

WILLIAM GOLDING'S PINCHER MARTIN:  
A STUDY OF SELF AND ITS TERROR OF  
NEGATION

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## Abstract

Pincher Martin describes the genesis of a preternatural world and then this world's gradual disintegration as its lonely creator, the novel's protagonist, embarks on an unwilling voyage of discovery to the dark wellsprings of self. While occasionally touching on matters pertaining to the novel's structure, each chapter of this thesis concentrates on tracing the development of this theme. Chapter I details the miracle of creation that proceeds from self's inscrutable essence, the role of association in this process, and the nexus between creation and self's survival after the body's death. Chapter II begins to articulate the novel's central irony: from within the same dark core of self responsible for the salvation of the first ordered creation, a second order, formed out of memory and destructive of its precursor, gradually begins to emerge. Chapter II also shows how reason assists in the rebirth of psycho-physical self, and, how by seeking to lend solidity and order to the created artifice, methodical reason pits itself against spontaneous revelation. Chapter III considers the collapse of self's artifice beneath the weight of accumulating realization. It also discusses how reason becomes inadequate and finally goes awry as self divides into components operating at cross-purposes. The Hindu sources of Golding's notions of subjective and objective reality -- together with his protagonist's final agonies in the teeth of not-being --

are the subjects of Chapter IV. In the final section of the thesis, the relationship of chapter fourteen to the novel's structure and theme is examined, and Pincher Martin is discussed within the context of Golding's first four novels.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction: The Vital First Reading	1
Notes - Introduction	6
CHAPTER I: Creation	7
CHAPTER II: The Genesis of the Second Order of Discovery and Understanding	16
Notes - Chapter II	36
CHAPTER III: The Final Day: Reason Collapses, The Artifice is Exposed	37
Notes - Chapter III	57
CHAPTER IV: The Last Repeat of the "Pattern"; Golding's Debt	58
Notes - Chapter IV	66
CHAPTER V: The Largest Chinese Box; Conclusion	67
Notes -- Chapter V	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78

## INTRODUCTION

### THE VITAL FIRST READING

Most of this thesis proceeds from analysis undertaken during repeated, painstaking readings of the novel. Though one hates to begin on a note that might dismiss a good deal of what follows, I firmly believe that the real achievement of Pincher Martin can only be savoured during a first uninitiated reading of the work; before reason has its opportunity to pause and then dissect, before delimitations of critical phraseology set in. First reading chapters one to thirteen a receptive reader may feel drawn into the genesis and annihilation of an intensely visual world, a world at times conveyed by an almost camera-like narrator using language with austere economy. The camera, by no means omniscient, (what camera is!) confines itself to objectively recording an interior realm. Golding nonetheless manages to breathe life into the riot of Pincher's complex perceptions and makes the world they create live vividly before our eyes. Camera-like, objectively, with fastidious attention to detail, the following passage describes the protagonist's sense impressions as he lies exhausted after his climb onto the rock:

His right arm was bent under his body and his wrist doubled. He sensed this hand and the hard pressure of the knuckles against his side but the pain was not intense enough to warrant the titanic effort of moving. His left arm stretched away along



the trench and was half-covered in water. His right eye was so close to this water that he could feel a little pluck from the surface tension when he blinked and his eyelashes caught in the film. The water had flattened again by the time he saw the surface consciously but his right cheek and the corner of his mouth were under water and were causing a tremble. The other eye was above water and was looking down the trench. The inside of the trench was dirty white, strangely white with more than the glossy reflection from the sky. The corner of his mouth pricked. Sometimes the surface of the water was pitted for a moment or two and faint interlacing circles spread over it from each pit.<sup>1</sup>

Descriptive metaphors and similes (not those hatched within and used by Pincher's consciousness itself, but those used to describe its activities and perceptions) have been pruned down to an extreme functionality. Never extravagant or over-extended, they directly distill the sense of something without calling undue attention to themselves:

...the consciousness was moving and poking about among the pictures and revelations, among the shape-sounds and the disregarded feelings like an animal ceaselessly examining its own cage. It rejected the detailed bodies of women, slowly sorted the odd words, ignored the pains and the insistence of the shaking body. It was looking for a 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." (31-32)

For thirteen chapters we see, we experience. We witness what seems to be living human suffering, what seems to be an agonized descent into madness courageously and resourcefully endured in the nightmarish present of a lonely rock in the North Atlantic, together with the memory of suffering callously and calculatingly inflicted on others in the past. The backward motions into recollection are imbued with a sense

of slipping as though pushed by the interior exigencies of consciousness, not the blatant manipulating hand of an external narrator:

He dressed as for bed and wrapped the grey sweater round his feet. It made a muffling between them and the rock like the cathedral carpets over stone. That was a particular sensation the feet never found anywhere else particularly when they wore those ridiculous medieval shoes of Michael's all fantastically but with practically no sole. Beside the acoustics were so bad -- wah, wah, wah and then a high whine up among the barrel vault to which one added with every word one spoke as though one were giving a little periodic momentum to a pendulum---  
 "Can't hear you, old man, not a sausage. Up a bit. give. I still can't hear you---"  
 "More? Slower?" (117)

Consciousness ebbs and flows before our eyes. Sometimes it disappears down into an exhausted labyrinth -- "At an end so far from the beginning that he had forgotten everything he had thought while he was there, he lifted his chin and saw the sun was sinking" (117) -- or shuts off abruptly in terror -- "Something was taken away. For an instant he felt himself falling; and then there came a gap of darkness in which there was no one" (167). These are not artificial gaps in the narrative, however; they are zones of experience accounted for. They are part of the texture of the flow. From the first day to the last hour the account remains unbroken; chapter divisions are determined by eddies or surges in the unceasing movement of the hero's interior life. For example, chapter seven ends with the triumphant realization, "Seaweed!" (108) and chapter eight begins with the frantic determination to use the stuff to transmute the rock into a "hot cross bun" (109). The division merely emphasizes the acceleration of conscious

activity.

Reading the novel for the first time, engaged by the life, by the verisimilitude of chapters one to thirteen, we are set up for a staggering blow. Golding deals it out in the last page of chapter fourteen. Pincher never really kicked off his seaboots, never really swam out to an isolated rock in the North Atlantic, never really clung to that rock and in isolation slowly went mad. We have unknowingly visited a region of the "undiscovered country from whose bourne / No traveller returns".<sup>2</sup> Leaving us reeling and puzzled, Golding insists that we ponder not only the fate of man after death, but also the nature of what we so often unhesitatingly designate as "reality". No, none of what transpired in those thirteen chapters was "real" in the pedestrian sense of the word. It was hidden away in another dimension, a fragile cocoon suspended in the void. If Golding was successful it nonetheless lived before our eyes, lived as a reality in its own right -- often hallucinatory and feverishly metaphysical -- but also as the familiar place of our own everyday perception. Peering out from inside our isolated "bone globe" each of us exists insulated within a world sustained by the five senses, organized, explained, and made comfortable by our reason, frequently invaded by memory at the spontaneous promptings of association. Pincher's experience after death merely epitomizes the evanescence, the alluring illusory permanence and solidity of this "reality". For the protagonist's remarkable will recreated this familiar mode in order to survive as "Pincher",

so that self could continue as an autonomous psycho-physical entity. But Golding insists we become aware of another reality larger than self -- larger, permanent, perhaps even supreme -- a presence "timeless and without mercy" (201): existing all around and deep within the distracting life of each of our individual pockets of experience. As we read the first thirteen chapters we are meant to succumb to the allure of the complex and engaging life of self, we are meant to repeat what we so often do in everyday life: accept this experience, our experience, as the genuine article. This acceptance enables chapter fourteen to descend like an apocalypse, compelling us to finally ask: reality? or illusion?

## Notes - Introduction

<sup>1</sup> William Golding, Pincher Martin (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 37. All quotations from the novel will be from this edition; page references will accompany each quotation within the text of the thesis.

<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare, Hamlet, III.i.79-80.

## CHAPTER I

### CREATION

Like the biblical account of the world's creation, Pincher Martin begins with a watery chaos. Whirled about underwater in his death throes the protagonist

was 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 and no air. He felt his mouth open of itself and the shrieked word burst out.

"Help!" (7)

Out of this chaos an order will emerge, just as it did in Genesis, only this time created to sustain self, after the body's death, in a preternatural existence outside of the realm of the physical senses, where time's conventional measuring sticks have no meaning. Pincher's world will be created from memory and galvanized into life by the quint-essence of his powerful self:

...a fact like a bar of steel, a thing that which was so nakedly at the centre of everything that it could not even examine itself. In the darkness of the skull it existed, a darker dark, self-existent and indestructable. (45)

This inscrutable core of being, self-sufficient and godlike, spontaneously imposes a desperate order on the chaos of its prior experience and creates a refuge against negation. The refuge endures for six self-created days. There is no seventh day of rest. Though determined to survive at any cost Pincher was not an immortal; in fact, the ostensible godlike power,

the irresistible will to manipulate prior experience and defy mortality, proves to be the progeny of a grotesquely enlarged mortal failing. Golding's hero devoted his life to self and to the ruthless service of its compulsive desires. At the bottom of all the compulsion was the terror of not-being, individual self's fear of absorption back into the ineffable "thing that created it"(179). This terror compelled the creation of the remarkable world detailed in the novel as well.

When Pincher's body expires, freeing self from the confusion overwhelming the waning physical senses ("...the man lay suspended behind the whole commotion, detached from his jerking body" (8) ) the process of self-preserving creation grounded in the materials of prior experience properly begins. At this point Golding is not describing a complex, refined sensibility, the sort usually associated with acts of creation. All the nuances of individual personality are absent and superfluous. Pincher's being, distilled into a "snarl", borders on naked impulse -- as an unalloyed atavistic will to live on, conscious only of dangling dangerously, suspended between existence and extinction. Here at this rudimentary level of consciousness a nexus between creation, self, and survival evinces itself. Of all the "luminous pictures" automatism shuffles before perception, by association only one is selected for sustained attention. Even one step away from extinction the "snarl" makes comparisons, instinctively chooses the image dredged up from

the depths of memory that expresses its condition, renders its situation comprehensible, and will preserve the spark of consciousness from the darkness of oblivion. Salvation takes the form of a metaphor embodying the delicate balance of the "snarl's" existence; a metaphor, most importantly, suggesting the ability to take control, to achieve domination:

A picture steadied and the man regarded it. He had not seen such a thing for so many years...The jam jar was standing on a table, brightly lit from O.P.. It might have been a huge jar in the centre of a stage or a small one almost touching the face, but it was interesting because one could see into a little world there which was quite separate but which one could control. 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... By varying the pressure on the membrane you could do anything you liked with the glass figure which was wholly in your power...  
 ...The delicate balance of the glass figure related itself to his body. In a moment of wordless realization he saw himself touching the surface of the sea with just such a dangerous stability, poised between floating and going down. The snarl thought words to itself. They were not articulate but they were there in a luminous way as a realization. Of course.  
 My lifebelt. (9)

Self's essence has taken the first step toward creating a "little world...which was quite separate, but which one could control"; it has discovered a ploy to begin the artifice: rescue the artificer, inflate the lifebelt. By association the memory-metaphor of the glass diver leads to the recollection of the lifebelt, which in turn triggers "a flood of connected images" (9). The result: "Suddenly he knew who he was and where he was. He was lying suspended in the water like the glass figure; he was not struggling but limp" (10).



For if self will survive, the conscious, rational mind must be satisfied that the conditions for physical life as it once knew it exist. Pincher cannot carry on as a disembodied being or an impulse one moment away from disintegration. Self must have a body, air for it to breath, and eventually a dry place where it can live. "Something meaningful behind the snarl", a "purpose which had not yet had time and experience to discover how relentless it was" (10-11), silently proceeds via association to encase consciousness in the shell of a recalled physical identity and to create the illusion of physical conditions where this identity may be sustained.

