

Wickedness in Darkness Visible

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Özet

William Golding'ın bütün romanları gibi *Darkness Visible* da ahlaksal konuların muğlaklığı, insanları yargılamanın ve insanları birbirinden ayıran ve toplum duygusu hissetmelerini engelleyen duvarları ortadan kaldırmanın zorluğu ile ilgilidir. Golding insanın doğası ile ilgili içgörüsünü mitik ve alegorik öğeler aracılığıyla okuyucuya aktarır. Roman iyi ile kötü arasında var olduğu varsayılan karşıtlığı ortadan kaldırır ve bu kavramların birbiriyle ayrılmaz bir biçimde bağlantılı olduğunu ortaya koyar. Olaylar son kırk yıl içinde İngiltere'de yer alır. İki ana karakter olan Matty ve Sophy manevi bir boyutta, ancak bu boyutun iki zıt ucunda yaşarlar.

Anahtar sözcükler: ahlak, muallak, iyi, kötü, inanç, bencilik

Abstract

Like all of Golding's novels *Darkness Visible* is concerned with the ambiguity of moral issues, the difficulty of judgement and of breaking down the partitions that isolate men and prevent them from feeling a sense of community. Golding employs mythic, fabular and allegorical modes to convey his insight about human nature. The novel destroys the binary opposition assumed to exist between good and evil, shows that they are interdependent, the one incapable of existing without the other. The setting is England of the last forty years, standing for the hell of contemporary western society. Matty and Sophy, the main characters, seem to live in a spiritual dimension, but at the opposite ends of it.

Keywords: ambiguity, good, evil, faith, selfishness, altruism

“As long as you have had Homo Sapiens, you have had wickedness, because that's what he is about,” William Golding told Biles (Biles, 1970: 40). To Golding, good and evil are irreconcilable powers existing together within man and man must choose between them; since man was created in God's image and was given free will, he can choose to be good or evil and God cannot stop his turning away from Him without removing his free will (Biles, 1970: 76). Golding's concern with the principle of darkness and evil links him with Hawthorne and Melville rather than Christian orthodoxy. In *Darkness Visible* he investigates the mysteries of the spiritual world that surround us but are largely closed to us, invisible, or ignored for much of most men's lives, and attempts to illuminate this darkness (Crompton, 1988: 113). He remarked to Haffenden, “the question of moral choice and circumstances is so complex that I think

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we're all like Diogenes's man with the lamp, walking through the dark and looking not just for a good man but for a situation in which we can say to ourselves, I am good" (1985: 108). This concern with darkness and the nature of man caused Golding to cut himself loose from two centuries of realistic mode in the English novel and to employ fabular, allegorical and mythical modes. Frank Kermode notes that Golding's world is one in which the myth of progress has failed, but the rival myth of the Fall of Man, of universal guilt and evil, has come back without bringing God with it (1987: 53).

The tendency toward allegory is established by the title, *Darkness Visible*, which alludes to Milton's vision of the Fall in the First Book of *Paradise Lost*. The epigraph from Book Six of *Virgil's Aeneid* extends this theme further as the dark powers are evoked. The reader understands that Golding will again explore the nature of evil, but his focus remains in the real world. And the pressure of feeling in the novel drives allegory out of the foreground of the story. Moreover, Golding's extraordinary perception of man as a physical being in a physical world torn between his instincts, his strong emotions and his evolving mind takes the novel beyond the bounds of allegory (Pritchett, 1987: 47). Although Golding uses the allegorical mode, the theme never becomes so abstract that we forget about the explicit social context of the setting (Dickson, 1990: 110-111).

Golding allows for the simultaneous operations of the factual and fabular in the novel, thus offering both social realism and moral allegory (Dickson, 1990: 109). Myth, fable and history characterize certain modes of imagination, and we find them co-existing in Golding's fiction. They are different ways of looking at life, each of them with a different stance toward truth. The fabular world is one that is made up and exists outside the world we inhabit, and fidelity to common experience is a minor, or even irrelevant consideration. When the fabulist writes of men, rather than of beasts, it is in the mode of vision and dreams. We enter this world to analyse the every day world with greater clarity. However, since fables have an anterior purpose, some initial thesis that the writer wishes to express in concrete terms, *Darkness Visible* with its multiple layers of meaning cannot be called a fable, though it has fabular features, such as Matty's visions and Sophy's weirdness.

History recognizes no other level of "reality" than the phenomenal or contingent. Fiction as history tries to persuade us that its places and persons are empirically true, like London of World War II and Greenfield of the 1970s, and a number of quite ordinary characters, such as Sim, Edwin and Pedigree. Nevertheless, *Darkness Visible* recognizes and emphasizes a spiritual dimension, which history does not accommodate.

