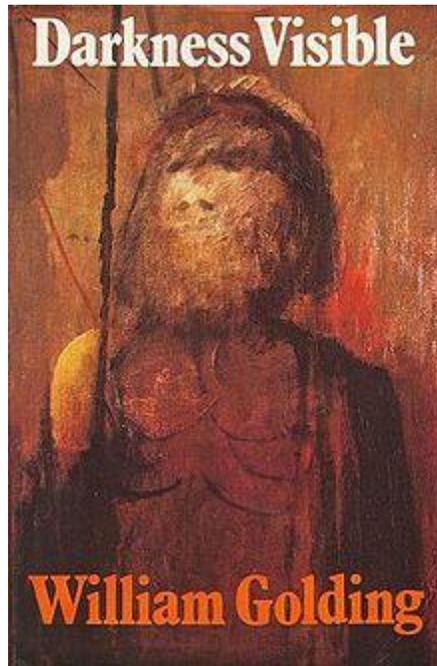


Aspects of Gender Conflict in English Literature

Spiritual Journey of Matty in William Golding's *Darkness Visible*

S. Vijayalakshmi, M.A., M.Phil.



Courtesy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darkness_Visible_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darkness_Visible_(novel))

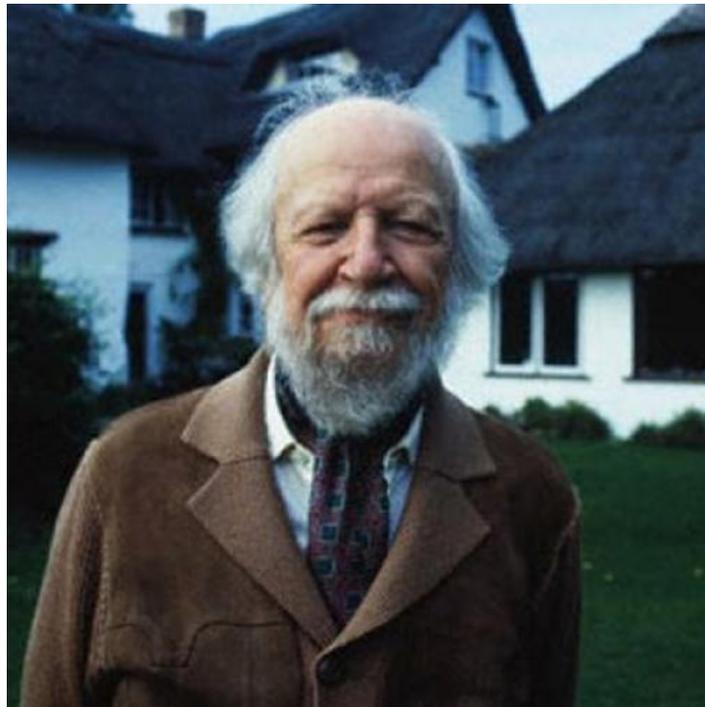
Abstract

Sir William Gerald Golding (1911-1993) is recognized as a great author of the twentieth century. He never stays from exploring the darker sides of humanity in his novels, which concerns with human guilt and sin. His fiction focuses on the significant aspect of man's quest for order on various levels and encountering in the process chaos within and without. *Darkness Visible* is a novel that deals with the religious theme, a conflict between good and evil where the evil is destroyed and the good achieves victory. The author brings out such situation between Matty, a moralist and Sophy, an immoral girl. Golding has clearly divided the novel into three parts. The first part concentrates on Matty, his original sin, his sense of guilt and his journal and

second part on Sophy, her evil deeds and in the third part ‘One and One’ the two good and evil power converge which ends with the destruction of evil and triumph of good.

Key Words: William Gerald Holding, Darker sides, *Darkness Visible*, Destruction, Evil deeds, Immoral, Man’s quest.

Introduction



Sir William Gerald Golding (1911-1993)

Courtesy: <https://newrepublic.com/article/76959/william-golding-lord-of-the-flies>

Sir William Gerald Golding (1911-1993) was a significant twentieth century English novelist who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983. He was a philosophical novelist. William Golding drew upon a variety of influences for his fiction.