The remainder of the first chapter, then, describes the resuscitation and re-elaboration of personality around the silent, purposeful workings of a seminal consciousness where thought is "not articulate but...there in a luminous way as a realization" (9). More refined emotions return together with disconnected verbalizations and the first stirrings of reason:

He thought. The thoughts were laborious, disconnected but vital.  
Presently it will be daylight.  
I must move from one point to another.  
Enough to see one move ahead.  
Presently it will be daylight.  
I shall see wreckage. (14)

While the narrator admits us into the slowly opening door of Pincher's conscious mind, and while the description of its increasingly complex and verbalized revolutions supersede the glimpse of its primitive, inarticulate essence, that

dark core, that ineluctable will, silently operates. Godlike, it creates order: formless darkness gives way to the division of night and day (18); the "cold, persistent idiot water", a bane to identity, containing "no weed...no speck of solid" (19) nothing definite to define self's existence, gives way to solid rock. A mind-boggling "infinite drop of the soft cold stuff" (19) is supplanted by a conceivable, finite thing where personality may further re-define and nurture itself. Without it the spark of consciousness would be extinguished, as a near-fatal crisis of purposeless automatism attests:

Pictures invaded his mind and tried to get between him and the urgency of his motion towards the east. The jam jar came back but robbed of significance. There was a man, a brief interview, a desk-top so polished that the smile of teeth was being reflected in it. There was a row of huge masks hung up to dry and a voice from behind the teeth that had been reflected in the desk spoke softly.

"Which one do you think would suit Christopher?" (16)

Though Pincher exhorts himself to "Think. My last chance. Think what can be done" (17); deliberate conscious thought does not deliver him. With logic he vainly tries to conjure up the hope of rescue:

She sank out in the Atlantic. Hundreds of miles from land. She was alone, sent north-east from the convoy to break WT silence. The U-boat may be hanging round to pick up a survivor or two for questioning... She may surface at any moment...Survivors, a raft, the whaler, the dinghy, wreckage may be milling about only a swell or two away hidden in the mist and waiting for rescue... (17-18)

These are plausible but unrealizable forms of salvation, beyond the powers of self's creation. The dark "centre" of being, mutely aware that if self will survive salvation must be

convincing and its origin concealed from the conscious mind, uses its spontaneous artifice to shape from old, nearly forgotten memories of a decaying tooth (see 174) and an obscure pinpoint on a captain's chart (see 31), a rock in the middle of the North Atlantic where a lost sailor may survive.

Golding takes pains to indicate that Pincher is not engaged in any conscious self-deception: he mistakes the rock for a ship, and, when he finally realizes what it is, the sight of his own unconscious creation fills him with genuine terror:

He glimpsed a riven rock face with trees of spray growing up it and the sight of this rock floating in mid-Atlantic was so dreadful that he wasted his air by screaming as if it had been a wild beast. (22)

Instead of the "formless mad talking of uncontrolled water" (21) there is "a sudden roar", the undeniable sound of conflict between definable entities. The inscrutable darkness residing in the heart of self has triumphed; it has re-kindled consciousness, re-fashioned a body, and shaped a world out of a formless chaos where identity may perpetuate itself.

If the first chapter affords a glimpse of the dark "centre's" machinations -- that spontaneous, unfathomable core of being's efforts to establish the essential conditions for survival -- then the second describes a process made possible in the first: the re-vivification of the complex conscious mind, sustained by the stimulation of the senses and the motions of reason. Chapter two begins with Pincher lying on a pebble slope at the rock's fringe exhausted by his struggle in the water. His senses, provided with the stimulus of

noise and pain, begin to "pull him back into himself and organize him again as a single being" (24). Wind and sea against the rock

made a language which forced itself into the dark, passionless head and assured it that the head was somewhere -- somewhere -- and then finally with the flourish of a gull's cry over the sound of wind and water, declared to the groping consciousness: wherever you are, you are here! (24)

Though personality begins to reformulate itself through a process which depends on a sense of squarely existing in the present, in his weakened state Pincher cannot avoid a brief simultaneous participation in two worlds, both equally "real":

Under the side of his face the pebbles nagged. The pictures that came and went inside his head did not disturb him because they were so small and remote. There was a woman's body, white and detailed, there was a boy's body; there was a box office, the bridge of a ship, an order picked out across a far sky in neon lighting, a tall, thin man who stood humbly in the darkness at the top of a companion ladder; there was a man hanging in the sea like a glass sailor in a jam jar. There was nothing to choose between the pebbles and the pictures. Sometimes a pebble would be occupied entirely by a picture as though it were a window, a spy-hole into a different world or other dimension. Words and sounds were sometimes visible as shapes like the shouted order. They did not vibrate and disappear. When they were created they remained as hard enduring things like the pebbles. (26)

"There was nothing to choose between the pebbles and the pictures" because both originate from within self, stored as memory in the deep recesses of the "centre". Nothing apparently external to Pincher's consciousness is the product of immediate, direct sense perception; all is grounded in recalled experience. Sapped by exhaustion, the will has allowed the necessary ascendancy of prior experience synthesized

by creative impulse into the ordered world -- sea, wind, rock, sky, gulls, etc. -- to slip, permitting this brief invasion of fragmented memory-pictures. The "centre" must keep them artificially separate, maintaining the pedestrian sense of a "past" subordinate to a "present" when all is one in a purely solipsistic world. Without this distinction a coherent sense of identity is impossible. He cannot simultaneously contemplate both worlds. As his strength returns, a single thought enables him to close the door on aimless automatism -- "I should be about as heavy as this on Jupiter" -- and gives him "back a bit of his personality", pulling him out of limbo into the created "present": "At once he was master. He knew that his body weighed no more than it had always done, that it was exhausted, that he was trying to crawl up a little pebble slope"(27). The ability to make the artificial distinction between past and present returns:

He looked closely at a button...  
 ..."I know you. Nathaniel sewed you on. I asked him to. Said it was an excuse to get him away from the mess-deck for a bit of peace." (29)

Again urging himself to "think, you bloody fool, think"(30), he deliberately and consciously searches through memory, confirming his mastery, his coherent identity, aiming to press the past into the service of the present. The miracle of the rock needs a logical explanation:

There was a name missing. That name was written on the chart, well out in the Atlantic, eccentrically isolated so that seamen who could to a certain extent laugh at wind and weather had made a joke of the rock. Frowning, he saw the chart now in his mind's eye but not clearly. He saw the navigating commander of the cruiser bending over it with the captain, saw himself as navigator's yeoman standing ready while they grinned at each other. (31)

Instead of passively enduring, "his consciousness was moving and poking about...It found the thought...and used the apparatus of the body to give it force and importance. 'I am intelligent.'" (31-32). This assertion signals that self has solidified to the point where it can actively confront a trial and achieve a co-ordinated, identity-confirming triumph.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GENESIS OF THE SECOND ORDER OF DISCOVERY AND UNDERSTANDING

Chapters one to three related Pincher's saving acts of creation and the consequent re-elaboration of self, culminating in the conquest of the cliff (36-39) and the discovery of the crevice-shelter (45-46). Enveloped within this ordered self-created world Pincher is insulated against annihilation. The remainder of the novel will detail the emergence of another order from deep within the same inscrutable darkness responsible for the first. Only, instead of another series of inventions meant to strengthen self's refuge these spontaneous discoveries will gradually form into a knowledge destructive of it. Sorted out, ordered by association, past behaviour will be revealed as a succession of repeated "patterns", a succession extending unobstructed by the body's death right into self's preternatural life on the rock. Pincher gradually comes to understand that the progenitor of all the "patterns" is the terror of not-being. In life this hidden fear produced compulsively cruel and selfish acts; after the body's death it created the rock. Always lingering just beneath consciousness fear compels self to elevate its desires and ambitions to a pre-eminent place, where the distracting radiance of their self-sufficient light might dispel the ever-present memory of

the darkness of negation. Exploiting, manipulating, seeking to dominate life around it, self unconsciously seeks reassurance in an illusion of control that will deny the inevitability and implications of not-being.

For Pincher all these realizations could form only after the body's death. In life he could bury occasional glimpses of the original terror by acting on and interacting with others; the senses could provide stimulation and distraction, lending themselves to the preoccupation of conquest and domination. After the extinction of the senses, however, there is nothing external to self except an ineffable mode it can know only as not-being. Utterly alone, encased within its own creations, self has nothing to contemplate but these creations and the emerging patterns of its own past actions.

If self consciously acknowledges the subjective origin of the presumed objectively existing physical world it has created, this world will inevitably fall to pieces. But this understanding does creep irresistibly before consciousness; something deep within the "centre" unconsciously and spontaneously reveals what self struggles to consciously and wilfully deny in order to survive. Self's rational component uses its "weapons" of "education and intelligence" to try and achieve domination by making the created world appear to conform to the rationally apprehended laws governing the "objective" physical world. These laws -- man so often fondly reminds himself -- have their basis in a reality supposedly independent of subjective human consciousness.



Burrowing into reason, burrowing into the reassurance of the "objective" order it apprehends, Pincher dismisses dangerous intimations of understanding with pithy explanations, or, by logically considering distracting problems of survival and rescue -- problems taking the objective existence of the created world (and self's existence as a psycho-physical entity) for granted -- implicitly bolsters the "reality" of his situation. Unfortunately reason ultimately fails. His creation is not part of the material world; the laws of that world do not operate here. Man-made and inadequate, reason even finally contradicts itself with fearsome consequence.

Hoping the silhouette will attract a ship, Pincher heaps up a pile of stones in chapter four to serve as "a man to stand here for me". First erected as a testament to identity and the fortifying pretense of rescue, this heap of stones will undergo a transmutation later in the novel reflecting the revelation and understanding of the "pattern". By chapter twelve it is completely transformed into a mute personification of not-being, the very thing it was originally intended to deny. Finding and hauling the proper stones (61-65) solidifies self by focussing its powers of "education and intelligence". A crisis in chapter five dramatically confirms this. Pincher ruminates over the rock's geologic history and by association inadvertently treads too near the truth of its subjective model:

He looked solemnly at the line of rock and found himself thinking of them as teeth. He caught himself imagining that they were emerging gradually from the jaw -- but that was not the truth. They were sinking; or rather they were being worn away in infinite slow motion. They were the grinders of old age, worn away. A lifetime of the world had blunted them, was reducing them as they ground what food rocks eat. (78)

Suddenly the air becomes "blotting paper", sucking up his voice's resonance, draining it of the reverberation lending the utterances of "education and intelligence" weight and conviction. For a few moments he becomes aware of his isolation and of the vast, personality-negating distances stretching out all around him:

The blue, igloo-roof over the rock went away to a vast distance, the visible world expanded with a leap. The water lopped round a tiny rock in the middle of the Atlantic. The strain tautened his face. He took a step among the scattered papers.  
"My God!" (79)

He clutches at the "dwarf" in terror; its "head" falls off, clatters down the cliff and into the water, a perfect symbolic expression of Pincher's dilemma. The "head", seat of reason, the resource employed to give the creation of the rock an objective reality identity can anchor itself in, has been rendered useless for a moment by the sudden spontaneous apprehension of mind-boggling immensity. Frantically Pincher rebuilds the "dwarf", taller this time, on "the stone that after all was not too heavy for education and intelligence and will" (80). The effort of re-building demands a concentration that shuts out the horrible glimpse of isolation and plugs the breach through which negation

threatened to pour in. This, however, was only a brief, comparatively innocuous apprehension. The silent activity within the "centre" has not yet selected and ordered past experience to the point where consciousness will be forced to confront the rock's ultimate origin. Reason remains a bolt-hole.