Literary myth so deals with men as to reveal an "archetypal" truth hidden below the surface of every day life. Myth is a cornerstone in building up literature due to its symbolic power and metaphoric type of narration. Literature develops out of the mythical framework and there is an intimate relationship between art and myths (Jung, 1933: 164). Mythification is employed by contemporary writers as a new way of expressing the spiritual crisis of modern society and the alienation of the individual. It is also used as a new expressive means of overcoming the fragmentation and chaos of contemporary life. Golding also makes ample use of mythification to communicate his particular vision of reality, and of the individual's relationship with society. He uses myth and mythical symbols to structure descriptions of contemporary life and internal

life as well as to try to link the past to the present so that he can control, order and give shape to the anarchic contemporary life. Since myth and ritual are the foundations of all cultural forms, myth provides tradition and cultural continuity. The religious school emphasizes myth's sacred and transcendental aspects. To Eliade, "myth narrates a sacred history" (1963:5). To Freud, myths are disguised forms of infantile fantasies which have been repressed, and reveal themselves in the dreams of individuals (qtd. in Leeming, 1981: 2). Similarly, Joseph Campbell regards myth as the depersonalized dream (1968: 19). Eric Gould, emphasizing the connection between myth and language, suggests that fictions aspire to the status of myth (1981: 11).

The modern world is more complex than previous forms of society, and the modern artist, aware of the importance of man's deeper self, finds myth the appropriate language and form for expressing man's deepest insight and highest aspirations. Early in the novel Golding establishes a biblical context and a spiritual dimension. Matty acts out, sometimes deliberately and sometimes accidentally, a series of biblical roles – Cain, Esau, Moses, while with Sophy the primacy of magic is stressed. In the Bible stories the notion of judgement is obscure and elusive. Although all three biblical characters are killers in one sense, no judgement seems to have fallen on them (Crompton, 1985: 101-103). Kinkead-Weakes and Gregor note that like history, myth has to persuade us that its characters are real people in real places, but at the same time it has links with fable in that it has to persuade us to question the nature of this reality. In the presentation of character, individual features fade to reveal archetypal forces. But if myth is not expressed in personal terms it loses contact with the complexities of the individual and becomes lifeless. In *Darkness Visible*, although Golding is concerned with a group, the focus is on two individuals – Matty and Sophy ; so Golding faces the problem that "character" presents for the writer of myths. Matty's story seems to belong to fable, but its whole realization belongs to history, in which myth is located by imaginative exploration (1988: 88-89).

Darkness Visible invokes the identical moral concerns of Golding's first novel in an updated setting. In both novels fire evokes the generic hell of the human condition in the particular hell of World War II. Fire, a symbol of man's reason and intelligence, can be positive or negative according to how it is used. Here it is a cause of massive destruction, but at the same time it gives birth to a saintly figure, Matty, who is "born from the sheer agony of a burning city" (*DV* 20). Matty's survival is so miraculous as to suggest the Apocalypse. London, bathed in a "shameful, inhuman light" has become "a version of the infernal city" (*DV* 11), embodied in the title and epigraph of the novel (Friedman, 1993: 123). At the end of the story Matty himself becomes the purifying fire, releasing Pedigree from the rage of his inner fires and conferring on him the freedom of death (Friedman, 1993: 124). The novel is extremely ambivalent from a moral perspective and deeply disturbing. It destroys the binary opposition that is believed to exist between good and evil. To McCarron, the novel shows good and evil are completely interdependent, the one incapable of existing without the other (1994: 42). The title of the novel is taken from Satan's words in Milton's *Paradise Lost* surveying the world after the Fall: "A Dungeon Horrible, on all sides round/ As of one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames/ No light, but rather darkness visible" (Dickson, 1990: 110). The emphasis on the Fall motif is extended further by the

epigraph from the *Aeneid* which draws attention to Virgil's prayer to the dark gods to allow him to penetrate the depths. Golding, similarly, hopes to penetrate the depths of his society and of human nature, and to make the darkness there visible (Crompton, 1985: 99). Friedman argues that underlying Golding's belief in man's essential depravity is a Calvinistic sense of original sin (Friedman, 1993: 11). The biblical background serves to remind us that man's wickedness and depravity is an eternally present threat and that the prophets of the Old Testament were wont to condemn their own time for similar wickedness (Boyd: 1990: 128). Yet what the novel conveys by its focus on the real world is that evil in our time is spreading wide and there is an impending doom. Milton's fiery furnace becomes Golding's London under siege during World War II, and the fiery scene concluding the novel brings the story full circle (Dickson, 1990: 109).

