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Araştırma makalesi/Research article

Tying Memories into a Pattern: William Golding's *Free Fall* as Autobiografiction and Trauma Narrative

William Golding'in *Serbest Düşüş* Romanının Kurgusal Otobiyografi ve Travma Anlatısı Olarak İncelemesi

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Abstract

William Golding's 1959 *Free Fall* depicts the narrator/character Samuel Montjoy's retrospective interrogation of his past in his "non-chronological" autobiography to understand his present self. His first-person narration is a journey into his memories presented according to their importance for him at different stages of his life (the narrated self) and shows the role of memory in shaping the present self (the narrating self). The narrator regulates his memories to conceive a coherent pattern in his autobiographical account which will also give meaning to his life and help construct a unified identity. However, he adopts a structure that has to rely on his remembering/forgetting, which problematizes the idea of constructing the self through unreliable memory. With this quality of the novel as an early

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example of the "fiction of memory," Golding's text is inventive and looks forward to contemporary narrative approaches to autobiographical writing. *Free Fall* has been widely studied as an existentialist novel due to the novelist's questioning the concepts of freedom to choose and fall through the protagonist's quest for self-knowledge. However, the aim of this study is to analyse Golding's work as autobiografiction and trauma narrative where the text presents an account of the protagonist's attempt for reconstructing the self through memories subject to his modifications and o fers the therapeutic use of his self-narration.

Keywords: *William Golding, Free Fall, trauma, autobiographical memory, autobiografiction, fiction of memory*, *the vollendungsroman*

Öz

İngiliz romancı William Golding'in 1959 yılında basılan ve Türkçeye ancak 2019'da *Serbest Düşüş* başlığı ile çevrilen eseri, roman başkişisi ve anlatıcısı Samuel Montjoy'un kronolojiyi takip etmeden kaleme aldığı otobiyografisi üzerinden sürdürdüğü geçmişini irdelemesiyle ortaya çıkan kişilik sorgulamasını ve kişiliğini yeniden şekillendirme çabasını konu edinir. Montjoy'un anlatısı, anılarına bir yolculuk, dolayısıyla şimdiki kişiliğini hangi geçmiş olayların şekillendirdiğini anlama serüveni olarak sunulur. Anlatıcı ve otobiyografi yazarı rollerini üstlenen Montjoy, anılarını okuyucusu ve daha önemlisi kendisi için tutarlı kabul edilebilecek bir örüntü içerisinde vermeye çabalarken bu çabasının aynı zamanda "tutarlı" bir benlik oluşturmak için de olduğunu anlarız. Otobiyografisinde yer verdiği anıları, hayatının farklı evrelerinde kendisi için önem sırasına göre okuyucusuna aktarılır. Bu sayede anlatıcı, kişilik arayışında hatırlama/unutmanın önemine dolaylı da olsa işaret etmiş olur. Hatırlama/unutmaya dayalı bir yapı içerisinde anılarını ele aldığı ve hayat hikâyesini okuyucusuna da aynı biçimde aktardığı için ancak zihnimizin ve hatıralarımızın aldatmacaları ile sürekli yeniden yazılan bir benlik oluşturabileceğimiz gerçeğini de ortaya çıkarır. Bu özelliği ile roman, otobiyografi yazımı alanında günümüz anlatı kuramlarına yaklaşmaktadır. Golding'in *Serbest Düşüş* romanı özgür irade, seçim yapma ve insanın düşüşü gibi konuları ele aldığı için daha çok varoluşçu romanlarla birlikte ve onların kuramsal çerçevesi dahilinde irdelenmiştir. Ancak bu çalışmada Golding'in romanını otobiyografi yazımı ve kurgusal otobiyografi oluşturma çerçevesinde değerlendirirken roman başkişisinin anılarını yeniden yorumladığı ve onları tutarlı bir kişilik "resmi" yaratabilmek için yeniden şekillendirdiği bir travma anlatısı olarak inceliyorum. Montjoy, sadece geçmişte yaptığı seçimleri anlayabilmek ve bugünkü ben'i hangi seçiminin oluşturduğunu bulmak için otobiyografi kaleme almamış, aynı zamanda hep "tam merkezde" var olan kendi karanlığını/kaybını ve bunun yarattığı baş edilmez korkunun nedenini de anlamak için hayatının belki de son evresinde bu işe kalkışmıştır. Romanda bu karanlık anın resmi tam olarak verilmese de kahramanın kendisi için oluşturduğu kişisel anlatısı bir "terapi" olarak işlev görür.

