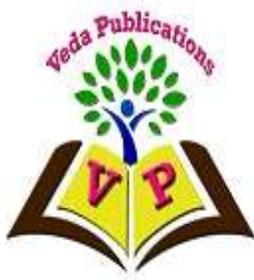


**DYSTOPIAN VISION OF WILLIAM GOLDING IN *PINCHER MARTIN***

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*(Lecturer in English, P.B.N.College, Nidubrolu, Guntur (Dt), A.P-522124.)*Email- [nagesh.ari@gmail.com](mailto:nagesh.ari@gmail.com)[doi.org/10.33329.joell.8.3.21.41](https://doi.org/10.33329.joell.8.3.21.41)**ABSTRACT**

William Golding, a Nobel laureate of 1983, projects the erosion of values and explores the state of anxiety, despair and alienation in all his works. Though Golding stands aloof from the other writers of his milieu, one hardly fails in tracing the besetting features of the age. As one cannot walk off one's own shadow, he trenchantly projects the individual reaction to the state of affairs. *Pincher Martin* delineates the lonely struggle of a naval officer on an uninhabited island in mid-Atlantic. This promethean character has nothing to treasure the most except his personality. Martin's ravenous ego in the past is juxtaposed with the present through a series of illusions. Pincher's fighting for identity results in extinction. Golding dramatises the inevitable extinction by exercising dystopian vision.

**Keywords:** *Dystopian, Nobel Laureate, Alienation, Milieu, Promethean.*



Art encapsulates the trends of the age. The prevailing changes from revolutionary changes to erosion of values subtly integrate into the sheen of the literature. With a remarkable insight William Golding probes into the dark recesses of human heart, which is the root cause of the predicament of man. His perspective contradicts with the behaviourist assumption that the onus of all the evils is on the environment. He assumes that the locus of evil in the will of man. He shares the ideological verisimilitude with Graham Greene, Joseph Conrad and Herman Melville in portraying the guilt. Like the other novelists, his conviction takes shape in suggesting that all human endeavours seem an ignoble exercise in futility. Golding is seen preoccupied with man's alienation, free will, guilt and primacy of evil in treating the protagonist Martin in *Pincher Martin*.

Man's strained relationship with God seems to be the conviction of Golding's in the delineation of Pincher Martin. It is a tragic tale of 'infinite regression' which is the consequence of 'omnivorous egotism'. Golding opined of the Martin's character as, "very much fallen—he's fallen more than most. In fact, I went out of way to damn Pincher as much as I could by making him the nastiest type I could think of" (Baker 125). Martin partakes the moments of damnation of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus in facing the moments of death. The tragic intensity is comparable to that of the horrible death clock of Faustus. Other instances that offer the precipitous moment of tragical utterance is Browning's Bishop in articulating a confessional note of evil, guilt, wickedness and impiety.

The novel *Pincher Martin* opens with the sight of turmoil in which Christopher Hadley Martin is caught, whose ship is torpedoed in Mid-Atlantic. In a series of interior monologues that cram the mind of the drowning naval officer, Golding places the interplay of present and past; truth and false; fantasy and desire in the reader's view of Martin. The officer is washed ashore to an island and wages a battle for life. The chaotic revelations of a drowning man are portrayed to the most minuscule detail to intensify the purgatorial effect:

He was caught struggling in every direction, he was the centre of the writhing and kicking knot of his own body. There was no up or down, no light no air. He felt his mouth open of itself and the shrieked word burst out 'help' (*Pincher Martin* 7).

Martin's ordeal against the forces and the survival attempts lend a metaphysical experience rather than a real experience. He is found dead by the rescue team and their immediate intention is to pick the corpse up. Golding caught glimpse of the precipitous moment of Martin's struggle for survival. Time and experiences in the life of Martin are telescoped into the moment of significance. The tribulations of his mind to maintain the sanity of mind is dealt in detail. His ultimate stance is to keep up his ardent value, which is his personality.

Golding wistfully juxtaposes Martin's past with the present. 'Snarl', the other attire of Martin's consciousness takes over. There are associated values on the merit side of him that are imagination, intelligence and indomitable will. In the words of Johnston, "Pincher Martin is an exhaustive demonstration of the original proposition, illustrating the delusive and egoistical length to which man's creative powers may take him to the name of survival" (105). His vehement denial of extinction is vindictive of his personality, which he protects to the hilt.

Survival, paradoxically assumes a new sense in the case of modern civilization. Men indulge in the war (the back drop is the Great War), which is the result of civilization. They start again to learn the survival from the primitive. Golding deftly brings out the fact with the enactment of the Martin passing through various stages of development. Left to the winds on an uninhabited island, he works out for water, food and shelter. Beaten against the rocks and elements, he passes through the ordeal of survival. The nauseating food and withstanding the fierce elements pose the existential question of finding his identity.

