

Politics and History in  
WILLIAM GOLDING

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GOLDING**

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THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Paul Crawford

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For \_\_\_\_\_  
Rhiannon, Jamie, and Ruby

CIP to come

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## Abbreviations

Page references in the text to William Golding's major works, including his final trilogy, are to the following Faber and Faber editions, using the abbreviations indicated. Original publication dates are given where appropriate.

- DV    *Darkness Visible* (1980 edition). First published in 1979.
- EE    *To the Ends of the Earth: A Sea Trilogy* (1992 edition).  
First published in 1991.
- FF    *Free Fall* (1961 edition). First published in 1959.
- HG    *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces* (1970 edition).  
First published in 1965.
- IN    *The Inheritors* (1961 edition). First published in 1955.
- LF    *Lord of the Flies* (1958 edition). First published in 1954.
- MT    *A Moving Target* (1982 edition).
- PM    *The Paper Men* (1985 edition). First published in 1984.
- PN    *Pincher Martin* (1956 edition).
- PY    *The Pyramid* (1969 edition). First published in 1967.
- SP    *The Spire* (1965 edition). First published in 1964.

Politics and History in  
WILLIAM GOLDING

## Introduction

### The World Turned Upside Down

The “reversible world” and the “world turned upside down” are phrases used to denote the way in which carnival inverts everyday customs, rules, and habits of the community. Hierarchies are inverted, kings become servants, boys become bishops, men dress as women and vice versa. The elements associated with the bottom part of the body (feet, knees, legs, buttocks, genitals, belly, anus) are given comic privilege over the spirit and the head. The “normal” rules of moral custom are overturned and license and indulgence become the rule: the body is granted a freedom in pleasure normally withheld from it, and obscenity of all kinds, from mild innuendo to orgiastic play and a robust revelling in mud, excrement, and all sorts of “filth,” is sanctioned.

—Allon White, “Hysteria and the End of Carnival:  
Festivity and Bourgeois Neurosis”

A PROPERLY HISTORICIZED AND POLITICIZED READING OF WILLIAM Golding’s major novels is long overdue. It is overdue because a timelessness to Golding’s fiction has been privileged in what Philip Redpath rather scathingly refers to as “repetitive,” “derivative,” and “conservative” criticism.<sup>1</sup> In applying categories of fable, myth, and allegory, much of this criticism has restricted itself to Golding’s portrayal of the human condition *sub specie aeternitatis*.<sup>2</sup> Here we are alerted to Golding’s preoccupation with humankind’s perennial battle between good and evil, its fallen nature and experience of pain, grief, and guilt. This critical focus, of course, is partly due to Golding’s own reluctance to view himself as a politically engaged novelist or his novels as *littérature engagée*. His politics are often implicit rather than explicit in his fiction. Alongside responses by Maurice Cranston, D. J. Enright, Roy

## POLITICS AND HISTORY IN WILLIAM GOLDING

Fuller, Philip Larkin, John Osborne, Stephen Spender, John Wain, and Colin Wilson to *London Magazine's* questions on commitment in May 1957, Golding contends that "current affairs are only expressions of the basic human condition where . . . [the novelist's] true business lies." This "exclusion" of topicality, or what Golding trivializes as "current affairs," goes hand in hand with a view of him as "politically conservative"—an appropriate tag perhaps if we view his fiction as *simply* perennial or universal—yet his work *does* engage with contemporary historical, political, and social issues in the act of diagnosing "the basic human condition." While Golding claims that historically specific "symptoms" are of less importance than an Aeschylean commitment to "looking for the root of the disease," his fiction retains what Gabriel Josipovici calls "immediate relevance" and betrays political engagement even when he might deny it. The remark of another respondent to *London Magazine's* questions is illuminating here. Roy Fuller notes: "The 'timeless' work of art is, more than any other, a product of its time, and surely internal evidence will always 'place' it."<sup>3</sup> In other words, "timeless" literature is context-bound and "engagement" is inescapable.