Chapter six begins with Pincher discoursing before this monument to his survival. Citing points one to four he tries to subordinate life on the rock to an organization grounded in his reason, hoping to somehow control experience by making it adhere to the explicability and predictability of rational laws:

"The end to be desired is rescue. For that the bare minimum necessary is survival. I must keep this body going. I must give it drink and food and shelter...Point one.

"Point two. I must expect to fall sick. I cannot expose the body to this hardship and expect the poor beast to behave as if it were in clover. I must watch for signs of sickness and doctor myself.

"Point three. I must watch my mind. I must not let madness steal up on me and take me by surprise. Already -- I must expect hallucinations. That is the real battle. That is why I shall talk out loud for all the blotting-paper. In normal life to talk out loud is a sign of insanity. Here it is proof of identity.

"Point four. I must help myself to be rescued. I cannot do anything but be visible...if they see the rock they will see this dwarf I have made. They will know that someone built the dwarf and they will come and take me off. All I have to do is to live and wait. I must keep my grip on reality." (81)

Finding a "rare and forgotten thing", an echo inside the drinking hole, he further explains his intentions:

If this rock tries to adapt me to its ways 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. (86)

After the excursions of memory during the second night, he begins the third day, designated "a thinking day". Problems -- presumptive of the rock's objective existence and meant to possess and concentrate attention in the "present" -- are brought forward for consideration. A water supply must be secured: "A well. Boring through rock. A dew pond. Line with clay and straw. Precipitation. Education. Intelligence" (97). Rescue must be attended to as well. Wrapping the "dwarf's" head in foil entails some precise calculation:

\*East or west is useless. If convoys appear in either of those quarters they would be moving towards the rock anyway. But they may appear to the south, or less likely, to the north. But the sun does not shine from the north. South is the best bet, then."  
(97-98)

As though to mock intentions of mastery through the deliberate workings of "education and intelligence", spontaneous association pulls Pincher out of the here and now into an extensive memory-episode, one of a series that will contribute to an understanding of the "pattern" of past behaviour, render the workings of education a bane, fragment his being, and eventually undermine the artifice of the rock by exposing its subjective antecedents. Chronologically haphazard though their recollection may be, by chapter thirteen the events contained within each of these episodes will have formed into a chain, a chain fused together by cause and effect, snaking

from a childhood terror, through Christopher's adult life, his body's death and the creation of the rock. Fear of not-being created the chain and confined self within it. Actuated by a craving for control, compulsive, often destructive actions produced consequences of the same order: instead of achieving control, self was denied it; slave of this appetite, its hunger for domination only sharpened, never satiated, self set in motion and trapped itself within a series of events beyond its control.

A "coraline substance...thin and pink like icing" (99) suggests the wartime paint ("Barmaid's Blush") of the destroyer Wildebeeste. Transported back onto the ship's bridge, Pincher relives his tormented meditation over the union of Nathaniel and Mary, relives the moment when the scheme to kill Nat (by suddenly turning the ship and pitching him from his dangerous prayer perch on the rail into the sea) first presented itself:

But say one nudged circumstances -- not in the sense that one throttled with the hands or fired a gun -- but gently shepherded them the way they might go? Since it would be a suggestion to circumstances only it could not be considered what a strict moralist might call it --

"And who cares anyway?"

This was to run with a rapier at the arras without more than a hope of success.

"He may never sit there again."

Then the officer of the watch in the execution of his duty gives a helm order to avoid floating wreckage or a drifting mine and no one is any the worse.

"But if he sits there again --" (104-105)

Searching for "a kind of peace" he hoped killing Nat would

purge away the corrosive hate ("to love and hate [Mary] were now one thing and one emotion") and sorrow ("Love for Nat? That was this sorrow dissolved through the hate so that the new solution was a deadly thing in the chest and bowels" (103) ) by clearing the way for the utter possession, for the absolute conquest of Mary. Nathaniel's death, as well, would be an exquisite bit of manipulation ("say one nudged circumstances"), a triumph of calculation and control. As a later memory-episode makes clear (183-186) this attempted murder will have a consequence of the same violent and destructive order -- the would-be murderer will himself be killed -- a consequence directly responsible for the creation of the rock. Other memory-episodes will reveal this doomed act as one with many precursors; merely another repeat of an already established pattern of compulsive behaviour.

Shaken out of his reverie and back into the present, Pincher re-addresses the problem of rescue, re-animates this identity-lending pretense by setting reason back into motion. The result: a "triumph", a "job with [a] point" (109). Using seaweed to make the rock a "hot cross bun" -- an act of domination because "men make patterns" --he feverishly hopes to "impose an unnatural pattern on nature, a pattern that would cry out to any rational beholder -- Look! Here is thought. Here is man" (109).

This portentous statement begins chapter eight, a chapter delineated by Pincher's effort to realize this grand design. Though he concentrates his will so that no memory-

episodes intrude for the remainder of the "day", he never even begins to realize his goal, a herculean task made impossible by disturbing moments of vacancy (112) a creeping, demoralizing weariness, and by the same intelligence which conceived the task in the first place:

When he piled the weed in the first trench it did not come within a foot of the top.

He stood in the trench, looking down at the red and brown weed and felt suddenly listless.

"Twelve loads? Twenty? And then the line to thicken after that---"

Intelligence sees so clearly what is to be done and can count the cost beforehand. (114)

As dusk approaches "what at first had been a purpose became grey and endless and without hope. He began to look for hope in his mind but the warmth had gone or if he found anything it was an intellectual and bloodless ghost" (117). Inserting himself into the sleeping crevice and wrapping his feet in a sweater "made a muffling between them and the rock like cathedral carpet over stone" (117). Association lifts him from the crevice and back into a rehearsal of Everyman, where he was needled by Peter the producer, a man he cuckolded in the pursuit of ambition. Peter sardonically "introduced" Pincher to a mask:

"Chris -- Greed. Greed -- Chris. Know each other."

...  
 "Let me make you two better acquainted. This painted bastard here takes anything he can lay his hands on. Not food, Chris, that's far too simple. He takes the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman. He was born with his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab. He's a cosmic case of the bugger who gets his penny and someone else's bun...  
 ..."Think you can play Martin, Greed?" (120)

This episode is not as unrelated to the "pattern" responsible for and repeated on the rock as it might appear. Pincher's manipulation of Pete's wife, Helen, together with doubtless many other selfish, ruthless acts, alienated his associates, forcing him out of the acting company and into the war.

The next day, in spite of the preceding night's enumeration of "problems" ("First clothes in the crevice, then more weed until the line is finished. Third, water... make a catchment area..." (121) ) proves anything but methodical. Actions are distracted, enervated; the ambition to turn the rock into a "hot-cross bun" forgotten, Pincher briefly labours on a water catchment area, solacing himself with rational calculations and a vision never to be realized:

"The amount of water in any given length of the cut will consist of all the water collected higher up, and also will be proportional to the area of rock above."

"...after this I shall do a real engineering job. I shall find a complex area round a possible basin and cut a network of lines that will guide the water to it ...like a Roman emperor, bringing water to the city from the hills."

"This is an aqueduct. I call it the Claudian."

He began to flake again, imposing purpose on the senseless rock. (128-129)

Once more he experiences the vague, half-understanding of the rock's model taking shape just beneath the surface of consciousness: "There is something venomous about the hardness of this rock. It is harder than rock should be. And -- familiar" (129). It plunges him into another crisis, similar to the "blotting-paper" terror. The voice of "education and intelligence" becomes meaningless:



The voice evaporated at the gate like escaping steam on a dry day.

"I'm working too hard, If I don't watch out I shall exhaust myself. Anyway I'll hand it to you, Chris. I don't think many people would---"

He stopped suddenly, then began again.

"Chris. Christopher! Christopher Hadley Martin---"

The words dried up.

There was an instrument of examination, a point that knew it existed. There were sounds that came out of the lower part of a face. They had no meaning attached to them. They were useless as tins thrown out with the lids buckled back. (129-130)

Chapter eight began with the elucidation of vaunting ambitions and ends on a note of abject terror. Survival and rescue were goals at the outset; now the preservation of a coherent sense of identity would be a "triumph."

As memories become more intrusive -- entering and possessing consciousness unsolicited, via association -- Pincher's ability to maintain a coherent sense of identity wears away. His greatest fear is of losing definition, of becoming "an album of snapshots, random, a whole show of trailers of old films" (133). By the fourth morning (93) the "centre" even finds it difficult to make the artificial distinction between "pictures" from the past and the present "reality". With increasing frequency through chapters six to twelve memories as vivid and substantial as life on the rock intrude. Belonging to a world where the straight line of chronological succession is meaningless, their intrusion eats away at the stability of the created order of the present. Of course, these recollections are not haphazard. Deep within the "centre" an inscrutable presence remains intact. Innately it imposes order; spontaneously it makes comparisons, finds

connections between events, discerns a "pattern".

Identity crumbles as the past acquires a clarity, an order that's expression and comprehension depend a good deal on the elaboration and fusion of two metaphors. T.S. Eliot once described the poet's mind as constantly creating "new wholes".<sup>1</sup> The silent spontaneous organization and understanding of the pattern of behaviour leading up to and repeated on the rock relies on the creation of a "new whole" out of two metaphors: the first, an image representing human life enslaved by self's compulsive desires (the "Chinese box"),<sup>2</sup> and the second expressing the ineffable mode that will swallow up and annihilate autonomous self ("black lightning").

Though lodged within the "two crevices" of rock and body during the second night, (68) consciousness is not confined there. The double envelope dissolves: without activity or trials to focus on, without the sense of definition and physical identity daylight gives, consciousness freely participates in the past. Pincher imagines the sun's fire travelling beneath the earth and this image transports him by association into a memory-episode beginning with a fire burning in a grate. Nathaniel Walteson discourses on the nature of heaven. Heaven, posits Nat, is "sheer negation. Without form and void. A sort of black lightning destroying everything we call life" (70). As time on the rock unravels "black lightning" becomes more than a fine sounding academic expression, even more than a vivid and compelling metaphor. It becomes a reality in its own right. All the inexorable

powers of "heaven", of not being, will be condensed into it. When the end comes "black lightning" will literally dismember Pincher's created world, his extraordinary will having forced annihilation to operate according to the dictates of this conception of it. The end is in the beginning as well. Nat has borrowed the words "without form and void" from Genesis 1.1, implying that after death man returns to the original condition out of which all creation emerges. Pincher shall be eventually forced to admit the veracity of this too.

Though he cut an absurd figure, Nat also made a prediction which unnerved his friend:

"There's a connection between us. Something will happen to us or perhaps we were meant to work together. You have an extraordinary capacity to endure."

"To what end?"

"To achieve heaven."

"Negation?"

"The technique of dying into heaven..."

"...You could say that I know it is important for you personally to understand about heaven -- about dying -- because in only a few years---" (71)

Back then Pincher uneasily dismissed his friend's lecture as nonsense; but as his sojourn on the rock grows longer, fraught with memory's intrusion, he must admit Nathaniel was right. As we shall see, they did indeed "work together", and Pincher's "extraordinary capacity to endure" results in a vivid demonstration of the "technique of dying into heaven". On the rock the "centre" picks up the threads of life's potential understanding dropped in the headlong pursuit of self's interests and weaves them into discovery.

