

THE "GOLDING NOVEL" : A STUDY
OF
WILLIAM GOLDING'S FICTIONAL WORK

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
GOA UNIVERSITY

FOR

THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

ENGLISH

1994

BY

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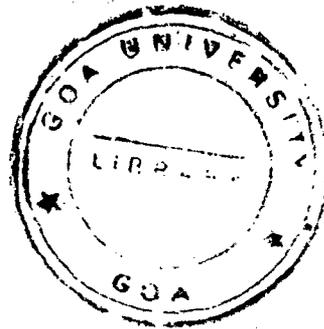


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CERTIFICATE

As required under the University Ordinance, I certify that the thesis entitled 'The 'Golding Novel' : A study of William Golding's Fictional Work submitted by Smt. Kiran Jayant Budkuley for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a record of research done by the candidate during the period of study under my guidance and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award to the candidate of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other similar titles.



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PREFACE

William Golding occupies an outstanding position among the post-War English novelists. With the exceptionally warm reception of his maiden novel, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), he shot into literary prominence as well as popular success. Ever since, his work has continued to stimulate the reader and the critic alike. Initially, the impact of his novels was felt in the English-speaking world and was mainly confined to England and America. But within a short time Golding's work transcended the barriers of language and nationality.

The present thesis underscores the irresistible appeal of Golding's fiction all over the world. Moreover, it contributes to the already copious criticism associated with it. However, despite the vast critical canon that has grown around Golding's fictional oeuvre, the need for a comprehensive approach to the study of the Golding Corpus was strong.

It can be seen that the critical response to Golding's novels, while it is overwhelming, shows an uneven trend. Most of his novels have been studied either singly or in groups, and a greater emphasis has been laid on the initial novels than on the later ones. Again, while there is a critical consensus on Golding's 'class' as a novelist, there is as yet a reluctance in some critical quarters to view his work as primarily fiction.

Perhaps the novelist's exclusive thematic pre-occupation and its unmistakably allegorical slant may have somewhat contributed to such a critical opinion. The present study intends to review this critical approach. Directed towards the entire Golding Corpus, it views the '*Golding Novel*' as a cohesive structure constituted around independent works of fiction. Further, it traces the process of maturation evident in this work through a phase-wise analysis of its

development.

This has posed its own challenge of analysing the subtle blend of thematic coherence and technical exclusiveness operating within the '*Golding Novel*'. The two major hurdles in the face of this challenge could have been the non-availability of critical material and the difficulty of a critical breakthrough.

But thanks to the goodwill and timely assistance from several individuals and institutions, this study has steered ahead of these hurdles. Although it is impossible to adequately acknowledge one's debt in words, I would nonetheless like to thank all those who have contributed to this work by way of help and encouragement.

In this regard, my teacher and guide Prof. A. K. Joshi, deserves a special mention for his open-mindedness and patience. I acknowledge with deep gratitude the valuable discussion I have had with him at every stage of this work.

I wholeheartedly thank the British Council Library at Bombay, British Library, Pune, University of Poona Library, and our own library at Goa University for the valuable reference material made available to me.

My special thanks are due to Shri V. R. Navelkar, Deputy Librarian Goa University, for being a constant source of information and goodwill.

I also acknowledge gratefully the encouragement and help I have received from my teacher, Dr. S. S. Kulkarni, former Head, Department of English, Goa University.

Shri Vivek Mordekar deserves a very special mention for this painstakingly prepared script and above all for his ever helpful nature.

My thanks are also due to my friend, Mrs. Archana Kakodker for her constant interest in this work. Although there are some debts

that are best left unexpressed, I would still like to remember fondly the thoughtful support and the valuable time given to this work by Jayant, Aditi and Alok. Without them this study would never have materialised.

Finally, there is the one unrepayable debt to my parents and my Gurus that I joyfully acknowledge. To them this work is gratefully dedicated.

CHAPTER ONE

THE 'GOLDING NOVEL'

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A study of the 'Golding Novel' should appropriately begin with a discussion on the novelist, William Golding, as a contemporary writer of fiction in the post-War England. The significance of Golding's position as a contemporary novelist needs to be stressed in order to explain the rationale behind this study. As a prelude to such an endeavour some reference to the contemporary fictional scene in England is also necessary.

The overall impression gathered from the general condition of the post-War English Novel, though interesting, may not be quite heartening. In fact, one feels the need to place it in perspective, by keeping various pertinent issues in mind. Of these, barring the fictional output itself, the position of the contemporary novelist is of paramount significance. Often torn between split loyalties to creative and critical writing, the novelist today finds his creative genius unduly taxed, perhaps smothered, in the bargain. Again, there is a reason to believe that the involvement of a large section of contemporary writers of fiction in academic pursuits has put further constraints on their creative faculty.

Despite this generally uninspiring condition of the

contemporary writer of fiction, the professional critic does not seem to have done much to understand his unequal burden or even to alleviate the unconducive atmosphere that surrounds him. In fact, the spate of contemporary criticism that has grown around the post-War English Novel reveals this fairly well. Though copious and sympathetic, it has not always been objective and encouraging. Even a casual glance at the critical analyses of the contemporary Novel in England shows a grave but guarded concern for the future of the English Novel, leaning noticeably towards its counterparts on the Continent and across the Atlantic. A sharp inclination towards the indigenous fore-runners of the post-War fictional writing in England is also discernible beneath the pronounced prognosis of a decline uttered by some literati. Seldom judged on its own terms, the contemporary English Novel has been found wanting. A point in case is Gilbert Phelps' observation that :

When we recall the scope and variety of English fiction in the earlier years of this century... it is difficult not to feel that there has been a decline.¹

With due consideration for the worth of proven merit, it is still necessary to evolve a more objective attitude to the contemporary English Novel. When applied to a potentially versatile genre like fiction a comparative critical approach as the major device for its evaluation could be detrimental to the morale of the practising novelist. In fact, Malcolm Bradbury's opinion of the criticism of contemporary writing voices the apprehensions of the

novelist quite effectively. He cautions that :

It is universally acknowledged that criticism of contemporary writing is a difficult task and that its deceptions are many. That the literature of one's age needs sifting by the wisdom of time... and in England one of the consequences of that truth has been that little accurate critical attention has been given to contemporary writing which may help to explain the more or less low morale of the post-War English fictional scene²

In view of Bradbury's comment, it is exigent to re-validate the potential of the post-War English novelist before endorsing the critic's diagnosis of a bleak future for the English Novel. Perhaps the contemporary novelist in England has not been as versatile and experimentative as his American or Continental counterpart. Nonetheless, he has ensured an optimistic future for the English Novel. However, by itself such a claim means little. There is need to establish its veracity by analysing the work of a practising novelist in England. The endeavour in the present study is therefore to illustrate the authenticity of this claim by an indepth analysis of the work of a contemporary novelist.

William Golding fits this bill more adequately than most of his contemporaries. With a dozen novels, a play, a collection of poems, two volumes of miscellaneous writings, a sort of travelogue, radio plays, talks, series of lectures and a lot of unpublished material -- he is best suited both to the requirements and the challenges of this study. A man with such heterogenous tastes and interests as

music, theatre, archaeology, navigation, history and civilization, literature, creative writing - the list is yet incomplete is more of an institution than an individual. One who may in fact be the representative of the most refined minds and sensibilities of his age is naturally the best bet to stand in for his chosen field of activity -- novel-writing.

Among the post-War novelists William Golding figures prominently for various reasons, not the least of which was his being a still-practising novelist until his unfortunate demise on June 19, 1993 at the age of 82. With nearly four decades of novel-writing to his credit, Golding had been a fascinating creative writer in terms of the choice of his themes, his technique and above all his concern with humanity at large.

Beginning rather late in the day, Golding became a celebrity with the publication of his maiden novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) written admittedly as a result of the War. Initially, his reputation flourished on the university campuses on both sides of the Atlantic; but soon it broke the academic circuit to burgeon into popular acclaim :

The literary success of *Lord of the Flies* is today an established fact, and William Golding now occupies a serious place among the finest of his fellow novelists³.

The award of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1983 has merely underscored this fact.

1.2 LIFE AND INFLUENCES

William Gerald Golding, the son of Mildred and Alec Golding was born at St. Columb Minor in 1911. He was educated at Marlborough Grammar School and Brasenose College, Oxford, where he first read science and then switched over to English literature. After a short stint with the theatre -- an experience drawn on in his novels *Pincher Martin* and *The Pyramid* -- he became a schoolmaster at Bishop Wordsworth's School, Salisbury until his teaching career was interrupted by the outbreak of the War in 1939. He served throughout the Second World War and rose to the rank of a commander in the British Royal Navy.

