The pieces of fiction, "The Spire" by William Golding[1], and "The Dead" by James Joyce[2], are relatively slight stories, but are given weight by repeated images and symbols, whose patterns imprint the works with their meaning. Both authors use these repetitive structures to make a story of unwise mediaeval architecture, and a brief account of this year's music school do, worthy pieces of literature.

Golding, in "The Spire", provides us with his version of a morality play about the sin of pride and concupiscence, and the inevitability of the decay and corruption that flows from this, in the life of Jocelin and his impossible spire. It is a work bursting with symbolism and these recurring devices develop along with Jocelin's slow learning about his rotten interior.

The central image is based on repetition of a description applied first to a model of Jocelin's cathedral, and later to Jocelin himself. The choice of words is so similar Golding can only want us to, at one level, identify Jocelin with the building:

> The model was like a man lying on his back. The nave was his legs placed together, the transepts on either side were his arms outstretched. The choir was his body; and the Lady Chapel … was his head. And now also, springing, projecting, bursting, erupting from the heart of the building, there was its crown and majesty, the new spire.
>
> It seemed to Jocelin that he lay on his back in his bed; and then was lying on his back in the marshes, crucified, and his arms were the transepts with Pangall's kingdom nestled by his left side. People came to jeer and torment him … they knew the church had no spire, nor could have any.

The obvious phallic symbolism of the first passage is focussed by the second – the spire is the sublimation of Jocelin's lust into a form he finds acceptable, a worshipful act of cathedral building. He finds the dream "meaningless" at the time, only coming to some realisation at the end of his life, finally seeing his desire for Goody for what it was.

> He looked up … and there was a tangle of hair … and the great club of his spire lifted towards it. That's all, he thought, that's the explanation …

[1] Golding, W., The Spire, Faber and Faber, London, 1964.

[2] Joyce, J., The Dead, in "The Oxford Anthology of English Literature", Gen. Ed., Kermode, F. and Hollander, J., Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, pp 1739-1768.

Golding has developed the image of tangled hair to such an extent by the final chapter, that its mere mention conveys its meaning as a symbol for Goody and temptation. He has laid the foundations for this from the beginning of the story.

Goody's hair is initially hidden under a wimple, a chaste garment, associated generally with nuns. As the novel progresses her hair is let out, plaited, then becomes wild in concert with the unfolding drama, until Jocelin is tormented by the vision of tangled red hair. His thoughts after Pangall's death illustrate the process:

> It was as if the red hair, sprung so unexpectedly from the decent covering of the wimple had wounded all that time before.

During the melee of Pangall's sacrifice, Jocelin is the mesmerised voyeur of an erotic vision of Goody:

> Her hair had come out into the light. It hung down; on this side splayed over her breast in a tattered cloud of red, on that, in a tangled plait which doubled on itself, and draggled with green ribbon half-undone.

The process continues until her tangled, blazing hair echoes Satan's earlier appearances with "blazing hair", "rising out of the west". Goody and her symbolic red hair haunt Jocelin as a temptation throughout his decline, especially after her death, irking him, blinding him and tormenting him.

Jocelin's identification with the church as a building is repeated with Jocelin's comparison of the mind of men to a building, with the cellar of the mind equating the pit of the church. Near his end, he is able to find his motives in arranging Goody's marriage to the impotent Pangall as coming from the "cellarage" of his mind. He had earlier been unable to explain the same thing to the visitor:

> And I must have known about him before, you see, down in the vaults, the cellarage of my mind.

The baseness of his motives and the "vaults' of his mind echo the stench of the pit and the "graves of the great" whose flooding has caused the odour. The pit is indefinably evil, and Golding's evocation of this in the unexplained movement of its base is quite chilling. It is a

suggestion of the pagan world beneath the veneer of Christianity which adds to the church's mystery and force. Golding suggests this in "An Affection for Cathedrals"[3].