Anahtar sözcükler: *William Golding, Serbest Düşüş, travma, otobiyografik bellek, kurgusal otobiyografi, vollendungsroman*

Introduction

> *"How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but—mainly—to ourselves"*
>
> *Julian Barnes, The Sense of an Ending (2011)*

William Golding's 1959 novel *Free Fall*[1] has been widely studied as an existentialist novel due to the novelist's questioning the concepts of freedom to choose and fall through the protagonist Samuel Mountjoy's quest for self-knowledge. Golding's work displays the existentialist view that man's fall is inevitable due to his free-will and reflects the fall motif as the underlying human behaviour, elevating the archetypal element of fall to the status of a myth-image.[2] The novel reenacts, in our contemporary world, the state of pre-lapsarian innocence and the mythical motif of fall, which is suggested by the title of Golding's work, echoing that of Albert Camus's 1956 novel *The Fall*. It is acknowledged that the novel's title has both scientific and theological connotations (Monod, 1985: 135). Golding seems to say that science has replaced conventional systems and made the situation of modern man indecisive and obscure in space, on the one hand; and from the theological angle, on the other hand, his title denotes man's sinful nature as "a morally diseased creature [and] a fallen being […] gripped by original sin" (Friedman, 1993: 12). The novelist reveals the duality of rationalism and spiritualism, and modern man's predicament through the main character's interrogation of his past from an existentialist point. Samuel Mountjoy tries to understand himself by examining the process of his "becoming" and repeatedly asking how he lost his freedom in the process. He is obsessed with his loss of free-will and innocence and wants to pinpoint what caused this loss, hence asking the same question in different parts of his writing, "Is it here?"[3] Friedman explains that Sammy's obsession with freedom "mirrors the transcendent issue of existentialist literature" (1993: 68). Therefore, Sammy revisits his past to answer this question through the retrospective reinterpretations of his momentous memories.

There is not much research on *Free Fall* studying it as autobiografiction and trauma narrative where the autodiegetic narration offers an account of the character's attempt to construct a stable and coherent identity based on his scattered recollections. Golding's text is presented in the form of the narrator/character's internal monologue and self-narration. Although Sammy struggles to render a coherent chronical of his past, starting from his early childhood, to understand where he lost his freedom and innocence, his autobiography is far from being a chronological account, and his recollections are subject to modification, if not complete distortion. Instead, he follows a structure that has to rely on memory "in the way it presents itself to [Sammy], the only teller. For time is not to be laid out endlessly like a row of bricks" (*FF* 6). Writing down his life story is supposed to give Sammy the ability to revisit his reminiscences, select among them, and thereby bring a pattern to his scattered memories. Such autobiographical writing is essential for the protagonist to retranslate his

past (the narrated self) to lodge the claims of his present (the narrating self). Therefore, Sammy writes not to give a catalogue of what happened but communicate "the unnameable, unfathomable and invisible darkness that sits at the centre of him" (*FF* 8). He says, "I am looking for the beginning of darkness, the point where I began" (*FF* 47), and his memoir is intended to pinpoint the exact moment that gave way to his fear of darkness, in fact. Nonetheless, the reason for Sammy's fear is not explicitly given in his narrative. Nor does he offer an affirmative answer to the abovementioned question and satisfactory clarification about the darkness of the centre, for it is obvious that he does avoid making an unhesitant and open mention of the "invisible darkness" of his traumatic moment which he nevertheless has to revisit in the utter darkness of his cell in a Nazi prison camp. The aim of this study is to analyse *Free Fall* as autobiografiction and trauma narrative where the text presents an account of the protagonist's attempt for reconstructing the self through his memories and offers the therapeutic use of self-narration. It shows that Golding's text is inventive and looks forward to contemporary narrative approaches to autobiographical writing and the genre of autobiografiction