After the War he returned to teaching but apparently he was not the same man that had enlisted in the war. His prolonged exposure to the horrors of combat on the one hand, and to what he described in *'Fable'* as :

The vileness beyond all words that went on, year, after year, in the totalitarian states

[*The Hot Gates*, p. 86-7]

on the other hand made a great difference to his attitude to life. This could have greatly influenced his intense preoccupation with evil inherent in Man which was the theme of his maiden novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954).

Yet, it would be rather inaccurate to single out the war years as the exclusive factor that triggered off so singular a sensibility in contemporary western world into writing novels that stand

distinctly outside the 'tradition' of the English novel and still comprise a body of forceful fiction that compels attention as well as awe. No doubt the war years with their 'hideous' revelation of what man -- civilized man -- was capable of doing to another of his own kind must have generated in William Golding a shocked response. But in all probability the war might have merely activated into novel-writing the reaction of a mind, differently wrought and preoccupied with the mystery of human life and destiny. In fact, the picture of young Golding that emerges through his autobiographical essays in the *The Hot Gates* (1965) is certainly of an unusual youngster -- curious, imaginative, highstrung and given to 'climbing' away into the sanctuary of his tree.

William Golding was brought up in a pragmatic household as a child pulled between the ardent rationalism of his father, to which he initially, at any rate aspired and the 'occult inwardness' he experienced in his bones which he had in all likelihood inherited from his Cornish mother.⁴ However he was greatly impressed by the 'incarnate omniscience' of his father who :

inhabited a world of sanity and logic and fascination (*The Hot Gates*, p. 166).

William Golding was nevertheless drawn irresistibly to nameless terrors rooted in the darkness of the cellars under his Marlborough house. His rational household was hardly conducive as an environment for his obsession with the mysterious and the timeless. The only way out was an escape up the chestnut tree which he gladly

accepted as a boy. But the fears and the awe of the dark remained all the same, tucked away at the back of his mind, waiting for the opportune moment to make their appearance.

What followed were years of vigorous study, backed by a family aspiration to go to Oxford and take up a career that was to be a scientific one. Golding recalls in his essay '*The Ladder and the Tree*' that his :

career was to be a scientific one ... There was no place in this exquisitely logical universe for the terrors of darkness (*The Hot Gates*, p. 172).

But Golding's switching over from Science to Literature midway during his Oxford years signals a change that Bernald Oldssey and Stanley Weintraub attribute to :

his academically split personality, his science - versus - the humanities point of view and the habit of running literary experiments that still smack of the laboratory he rejected⁵

Obviously, this was a period during which young Golding was seriously reconsidering his tight-rope-walk between the rational and the irrational and was finding the rational universe governed by science wanting ... wanting in some strange way to meet the requirements of his sensibility that was perhaps differently moulded, nourished as it was by a number of diversely rich interests and influences. Among these the most prominent being Shakespeare, Rider Haggard's *Cleopatra*, natural history, the Bible. in the

Authorised Version, Egyptian hieroglyphics' and above all :

The Greeks (who) taken collectively represent one of the most potent forces in shaping
(or confirming) Golding's conception of human psychology and human fate⁸

Thus the war years appear to be in Golding's cumulative experience a mere tip of an iceberg that initiated a quest that must have begun quite early in life. There is little doubt that the sensibility underlying Golding's novels was sharpened to a crescendo by the War but it would be far-fetched to infer that it was also shaped exclusively by it. The disgust with mankind in general and the unmistakable note of pessimism that dominates *Lord of the Flies* is the residual effect of his war experience but the very fact that his point of view undergoes a metamorphosis within a decade after *Lord of the Flies* (1954) is significant. In 1962 William Golding, while on a lecture tour in the United States, has candidly admitted that :

Before the second world war I believed in the perfectibility of social man, that a correct structure of society would produce goodwill; and that therefore you could remove all social ills by a reorganization of society. It is possible that today I believe something of the same again, but after the war I did not because I was unable to I believed then, that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creature and that the best job I could do at the time was to trace the connection between his diseased nature and the international mess he gets himself into (*The Hot Gates*, pp. 86-7)

In an attempt 'to trace the connection', what followed were years of intense novel-writing but they were novels written by rote,

not works that had sprung from the core of their author's being. They all failed to find a publisher, but contributed to Golding's realization that he had first to please himself when he wrote a novel. Perhaps this was the period of incubation that culminated in the phenomenal success of his very first novel *Lord of the Flies* in 1954 and with it began his long literary career that spans over nearly four decades.

But *Lord of the Flies* was not his first literary effort to be published. *Poems*, a collection of poetry, was published in 1934 in Macmillan's Contemporary Poets series. Golding does not seem to hold a very high opinion of what he refers to as *That melancholy slim volume of my extreme youth* and has even suggested that he made *furtive efforts to conceal, destroy and at any rate disclaim them*⁷. However, in Johnston's words :

One may nevertheless see here and there within its covers hints of the spirit that was later to find full expression in his novels.⁸

Thus the value of the volume of verse lies in the glimpse that it affords into the long-drawn process of growth and development of a resourceful, creative mind that was suddenly to take the reading public by storm with the arrival of his maiden novel on the scene. Incredible though it may seem, the phenomenal success of *Lord of the Flies* (1954) was not all. It was rapidly followed by other novels namely, *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956) and *Free Fall* (1959), which did not merely win academic acclaim but also gained a

general readership. In Peter Green's opinion :

they comprised a body of work that stood apart from the mass of contemporary fiction and had to be judged on its own terms⁹.

Green's assertion underscores the import of Golding's fiction by implying the novelist's originality of approach to his themes and technique. Indirectly, such an appraisal of the Golding-Corpus justifies the purpose of this study of Golding's novels. In fact after 1960, Golding's work has gone from strength to strength forging new paths in all aspects of his novel-writing. What is even more significant, he continued to write right into the present decade. His last fictional work to be published is *To The Ends of the Earth : A Sea Trilogy* (1991).

1.3 RANGE AND DIVERSITY OF GOLDING'S WORK

In view of Golding's versatile and untiring novel-writing, it is worthwhile to make a brief reference to his prolific fictional as well as non-fictional output. In addition to the eleven novels that Golding has to his credit, he has published a few short stories, a play, two radio plays, a book of verse, a travelogue and several critical articles in reputed magazines and literary journals. Some of his autobiographical and other articles have been published as *The Hot Gates* (1965) and *A Moving Target* (1982). Golding's only

play *Brass Butterfly* (1958) is based on his novella *Envoy Extraordinary*; while his unpublished radio-plays *Break My Heart* and *Miss Pulkinhorn* have been separately published as short stories with the same titles in reputed magazines. Another of his well-known published short-stories is *The Anglo Saxon*. The title of Golding's travelogue is *An Egyptian Journal* (1985), while that of his collected verse is *Poems* (1934).

Golding's novels in their order of publication are namely, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1959), *The Spire* (1964), *The Pyracid* (1967), *The Scorpion God* (1971), *Darkness Visible* (1979), *Rites of Passage* (1980), *The Paper Men* (1984), *Close Quarters* (1988) and *Fire Down Below* (1989). Of these *The Pyracid* is a trilogy comprising of two previously published novellas. There is another work of fiction, *The Scorpion God*, which also consists of three separate novellas. *The Rites of Passage*, *Close Quarters* and *Fire Down Below* have been recently published as a trilogy called *To The Ends of the Earth : A Sea Trilogy* (1991).

This body of work has today grown into a dozen works of fiction and yet remains distinct both as a class and as individual novels. Still, there is a gradual evolution noticeable in Golding's work that has brought it closer towards the mainstream of the English Novel, without compromising the individual flavour and thematic

significance of his own novels. The sheer variety of imagination coupled with a relentless search for the mystery of human life, are the well-springs of inspiration of Golding's fiction; while the one compels our wonder, the other inspires awe ...! This study attempts to match the one with the other in an attempt to arrive at the core of the 'Golding Novel' and to discern what John Fowles has applauded as :

the role Golding has played in the contemporary novel by remaining ... so conspicuously sui generis, his own writer, his own school of one¹⁰.

No tribute could be more befitting than Fowles' admiring words and none could explain better the continual source of interest in Golding's novels.

