

## MATTY AS AN EMBODIMENT OF MYSTERY IN WILLIAM GOLDING'S *DARKNESS VISIBLE*

Mrs. N. Shenbaga Priya,  
Research Scholar, 2011311411039, M.S.University &  
Assistant Professor in English,  
Pope's College, Thoothukudi,  
Tamilnadu.

Dr. S. Pauline Anbuselvi,  
Guide,  
Head and Associate Professor in English (Rtd.),  
Pope's College, Thoothukudi,  
Tamilnadu.

Dr. R. Rita Yasodha,  
Co-Guide,  
Assistant Professor in English,  
Aditanar College of Arts and Science, Tiruchendur,  
Tamilnadu.

### Abstract:

*Darkness Visible* presents a complex view of human nature and is generally considered as the struggle between good and evil. With two stories, the novel tells the importance of love and redemption. This article focuses on Matty, the central character of the first part of the novel who seems to be quite mystic. He is a disfigured child resulting from a bomb explosion which made others avoid him. Still, he maintains himself and becomes a savior at the end sacrificing his own life for others.

Key words: human nature, love, hatred, redemption.

Paper:

The re-emergence of William Golding with his *Darkness Visible*, after eight years, is on par with excellence for its perspective on man in the twentieth century. It is considered as a dark and complex novel and this book is centered on two stories. The first story is about Matthew Septimus, a disfigured child from a bomb explosion during the Second World War. The second story is about two twins, Toni and Sophy. Their childhood and their growth as adults in the war scenario are described in the novel from the perspective of Sophy. The novel speaks of the effects of the unspoken threats of loveless world through the characters. This paper tries to make an attempt on how Matty, with his half burnt face and his rejected state, has handles his life towards his purpose amidst hatred and suffering.

Matty is introduced in *Darkness Visible* not as any common but as an emerging child from the flames and Golding describes him as,

What had seemed impossible and therefore unreal was now a fact and clear to them all. A figure had condensed out of the shuddering backdrop of the glare. It moved in the geometrical centre of the road which now appeared longer and wider before. Because if it was the same size as before, then the figure was impossibly small – impossibly tiny,....(*Darkness Visible* 12).

The crew is staring out at the impossible, half burnt small child. Matty is the child who walks out of the fire, burnt and naked but his walk is steady and he knows where he is going. He is going towards safety but he takes his own time in taking every step. His walk is described as “A

child's stride is quick; but this child walked down the very middle of the street with a kind of ritual grit that in an adult would have been called Solemn." (*Darkness Visible* 14)

Matty is hospitalized and treated; he is called number Seven. He has no visitors, has nothing but the fire. After working through the alphabet in rotation, he was given 'Septimus' as a middle name and his first name 'Mathew' became Matty. He mouthed the words and his language was unusual. Even as a small boy, he seemed to understand things around him and learnt to control his desperate need to speak. During his many years of childhood, his visitors tried not to see the burnt right side of his face. Only with the nurse who cared for him, Matty smiled. The time comes for Matty to part with the nurse and he handled it in a more matured way as, "He suffered this in animal patience, seeing this was what was going to happen and there was no escaping it." (*Darkness Visible* 19) He knows that his life would be going without acceptance from others and he has to undergo this all by himself and thereby, passed his days in silence.

Matty is repaired as much as possible and is sent from the hospital. His smile has gone forever. He limps and has hair on the right side of the skull but his left side is white because of the blast. Inquiries are made on his background but they find nothing. It is assumed that he might have born out of the blazing fire. Then Matty has entered into his first school – the Foundlings School which turned his life upside down. There he faces a very bitter experience with Mr. Pedigree on the death of one student for which no one is to be blamed for; but Pedigree is arrested and Matty is sent to Coventry. Both Pedigree and Matty feel affected by the guilt. From there, he begins to take odd jobs but soon the understanding of his unattractive appearance

wounded him. He fled and reaches Australia. Within months, he finds himself a job, a church, a bed in the Y.M.C.A in Melbourne.