McCarron argues that like most of Golding's later fiction *Darkness Visible* depicts the attainment of truth through the sinful paths of outrage. The novel is not concerned with fairness or justice, but with the irrational, numinous force which is at the centre of life and which can be apprehended as much by piety as by outrage (1994: 51). *Darkness Visible* explores the difficulties of judgement in moral matters; the extremes of behaviour of which men are capable, their paradoxical saintliness and sinfulness, and the conflict that goes on within the human soul, the result of which determines whether a man is to be saved or damned (Friedman, 1993: 11). Behind these lie the mysteries of the spiritual world, surrounding us but largely closed to us, invisible to or ignored by most men. Golding penetrates these mysteries using two characters that live primarily in a spiritual dimension, but at opposite poles within it: Matty and Sophy. These two are symbolically linked by their initial killings. Sophy throws a stone and kills a dabchick; Matty throws a shoe, causing Henderson to fall to his death. (Dicken-Fuller, 1990: 45). Matty, though physically disfigured in the fires of the Blitz, is in his unworldliness, selfless-love and self-dedication some kind of saint. Opposed to him is Sophy, young, beautiful, an agent of the powers of evil, advancing as far as she can the impulse toward destruction and chaos by her criminal behaviour, sexual excesses and general attitude to life. The structure of the novel makes it fairly easy to focus on and examine each character separately. As Dickson argues, while Matty believes God determines all acts, Sophy sees only chance. Matty through his talks with the spirits strives for self-transcendence, Sophy believes merely in the principle of entropy. What the two have in common is a kind of extremism and moral blindness, which precipitates Henderson's death and gives rise to the kidnapping plan. They end up as fanatics, one for good one for evil (1990: 115).

At the beginning of the novel, Matty, a small child, miraculously emerges from a raging London firestorm with the left side of his face burning. The firestorm is compared to "a burning bush" (*DV* 9), a reminder that God had spoken to Moses out of the fire of a bush, a bush that burnt but was not consumed. Matty survives but the left side of his face is permanently deformed; he has no left ear and his mouth is so misshapen that he has difficulty speaking. Attempts to identify him fail. He is just given a number for a name, seven, then two Christian names: Matthew Septimus. His first name, meaning a "gift of God" hardly seems to be apt for a boy who is hopelessly naïve and obsessed to the point of religious fanaticism. The full name invokes the idea of

compassion and understanding. (Dickson, 1990: 112). When read as a biblical reference, this alludes to Matthew, chapter 7, whose opening verse is “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (113). This helps to explain the final scene in the park when Pedigree is judged. Matty 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.

His dubious role in the mysterious death of his classmate Henderson and the jailing of his pederast teacher Pedigree as a result of the death give Matty a deep sense of guilt. Sarcastically called “a treasure” (*DV* 28) by the school master Mr. Pedigree, who hankers after pretty boys like Henderson, Matty mistakes Pedigree’s revulsion for affection. This literal-mindedness leads to his devotion to Pedigree. Henderson’s fatal fall, whether suicidal or accidental, plays a critical formative role in the lives of Matty and Pedigree. Pedigree’s unfair words of blame, “You horrible, horrible boy! It’s all your fault” (*DV* 37), are taken literally by Matty, imbuing him with a sense of guilt and sinfulness. What happened to Henderson is never clearly stated. It seems that he slipped on the leads and fell. Yet Matty had flung his gym shoe and uttered the biblical curse, and then, as his journal for 26/11/66 reveals, had watched Pedigree’s window where he had seen Henderson come away. Matty had willed Henderson’s death, and because he possessed a spiritual power that at that stage he did not recognise, his curse was fulfilled and Henderson fell to his death where he had thrown his gym shoe. The curse reveals both Matty’s wish for his rival’s destruction and the spiritual power to effect it. At the same time, Matty acts in the conviction that he is expelling the evil that Pedigree teasingly attributed to Henderson, and that Matty, as usual, took literally (Friedman, 1993: 125). Yet there may have been an element of jealousy as well for Pedigree’s love (Boyd, 1990: 132). Matty is confused and inarticulate in trying to explain to the headmaster what he thinks happened to Henderson, and is sent away from school. Wherever he goes to work, he is rejected. As he grows older, he experiences sexual feelings for “the daughters of men” (*DV* 49); being aware that his appearance is too disgusting to attract any female, he begins to read the Bible excessively to quench his sexual desires. Eventually, Matty becomes a wanderer, like Cain and Esau, doing his best to atone for Henderson’s death, which was prompted by misunderstanding (Crompton, 1985: 103). It is a fortune-teller’s ball in the window of Goodchild’s Rare Books that acts on Matty like a revelation – glowing, illuminating, transforming (*DV* 48), making him aware of the presence of a dimension beyond the material world (Redpath, 1986: 55). He understands that he has received a call to put the world aside, that he must put the desires of the flesh behind him and try to discover himself and his purpose in life, so he leaves for Australia. He regards sex as sinful and dangerous, and avoids it. As examples of his attempt at atonement his stabbing his palm with a nail, giving up speech, performing his own mystical baptism in an Australian swamp, with its implications of purification, giving his life to save a boy, and returning after his own death to fetch Pedigree and grant him freedom can be given. Many of his actions are shaped and conditioned by his passionate literal faith in the Bible, which he has learnt by heart.