1.4.1 THE 'GOLDING NOVEL'

The continual source of interest for the scholar as well as for the general reader in the novels of William Golding is undoubtedly their distinctness from the general tradition of the English Novel of the last two centuries. The reason for this deviation from the British tradition of Novel can be certainly traced to Golding's originality and genius. But it may be partly due to the failure of his initial imitative attempts at novel-writing. He has described these imitations as :

Novels written by other people revolving round the English publishing world and falling on the cat every now and again (until) .. I suddenly saw my book, the book that I could write because I knew about it ...¹¹

Thus it is natural that a study of Golding's novels should begin with an inquiry into the nature of the concept of 'Golding Novel'. A specific analysis will help to foreground some features of Golding's novels that make them so conspicuously a class by themselves. Further, such an analysis will suggest a connotation to the term the 'Golding Novel' that has been used here to denote the special significance that Golding's novels hold and which makes a detailed study of them viable.

1.4.2 GOLDING'S CONCERN WITH MAN

In all his novels, Golding displays an unmistakable, almost an inevitable, pre-occupation with Man's basic nature, his potential for evil, his blindness of the spiritual reality that exists beyond and independent of this material world in all its mystery and certainty. The primary import of his novels appears to be to vivify this concern and to awaken in his reader an awareness of the reality that defies reason and yet becomes cognizable as a mysterious entity.

This preoccupation is particularly noticeable in his earlier novels where the affinity of themes that animate these works is most striking. In *Lord of the Flies* (1954) Golding depicts the beast in

Man through the young pre-adolescents left to themselves on an idyllic tropical island; in *The Inheritors* (1955) he traces the root of that evil in the overthrow of Man's innocent, pre-lapsarian predecessors, the Neanderthals by the Homo Sapiens during the process of evolution; *Pincher Martin* (1956) exposes the extent to which an exceptionally depraved ego can go in the preservation of self and the defiance of God aided by its stunted all-consuming rationalism; in *Free Fall* (1959) a contemporary artist with a momentary experience of '*the metaphorical light*' (*Free Fall*, p.8) is yet guided by reason to the ultimate choice that keeps him in a state of free suspension from Grace; *The Spire* (1964) analyses the vision of a medieval monk to erect a spire as a diagram of prayer, his subsequent obsession and the final acknowledgement of '*the reality*' underlying that vision. This completes the first cycle of Golding's quest into '*Human Condition*'. From *The Pyramid* (1967), his next novel, onwards 'Golding seems to have come closer towards the mainstream of the English Social Novel. His thematic preoccupation, therefore, manifests itself in a different manner than before.

1.4.3 ISOLATED SETTINGS OF THE PLOTS

Particularly in the earlier novels of Golding, there is a noticeable similarity of pattern and a characteristically intense and exclusive approach. They are all invariably set in isolated surroundings giving them a kind of insular existence that heightens the effect of these novels making the thrust of their thesis sharp. There is no denying that the themes which his plots embody require an intensity of action and an operating mood that is uniform and selective. Golding's protagonists are generally the focal points of a storm and are prone to remorseless self-questioning as in the case of Sammy Mountjoy in *Free Fall* (1959), Matty in *Darkness Visible* (1979), or Talbot in *Rites of Passage* (1980).

Often, this self-interrogation is intended at making a discovery either of the motives behind actions or of one's own self or of the cause of the present predicament of the character involved. It is thus necessary that the canvas be sparse and narrow. This ensures that the beam of discovery is turned inwards into the nature of Man which is Golding's concern and is not lost or refracted by a vaguely overcrowded plot. Thus, it seems almost a pre-condition with Golding that his novels be isolated from the everyday world of vulgarity and diversity so that his thesis is not marginalised.

Had the boys in *Lord of the Flies* (1954) been placed in the

warmth of adult security and the reassuring presence of a civilized world, however vitiated, the very punch of the ugliness that springs from evil in pre-adolescent boys in the near-paradisaal environment would have been all but lost. The 'beast' that manifests itself in the idyllic atmosphere of the tropical island, where the children are marooned, becomes unexpectedly convincing only because it is hard to see where it emanates from, except from the innocence of uncorrupted childhood.

So also, Pincher Martin's struggle in the novel of that name would not have been so shockingly revealing in its selfishness and depravity if it were set in the midst of a full-fledged narrative complete with characters and events vying with each other for the reader's attention. In fact, Pincher's solitary stance of defiance and of survival in the face of total adversity 'apparently' rises to the peak of Promethean struggle only because it is on an isolated rock in mid-Atlantic. Similarly, the futility of that 'egocentric' existence and the accompanying shock -- with which the realization comes home to the reader, that Pincher Martin's is a defiant step towards certain damnation and not survival -- become terrifyingly real only because there is precious little to divert the reader's attention.

In the case of *The Inheritors* (1955), the isolated setting is inevitable since that novel is set in the remote evolutionary past of humanity. As the novel concerns a handful of Neanderthals on the

last leg of their racial existence, the isolated setting becomes consistent with the plot and helps to accentuate the irony of the 'fall' inherent in the evolution of the Homo Sapiens. It also helps to throw into relief the pre-conceptual stage of innocence of the Neanderthals against the cunning and the cannibalism of their inheritors. An elaborate plot would have blunted the intended irony of the adage 'The meek shall inherit the earth' and over-shadowed the sheer poetry underlying the narrative.

1.4.4 THE MOMENT OF CONFRONTATION FOR GOLDING PROTAGONISTS

Another significant device, that is effectively used by Golding to enhance the dramatic intensity of his novels, is to make his protagonists face 'a moment of confrontation'. It is this flash of insight that affords the reader deeper understanding of the intended thesis of the novel. The most calculated of such moments is undoubtedly the highly contrived incident in the novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) in which Simon, the epileptic voyant, holds an imaginary dialogue with the pig-head mounted on a stick buzzing with flies. It facilitates the reader's coming to terms with the truth which Simon already knows deep within himself and which is articulated elsewhere in the novel thus :

However Simon thought of the beast there arose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick (Lord of the Flies, p. 113).

Similar is Pincher Martin's near-insane encounter with the Dwarf wearing black sea-boots, who inhabits his childhood nightmares of the dark cellar. In Free Fall this confrontation occurs during Sammy's forced confinement ordered by Dr. Halde in the Nazi war camp. He is confined in the darkness of a broom-closet and the horrors of Sammy's self-revelatory experience in that tiny cell clearly indicate the motive behind this confrontation with one's own self which is the hall-mark of a Golding novel. It is this momentary exposure to one's inner being that focuses the crucial instant of Man's understanding of the spiritual reality of his existence. This juxtaposition of the world of matter with the world of spirit proffers a glimpse of the essential duality of human life and :

dramatizes this opposition between what in conversation Golding calls the 'My Godness of man, that original spirit, the scintillans Dei...' and the pervasive brutality in man which constantly overcomes but never quite completely destroys him.¹²

This confrontation scene may be also seen as a moment of reckoning that sometimes serves as a ploy to arrive at the judgement of a situation that is baffling or distressing as in Lord of the Flies; as a flicker of a retribution that is earned by the individuals concerned as in the cases of Pincher Martin and Sammy Mountjoy or even as an awareness of self as in the cases of Dean Jocelin or Talbot or Oliver.

1.4.5 'GIMMICK' ENDING OF GOLDING'S NOVELS.

A sudden shift of the point of view towards the end of his novels is another technique that characterizes Golding's work. He has consistently made use of it from novel to novel in order to provide a fuller view of the breadth in which his narrow canvas is meant to operate. But this broadening of the perspective is done subtly and suddenly so as to deny an impression of impact and finality.

In *Lord of the Flies* (1954), for example, the boys are suddenly accosted by the naval officer, in the '*trim cruiser*', who has come to rescue them in the nick of time when a bloody manhunt was about to conclude in the brutal murder of Ralph, the protagonist. The sense of being cheated out of a well-worked-out climax is the initial reaction of the reader.

In *The Inheritors* too the reader feels the sudden snapping of the novelist's sympathetic chord with the Neanderthal protagonist Lok who has been dumped to perish as '*the red creature*'; while the reader is brought to a reassuringly closer view of the Homo Sapiens who wish to sail away beyond the '*fall*'.

The sudden discovery that Martin has died six days ago that comes at the end of *Pincher Martin* robs the reader of the richness of a unique experience of awe and terror. So also in *Free Fall* the reader is left on a note of uncertainty of '*the sphinx's riddle*'

without having come to the crux of the theme.