The "Chinese box" is not recalled as abruptly as the "black lightning". At first Pincher consciously (and vainly) endeavors to remember the particulars of a vague, niggling memory. Recollection begins during the third night, spontaneous association again the catalyst. As Pincher considers "the sluggishness of his bowels", association conjures up "pictures of chrome and porcelain and attendant circumstances" (88), heaving him back into a distant morning where he confronted his visage in a bathroom mirror. Having just taken an associate's lover, Pincher considered the insensitivity of his act in terms of a general idea:

The whole business of eating was peculiarly significant. They made a ritual of it on every level, the Fascists as a punishment, the religious as a rite, the cannibal either as a ritual or as a superbly direct declaration to conquest. Killed and eaten. And of course eating with the mouth was only the gross expression of what was a universal process. You could eat with your cock or with your fists, or with your voice. You could eat with hobnailed boots or buying and selling or marrying and begetting or cuckolding -- (88)

This recollection again prompts him to consciously try and make an important connection:

But there was a connection between eating and the Chinese box. What was a Chinese box? A coffin? Or those carved ivory ornaments, one inside the other? Yet there was a Chinese box in it somewhere -- (90)

The idea of eating as a metaphor for self's progress through life has taken hold, but the link with the "Chinese box" remains elusive: "Think about women then or eating. Think about eating women, eating men...lie restful as a log and

consider the gnawed tunnel of life right up to this uneasy intermission" (90). Association immediately prods him to

"...call those three rocks out there the Teeth."

"...No! Not the Teeth!"

The teeth were here, inside his mouth. He felt them with his tongue, the double barrier of bone, each known and individual except the gaps -- and there they persisted as a memory if one troubled to think. But to lie on a row of teeth in the middle of the sea -- (91)

Pincher has gone perilously near a dangerous realization fatal to identity. Nonetheless, the "centre" will pursue the "Chinese box" down the meandering path of association because its innate impulse for order demands it. Conscious, purposeful efforts are to no avail. Only when he can no longer distinguish between "pictures" and "reality", only when his sense of physical identity weakens -- as it does at night in the crevice, or, more to our purpose here, in the daylight of chapter nine -- can association freely leap over the barrier of conscious control and the silent, purposeful component of the "centre" find the metaphor it seeks. Peering into a pool of water (134), vainly trying to make out the unrecognizable features of his face, at that moment, when his sense of physical identity slips away ("He puffed downward and the dark head wavered and burst...there was a lobster<sup>3</sup> supporting his weight at the end of his right sleeve") the little fish in the salt pool suggests an aquarium behind a bar and the second pivotal memory-episode emerges:

[Pete:]

"...I love you, Chris. Father and mother is one flesh.

And so my uncle. My prophetic uncle. Shall I elect you to my club?...

"Call it the Dirty Maggot Club. You member?..."

"We maggots are there all the week. 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...when they've finished the fish, Chris, they start on each other."

"Cheerful thought, old man."

"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 one and where there was a fish there is now one huge, successful maggot. Rare dish." (135-136)

Pete's drunken imagination also suggests a fusion of "Chinese box" and annihilating "black lightning": "Have you ever heard a spade knocking on the side of a tin box, Chris? Boom! Boom! Just like thunder" (136).

The real fusion of these two images into a single metaphor for Pincher's existence takes place that night in the crevice. Once again association runs riot in the darkness, unhampered by a solid sense of identity and its concomitant conscious control. Limitations of physical identity melt away:

...the crevice enlarged and became populous. There were times when it was larger than the rock, larger than the world, times when it was a tin box so huge that a spade knocking at the side sounded like distant thunder. Then after that there was a time when he was back in rock and distant thunder was sounding like the knocking of a spade against a vast tin box. (143-144)

That same night past life begins to form into an order the conscious rational mind would deny. The expression of this order is at first veiled and symbolic -- ostensibly a wild hallucination:

...There were projections in the wall of the tunnel so that though it was more nearly a well than a tunnel he could still climb. He laid hold, pulled himself up, projection after projection. The light was bright enough to show him the projections. They were faces, like the ones in the endless corridor. They were not weeping but they were trodden. They appeared to be made of some chalky material for when he put his weight on them they would break away so that only by constant movement upward was he able to keep up at all. He could hear his voice shouting in the well.

"I am! I am! I am!" (145)

Reason explains it all away in conventional Freudian terms, but this voice bears little conviction ("Nobody paid any attention...but the nature of the cretin was to go on talking" (145)). The well, projections and climb symbolize Pincher's lifelong, callous use of others to serve the compulsive desires of self; subordinating others to his own narrow ends, using them as footholds to "climb" away from his awareness of not-being, he sought to reinforce the illusory importance of his own being (I am!). On the rock self would deny this understanding because its actions after the body's death, though they lack their former living human objects, serve the same end: the created world of the rock is another chalky foothold in the futile well of denial, another "Chinese box". Pincher remains as the solitary maggot, swollen with the suffering of others, waiting for the booming spade of the "black lightning" to dig him up for consumption. In the next chapter the understanding condensed in this "hallucination" finds confirmation in another series of memory-episodes.

Summer lightning illumines the image of Mary Lovell to begin chapter ten and a memory-episode revealing the selfish

motivation, the insatiable desire to possess and dominate, responsible for her rape: "a madness, not so much in the loins as in the pride, the need to assert and break". (148). Raping Mary was an act of futility; after brutalizing her, still yearning for absolute possession, he asserted "I'll marry you then". Her response only quickened his hopeless desire, plunging him deeper into the pattern of compulsive behaviour that eventually cast him onto the rock; "I loathe you. I never want to see you or hear of you as long as I live" (152). Lumped together with the recollection of this act are a group of other memories all sharing an essence epitomized by the chalky well and the "Chinese box". Pincher caused a friend to crash ("let him turn with his overlapping wheel. Oh clever, clever, clever. My leg Chris, my leg...), committed a theft ("The cash box. Japanned tin, gilt lines. Open empty.") and a calculated cuckolding ("She's the producer's wife, old boy" (152) ). Mary's rape and the seduction of Peter's wife have definite consequences, form into part of the perceivable chain of cause and effect leading to the rock. Confined together in the box by their compulsive appetites, maggots bite and are bitten in return. The director had his revenge on his ruthlessly ambitious underling and released him for military conscription:

"No, old man. I'm sorry, but you're not essential."  
 "But George -- we've worked together! You know me---"  
 "I do, old man. Definitely."  
 "I should be wasted in the Forces. You've seen my work."  
 "Well then---"



The look up under the eyebrows. The suppressed smile. The smile allowed to spread until the white teeth were reflected in the top of the desk.

"I've been waiting for something like this. That's why I didn't kick you out before. I hope they mar your profile, old man. The good one." (153-154)

Slighted by the transparency of his manipulation, the producer's wife mocked Christopher's plea for intercession on his behalf:

"Help me, Helen, I must have your help."

"Black maggot eyes in a white face. Distance. Calculation. Death.

"Anything my sweet, but of course."

"After all, you're Pete's wife."

"So crude, Chris."

"You could persuade him."

Down close on the settee, near.

"Helen---"

"Why don't you ask Margot, my sweet, or that little thing you took out driving?"

Panic. Black eyes in a white face with no more expression than hard, black stones.

Eaten. (154-155)

Perhaps the most important memory of all in the tenth chapter recalls Nat's unexpected betrothal to Mary, still the burning object of Christopher's compulsion. This episode relates the sudden birth of a plot to possess Mary that will culminate in the Wildebeeste's destruction; it marks the point where a relentless series of events, like falling dominoes, are irrevocably set into motion, where Nat's prescience (70) begins to realize itself, where the two men's destinies fatally interweave. The recollections preceding this one have established Christopher's position at the time of the conversation -- he is about to be drafted into the armed forces. His past actions made this inevitable. He has been carried along to a crossroads, a point where he has the opportunity to make a choice, to clearly choose between roads radiating

away from him. But he is unable to choose. Here Christopher confirms that he has lost his freedom, abnegated any control of his destiny, bound himself irretrievably within a chain of cause and effect actuated by the compulsive desires of self. Participating in the memory of Nat's announcement, and the flickers of memory ( of Mary's rape (157-158) ) contained like Chinese boxes within that memory, Pincher recalls that he "felt the bleak recognition rising in him of the ineffable strength of these circumstances and this decision". Nat must not possess Mary. All considerations of affection and friendship are meaningless. For one brief moment an impulse stirred within him, presenting a choice that could have altered his destiny:

[Nat:]

"You'll be here to look after her, Chris, when I've gone."

There is something in the stars. Or what is this obscure impulse that sets my words at variance with my heart?

"Only be careful. Of me." (158)

But the "obscure impulse", the chance to break the "pattern" of compulsive behaviour, is "trodden down, kicked aside"; "calculation and hate" move Pincher to swallow his warning ("All right, Nat, forget it.") and choose the Navy in the hope of somehow getting at his friend and removing the impediment to the possession of Mary, even though he does it "drearly and with the foreknowledge of a chosen road". (159).

## Notes - Chapter II

1 "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), p. 287.

2 This represents only one of two meanings of "Chinese box" in the novel. Chapter V contains a discussion of the second.

3 His hands occasionally transmute into lobsters (creatures with "pinchers") because the "centre", constantly discovering links between things, associates the nickname Christopher's shipmates provided with a vital element of his nature. His determination to survive has the relentless, instinctive quality that animates a primitive creature like a lobster.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE FINAL DAY

#### REASON COLLAPSES

#### THE ARTIFICE IS EXPOSED

The fifth evening in the crevice then -- with all its implicit realizations about the past -- seriously undermines what remains of Pincher's ability to maintain a vital belief in the objective existence of the created physical conditions essential for survival. Self cannot maintain its identity, let alone realize its desires, without a corporeal form and the conditions to sustain it. He hauls himself out of the crevice into the sun for the final time (159); this is the last day. Recollection will finally reveal the model for the rock's creation and utterly destroy the pretence of its objective existence. Reason, heretofore used to fortify identity, will become a double-edged sword; the logic and calculation once used to carve out a refuge will slice the other way, cutting through the artifice, making its existence untenable in rational terms. By chapter twelve (175) self will have bolted into the flimsy pretence of lunacy; this stratagem meant to serve both as a paradoxical "explanation" of the "centre's" distressing perceptions and as a method of regaining some of identity's crumbling cohesion.

This final day occupies more narrative space than

any other. Pincher does not "die into heaven" easily; though a component of it has silently engineered its own destruction, the dark "centre" is full of wiles, stratagems, hatched by its innate and very fierce determination to live on. The first of these wiles, Uticaria, appears at the end of the tenth chapter (159), just as Pincher emerges into daylight. One must have a body to fall sick -- besides, horrible realizations and an increasingly fragmented, disorganized personality can be dismissed as symptoms of delirium. It also fulfills an earlier prediction (81), strengthening the illusion of a measure of control through rational understanding ("I said I should be ill and I am." (160) ).

Chapter eleven is virtually devoid of movement backward into the recollected past. No memory-episodes break up the narrative as Pincher concentrates in a desperate effort to come to terms with the problems threatening his survival in the self-created here and now. After the terror, gradually exposed, of realizing "I shall never get away from this rock" (163), Pincher stubbornly summons "Weapons. I have things that I can use. Intelligence. Will like a last ditch. Will like a monolith. Survival. Education, a key to all patterns, itself able to impose them, to create" (163). This chapter records reason's last, very brief effective exertion. Self is fragmenting, splitting into pieces. A component of the "centre" ineluctably proceeds toward an elucidation of the pattern of past behaviour and its fearful significance while the rational "mouth" struggles to flee in the opposite direction.

If self will survive harmony must be re-established. The "centre's" artifice of illness was meant to enable Pincher to focus his will and intelligence, to re-assert the illusion of mastery, of self's co-ordinated power to seize a problem and conquer it in the name of its own interests: "I must hang on. First to my life and then to my sanity. I must take steps" (163). Briefly he succeeds in rationally denying the undeniable, in reducing his fearful half-understanding to a feverish fabrication with a physical origin:

"I am poisoned. I am in servitude to a coiled tube the length of a cricket pitch. All the terrors of hell can come down to nothing more than a stoppage. Why drag in good and evil when the serpent lies coiled in my own body?" (163)

The enema becomes another defiant "triumph", a moment of self-orchestrated glory replete with grandiose music and comparisons to Ajax and Prometheus. He becomes "a hero for whom the impossible was an achievement" (164). Afterward he boasts, the "master once more":

"Everything is predictable. I knew I shouldn't drown and I didn't. There was a rock. I knew I could live on it and I have. I have defeated the serpent in my body. I knew I should suffer and I have. But I am winning. (166)

With renewed confidence reason calmly and lucidly explains an optical illusion (166). Before the triumph can be savoured, however, the double-edged sword swings the other way. Quick as nemesis association suddenly descends, revealing an incongruity triumphant reason must reject with terrifying consequence:

Food. Heaped on a slab, not swimming free but piled up, all the spoils of the sea, a lobster, not shutting like a fist and shooting back into a crevice but---

He was on his feet. He was glaring down at the place where the weed grew under water by the three rocks. He cried out.