Golding's privileging of "timelessness" at the outset of his writing career ought best to be seen as part of cold war ambivalence toward, and hence distancing from, the politically committed writing of the 1930s. As Robert Hewison notes in his book *In Anger*, increased disillusion and disenchantment with communism after the war meant that writers turned away from political commitment and retreated "back into the 'ivory tower' from which the conflicts of the 1930s had drawn them." Certainly, many of the prominent "Movement" writers during the 1950s, such as Kingsley Amis and John Wain, had maintained an ambivalent stance toward social critique. While attacking class, Movement writers preferred neutral, consensus politics or what Blake Morrison refers to as "Butskellism." As such, they "defined themselves in opposition to the 1930s generation both socially (lower-middle-class as against upper-middle-class) and politically (political neutralists as against political activists)." This renouncing of politics, Hewison reminds us, "is a political act, and the drift from the Left became a move to the Right." As such, in renouncing political commitment Golding leaves himself open to being labeled a "conservative" writer. Certainly, his failure to appreciate or foreground politically radical aspects of his early fiction suggests that such a label is entirely appropriate. Yet, however much Golding's political "side-taking" in his fiction dips below his own line of sight, or behind a smoke screen of universalism, it does not escape visibility in

*Metafiction, Preromanticism, and Ship of Fools*

the texts themselves. As John Wain remarks, an author's political attitudes will "generally appear in his work, even if he himself is the last person to recognize them." Similarly, in *What Is Literature?* Jean-Paul Sartre dismisses the idealism behind "universal" and, indeed, "eternal" fictions: "Whether he wants to or not, and even if he has his eyes on eternal laurels, the writer is speaking to his contemporaries and brothers of his class and race." Without doubt, Golding is not the kind of "committed" writer who, according to Sartre, "knows that words are action" and "has given up the impossible dream of giving an impartial picture of Society and the human condition." Golding's "commitment" is far more diffident. He hangs on to the dream of giving an impartial "diagnosis" of the human condition while at the same time satirically engaging with contemporary "symptoms" of that condition. This divided or ambivalent form of "commitment" can be seen to be part of what W. L. Webb has described as the "combination of contradictions" at the heart of Golding's fiction that "has baffled many a thesis-hunter: that strange mixture of the practical and the mysterious, the bluff and the sensitive, comic and solemn—in fact, the whole English bundle of contradictions, raised to a high creative power."<sup>4</sup> It is a "combination of contradictions" that includes not simply Golding's ambivalent angle of approach to the historical referent but also his sexual politics, representations of class, and treatment of postmodernism.

James Gindin has shown that Golding's past had been intimately connected with socialist engagement, so we should not, perhaps, be at all surprised that he wrestles with contemporary issues and events and, indeed, takes a particular attitude or stance toward them in his fiction. Golding's father was a Labour Party activist, and his mother worked for woman suffrage. At the age of twelve, Golding began to write a history of the trade unions, organizations that he later found to be totalitarian in their application of the "closed shop." He has even described himself as "Bitterly left of center" and a non-Marxist "socialist."<sup>5</sup> Yet for all his socialist grounding, Golding appears, at least at a public level, to separate fiction from politics:

A writer is a citizen with a vote, access to his MP, access to the correspondence columns of magazines, newspapers and the BBC—a citizen with the right to speak in Hyde Park if he wants to or feels he ought. Surely that gives him enough opportunities for non-professional engagement in current affairs? I should think that the Marxist ideal of total engagement has been blown on, even in Russia. I am a

citizen, a novelist and a schoolmaster. If my teaching of English grammar need not be aimed specifically at the prevention of capital punishment why should my novels be?<sup>6</sup>