Often the reaction to this shift has been viewed as :

a trick, a means of cutting down or softening the implications built up within the structure ... 13

of the novel. But a more careful analysis shows that this 'gimmick' is more than a mere trick to palliate the reader or to back down from the demands of the plot. On the contrary, it is a subtle device planted innocuously to show the climax in its true shade of reality.

The 'rescue' in a naval warship and into a war-ridden-outside-world is hardly any the better than the anarchy and the blood-lust on the island in *Lord of the Flies* (1954). The uncertainty of whether Sammy's experience has really redeemed him best exemplifies to the reader the condition of an eternal fall into which Sammy is trapped unable to bridge the gap between the worlds of matter and spirit; and in *The Spire* Jocelin's last words "Now -- I know nothing at all" and "It's like the apple tree" [*The Spire*, p. 223] are a fitting comment on the transient nature of human reality. They show the worthlessness of worldly knowledge on the one hand and stress, on the other hand, the inadequacy of expressing the total understanding that is gained when all palpable awareness is surrendered unconditionally. Thus in the seeming confusion of Jocelin's words lies his intransigent, unpalpable realization of a vision of what Golding has called :

a signature scribbled in the human soul, sign that beyond the transient horrors and beauties of our hell there is a Good which is ultimate and absolute. (A Moving Target, p. 282).

1.4.6 USE OF LITERARY FOILS

Another carefully handled device by Golding is the subversion of other literary works as jumping pads for his own novels. This works in close association with the dual perception of the plot that his novels afford. It also helps to strengthen Golding's thesis because his story develops as a kind of ironical comment on the source, which being often well-known, facilitates this recognition.

In *Lord of the Flies* Golding has made use of R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857) to present his then-overwhelmingly pessimistic point of view regarding the primacy of evil that 'breaks the surface' into the most ideal situations irrespective of how innocent are the individuals involved or how idyllic their surroundings. This view is stunningly brought home by the novelist in relation to the romantic idealism and the national egotism of *The Coral Island*. As John S. Whitley asserts :

It is clear, then, that Ballantyne's novel is very much present to Golding and one way to look at *Lord of the Flies* (1954) is that it is a twentieth - century inversion of a nineteenth - century thesis ...¹⁴

Regarding *The Inheritors* (1955) Golding has himself admitted that he wrote it :

as a reaction against H. G. Well's simplistic view of evolution and descent of Man in which he made Neanderthal men into ogres ...¹⁵

As such Golding grapples here with an imaginative turning turtle of the Wellsian view of the Neanderthal man as presented in his *The Outline of History* and in his story '*The Grisly Folk*' to contend that :

... if there's going to be a destructive animal of the two, it's going to be *homo sapiens*, *homo sapient sapiens* and not *Neanderthalensis*¹⁶

The superficial resemblance of Pincher Martin's struggle for survival to that of Robinson Crusoe and Prometheus is recognized by such remarks about Pincher Martin as :

a grim parody of *Proctor's Bound* as well as of *Robinson Crusoe*¹⁷.

Another early work which has been suggested as the possible source of inversion of Golding's novel is Taffrail's survival tale '*Pincher Martin O.D.*' (1916)¹⁸.

Through Golding's method used in his two earlier novels namely *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *The Inheritors* (1955) it is clear that Golding looks out for smugness of attitude and conviction so as to puncture them in his own works through irony and parody. This practice has no doubt caught him unawares in his design in *Pincher Martin* by creating an inversion of Taffrail's tale, albeit inadvertent.

In *Free Fall* there is noticeably a similarity of pattern to that of James Joyce's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913). In fact Arnold Johnston has suggested that the book resembles :

that most familiar of modern novelistic types, the *Kunstlerroman*, for Sammy's story is certainly a portrait of the artist, covering most of the crises - from childhood to manhood in the maturing of a sensitive youth¹⁹

But this resemblance is merely superficial. Golding's approach is not autobiographical in the sense that Joyce's or Lawrence's is. Golding has in fact affirmed that :

Free Fall was an invention from beginning to end, a deliberate invention. All the terms of my life were turned upside down ...²⁰

It may thus be concluded that Golding has taken an innovative step in *Free Fall* by adopting an '*autobiographical foil*' over his earlier device of merely inverting any literary foil.

This has put Golding in a position of having the double-pronged approach. He is now successful in offering his reader a dual perception into the dramatic events of Sammy's life. Sammy's faithful narrative account of his own life offers one; while the other is accessible through the novelist's design upon it. Golding explores the issue of the unbridged gap -- between the choice for the ordinary universe dictated by reason and for the spiritual realm governed by faith -- that is hinted at in *Free Fall* but not resolved.

An additional insight into the thematic significance of *Free Fall* is possible by looking at it as a kind of reversal of Dante's *La Vita Nuova* and his allusion to his journey through Hell

(Inferno), Purgatory (Purgatorio) and Heaven (Paradiso) in what Arnold Johnston has described as :

a modern parody of Dante's works²¹.

Despite a lot of source-hunting for *The Spire* (1964), it is clear that Golding had the legend of the Salisbury Cathedral and the erection of its 404 ft. high spire in mind when he wrote this novel. It is an archaeological marvel considering the boggy foundations on which the structure stands. The very fact that the pillars of the cathedral should support such a high spire is itself a miracle for they were not intended to bear the weight of such a superstructure. Golding has described this in *An Affection for Cathedrals* as :

a technological gamble which makes space travel seem child's play. The builders erected the highest spire in the country on top of it. Thousands of tons of lead and iron and wood and stone. Yet the whole building stands. It leans. It totters, it bends. ..So it stands, a perpetual delight, a perpetual wonder ... [A Moving Target, pp 9-19].

This 'perpetual wonder' has motivated Golding to explore the sincerity and the depth of faith that created the spire. In the novel, he relates it to Dean Jocelin's indefatigable ego and his sexual obsessions beneath the realisation of his vision of the spire atop the cathedral in spite of its floating foundations over a swamp.

• There is a noticeable difference in Golding's approach to the

use of a literary foil in *The Spire*. In this novel he does not 'invert' the legend by adopting an ironical tone as has been his practice in his earlier novels. He traces the developments that converge into the construction of the spire with an insight and a sympathy that he had hitherto applied only to *The Inheritors*. In *The Spire*, he probes with a blend of matter-of-fact detachment and humane interest the psycho-sexual background of Jocelin's 'Vision' to analyse the motives and the actions that lead to the building of the spire at all costs and against all odds.

Yet Golding's interest is not merely in the psycho-analysis of Jocelin's mind. He wants to resolve the seeming clash of ego and faith in Jocelin's mind that develops along with the growth of the spire, stage by stage. This crisis finally flings Jocelin helplessly at the cross-roads of doubts and fears that shake the very foundations of his belief in his vision and his faith in his own pious intentions.

Finally, in placing the mystery and the motives alongside the terror and the beauty of the actions brings for Golding the exploratory journey into the Good and Evil underlying human nature to a temporary halt. The Spire hints at the possibility of resolving the crisis that is at the root of the human dilemma - the apparent discord between the worlds of flesh and being. Golding for the first time strikes a note of optimism. The deeper implication

of *The Spire* can be better understood by applying the Norse-myth concerning Balder²² to the novel. This elevates the moral status of Dean Jocelin and gives a greater significance to his momentary acquiescence to the duality of life.

1.5 CONCLUSION :

The attempt in the preceding discussion has been to clarify in simple terms and through easily recognizable characteristics the concept of the 'Golding Novel'. These characteristics have given the 'Golding Novel' a distinct identity, different from the traditional English Novel. Its basic distinction from the traditional Novel will have to be more elaborately highlighted in view of its complex generic identity. This will be done in the following chapter, when a stage-wise analysis of the 'Golding Novel' will be undertaken.

The two stages of Golding's Novel writing to be thus identified will be called the Initial Stage and the Social Stage. The five initial novels of Golding, namely, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors*, *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall* and *The Spire* will be analysed as the constituents of the Initial Stage. The Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel' begins appropriately with *The Pyramid* (1967) and extends to *The Scorpion God*, *Darkness Visible*, *Rites of Passage*, *The Paper Men*, *Close Quarters* and *Fire Down Below*.