"Whoever saw a lobster like that swimming in the sea? A red lobster?"

Something was taken away. For an instant he felt himself falling; and then there came a gap of darkness in which there was no one. (167)

The "unreality" of a red lobster apocalyptically embodied the realization that the rock was unconsciously created from memory; before this understanding being dissolved in terror and self-defense. When it re-assembles after the gap of "not-being" the "separation enabled him to forget what had caused the terror" (167). Just a few pages earlier Pincher was prepared to bring his rational powers heroically to bear on whatever threatened his existence, willing to examine half-formed thoughts congealing in the "centre", confident in his ability to prevail over them ("Know your enemy" (162) ). This has been exposed as sheer folly. Such exertions now lead to the fatal pit of understanding. His posture changes: "I'd better not remember it again. Remember to forget" (169). Though it begins to rain, an apparent confirmation of the godlike powers of intelligence ("I said there would be rain. Let there be rain and there was rain" (170) ), this victory is empty and cannot assuage his uneasiness:

"What piece have I lost in my game? I had an attack, I was doing well, and then---" And then, the gap of dark, dividing that brighter time from this. On the other side of the gap was something that had happened. It was something that must not be remembered...It was something about a pattern that was emerging. (172)

Reason loses its remaining vestiges of usefulness -- it goes frantically in circles, flits from point to point, terrified of resting too long in one place and penetrating through to some horror. Once again self begins to fragment. The "centre" shaped the past, discerned a "pattern" and though it would not willingly destroy itself, cannot by nature veer away from comprehending it. Golding juxtaposes the frantic verbalized writhings of reason and the silent discoveries of the "centre":

Far out from the centre, the mouth quacked on.

"Where, for example, shall we draw the line between the man whom we consider to be moody or excitable, and the genuine psychopathic manic-depressive?"

The centre was thinking, with an eye lifted for the return of the storm of terror, about how difficult it was to distinguish between sleeping and waking when all one experienced was a series of trailers.

"A recurrent dream, a neurosis? But surely the normal child in its cot goes through all the symptoms of the neurotic?"

If one went step by step -- ignoring the gap of dark and the terror on the lip -- back from the rock, through the Navy, the stage, the writing, the university, the school, back to the bed under the silent eaves, one went down to the cellar. And the path led back from the cellar to the rock. (173)

The "mouth's" jabbering is for nought. Trapped into confronting another "unreality" it must reject, reason triggers a deadly train of thought:

"The solution lies in intelligence. That is what distinguishes us from the helpless animals that are caught in their patterns of behaviour, both mental and physical."

But the dark centre was examining a thought like a monument that had replaced the other in the dreary park.

Guano is insoluble.

If guano is insoluble, then the water in the upper trench could not be a slimy wetness, the touch of which made a flaming needle nag at the corner of an eye.



His tongue felt along the barrier of his teeth -- round to the side where the big ones were and the gap. He brought his hands together and held his breath. He stared at the sea and saw nothing. His tongue was remembering. It pried into the gap between the teeth and re-created the old, aching shape. It touched the rough edge of the cliff, traced the slope down, trench after aching trench, down towards the smooth surface where the Red Lion was, just above the gum -- understood what was so hauntingly familiar and painful about an isolated and decaying rock in the middle of the sea. (174)

The revelation of the created rock's model dashes for good what little remains of Pincher's hope of connecting "a future with the past for all this ghastly interlude" (81) and confirms the methodical, probing exercise of the former boon of "education and intelligence" as the deadliest bane. Chapter twelve marks the beginning of a new phase of the "game" Pincher has been playing: self must now "protect normality" (175), must somehow incorporate what has been so apocalyptically realized into a new scheme of explanation that will prevent the created world around it from collapsing into nothing, hold it together "as by rivets driven in", prove that the "will could resist" (176). Reason must confine its explanations to a single predicted phenomenon; "education and intelligence" must paradoxically prop up the pretence of lunacy, the role of the "poor mad sailor on a rock" (197). Nothing indicates the "centre's" desperate shift in strategy more clearly than the "dwarf". Until chapter twelve a monument to the powers of reason, the new strategy, with its licence of lunacy, transforms that pile of stones into "the old woman from the corner of the cellar" (176). The game waged on the rock has the same object as the game played at so hard in life: control;

control meant to confirm self's power and deny the implications of not-being. The recollection of the "old woman" becomes an important "piece" in the now doomed and pathetic contest. Created by Christopher's childhood imagination out of what must have been a still vibrant residue in the young boy's memory -- a residue of fear remaining after self's emergence from not-being into being -- the "old woman" was a personification of absolute nothingness. She has been recalled by association because Pincher is shaken by the same fear as the one imaginatively experienced in the childhood cellar. He has discovered the mark of the "black lightning" on the rock (177) -- the adult, intellectual equivalent of the child's personification. Nathaniel's metaphor, however, expresses an annihilating power capable of causing a "split into the whole nature of things" (179), a force belittling human will and immune to its exertions. Aided by the licence of lunacy the "centre" desperately "weds" the adult metaphor to the childhood personification, hoping for an object will can focus its machinations on, meaning to revive self's determination to somehow achieve a measure of cherished control. In life a woman could become an instrument in the hands of a clever seducer and shape a husband's intentions. With language recalling the incident related on page 154, Pincher pleads with the "old woman" to intercede on his behalf with her "husband" (who implicitly wields the lightning) and ask him to preserve the creation of the rock:

He grabbed the old woman with her nodding silver head.

"Help me, my sweet, I must have your help!"

The mouth took over.

"If you let him go on doing that, my sweet, he'll knock the whole bloody rock apart and we shall be left swimming...if he'll only let it alone it'll last for ever. After all, my sweet, you're his wife." (178)

Of course this ~~stratagem~~ fails -- just as all his previous selfish wheedlings and manipulations ultimately failed and exacted a penalty too. Control is an illusion because self has severe limits. The chain of recollected events culminating in the destroyer's destruction irrefutably demonstrate this to Pincher. The producer's wife mocked the pleading cuckold and he was ignominiously expelled from the acting company by the men he sought to take advantage of; Mary spurned her coercer and was betrothed to Nathaniel; the "old woman" remains mute and Pincher, by recalling her, inadvertently trips the dangerous switch of association. He recalls the first repeat of the "pattern", self's first flight from not-being, the key to understanding all his consequent behaviour. Descending in his fearful imagination the child re-experienced the original terror accompanying self's emergence from not-being into being; this fear of the "thing that created it" (179) was the first, guiding, hidden impulse of life. Once more Golding presents two modes of consciousness operating at cross purposes as the frantic pleading of the "mouth" alternates with the silent recollection of the "centre":

"A man must be mad when he sees a red lobster swimming in the sea. And guano is insoluble. A madman would see the gulls as flying lizards..Wouldn't he my sweet? Say he would! Say he would!"

The silver face nodded on gently and the rain spattered.

Kindling from coffins, coal dust, black as black lightning. Block with the axe by it, not worn for firewood but by executions.

"...a madman wouldn't sleep properly. He would feel the rock was too hard, too real; he would superimpose a reality, especially if he had too much imagination. He would be capable of seeing the engraving as a split into the whole nature of things -- wouldn't he?"

And then fettered in the darkness by the feet, trying to lift one and finding a glue, finding a weakness where there should be strength now needed because by nature there was nothing to do but scream and try to escape. Darkness in the corner doubly dark, thing looming, feet tied, near, an unknown looming, an opening darkness, the heart and being of all imaginable terror. Pattern repeated from the beginning of time, approach of the unknown thing, a dark centre that turned its back on the thing that created it and struggled to escape.

"Wouldn't he? Say he would!" (179)

Soon the flimsy, incessant arguments of the "mouth" are silenced by a lonely awareness of the inevitable:

There is no centre of sanity in madness. Nothing like this "I" sitting in here, staving off the time that must come. The last repeat of the pattern. Then the black lightning. The centre cried out.

"I'm so alone! Christ! I'm so alone!" (181)

Loneliness on the rock, profound and unendurable as it may seem, is nothing more than an extension of self's dominant life experience ("Black, a familiar feeling, a heaviness round the heart" (181) ). A barren rock proves both the perfect metaphor and the aptest reward for an existence preoccupied with the compulsive desires of self; a life made jejune, isolated from other men, by the absence of selfless love or compassion. Association establishes another nexus between rock and life as it dredges up the memory of despair and loneliness experienced as a student. Then, youthful agony

found expressions that could very well have been conceived on the rock:

The centre was thinking -- I am alone; so alone! The reservoir overflowed, the lights all the way long to Carfax felt the gulping of its throat, sent eyesight on ahead to cling desperately to the next light and then the next -- anything to fasten the attention away from the interior blackness.

Because of what I did I am an outsider and alone.

The centre endured a progress through an alley, across another road, a quadrangle, climbed bare wooden stairs. It sat by a fire and all the bells of Oxford tolled for the reservoir that overflowed and the sea roared in the room.

...

"I am so alone. I am so alone!"

Slowly, the water dried. Time stretched out, like the passage of time on a rock in the middle of the sea.

The centre formulated a thought.

Now there is no hope. There is nothing. If they would only look at me, or speak -- if I could only be a part of something -- (181-182)

This is the first of two associatively linked memory-episodes, the last extensive excursions into recollection. After these episodes (181-186) the "centre" will no longer spontaneously sort out the past because this process will have formed a fatal understanding and locked self in a death struggle with not-being. Absorbed then, in the "present", in its final desperate writhings, grasping at ~~stratagem~~ after ~~stratagem~~, self will vainly struggle to deny what its essence has realized as undeniable.

The lonely despair of the first episode was alleviated by the unexpected balm of Nathaniel's visit; briefly, joy and affection poured out of Christopher:

The door opened a few inches and a shock of black curls poked round by the very top.

"Nathaniel!"

Nathaniel bowed and beamed his way into the room and stood looking down at the window.

"I thought I might catch you. I'm back for the weekend." Then as an afterthought: "Can I come in?"

"My dear man!"

...

"It's good to see you, Christopher."

"And you can stay? You don't have to rush away?"

...the body was laughing, louder and louder and the water was flowing again. Nat was grinning and blushing too.

"...My dear Nat -- you've no idea how glad I am to see you!" (182-183)

In the second memory-episode Pincher's recollection of his last action in life ("Hard a-starboard!" (186) ) confirms his bondage within the lonely "pattern" of compulsive behaviour repeated on the rock and his rejection of the potential freedom -- the faint chance to break out of the "pattern" -- through the love contained in the first. If he had nurtured the tender shoot of his love for Nathaniel instead of allowing his craving to blight it he never would have set in motion the scheme that destroyed the Wildebeeste and cast him onto the rock. He never would have sent the other look-out away; instead of a "destroying concussion" (186) one of them might have given the "right order" in time and saved the ship. Tracing the chain of cause and effect even further back, if Pincher had loved Nathaniel he might somewhere have taken a few steps in the freedom of a selfless act, away from the prison of compulsion; he probably would never have been forced to join the Navy in the first place. The black loneliness of the first episode becomes the darkness of the "tin box" in the second; creatures without volition are compelled by the ceaseless gnawings of appetite to consume one another:

Be as little connected as possible. Fire a fuse from the bridge that will blow him away from her body and clear the way for me. We are all past the first course, we have eaten the fish.

