶⁸ And again "he looked solemnly at the line of rocks and found himself thinking of them as teeth. He caught himself imagining that they were emerging gradually from the jaw."¹⁶⁹ The sea becomes "more personal and vicious"¹⁷⁰ and seems to seize him with its frozen hands. He is even

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Ibid., p. 79.

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Ibid., p. 20.

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Ibid., p. 25.

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Ibid., p. 71.

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Ibid., p. 32.

threatened by the gulls which are insignificant in the civilized world, but here on the rock are bloodthirsty "wartime gulls."¹⁷¹ Besides, his own inner evil, his past sins are awakened by external primitive forces. He is tortured by recollection of his past sinful roles: Martin as a seducer, as an adulterer, as a pincher of what his friends had, as a man who takes what is best no matter to whom it belongs. He is a man of pride, lechery and greed. That is why he is called "Pincher":

He had cuckolded one of his friend's wife, Sybil, and in his pride and sadistic feeling he led Alfred to his own bedroom in order to let him see Sybil in his bed. Before he joins the Navy he has been an actor who has committed adultery with his producer's wife - Helen. He once seduces a decent girl - Mary, who afterwards marries his best friend, Nathaniel, and this makes him frustrated because he feels for the first time that he is defeated. He has also raped a little boy in the cellar. They all know him as "Christ-Greed. Greed-Christ," he is the god of Greed. And when his producer explains to him his role he is, of course, telling Pincher his own nature: "This painted bastard here takes anything he can lay his hands on. Not food, Chris, that's far too simple. He takes the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman."¹⁷² His greedy nature is symbolized by the Chinese box in which the Chinese bury a fish to feed maggots when they want to prepare a "rare dish." When the little maggots have eaten the fish, they will start to eat each other:

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Ibid., p. 50.

172

Ibid., p. 109.

"The little ones eat tiny ones. The middle-sized ones eat the little ones. The big ones eat each other. Then there are two and then one and where there was a fish there is now one huge successful maggot. Rare dish."¹⁷³

Pincher himself is a maggot, a huge one that eats up everything that happens to be near him. To him other people, the victims of his lust, cruelty and greed, are reduced to little maggots that feed him. He never considers them as human beings but as a kind of enticing food or tools of his pleasure. He sees women as maggots and one of them is his producer's wife who is "Fat. White. Like a maggot with tiny black eyes. I should like to eat you," he tells himself, "you're not a person, my sweet, you're an instrument of pleasure."¹⁷⁴ He himself accepts that he is a maggot - a big one. He is proud because he has never been eaten. He always laughs at other defeated people and talks in their faces, "I'm a bigger maggot than you are."¹⁷⁵

Having fought against both external and internal forces, Pincher gradually becomes weaker and weaker. He loses all his energetic enthusiasm. His ambition is severely reduced. At first his cherished goals were "comfort, safety and rescue;" now they are basic - the preservation of life and sanity. The mussels begin to taste of decay. He loathes them; they are in fact the only kind of food that a maggot dislikes. Yet he tries to console himself saying, "I shall be rescued today,"¹⁷⁶ and strives harder to use his intelligence to bring about

173 Ibid., p. 124.

174 Ibid., p. 87.

175 Ibid., p. 140.

176 Ibid., p. 97.

rescue. He then thinks of the planes that might pass over since he knows that they must surely send the planes to check the course and look for the ship. His stone figure can attract only the ships, not the planes. He eventually thinks of seaweed and uses it to make the pattern "S.O.S." on the rock. He knows that "men make patterns and superimpose them on nature,"¹⁷⁷ and he himself with his capacity to think, is going "to impose an unnatural pattern on nature, a pattern that would cry out to any rational beholder - Look! Here is thought. Here is man!"¹⁷⁸

For a long time he struggles to retain his belief in intelligence because "intelligence sees so clearly what is to be done and can count the cost beforehand;"¹⁷⁹ he knows that he is going to be sick because of mussels and exposure, and he is sick. But gradually uncertainty and eventually despair assert themselves. The first uncertain note is struck when he says: "I may never get away from this rock at all."¹⁸⁰ He is beginning to lose his sense of identity. Talking to himself is now not enough; he needs a mirror or his own photographs to make him recognize his own features. He wants to get in touch with other human beings because they "describe me to myself - they fell in love with me, they applauded me, they caressed this body, they defined it for me. They were the people I got the better of, people who disliked me, people who quarrelled with me. Here I have nothing to quarrel with. I am in danger

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Ibid., p. 100.