Reshaping memories/Rewriting the self

Free Fall is seemingly built on its protagonist's two interrelated quests for "the decision made freely that cost [Sammy his] freedom" (*FF* 7) and "for the point where this monstrous world of [his] present consciousness began" (*FF* 78). Sammy dissects his past life and tries to tie his memories to a pattern, just to conceive a coherent narrative which will also give meaning to his life and help construct a *unified* self.[4] It is a journey into his memories which are rearranged according to their importance for him. Sammy believes that such a way of writing will enable him to "see the connection between the little boy, clear as spring water, and the man like a stagnant pool" (*FF* 9). To Monod, this technique helps Sammy catch the cause-and-effect relationship between his remembrances as "memory never yields a continuously chronological sequence of events; it jumps back and forth, juxtaposes and conflates episodes, etc. Morally, the quest for guilt and responsibility is much assisted by the potentialities of such a time-pattern" (1985: 138). Yet, the same technique also shows the role of memory in shaping Sammy's perception of his present identity, or that of his present emotions and experience in shaping his memories. Or both. Looking into his memories to mark the critical turning points that, Sammy thinks, shaped him, he at the same time rewrites his present self. Golding's novel also problematizes the idea of constructing/reconstructing the self through unreliable memory, as Sammy states, concerning his remembrances, that "all these are guesses. Part of the reality of my life is that I do not understand it" (*FF* 94). He starts writing down his memories with his self-reflexive elaboration on two ways of comprehending time, pointing to its dualistic nature as objective vs. subjective, and two modes of memory, "autobiographical memory" which is susceptible to distortion vs. "semantic memory". Explaining the unique way of composing his autobiography and the pictures he selects to include, Sammy writes:

> "I see now what I am looking for and why these pictures are not altogether random. I describe them because they seem to be important. They contributed very little to the straight line of my story. […] But they are not important in that way. They are important simply because they emerge. I am the sum of them. I carry round with me this load of memories. Man is not an instantaneous creature, nothing but a physical body and the reaction of the moment. He is an incredible bundle of miscellaneous memories and feelings, of fossils and coral growths" (*FF* 46).

He believes that these two opposing conceptualizations of time and memory exist concurrently and show how one's remembering/forgetting is important in the narrative construction of identity: "Time is two modes. The one is an effortless perception native to us as water to the mackerel. The other is a memory, a sense of shuffle fold and coil, of that day nearer than that because more important, of that event mirroring this, or those three set apart, exceptional and out of the straight line altogether" (*FF* 6). Accordingly, Sammy's autobiography is a means of retrieving past events from his actual life as he remembers. This is the model of a fusion of semantic memory and autobiographical memory (a blend of memory of facts and mental reconstructions) on which autobiographical writing, fictional or otherwise, is supposed to depend. However, as Sammy claims, memory is selective, and the way he remembers gets contaminated in time. He reviews and reinterprets all the past events and people in his life and his relationships with them retrospectively from his present moment and also under the influence of some major changes and *experience*, which stresses the process of becoming/rewriting the self endlessly. He re-evaluates his *innocent* self through his "adult testimony" (*FF* 60).[5]

The time and memory opposition that Sammy brings forth as the controlling element of his narration has become the object of several contemporary novels and memory theories. Nicola King, in *Memory, Narrative, Identity*, outlines two opposing models of memory and points to the crucial part of retranslation. Depending on Freud's analogy with archaeological excavation, one model "assumes that the past still exists 'somewhere,' waiting to be rediscovered by the remembering subject, uncontaminated by subsequent experience and time's attrition" (King, 2000: 4). Whereas, "the other imagines the process of memory as one of continuous revision or 'retranslation,' reworking memory traces in the light of later knowledge and experience" (King, 2000: 4). This also shows the necessity of questioning how and to what extent memory is retranslated in cases of deep changes such as trauma. The process of retranslation is, if not always, needed due to the "unspeakability" of personal trauma as it is figured in Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*. Memory theories acknowledge that the coherent autobiographical story made up of memories is to depict the self in the best picture possible needed for self-esteem.[6] As Dan P. McAdams points out in *The Stories We Live By*, self-narration through autobiography writing is "to identify or construct a coherent view of self" (1993: 11). In *Free Fall*, Sammy is after such a coherent picture that suits to his present self.

Samuel Montjoy is a well-known and talented artist but an unhappy man whose "yesterdays walk with [him]. They keep step, they are grey faces that peer over [his] shoulder" (*FF* 5). Therefore, his is an attempt to recount the innocent mistakes of his childhood, and the responsibilities of his early adulthood along with the impact of World War II on his choices, starting from his early childhood days to his days of imprisonment in a Nazi prison camp, with his disconnected recollections and flashbacks. He tries to organise these recollections into a coherent pattern in his autobiography that is also regarded to be a *Bildungsroman* (Raine, 1986: 101). For Sammy, as the aging protagonist and "the only teller" of his seemingly reliable account, autobiography writing is the embodiment of his endeavour to compose a stable self that he can be in peace with in the ending years of his life. Thus, *Free Fall* should also be regarded as a *Vollendungsroman* with its quality of being a narrative of completion and self-narration. The term *Vollendungsroman* was first used by Constance Rooke to define a text that aims to "discover for its protagonist and the reader some kind of affirmation in the face of loss" (1992: 248). The documentary storytelling makes Sammy confront his becoming in different parts of the novel, and the affirmation he is after is not expected from the reader because, addressing to the implied reader of his autobiography, he writes:

> "Perhaps if I write my story as it appears to me, I shall be able to go back and select. […]
>
> To communicate is our passion and our despair.
>
> With whom then?
>
> You?
>
> How can you share the quality of my terror in the blacked-out cell when I can only remember it and not re-create it for myself? No. Not with you? […]
>
> And who are you anyway?" (*FF* 7-8).