And it may not work. He may not bother to lay aft and pray to his aeons. Good-bye, Nat, I loved you and it is not in my nature to love much. But what can the last maggot but one do? Lose his identity? (184)

Endeavoring to kill Nathaniel was the last effort in life before death to achieve control, to somehow influence the course of events to accommodate selfish ends. Like all its precursors this effort failed and had a consequence of the same magnitude. Pincher's failure became a moment of supreme irony. Instead of devouring he was devoured:

A destroying concussion that had no part in the play. Whiteness rising like a cloud, universe spinning. The shock of a fall somewhere, shattering, mouth filled -- and he was fighting in all directions with black impervious water.

His mouth screamed in rage at the whiteness that rose out of the funnel.

"And it was the right bloody order!"

Eaten. (186)

Pincher accurately predicted one last repeat of the "pattern"; one more desperate, futile attempt at denial and then the "black lightning". (181). Even though it understands the past and its implications for the present, even though it is aware of lunacy's pretence and the "black lightning's" inevitability, hardened by a lifetime self will not abnegate its determination to live on or its yearning for domination; it will not embrace the humility that could ease it into not-being. The destruction of self's created world will be made to conform to the "laws" of that world and to the creator's self-aggrandizing sense of the dramatic. Annihilation will not

suddenly descend as it did after the revelation of the red lobster in chapter eleven. Obliteration will unravel according to an improvised scenario, with its creator sitting squarely in the centre of it all, orchestrating his own inevitable doom.

After the final memory-episode the remainder of chapter twelve emphasizes how "centre" and "mouth" vacillate between division and harmony. Mouth clings to delusion ("I wish I hadn't kicked off my seaboots when I was in the water" (186) ) while the "centre", recognizing this obvious falsehood, tells itself to "pretend and keep on pretending". For the "mouth" there "is always madness, a refuge like a crevice in the rock. A man who has no more defence can always creep into madness like one of those armoured things that scuttle" (186), whereas the "centre" orders itself to "Find something to look at".

So the "centre" listens (in some inscrutable mode) to the "mouth's" arguments and lyrical laments and provides an accompaniment of background music (188). It "finds something to look at" because the "words could be examined as the thoughts had been" (188). Music, storm noise and the "mouth's" utterances briefly create the order of drama -- a distraction, a refuge from understanding. But the "centre" cannot hold back its innate, automatic propensity to discover links and to make comparisons. "Hearing" the approach of not-being, "another noise beyond the storm and background music and sobbed words from the mouth" (188), a "noise so faint in comparison with



the uproar of the wind and rain and waves that it caught and glued attention" (189), the "centre" tries to manipulate this automatic propensity into an escape by deliberately making innocuous comparisons. First it confuses the "noise" with thunder, then gunfire, a drum, shifting furniture, and a copersheet shaking in the wings of a stage; each suggestion desperately seized on by the "mouth" as it tries to spin out an enduring, denying role. But what began so deliberately soon overleaps control. Association returns the "centre" to the memory of the childhood descent, a memory suggested partly by the mouth ("coal flat") but mainly because the "centre" now, as then, experiences the same irresistible approach of the "thing that created it":

"I must have the lead or I shall leave the coal flat---"

The cellar door swinging to behind a small child who must go down, down in his sleep to meet the thing he turned from when he was created. (189)

From comparisons meant to confuse, the "centre" spontaneously and automatically proceeds to the metaphor expressing the real meaning of the inevitable "noise":

...the centre knew. It recognized with a certainty that made the quacking of the mouth no more help than hiccups. The noise was the grating and thump of a spade against an enormous tin box that had been buried. (189)

Self has divided again. "Centre" and "mouth" no longer work in tandem. Determined to deny the understanding that has reduced its utterances to "hiccups" the "mouth" begins chapter thirteen with a rational explanation of insanity grounded in some grand-sounding generalizations about man:

"Mad," said the mouth, "raving mad. I can account for everything, lobsters, maggots, hardness, brilliant reality, the laws of nature, film-trailers, snapshots of sight and sound, flying lizards, enmity -- how should a man not be mad? I will tell you what a man is. He goes on four legs till Necessity bends the front end upright and makes a hybrid of him...He is a freak, an ejected foetus robbed of his natural development, thrown out in the world with a naked covering of parchment with too little room for his teeth and a soft bulging skull like a bubble. But nature stirs a pudding there and sets a thunderstorm flickering inside the hardening globe, white, lambent lightning a constant flash and tremble. All your lobsters and film-trailers are nothing but the random intersections of instant bushes of lightning. The sane life of your belly and your cock are on a simple circuit, but how can the stirred pudding keep constant? Tugged at by the pill of the earth, infected by the white stroke that engraved the book, furrowed, lines burned through it by hardship and torment and terror-unbalanced, brain-sick, at your last gasp on a rock in the sea, the pudding has boiled over and you are no worse than raving mad." (190-191)

Foreshadowing the internal debate externalized as the dialogue with the "hallucination" (194), the "mouth" directly addresses the "centre", trying to restore self's lost unity by insisting that " If I have gone mad then you have gone mad. You are speaking, in there, you and I are one and mad" (191). Sensing the propinquity of annihilation the "centre" co-operates, "trying to stir itself like pudding"; its ostensible compliance with the "mouth's" command, however, really serves its own earlier dictum of "find something to look at." It has summoned a storm accompanied by strains of music, ordered the sea to wash over the rock, commanded lightning to appear, provided the "mouth" with sufficient props to play out the lunatic role of the defiant hero. It has created an order it can contemplate and immerse perception in. Just as earlier trials (the cliff,

shelter, rescue) provide self with an object it could focus its powers on, so a madman's defiant struggle with the raging wind, sea and lightning enable self to retrieve a bit of lost unity and identity.

A flash of lightning obliterates the "old woman" (192), instantly suggesting a new episode in the drama where the lunatic hero may grapple with the force about to destroy him. Now "she is out of the cellar and in daylight" and Pincher must "hunt her down". In chapter twelve the "old woman" was the object of seductive wheedling; that approach proved unproductive, unable to satisfy the cherished and by now grotesque illusion of the will's ability to achieve control, so Pincher now yearns for an ultimate act of conquest -- her destruction. Association moves the "centre" to make a few short swift connections between this attempt to satisfy self's craving for domination and the objects of similar efforts undertaken in the past. The "old woman" becomes protean during the pursuit: "She was leaning over the rail [Nat praying aboard the Wilbeeste] but vanished and he stole after her into the green room [Mary Lovell, a "front parlour on two feet" (104)]. But she was out by the footlights [Helen?] and when he crouched in the wings he saw that he was not dressed properly for the part" (192-193). Self's cohesion, derived from this improvised scenario, is underscored as "he" (the "centre") and his "mouth" are one in exhorting "Change your clothes! Be a naked madman on a rock in the middle of a storm!" (193). But at the drama's climax the illusion dissolves; having "captured" the old woman self

divides; only the mouth remains to hollowly exult over its "conquest":

He fell on her and began to slash with his knife while his mouth went on shouting.

"That'll teach you to chase me! That'll teach you to chase me out of the cellar through cars and beds and pubs, you at the back and me running, running after my identity disc all the days of my life! Bleed and die." (193)

Even the "mouth" knows it cannot slay what the "old woman" represented. Its ridiculous histrionics deflate as it joins the "centre" in acknowledging that "the blood was sea water and the cold crumpling flesh that was ripped and torn nothing but oilskin" (193). Without a role to give shape to its noises the "voice became a babble...It filled every tick of time with noise" (193-194) hoping to drown out the sound of the "spade against the tin box". Improvised drama dead, the "centre's" co-operation ends; "mouth" and "centre" again begin to separate into autonomous fragments: "...the centre began to know itself as other because every instant was not occupied by noise" (194).<sup>1</sup> Something must be invented to provide a "point of attention". "Mouth", still refusing to aggregate its explanation, makes a prediction:

The mouth spat and deviated into part sense.

"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." (194)

Only this time the result of the "centre's" co-operation with the "mouth" proves to be more than a "point of attention" identity can anchor itself in. The "hallucination" is a projection of

the darkest, most unfathomable core of the "centre", where dispassionate understanding resides, an awareness of and kinship with the "thing that created it" untainted by the cravings and obstructions of self. It holds out the peace of negation, the cessation of a life tormented by fear and desire ("Have you had enough?...Consider" (194-195) ). Like the "centre" (see 45) the "hallucination" "had this quality of refusing overall inspection" (195); it has the dimly recollected form Pincher occupied before death perceptible only piecemeal, "one feature at a time" because it also reflects the ambiguity of physical identity that plagued him throughout his sojourn on the rock. Of all its clothing the black boots are most prominent (black -- like the dark cellar, the tin box, and the terrible lightning). Never really kicked off, the truth they embody makes the artifice of "the rock behind them seem like cardboard, like a painted flat" (195). Mesmerizing and terrible, they rivet consciousness: "There was no background music now and no wind; nothing but black shiny rubber".

Explanations have no weight:

"What's the good? I'm mad."

"Even that crevice will crumble."

He tried to laugh up at the bloodshot eye but heard barking noises. He threw words in the face.

"On the sixth day he created God. Therefore I permit you to use nothing but my own vocabulary. In his own image created he Him."

"Consider now."

...

"I won't. I can't." (195-196)

Self is pushed into making fatal admissions:

"...I have created you and I can create my own heaven."  
"You have created it."

...  
 "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. O yes! I understand the pattern. All my life, whatever I had done I should have found myself in the end on that same bridge, at that same time, giving that 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? (196-197)

Having been forced to "consider" Pincher nonetheless prefers the tortured thread of his life, "pain and all" (197) to the "black lightning". Though self unites in this, becoming atavistically determined and single-minded, the debate has sealed Pincher's fate. What little credibility remained imbued within the presumed objective existence of the artifice of body, rock, sea, sky, etc., has been irrevocably drained away.

Debate over, storm sounds and music return. Reviving the role of the "poor mad sailor on a rock" Pincher tries to lend it tragic overtones:

He clambered up the High Street.  
"Rage, roar, spout!  
Let us have wind, rain, hail, gouts of blood,  
Storms and tornadoes..." (197)

Self's lifelong desire for identity through domination manifests itself again as first the rock becomes a ship and then a steed, which Pincher mounts, urging it on, he pretends, through the waves, "beating it with his heels as if he wore spurs" (198). Self has chosen to remain trapped within the "pattern", it has perversely decided to remain a slave to its futile, compulsive desires. In a paroxysm of defiance the "mouth" screams out, "I spit on your compassion" (199), but the "sound" and first

glimpse of a tendril of the "black lightning" force Pincher to abandon his heroic posture and scramble for cover:

The noise was not as loud as the sea or the music or the voice but the centre understood. The centre took the body off the slab of rock and bundled it into a trench. As it fell the eye glimpsed a black tendril of the lightning that lay across the western sky and the centre screwed down the flaps of flesh and hair. Again there came the sound of the spade against the tin box. (199)

Terror makes him shout, "Hard a-starboard! I'll kill us both, I'll hit the tree with that side and you'll be burst and bitched! There was nothing in writing!" Association still operates: spontaneously it creates a link between Pincher's immediate dilemma and a few of the most ruthless actions of his past life. Trying to pitch Nathaniel into the sea, coercing Mary, violating an agreement or posturing as a madman in the teeth of a storm -- all these actions share the same root and feed the same end. All are meant to fortify self by nourishing its insatiable, unrealizable desires for possession and domination; all are meant to deny the implications, the fear, of not being.