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Ibid.

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Ibid., p. 104.

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Ibid., p. 105.

of losing definition."¹⁸¹ Lacking these elements (mirrors, photographs and relationship with other people) he cannot even recognize his own hands. They are taken by him for lobsters; and his disgust for them forces him to hurt them. Only pain can tell him that they are his own hands:

"He eyed the peculiar shapes that lay across the trousers indifferently for a while until at last it occurred to him how strange it was that lobsters should sit there. Then he was suddenly seized with a terrible loathing for lobsters and flung them away so that they cracked on the rock. The dull pain of the blow extended him into them again and they became his hands, lying discarded where he has tossed them."¹⁸²

By now, with agonizing melancholy, he feels sure that he will never be rescued at all; "I shall never get away from this rock."¹⁸³ He also realizes that he is losing control of his mind. "He felt the pressure of the sky and air was right inside his head."¹⁸⁴ He drags on hopelessly and gradually breaks down. He knows that he is going mad because of depressing exposure, because of despair and "because the sea is a terror - the worst terror there is, the worst imaginable."¹⁸⁵ He exclaims desperately,

"I am Atlas. I am Prometheus."

He feels crushed by the stronger power of the world - the universe, like

181

Ibid., p. 121.

182

Ibid., p. 120.

183

Ibid., p. 147.

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Ibid., p. 146.

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Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁸⁶
 Atlas who was condemned to bear the world on his shoulders forever. He is also like Prometheus,¹⁸⁷ Atlas' brother, who was very wise, wiser than gods, and also the savior of mankind. Prometheus brought civilization to man. It is his intelligence that encouraged him to defy gods. He was damned by his pride in his own intelligence. He was bound to a rock tortured by exposure and could take neither rest nor sleep. Pincher is in exactly the same situation. To survive on this barren rock which he first takes for salvation is really damnation. It is a real hell for him. He can neither rest nor sleep. His mind is never at peace. He is threatened by the stronger primitive powers and eaten away by his past sins and remorse at his wrong order which caused the destruction of the ship and of all her crew. Like Prometheus, Martin tries to use his wisdom and intelligence to seek salvation, but is forced to damnation by them.

From now on Pincher's mind ceases to probe at the rationale of living and begins to question his own identity; it struggles wearily and desperately against delirium and death, "I must hang on. First to my life and then to my sanity."¹⁸⁸ The tension which begins right at

¹⁸⁶ Atlas was one of the Titans, the earliest gods in Greek Mythology. He took Cronus' side in the battle between Cronus and his son, Zeus. Zeus conquered the Titans and punished them severely. Atlas was condemned to bear the world on his shoulders forever.

¹⁸⁷ Prometheus was Atlas' brother who took Zeus' side in the battle with Cronus. In order to save mankind he stole fire from Olympus for men and thus defied the gods. From the fire man created civilization. Zeus was angry and punished him terribly by binding him to a barren rock to be tortured by exposure.

¹⁸⁸ Golding, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

the beginning of the story reaches its climax when he consciously realizes his own defeat:

"Oh help, help! I am dying of exposure. I am starving, dying of thirst. I lie like driftwood caught in a cleft. I have done my duty for you and this is my reward. If you could only see me you would be wrung with pity. I was young and strong and handsome with an eagle profile and wavy hair, I was brilliantly clever and I went out to fight your enemies. I endured in the water, I fought the whole sea. I have fought a rock, and gulls and lobsters and seals and a storm. Now I am thin and weak."¹⁸⁹

This is also Prometheus' situation. Martin claims to be the savior of mankind because he has fought in the war in order to gain peace. He also considers himself the savior of his countrymen because he has fought their enemies. Like Prometheus, he feels he has done his duty by the human race.

