



A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF SAMUEL MOUNTJOY'S CHARACTER IN GOLDING'S FREE FALL

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This paper aims to analyze William Golding's Central Character Samuel Mountjoy in his novel Free Fall using the psychoanalytic literary criticism. All variants of psychoanalytic literary criticism endorse that literature or the creative process as a whole is inextricably woven with human psyche. Application of psychoanalysis to literary works is mostly inspired by Freud's essay on art and literature. According to it not just literary works are analyzed but also life of the literary artist and characters therein are analyzed. Freud believed that creative writings are product of unconscious processes and it is possible to analyze literary texts by understanding in what ways the psychological forces act on them. Applying psychoanalysis consists of finding about the psychological health of the creative artist or the character by treating the work as symptoms of sexual frustrations or obsessions. The symbols and the themes related to the writer's life motivate the creator to express himself.

Free fall Golding's fourth novel published in 1959 is his first novel to be told in the first person. The first three novels had isolated settings, away from society. It is a self examination by an English painter, Samuel Mountjoy at a crucial point in his life when he was held as a prisoner in the German prisoners of war camp during the Second World War. Sammy had risen in the society from an obscure birth and poverty to become a painter of repute and his pictures hung in the Tate Gallery. He is swept into the world war scenario where he is taken prisoner at some point of time. He is subjected to rigorous questioning by the jail authorities when some of the prisoners are found missing presumably escaped from the prison. He is threatened with torture if he failed to comply and he is locked in a totally dark cell in isolation. He faces oppression,



subjugation and psychological conflict. Sammy's mind charges drastically in the agony of the prison cell. At this juncture in *Free Fall* the gap opens itself in the midst of the symbolic world. Sammy had his visual field disrupted by the impenetrable darkness of the Cell in which he was imprisoned as well as the deanery where he lived in his childhood. This darkness affords a due to the readers interpretation of an invisible spot depicted by the author.

Free Fall is concerned with a man in that state to find the point where he entered it. It deals persistently with the social aspects of Sammy Mount joy's personality, one finds his absolute lust and dominance of Beatrice, his ego centricity and his pride. *Free Fall* is an attempt to find the point at which things changed. As Kinkead-Weakes and Gregor put it "Revelation and recognition of being, then, give way to explanation, discovery of being". Mount joy's task is to find the point at which he became one of the guilty. In the novel we come across three states. The primal state where innocence exists among good and evil alike. Next is progress and change or "Becoming" and the third one is of revelation and illumination concomitant with Sammy's enlightenment.

As Sammy sits at his typewriter he attempts to trace his life back to the exact point at which he was no longer free to choose, the point at which he imposed a "pattern" on his life. He first examines his childhood in Rotten Row and the rectory where everything smacks of innocence. Skipping the crucial period, he jumps to his manhood and his imprisonment in Germany. Sammy finally harrows his life to one critical period, his adolescence, in which he finally finds the spot he is looking for. In his childhood all is innocence and unrecognized evil. There is knowledge neither of evil nor goodness, so there is no need for choice. In his manhood Sammy, realizes that the freedom of choice and the act of 'Becoming' are already past; it is in this period he finds the revelation he experienced leaving the cell. It is his adolescence, attending grammar school with Beatrice Ifor, that the processes of development and growth lead him to the



recognition of evil and, consequently, the choice and subsequent loss of freedom. The last section, at the mental asylum and back at the prison camp, is Sammy's attempt to seek forgiveness from Beatrice and somehow rid himself of the guilt for bringing her to that state. This defines him as one whose evil is unforgiving, one of the guilty.

The narrative moves between England and Germany. In his dark cell in isolation he indulges in self examination by going through his life all over again right from his childhood to the present state of agony and psychological conflict which he wishes to resolve by accepting the truth. He starts realizing what man can become and achieve and what he slowly but gradually slips into through his own choices. As a result of the choices that he makes he loses his freedom of choice or his free will.

According to John Gray the life of Samuel Mountjoy in the novel includes much of the author himself. In an interview Golding described *Free Fall* as a confession. His own school teacher of religion is similar to Rowena Pringle Sammy's teacher and the science teacher has something in common with Golding's father, Alec Golding. The relationship of Sammy and Beatrice, his dominance and subjugation of the girl finds similarity in Golding's life as well. Like Golding Sammy also abandoned Beatrice after a tempestuous physical relationship in which his male ego was satisfied but at a later stage he becomes guilt ridden and wants to be forgiven. Beatrice had from a state of innocence in adolescence reached the mental asylum as she was unable to cope with the reality of life. Like Golding he left her to marry a more confident and balanced woman. Sammy rises in life to become a successful painter who could lead a happy and contented life but when he looks back he is weighed down by guilt due to the obsessive passion he had for Beatrice then, his complete physical and mental subjugation of her and then after all his abandonment of her, drifting apart from her. Sammy visits Beatrice in the mental asylum. Looking at Sammy, Beatrice pissed over her skirt and her legs and her shoes and my shoes (243). It seems that Beatrice, still the innocent, is unable to cope with the



fallen man that Sammy is when he meets her. Not only Sammy's treatment of her but his appearance in search of forgiveness are incomprehensible to her.

It is manifest that Sammy fears what lies deep inside him and he tries to resolve the psychological conflict by solving the mystery of his life as to when he lost his freedom of choice for that he goes through his life right from his childhood. The moral progression in *Free Fall* is not as simple as the fall from innocence to knowledge. The innocent must first recognize good and evil. Innocence is not goodness : without knowledge of evil there is no goodness. Once these moral poles are established, there becomes possible a choice between them. Also once a choice has been made, there is no longer free will. In the cell Sammy finds the truth : "It is only in such conditions as these, electric furnace conditions, in which the molten, blinding truth may be uttered from one human face to another (144). In "accepting all things" Sammy accepts both aspects of his and man's nature. There is more glory; vision is a joy in the characteristic dual nature of man, in his dilemma of being gorgeous and ugly, Nobel yet animal. The same is true of evil unpunished and guilt : "The moral order, sin and remorse, they are all true. Both worlds exist side by side". (244)

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