In spite of finding a good state to pass the remaining years, he begins to have questions and feelings about who he is. The questions break him apart and repeatedly probe his mind again and again and he sees that the answer lies in him. He believes,

To this, the only answer from inside him was something like: You come out of nowhere and that is where you are going. You have injured your only friend; and you must offer up marriage, sex, love, because, because, because! On a cooler view of the situation, no one would have you, anyway. That is who you are. (*Darkness Visible* 51).

He takes up a series of odd jobs and he is rejected everywhere as he is pathetic outside. While working in a hardware shop, he is asked to wear a hat to keep his hair in place and to cover his disturbing face. For no reason, he chooses a black hat with a broad brim.

Matty begins to change everything in him by wearing jacket, trousers, shoes, socks, roll-neck sweater, pullover and became the man in black. There is a question waiting for him at all end-who is he. Everything about Matty is a mystery; becomes a mystery and Golding clearly states, "One of Matty's characteristics was a capacity for absolute inattention." (*Darkness Visible* 53) He seems to sort out things by himself; not welcoming or expecting a thing. Getting the Bible in wood takes him to become a religious mystic. In all the following incidents that happened in his life, he is rejected for he is disfigured. The travel to Australia for various jobs invariably kindles sexual feelings and as a result, he begins to read the Bible obsessively to wade off his sexual desires; thus becoming a religious mystic.

In course of time, his question changes as "... and the question which went with him always, changed and came clearer. Not- who am I? "What am I." (*Darkness Visible* 56) The question keeps him awake; he cries it aloud on the open road in Melbourne but has no answer. Still the question begins to get into his mind and his feelings until he dreams it night after night. He even dreams about Mr.Pedigree saying those words and asking for help. Matty struggles to explain his state of despair and grief, "How can I help until I know what I am?." (*Darkness Visible* 56) but still he moves on. The understanding of the Australian aborigin over Matty's elaborate cross with pebbles and the aborigin's jumping on Matty seem comical but finally helps Matty to settle in Cornwall with journal writing.

The journal entries of Matty cover the period of two years which further explains the mystic character of Matty, who is religiously waiting for the apocalypse to happen and when nothing happened, he takes a job as a gardener in Greenfield. Still hearing voices from outside, Matty works happily at the school for ten years hoping to serve his purpose of living. In the meantime, Pedigree released from prison and returns to Greenfield with a broken inside. Little do they know each other and their mutual fragmented life.

The mysterious death of Matty and the rescue of the Arab boy seem to assemble certain things in Matty's life. In the rescue mission of the Arab boy, the appearance of Matty on fire can be related to his appearance in the blast in the beginning of the novel. It is described as, "... a strange thing happened in the fire. It seemed to organize itself into a shape of flame that rushed out of the garage doors and whirled round and round. It made as if on purpose for the man and his burden. It whirled round still and the only noise from it was that of burning." (*Darkness Visible* 248) Thus the Arab boy is saved because of Matty.

The first as well as the last appearance of Matty bring out the sense of mystery and fulfillment. Matty recognises the purpose of his inner self coming together in his sacrifice. Not only is the life of the Arab boy rescued but also the terrific life of Pedigree. The last episode of the novel presents the elements of love and freedom from the clutches of the past. Pedigree knows that Matty is dead. In spite of that, he sees Matty entering the park; and Matty is not as awful to look at as he would be and above all, he feels the warmth of the golden hands of the sun light.

Realising the love of Matty, Pedigree cries out his heart and asks Matty to help him. Pedigree can feel a drift upwards, and then a swirl and the gold begin to grow fierce and consume Matty. Matty vanishes in the fire and Pedigree sees the face as gold as fire instead of a two toned face. The smile is loving and terrible. Before Pedigree can react, Matty tears all the strings that bound Pedigree to his clutches. Pedigree is free at last. The world of human passion, subsequently how it transcends everything and remains are shown in the life of Matty. From an emerging child from fire and alive to a redeeming creature of the fire and gold, Matty makes every men to reach the liberal state, the intensity of inner freedom.

Works cited:

Golding, William. *Darkness Visible*. London: Faber and Faber limited, 1980. Print.