## Notes - Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> The "centre", of course, does not perceive time in the same mode as the "mouth" does -- it can enlarge a single moment by moving backward, following associative resonances.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE LAST REPEAT OF THE "PATTERN"

#### GOLDING'S DEBT

After the watery chaos accompanying physical death at the novel's outset, self lingered as a "snarl" fighting on the brink of annihilation, fighting as an obstinately autonomous atavistic impulse to prevent itself from falling back into union with the ineffable reality from which it originally emerged. Here, at the end of chapter thirteen, faced with the same danger and prompted by the same terror, essential self is once more denuded of the ordered trappings and created extensions of individual personality. Pincher's harshly taught understanding of individual self's existence as nothing more than a series of repeated patterns is once again re-affirmed. The watery chaos of chapter one was without "up or down"; here, for a moment, a similar disorder invades as "the centre did not know if it had flung the body down or if it had turned the world over" (200). Just as creation proceeded from chaos after the salvation of the glass diver according to the silent dictates of the "centre", so annihilation descends governed by the same dictates -- an inevitable process of dissolution nonetheless made to conform to the "laws of this heaven" (200), made to conform to the "centre's" unconscious and spontaneously manifested preconception of how its end will unravel. Nathaniel's

metaphor finds a literal realization. Tendrils of "black lightning" open up cracks in the now frozen created artifice "utter...absolute...three times real" (200). The "centre" continues to dress the inevitable in the garb of conceptualized process -- an act meant to control, seeking to reduce it to comprehensibility, to a language self can deal in. Just as it did in chapter one essential self seizes an image engendered by its innate tendency to make comparisons, again, by the urge to somehow dominate experience. This represents the final repeat of the "pattern", the last hopeless attempt to deny the presence of not-being. Unlike the salvation of the glass diver, however, self conjures up a metaphor embodying only its desperate, atavistic will to survive at any cost. In a spasm of denial it concentrates all its attention on this created extension as the inexorable lightning does its work all around it:

The rock between the claws was solid. It was square and there was an engraving on the surface. The black lines sank in, went through and joined.

The rock between the claws was gone.

There was nothing but the centre and the claws. They were huge and strong and inflamed to red. They closed on each other. They contracted. They were outlined like a night sign against the absolute nothingness and they gripped their whole strength into each other. (201)

Though the "centre" determined the means and setting of its destruction it has not orchestrated everything. Now, in spite of all its artifice and tenacity it is about to enter the real "heaven" Nathaniel tried to describe, a heaven beyond the grasp of its woefully all-too human intelligence. Behind the conception of the "black lightning" something inconceivable operates.

Described as a self-contradiction, in actuality it exists beyond concept, beyond language and its delimitations, a "compassion...timeless and without mercy" (201).

A digression is in order here, because here, at the very end of chapter thirteen, a certain indebtedness explicitly manifests itself. Without exploring this debt much of the resonance emanating from these concluding sentences will be lost. For Golding's notions of essential self (the "centre") and ultimate reality (expressed, in part, by the presence of the "compassion...timeless and without mercy") are to a large extent indebted to Hindu philosophy. My aim is not to produce the fruit of endless searches through interviews or other biographical material, guided (or misguided) by the hope of discovering some unequivocal acknowledgement by the novelist of his debt. The debt is unmistakable and one need only read Pincher Martin a few times to delineate it. Genius, however, transforms debt into new riches. Golding did not adopt Hindu ideas wholesale; they merge into an individual vision partly and unavoidably conditioned by Western ideas as well.

Without launching into a cumbersome treatise on the elements of Hindu philosophy, their evolution and the myriad arguments of the various divided schools, and thereby risking an oversimplification (because it serves a purpose), one may assert that the most fundamental and significant idea emerging from the Upanishads is simply this: ultimate subjective reality (Atman) and ultimate objective reality (Brahman) are one. If a man embraces the rigours of yoga (discipline), releasing

self from the distraction of all outward events,<sup>1</sup> penetrating to and experiencing the essence of his being, "he obtains all worlds and desires"<sup>2</sup> and can assert with the authors of the Chandogya Upanishad that

This is my self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice, than a barley corn, than a mustard seed, than a grain of millet or than the kernel of a grain of a millet. This is myself within the heart, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds...this is Brahman.<sup>3</sup>

For in his deepest existence man "is never born; nor does he die at any time...He is unborn, eternal, abiding and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain".<sup>4</sup> Ultimate self -- "without sound, without touch and without form, undecaying, is likewise, without taste...without smell"<sup>5</sup>-- cannot examine itself for

you cannot see the seer of seeing, you cannot hear the hearer of hearing, you cannot think the thinker of thinking, you cannot understand the understander of understanding. He is your self which is in all things.<sup>6</sup>

Though it gives life to the lower forms and functions of a person it remains distinct from them, buried in the remotest depth of being. Brahman -- present everywhere yet at the same time transcendent -- infinite, inaudible, invisible, indestructable; making possible time, space and causality but prior to these things; making possible conception and the conceptualized but beyond concept; defies the labels of language and the delimitations of ideas. Inadequate definitions of it must usually be framed in negative terms. Man cannot describe what it truly is, only what it is not. Just as

Brahman is the Supreme Reality, the ineffable silence behind the noisy commotions of the physical world, "that from which beings are born, that in which when born they live, and that into which they enter at their death"<sup>7</sup>, so Atman is the essential reality sustaining the motions of the jiva, or individual ego.

Using these rudimentary ideas as a starting point then, a few similarities immediately present themselves. First of all, Golding's description of the "centre" strongly resembles the Hindu Atman or ultimate subject: "a fact like a bar of steel, a thing, that which was so nakedly at the centre of everything that it could not even examine itself...it existed a darker dark, self-existent and indestructable" (45). The impossibility of ultimate subject engaging in self-examination, self-sufficiency, and indestructability are all qualities strongly reminiscent of the Hindu Atman. Golding's description of it too, hints at the inadequacy of language before something unrenderable: a "fact", a "thing" likened to a bar of steel suggesting only impenetrability, inscrutability.

But, unlike the Hindu Atman, the whole of Golding's "centre" is not pure existence, self-aware, unconditioned by the forms of mind and intellect; it lent components of itself, its great powers, to desires focussed in the corporeal. Individual self's relentless will to live on as a psycho-physical entity, its fierce attachment to the material world, subverted ultimate self's godlike creating power and fashioned a pre-ternatural world after death. For God, Atman, Brahman, the

first principle of creation -- call it what you will -- exists deep within the "centre" of Pincher's being. Without a doubt the absolute core of the "darker dark" is one with the blackness of the annihilating lightning, or the looming dark memory-horror of the childhood basement. Golding presents us with a man who cannot properly realize the deity resident within him, who, because of his slavish devotion to desires rooted in the corporeal self, cannot achieve supreme self-consciousness, cannot properly realize the unity of God within and without. While the kernel of divinity deeply concealed within the "centre" contains the seeds of complete understanding -- as its sorting out and understanding of past experience attests -- its potential for enlightenment has been encased in delusion and fear. Pincher achieves understanding but by nature cannot embrace it.

According to Samkya Hindu doctrine,<sup>8</sup> ordinary consciousness -- distracted, immersed in the physical world apprehended by the senses -- confuses this ephemeral world with the permanence of ultimate reality. Samkya philosophy compares the physical universe (prakriti) to a pool of water reflecting the light of ultimate reality. Pool and light are separate, distinct. Ignorance (avidya) mistakes the reflected light in prakriti for reality. Pincher's eyes struggle to never flinch from the pool. So much so that for Pincher a glimpse of the real light is not light, not beautiful, not enchantment, but only darkness, the black terror of negation. Darkness -- whether the shadowy childhood basement, the confines of the

tin box, the black boots of the "hallucination", or the tendrils of "black lightning" represent intelligence's attempt to render the unfathomable, its limited ability to describe only its negative aspect. It is the product of a perversely ignorant human point of view. Having mistaken the physical self for real self, having failed to realize the presence of reality within, the presence of it without inspires only fear. At the end of chapter thirteen then, the approach of the "thing that created him" does not fill Pincher with an anticipation of peace, of a merging or union with something larger and more glorious. Individual self instead chooses to remain separate, isolated, insulated within its own creation, refusing to enter into timeless compassion and love, blending with the larger reality from which it originally emerged. ("I shit on your heaven!"(200) ).

Of course, this notion of the presence of God both within and without is not exclusively Hindu. It has found expression in Western religion and philosophy. For example:

Though God is everywhere present, yet He is only present to thee in the deepest and most central part of thy soul. The natural senses cannot possess God or unite thee to Him; nay, thy inward faculties of understanding, will and memory can only reach after God, but cannot be the place of His habitation in thee. But there is a root or depth of thee from whence all these faculties come forth, as lines from a centre, or as branches from the body of the tree. This depth is called the centre, the fund or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity -- I had almost said the infinity of thy soul; for it is so infinite that nothing can satisfy it or give it rest but the infinity of God.<sup>9</sup>

What establishes Golding's debt as belonging to Hindu rather

than Christian sources is that the Christian God does not, in the manner of the Hindu Brahman, seek to absorb the many into the One. The love of Christianity's God is directed to confirm each individual soul in its own identity, so that the nearer it draws to Him, the more truly it becomes its own unique and personal self. A relentless compassion "timeless and without mercy", "prying for a weakness", waiting for the opportunity to pierce and annihilate the "centre" -- thus terminating its suffering -- bears little resemblance to the Christian deity. But I must re-emphasize that Golding has not adopted Hindu ideas wholesale: his metaphysics remain sketchy, his eschatology incomplete. What precisely is the relation between the material world and Pincher's preternatural one? What follows the dismemberment of the centre? Metempsychosis perhaps? A conversation with Nathaniel might be a hint, but only a hint (see 156). Golding refrains from making any neat assertions, leaving the reader staring haplessly into the face of an Unknown, a mode where language is useless and ordinary human understanding impotent.



## Notes - Chapter IV

1 One could argue that Pincher's preternatural existence after death represents just such an opportunity to liberate self from the distraction attending the living senses. Pincher's failure to do so indicates the depth of his attachment to the sense-apprehended world.

2 Chandogya Upanishad, III.14.2. From The Principal Upanishads, trans., ed. S. Radhakrishnan (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1953), p. 391. All further quotations from the Upanishads are from this edition.

3 III.14.3., pp. 391-392.

4 Katha Upanishad, I.2.18., p. 616.

5 Ibid. I.3.15., p. 629.

6 Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, III.4.2., p. 220.

7 Taittiriya Upanishad, III.3.1., p. 554.

8 For an adequate discussion of Samkya doctrine see John Koller's Oriental Philosophies (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), pp. 52-63.

9 William Law, quoted by Aldous Huxley in The Perennial Philosophy (New York: Harper and Row, 1944), p. 2.

CHAPTER V  
THE LARGEST CHINESE BOX  
CONCLUSION

Pincher Martin contains a metaphor elucidating a major feature of its own structure: a "Chinese box", "fretted ivories, one inside the other" (95). Golding encloses compartments of memory one inside the other -- the novel consists of an extended series of openings and closings, the sudden revelation of a diminishing succession of memory boxes ("a recession like repeated rooms in mirrors hung face to face" (137) ) and then the equally sudden clapping up of the lot within the larger box of consciousness in the preternatural here and now. Association, with a single notable exception, is the means of opening and revealing each box.

Chapter fourteen is that notable exception, the "Chinese box" encasing all the others; but instead of the complexities of "fretted ivories" it sits squat and unadorned, virtually opaque, its lid banging shut with the words "You saw the body. He didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots" (208). Golding fashions and seals this last box by shifting the narrative point of view outside the confines of the protagonist's consciousness; the reader is lifted from Pincher's preternatural world -- where sense perception exists as a resuscitated memory, where recollection and hallucination intrude with a vividness that vies with the "present" for supremacy -- into the diurnal world perceived by the

living five senses. We see Pincher's world as other living men see it; that is, we do not see it at all.