Individually reflecting on different periods of his life given in separate sections[7] in the novel enables Sammy to write down his recollections according to their significance for his older self. Therefore, "both the authorial audience and his narratee witness the events through his gaze. Even though the narrator seems to privilege his younger self's perspective from time to time, the internal focalization prevents him from conveying the events without attaching them [to] his adult testimony" (Kumbaroglu, 2021: 81). Sammy looks back at his early childhood in the first three sections of the novel, and the opening setting is the "deep and muddy pool" of rural slums in England in the first half of the twentieth century. He relates that he was born as an illegitimate child in the slum of Rotten Row, where he was joyful despite their poverty. For Sammy, this place is the "Garden of England" (*FF* 22), for Rotten Raw is the innocent world of his childhood under the "the majesty and central authority of Ma and Evie" (*FF* 29). His Ma with her affection and his best friend Evie with her stories that Sammy is fond of are his "twin towers" (*FF* 29). By means of their comforting presence, the slum world is a peaceful world for Sammy: "I crawled and tumbled in the narrow world of Rotten Raw, empty as a soap bubble but with a rainbow of colour and excitement round me. […] We were noisy, screaming, tearful, animal. And yet I remember that time as with the flash and glitter, the warmth of a Christmas

party" (*FF* 17). Sammy's narration leaps to his school days in London in the following three sections where he relates that he misbehaved together with his two friends, Johnny Spragg and Philip Arnold. Johnny is "chunky, active and cheerful" (*FF* 37). However, Philip, who "is a living example of natural selection and fitted to survive in this modern world as a tapeworm in an intestine," knows how to encourage Sammy to act mischievously (*FF* 49). With his encouragement and misguiding, Sammy accepts the challenge to spit on the altar (*FF* 61) and acquires the habit of bullying small boys to get their fag-cards of the King of Egypt. However, in spite of all negations, Sammy feels innocent in his school years. For this reason, he describes this period of his life as the "days of terrible and irresponsible innocence" (*FF* 25). There is still a sense of guilt, but it is a state of being unaware of any corruption or misdoing, and he feels blameless and naive throughout this unconscious and therefore *innocent* period of his life.

Golding uses various figures to indicate multiple conflicts where "the two forces of duality come to merge with one another so that to distinguish between the two becomes a quest relying on a twentieth century provisional exercise to capture a 'shifting, incomprehensible, ambiguous' reality" (Johnson, 1998: 62). From Sammy's childhood to adulthood, all other characters he comes into contact with represent the conflicts he experiences. Golding

> "dramatizes a complex interrelationship between the two forces, tracing the duality from its most simplistic (as Sammy perceives it in his childhood) to an increasingly complex rendering as the narrator explores his past and those who have most influenced him—all brought to bear on his quest for redemption and freedom" (Johnson, 1998: 62-3).

Sammy revisits different moments of his school years with flashbacks to complete the pictures from his past, and this time he recounts the memories of another pair of important figures from his school years, Nick Shales, who teaches Science, and Miss Rowena Pringle, who teaches Scripture. Nick Shales and Miss Rowena Pringle stand for the opposing worlds of rationalism and spiritualism from which Sammy had to make a choice and lost the bridge between. Sammy's subsequent life is torn with additional conflicts caused by this duality, and he symbolically hangs between two opposites. When later examining the impact of his teachers, whom he now regards as his "parents not in the flesh" (*FF* 250), Sammy realizes that they played a more significant role in shaping his identity than the others: "These two people, Nick Shales and Rowena Pringle, loom larger behind me as I get older. Mine is the responsibility but they are part reasons for my shape. […] I cannot understand myself without understanding them" (*FF* 214). He scrutinizes his relationship with them more closely to appreciate their worlds in order to understand the nature of his choices and their impact on his present self.