This is the pitiful tragedy of mankind. Despite his heroic resistance, man is completely defeated. Martin is worn down by time, weather, and by internal forces. He is ultimately overcome by madness: "And last of all, hallucination, vision, dream, delusion will haunt you. What else can a madman expect? They will appear to you on the solid rock, the real rock, they will fetter your attention to them and you will be nothing worse than mad."¹⁹⁰ With the last straw of his consciousness, he shouts through the uproar of storm and rain.

"Ajax! Prometheus!"

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Ibid., pp. 171-172.

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Ibid., p. 177.

Like Ajax, one of the heroic warriors in the Trojan War, who was struck with madness by Athena, and who has done many disgraceful things during his frenzy and, being ashamed of them, killed himself, Martin is seized by delirium, by the stronger authority of indifferent, merciless nature. Again and again he calls himself Prometheus as though to claim himself the savior of mankind and a man who defies God. If he himself is damned, it is certain that mankind is destined for damnation. Pincher is degraded to such an extent that he is in a state closer to animal than man: he makes "barking noises" and "his mouth quacked." He finally yields himself to death which comes in the form of black lightning that takes away with it his beloved life "in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy."¹⁹¹

In a style of stern, rigid and vivid prose Golding tells the story from the beginning until the end, leading the reader to believe that all that has happened is real and true. But in the last chapter the reader feels that he is tricked by the twist of the ending. We are informed that Martin's body is cast ashore on an island. Like a wartime officer who appears at the end of "Lord of the Flies," Mr. Davidson, also a wartime officer, whose duty is to "harvest" the corpses of the victims of the war, comes to the island in order to bring Pincher's body from Mr. Campbell. The latter, a rather pathetic, disillusioned old man asks Mr. Davidson, "Would you say there was any - surviving?"¹⁹² Mr. Campbell means to suggest his pessimistic attitude of war and of

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Ibid., p. 184.

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Ibid., p. 190.

mankind as a whole. He cannot see and expect any survival since the whole human race is rotten and corrupted like the lean-to which is "broken, defiled. Returning to the earth, the rafters rotted, the roof fallen in - a wreck."¹⁹³ But his question is misunderstood by Mr. Davidson whose mind is now focusing on Fincher's body. Then his answer is, "If you're worried about Martin - whether he suffered or not - Then don't worry about him. You saw the body. He didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots."¹⁹⁴ This, we know, is the first thing Martin does when he is struggling in the dark ocean. And during his survival on the rock he keeps complaining that he should not have taken them off. He also takes off the lifebelt and uses it as his pillow on the rock but Mr. Campbell tells Mr. Davidson that the body was held by a lifebelt when he found it.

Golding, as in his other novels, has used a "gimmick" at the end. This is effective for his particular purpose. He uses this to demonstrate that what has happened on the rock flashes through Martin's imagination within a few seconds before his death. And his whole struggle for survival is just an hallucination. His living on the rock is a spiritual one after physical death. That is why this book, when it was published in America, was called The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin.

Realizing that he has used a difficult form for the novel, Golding explained its theme when it was dramatized on the B.B.C. Third Programme:

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid.