With *The Pyramid* Golding's approach to novel-writing undergoes a distinct change. With this changed approach the term 'Golding Novel' invites new meanings which will be elaborated in detail in the subsequent chapters. For the present, it would be sufficient to recognize a few salient features common to Golding's novels. They are shared in particular by the first five novels that support the idea of the 'Golding Novel'. There are still a few more characteristics that Golding habitually uses. These are :

(i) his use of names having significant connotations for the characters as well as for places in his novels,

(ii) the preference he gives to visionaries and artists as worthy of apocalyptic experiences or of a deeper insight into the reality behind the superficiality of life,

(iii) the invariable debility that these 'visionary' characters are invested with, almost as a kind of restoration of natural balance in view of their spiritual superiority, and

(iv) the use of his own experiences in childhood at certain crucial stages in his novels to indicate the root of the crisis in his characters' experiences.

These characteristic devices further consolidate the idea of the 'Golding Novel' and facilitate the subsequent analysis of its stage-wise development and its assessment as the canon of an established novelist.

In the meantime, it can be asserted on the basis of the earlier discussion and on the evidence offered by Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor in their perceptive study that :

...Golding's novels are unmistakably all of a piece. Among themselves they reveal a family resemblance, a unity even, that gives the phrase 'a Goldingian Novel' a readily understood meaning²³

The essential unity that Golding's novels manifest is predominantly due to their thematic content. Even so, the 'Golding Novel' also displays an astonishingly well-patterned form. Golding's novels are well-chiselled fictional artifacts with an exquisite internal structure of their own but they also embody a strikingly similar surface structure. As Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor point out :

The patterning can be observed even in the externalities of length and chapter divisions, virtually the same in every novel. The general form is [so] markedly dialectical ... These books, so emphatic in pattern, so exclusive in structure, have as an increasingly dominant theme the limitations of the pattern-maker and the tragic consequences of his vision²⁴

While one agrees with the critics' opinion about the beautiful blend of form and content in Golding's novels, it is difficult to endorse their view of 'the tragic consequences of his vision' in the light of his later novels. This study will therefore attempt to uncover the gradual evolution of a positive vision in Golding's fiction.

Having recognized the coherence, the cogency and the distinctness of the 'Golding Novel', the attempt in subsequent chapters will be to consider the inter-related patterns in Golding's novels in relation to his themes and vision. This will be also useful to examine how they relate themselves to the mainstream English Novel and to fiction in general. Such an assessment, in turn, will substantiate the claim made earlier in this study that Golding is a novelist '*sui generis*' and vindicate his position among writers of fiction in general and his contemporaries in particular. Placed on a par with the greatest writers of fiction such as Dostoyevsky, Conrad and Joyce, Golding's singular achievement is the unstinted acceptance of him as a '*model*' by his contemporaries. Some, like Ian McEwan²⁵, admit that :

I could not resist ... the power of Golding's model, others like John Fowles endearingly call him '*cher maitre*'²⁶. If these comments conceal an unabashed admiration of the Golding '*magic*', they reveal his capacity to enthrall and so justify this study of the 'Golding Novel'.

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CHAPTER TWO
THE INITIAL 'GOLDING NOVEL' :
EXPERIMENTAL PHASE

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding discussion, an attempt was duly made to establish the overall identity of the 'Golding Novel' with the help of its characteristic features. Even so, the issue of its identity needs to be more elaborately discussed with regard to its generic position. In view of the critical common-place regarding Golding's novels primarily as fables or allegories, it is imperative to establish the generic status of the 'Golding Novel'. The discussion in Chapter One has already prepared the ground for this, by unraveling its surface structure.

The present chapter will, therefore, attempt to reveal the intrinsic pattern embedded in Golding's novels, with the help of the modes and categories operating in them. This, in turn, will help ascertain the generic identity as well as the gradual development of the 'Golding Novel' over the last four decades. However, the identification of the conventional modes and categories of literature in a contemporary work poses its own paradox. As Terence Hawkes perceptively remarks :

Modes and categories inherited from the past no longer seem to fit the reality experienced by a new generation.¹

There is a reason for this seeming paradox. The concept of

reality in the contemporary world of fiction has undergone a noticeable metamorphosis : on the one hand it has developed into an extremely complex experience; on the other hand it has become exigent for the creative writer to perceive and communicate it imaginatively. However the conventional literary modes and categories are not always adequate enough to comply with the literary demands of the reading public and the imaginative leap of the creative writer.

What is generally true of the creative writer applies to the writer of fiction in particular. A novelist today has to contend with the contemporary readerly approach to and expectations of fiction. He is faced with the problem of matching his thematic potential with an imaginative presentation of fictional reality consistent with the expected reality. As a result of this situation the novelist is saddled with a strange dilemma ! In the words of Malcolm Bradbury, he :

may feel himself under a growing need to present his fiction as fictive - because the problems of presenting the structure of the novel as authoritative or somehow co-equal with life are intensified and obscured...²

But the novelist is also hard put to it to create 'the world out there' and yet conceal that it is what Roger Fowler calls, 'an artifice constructed through the novelist's technique'³. Here he finds the need to experiment with the modes and the techniques of narration.

Like his contemporaries, Golding is also a victim of this

dilemma: to provide his readers with an imaginative experience of reality without suffusing it with the banality that has come to be associated with that term; and what is more, without denuding his characters of vitality and his theme of its ardency. Golding's way out of his dilemma has been to enrich his fiction with a fair dose of fabulation. All his early novels, particularly *The Inheritors* and *The Spire*, testify to this fact.

It is thus that his novels have been variously labelled by critics and commentators as fables, allegories, myths, histories or ideographic narratives⁴. This has invested the 'Golding Novel' with a rare challenge in that the above literary modes are found to be at once inadequate and yet necessary to define the full potential of Golding's fiction. Merely using terms with known connotations such as those mentioned above sheds light on one angle of Golding's imagination than on another. At best, such terms may apply to a larger extent to one novel than to another. Hence using such 'blanket' terms to describe Golding's novels would prove counter-productive.

It is important to note that Golding's novels are not thematically exclusive of one another although they may be independent fictional artifacts. Thus it would be advantageous to adopt a comparative approach in the study of the 'Golding Novel' in order to trace the development of his imagination, in an attempt to discover the literary mode to which his novels belong.

Thus the ensuing discussion will move from the surface structure to the deep structure of Golding's fiction, dealing with individual novels in terms of their plot, thematic potential, modal variety and finally a stage-wise analysis of the emerging generic countenance of the 'Golding Novel'. This analysis will be directed towards important elements of the 'Golding Novel' such as narrative techniques, points of view and thematic linkages that posit it with a rare status as a fictional edifice with recognizable stages of development.

2.1.2 'GOLDING NOVEL' : THE STAGES

A brief comment on the different stages of the 'Golding Novel' is necessary at this point. It will facilitate the stage-wise analysis that this study proposes to undertake in order to understand and classify Golding's novels. There are two distinct stages that can be identified during the course of the development of the 'Golding Novel' : the Initial Stage and the later Social Stage. There is a general agreement among critics that Golding's first five novels belong together. Hence these five novels namely, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors*, *The Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall* and *The Spire* shall be included in the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' in this study. The main features of this stage are : the thematic continuity from novel to novel; the use of isolated settings or the isolation of the protagonist from his

social context as in *Free Fall* and *The Spire*; and the exploitation of other easily identifiable techniques as described in Chapter One. The Initial Stage will be discussed in two phases: its first phase, the *experiential phase*, concerning *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin* will be dealt with in this chapter; while the second or the *transitional phase* centering on *Free Fall* and *The Spire* will be discussed in the following chapter.

With the publication of *The Pyramid* the 'Golding Novel' shows a clear concern with themes of social significance. Making use of a broadly realistic and acceptable social canvas, it embodies its thematic potential in an identifiable social context. Hence this development of the 'Golding Novel' will be identified as its Social Stage. However, as the novelist's thematic concern takes on diverse aspects of presentation in his fiction, the Social Stage will be studied in three different phases consistent with the nature of Golding's thematic preoccupation. As such the *moral phase* will deal with *The Pyramid* and the three novellas of *The Scorpion God*; the *metaphysical phase* will dwell on *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*; and *To the Ends of the Earth: A Sea Trilogy* will be the focus of the *final phase*. These phases will be discussed sequentially in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

A detailed analysis of Golding's use of structural, narrative and perspectival techniques concerning each stage will

be undertaken at the end of the discussion. Thus at the close of the Initial Stage in Chapter Three, there will be a discussion of Narrative Technique, Character, Point of View in each of the novels of this stage along with an assessment of Golding's novelistic style and his authorial vision. Similarly, at the close of the *final phase* of the 'Golding Novel' in Chapter Six, an in depth evaluation of Golding's use of structural, narrative and perspectival techniques during the Social Stage will be undertaken. This discussion will also take an a overview of Golding's entire fictional oeuvre and comment on the trilogy of the *final phase* as its culmination.