Although Sammy is fond of Miss Pringle's lesson owing to his interest in the spiritual world, he hates her because of her unfair and cruel treatment. He thinks that she teaches religion and God's love with a lack of mercy. "She ruled, not by love but fear. […] She was a past-master of crowd psychology and momentum" (*FF* 195). Additionally, Sammy finds out that Miss Pringle has a particular hatred against him because, contrary to her wish, Father Watts-Watt turns his attention to Sammy after adopting him. Hence, Sammy states that her detestation is "partly because she had a crush on Father Watts-Watt—who had adopted me instead of marrying her" (*FF* 194). Despite his eventual hatred for Miss Pringle, Sammy nonetheless relates that "I was

still innocent of the major good and evil; I thought no evil, I believed when she made me suffer that the fault was mine" (*FF* 195). Unlike Miss Pringle, Nick Shales is a kind and considerate person. Sammy finds his lesson uninteresting because, in contrast to Miss Pringle's universe of miracle, the universe that Mr. Shales teaches is a realistic one. Sammy feels that he has to make a choice here and picks Mr. Shales's rationalist world, rejecting the spiritual world of Miss Pringle. Thus, Mr. Shales draws Sammy not with what he teaches but because of his character, and Sammy's choice has been made "by what he was, not by what he said":

> "For an instant out of time, two worlds existed side by side. […] I believe that my child's mind was made up for me as a choice between good and wicked fairies. Miss Pringle vitiated her teaching. She failed to convince, not by what she said. Nick persuaded me to his natural scientific universe by what he was, not by what he said. I hung for an instant between two pictures of the universe; then the ripple passed over the burning bush and I ran towards my friend. In that moment a door closed behind me. I slammed it shut on Moses and Jehovah. I was not to knock on that door again, until in a Nazi prison camp I lay huddled against it half crazed with terror and despair" (*FF* 217).

Towards the end of grammar school, Sammy falls in love with Beatrice Ifor, who, Sammy deems, "is the most mysterious and beautiful thing in the universe" (*FF* 84). He adores her beauty and purity, and is obsessed with possessing her sexually, seeing her only as a "white, unseen body" (*FF* 235). On the last day of the school, Sammy's headmaster praises his artistic ability, "an exceptional talent that makes you [Sammy] as distinct as if you had a sixth finger on each hand" (*FF* 234). Then he warns him against possible outcomes of his self-centred personality: "If you want something enough, you can always get it provided you are willing to make the appropriate sacrifice. Something, anything. But what you get is never quite what you thought; and sooner or later the sacrifice is always regretted" (*FF* 235). Sammy, instead of heeding these words as a warning, finds them encouraging to pursue his lustful chasing of Beatrice. He therefore ignores the headmaster's warning that the sacrifice is always regretted. Sammy asks himself: "What is important to you? 'Beatrice Ifor.' […] 'If I want something enough, I can always get it provided I am willing to make the appropriate sacrifice. What will you sacrifice? 'Everything'" (*FF* 236). He chooses to possess Beatrice's body and is ready to sacrifice his innocence for this. Through his psychological tortures of Beatrice, Sammy convinces her to become his lover and "invites damnation. His decision to risk all for earthly lust is […] reflected in his voluntary and hazardous descent into hell" (Friedman, 1993: 76). Yet, as a conservative and a devout person, Beatrice does not respond to his lustful desires in the way he imagined. In his retrospective interrogation of the moment, Sammy regards himself as "a young man certain of nothing but salt sex," and Beatrice as the victim of his abuse (*FF* 108). Their "lovemaking was becoming an exploitation," he remarks (*FF* 120) once his ideal love has become obedient to his desires:

> "She remained the victim on the rack, even a rack of some enjoyment. But there was nothing in this that we could share, for poor Beatrice was impotent. She never really knew what we were doing, never knew what it was about. […] Her clear absence of being leaned in towards me, lay against me, clung" (*FF* 119-21).

Sammy's exploitation goes on until he falls in love with Taffy, who is a member of the communist party and whom he will marry. Unlike Beatrice, Taffy is a fully participating partner, which makes their lovemaking "a complete preoccupation and dependence" (*FF* 110). Beatrice, deeply upset by the betrayal, loses her sanity and lands in a lunatic asylum. Sammy, in order to avoid responsibility, takes refuge behind the excuse of the brutal atmosphere of World War II where thousands of people are being killed: "Why bother about one savaged girl when girls are blown to pieces by the thousand? There is no peace for the wicked but war with its waste and lust and irresponsibility is a very good substitute" (*FF* 132). Sammy's schooldays cover the darker years of his childhood, for he experiences a sense of guilt during these years, and the memory of his abusing Beatrice haunts him whenever conditions are favourable to such remembrances.

