

fiers, for, in the kind of qualification they provide, they reduce the issues of the novels to a simpler and trickier plane of experience.

Golding's metaphors can all be read as orthodox and traditional Christian statements about the nature of man. Each metaphor underlines man's depravity, pride, the futility of his reason. The novels are permeated with the sense of man's sin and guilt, and the images depict these qualities in conventional Christian terms. The "gimmicks," however, back down from the finality of the theologically orthodox statements. In an age when many other writers view man's experience as disparate, impossible to codify, existential, Golding's metaphors are at least sufficiently unique to suggest the reality, the permanence of the traditional Christian explanation of the nature of man. But, then, the "gimmicks" seem to provide some concession to contemporary man's fear of generalized absolutes, to his existential attitude. This is not to suggest that Golding reverses his metaphors with these slender "gimmicks," that the novels ultimately demonstrate the failure of the orthodox explanations. Rather, the metaphors still stand; the orthodox Christian versions of man's depravity and limitations, in Golding's world, still convey a great deal that is relevant and permanent. But they do not convey everything. The "gimmicks" suggest that the orthodox Christian explanations are not quite adequate for contemporary man, although they are too tricky and slender to do more than suggest. The "gimmicks," precisely because they are "gimmicks," fail to define or to articulate fully just how Golding's metaphors are to be qualified, directed, shaped in contemporary and meaningful terms. The "gimmicks" tend to simplify and to palliate, rather than to /205/ enrich and intensify the experience of the novels. For all his unique brilliance and his striking metaphors, Golding has not yet worked out a novelistic form adequate for the full tonal and doctrinal range of his perception. /206/

LORD OF THE CAMPUS

TIME

Back in England last week after a year in the U.S., British Author William Golding recalled his interrogation by American college students. "The question most asked was, 'Is there any hope for humanity?' I very dutifully said 'Yes.'" Golding's credentials for being asked such a monumental query—and for answering it—rest on one accomplishment: his *Lord of the Flies*, a grim parable that holds out precious little hope for humanity, and is the most influential novel among U.S. undergraduates since Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*.

When *Lord of the Flies* was first published in the U.S. in 1955, it sold only 2,383 copies, and quickly went out of print. But British enthusiasm for it has been gradually exported to Ivy League English departments, and demand for the book is now high. The paperback edition, published in 1959, has already sold more than 65,000 copies. At the Columbia University bookstore, it outsells Salinger.

Lord of the Flies is required reading at a hundred U.S. colleges, is on the list of suggested summer reading for freshmen entering colleges from Occidental to Williams. At Harvard it is recommended for a social-relations course on "interpersonal behavior."

An M.I.T. minister uses it for a discussion group on original sin. At Yale and Princeton—where Salinger, like the three-button suit, has lost some of his mystique as he becomes adopted by the outsiders—the in-group popularity of Golding's book is creeping up. At Smith, where *Lord of the Flies* runs a close second in sales to Salinger's *Franny and Zooey*, 1,000 girls turned out for a lecture by Golding. The reception was the same at the thirty campuses Golding visited during his year as a rarely resident writer-in-residence at Virginia's Hollins College.

Creating Their Own Misery. The British schoolboys in *Lord of the Flies* are a few years younger than Salinger's Holden Caulfield—they are six to twelve—but they are not self-pitying innocents in a world made miserable by adults. They create their own world,

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their own misery. Deposited unhurt on a deserted coral island by a plane during an atomic war, they form the responsible vacation-land democracy that their heritage calls for, and it gradually degenerates into anarchy, barbarism and murder. When adult rescue finally comes, they are a tribe of screaming painted savages hunting down their elected leader to tear him apart. The British naval officer who finds them says, "I should have thought that a pack of British boys would have been able to put up a better show than that." Then he goes back to his own war.

Says Golding: "The theme is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. Before the war, most Europeans believed that man could be perfected by perfecting his society. We all saw a hell of a lot in the war that can't be accounted for except on the basis of original evil."

"People I Knew in Camp." What accounts for the appeal? Part of it is, of course, pure identification. A Harvard undergraduate says the book "rounds up all the people I knew in camp when I was a counselor." On another level, Golding believes students "seem to have it in for the whole world of organization. They're very cynical. And here was someone who was not making excuses for society. It was new to find someone who believes in original sin." The prickly belief in original sin is not Golding's only unfashionable stance. Under questioning by undergraduates, he cheerfully admitted he has read "absolutely no Freud" (he prefers Greek plays in the original) and said there are no girls on the island because he does not believe that "sex has anything to do with humanity at this level."

At 51, bearded, scholarly William Golding claims to have been writing for 44 years—through childhood in Cornwall, Oxford, wartime duty as a naval officer, and 19 years as a schoolmaster. Golding claims to be an optimist—emotionally if not intellectually—and has a humor that belies the gloomy themes of his allegories. One critical appraisal of *Lord of the Flies* that impressed him came from an English schoolboy who went to an island near Puerto Rico last year to make a movie based on the book. Wrote the little boy from the idyllic island, surrounded by his happy peers and pampered by his producer: "I think *Lord of the Flies* stinks. I can't imagine what I'm doing on this filthy island, and it's all your fault." In Golding's view, a perfectly cast savage. /64/

BEHIND THE VOGUE, A RIGOROUS UNDERSTANDING

EDMUND FULLER

The literary conversation piece of the last year has been the eruption in American schools and colleges of a vogue for William Golding on a scale matched only by that for J. D. Salinger. Though the enthusiasm for the two men is comparable, it does not spring from similarity in the work. Golding and Salinger are unlike in method, manner, material, and in the vision which they bring to bear on life. They appeal to youth on different grounds. It is gratifying to see this interest in both, for it is a response to good writing that touches in differing ways the nerve roots of modern man. But I regard the taste for Golding as more discriminating, more demanding, and thus more heartening than that for Salinger.

Holden Caulfield and assorted members of the American family Glass all are special, but with a neurotic unity in their diversity. They are infinitely "sensitive" in the current cliché. Notwithstanding their pronounced peculiarities, they so reflect certain patterns of contemporary personality, emotional problems, and pressures that young people at least recognize and often identify with them. Salinger speaks with a vocabulary and a tone that induce sympathetic resonances in youthful ears. In a student paper I have read: ". . . he writes about us; he writes about urban prep school life in contemporary, northeastern America."

These are subjective resonances. Some of this recognition is self-indulgent and some of the identification is self-pitying. I think the core of Salinger is soft, and part of the reader response is soft. The pictures he draws are intensely real in their small frames. I don't think there is in him the kind of depth and insight to draw us toward a more rigorous and objective understanding of ourselves and our kind. It is this latter rare and valuable ability that Golding has, which makes the enthusiasm for him potentially more significant. Salinger implicitly traces the defects of individuals back to the defects of society. Golding in his own words is attempt-