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### MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

1. Title of the Project: A Critical Study of Selected Novels of William Golding
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3. Duration of the Project: March 2013 to March 2015

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### A Critical Study of Selected Novels of William Golding

##### Introduction

William Golding is one of the significant novelists of the post World War II era. He was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 1980 and the Nobel Prize in 1983 for his contribution to literature. His novels provide insight into human nature and enrich and deepen our understanding of it. In the eponymous project *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *The Spire* (1964) were studied, discussed, and analysed. Golding offers an implicit critique of democracy, totalitarianism, rational humanism, religion, and marriage in the said novels.

##### Lord of the Flies

In his first novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Golding offers an implicit critique of democracy, totalitarianism, rationalism humanism, and religion.

- Ralph represents democracy. He is elected the leader of the boys in an assembly called by him using the conch he discovers in the blue lagoon on the shore of an uninhabited island where he, along with many other British schoolboys are marooned due a plane crash. He plans their rescue very rationally and distributes work among the boys to support their livelihood. But

he fails in his mission which suggests the failure of democratic countries to prevent the brutal world wars of the twentieth century.

- Jack, another powerful boy openly challenges Ralph and forms a new tribe snatches away leadership from Ralph. Jack is the totalitarian who kills Simon and Piggy to maintain his power like Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. He builds his tribe using the same principles used by the aforesaid dictators. The fear of the beast in the mind of boys is capitalized by Jack to build his tribe. Golding shows how totalitarianism thrives on irrational fear and makes people blindly follow it.
- Piggy is the rational humanist who is physically weak. His physical deficiency, his asthma, and spectacles suggest the inherent weakness of rational humanism. He becomes Ralph's advisor and helps him to plan rescue. He is brave but powerless. He gets killed by the tribesmen of Jack. It is suggested that mere rational humanism cannot save the world from disaster.
- Simon represents religion. He has communion with the lord of the flies which is nothing but a dead pig's head on a stick bulging with flies which suggests the inherent evil hidden in human nature. He discovers that the beast which all the boys fear is a dead parachutist dropped from the sky. Simon is killed by Jack's tribe in a ritual on the shore before he could tell them the truth about the beast. So religion and revelation cannot prevent the violence raging in the world, rather it falls prey to such violence.

## **The Spire**

*The Spire* (1964) is the story of a medieval dean Jocelin and his vision, which he ascribes to God, to build a 404 feet spire to the cathedral. Golding offers an oblique critique of religion, rationalism, and marriage in this remarkable novel.

- Jocelin represents religion. He is obsessed with the idea of building a huge 404 feet spire to the cathedral for which there are no sufficient foundations. He ignores Master Builder Roger's advice to not to build the spire. Jocelin's religious hubris brings suffering

to Jocelin's himself, Roger, Goody whom he calls daughter in God, and Pangall. Jocelin finally realises his folly and suffers. Roger ruins himself by drinking and seducing Goody. Pangall is sacrificed by the workers in the process of building the spire. The spire is sublimation of Jocelin's sexual desire for Goody which he never explicitly expresses.

- Roger Mason is the master builder appointed by Jocelin to build the spire. Roger is a materialistic man, drinks a lot. He is not satisfied with his wife and seduces Goody Pangall. He is threatened but Jocelin to continue his work. His life is ruined in the end.
- Goody is a victim of her impotent husband Pangall, Roger who seduces her and an object of concealed lust for Dean Jocelin. Goody is a scathing comment on the social institution of marriage which is the root cause of her suffering.
- The building of the spire is funded by Jocelin's aunt Lady Alison who is a mistress of the King. Jocelin's elevation to Deanship was owing to her influence. Thus the moral and material foundations the spire and Jocelin's hubris are busted.

## **Conclusion**

William Golding offers a scathing critique of democracy, totalitarianism, rational humanism, religion, and marriage in *Lord of the Flies* and *The Spire*. He exposes the inherent flaws embedded in the said institutions which lead to human suffering. Golding brings out how the inherent evil within man subverts these institutions and all attempts of establish order in the world and establish and promote peaceful coexistence are doomed to fail. However Golding was an optimist. He hoped that common sense will prevail and peace will be established in the world.

“I have been in many countries and I have found there people examining their own love of life, sense of peril, their own common sense. The one thing they cannot understand is why that same love of life, sense of peril and above all common sense, is not invariably shared among their leaders and rulers. ... Agreement between you does not need cleverness, elaboration, maneuvers. It needs common sense, and above all, a daring generosity. Give, give, give!” (Banquet Speech)