Sammy's traumatic moment and "the torture of the centre"

Sammy takes a significant leap in Section 7 to relate the moment in which he finds himself a prisoner being interrogated by Gestapo commandant Dr. Halde, who is a psychologist by profession. Halde is the representative of the "rational" wicked that the war created, and for that matter he is the typical intellectual man ("rational hat") of the twentieth century (*FF* 176). To Johnson, he is "an incisive portrait of twentieth-century man whose villainy derives […] rather from his deliberate choice to sacrifice his spiritual capacity and to serve only his reasoning faculty" (1998: 64). When Sammy refuses to cooperate and give information concerning the escape of some other prisoners, he is locked up in a dark room by Halde. Sammy's extreme "terror and despair" (*FF* 217) in this dark room force him to recall the reason behind his "invisible darkness that sits at the centre," which directly takes us to the traumatic moment that haunts him when he is under life-threatening stress (*FF* 8). Caruth's definition of trauma is used here to explain Sammy's extreme terror and despair, as well as to explore the "dark cell" of his conscience: personal trauma is "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth, 1996: 11). Sammy's personal terror and despair dominate his reinterpretations of not only the war years but also the reminiscences of his earlier experience. He says, "what men believe is a function of what they are; and what they are is in part what has happened to them" (*FF* 212).

When Sammy finds himself confined in a small cell, the size of which he cannot guess in utter darkness but believes to be getting narrower each minute due to the supposedly descending ceiling, his deep fears come to the surface under the pressure of confinement and terror, and he is more disturbed with the hell of his conscience now. Actually, Halde does not contribute much to this; he does not torture Sammy in a real sense. He does not torture him psychologically, either. However, he gives stimuli by saying: "I shall explain you to yourself. No one, not a lover, a father, a schoolmaster, could do that for you. […] 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" (*FF* 144). In fact, the cell is only a broom closet where Sammy is kept locked up for a while. When the door is reopened, the

commandant ironically states that "the Herr Doctor does not know anything about peoples" (*FF* 253). This is the closing sentence of the novel and it confuses the reader as much as it does Sammy, who utters: "He spoke the inscrutable words that I should puzzle over as though they were the Sphinx's riddle" (*FF* 253). Like Sammy, readers also find themselves in the labyrinth of Golding's narrative.[8] We can understand that Sammy created his own cell, his "self-created hell," and tortured himself (*FF* 122). If there is guilt, there is self-torturing, and "guilty ones are forced to torture each other" (*FF* 250). Therefore, Sammy does not need any outside cause or any person for tormenting. He "has been shut in with himself. […] The guilty Sammy is made to torture himself in the cell" (Boyd, 1990: 76). The pressure he feels in the dark room is enough to disturb his integrity.

Sammy calls this "the torture of the centre" (*FF* 174). Since he cannot know what is hidden in the middle of the dark place, and symbolically at the centre of his own inner darkness, his fear of the unknown and the unspeakable is greater. He cannot even guess what could be at the centre of the room he is locked in: "The centre was the secret—might be the secret. Of course they were psychologists of suffering, apportioning to each man what was most helpful and necessary to his case" (*FF* 173). Although he wants to "leave the centre alone" and escape from the torture of its darkness (*FF* 174), he cannot help but fall victim to hallucinating about what is most dreadful because "the centre of the cell boiled with shapes of conjecture" triggered by his terror (*FF* 175). When he touches a soft thing on the floo , just in the middle of the room, he assumes it to be the penis of a dead body. He can only "find what he expects to find" there (*FF* 175), and what is apportioning to Sammy is a man's sexual organ. Only when the commandment opens the door does he realize that the thing he assumed to be a penis is a damp floorcloth. "Thus hell is the closet cell where Sammy's fear for his 'privates' turns a scrap of cloth into a severed penis. That his hell is evoked in sexual terms recalls the *sin* that cost Sammy his freedom" (Friedman, 1993: 74, emphasis added). However, we claim that this moment cannot and should not directly attach itself to his sexual exploitation of Beatrice.

Under this isolated cell condition, he reminisces over how he lost his freedom in a series of long flashbacks, and in the "invisible darkness" of his cell/self, he tries to understand which past actions of him have shaped his current self. Nevertheless, we cannot regard *Free Fall* as Sammy's personal confession of any specific individual fault but a realization of a traumatic wound. The section which starts with the question, "How did I come to be so frightened of the dark?" (*FF* 154) is a diversion where he handles his fear of darkness and tells the story of his days immediately following his mother's early death. His answer to this question is not, as expected, related to his sexual exploitation of Beatrice and abandoning her in a helpless situation. Instead, he revisits the memories of his traumatic loss (indirectly) and of a certain period from his early childhood related to Father Watts-Watt, a seemingly polite clergy man who adopted Sammy after his mother's death. Father Watts-Watt is a paranoid person who believes that his "foes" pursue him by sending light signals—that is why he does not allow Sammy, even on his first night at the rectory, to sleep with any lights on lest he might signal that Father Watts-Watt is there in Sammy's room at night. Although Sammy is able to offer