Matty becomes mysteriously in touch with levels of experience beyond that normally open to man (Redpath, 1986: 164). The fact that he does not receive his prophetic call through the conventional medium of the Church suggests that his

subsequent mission to discover himself may not follow conventionally religious paths. In addition, certain aspects of presentation make the reader doubt his prophetic mission. Some of his behaviours make him appear ridiculous or mad. Is he a fool, or a saint, or a religious maniac? (Boyd, 1990: 130). His religion is narrow-minded and lacks scepticism. The certainty in the rightness of one's faith may be a source of wickedness and dangerous, as hinted at in the final exchange between Sim and Edwin: "We think we *know*." "Know? That's worse than an atom bomb and always was" (*DV* 261) (1990: 137). However, although he continually misinterprets, his intentions are good and one positive message that arises from the obscurity of the novel, as Redpath also notes, is that one's intentions are more important than the actual fact (Redpath, 1986: 55). In his adventures in Australia one of the main lessons Matty has to learn is the danger of his own literal-mindedness and that things are not always what they seem; for instance, the wilderness where he is stranded is not the outback but lies close to the suburbs of Darwin; the Abo who subjects him to mock crucifixion is not a genuine Abo. His various strange practices there are all inspired by his excessive reading of the Bible, which deepen his insight into his guilty inner self. He interprets his feelings and experiences with the aid of the Bible. His symbolic suffering of the agony of crucifixion (*DV* 64) in Australia, followed by the symbolic baptism of resurrection (*DV* 75-6) leads to his spiritual release and he is able to cry tears of love and forgiveness as he leaves Australia.

Back in England, Matty starts being visited by two rather unconventional spirits and he puts his entire life into their hands. He trusts them unconditionally, even when he is seriously put to the test by the obligation to part with his precious Bible. He dedicates himself to the practices laid down in the Old Testament, forgetting food and drink, and preparing for the final judgement. Reading the Book of Revelation, he becomes convinced that 6/6/66 must be the Day of Judgement forecast in the Apocalypse. He paints the date in blood, wears it on his forehead and carries it as a warning through the streets. When nothing happens, he is disillusioned and wonders what his mission is. Matty's spirits may be hallucinatory, but their visits determine his future course of action. Instructed by them, he returns to Greenfield where his spirits inform him about his personal mission, which is to save a child born on the day when Matty expected judgement and at which time a black spirit was cast down. This information may allude to the fall of Satan, or the birth of the child who is to be the Messiah (Crompton, 1985: 112). Thus he learns the answer to his question, "What am I for?" (*DV* 68) Consequently, his life becomes a life of love for others, resulting in unconditional altruism. Matty's story suggests that faith in God can mean hope and salvation in a world which is evolving inevitably toward complete chaos (Redpath, 1986: 55).

In Part 2, it is observed that Sophy also has an inexplicable power, but it can hardly be called religious. Sophie's spiritual powers are evident in her throwing the stone that kills the dabchick. It is an act of will operating spiritually or magically, an act of wanton and gratuitous destructiveness for which she feels no sense of guilt. It seems that some force in the nature of things is helping her when she finds the stone that fits her hand and enables her to kill a swimming dabchick by throwing a single stone. She learns through this act the inevitable and unalterable law of "Of course" (*DV* 108), in which her will can mesh in with the universe (Redpath, 1986: 95). Her advance toward

evil is closely connected with her pursuit of “weirdness”. Sophy feels weird in the sense of stranger when she is caught in enacting an evil that seems to reach her from outside herself. Another element in her weirdness is a sense of inexplicably knowing the future, like the witches of *Macbeth*. This is what the child Sophy experiences as the “Of course” way things sometimes behave. Her sadistic wilfulness illustrates the manifestation in an action of a state of mind. She takes pleasure only from inflicting pain and controlling others. Her development parallels Matty’s in several episodes. Just as his spiritual powers, which he does not yet understand, become apparent in the episode of Henderson’s death so do Sophy’s powers become evident in her throwing the stone that kills the dabchick. Like Henderson’s death, it is an act of will operating spiritually or, from another point of view, magically (Crompton, 1985: 104). Ironically, she and Matty are linked together in their extremism for they share a common fanaticism. Whether revealing her sadism or his righteous indignation, both their actions are connected with death and symbolize the extremity of their spiritual positions (Dickson, 1990: 114-115).