([http:// www.biblio.com/author_biographies/william_golding.html/](http://www.biblio.com/author_biographies/william_golding.html/)) “The most profound inspiration was his own life experiences as a witness to and participant in war. The pessimism about the nature of humanity that forms the core of his work resulted from these experiences” (An Introduction to English Literature, 27). Religion was also a significant influence on his

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work. His ideas about the dual nature of humanity are partly drawn from Christian notions of the battle between good and evil. His works are full of vitality, seriousness and originality. He is not a prolific writer but he displays rare techniques and has exhibited his imaginative power. Golding's works present the subject in a startlingly new light, giving it yet another dimension.

Golding's Themes

Golding's themes are based on man's alienation, free will, guilt, primacy and universality of evil. *Darkness Visible* (1979) is dark and complex novel. It has won the James Trait Black Memorial Prize. In this novel, Golding has brought out the struggle between good and evil using naivety, sexuality and spiritual thought. The author has explored the darkness of man's heart, which he makes visible. It communicates an apocalyptic vision. It is concerned with the ambiguity of moral issues, the difficulty of judgment, and breaking down the partitions that isolate men and prevent them from feeling a sense of community.

<<http://www.kirjasto.sci.filwgolding.html>>

Matty's Journey Towards Salvation

Darkness Visible focuses on a trio of diverse characters. One is Matty, Christ-like figure, who as a boy miraculously emerges from the bombing of London hideously scarred but mentally changed. The others are a beautiful pair of twin girls, Toni and Sophy left mentally scarred by their father's neglect. Golding has taken these three characters and has woven their stories together, contrasting Matty's intense empathy for others and exploration of himself with Toni and Sophy's lives of sadism, political violence, sexual perversity even though they are numb to the world. All three characters are searching for meaning in their lives, highlighting ideas of divine moralism verses selfishness.

Fall Motif

Darkness Visible (1979) by William Gerald Golding is a contemporary novel about England in the 1970s and deals with characters and events that are in the real world. The initial letters of the novels title are D.V: an abbreviation from the Latin "Deo Volente" or "God willing". The title *Darkness Visible* is taken from *Paradise Lost*, Book 1 by Milton.

Golding focuses on fall motif, the prevailing image of darkness, and the concern about the nature of evil. Though he explores the nature of evil, his focus remains in the real world. Milton and the Bible form the literary backdrop for *Darkness Visible*. Golding undertakes the exploration of the darkness of man's heart and makes it visible. His fiction falls into several categories: comprehensive studies, religious and theological approaches, perspectives of fable and myth, structural or post structural readings. He shifts settings and creative techniques in each novel but his themes are always a conflict between good and evil. In *Darkness Visible*, Matty represents the spiritual goodness and Sophy represents the power of evil.

Two Extremes

The characterization of Matty and Sophy are in two extremes. Matty is the centre of Golding's mystic vision. The fire disfigures his face. He is named as Mathew Septimus Windrove. His last name keeps changing which adds a kind of universality to his character. He is sent to a school for foundlings in Greenfield where his deformities and difficulties in speaking make him the butt of most of the boys. He is isolated from other children because of his disfigured face. He is very silent.

Matty

Bible is his only companion throughout his life. He is able to endure the sorrows of existence with the help of the Bible. Matty reveals a capacity for visionary gleams. His spiritual quest actually begins when he goes to Australia, the land of mystics and seers. He reads the Bible to quench the sexual desires. Throughout the novel, he faces profound questions: Who am I? What am I for? The spirit who assures him that "he is near the centre of things" gives the answer for his question (*Darkness Visible*, 91). Matty moves from the spiritual world to the world of weird. He serves to foil Sophy's most diabolical plans of kidnapping a child. Matty gives his own life to save that boy. Matty realizes that the reason of his existence is to save the child. He becomes a spiritual soul.