The titanic struggle Martin wages is not directed to mere survival but for preserving identity and sanity. He builds a replica of a man out of stone,



which is a mirror of his image and his identity on the island. He is haunted by the inherent existential dilemmas that he might be attacked by chance adversaries. The dwarf's (replica he builds) head topples, mocking at his efforts; at times substantiating his fears. He indulges in a sort of premonition, "the rock is likely to disappear like the teeth that get worn away" (*Pincher Martin* 78). Contradicting the internal qualms, he musters his strength and states that nothing could go against his will and intelligence. His reassurance to himself is the dire need of the moment and hence rebuilds the dwarf, "on the stone that after all was not too heavy for education and intelligence" (80). It is a broad message of Golding about how the civilization is haunted by the fear of unknown.

Pincher does not accept extinction and he vacillates between oblivion and consciousness. The recollection of his identity conjures up the memory of the broken ship and his eventual reaching on to the island. In moments of utter isolation, he indulges in self assurance, "Presently it will be daylight, I shall see wreckage. I won't die. I can't die" (*Pincher Martin* 14). Wriggling like an animal he searches for suitable thought. "It found the thought, separated it from the junk, lifted it and used the apparatus of the body to give it force and importance. 'I am intelligent'" (32).

Golding telescopes time in the consciousness of Martin. Being driven by pain, he ruminates over the past and is seized by the figures of Nat and Mary. His state of mind is similar to the condition of Macbeth in Banquet Scene. The excruciating pain in the body and the haunting past have self-inflicting agony on Martin. The image of Nathaniel, a saintly figure who prophecies the death of Martin, "You could say that I know it is important for you personally to understand about heaven-about dying because in only a few years you will be dead" (*Pincher Martin* 71). The omen horrifies Martin and thinks over the implication. He rejects Nat for a fool and harbours a secret hatred for him. Nat wants Pincher to learn the technique of dying into heaven, in order to make himself ready for heaven when death comes. Golding's religious conviction, perhaps suggestive of medieval Christian

belief, stresses the earthy existence as a preparation for damnation or salvation.

Golding creates the character of Nathaniel as a counter poise to Martin. Nat and Mary stand for the goodness in Martin. In a fit of emotion he admits, "Mary and Nat stand in the lighted centre of my darkness" (*Pincher Martin* 151). Mary has been a strong influence on Martin. She remains a mystery to him, "The invincible banner of virginity" (151), which he thinks she proudly carries. Martin was emotionally disturbed when Mary married Nat. Martin's evil designs reaches the highest point when he wants to kill Mary as he fails to seduce her. On another occasion, he plans to murder Nat for having won Mary's hand.

Martin's unyielding personality trait reveals one more shade of his attitude, thereby divulging his complete self through a series of illusions and interior monologues. One such recollection, "...a woman's body, white and detailed...a boy's body...box office, the bridge of the ship..." (*Pincher Martin* 25-26). The recollection acts as a cognate reconstructing the pattern of Martin's existence. To accentuate his personality trait of being a pincher, he is ironically Pincher. He carries the nick name 'Pincher' apart from his original name 'Christopher', carries the meaning of Christ bearer.

Pincher Martin is created as a devourer of life. Pete, the director, puts it as, "Chris-Greed, Greed-Chris know each other" (*Pincher Martin* 119). Martin's omnivorous egotism leads him to the sub-human status, wherein he does not shy away from doing harm to anybody. Mary is "nothing but another step on which one must place the advancing foot" (149), and he thinks of Jane as being "good for a tumble (143). His cynical and sadistic pleasure is seen in his invitation to Alfred, the director, when shares bed with his wife Helen. In a bid to win the motor cycle race he cripples his friend Peter. Martin's greed, pride and animal instincts take him to a stage that is beyond redemption. In this pursuit of 'kill and eat pattern' he has nothing to preserve but his self.

Golding draws the un-regenerated Martin in the final confrontation between the black centre and black lighting. Martin remains as Pincher who is



unremorseful and condemned. His unrepentant self-preservation is seen when he fails to submit to God, "I have considered, I prefer it, pain and all" (*Pincher Martin* 197). Martin loses sanity and faces an apparition, which can be interpreted as symbolic dooms day. He indulges in conversation with it in a fragmented self. In a traumatic and unyielding strife with elements, self and past, Martin utters, "I spit on your compassion. I shit on your heaven" (199-200). With the strike of dark lighting he is converged into vortex. Golding presents *Pincher Martin* as a damned character, who has no hope for redemption.

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