Like Matty, she learns that the pursuit of simplicity, whether it be for good or evil, makes enormous demands. Merely breaking rules is not enough; for her, “the way to simplicity is through outrage” (DV 168). Deep down at the back of her mind she finds a long, dark tunnel with a small being at its mouth, which she calls *This*, the very substance of her identity (DV 124). “*This* lived and watched without any feelings at all and brandished or manipulated the Sophy creature like a complicated doll” (DV 124). It is through this dark tunnel that Sophy knows herself to be different and recognises the powers of evil that wait to be exploited. Two radio programmes, one on entropy, the other on statistics, reinforce the intuition of *This*: that reality is dominated by destructive dynamics, which will eventually result in complete chaos. She becomes convinced that a parallel to her own desire for weirdness can be found in natural processes as well. She characterizes this dynamics as “unwinding” (DV 166), and explains to Gerry as: “On and on, wave after wave arching, spreading, running down, down, down ___” (DV 167). For Sophy freedom is allowing the spring to uncoil, to be in sympathy with the process of unknotting and running down, which is the universal law. Man does not have the power to stop this movement; he can only participate in it or accelerate it (Schreurs, 1991: 137). This awakens in her a desire for absolute autonomy that can be achieved only by destroying the autonomy of others. She imagines that the universal forces of destruction are at her service as they both share a common goal – “the unknotting, the throbbing and disentangling of space and time on, on on into nothingness” (DV 167) (Schreurs, 1991: 147). For the realisation of that autonomy she leads an a-social life, solely for herself. In Sophy’s view reality has a supra-rational structure concordant with the one at the back of her mind (Schreurs, 1991: 135). The tidal wave reveals to her the presence of an invisible force acting through a material medium by which the entropy of the universe expresses itself (Redpath, 1986: 95).

The light-dark imagery which affects every page of the novel is ambiguous, like the other features of the novel. The light is sometimes evil, more often good. It is associated not only with destructive fires, but also with purifying vision. Light encompasses both Sophy’s terrorism and Matty’s mysticism. The same is true of dark. The “long dark tunnel” at the back of Sophy’s mind, which instigates Sophy’s evil

deeds serves quite a different purpose than the dark swamp water in which Matty is baptized.

The dark Sophy, passionately self-absorbed, and her twin sister the fair Toni, coldly unfeeling, represent the two faces of natural depravity and contemporary moral entropy. To Sim the vicious criminality of the twins can be identified with the condition of 1970's England. The betrayed promise and tragic waste that Sim associates with the 60's generation is also embodied in the twins: "A treasure was poured out for them and they turned their back on it. A treasure not just for them but for all of us" (*DV* 259) (Friedman, 1993: 132). He has difficulty in understanding how two such intelligent and beautiful young girls could behave in this horrible way. "Is there nothing to live for?" he wonders (*DV* 167). Sophy and Toni invoke the 60's credo of personal freedom only to pervert it in acts of wanton violence (Friedman, 1993: 133). The twins' physical beauty conceals their inner darkness much as Matty's disfigured face and body obscure his inner goodness. Matty and Sophy are far more alike than they are opposed and many of Sophy's cruel and pointless actions have a supernatural or mystical element within them (McCarron, 1994: 44). With similar powers Matty and Sophy develop in opposite directions. While Matty submits himself to the spiritual and creative, Sophy submits herself to entropy and the void, manipulating people into agreeing to her criminal plans. The question is whether Toni and Sophy are the playthings of these powers or whether they maintain a certain degree of freedom; naturally there is no unambiguous answer to that. When Matty first sees Sophy and Toni, he likens them to beautiful angels (*DV* 101). Much later Sophy appears to him in a dream and causes him to defile himself (*DV* 236). Matty's dream explicitly identifies her with the whore of Babylon in the Apocalypse, encouraged by Satan to seduce the early church from virtue. She is, in short, a figure of evil, embodying the temptations of the flesh (Crompton, 1985: 112-3). Sophy renounces her educated, gentle persona and chooses to side with the dark power within herself (Schreurs, 1991: 133). She unsexes herself by an act of will and gives her body as a useless, unnecessary and unregarded thing to anyone who wants it (Crompton, 1985: 115). Her sadism is already evident in the episode where she has her first orgasm brought about by stabbing her boy friend Roland. For Sophy sex is little more than a mechanism for imposing her will on men: she wills Pedigree to stay in the urinal; the plot to kidnap the rich boy is no more than an extension of Sophy's will to power through violence; she easily persuades her friend Gerry and his companion Bill to take part in her reckless plan. The ultimate act of self-assertion, the imagined murder, fuses sex and violence into almost a ritual celebration of darkness. At the climax of her fantasy is her sliding the knife into the child's body, feeling the sacrificial blood flow and watching the "black sun" rising in the sky (*DV* 252). This identification of Sophy with Satan, bringing sin and death into the world, prepares the way for the last act of saving the child and the triumph of the forces of good in the figure of Matty, who rushes out of the burning school ablaze from head to foot to rescue the child the terrorists are seeking to abduct and thwarts the planned abduction (Crompton, 1985: 118). After saving the child at the cost of his own life, Matty becomes spiritually whole. This is symbolised by his scarred two-tone face becoming one colour, symmetrical and beautiful (Redpath, 1986: 170). At this scene the different paths of Matty and Sophy cross in a coincidental final confrontation.