Such an approach to the fictional features of the 'Golding Novel' and to Golding's novelistic technique is felt to be consistent with the overall objective of this study. It intends to understand the 'Golding Novel' and to ascertain its stage-wise development. Hence a comparative approach to the two major stages of the 'Golding Novel' will reveal not only its developments from novel to novel but from the Initial Stage to the Social Stage.

The developments during the Social Stage are particularly significant : Golding's fiction now shows a diversification of the novelist's original concern with mankind and the innate evil in Man. Themes of '*survival*' and '*fall*' that mark the two phases of the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' respectively, now yield place to themes related to Social depravity, metaphysical quest

and self-perception during the Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel'.

Such an alteration in the thematic thrust of the novelist brings in its wake technical innovations involving interesting structural and narrative devices. The diverse points of view offered in the novels of the Social Stage naturally reflect on the viability of the plot and the evolution of characterization resulting in more enriching perspectives. These features together offer a deeper insight into the novelist's continually-developing vision. They also facilitate a better understanding of his 'world-view' and a more intimate acquaintance with his style. The trilogy of the *final phase* is particularly useful for this intimate understanding of the 'Golding Novel' since it epitomizes the entire Golding Corpus. Hence, this work will be analysed as the paradigm of the 'Golding Novel'.

2.1.3 THE INITIAL STAGE OF THE 'GOLDING NOVEL' : ITS TWO PHASES

Golding's sixth novel, *The Pyramid*, brings the 'Golding Novel' noticeably close to the genre recognized as contemporary social fiction. The initial target of study will be Golding's first five novels. These belong to his decade-long observation and analysis of Man and his condition. Of these, the first three namely *Lord of the Flies* (1954), *The Inheritors* (1955), and *Pincher Martin* (1956) have the 'survival' theme as their nucleus. The remaining two, *Free Fall* (1959) and *The Spire*

(1964) deal with the 'fall' motif and its implications.

There is apparent in these five novels a gradually developing thematic and structural continuity in spite of their having totally dissimilar plots. This distinct feature of these novels validates the claim that Golding constantly breaks new paths while it supports the notion of 'family resemblance' in Golding's novels.

However, Golding's approach to all these five novels of the Initial Stage is not uniform or static. There is a constant change in narrative mode, perspective and technique, particularly, in the first three novels of this stage - *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*. This change does not seem to be motivated by the sheer need for superficial novelty of approach nor does it seem to have been initiated by purely extraneous factors such as popular taste or critical prejudice. In fact the reviews⁵ of *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* are so raving as to rule out the possibility of change either for its own sake or due to the adversity of readerly response and critical opinion. There is thus scope to conjecture that this change is intended to meet the novelist's developing vision and his maturing technique. Perhaps his changing thematic perception is also an important determining factor.

In keeping with the influence of the above determinants, the change that marks the development of the 'Golding Novel' is

organic, planned, comprehensive and subtle. Above all, it gives the impression of being intentional. It indicates a deep-seated urge in the novelist to constantly alter and re-furbish his literary provisions; to convey realistically and succinctly his uncompromising concern with 'human condition'.

It is thus that the 'Golding Novel' displays an 'experimentation streak' during the earlier part of its initial Stage of development. The almost bell-jar-variety of conditions in which the plots of the first three novels are enacted supports this contention --- the isolated settings, insulated social conditions, threadbare locale, absence of emotional entanglements are common to all these novels, albeit to a gradually diminishing degree.

The quick succession of *Lord of the Flies* (1954), *The Inheritors* (1955) and *Pincher Martin* (1956) further bolsters the view that the novelist was experimenting with his craft. In fact, these novels show a similarity of narrative technique and style while yet displaying a distinct qualitative improvement. Further, they present a thematic continuity among themselves underlining to Golding's, pre-occupation with themes and his experimentative concern to probe further into them.

The other two novels of the Initial Stage -- *Free Fall* (1959) and *The Spire* (1964) --- appear to have been written with a greater time-lag and with an express necessity to change

avenues. This delay, incidentally, is assigned to the greater complexity of these novels by certain critics⁶. These two works are distinct from their three predecessors in mode of narration, in technique and in thematic approach.

There are other, more apparent distinctions too. The environment in the three earlier novels had been purely incidental to the plot, so was character; in the two later novels the context, the locale and characterization are given a greater leverage in their general layout. Again, the later novels show a greater proneness to the social milieu and to the contemporary context. For instance, there is an overt reference to war-day England in *Free Fall* as there is an apparent reference to the religious conflict and corruption of the Middle ages in *The Spire*. Though, as yet individuals are the focus of action and the social context is secondary, the 'transition' from isolated individual-centered themes of the *experiential phase* towards social fiction of the second stage is discernible in these novels.

As has been mentioned earlier, the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' will be studied in two phases. For the sake of convenience, phase one will be termed as *the experiential phase* and it will be discussed in this chapter. It will concern itself with *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin* -- novels which more than others display his :

habit of running literary experiments and expose his science-versus-humanities point of view?⁷

In phase two, *Free Fall* and *The Spire* shall be discussed. As these novels manifest a departure from the earlier phase of the 'Golding Novel' and an orientation towards its Social Stage, the phase can appropriately be described as the *transitional phase*.

Critics such as Julia Briggs and Don Crompton see this shift from the earlier novels to the later novels of the Initial Stage clearly reflected in *Free Fall* :

Apparently abandoning the meticulous planning, the well-organised division and sub-division, the firmly controlled point of view which had characterised his earlier books Golding seems to be experimenting, letting the work run free in quite a new way, no longer certain as to where it was taking him.⁸

Because of this significant development, *transitional phase* will be independently discussed in Chapter Three with a view to elucidate the generic development and modal complexity of the 'Golding Novel.'

2.1.4 COMMON FEATURES OF GOLDING'S NOVELS OF THE INITIAL STAGE

Even a cursory survey of the 'Golding Novel' will reveal that variety and unpredictability have always been its notable features. Grafted to these features are Golding's intense concern with mankind in relation to the universe and his constantly experimentative and daring approach to his craft. These inimitable qualities make the study of the 'Golding Novel' a challenging proposition as Golding emerges as a 'sui generis'

novelist who :

cut himself loose at a single stroke from two centuries of tradition in the English novel: centuries during which the realistic mode has been paramount.⁹

Opting for a different kind of narrative mode than that to which the readership of realistic fiction had been accustomed, Golding quickly displayed his originality and his distance from the traditional genre. In doing so, he helped revalidate the kind of fiction with much celebrated precedents¹⁰ that had nonetheless taken a backseat since the eighteenth century.

However, such an approach of the novelist to his themes has been interpreted as perhaps an unintentional though obvious distancing from 'the quotidian and circumstantial', the recognizable world we inhabit. This, having naturally upset the critical circles, has evinced a response of unease even wariness in Golding's critics, who would rather have him :

wed his sense of transcendent evil and good to the fully felt social novel that the English have constructed in their great tradition.¹¹

As his fiction of the late 60's shows, Golding was to heed this advice but not initially. He began his first novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) with the firm conviction that he had to please himself. Years of unpublished novel-writing had taught him this wisdom. Thus emerged the multimodal, almost amorphous, fiction of his *experimental phase* -- works he was to describe as 'dy' books, with fiction a complicated generic visage. In fact, the complex structure of his novels demonstrates a novelist's attempt to cope

with a rapidly changing world and its attendant complex reality. As Ronald Hayman rightly opines of a novelist's inclination for formal innovation :

Far from being antithetical to realism in the novel, formal invention is indispensable to it. The complexity of reality he experiences will be in the complexity of his structure, certain portions playing in relation to the whole, the same part that the whole plays in relation to reality.¹²

The uncertain generic identity of the '*Golding Novel*' merely underscores this observation and reveals the novelist's strong inclination for formal invention.

Notwithstanding the issue of generic identity, Golding's concern, as reflected in his novels, is with Man rather than 'with men in general' - with the need to understand human predicament in the physical world in relation to the world of spirit undeniably beyond it. Golding has, thus, tried to probe into the mystery of human existence in novel after novel. This does not imply that he has either ignored or overlooked the contingent reality or the immediate environment in his fiction. Issues central to the contemporary existentialist inquiry have preoccupied Golding too. But he analyses them not merely in the context of the phenomenal experience. His inquiry focuses on questions such as : What kind of creature is Man? What is the essence of his being? How does he become depraved? How does Man in his defiance of spiritual reality accost death? What is the possibility of conjoining the worlds of flesh and being?

