

ISSN : 2395-4132

# THE EXPRESSION

An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

Bimonthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



Impact Factor 6.4

**Vol. 9 Issue 3    June 2023**

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Bijender Singh

Email : [editor@expressionjournal.com](mailto:editor@expressionjournal.com)

[www.expressionjournal.com](http://www.expressionjournal.com)



## **EXISTENTIALISM AND WILL TO LIVE IN WILLIAM GOLDING'S *PINCHER MARTIN***

**DEVESH RAO BOUDDHA**

**Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English**

**Under the Supervision of Dr. M.S. Rathore**

**Jiwaji University, Gwalior (M.P.)**

**Govt. Girls P.G. College, Shivpuri (M.P.)**

.....

### **Abstract**

In William Golding's novel *Pincher Martin* (1956), the profound themes of Existentialism and the Will to Live take center stage. Golding's literary repertoire is replete with explorations of civilization, human nature, morality, and existential quandaries. *Pincher Martin* unfolds against the backdrop of World War II, hinting at its core themes of existentialism and the relentless "will to live." The narrative revolves around a naval officer's agonizing struggle for survival amidst the unforgiving elements of the sea. The novel's essence aligns with existentialist philosophy, exploring the individual's isolation, anguish, and the quest for meaning in an indifferent universe. This novel can be perceived as reflecting Golding's own experiences, adding an autobiographical layer to the work. Having served as a naval officer prior to his full immersion in writing and teaching, Golding likely drew from his personal encounters with life-and-death situations, amplifying the authenticity of the protagonist's plight. *Pincher Martin* masterfully illustrates the existential crisis of the individual grappling with isolation and mortality. The naval officer's battle against the forces of nature becomes a metaphor for humanity's broader confrontation with the unknown. The novel's exploration of the "will to live" underscores the tenacity of the human spirit when confronted with dire circumstances. Thus, William Golding's *Pincher Martin* exemplifies his adeptness at weaving existentialist themes and the primal "will to live" into a compelling narrative. Set against the backdrop of war, the novel captures the essence of human existence in its rawest form. Golding's literary finesse intertwines his own life experiences with universal dilemmas, leaving readers with a poignant contemplation of the human condition.

### **Keywords**

Human Condition, William Golding, *Pincher Martin*, Survival, Existentialism, Struggle, Sub-Consciousness, Individualism, Philosophy.

.....



## **EXISTENTIALISM AND WILL TO LIVE IN WILLIAM GOLDING'S *PINCHER MARTIN***

**DEVESH RAO BOUDDHA**

**Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English**

**Under the Supervision of Dr. M.S. Rathore**

**Jiwaji University, Gwalior (M.P.)**

**Govt. Girls P.G. College, Shivpuri (M.P.)**

.....

### **Introduction:**

To attain critical appreciation among the English novelists during the last ten years, William Golding has proven the most willing to explain his work to the public. He is believed to be engaged in a special sort of sense, using fiction, he acknowledges examining human nature. He dispels what he calls man's "appalling ignorance of human nature" by pointing that man is more or less prone to evil. Apart from Existentialism, will to live, sub-consciousness and metaphysical journey, *Pincher Martin's* evil consists of a relentless and unregenerate pursuit of self-gratification.

British author William Golding's third and famous novel *Pincher Martin* was first published in 1956 and set during World War II. It tells the story of a Royal Navy lieutenant named Christopher Hadley Martin who washes up on an inhospitable islet after his ship sinks. It reminds us of *Robinson Crusoe*, the masterpiece of Daniel Defoe, a survival story. Golding's *Pincher Martin* primarily concerns Martin's spiritual and metaphysical journey as he struggles for his existence while awaiting rescue.

When a German U-boat attacks his ship during the night, Lieutenant Christopher Hadley Martin thrashes in the cold North Atlantic water, appears to survive alone in that ship. He puffs up his lifebelt and kicks off his sea boots to better stay afloat. In the morning, the waves throw him onto a large rock, to stay alive and survive, he has nothing but seaweed, sea snails, and other marine invertebrates to have.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The main objectives of the present study are as follows:

- 1) It tries to make understand the importance of life that human life is priceless that never comes back.
- 2) It focuses on the fact that if one has to consider oneself alive, one has to struggle throughout his/her life in order to prove their existence and presence in front of this society and world.
- 3) It sheds light on the main character (Martin) and his sub-consciousness in William Golding's third Novel, *Pincher Martin*.

## **Review of Literature:**

To find the traces of survival and existentialism has been the major concept of various researchers. In one of her research papers “Traces of Existentialism” (2013), Ms. Arzu aims to display Golding’s novel, *Pincher Martin* as an existential work. For this purpose, she throws light on the major principles in this particular novel like struggle against death, self deception, the sense of alienation etc. She also clears that although Golding has always rejected but at the end of the day, he has created an existentialist novel.

## **Existentialism and Will to Live:**

Most of the survival stories frame their protagonist’s attributes that enable survival—endurance, courage, and a will to live this is proven true in *Pincher Martin* in which Golding initially embraces survival narrative conventions. His strong will to live is reflected when he shouts throughout, “I won’t die. I can’t die. Not me.” (1)

Being on island, First of all, Martin builds a pile of stones, he calls it the Dwarf. He is hoping that it will be seen by a passing ship as a sign of human intelligence. Martin believes on his intelligence, faith in himself and strong will to live, he searches for water, shelter, and food and also gets success in finding these in a small cave that houses a pool of freshwater and no shortage of unflavored. Although having all those edible mussels and anemones clinging to the rock below the waterline was a technical task for him.