"Christopher Hadley Martin had no belief in anything but the importance of his own life; no love, no God. Because he was created in the image of God he had a freedom of choice which he used to centre the world on himself. He did not believe in purgatory and therefore when he died it was not presented to him in overtly theological terms. The greed for life which had been the mainspring of his nature, forced him to refuse the selfless act of dying. He continued to exist separately in a world composed of his own murderous nature. His drowned body lies rolling in the Atlantic but the ravenous ego invents a rock for him to endure on. It is the memory of an aching tooth. Ostensibly and rationally he is a survivor from a torpedoed destroyer: but deep down he knows the truth. He is not fighting for bodily survival but for his continuing identity in face of what will smash it and sweep it away - the black lightning, the compassion of God. For Christopher, the Christbearer, has become Pincher Martin who is little but greed. Just to be Pincher is purgatory; to be Pincher for eternity is hell."¹⁹⁵

After a more careful reading, we can say that Pincher has met his physical death on the second page of the book in which all his physical organs are described as detached things separated from each other: "But the man lay suspended behind the whole commotion, detached from his jerking body ... Could he have controlled the nerves of his face, or could a face have been fashioned to fit the attitude of his consciousness where it lay suspended between life and death, that face would have worn a snarl. But the real jaw was contorted down and distant, the mouth was slopped full ... The throat at such a distance from the snarling man vomited water and drew it in again. The hard lumps of water no longer hurt. There was a kind of truce, observation of the body. There was no face but there was a snarl."¹⁹⁶ Golding seems also to give many

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William Golding; Samuel Hynes, William Golding (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 27-28.

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Op. cit., p. 6.

hints about Pincher's physical death by his certain chosen words for describing Pincher. His eyes are called both "windows" and "dull stones," his eyebrows "the arches of the skull," his legs are "some other substance, petrified and comfortable" with "wooden feet". Pincher's uncontrollable separate organs seem to suggest his physical death.

Pincher is a greedy man who always devours other people and their possession but has never been devoured himself. His ego would not allow him to be eaten. After his physical death, his greedy soul will not even let the gulls eat his body. And his soul knows that in order to live a real life he has to keep both body and mind together. That is why he tries, with great agonizing struggle, to unify his distracted body with his centre -- his soul. To him, eating does not only simply mean living on nutriment it also means gaining something from other people such as killing, punishing, buying, selling, marrying, begetting and even cuckolding. Because he is a man of greed without love, the only relationship he can have with other people is eating. He eats every woman who gets in touch with him. He eats all people around him, like a huge maggot in the Chinese box. He even eats only true friend, Nathaniel, who stands in his way, who wins the heart of the decent Mary whom Pincher wants to possess. In order to destroy Nathaniel, he has to sacrifice the whole ship and her crew and even himself by blowing her up. His nature is beyond his control. Although he loves Nathaniel, he is forced by his stronger nature to destroy him: "Nat, I loved you and it is not in my nature to love much. But what can the last maggot but one do?"¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 168.

He believes neither in God nor in other people; the only reality is the thread of his own life. He cannot let go his life because dying is a kind of being eaten. He is a self-centered man who is proud and believes in his own intelligence and that he can create everything, even God. After being cast up on the rock, he declares the following day as the thinking day instead of Thanksgiving Day, and "on the sixth day he created God. ... In his own image created he Him."¹⁹⁸ He can even create God himself, so there is no doubt that he can create everything for himself; "Let there be rain and there was rain."¹⁹⁹ When he is put on imaginary trial by God he defies Him and rejects all His power and rules. When he is asked what does he believe in? He answers, "The thread of my life. At all costs ... I have a right to live if I can!" And when God gives him chance to consider, he retorts, "I will not consider! I have created you and I can create my own heaven."²⁰⁰ But in fact what he has created is hell because he does not know the technique of dying and of how to prepare himself for heaven after death. He is angry with God because God gives him the power to choose and when he has made his own choice - to create his own heaven, why should God torture him, why should He punish him and put him in Prometheus' place?

"You gave me the power to choose, and all my life you led me carefully to this suffering because my choice was my own ... If I ate

198

Ibid., p. 179.

199

Ibid., p. 156.

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Ibid., pp. 179-180.

them, who gave me a mouth?"²⁰¹ Although his own created world is "pain and all," he prefers it to God's compassion which is the black lightning that destroys life. And he cannot let his life be destroyed. His final answers to God is, "I spit on your compassion,"²⁰² and "I shit on your heaven."²⁰³ This is a kind of blasphemy that deserves a fatal punishment - torture and pain on a barren rock.

