

SMART Ritual Abuse Online Conference
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Masonic Themes and Trauma in the Novels of
William Golding (1911-1993)

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“Art is partly communication but only partly. The rest is discovery. I have always been the creature of discovery”

(Golding, *Free Fall*, p. 113).

Report released in the UK in July this year, commissioned by the National Police Chief Council (NPCC) and the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC):

Organised ritual abuse and its wider context:

Degradation, deception and disavowal

by Dr Elly Hanson, clinical psychologist.

- Convictions for ritualistic and/or intrafamilial child abuse in the UK
- The nature of organised ritual abuse, its ideologies, perpetrator psychology, types of abuse and torture, coercion and moral injury involved, effects of dissociation and so on
- Impacts on victims and survivors

Golding's childhood memories

- Early sense that strange creatures visited him as a baby.
- Being abandoned in the forest at the age of three or four – he never forgave his parents for this. Saw “a spectral stag” (Carey, p. 45).
- Something dark and terrifying that occurred in the cellars of his family home – 29 The Green Marlborough. He only ever refers to it as a cold and creepy house.
- Terror of strange creatures scuttling around in the cellars, along with the feeling of ghosts or demons.
- These cellar experiences always involved an old woman, an old crone; on occasion, he called her the devil.
- These childhood memories pursued him throughout his life with frequent nightmares.



Golding's family background

Paternal side

Father: **Alec Golding** – the most important person in William Golding's life. A rational thinker and lifelong teacher, admired by generations of pupils. On two occasions he broke down when he had to lead the prayers and scriptural reading at the school, suggesting some possible trauma associated with religion.

Grandparents: **Jo and Polly Golding**. Religious (Moravian Church). Remembered by Alec as kind and gentle. But great-grandfather was a bully and an alcoholic.

Maternal side

Mother: **Mildred Golding** (née Curnoe) Grew up in Cornwall, very superstitious and told the young William ghost stories. A suffragette, but also described as “a frightened woman, frightened of her own mother” (Golding Carver).

Grandparents: This set of grandparents had a reputation for domestic violence.

Mary Curnoe described as “fierce, mean and dangerous” (Carey, p. 4).

Thomas Curnoe died before William was born. Veteran of the goldrush, reputation as wild and immoral, also a Freemason. The relative of most interest to William Golding.

Golding's early career

- Oxford University: Experimented with hypnosis – fell into a lengthy trance and spoke “like a chapter of the Old Testament”, leaving his friend “white and shaken” (Carey, p. 45).
- Early teaching career: Steiner School: known for creating stories to entertain the children, often “terrifying tales of magicians and sorcerers” (Carey, p. 65). Then at Bishop Wordsworth’s School, a Church of England boy’s grammar school, both before and after the war. His first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, was written while teaching at this school.
- World War II: In late 1940 he enlisted in the British navy and became a temporary lieutenant, until the end of the war in 1945. He spoke of the cruelty of war, saying “I have always understood the Nazis because I am of that sort of nature” (Carey, p. 82).
- Many obvious allusions to his own life in his novels. A lot of self-deprecation and self-criticism throughout his novels and often describes something unnameable and dark at the centre of him.
- “But then what am I looking for? I am looking for the beginning of responsibility, the beginning of darkness, the point where I began”, he writes (Golding, *Free Fall* p. 49).

Pincher Martin (1956)

- Draws on Golding's own navy experience but also on the war experience of one of his co-workers at Bishop Wordsworth's school.
- The protagonist - Pincher Martin, a WW2 naval officer whose ship has been torpedoed.
- Pincher is the nickname in the British navy for all men with a surname Martin.
- The central narrative is the horror of a near-drowning experience in the freezing Atlantic Ocean, then being swept onto an uninhabited rock island for a struggle to survive.
- Based on a Chinese box structure.
- Multiple elements of Golding's own early life in the story. Often self-deprecating. "A self-defaming self-portrait" (Carey, p. 193).
- The more readily understood tale of survival of a seaman in the Atlantic Ocean is now woven together with flashbacks that are supposedly those of the protagonist's life but are clearly modelled on Golding's own.
- My exploration of *Pincher Martin* focuses on the childhood memories that have been incorporated into the novel and what the character Pincher Martin could represent in terms of these memories.
- It employs the psychological concept of dissociation and alter formation as a response to severe trauma.