The title of Part 3 “One Is One” implies that the focus will be on the condition of spiritual isolation. The novel consistently suggests that barriers and partitions are made by humanity and therefore can be broken down, but only Matty seems able to attain this desirable unity in any permanent sense. It is a particular gift of Matty that he has the ability to break through the interpersonal walls through the power of “wordless communication” (DV 18). He almost totally rejects language. He communicates silently and with great intensity his grief at human wickedness and sin, yet also the joy of his love of humanity (Boyd, 1990: 144). To Crompton, this section has echoes of Aeneas’s wandering among spirits of the underworld who are awaiting judgement, like Sim and Edwin (1985: 115).

Sim and Edwin represent contrasting types of unknowing and unawareness. Long time Greenfield residents, they see symptoms of irreversible decline in the new social order – loss of communal purpose and social and religious friction, and are repelled by the obsession of the age with the pursuit of worldly goods and indulgence of appetites (Boyd, 1990: 143). Even such old friends communicate only tentatively, justifying Sim’s maxim: “One is one and all alone and ever more shall be so” (DV 225). Crompton notes that Sim has been quick to condemn Pedigree for coming to the shop to steal books as bait for children, refusing to recognise that his placing of the children’s books in the window to attract the Stanhope girls had exactly the same motive. Edwin fails to see any connection between Pedigree’s perversity and his own sexually ambivalent marriage, that of an effeminate man married to a masculine woman” (Crompton, 1985: 121-2). Alienation fosters spiritual depravity. Not coincidentally, the Little Theatre Group rehearses Sartre’s *No Exit*, in which people eternally torture each other. The wordless communication of Matty is the antidote to the meaningless babble of human voices. (Friedman, 1993: 134-5). The séance instigated by Edwin with Sim and Matty culminates in a momentary revelation of the “ineffable promise” of the “world of spirit” (DV 233). The men join hands so that being touches being and the circle expands to embrace millions, a whole country. The world of Greenfield is no longer for Sim a prison or mad-house, but a world transformed to a beauty beyond words, where a lonely man may suddenly feel loved. Sim experiences an epiphany after his hand is “read” by Matty so that the habitually sceptical Sim is compelled to agree with Edwin, who says, “We broke a barrier, broke down a partition” (DV 231, 234). Sim discovers that his hand possesses a dimension of holy infinity. He forgets about time and is drawn into a circle that “instead of being a small one was gigantic, ... country-wide, vast” (DV 232). Yet the sensation of pleasure vanishes as soon as Matty lets go of his and Edwin’s hands. Moreover, they are reluctant to agree to Matty’s wish that Pedigree should be drawn into the magic circle. Incapable of self-transcendence, Sim and Edwin soon sink back into the ranks of the spiritually uncommitted, unable to make use of the opportunity of entering the spiritual world by surrendering the self. Matty has touched their hearts without transforming them. Sim’s apprehension of harmonious unity is confined to a single moment. When the abduction affair comes to light and their first spiritual meeting is broadcast on TV and they become figures of

ridicule because of their faith, Sim sees it as a “public condemnation” and defends himself: “We did nothing! It was a kind of praying!” (*DV* 255); Edwin’s response is real renunciation even though he had experienced a mysterious reality in the early encounter with Matty: “I said seven words. I said a small sentence and I saw it as a luminous and holy shape before me. ... The light was not of this world” (*DV* 204). He now disowns this experience, saying, “We’re not innocent. We’re worse than guilty. We’re funny. We made the mistake of thinking you could see through a brick wall” (*DV* 258). Thus they both deny the sense of communion they felt thanks to Matty, who attempted to tear down the walls between men and between men and God, and wanted to offer men freedom (Schreurs, 1991: 143).