Cold war expediency, a distaste for “committed” literature, a “conservative” and aesthetically driven view of literature, and a spirit of compromise or moderation that owed something to his place within the “Establishment” perhaps led Golding to taking this position. Golding seems to consider Marxism, in a similar light to the Movement, as “a phase to be passed through in one’s adolescence, and to be grown out of as one matures.” Yet despite his preferred channels of political engagement such as his writing of a joint letter to the *Times* (London) protesting the British government’s support of U.S. policy in Vietnam, Golding’s fiction still interrogates contemporary issues such as totalitarianism, genocide, and the inequalities of the English class system. This engagement is particularly evident in his novels of the 1950s and 1960s when the shock waves of the Holocaust entered postwar literature and high expectations of better opportunities for everyone after the war spawned attacks on the English class system, especially during the so-called cultural revolution. Indeed, the themes of atrocity and particularly class are an ongoing concern right across Golding’s fiction, although he does not engage quite so powerfully with these issues in his later fiction, but chooses instead to attack class more lightheartedly and to “encrypt” the trauma of World War II in forms that reflect and engage with the historical, postindustrial phenomenon of postmodernism or what Fredric Jameson calls the “cultural logic of late capitalism.” As Dominick LaCapra has observed, postmodernism “has developed in the wake of the Shoah, which it has often explicitly avoided, typically encrypted, and variably echoed in traumatized, melancholic, manically ludic, opaque, and at times mournfully elegiac discourses.”<sup>7</sup> As such, postmodern literature continues, in a different historical period and in a more intensely skeptical way, the earlier modernist questioning of traditional foundations of Western culture after the trauma of World War I. But, as LaCapra suggests, postmodernism can be seen as an avoidance of direct engagement with the atrocities of World War II. LaCapra’s insight echoes my own recognition of a deflation in Golding’s satire that, as it becomes more Horatian, and hence more lighthearted or celebratory compared to Juvenalian or noncelebratory forms, shifts from its interrogation of Englishness in relation to contemporary totalitarianism and atrocity to echoing postmodern indeterminacy. The deflation that occurs

in this movement from Juvenalian to Horatian forms results in the “encryption” of the darkness of the Holocaust, and any critical maneuvers dependent upon it, thus making it less visible. This deflation also extends to Golding’s attack on the English class system. His earnest treatment of stratification in *The Pyramid* (1967) turns into an altogether lighter or comical ribbing in *To the Ends of the Earth: A Sea Trilogy* (1991), which comprises *Rites of Passage* (1980), *Close Quarters* (1987) and *Fire Down Below* (1989).

A rethinking of critical paradigms is required in order to interrogate the current practice of reading Golding. This needs to be synthetic in nature, utilizing the growing body of theory about the fantastic and the carnivalesque to intervene in a critical discourse that has consistently read Golding’s novels as mythic and allegorical figurations of an essentialized human condition. The new reading offered in this book places Golding’s fiction *firmly* in its contemporary context by establishing the satirical aspects of his novels. In Chapter 2, I provide a theorization of the combined carnival and fantastic modes at the heart of Menippean satire, an ancient polemical form that, in its reference to the writing of the Greek Cynic Menippus, predates Quintilian’s *satura*. It is these carnival and fantastic modes that are at the hub of Golding’s major novels and guide my overall analysis. Briefly, a noncelebratory or Juvenalian satire dominates *Lord of the Flies* (1954), *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1959), *The Spire* (1964), and *The Pyramid*. In *Darkness Visible* (1979), *The Paper Men* (1984), and *To the Ends of the Earth*, the satire is more lighthearted or Horatian in tone. Of course, the definition of satire remains fluid. Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, in their excellent *Theorizing Satire*, establish the major element of satire as an attack on matter outside the text.<sup>8</sup> It is unlikely that arguments cited about what constitutes satire will end. They will surely rumble on, not least because satire is a plastic or versatile literary kind that inhabits a variety of genres and is difficult to define comprehensively. If anything, satire would probably best be seen as combining the fantastic and carnivalesque modes in transgeneric attacks upon historical targets.

In my investigation of the significance of National Socialism and the Holocaust to a reading of Golding’s early novels, I am indebted to those critics who have placed the toes but not the whole foot on such historical ground. The most prominent among these are James Gindin and S. J. Boyd.<sup>9</sup> I am also indebted to those critics who have noted elements that I locate as being at the heart of the fantastic and carnivalesque, those who acknowledge Golding’s attack on the English class system and lit-

erary criticism, and those who have drawn attention to his preoccupation with the status of language and literature in the so-called postmodern era. Where appropriate, I highlight the individual contributions of these critics in the main body of my text.