Childhood trauma in *Pincher Martin*

- The central narrative around the experience of the seaman is not where the novel begins.
- The opening image deals with the sensations of gasping for air, writhing, kicking and crying for help as the person undergoing the ordeal swallows water and then regurgitates it. The single line statement “Moth——” suggests a child screaming for his mother for help.
- The one observing this is a man who is detached from the body undergoing it, “suspended between life and death”, having “not seen such a thing for so many years” (*Pincher Martin*, p. 11).
- The observing self sees “luminous pictures ... shuffled before him ... drenched in light (*Pincher Martin*, p. 10). We now see a child’s toy: a jam jar on a table lit from an O.P.
- The jar contains a little glass figure that can be made to sink into the water in the jar by pressing on the rubber membrane attached to the top of the jar. “You could let it struggle to the surface, give it almost a bit of air then send it steadily, slowly, remorselessly down and down” he writes (*Pincher Martin*, p. 11).
- The placement of this experience in the first two pages suggests that a terrifying childhood trauma of some sort is the novel’s primary concern.

Alter formation in *Pincher Martin*

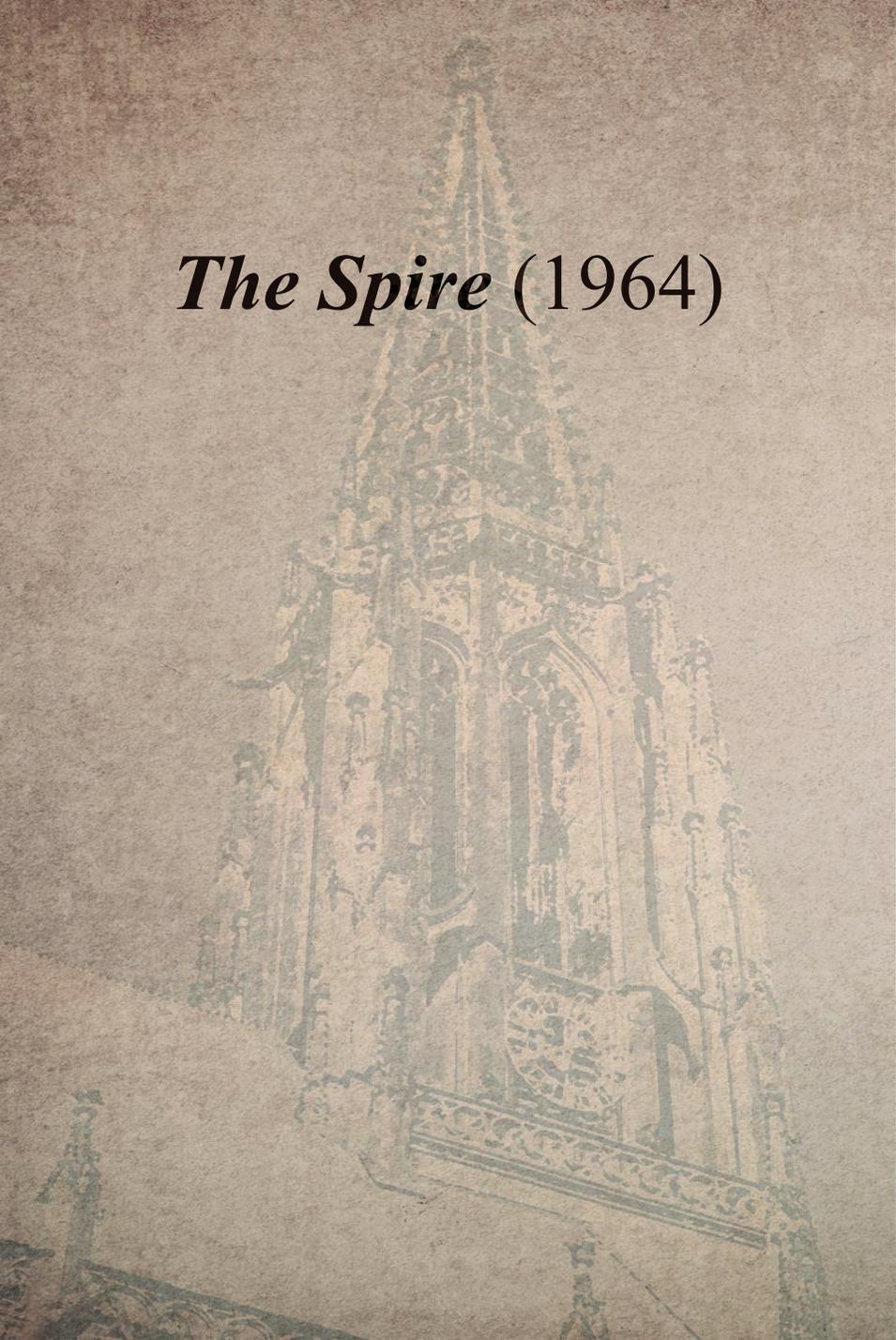
More details of trauma in the cellar emerge throughout the novel:

- An “old woman from the corner of the cellar”, overseeing the torture (*Pincher Martin*, p. 157).
- The narrator has the feeling of being tied up in a dark corner; of being in a tin box – buried alive.
- We see a man who seems to be acting as his torturer. Behind the man he can see what looks like a painted rock on a flat surface, like cardboard. It is not a real rock.
- The man torments him with a child’s nursery rhyme, round and around the mulberry bush, and asks him if he has had enough yet.