minute details about some of his earlier memories, the reader is left in suspense as to how exactly Sammy remembers the period of time when he started living at the vast rectory after his mother passed away. He states that this period is "far back on the very edge of memory—or further perhaps, because the episode is outside time" (*FF* 154). Still, he does remember his first day at the rectory, for it left its mark "on the very edge" of his memory (here the "flashbulb memory"[9] which defines reminiscences of exceptional instants or events). On Sammy's first day there, Father Watts-Watt attends his room to say good night, uttering "I suppose your mother used to kiss you good night," (*FF* 159) and informs Sammy about his *weird* rule concerning keeping lights off all night: "'You mustn't play with the lamp, Sam. If you touch the bulb I shall have to take it away.' […] He came to the bed and very slowly sat himself down sideways near the foot. *He could sit anywhere there without touching me*" (*FF* 158, emphasis added). Father Watts-Watt's *advance* increases Sammy's "irrational fear" in the total darkness of his room (*FF* 156). "Now there was not only the threat of the darkness but a complete mystery added to it," he interprets the moment from his present (*FF* 160). This *incomprehensible* experience, added on to the traumatic loss of his mother, cannot be deemed "traumatic" by the child Sammy. "Since the initial event is not consciously registered by the subject due to their lack of necessary cognitive tools to grasp the traumatic nature of the event, this event is not processed at the unconscious level of the subject by being repressed either" (Aktari-Sevgi, 2021: 171). For such a small child, this might be mysterious behaviour that he was unable to comprehend, but when the older Sammy looks back on this occasion, he calls it Father Watts-Watt's "first passionate movement" towards him (*FF* 161)—"his advances, if that is what they were" (*FF* 159).

In *Free Fall*, there are actually two occasions of "exploitation" which Sammy is somehow involved in: Sammy's *confessed* exploitation of Beatrice, and that of Father Watts-Watt, which is only *implied* as Sammy chooses to be very careful "in the impression I [Sammy] convey because although [Father Watts-Watt] teetered on the edge he never went further towards me than I have said" (*FF* 162). Sammy's examination of this momentous and traumatic first night and his following days at the rectory is left inconclusive. Therefore, we cannot decide to what extent these two cases of exploitation are interrelated. Nonetheless, we can see that an earlier, not registered traumatic event has become registered by the subject when a similar occasion is experienced. It is known that "a traumatic initial event, which is not understood as traumatic by the subject at the time it happens, forces itself into the subject's psychic life by the experience of a second event through repetitive actions" (Aktari-Sevgi, 2021: 171). In Sammy's case, we have to rely on what the narrator provides. Or more significantl , Sammy has to rely only on how he remembers this event and what he remembers exactly.

Sammy visits Beatrice in the lunatic asylum where she is kept to ask for forgiveness because he has understood that "something to forgive is a purer joy than geometry. It is a positive act of healing, a burst of light" (*FF* 74). However, when he attempts to talk to her, Beatrice urinates on his feet, and therefore Sammy believes the consequence of his guilt to be irreversible. On the other hand, the Nazi prison camp becomes the place of purgation for Sammy—not through complete forgiveness, perhaps, but through a partial recovery by means

of facing the impossibility of outside, physical help. However, we should note that Sammy's self-narration is his true remedy after yielding to the healing power of autobiography writing.

> "I cried out not with hope of an ear but as accepting a shut door, darkness, and a shut sky. But the very act of crying out changed the thing that cried. […] When a man cries out instinctively he begins to search for a place where help may be found; and so the thing that cried out, struggling in the fetor, the sea of nightmare, with burning breath and racing heart, that thing as it was drowning looked with starting and not physical eyes on every place, against every wall, in every corner of the interior world. […] Here the thing that cried came up against an absolute of helplessness" (*FF* 184).

