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**Simran Tripathi**  
Research Scholar, Department  
of English, IIS Deemed to be  
University, Jaipur, Rajasthan,  
India

**Dr. Sucharita Sharma**  
Sr. Assistant Professor,  
Department of English, IIS  
Deemed to be University,  
Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Simran Tripathi**  
Research Scholar, Department  
of English, IIS Deemed to be  
University, Jaipur, Rajasthan,  
India

## There is no center of sanity in madness: Constructive approach of psychic deconstruction in William Golding's pincher martin

**Simran Tripathi and Dr. Sucharita Sharma**

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### Abstract

The novel *Pincher Martin* (1956) titled in the American world as *Two Deaths of Christopher Martin* (1957) incorporates the psychoanalytic approach as depicted through the protagonist Pincher Martin's two deaths. Martin is a personification of every modern man who is dangling between his conscious and subconscious mind; assists him to construct an illusionary self in this real other world. The narrative themes, forms, and language of the selected text can be the imprint of the writer's psyche; explores how both psychic and linguistic approaches are interdependent and can examine under a singular shade of deconstructive approach. The shift from Aristotelian to the postmodern era has brought notable changes that help us in the understanding of the constructive approach of linguistic and psychic deconstruction; that works upon the binaries as the center and de-center self and other, mind and body. The famous argument of Rene Descartes "Cogito ergo sum" means "I Think Therefore I'm" de-centralizes Martin's perishable body and his eternal psychic existence, within the canopy of interdependent aspects of death and life that is de-centralized by the postmodern notion of time that precedes our essence. This paper is an attempt to cope with the notions of psychic and linguistic deconstruction. That guides us towards an unstable center in this centerless world, works upon the doctrine of dualism and pluralism, and the ways to seek a mono-centric center.

**Keywords:** Deconstruction, psyche, existence, monocentrism, dualism, narratology

### Introduction

In literature, every word has multiple meanings; at the same time, different types of privileges can occur. These privileges generate instability that affects the reader's psyche and makes them dangle between imaginary and real doctrines. With the rise of multiple meanings, it subjugates the notion of meaninglessness. The deconstructive approach does not destroy conventional themes, but the reassessing provides new wings to explore the old notions. The close analysis of the novel *Pincher Martin* explores that deconstructive approach that provides an entirely new meaning to the old one. This new meaning would help us to provide Martin's meaningless existence a new sense. "The Centre knew self existed, though Christopher and Hadley and Martin were Fragments far off." (*Pincher Martin*, 171)

*Pincher Martin* is the story of Christopher Hadley Martin. The character Martin is the mouthpiece of Golding. Golding depicts Martin as a sole survivor of a military torpedo destroyer in the Atlantic Ocean. The story possesses chronological displacement that seems to flourish among the parameters of ending, middle, and beginning, Golding's novel *Pincher Martin* opposed Aristotle's notion of a crystallized tragedy as suggested in *Poetics* "A whole is what a beginning middle and end" (*Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts*, 31). Here the beginning and end contradict and helps us in deconstructing the middle to interpret his haphazard existence that lacks a coherent meaning. Redpath, explores; "Chronological displacements are a central feature of Golding's work, even more so than the shift of perspective" (*A Structural Reading of his Fiction*, 187.)

Golding's narration successfully presents psychic and linguistic deconstruction as the whole story breathes under the canopy of flashbacks.

From the beginning till the end story generates a tricky aura around the reader's psyche by using a linguistic pattern that puts the novel under the shade of modern psychological novel. In this novel, the time has been arrested by Golding's psyche and language as while moving forth and back presents a jigsaw puzzle that cannot be easily explored even after the reading of the book in the very first attempt. The kind of tricks used by Golding in the novel seems to hijack the reader's psyche. He successfully explores how Rene Descartes' notion "I think Therefore I'm" seems to fail as our psyche that has been hijacked by the illusionary external world. Here we can see how our psyche has the power to generate a kind of language that can deconstruct even time. At the same time, his tricks of narrating a simple story into a tricky one successfully deconstruct the reader's psyche. While discussing the complexity of the book, in the words of Philip Gregory, "This is much more profound and thought-provoking than a mere 'twist in the tail' trick. It means that we the readers have been like Pincher, fretting about water and anemones, rocks, seals and seagulls, and it has all been the last illusion of a dying consciousness." (*Pincher Martin*, 226)

Dasein is a concept that considers that having a physical existence means having an opportunity of maintaining a relationship between self and others. With the shift of every era. The center shifts as during the platonic era, the center exists in the Supreme power, while in Romantics, Man was the center. In today's literary modern era, language has been privileged over everything else. It has the power to deconstruct both the mind and body. According to Derrida, a writer himself can never express the accurate meaning of his written word, and the Deconstructive approach aims to scrutinize every word on conventional ideas out of which new forms keep germinates and propagates new meaning out of the old ones.