Campbell found Pincher's corpse still girded with a lifebelt, its seaboots intact. If we proceed, using logic, from the evidence of the physical remains, nothing that has gone before in the novel makes much sense; we are left facing the impenetrable front of this last "Chinese box" -- from the outside suggesting nothing of the succession concealed within. By shifting the point of view so dramatically Golding makes a great demand on the reader, forces him to re-evaluate his participation in the imaginative vision of the preceding thirteen chapters. Is this final box really all? All that went before -- merely an illusion?; perhaps a hallucination, a phantom emerging from the depths of a dying physical consciousness and then dissolving? Is there, as Campbell asks, "Any surviving? Or is that all?". In the silence between Campbell's question and Davidson's uncomprehending answer "the sun sank like a burning ship, went down, left nothing for a reminder but clouds like smoke" (208). When a man passes below the horizon of this life does he trail nothing more than the dissipating vapours of his physical life, or is that merely all that is apparent to the ordinary eye lodged in the material world?

The characters of Davidson and Campbell also contribute to the inscrutability of this final box. They are two-dimensional, flat. We are introduced to them as one might encounter two strangers presenting the puzzle of their exteriors to us, a

puzzle moderated only by what they have to say and how they act. While Campbell seems to crave understanding, trying to decipher "a profound and natural language that men were privileged to read only on a unique occasion" (205), a mystery belied by "clouds like smoke", Davidson is immune to, indeed, incapable of such musings. Golding paints him in unmistakably conventional colours as an agent of mortality: Davidson's ship first appears as a "black shape" out of a "wintry sunset" (202); his official papers "chatter like the dusty leaves of late summer"; reaper-like his "sad harvest" never ends ("...I do this job seven days a week"); his breath has a "sweet smell" suggesting decay, and his wide, staring eyes are reminiscent of a momento mori (203). Though the "Chinese box" this character unflinchingly accepts as the sole reality encases all the others, it is not all. Reality, as the metaphor implies, is multi-layered. Davidson proffers the seaboots as evidence of a quick, painless death. Perhaps Pincher's death was rapid according to one measuring stick: a stick determined by reason in tandem with the senses, a stick relative and conditioned -- relative to man's perception of change in the material world around him. But what if the senses are extinguished? Then the conventional stick becomes useless. Why could not an eternity of suffering be secreted within a single second?

Although doubtless memory may intrude and colour perception, one senses that in Davidson's world -- the exterior-oriented world of the five senses -- time marches on

before unblinking "too-wide eyes" with the inexorable cyclical regularity of birthing and the "sad harvest". Within Pincher's world no such regularity existed. Prodded by association time easily slid backward and then leapt forward again. Via Sammy Mountjoy Golding asserted later on in Free Fall that

Time is not to be 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 a memory, a sense of shuffle fold and coil...<sup>1</sup>

Sammy Mountjoy and the rest of us straddle both modes. Davidson and the dead Martin each sit at antipodes. Pincher's world, as well, gathers into itself even more than this. His suggests the interior illuminated reality of an artist encased by the opaque incomprehensibility of life epitomized by chapter fourteen. Godlike, Pincher's essential self created the world of the rock from prior experience, and then the very same creating impulse formed an ordered understanding of the past which undermined it. His own eminently comprehensible vision of his own experience penetrated to the well-springs of his behaviour, understood (albeit in spite of certain unbending aspects of itself) the nature and origin of the created "heaven" because it sorted out and welded together a complex chain of cause and effect by reliving the most vital links. In opposition to this kind of illumination, chapter fourteen, as Campbell tells Davidson, represents "the type of human intercourse. We meet here, apparently by chance, a meeting unpredictable and never to be repeated" (207). Pincher's

revelations on the rock stripped away the "apparently by chance" and denied the "never to be repeated"; for not chance, but a series of events he set in motion himself cast him from the bridge of the ship (and brought Davidson and Campbell together); and human life, as his tortured ruminations attested, is laden with oft-repeated patterns.

The protagonist's experience in Pincher Martin is really the raw material of art in gestation, a rendering of the process of sorting out and understanding that is a crucial part of creation itself. An artist's mind constantly makes comparisons, constantly grasps at metaphors as a means of ordering the apparent chaos of human experience and finding a significance. In Free Fall Sammy Mountjoy asserts that "art is discovery";<sup>2</sup> so it was in Pincher Martin: from the beginning even rudimentary consciousness made comparisons, seized on metaphors in an effort to achieve control over experience, and, each time, inadvertently took a few steps down the path of discovery. The reader became privy to one man's tormented, unwilling movement down the path of self-discovery toward self-annihilation. After all the tortured machinations of the first thirteen chapters, with all their desperate artifice, culminating in shaking, terrible discoveries, the fourteenth chapter, excepting its final stunning sentences, seems flat and a little dull. Campbell too, weakly endeavors to make a comparison, yearning for discovery, for understanding -- likening a rotting corpse to a falling lean-to -- but it leads nowhere; his interlocutor cannot even begin to understand:

"Broken, defiled. Returning to the earth, the rafters rotted, the roof fallen in -- a wreck. Would you believe that anything every lived there?"  
 Now the frown was bewildered.  
 "I simply don't follow you, I'm afraid." (207)

The wrenching shift in point of view created by chapter fourteen links Pincher Martin to its predecessors Lord of the Flies and The Inheritors. Lord of the Flies concludes with the naval officer's interruption of the children's manhunt. The vividly conveyed elemental bloodlust of the hunters and the naked fear of their fleeing quarry are suddenly observed from the point of view of a rather typical English gentleman. For a few pages it is almost as it was in Pincher Martin: the children's world is a zone of experience invisible and incomprehensible to an outsider, to someone who has not participated in it. Evil and terror seem to evaporate; the adult sees only "fun and games", and the terrorized quarry becomes a "little scarecrow" desperately in need of "a bath, a hair cut, a nose-wipe and a good deal of ointment".<sup>3</sup> Unsuccessfully groping to understand, the adult tries to relate the children's situation to Coral Island, a stylized adventure book for boys. At the spectacle of weeping and confusion he "was moved and a little embarrassed"; turning away, he allows his eyes "to rest on the trim cruiser"<sup>4</sup> floating in the distance like the embodiment of his secure adult sense of duty and purpose in the world.

A similar shift takes place in The Inheritors. After Fa's death Golding ceases to describe the workings of Lok's consciousness and its perception of the world from the inside. Gone is its fragile innocence, gone its more than human trust and its pre-rational patterns of thought. A new sort of man has ascended. It is as if we see Lok through the eyes of one of the "new people"; he becomes a "strange creature, smallish and bowed",<sup>5</sup> the Neanderthal of "repulsive strangeness", the potential "germ of the ogre in folklore" that is described in the quotation from H.G. Wells' Outline of History used to introduce the novel. Golding begins the final chapter of The Inheritors after a dispassionate, objective description of Lok's anguished death, carrying over, in essence, the point of view established at the end of the previous chapter. Lok and "the people" are wood-dwelling "devils",<sup>6</sup> strange, incomprehensible creatures Marlan and his band of outcasts flee from over water. Tuami's consciousness -- pervaded by lust and guilt, capable of hatred and the calculations of reason -- returns the reader to an all-too familiar mode.

In neither Lord of the Flies or The Inheritors is the narrative shift as dramatic, or, more importantly, as vital to the central concern of each novel as it is in Pincher Martin. The naval officer's appearance conveniently and fortuitously jerks the allegory to a finish, while his adult incomprehension serves to obliquely comment on "civilization's" blindness to the innate evil -- displayed so nakedly on the



island -- flowing beneath and responsible for so much of the world's destructive behaviour. Lok's death, the extinguishing of his point of view and the establishment of the "new people's" in its place, signals the beginning of a new age, a beginning that sharpens our appreciation for what has gone before: an age of innocence, an age of sensuousness, an age where a genuine sense of community and selfless love flourished. The allegory of Lord of the Flies would remain virtually intact if the naval officer never intervened and Ralph was slain. Though deprived of its wistfulness, the essence of The Inheritors -- consisting of Golding's remarkable creation of a Neanderthal point of view -- would remain essentially undiminished if the narrative shift was omitted.

So then, in spite of this link with its predecessors, and in spite of an even stronger thematic kinship with its successor, Free Fall, Pincher Martin occupies a unique place apart from the rest of Golding's early novels. It has achieved a solitary position by virtue of its sheer intensity. Almost every line of this masterwork contains the seeds of an apocalypse; every preternatural moment shimmers with meaning as the reader shunts from fascinations of plot to larger, often unanswerable questions the presence of impending annihilation forces each action to address: what are the wellsprings of human behaviour? what is the nature and limit of human understanding? what is the place of reason in this understanding? to what extent is man free?

Sammy Mountjoy confronts many of these problems in Free Fall. He is preoccupied with the loss of his freedom. He also struggles and fails to find a "bridge"<sup>7</sup> joining the material world -- explained and ordered by reason -- to the miraculous world of mystical vision first revealed to him in the prison camp -- apprehended by some means beyond logical understanding. Pincher's recollections reveal how he too lost his freedom, how he became a slave confined within a "pattern" of compulsive behaviour. Pincher, like Sammy, struggled and failed to find the same "bridge" by trying to explain and sustain with rational explanation the "miracle" of his godlike acts of creation and his consequent survival on the rock. Both men were compelled to seek the "bridge"; Pincher's compulsion, however, urged on by the terror of not-being, was by far the stronger. Although Sammy claims to be "violently searching",<sup>8</sup> his autobiographical ruminations have none of his counterpart's automatic, associative stirrings, none of Pincher's unwilling flashes of realization and desperate gropings at denial. Pincher's discoveries emerge glowing and sparking from a paradoxical, inscrutable furnace deep within the "centre". Sammy's discoveries flow quietly from a pen, prompted along by the desire to "expunge or exorcise" with understanding the "grey faces"<sup>9</sup> that constantly peer over his shoulder, bringing with them pangs of guilt from his past. Through writing Sammy hopes to find an

understanding... a sweep that takes in the whole of remembered time and then can pause... if I write my story as

it appears to me, I shall be able to go back and select. Living is like nothing because it is everything -- it is too subtle and copious for unassisted thought.<sup>10</sup>

In the pause following each sweep of understanding, Sammy's "centre" -- "unnameable, unfathomable, and invisible darkness" -- "reaches out and fumbles at a typewriter with its tongs..."<sup>11</sup> It creates an enduring work of art; Sammy's testimony sits before us. Pincher, too, pauses after sweeps of recollection and understanding, but instead of the assurance of "I exist. These tobacco-stained fingers poised over the typewriter, this weight in the chair assures me that two people met",<sup>12</sup> his "centre" discovers "an unknown looming, an opening darkness, the heart and being of all imaginable terror" (179) sitting within and without, silently waiting to engulf and to annihilate autonomous self. Pincher's experience is transmuted into art, but not by him. His character, embroiled in the "nothing-everything", does not have the luxury of "assisted thought". An almost camera-like, self-effacing narrator dispassionately performs the deed for him. Sammy's revelations are meditated on in the monk-like solitude of a study; Pincher's descend like the tormented visions of a crucified man who has caught a glimpse of what awaits him in the next world, yet who nonetheless prefers to cling to his life on the cross, "pain and all".

## Notes -- Chapter V

- 1 Free Fall (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 6.
- 2 Ibid., p. 102.
- 3 Lord of the Flies (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 221.
- 4 Ibid., p. 223.
- 5 The Inheritors (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), p. 219.
- 6 Ibid., p. 227.
- 7 Free Fall, p.
- 8 Ibid., p. 5.
- 9 Ibid., p. 7.
- 10 Ibid. p. 7.
- 11 Ibid., p. 8.
- 12 Ibid., p. 9.

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Bibliographical Note

The following list is a short one mainly because I did not consult critical opinion while writing this thesis. Two critical writings have been included below only because I read these two works some years before I began my study, and I feel obliged to make some sort of an acknowledgement here.

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