> Our old churches are full of this power … there is a whole range of other feelings that have, so to speak, coagulated around them …
> Winchester has had three cathedrals on the same site; and probably a pagan temple before that, since there is a sacred and Pre-christian well in the crypt.

The distinctly non Christian feel of the pit is emphasised by its holding of a sacrificial body, Pangall, and of Jocelin in stone, as offerings to the rough workmen's superstitions. As applied to the human it is in the subconscious that outward affectations of faith cannot hide. This pagan feeling is reiterated over and over with allusions to common symbols of hidden knowledge. Golding for example has brooms pushed by the mute and Pangall, and a broomstick with a wisp of red hair in Rachel's grasp. Various birds, most notably, eagles and ravens, but also kingfishers, bluebirds and swallows, fly in and out of Jocelin's consciousness. The mistletoe and the rotting berries are further pagan allusions, and of course in the midst of a Christian cathedral, the phallic spire is an often used fertility symbol.

This pagan line of thought is matched by biblical allusions which form another substratum in the pattern of his work. Many of these come together in Jocelin's explanation to himself of the nature of God and the justification of his folly:

> Even in the old days he never asked men to do what was reasonable … to build a ship on dry land; to sit among the dung hills; to marry a whore; to get their son on the altar of sacrifice.

Reverberations of Jocelin's pride in his false mission, from his comparison to the heroes of the Old Testament, echo through the book. His comparison to Noah is seen where he describes the church as "my stone ship". Interestingly even early in the story where this occurs the ship is lying "aground on her side". He compares his willingness to compromise the cathedral with profane men, with the penitent prophets sitting amongst the dung. He appeals to the examples of Hosea commanded by God to marry a harlot, to justify associating him with a painted lady,

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[3] Golding, W., An Affection for Cathedrals, in "A Moving Target", Golding, W., Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1982, p. 10.

Rachel. And finally his sacrifice of lives to his project is sanctified by a misplaced comparison to Abraham and Isaac, the first people mentioned on page one, as he fails to remind himself that the sacrifice did not occur.

Jocelin's final statement, "It's like the apple tree", is previewed by other tree symbols throughout the novel. The church is seen as a fir tree, then the spire as a "warping, branching and sprouting" tree, and the church is seen as crucified, on the tree as it were, by the driving of the holy nail. More and more reference is made to apple blossoms and trees until we are left with the final statement and no more. In the context of Jocelin's realisation that it was his lust for Goody that drove him to cause the spire to be built, this could be Jocelin's way of acknowledging his taint with original sin from the biblical creation myth. Golding would have us apply original sin more generally as a tendency towards baseness deep within man, with all men sharing guilt and ultimately doomed to decay because of it.

The angelic visitations occur frequently throughout Jocelin's decline, and their increasing burden measure his downward path. Even the initial rather benign symptoms would cause a modern man to seek medical attention, but to a mediaeval man who measures effectiveness of prayer by the degree of discomfort in his legs, an interpretation more suited to his lofty station is possible:

> … he knew he was not alone. It was not that he saw, or heard a presence. He felt it, like the warmth of a fire at his back, powerful and gentle at the same time; and so immediate was the pressure of the personality, it might have been his very spine.

Such is his pride in his chosen status that his initial symptoms of tuberculosis of the spine are interpreted as the visitation of a guardian angel. He sees himself as among the angels; one of them:

> Rushing on with the angels, the infinite speed that is stillness, hair blown, torn back, straightened with the wind of the spirit, mouth open, not for the uttering rainwater, but hosannas and hallelujahs.

The visitations pock-mark his life, each becoming a heavier burden involving more pain until, in a confluence of symbolism, he finds the supports of his spire as well as his body are hollow.

> He took the chisel … and thrust it in. It sank in, in, through the stone skin, grated and pierced in among the rubble …
> Then all things came together. His spirit threw himself down an interior gulf, down, throw away, offer, destroy utterly, build me in with the rest of them …
> Then his angel .. struck him from arse to the head with a white hot flail. It filled his spine with sick fire and he shrieked because he could not bear it, yet knew he would have to.