The fantastic is evident in the Beast in *Lord of the Flies*, Lok's half-formed perception and the strange materialization of the New People in *The Inheritors*, the double death of *Pincher Martin*, Sammy Mountjoy's mystical experiences in *Free Fall*, the ambiguous miracle of *The Spire*, the entombed village of Stilbourne in *The Pyramid*, the miraculous world of Matty who emerges from apocalyptic flames in *Darkness Visible*, the visions of Barclay in *The Paper Men*, and the mysterious object released from the bottom of the ship and Wheeler's "ghost" in *To the Ends of the Earth*. These are just the tip of a dark iceberg of the many fantastic motifs in Golding's corpus—a corpus dense with Gothic nightmare, doubles, and the diabolical. The reversed world and upside-down motifs of the carnivalesque are equally prevalent throughout his novels. Violent Dionysianism and scatology dominate *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors*. In *Pincher Martin*, the protagonist has his mouth and flies open, literally consuming the world. Inversions and cloacal fetor overflow in nearly all Golding's novels, not least *Free Fall*, *The Spire*, and *The Pyramid*. *Darkness Visible* is oxymoronic, turning upside down the established binary opposition of good and evil as readily as Harry Bummer's "cruciforce" of Matty. Antipodean symbolism pervades *To the Ends of the Earth*, with Colley as equatorial fool and victim of the fecal "badger-bag"—a bag into which Golding is ever keen to place the reader's head.

In his major novels, Golding deploys the various symbols, themes, and forms of the fantastic and carnivalesque in five main ways. These deployments move beyond a general or universal satirical function to undermine all human endeavors or actions. First, the modes attack an English national identity that constructs itself in opposition to Nazism.<sup>10</sup> This is achieved mainly in *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors*, *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall*, and *Darkness Visible*. Second, they expose the poisonous nature of the English class system. This is done progressively in *Lord of the Flies*, *The Spire*, *The Pyramid*, and *To the Ends of the Earth*. Third, the modes critique religious dogmatism and authority. This is most clearly effected in *The Spire*, but is also featured sporadically in both his early and his later fiction: *Lord of the Flies*, *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall*, *Darkness Visible*, *Rites of Passage*, and *The Paper Men*. Fourth, they lambast the world of depthless, postmodern literature, literary criticism, and biography. This narrower attack is carried out in *The Paper Men*. Finally, they intensify a question-

ing of "truth-telling" in fiction that is so much part of the self-conscious and metafictional aspects of many of Golding's novels. In terms of the latter, the protean, distortive, and indeterminate nature of satire's world-turned-upside-down complements a growing modernist self-consciousness in *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall*, and *The Spire* that develops into a more intense, postmodernist, metafictional focus in *Darkness Visible*, *The Paper Men*, and *To the Ends of the Earth*.

Postmodern metafiction, as many commentators have noted, not least Patricia Waugh, emerged in the late twentieth century out of a tradition of self-conscious literature stretching back to Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767), and even beyond this, as Robert Alter suggests, to ancient Greek writing. Because satire's combined fantastic and carnivalesque are given to dissolution and multivalence, it is an ideal host to various reformulations and literary marriages, not least in modern and postmodern literature. In terms of the latter, Brian McHale locates an "affinity between postmodernist fiction and the fantastic genre." Indeed, Patrick Parrinder suggests that the terms *fantasy* or *fantastic* may substitute for the term *postmodernism*. Furthermore, Linda Hutcheon and Christine Brooke-Rose argue, respectively, that fantastic inversions of real and unreal can be linked with postmodern literary playfulness and be seen as the forerunners or antecedents of postmodernist metafiction. Equally, the multivoiced and heterogeneous nature of the carnivalesque is a perfectly suited analogue to late-twentieth-century postmodernity that Terry Eagleton neatly summarizes as

a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation. Against these Enlightenment norms, it sees the world as contingent, ungrounded, diverse, unstable, indeterminate, a set of disunified cultures or interpretations which breed a degree of scepticism about the objectivity of truth, history and norms, the givenness of natures and the coherence of identities.

Some theorists, such as Daniel Bell, Jean-François Lyotard, and Fredric Jameson, have claimed that this "way of seeing . . . springs from an historic shift in the West to a new form of capitalism—to the ephemeral, decentralised world of technology, consumerism and the culture industry, in which the service, finance and information industries triumph over traditional manufacture and classical class politics yield ground to

## Menippean Satire, the Fantastic, and the Carnavalesque

The one thing we know about satire is that it promises to tell us what we do not want to know—what we may, in fact, resist knowing. . . . [S]atire tells of the descent of humanity below itself.

—Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, eds.,  
*Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*

GOLDING'S FICTION IS PARTLY SATIRICAL, DRAWING ON STRATEGIES for indirect attack or critique that originate in ancient literary forms, particularly Menippean satire. Central to Menippean satire are two modes: the fantastic and the carnivalesque. Menippean satire provides a generic root for both these modes that may be seen to operate in tandem in much of Golding's fiction. Although the fantastic is subsumed within Bakhtin's conception of the Menippean-based carnivalesque, I choose to separate these modes that have been subjected to a variety of analyses not least by Tzvetan Todorov and Mikhail Bakhtin, respectively.<sup>1</sup> A growing body of theoretical approaches develops out of their seminal writings and informs Golding's deployment of these modes, not least in terms of their historicizing role.

Interest in Menippean satire, and debate concerning this ancient form, has been revitalized by Mikhail Bakhtin and Northrop Frye, among others. Bakhtin "conceptually links" the *menippea* with the fantastic and carnivalesque.<sup>2</sup> Both his analysis in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and that by Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* are central to our understanding of this composite form. Indeed, Joel C. Relihan has called Bakhtin and Frye "deans of the study of modern Menippean satire."<sup>3</sup> Frye uses the term

1. See Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*; and Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

2. See Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, 15-16.

3. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 107-80; Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 308-

*anatomy* for Menippean satire, a form that amounts to a variety of literary productions over many centuries, incorporating “dialogue, stylization of character, fantasy, intellectual satire . . .” He adopts this term from Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), arguing that it suitably voices “the intellectualized approach of this form.” Drawing on the Menippean satire of Varro, Lucian, Petronius, and Apuleius, he identifies its fantastic and moral utopian framework. “Anatomy” is one of Frye’s four fictional forms, the others being novel, confession, and romance. However, Relihan notes that the various elements of “anatomy” are both “separable” and capable of combining to “result in other related comic, or non-comic, genres.”<sup>4</sup> Both comic and noncomic potentials, I suggest, are actualized in Golding’s work.

Bakhtin locates various elements to the *menippea*. He finds a general elevation of comedy. Yet comic elements may vary considerably from a strong form in Varro to a diminished form in Boethius. There is an unrestrained fantastic, beyond legendary and historical forms, that is highly inventive in terms of plot and philosophy. The fantastic is used not as “truth” in itself, but as foil to a truth, discourse, or philosophical concept. This subordinated fantastic, acting in unity with an idea and consolidating it, often takes the form of an adventure story. The fantastic combines the symbolic and religio-mystical with the filth and depravity of slum naturalism. This organic structure, which includes philosophical dialogue, is central to the *menippea* and its subsequent manifestations in novelistic forms. It restricts itself to pared down, ultimate questions about life, which tend to be of a practical and ethical nature. The action moves between and takes place on thresholds of heaven, earth, and hell. An experimental fantasticality is found in unusual points of view, often from above (catasopia), something that is absent from ancient epic or tragedy. Abnormal “moral and psychic states” are represented—dreams, madness, split personality, suicidal ideation. Indeed, epic and tragic integrity is lost to a divided, unfinalizable, or split mind. This extends to notions of a dialogized self and the trope of the “double.” Characteristic of the genre is disinhibited and transgressive behavior or language that violates social norms. Such eccentricity and scandal liberate human behavior patterns from normalization. There is a focus upon oxymoron-combinations, abrupt contrasts, and *mésalliance*. The *menippea* contains

12; Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire*, 4. More potently, Todorov has called Bakhtin “the greatest theoretician of literature in the twentieth century” (*Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, ix).

## 3

## Literature of Atrocity

*Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors*

We are post-Auschwitz homo sapiens because the evidence, the photographs of the sea of bones and gold fillings, of children’s shoes and hands leaving a black claw-mark on oven walls, have altered our sense of possible enactments.