Sophy as the Power of Evil

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The ignorant and immoral girl, Sophy is the power of evil. Sophy's spiritual powers are evident in her throwing the stone that kills a dabchick. It is an act of will operating spiritually or magically, an act of wantonness for which she feels no sense of guilt. It seems some force in the nature of things is helping her when she finds the stone that fits her hand. She learns through this act the inevitable and unalterable law of "of course" (Darkness Visible, 108). Her advance toward evil is closely connected with her pursuit of weirdness.

Matty and Sophy

Matty ends where Sophy begins. Fire of blitz where Matty emerges is linked with fire at school which leads to the death of Henderson. Matty's uncertainty seen in question who am I? With Sophy's certainty seen in decision to kidnap child, Matty rejects daughters of men with Sophy finds sexual partner in Gerry. He goes to Australia with Sophy works at runways travel, Matty's baptism with Sophy and Toni struck by tidal wave, spirits tell Matty what he is supposed to do while Sophy discovers of course way of thing. Matty sees the twins going into shop while Sophy and Toni go into shop.

The gold grew fierce and burned. Sebastian watched in terror as the man before him was consumed, melted, vanished like a guy in a bonfire; and the face was no longer two-tone but gold as the fire... (Darkness Visible, 265)

Matty comes from darkness and become spiritual whole but Sophy who has everything in life become nothing at the end because of her sin. In this novel, Golding establishes a Biblical context and a spiritual dimension. Matty endures the sorrows of existence though his resolution is not easily made. His spiritual quest actually begins when he goes to Australia, the land of his penance. In Australia, too he faces the same old temptations. Therefore, he leaves that place and decides on starving the evil in him. He experiences crucifixion in an encounter with an Abo.

Matty and Sophy live in a private world of their own. The two worlds of Matty and Sophy, which develop along parallel lines, meet at the last part "One Is One". The school in which Matty is working is set on fire by a bomb thrown by Sophy and her terrorist friend's in

order to kidnap a child, a prince, from the school. Matty that is who caught in the flames sees a strange man carrying a child out of the school wrapped in a blanket. Matty rushes to the man. At the sight of the fire monster the stranger drops the bundle and lets the child go. Thus, Matty loses his life but not before he has saved the child.

Matty Fulfils His Destiny

When Matty saves the child even after his body is caught by fire, his two toned face becomes gold. Matty fulfils his destiny. Now he realizes the purpose of his existence. He gets the answer for whom he is for? The purpose of his existence is to save the child.

He is also aware of the beautiful aspects of the universe. Matty is the messenger of light in a world of gloom and darkness. “He practices the mortification of the flesh somewhat in the manner of the Buddhist Nirvana and dies a martyr’s death” (William Golding: A Study, 25)

Matty becomes spiritually whole after he gives his life as a burnt offering in rescuing a child. His story is the story of man facing the question of moral guilt and responsibility for the deeds of his fellowmen.

Conclusion

Darkness visible is a parable, which ends with a triumph of goodness and the failure of evil. Golding presents two major characters Matty and Sophy to give a moral lesson. Matty is good and spiritual but Sophy is a power of evil. There is conflict between both good and evil in the novel, where Matty sacrifices his own life to rescue the child and become spiritually whole. His body is called spirit but Sophy’s body is just a dead body. She attains nothing. This gives a good moral lesson to the world.

Matty is horribly disfigured for no particular sin of his, but the author points out that man is already guilty through original sin. According to William Golding, Man inherits guilt even before he incurs it as an individual. Matty bears the guilt of human existence, in a wider sense and as individual, in the narrow sense of responsibility for a particular action, he incurs guilt.

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Through *Matty Golding* also shows how one can order one's life and work out one's salvation. Golding represents the power of evil through Matty and Sophy, Golding presents a moral lesson. Sophy's evil mind is revealed through her actions. Her killing of dabchick, her boy friend Roland and to the extreme she plans to kidnap child shows her evil nature. The good and evil converge at the end of the novel where the good Matty becomes spiritually whole and evil Sophy dies for nothingness.

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