Now, since Hadley met his basic needs, he focuses next on preserving his sanity, he names various parts of the rock and subconsciously talking to himself, concluding, “In normal life to talk out loud is a sign of insanity. Here it is proof of identity” (2).

In the midst of his surviving and metaphysical journey, he recalls some of the images from dreams and memories which give shape to Martin’s life before the war, when he was struggling through his acting career. These memories reveal a debased scoundrel with few scruples about carrying on affairs with the wives and girlfriends of his friends and colleagues. When World War II broke out, he begged one of these colleagues, a producer, to help him avoid being conscripted into the armed forces, but the producer refused. In this mean time, he also thinks often of his friend Nathaniel, who joined the Navy around the same time, served on the same ship, and ultimately died during the attack on it.

On the rocky island, Martin suffers a terrible tackling fever, during which he recalls some of his darkest moments in life. Since ‘sex and sexuality’ is also one of the themes in Golding’s novel, *Pincher Martin* is also not untouched with it. Golding says, “Sexuality is the central passion, a biological need of man”(3). Martin remembers that When he was a civilian, he fixated on a young woman named Mary. One night, he took her out driving, and when she refused to have sex with him, he began speeding and threatened to crash the car into a tree just to change her mind. He eventually stopped the car, only to rape Mary on the side of the road. Golding never hesitates to discuss some elements or ideas which directly or indirectly considered negative, themes like evil, violence and sexuality can be easily noticed in his novels. He clearly states, “I would call myself a universal pessimist but a cosmic optimist.” (4) These images give way to memories of Nathaniel telling him that he and Mary became engaged not long after Martin raped her. Along with evil, sexuality, violence is also the part of one’s existence. To make it more evident, Indu Kulkarni says “The metaphor of violence have a savage raw realism that reinforces the sexual and eschatological import of the novel.” (5) Martin then recalls the night of the U-boat attack when, as revenge for marrying Mary, Martin was about to murder Nathaniel by pushing him overboard—until the torpedo struck.

# The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 6.4)

[www.expressionjournal.com](http://www.expressionjournal.com) ISSN: 2395-4132

After Martin recovers from the fever, his sanity hangs by a thread. When a hurricane hits, he appears to completely lose touch with reality. As the wind and rain batter him, he argues about death with a hallucination of Nathaniel. Martin insists that he survived while his shipmates didn't just because he possesses a superior will to live. In the final chapter, a British officer lands on a small island to retrieve a body that washed up onshore. The body's identification disc reads "Christopher Hadley Martin." When the man who found the body asks the officer if Martin suffered, the officer replies, "He didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots" (6). This reveals that everything in the preceding chapters was a spiritual and metaphysical journey took place in Martin's head in the last moments of his life, as his terrible ego constructed an alternate reality to avoid acknowledging death.

If we focus on the story appropriately, we can find clearly that Golding tells virtually the whole story from Martin's perspective i.e. the hero of the action. At the starting point, Golding elicits sympathy for Martin when he describes the horror of his near drowning in detail. Once Martin reaches the rock anyhow, he objurgates himself to think and use his intellect and reason to survive. At one point, the reader admires this man who can keep his wits about him, withdraws shelter, and find water and food. Since the story is being told from inside Martin's mind, he also returns to memories that reveal self-centeredness at the core of his being.

## **Conclusion:**

It is undoubtedly proven by now that all the Golding's fiction revolves around innumerable issues related to man's destiny and his precarious position in the world. In his first three great works, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*, Golding brings his readers to remote and farer places where all types of struggle like physical, spiritual, existential, philosophical and moral take place. Golding is quite straightforward in accepting the fact that pessimism, evil and struggle for survival are the unavoidable parts of one's life. We find existentialism, survival and a strong will to live in his third novel *Pincher Martin*. This particular novel of him directly or indirectly reminds us of Robinson Crusoe. The plot of *Pincher Martin* seems quite simple in the beginning. A British navy officer is blown off his ship by a German torpedo. He tries to survive alone on a small, rocky island in the North Atlantic. Throughout the novel, his battle is described as though it were against some mystical force within him as much as against the hard, cold rock that seems to constitute his outer world. Not till the end, we come to know that Hardley was immediately dead when the torpedo hit his ship and all the action was taking place nothing but in Martin's mind when he was about to die. The man who discovers the body says in the last line of the novel, "He didn't even have time to kick off his seaboot," then the reader knows that Christopher has died on the very second page of the novel when he could only say "Moth" as he was trying to say "Mother". Although, throughout the novel, we are given hint that the ongoing action in which naval officer is engaged is only mental rather than physical. Golding's art has been so realistic that we readers could not even imagine and consider it unreal.

## **Reference**

1. Golding, William. *Pincher Martin*. Faber and Faber, 1956, p. 10.
2. Golding William. *Pincher Martin*. Faber and Faber, 1856, p. 68.
3. Golding William. *Lord of the Flies*: Faber and Faber, 1954, p. 223.
4. Golding William. *Belief and Creativity*. A Moving Target, p. 201.
5. Kulkarni Indu. *The Novels of William Golding*, Atlantic Publisher, p. 44.
6. Golding William. *Pincher Martin*. Faber and Faber, 1956, p. 192.

**Vol. 9 Issue 3 (June 2023)**

**Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Bijender Singh**