In other words, the human experience portrayed in Golding's novels is not the presentation of mere mundane reality as an end in itself but as reality that subtly posits the deeper archetypal truths underlying it. For Golding, the novelist, the phenomenal world is just a conglomeration of complex exigencies to bring about the innate discovery of being through a sudden exposure to and understanding of itself. His way of doing this is by :

pushing conceptualization to the point where it is just experience.¹³

Even a random sampling of his novels will validate this observation of Stephen Medcalf.

Interestingly, this discovery of being is not confined to the protagonist of a given novel so that it should begin and end in one novel. It is an exploratory journey into the essence of being and becoming that continues from novel to novel, developing gradually into a vision. Such a vision evolves from the glimpses of the inevitably depraved condition of mankind, its opacity of vision and ignorance of self. In all appearance Golding's plots hold forth same theses, vivified with ingenious structural and narrative devices through very similar contexture. This naturally seems to reduce his novels to embodiments of preformulated thesis, making them out as fables with an 'anterior' purpose. It also divests them of their rightful appeal as works of fiction with an unique ability to entice and to move.

What is more, the so-called theses as the nuclei of novels

bear down the fictional element in a bid for a bold and convincing portrayal. This, in turn, diminishes the novelist's efforts to view his novels as purely fictional artifacts, pressing him for an enactment of a forceful thesis rather than for the portrayal of an appealing story. In other words, the preoccupation with a theme, or with a pet theory can unduly affect the creation of a work of fiction and reduce it to an exercise to prove a desired thesis or conclusion. Fortunately, in Golding's case this apprehension does not hold in the context of his entire fictional work but his initial fiction has come under a cloud for being considered as fables. This applies mostly to the earlier novels of the Initial Stage.

2.2.1 NOVELS OF *EXPERIMENTAL PHASE*

The novels of the Initial Stage of Golding's career give the impression that they were created for an anterior purpose. This is mainly true of the three novels of the *experimental phase*, more so of *Lord of the Flies*. In fact the novelist has often admitted that *Lord of the Flies* was written as a result of his War-experiences. As late as 1976 Golding was to admit that :

The years of my life that went into the book were not years of thinking but of feeling... It was like lamenting the lost childhood of the world. The theme defeats structuralism for it is an emotion. The theme of *Lord of the Flies* is grief, sheer grief, grief, grief (*A Moving Target*, p. 163).

Even an elementary reading of the novel will reveal that the so-called 'grief' over 'the lost childhood of the world' has taken

precedence of the gripping survival tale of the young adolescents.

Further to stress this theme the novelist has made specific choices in terms of his locale, setting, character, narrative technique that have side-lined the natural development of a poignant tale. The isolation of a score or two of boys; the avoidance of any emotional relationships; the use of trite symbolic devices; the unnatural verbal skill given to some of the boys; the undue intrusion of the novelist in his story and above all the allegorical status of the boys -- all these factors indicate that the novel was for Golding, consciously or otherwise, an exercise of sorts. It was rather an 'experiment' where all the conditions were closely controlled by the novelist-experimenter to arrive at a desirable conclusion.

What is true of *Lord of the Flies* is true to a lesser or greater degree of *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*. In each of these novels also, the story proceeds from a pre-conceived thesis. Enacted in a well-regulated and isolated setting it permits no undesirable intrusions. The extremely limited number of characters in these novels also eschews any emotional complication that could intrude into the chosen theme of the novelist. The elementary conceptual ability and the telepathic togetherness of the Neanderthals rules out their individuality as characters. Again, the limited development of the homo sapiens ensures the smooth movement of the plot in a way desirable to the novelist's

design. So also Pincher's isolation on the mid-Atlantic rock and his wilful depravity further facilitates the intended plan of Golding in that novel. In the case of *The Inheritors* his objective was to overturn the Wellsian myth of evolution, while in *Pincher Martin* it was to analyse an 'intentionally' depraved human specimen.

Yet in all fairness to Golding it needs to be accepted that these novels became impressive fictional artifacts in their own right. Particularly *The Inheritors* remains his best admired tour-de-force. But this is more due to his technical ingenuity and narrative skill than due to his experiments with theme. In fact, his *Pincher Martin* was not comprehended well and that possibly steered Golding towards a more acceptable theme with a less isolated milieu and with a larger social accessibility in *Free Fall*. This pushed the 'Golding Novel' towards socially-inclined yet individual-centred fiction of the *transitional phase* to culminate in the creation of *The Spire* -- the most satisfactory work of fiction during the Initial Stage.

The above argument strengthens the contention that Golding was experimenting with his craft -- certainly during the early part of the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel'. This phase is therefore described as the *experimental phase*. Particularly the backdrop to the genesis of the novel *Lord of the Flies* offers some additional evidence of Golding's overt experimentation. Written

much earlier as *'Strangers from Within'*, its manuscript had to be largely altered probably to weed out much of its explicit didacticism. This was done to restore its deserving aesthetic value before it could be accepted for publication in its present form and under the well-known title.

It may be thus argued that this interesting story was for the novelist primarily a cathartic moral experiment. Hence, he was probably trying in the original manuscript to make his thesis as convincing as possible, perhaps at the cost of its artistic value. Particularly Golding's well-known views - often aired through interviews and articles, about the novelist's obligation 'to tuck away' a lesson and 'to mirror the world' around him -- lend further credence to the view that his early novels were experiments with an explicit objective.

Golding's peculiar fondness for the inversion of literary sources in his early work also shows that these novels can be viewed as literary experiments. *Lord of the Flies* attempts a crafty reversal of the idealistic national pride and the joys of primitive living without losing one's grip on civilized life, glorified in the Ballantyne tale, *The Coral Island*. Similar literary experimentation was continued through *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin* also.

However, the gradually soaring fictional finesse of these novels is also significant. The proportional growth of thematic complexity in them; their structural compactness and the gradual

elimination of their trite symbolism reveals that these novels were carefully developed fictional artifacts. They were experiments to the extent that the novelist was step by step pruning his fictional ability to meet the requirements of an aesthetically satisfying work of fiction. A perceptive comparison between *Lord of the Flies* or *Pincher Martin* and *The Spire* will reveal that Golding's culminating work of fiction was the latter novel -- the final work of the *transitional phase*.

The above discussion ascertains that the novels of the Initial Stage cannot be all grouped together. The first three have clearer pre-conceived thesis embedded in their structural design. They strike as powerful fables and well-conceived allegories. They also stand up challengingly to being embodiments of myths. The latter two novels are less fabular and more fictional than their earlier counterparts. In them the leaning of the story towards realistic fictional mode is clearly discernible. The former three are more closely knit by their multi-modal identity leading to the generic complexity of these works. They also display a gradual emergence of the fictive element giving the evidence of a progressively developing narrative and structural skill in the novelist. This calls for the discussion of the novels of the *experiential phase* singly and severally.

As such it would be worthwhile to undertake a novel by novel analysis of the *experimental phase* of the 'Golding Novel' in a

chronological order beginning with *Lord of the Flies* (1954), followed by *The Inheritors* (1955) and *Pincher Martin* (1956). This analysis would try to uncover the modal complexity of a given work so as to indicate the attendant changes during the shift from one work to another. This should hopefully help to map out the narrative and structural nuances as well as the thematic and stylistic developments of the *experimental phase* of the 'Golding Novel' determining thereby its generic position at this stage.

But to begin with, one has to contend with the issue of a pre-formulated thesis as the focus of Golding's fiction. The novelist has himself not denied such a charge, only modified it. The crux of his thesis may be described in what he has termed in '*Fable*' in another context '*that hideous parody thing*' that stands between man and his happiness rooted in :

habits of feelings which have acquired the force of instinct (*The Hot Gates*, pp.

92-4).

Interestingly it can be identified as the '*innate evil in Man*' in Golding's maiden novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) published after his horrifying experiences during World War II and their unmitigated after-effects. The following discussion of the plot of the novel will reveal its presence.

2.2.2 LORD OF THE FLIES : THE PLOT

By itself the novel *Lord of the Flies* has no obvious connection

with the War except its initial reference to the evacuation of its young enthusiasts from an imaginary World War to the sylvan refuge in idyllic surroundings. Set on a secluded tropical island at some future date the novel affords the novelist a free hand in the enactment of his drama. Conveniently removed from any contact with Civilization and its constraining influence, Golding's boys find themselves on a tropical island. They become the inmates of worldly paradise which left to itself would be a perfect source of sustenance and bliss to its marooned inhabitants. To enhance the idyllic environment Golding lends it the additional note of adventure and fun, thereby making it more appealing to his pre-adolescent castaways.