Just as the increasing wildness of hair follows his increasing torment from guilt, the ever increasing burden of his angel measures the increased obviousness of his corrupt, evil nature, until it collapses. Only then can Jocelin too see how he was, and he indulges himself in some self mockery as Father Adam incredulously catalogues his failings.

> "They never taught you to pray?"
> Hair blown back by the wind of the spirit. Mouth open, not for uttering rainwater, but for hosannas. He smiled wryly at his chaplain.

Time is treated as part of the changing pattern of existence. Initially the slow march of Christian festivals through Christmas to Lent and Easter marks the flow of time. The change is first to secular with months and seasons, and eventually we note time by the pagan festival Jocelin can see from his spire as the ring of fires.

Between the events which mark the calendar, the cadence of the everyday life is shown by Golding's use of noise. Initially the slow rhythms of the services is what is heard. Then the harsher rhythm of the workman is more audible. With macabre irony, Roger, the builder, gives the final rhythm mentioned with the sound of his tuberculous lungs, mocking the sound of productive work.

> The first thing that came back was a noise. It was a scraping, a tussing, a thing of breath and phlegm, and rhythmical.

Golding's use of interlocking and interwoven patterns of symbols mat the story into a rich myth of the building of a spire and more generally of the human condition.

While Joyce in "The Dead" does not have the luxury of time to allow change over great lengths of time, the whole story taking less than half a day, he suggests form and pattern of a whole lifestyle, and is able to pass judgement upon it. Like Golding, in this story Joyce relies on repeated symbols and images to emphasise the development of his central character's line of thought.

The fragment of his characters' lives given here suggests a long standing prevailing pattern. The dance is an annual event, has been for years, and the characters expect certain things to happen, which do; the dancing, the meal, even the person who carves the goose, are familiar things. By providing several generations meeting together who know each other well, this feeling of familiarity is accentuated.

Small incidents throughout the short story, seemingly unconnected, all give a feeling of an affection for, and mourning for, the loss of the past. Most are structured around uncomfortable little interactions covered up by politeness, and the unease they breed emphasises the doubt and dissatisfaction about the present.

Gabriel's first rebuff at the party from the girl, Lily, sets the tone for the exchanges.

> - Oh then, said Gabriel gaily, I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young men, eh?
> The girl glanced back at him over her shoulder and said with great bitterness:
> -The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you.
> Gabriel coloured as if he felt he had made a mistake.

The incident is minor, but echoed with magnified significance for Gabriel, with his wife, and her love for a lost boy in her youth. Again the moment is made more uncomfortable than would be necessary.

> -He died when he was only seventeen. Isn't it a terrible thing to die so young as that?
> -What was he? asked Gabriel, still ironically.
> -He was in the gas works, she said.
> Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead.

The uncomfortable conclusion Joyce leads us to, from these uncomfortable vignettes, is the feeling that men like young Michael Furey no longer exist, and those remaining in the present are not good enough.

Even the music gives us the impression of a flat uninteresting present which fails beside the fondly remember recollection of past glory. Caruso, the greatest tenor of the early twentieth century, is dismissed as an also ran to the unheard of English tenor lovingly memorialised by Aunt Kate.

> -O, I'd give anything to hear Caruso sing, said Mary Jane.
> -For me, said Aunt Kate, … there was only one tenor …
> His name … was Parkinson. I heard him when he was in his prime and I think he had the purest tenor voice that was ever put in a man's throat.

Mary Jane, the successor to the aunt's world, figures in another musical contrast, between her "Academy piece" without any melody, to which no-one listened, and the galvanising effect a hoarsely sung snatch of the old Irish air has on its audience.

Gabriel's speech, although a resounding success in its context of a sentimental gathering, is a little uncomfortable in the light of his agonising over its composition and the level at which to pitch his speech. It is a more direct appeal to the "hospitality" and "tradition" of the past and questions the present generation. He finishes however with an appeal to struggle with the present more out of duty than inclination, which again underscores the attraction of the past.