The linguistic world claims to impregnate with a center; while itself looking for a cynosure. Every word has multiple meanings, and this multiplicity holds the power to de-centralize a single meaning into multiple. These days' writers are using the language as a medium to locate a center, and by de-centralizing the language that revolves around themes and characters, to examine these themes and characters, we again have to snuggle up on the language. In other words, we can accomplish our quest of the centre by reaching the end of the beginning. As Golding does with the plot of the story, he forms a circle by connecting Martin's struggle for existence fades away with locating his dead body. "Then don't worry about him. You saw the body. He didn't even time to kick off his sea-boots." (*Pincher Martin*, 224) Around the periphery of the story, the reader moves to locate the center. The plot, themes, symbols, and characters are the ingredients in the composition of the walls where the language acts as a gum that holds on everything firmly. To set foot on in the circle and we have to de-centralize the periphery in between which we can locate the centerless center.

Modern philosophers believe that time is the essence or the center. It is the time in which we can make choices to have a meaningful existence. With the help of literary language, Golding demonstrates Martin's time as lived time and doing time. Doing time is an expression used to express the time that people spend in imprisonment; it is the time that they count by the clock because they are not living in it. Instead, they chose to exist. Doing time is entirely existential. The

notion of lived time talks about the life that the people live at the utmost. Martin's time over the rock is his doing time because that rock imprisons his body, while his soul and psyche seem to dangle between past and present by reviving his lived time or past. Here Martin's lived time (past) is his 'Self' while his doing time (on the rock) is 'Other'; Golding here de-centralize the notion of time and existence by privileging the other over self. Doing time was privileged over his lived time. Revisiting the past provides him an escape from the present. We can say Martin's Present successfully privileged over his past, and somehow, while de-centralizing the time he explores, it is the power of time that de-centralizes the Human psyche and body and shapes our identity as a dangling man. When we fail in locating the center, we form it at our vantage. The constant fluctuation of center made us believe that in this modern era, the focal point of every notion deals with de-centralizing the center that lacks in having a center. "The sort of heaven we invent for ourselves after death, if we aren't ready for the real one." (195)

The deconstruction provides us an understanding of how Martin's life produces contrary aspects from existentialist. Critics claim that Martin is far away from the category of being an existentialist. Existentialists make choices out of their existence to find the sense out of existence, while Christopher Martin's only choice is to exist whether the existence is worthy enough to live or not. "Take us as we are now, and heaven would be a sheer negation. Without form and void. You see? A sort of black lightning destroying everything that we call life." (71) In most existentialist literature, we found characters; they make choices to achieve the ultimate goal that is death. Here Martin's ultimate goal is to live a life that can choose out of his own choices between death and life. Martin starts considering himself as God. As he starts realizing as if everything is under his control, as he says, "I said it would rain and it has" (183). The moment we locate at the end that Martin had died with the shipwrecked, our assumption about Martin's ego-centrism seems to be a delusion generated by the writer to tell us that no one can revolt against the God's choices when they and their existence are the results of God's choices. "Then I was dead. That Was Death. I Have been Frightened to death. Now the Pieces of me have Come together, and I am just alive" (178)

Philosophers believe that the mind and body are two different fundamental aspects that exist in one. Researchers explore that every individual has a dual identity. Like Rene Descartes, French Philosopher and mathematician talk about the Cartesian view that considers mind and body as wholly two different entities. The study of duality in an individual can be called dualism. The Philosopher Robinson explores that dualism is "a theory that the mental and physical- or mind and body or mind and brain- are, in some sense, radically different kinds of things" (Robinson, 2012). This duality is not just a notion that exists in an individual; somehow, it affects the outlook of a man that changes his viewpoint towards himself and the world. Besides Human Being, the materialistic world deals with the aspects of duality in the form of substance, physical, and mental. Many critics and philosophers reciprocate against the notion of duality by adopting a new idea of Monism. It focuses on the singularity of substance but unaware of the form and nature of that singularity. We can examine the similar concept of duality in *Pincher Martin* that deals with Martin's mind and