- In the central narrative Pincher Martin finds himself on a rock island after near-drowning.
- The Rock/island acts as a container for the memory of the near-death drowning trauma.
- This alter personality state is based on the myth of Prometheus, forever chained to a rock.
- The character, Pincher Martin, can be seen to be a literary representation of an alter personality state.
- We see the narrator telling himself not to remember: “It was something I remembered. I’d better not remember it again. Remember to forget”, he says (Golding, *Pincher Martin*, p. 151).

Spiritual abuse in *Pincher Martin*

- Pincher Martin's precarious survival on the rock is accompanied by strange experiences. While there is no concept of ritual abuse at this time, Golding was becoming aware that there was a spiritual element involved in these experiences.
- Themes from two mystical traditions appear in the novel: the Jewish Kabbalah, and the Hindu system of Kundalini yoga. But they are coupled with torture, not the patient and gentle experience of meditation.
- Alison Miller describes the deliberate use of near-death trauma in ritual abuse to create splits and alter states that are located in sites corresponding with the Kundalini chakra energy centres or the stations of the Kabbalah.
- Elements of the Jewish Kabbalah – he sees an image of an upside-down tree, the “Tree of Death” instead of the “Tree of Life”.
- The Kundalini serpent energy. “When the brain is deprived of oxygen, kundalini may actually rush to the brain in an effort to sustain life” (Greyson p. 46).
- Looking for shelter, Pincher Martin wriggles his body into a triangular hole in the crevice of a rock “like a snake that cannot cast his skin” (*Pincher Martin* 43).
- The root chakra, Mūlādhāra, is where the dormant Kundalini is said to dwell; it is at the base of the spine and is symbolised as a triangular hollow.



The Spire (1964)

- When Golding was teaching at Bishop Wordsworth's School (1945-1961) he could see the spire of Salisbury Cathedral under reconstruction. This gave him the idea for a novel.
- *The Spire* is set in the Middle Ages. It concerns a proposal to build four-hundred-foot spire on the top of an existing cathedral. This is an ill-fated decision because the foundations of the building are not sufficient to carry the weight of the spire.
- The first image we see is the sun illuminating a stained-glass window depicting Abraham and Isaac.
- On the first page we are told: "The chancellor had found what he was looking for, a memory."
- The novel then traces the building of this ill-fated construction and its effect on the mental state of the protagonist, Dean Jocelin, who is driven to pursue this build, even to his own death.
- On the first page, then, the author tells us that the theme is sacrifice and that it concerns a memory.

The Spire – key characters

- Dean Jocelin, the protagonist. But everyone warns him that the foundations of the existing cathedral are not strong enough to bear the weight of the spire. Throughout the novel the Dean becomes more and more involved with the actual build, climbing the ladders right up the top himself, experiencing a mixture of ecstatic and terrifying emotions and sensations that eventually become demonic in nature.
- Roger Mason, the Master Builder, who has been commissioned to undertake the build, but he clearly demonstrates to the Dean that there are effectively no foundations under the base of the spire. His team includes the stone masons, sculptors, carpenters, stained-glass glaziers and quarrymen. The Dean continues to pressure him to keep building, against his better judgement. He turns to drink as a response, delegating the responsibility of the build to his second-in-command.
- Pangall – the third key character - In the cathedral he is a type of caretaker and has workmen under him, whom Jocelin refers to as “faithful servants of the House”. But the contract to undertake the build has not been allocated to Pangall. Roger Mason’s workmen jeer and laugh at him: “they’ve made a game of my whole life”, he says (Golding 16). “They’ll never leave me alone. They’ve chosen me to be their fool” (Golding 61).