Besides God, Nathaniel is the only saint figure in "Pincher Martin" who appears in order to be destroyed. Like Simon in "Lord of the Flies", Nathaniel is quiet, mystic and rather strange compared with the other sailors; he seeks privacy and peace even in a man-of-war. He is considered by Pincher as "dutiful and uncomprehending" and witless. He is a true friend who feels responsible for Pincher's trouble and tries to help him. He is the only one to whom Pincher cries for help before he is drowned: "Nat! Nathaniel! For Christ's sake! Nathaniel! Help!"²⁰⁴ and "Help Nathaniel! Help ...!"²⁰⁵ Nathaniel foresees Pincher's death and also his own. Knowing the kind of life Pincher has led and being uncannily aware of his approaching death, he tries to give Pincher a lecture on eschatology. He teaches Pincher "The technique of dying," "Take us as we are now and heaven would be sheer negation. Without form and void. You see? A sort of black

201

Ibid.

202

Ibid., p. 182.

203

Ibid., p. 181.

204

Ibid., p. 10.

205.

Ibid., p. 12.

lightning destroying everything that we call life."²⁰⁶ Pincher is amused by Nat's lecture and his answer is, "I don't see and I don't much care," since he is not interested in heaven. His ego and greed in life will not let him die easily. He is sure to outlive other people because they will all be eaten and that is why he tells Nathaniel, "You'll die a long time before me ... And I'm going to have a damned long life and get what I'm after."²⁰⁷ The recompense Nathaniel receives from Pincher is hate and jealousy. Pincher is frustrated when he knows that Nathaniel is going to marry Mary, the girl whom he has seduced and still wants - "Christ how I hate you. I could eat you. Because you fathomed her mystery, you have a right to handle her transmuted cheap tweed; because you both have made a place where I can't get; because in your fool innocence you've got what I had to get or go mad."²⁰⁸ But to his amazement he has found that he both loves and hates Nathaniel. The inclination of his nature to sadism is obvious. His desire for what Nathaniel has had is strong enough to make him construct the murderous plan. And Nathaniel is destroyed because Pincher is "a bigger maggot."

Since Pincher on the rock is just a living soul without physical content, since he is an empty soul without body, he tries to recollect his experiences in the past to fill the empty space, in order to keep both soul and body together and to become a complete being since thinking and intelligence indicate the existence of soul - mind and experiences

206

Ibid., p. 63.

207

Ibid., p. 64.

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Ibid., p. 92.

assure the existence of physical being. But his selected recollections in trying to recreate himself into a unified human being turn out to be all evil ones. Instead of unifying body and soul, his past sins ultimately destroy his soul - his will to live. His centre, which is the only strength he has, is corrupted and poisoned, and gradually eaten up by the serpent that coils in him. That is why at the end, even his greedy soul refuses to exist and accepts God's compassion. And Pincher is finally annihilated by "the black lightning."

In Pincher Martin Golding uses many symbols and classical allusions. Again and again the rock is described as a tooth in the mouth of the world. It symbolizes the ravenous primitive forces that will eat up everything that happens to be near. And Martin, an insignificant living thing, is consequently a small morsel on the tooth and will be soon ground and swallowed up. Now and then Martin's head is called "the globe." This symbolizes the world - the universe, and the struggle of Martin for survival and salvation on the rock is the struggle of all people over the world.

Golding uses classical references Atlas, Prometheus and Ajax in order to dramatize the history of the human race, to remind us that man has been struggling for salvation since his creation. Man strives to survive but is defeated by the timeless, merciless stronger forces and pushed to damnation by his own wisdom and ego. The parallel with Prometheus, is, of course, ultimately ironical. For, unlike Prometheus, Pincher is depraved, the maggot who devours. How can such a destroyer be a saviour?