body. As Martin says, "I was always two things, mind and body. Nothing has altered. Only I did not realize it before so clearly." (*Pincher Martin*, 187) As depicted by Golding, at the very beginning of the novel, Martin introduces as a struggler. His body seems to struggle against the waves of the Atlantic Ocean; correspondingly, his psyche struggle against the worldly affairs of recent memories. His body and mind, two contrasting factors, seem to deal with a similar notion of existence in the real illusionary world. "There was still the silent, indisputable creatures that sat at the centre of things, but it seemed to have lost the knack of distinguishing between pictures and reality." (97)

This story controverts Martin's psychic existence with his bodily extant. "I am still asleep. I am shut inside my body." (*Pincher Martin*, 131) Martin's psyche seems to dangle between past and present while struggling to rescue his body from drowning. His psyche forces him to reconstruct an illusionary existence that deconstructs his essence of survival. It is Martin's consciousness that makes him realize that he is consciously subconscious while struggling for survival. Martin meets all his memories that Golding's presents by using the techniques of Flash Backs that shapes the texts as a modern psychological novel. As many critics brutally criticized the technique of the novel and suggested to him that Golding should change the ending. In an interview with Biles, William Golding explores, "I suppose a straightforward twentieth-century humanist, and this is not what I am, I don't think, and this isn't what the book is about. No, I wouldn't change the ending." (Biles, 70-1)

The moment Martin refused the idea of death by revolting against God's will and started striving to survive, people consider him insane. That insanity against God fragmented him between lived time and doing time and between his mind and body that not only takes him far away from sanity but also depicts how his doing time privileged over lived time, and how his mind is the antithesis of his other that has been represented by Martin's body. Martin's insanity fragments his 'self' from 'other' and then commands his other towards self. It is Martin's madness that holds the center of sanity. "Bright rock and sea, hope though deferred, heroics. Then in the moment of achievement, the knowledge, the terror like a hand falling. It was something I remember. I'd better not remember it again. Remember to forget. Madness? Worse than madness. Sanity." (180) The dispersed beads of sanity in the novel, we the readers, have to recollect every sensible bead and form a garland of insanity that has been meticulously hidden by the writer in between the linguistic pattern whose decentralization is the only way to get the center where sanity lies in. In other words, insanity holds the center of sanity. The significant similarity between Shakespeare's insane clown and Golding's madness depicted through the character of Martin is that both are commoners. In contrast, Shakespeare's clown holds the center of sanity in insanity vice versa; the character Martin has the insanity that holds the center of sanity. In other words, anagnorisis presents in both the plays but in different forms, as the Shakespearean fool is aware of his ignorance while it is Martin's ego that does not allow him to be aware of his ignorance. This awareness of ignorance is ignored and is sagaciously is the central theme of Golding's novel *Pincher Martin* where the readers have skillfully entangled around the center of Martin's awareness that is de-centered by his own rejected ignorance. The

consequences are; when his awareness ignorantly makes him insane that holds the center of sanity.

Martin's insanity explores how madness affects human choices, and unknowingly it releases all hidden emotions and desires that the world also accepts profoundly. As Martin says, "Sanity is the ability to appreciate reality." (173) an insane person can only deal with reality fearlessly because the person's rationality skillfully befools his self and other. The motif of obtaining sense out of this nonsense corrupts man's psyche and can transform Human's sanity into insanity. Hegel also focuses on a similar concept and explores, "The capacity for self-reflection is given to man alone, that is why he has, so to speak, the privilege of madness." (*Writing and madness*, 36) Martin sets a perfect example of Sartre's notion of Existence Precedes Essence; in other words, what he is, is the result of his choices. Martin as corrupt soul, a man full of lust, or emulates as Satan; it is all his choices that shapes his identity as a man who is suffering from moral degradation in this modern mechanized era. As Golding once remarked on his developed character, Martin, "Pincher Martin is very much fallen- he's fallen more than most." (*The Meaning of It All*, 10)