—George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays, 1958-1966*

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night. . . . Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

—Elie Wiesel, *Night*

IN MOVING BEYOND THE EARLIER CRITICAL RECOGNITION THAT Golding interrogates English “immunity” from totalitarian violence and the institutionalization of this brutality in its class structure, we need to show how this attack is achieved through the use of fantastic and carnivalesque modes, modes that amount to Juvenalian or noncelebratory satire in opposition to merely universal or ahistoricist readings. As such, the fantastic is a technique of “literature of atrocity,” significant in terms of the Holocaust experience, and its theme of demonization joins the noncelebratory carnivalesque in foregrounding exclusionary gestures toward the Jews. Yet Golding’s attack on English constructions of national identity in opposition to Nazism is obstructed by the fabular and hence indirect form of critique in both *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *The Inheritors* (1955).

Contrary to those who claim the fantastic mode is escapist, Golding

In *Lord of the Flies* particularly, and perhaps more tenuously in *The Inheritors*, Golding's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or "coming to terms with the past," concludes that the English and Nazis are not so different as one might expect. It is this painful evocation of similitude that has been overlooked in earlier critical readings. Both novels should certainly be included in the wider European tradition of "literature of atrocity." That we know Golding himself to have been deeply involved in the war, on intimate terms with its horror, and exercised by expressions not just of Allied moral superiority to Nazis, but of racial violence that broke out in England after the war as well, is significant for a full understanding of his early novels.

In *A Moving Target*, Golding tells of the impact this loss of belief in the "perfectibility of social man" had on *Lord of the Flies*: "The years of my life that went into the book were not years of thinking but of feeling, years of wordless brooding that brought me not so much to an opinion as a stance. It was like lamenting the lost childhood of the world. The theme of *Lord of the Flies* is grief, sheer grief, grief, grief, grief" (MT, 163). Despite such commentary from Golding himself, the effect of the war and other social contexts such as racial violence on his writing has drawn scant attention from critics. This emphasis has tended to remain submerged.

Furthermore, there has been no consideration of how Golding, "punch drunk" on atrocity, uses fantastic and carnivalesque modes powerfully to register his grief about this context.<sup>4</sup> The following readings of *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* aim to redress this lack. These novels, which can be thought of as a pair, make an oblique response to the sociopolitical context of World War II and its aftermath. They provide an uneasy coexistence of the universal and historical.<sup>5</sup>

### *Lord of the Flies*

In *Lord of the Flies*, fantastic and carnivalesque modes are used to subvert postwar English complacency about the deeds of Nazism, particularly the Holocaust. Although oblique, Golding effects an integration between literature and cultural context. This interpretation renegotiates previous critical paradigms that have, for the most part, centered on the

## Conclusion

### Socialist Subversions?

### The Radical and Reactionary in Golding's Satire

AS I HAVE INDICATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, I AM INDEBTED TO previous critics for their limited references to historical context; acknowledgment of Dionysian violence, scatology, and topsy-turvy symbolism; brief advertisement of the fantastical and satirical aspects to Golding's fiction; discussions concerning his attack on class and exploration of the fictionality of fiction; and recognition of Greek, Latin, Christian, and secular influences. Yet these worthwhile strands of critical activity have lacked any comprehensive or focused appraisal as part of a whole. In other words, there has been no synthesis of available, though often underplayed, knowledge and insight to establish governing structures and functions to Golding's complex fictions. Significantly, there has been a general exclusion of "extraliterary" satire and the "sub-literary" fantastic as not worthy of serious critical attention.

This book marks a radical departure from earlier Golding criticism. It begins to bridge the gap between the complexity of Golding's fiction and various critical readings of it that have not responded sufficiently to neighboring fields of study, inquiry, and analysis, but have run for the line with blinkers on. In an interview with John Haffenden, Golding insists, albeit rather pompously: "I've never read a criticism of my work which is half complicated enough."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Golding constructs difficult, obfuscatory fictional labyrinths into which, one suspects, he rather gleefully watches critics disappear. His novels appear increasingly to offer a slippery, highly self-conscious literary performance against a background of source-hunting, overdetermining, and maybe superfluous criticism. Once he started noticing (as he could not fail to do) critical interest in his work, he inevitably attempted to keep several steps ahead of critics in the attitude of "Right, this will give them something to think about!" The analysis provided in this book gets to the hub of the difficult, interwoven, and diverse themes that Golding generates in his fic-

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