Matty, despite the opposition of Sim and Edwin, is determined to try to redeem the enemy whom he loves, to cleanse him of filth, to cure and free him from his obsession. Pedigree’s insistence on his folly has made him an object of righteous anger. To Matty, Pedigree resembles the supreme scapegoat in that he is “despised and rejected” (*DV* 96) and on him the sins of the community are imposed. Sim, who is a model of decency and respectability in appearance, too has paedophile inclinations, in his case young girls. He dotes on the Stanhope twins. His reason to shun Pedigree is that Pedigree reminds him of the truth about himself. His involvement with Pedigree and his entry into Sophy’s territory for the séance force out of him a confession to Edwin about the Stanhope girls: “I used to be in love with them” (*DV* 224). It may be argued that Pedigree is a greater sinner than Sim because he has allowed his illicit desires to be transformed into action whereas Sim has only indulged in fantasies. However, Boyd points out that Christ takes the thought for the deed, and hence judgement on Sim and Pedigree is not a simple matter of black and white (1990: 147-8).

Pedigree, no worse than Sim and Edwin, has suffered more because of his weakness for beautiful boys. As he insists in his own defence, “There have been such people in this neighbourhood, such monsters, that girl and her men, Stanhope, Goodchild, Bell even, and his ghastly wife – I’m not like them, bad but not as bad, I never hurt anybody” (*DV* 264-65). Pedigree, in a way, has been driven to ever new disgraces by the loathing with which he is regarded by the inhabitants of Greenfield and has become a prisoner of lavatories. He knows that one day his fears may make him a child murderer as well as a child molester. It is implied that in his case judgement is not an easy matter. Perhaps Pedigree differs from ordinary people not in being more wicked, but more unfortunate, an object worthy of pity rather than hate; although, as the narrator notes, “It is not recorded anywhere if there was a single person living in Greenfield who pitied him” (*DV* 85) (Boyd, 1990: 149). Matty, in fact, sees him more as an object of pity than of hate.

Matty’s unchanging love for Pedigree seems to indicate that Matty believes him capable of being saved. When the dead Matty appears before him in the park, apparently resurrected, floating and waving, Pedigree makes one last effort to resist him. At the same time Pedigree realises that Matty was the only one ever to have loved him. Matty with his face transformed, “no longer two-tone but gold” (*DV* 265), has come to redeem

and rescue him by cutting him loose from his subservience to his passion and bringing him the freedom of death. With this purpose he draws away the multicoloured ball that Pedigree is clutching to lure children, and vanishes in an all consuming fire. Pedigree could not have won the struggle within himself without Matty's love. We see the appalling struggle that goes on inside Pedigree, see that he is not simply a beast. Finally delivered from his agony and overpowered by emotion, Pedigree dies of a heart attack. What saves him is the love of Matty. To Boyd, the Christian reading suggests that it is not for us to judge; we are all sinners. Matty may be said to represent Christ's sacrifice which made possible the salvation of the likes of Pedigree, which opened the gates of Heaven to all of us (Boyd, 1990: 152).

The sceptical, unreligious voice is present as the park-keeper, who finds the dead body of Pedigree and the ball a few yards from his feet, and thinks "the filthy old thing would never be cured" (*DV* 265). Perhaps the vision of salvation was simply a hallucination of the dying Pedigree, the resurrected Matty a mere fantasy. Thus Pedigree's salvation is questioned and the reader is confused. Boyd suggests that a middle way of interpretation could be that for Pedigree salvation and redemption is the knowledge that he is loved and forgiven. This is what provokes tears of joy in him and turns a world of filth and guilt to golden light and warmth. As Boyd contends, in imitation of the teachings of Christ, Matty forgives Pedigree and thus transforms the world and breaks down the walls that keep us each in his cell (Boyd, 1990: 153). Matty incarnates potential, not actual salvation. To be saved, humanity must also generate the good as Matty notes: "What good is not breathed into the world by the holy spirit must come down by and through the nature of man" (*DV* 237-38).