Martin's purpose is to survive, and one cannot survive without having a center. Martin's incompetency of not having a center generates Existential frustration. Makes him dangle between his self and other, life and death, and the presence of two contrary elements insane sanity in an individual metamorphose into two dual entities, mind and body. All these aspects Personify Martin as a man of the modern mechanized era who has dual identities in a monocentric existence. As Martin says, "This is an ordinary experience of living. There is nothing strange in that" (*Pincher Martin*, 85). In this modern mechanized era, Martin is not the first who is living dual existence in the form of mind and body that assembles in a monocentric identity as a Human Being. Every Human is in search of a center; that exists with dualities in themselves as body and mind. This duality barricades them in exploring a center because both the mind and body have contrary aspects. The quest of the center can be accomplished only by de-centralizing the middle center from where all other offshoots are germinating, and then only the quest of a real center can be fulfilled.

Modern literature is purely the reflection of real imagination, and to create the distinction between this real illusionary world and the unreal pragmatic world, we have to deconstruct the pragmatic imagination around which our literary story revolves. Here in *Pincher Martin*, the contemporary imaginations have privileged over the former real memories. Escape from present to past de-centralizes his existence. In Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions*, the protagonist Zimmer working in silent movies, depicts as a way to escape from his meaningless chaotic existence. That escape into the world of movies and then writing a book by the name of 'The Silent World of Hector Mann' (*The Book of Illusions*, 3) provides him meaning to his meaningless life. In similar ways, Martin's existence is de-centralized by dreams and realities. The one he experiences after plunging into the subconscious world of memories and the other he is experiencing into a fully conscious world of realities surrounded by the memories of waves. As Martin says, "Sleep is where we touch what is better left unexamined." (*Pincher Martin*, 95)

This novel that discusses the concept of the center itself lacks in holding a center, as in the very end, we came to know that Martin has died just after the few seconds of sinking the ship. The whole story takes place in the psyche of Martin; within seconds, his psyche reassesses his past and breathed life in his every single word that it starts seeming lively. The center is in our psyche where everything takes place; our psyche holds the power that it can transform our imagination into reality. Again if the reality contradicts from our imagination, as the novel deals with Martin's struggle of six days prove to an image of his psyche that rebuts by his dead body that did not have enough time of removing his sea boots. The novel deals with a lack of notion of certitude because much of the time, we witness Martin dangles between dream and reality whenever it seems as he is sleeping, he re-evaluates his past, and after awakening, he meets the real waves that barricade his real-world from other.

"How can I have a complete identity without a mirror?" (*Pincher Martin*, 140) This line talks about the theory of Social Mirror Theory that focuses on self –reflection. Martin here explores that humans and society are an interdependent course; both are incomplete without each other. In this condition, it is now more challenging to locate a center. The dissemination of the center between self and others provides us a false illusionary center by and by deconstructing these centers that lack in holding a real center shapes our identity as a meaningless man who for surviving forms an illusionary center. We are merely the reflection of this center-less world, and this is the reason that we lack in having a center. As in the novel, Martin discovers his imaginary center that is the rock on which he sustains for six imaginary days. In a similar, the only way to exists in this other world is to create an imaginary self.

In the story *Pincher Martin*, It is the notion of time that de-centralized Martin's existence between real and imaginary one. Martin experienced both lived time and ding time. Martin's doing time, or his other, has privileged over his self that is lived time. At the same time, Martin's unreal existence is de-centralized by his real death. The death about which the readers remain dubious till the end, that whether it is real or unreal. His failure in search of self; look for an escape, and he introduces as an escapist. The similar case we can locate in *Pincher Martin*. As Martin revisits his past to escape from the struggle of mortal existence that not only provides him an escape from the struggle but also provides him an unreal existence that he finds by moving away from the ultimate truth that is death. Philosophers believe that deconstruction can provide us a center, but the truth is that whenever we deconstruct a monocentric aspect, it propagates into multiple aspects, and then the task of locating a center becomes more difficult.

A man's wrong choice is enough to prove him insane. This other world profoundly believes that a mad person can never look out for a center, and the man who look up for a center can introduce as insane. The concept of sanity and insanity lies in our choices. The constant shift in Martin's choices explores that the modern man considers time as the essence, and with the constant change of time, their choices keep repositioning. The similar shifts in Martin's choice of existence provide his material existence a shift from doing time (other) to lived time (self) that is guided by his psyche.

"The whole problem of insanity is so complex that a satisfactory definition, a norm has never been established." (*Pincher Martin*, 184)

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