Masonic themes throughout *The Spire*

- Throughout many of his novels Golding mentions the secret societies and fraternities, both ancient and modern; in some he mentions the Druids and witchcraft.
- The medieval setting of *The Spire* alludes to the history of Freemasonry in Britain, originally based on the signs and building secrets of the early cathedral-builders.
- The plot and symbolism and the actions, expressions and movements of the characters share many elements with the Holy Royal Arch degree, the highest degree in English Freemasonry.
- A subtext within *The Spire* – appears to be a deliberate and extensive coding of Masonic themes as a comment on Freemasonry in British culture and in the Church of England in particular.
- *Darkness Visible: A Christian Appraisal of Freemasonry* (1952) by Walton Hannah. It caused a scandal at the time, which may well have been a subject of gossip at a C of E school.
- The stream of consciousness elements in the novel appear to be describing the physical and psychological effects of undergoing a traumatic version of the Royal Arch ritual, possibly experienced during childhood or youth, when the neurological and psychological foundations of the body and psyche are not developed enough to cope with it.
- Golding describes the spire in this novel as “this great finger sticking up” (Golding, *The Spire*, p. 108).

The Royal Arch rite and Kundalini research in the 1970s

- There is a similarity between the metaphors used in the Royal Arch rite, the Hindu practice of Kundalini and the spiritual system of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. All are aimed at achieving a mystical state.
- In *The Spire* the protagonist, Dean Jocelin, experiences a series of disturbing and powerful physical sensations and psychological states as the building of the spire progresses.
- In the 1970s, when eastern practices of meditation were becoming popular in the west, a group of scientists examined the side effects of practising Kundalini meditation. They matched those described in *The Spire*, written by Golding in the previous decade.
- In the novel the entire building of the spire is dangerous because the foundations are inadequate, a metaphor implying that the search for a mystical state is being undertaken by someone whose body and psyche is not prepared for it.
- My argument – that the memory that Golding was describing in the novel is that of a profoundly disturbing kundalini-type experience forcibly undergone through an abusive version of the Royal Arch rite.

Witchcraft

- Towards the end of *The Spire* the protagonist meets with an aunt in a ritualistic atmosphere. He thinks he was chosen by God to build the spire, but she answers: “Listen nephew, *I* chose you ... It wasn’t at Windsor but at a hunting lodge” (Golding, *The Spire*, p. 184).
- By the end of their conversation the protagonist is thinking that he has been bewitched. “Yes. Witchcraft. Witchcraft,” he says (Golding, *The Spire*, p. 187).
- The maternal side of Golding’s family was from Cornwall, noted for its superstitions and rich folklore.
- The connection between Freemasonry and witchcraft is noted in a document in the *Museum of Witchcraft and Magic* in Cornwall. Both traditions draw on the ancient magical mystery cults and the medieval Jewish Kabbalah.
- The document states that the Masonic Royal Arch degree shares its symbols and rituals with modern Wicca, a product of the 1950s. The founder of Wicca, Gerald Gardner (1884-1964), was, according to Aleister Crowley, a Royal Arch Companion.
- When the protagonist in *The Spire* is dying, he is remembering the cellars. His last thoughts are “Mason. Roger Mason”, followed by reminders of witchcraft (Golding, *The Spire*, p. 219).
- For Golding personally, the writing of *The Spire* was very difficult for him. Extensive use of alcohol and experiencing hallucinations.

Golding's entire oeuvre

- 12 novels in total, plus plays and short stories, containing further elements of what looks like ritual abuse practices – the sense of being hunted, paedophilia references, sensations of being crucified, and so on.
- Most of Golding's novels were published prior to the term and concept of ritual abuse even existing.
- In the novels he was progressively recognising the links between his own childhood experiences and the abusive use of ritual practices. But how conscious was he of these links?
- “He had been a sensitive, frightened child, and he grew into a sensitive and frightened man ... fear of the supernatural had been with him since ‘before I can remember’” (Carey, p. 577). He suffered from panic attacks and phobias.
- He even had a fear of writing; he believed that he did not actually do the writing, that it was some other being inside him. To control the fear, he drank.
- He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983 and in his acceptance speech referred to his fear of the supernatural. He was knighted for his contribution to British literature in 1988. But what price did he pay for his success?

Spread of the occult

- Mystical systems like Kundalini and the Kabbalah were once highly secret, only to be passed on to a rare few, so as to protect the knowledge from getting into the wrong hands. This is no longer the case.
- “Some investigators in the field of consciousness and near-death studies have suggested that the significance of the near-death experience (NDE) may be its role as a catalyst for human evolution” (Greyson, p. 44).
- We know that in ritual abuse children are selected for various roles. But are some children chosen specifically to ‘assist’ in the process of human evolution? In other words, are they selected to undergo these near-death traumas with the aim of ‘creating’ genius?
- Does the notion of advancing humanity provide some groups who practice ritual abuse a type of moral justification for their practices?