As Dickson points out, multiple ironies inform nearly every page of the novel, contributing to the general ambiguity. Though Matty is seen as a religious figure, his "heroism" has to be qualified at every turn. That his name is continually changed or misunderstood adds a kind of universality to his character, yet it also comments on the problems of identity and communication. "Greenfield" seems particularly inappropriate for a town overrun by jet noise, rumbling trucks and disparate social groups; Mr. Stanhope is completely void of love or hope; Sophy's misanthropy hardly makes her wise, as her name translates; Fido Masterman is master of nothing; Mr. Pedigree's pedigree is pederast (1990: 112). Irony complicates the connection between physical appearance and state of mind. Matty, the character most closely associated with goodness is ghastly and misshapen, whereas Sophy, the most sinister, evil presence is beautiful (113).

Dickson claims that Matty's life establishes the absurd saint motif. He is much like Ezekiel of the Old Testament; the vision of fire and of the angelic wheels and the vengeance against Edom – "over Edom will I cast out my shoe" – connect him with the biblical figure. Matty is literally connected with Henderson's death after casting his shoe at the suspected wrongdoer. At this point Matty's blindly literal reading of the Bible causes great harm; however, he will have the opportunity for redemption through sacrifice. Matty becomes the absurd Christ figure, as he baptizes himself in the swamp

water and undergoes the wildest crucifixion and emasculation imaginable (1990: 113). The German bombers spraying incendiaries over London have a biblical counterpart in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where avenging angels scatter coals of fire over the doomed city of Jerusalem. The emergence of Matty from the flames is reminiscent of an incident in which Ezekiel beholds a mysterious being with brightness all around it. Later this spirit carries Ezekiel up to Heaven. In a similar fashion, Matty walks out of the story “waist deep in gold” (*DV*, 264), taking the dying Pedigree with him and vanishes “like a guy in a bonfire” (*DV* 265) (Crompton, 1985: 98).

But the Bible is not Golding’s only point of reference. The description of the holocaust has a certain magical quality; in all the destruction there is a strange brightness, almost a beauty, as though one were looking at a city of the underworld containing “too much shameful, inhuman light ...a version of the infernal city” (*DV* 11). The description also suggests the classical underworld with its rivers of flame (Crompton, 1985: 99).

In one sense the novel is ultimately hopeful, suggesting, at least, the possibility of escape from a world threatened by atomic bombs, cultural dislocation and ceaseless noise. To Don Crompton, Matty’s journal represents the new gospel, the good news that a child has been born that shall bring the spiritual language into the world. The child is guarded on earth by a man whose natural mode of language is in signs, not words. Matty’s “elders” never speak to him. They “show” written papers and books, which Matty translates into his journal (1988: 134). What seems to be promised is a saviour, a new gospel and a new language, and Matty’s destiny is to become “a burnt offering” (*DV* 238).

The ending has the usual ambivalence of Golding’s novels. Only the possibility, not the certainty of redemption is suggested (Friedman, 1993: 137). It might be claimed that Matty represents the spirit and Sophy the body. But we cannot be certain of the reality of the spiritual and its relationship to Matty because he has a tendency to regard everything in a biblical light and he often misinterprets things owing to his literal mindedness. Moreover, we can never be entirely sure of the actuality of the spirits; they are extremely banal, improbably dressed, and make almost impossible demands on Matty. Besides, Sim’s refusal to accept Edwin’s observation that the football passed through Matty’s feet seems to make light of the spiritual aspect. One of the possible interpretations is that a spiritual dimension intersects with the material and influences its course. The only way to become aware of the spiritual may be to submit to it uncompromisingly (Redpath, 1986: 53-4). In the selfish and depraved world depicted only Matty is capable of such commitment. Dying in a deed of complete self-effacement, he sets an example of self-denial that grows out of love for one’s fellow men (Schreurs, 1991: 141).

To sum up, the novel attempts an exploration of the most crucial twilight zone where the final battle is to be settled between right and wrong, between good and evil, between light and darkness, and between God and Satan by means of mythic and fabular modes (Crompton, 1985: 99). It can be said that in *Darkness Visible* Golding

makes the hellish darkness of the human heart visible, but also gives evidence of the presence of the powers of good. The novel suggests that the hell of our present is man's creation, essentially present in his inner self as exemplified by Sophy. From within an inner hell she creates other hells in this world, as do Toni, their father, Sim, Edwin, Fido and many others, each in his own way, and they all go unpunished, neither is the saintly Matty rewarded. Matty and Sophy illustrate that deprivation of love breeds fanatics either for good or for evil. Virtually all the characters experience isolation and are unable to love effectively. The reader is confronted with the darkness hidden in his own heart. On the other hand, Matty's faith in a good God and an eventually good universe appears justified in the freedom he provides for Pedigree and the happiness he gives, even if momentary, to Sim and Edwin. The final movement in *Darkness Visible* is toward reconciliation. The idea of unity is pervasive, but only Matty seems capable of attaining it in any permanent sense.

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