In this story, Joyce makes use of colour as a recurring descriptive device. His description of the food on the table at the party is a riot of colour. In one paragraph he manages to fit in brown, red, yellow, purple, gold, silver, orange, black, white and green in his survey of the feast. This the aunts can preserve from the past as part of the "splendid style" of the "Misses Morkan's Annual Dance". A colour not on the banquet table figures in his description of Aunt Julia, showing what they cannot preserve.

> Her hair, drawn low over the tops of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face.

Her singing of "Arrayed for the Bridal", which she of course never was, is a strong call from her past, and Joyce notes "a little colour struggled into Aunt Julia's face".

The draining of colour is an invitation to the shadow, which is for Joyce the inevitability of death. Gabriel knows this by the end of the story.

> Poor Aunt Julia! She too would soon be a shade … He had caught that haggard look on her face for a moment when she was singing "Arrayed for the Bridal". Soon, perhaps he would be sitting in that same dressing room, dressed in black … and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him … telling him how Julia had died.

Shadows are a recurring motif in this story, associated with a call from the dead or past. When Gabriel watches his wife on the stair listening to "The Loss of Laughlin", "Distant Music" as he christens the scene, Joyce seems to be thinking aloud.

> He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of.

In the shade she is receptive to the call of the past, just as she and Gabriel are later, in their unlit hotel room, as she recalls Michael Furey to her husband, and Gabriel finds himself the loser, in his own estimation, against this memory.

> So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, played in her life.

Gabriel would like to be the kind of man his wife's memory finds so attractive but knows that he is just not capable of it. He can admire a man driven by passion who dies only once, but finds he must be a more reasonable person.

> Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age. He thought of how she … had locked in her heart … that image of her lover's eyes when he told her that he did not wish to live … He had never felt like that himself to any woman.

Gabriel is therefore doomed to age and wither. The repetition of the paradoxical "last end", in his final paragraph, previously applied to the monks who sleep in coffins, highlights Gabriel's realisation that he is destined to suffer many little deaths, in his doubts and rebuffs of his day to day existence until he too can have a "last end". He feels himself unable to avoid the inevitable shadow but unable to "blaze" on his way out.

> His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which those dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling.

The closeness Gabriel feels to the dead in the shadow is emphasised by a bit of ghostly repetition as Gabriel hears "a few light taps on the pane" and turns to see, not Michael Furey, as Gretta had done all those years ago, but Joyce's other recurring image of death, snow.

Inclement weather lays over this story like a shroud, surrounding the dance, necessitating galoshes while outside and tapping on hotel windows.

Joyce uses rain only concerning the loss of Michael Furey. The words we hear of his song concern rain, and he dies for Gretta by going out in the rain. Having established this, it is sufficient for Joyce to place the form Gabriel sees in his tears under a dripping tree, for it is to be identified with his wife's lost love.

Snow frames the small events of "The Dead", even when it is not visible. Gabriel imagines the scene outside the dance, and snow is the recurring item.

> People, perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside … In the distance lay the park where the trees were weighted with snow. The Wellington Monument wore a gleaming cap of snow …

Aunt Julia's response to a news report of snow "all over Ireland" establishes Joyce's use of snow as a complement to the grey and shade of death, with a hint of mourning for the loss of the past. Aunt Julia is the closest to the shade, certainly near death, and confesses this as she replies:

> -I love the look of snow, said Aunt Julia sadly.

Snow "all over Ireland" is deliberately recalled in the final paragraph as the snow begins to fall, and for the whole passage Joyce covers first his native land with its burial cloth, then his whole universe to the "region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead" as the falling snow represents the "descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead".

Joyce therefore, like Golding, fleshes out his little tale on a structure of recurring motifs which lend more universal application of the themes explored in this work. Both authors

successfully use repetition as the framework of these pieces of prose fiction and draw us into their little worlds to make us look more closely at ours.

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