The novels of the dark period of World War II cannot be the products of their writers' imagination only but also of the chaotic era they were written in (Eagleton, 1990: 208). Having witnessed, as a war writer, man's murdering and tormenting each other brutally, and having lost his belief in man's innate goodness as a result, Golding shows in his novels that "rational" man's irrational evil is responsible for such a violence. He remarks that "anyone who passed through those years [of World War II] without understanding that man produces evil as a bee produces honey, must have been blind or wrong in the head" (1970: 87). It is implied that a considerable part of Sammy's pathetic situation is also the result of the radical changes in the social environment that the war caused. Sammy sees himself as the product of the war atmosphere, hence his attitude of "this or that" (between rationalism and spiritualism) when his belief in any value is ruined. He writes: "There was anarchy in the mind where I lived and anarchy in the world at large, two states so similar that the one might have produced the other. The shattered houses, the refugees, the deaths and torture—accept them as a pattern of the world" (*FF* 131). In *Free Fall*, Golding depicts the despair which dominated the "morally diseased" world on a larger scale during World War II, and by the same token, as a war artist, Sammy mirrors the effect of war in his life in which the wicked and the guilty torture each other.

However, the focus of Golding's fiction is always the problematics of the self handled differently in his various texts. Redpath, in his *William Golding: A Structural Reading of His Fiction*, foregrounds this quality of Golding's works, claiming that the writer visits the dark caves of man's existence, and therefore he draws the reader into his/her inner self (1986: 26). Page, likewise, holds that "Golding's concern is with larger, more fundamental and abstract issues that may be called metaphysical or theological. […] Such works ask not 'How does man live?' but 'What manner of creature is man?'" (1985: 11). With reference to *Free Fall*, Friedman argues that "existentialist characters invariably concern themselves with the problem of identity. Samuel Mountjoy's (Sammy) attempt to identify that moment when he lost his freedom is equally an attempt to identify what he is in terms of what he was" (1993: 68). Golding's *Free Fall* portrays its protagonist as the representative modern man and depicts his existentialist quest for self-knowledge and the discovery of his becoming. As a war artist, Sammy examines the meaning of his existence and exercise of free-will amidst the turmoil of the war years, and through the non-chronological structure of his autobiography, he foregrounds the confusion of time and space during the post-war period.

At the same time, however, with Sammy's non-chronological account of his past, the novel also represents the problem of identity construction based on memory, and of retranslating memories into a coherent whole and rewriting the present self. *Free Fall* is an early example of the "fiction of memory," and thereby an inventive text and a precursor which shows that memory is open to modification and reshaped by the present self. Golding's novel, in conclusion, should be read side by side with such subsequent ones as Julian Barnes' 2011 *The Sense of an Ending*, where the novelist depicts how the present self is a construct of remembering and forgetting. Like Barnes' work, Golding's *Free Fall* is a novel of completion-a pioneering example of the *Vollendungsroman*[10] where the older Sammy's self-narration comes to be a remedy for his personal apocalypse.

Endnotes

1 Hereafter cited parenthetically as *FF*.

2 In the same vein, Kermode argues that Golding should be regarded as a "mythmaker" insofar as his novels "deal in the primordial patterns of human experience" (1985: 65).

3 In different places of the text, Sammy asks such similar questions: "When did I lose my freedom?" (*FF* 5) or "How did I lose my freedom?" (*FF* 6). His repeated answer to these questions is: "Here, then? No. Not here" (*FF* 132, 217).

4 Whitley claims that "Golding moves from creating a pattern to writing about the ways in which a narrator/artist seeks to find or create a pattern in experience" (1988: 177)

5 Sammy's narration hinges on a marked distinction between his innocent self and experienced self on the basis of remembering as Sammy states: "I am not a man who was a boy looking at a tree. I am a man who remembers being a boy looking at a tree" (*FF* 38).

6 See Charles Fernyhough's *Pieces of Light* (Profile Books, 2012)

7 *Free Fall* consists of 13 sections/chapters where Sammy relates the significant events and people from his past with flashbacks, which deflects the chronology in his narration. "The real historical chronology of Sammy's *bildungsroman* rests on the following sequence of the sections in the book:1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 4, 5, 6 (here, a still unbridged time-gap), 7, 9, 10, 14, 13" (Monod, 1985: 138).

8 The text requires the reader to elaborate on the identity problematics instead of providing one single explanation. Skilton writes that Golding's novels "give the impression of being difficult to grasp, intellectually. And they are hard to understand if regarded purely as problems demanding and admitting of satisfactory solutions" (qtd. in Redpath, 1986: 23).

9 See Sweatt, *Mechanisms of Memory*, 20.

10 See Çiğdem Alp Pamuk's article "*The sense of an ending* as the story of aging" for a detailed study of Barnes' text as the *Vollendungsroman*. We can say that both Golding and Barnes share the characteristics of "the use of life review, as a structural device, deconstruction of the ego, recognition of mistakes, and affirmation of life in the face of loss" (Pamuk, 2020: 238).

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