Then skillfully the novelist sets about revealing the unsuspected cause of disaster that transforms the island - sanctuary into a fear-haunted exile of violence and terror. The situation gradually deteriorates to such an extent that the life of the boys becomes an epitome of savagery, bloodlust and anarchy due to their fear of an imaginary '*beast*'. However the beast is in themselves, but only Simon, the visionary epileptic among the boys, knows it. But when he tries to share this perception with others, the boys in the frenzy of a savage war-dance '*do*' him, imagining him to be the '*beast*' himself.

After Simon's tragic death, the atmosphere on the island is further vitiated through the now-overtly manifesting rivalry between

Ralph, the protagonist, and the antagonist Jack. The fear of dark aggravates the condition even more, driving the boys, under the ruthless chieftaincy of Jack, as a savage tribe. The genuinely good intentions of Ralph as also the rational arguments of Piggy, his myopic, asthmatic friend, are not enough to dispel the doubts about the beast from the minds of the boys nor to convince them of the primacy of rescue and order over survival and hunting.

Heat generated by the conflict between Ralph and Jack widens the rift among the boys. Piggy's spectacles are stolen and he is thrown to his death in an attempt to retrieve them. This leads to the complete isolation of Ralph from the rest of the tribe. Finally, he becomes the victim of a manhunt organised by Jack to eliminate him. Caught between a forest set to fire and the unflinching spikes of the ruthless savages, Ralph is precariously poised for an imminent death.

2.2.3 IRONICAL REVERSAL AT THE END OF THE NOVEL

In a sudden reversal of events, Ralph is miraculously saved in the nick of time. His rescue is contrived through the unexpected arrival of a naval officer in a war-frigate on the scene, having seen the smoke from the burning island. This ironic twist in the narrative gives an altogether new perspective to the action. In giving the story the semblance of a 'happy' ending

this 'gimmick' conclusion operates as a potent structural ploy. It offers an entirely revised point of view to the unsuspecting reader, notwithstanding his sense of belied expectations.

The irony wrought by the appearance of an adult • symbolic of the civilized world torn by nuclear war is obvious. So also the use of a war frigate as the vehicle of rescue for the boys from a violent and ritual - dominated life into a civilized world devastated by war is ironic. Again, the naval officer's inability to look beyond the painted faces of the boys, his failure to encounter the evil, the savagery in them is very striking. Even Ralph, by now considerably mature in his perception of human nature, has apparently not gained insight into the reality of life. Ironically, he weeps :

for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of
a true, wise friend called Piggy (Lord of the Flies, p.223)

But, even at that gross price Ralph has not gained spiritual insight. His tears are for the darkness of man's heart and for the lost friend called Piggy -- not for the only boy who had known that darkness all along and had paid the price of his life in an attempt to dispel it. So also the naval officer is moved by the situation. But ironically he is moved to embarrassment, 'not to sympathetic understanding'. He turns his back to the boys "to give them time to pull themselves together" (Lord of the Flies p.223) in an action highly reminiscent of contemporary adult sensibility, in its absence of vision.

2.2.4 FABLE AS AN ELEMENT IN LORD OF THE FLIES

Lord of the Flies, viewed from this angle emerges as a work with an obvious didactic purpose wherein 'Fable has heavily encroached on fiction' creating thereby what John Peter considers to be :

a compromise of proselytism and art like the literature of the Middle Ages.¹⁴

It would be useful to examine the medieval concept of fable in connection with Peter's observation regarding Lord of the Flies. Going by MacQueen's opinion of and commentary on the encyclopaedic work De Geneologia Decorum Gentilium by Giovanni Boccaccio it is possible to establish in this novel the operation of a mode called fable (fabula) in Boccaccio's sense of the term. For Boccaccio :

A fable is a connected utterance which, under the appearance of fiction, is exemplary or demonstrative, and which reveals its author's purpose only when the shell of fiction has been removed.¹⁵

It is quite clear in Lord of the Flies that underlying the survival-story of the young castaways is a fable regarding the innate evil in mankind but it is hidden under the gripping story of the marooned boys.

Further, it adheres to Boccaccio's classification of fables, resembling the kind that :

deals with universals even if the narrative has no actual basis in historical facts, it is still probable or at least possible.¹⁶

This can be easily ascertained by making a brief reference to

the context of the survival-story. The boys are marooned on the tropical island, while being evacuated from an Atomic War. Interestingly, this War is set in the distant future, in the novel. While the boys are on the island, the War is still raging in the outside world. In fact, when the boys in their apprehension and fear of the 'beast' on the island yearn for some sign from the world of adults, they are befittingly 'rewarded' by a dead parachutist -- a victim of gross inhumanity committed on a global scale in the name of War. Significantly, the 'rescue' of the boys is also arranged in a War cruiser.

In other words, all the imaginary details vivified in the novel could have taken place anywhere at any time in the world. The two World Wars and the subsequent ebb and flow of history has well-shown that the events portrayed in the novel, as well as their fabular connotations, are quite probable. What is more, this element of probability is universally applicable to the human race. Thus, it can be argued that *Lord of the Flies* contains the elements of fable in the conventional sense, particularly in the medieval sense of the term. Further, these 'fabular' elements in *Lord of the Flies* are readily discernible through a concrete pattern of symbols introduced for the purpose.

In *Lord of the Flies*, it is apparent that the moral of the fable and its parameters were pre-determined. Further, its symbolic pattern and narrative sequence indicate that it had been

carefully structured as a cohesive influx aimed at a definite point of convergence. The discovery of the conch signifying law and order, the pighead on the stick symbolizing 'Lord of the Flies', the dead parachutist as a sign from the world of adults, Piggy's spectacles as the source of fire and above all the rescue in a vessel of war -- are all trite symbolic devices making the fable an embodiment of a pre-formulated thesis falling between the stools of didacticism and "The tendency to reduce life to pattern"¹⁷.

This overt didacticism has drawn a lot of critical flak. For, it involves in Peter's view, the double fault of over-explicitness and obtrusion of the smooth movement of :

a work of real distinction so that much remains external and extrinsic, the teller's assertion rather than the tale's enactment before our eyes.¹⁸

Another critical objection to this fable like many of its predecessors has been due to its isolated setting and the avoidance of contemporary social reality. But, as Whitley concedes :

the necessity of maintaining a clear thesis requires their authors to remove the action of the novel from the complexities of society in order to say what they have to say about it.¹⁹

It has to be acknowledged that in spite of the insular locale of Golding's fable, it does not altogether ignore the contingent reality. Moreover, Golding's vivid narration, his minute observation and the verisimilitude in his novel make one take a milder view of the strained moments in the novel. They prompt us to look indulgently on them as :

blemishes that catch the eye because of their dissimilarity to the skillfully woven fabric²⁰ of the whole.

This itself is no mean achievement. In fact, Golding's use of an isolated milieu and exclusively pre-adolescent characters forestalls other inevitable deviations such as love affairs, marriages and such other details of human existence that go with them. The very limitedness of adolescent experience restricts the exposure of the boys to the most basic one of survival and death, thereby maintaining the intensity and the forcefulness of Golding's thesis. The little boys assist the novelist beautifully in presenting the 'macrocosm in a microcosm', thrusting the moral of his fable into a prominence rarely paralleled in contemporary fiction.

It can thus be seen that *Lord of the Flies* is a fable in the conventional sense of the term. However, it is necessary to assess Golding as a fabulator in the contemporary sense too. Ronald Hayman, commenting on 'a fabulator in Robert Scholte's sense of the word', elucidates the fabulator's :

particular pleasure in design, being less concerned with the representation of reality than with the construction of a verbal artifact that will please and stimulate the reader. Ideas and ideals become more important than objects or actions. Comedy and irony at once signal the writer's awareness of his own limitations and license him to embark on absurdly ambitious schemes.²¹

The meticulously enacted structure of *Lord of the Flies* is an illustration of the fact that Golding is particularly keen on the design of his work. But he is equally concerned with a vivid,

sensuous, almost a synaesthetic evocation of reality; while ideas and ideals are vitally important to Golding he does not delegate an insignificant position to objects and actions, much less to persons and reactions. In fact, this delicate equipoise between the abstract and the concrete gives *Lord of the Flies* its verbal diversity and its author, the credit for :

pushing of concepts back to percepts²².

In the same way, while comedy and irony are an essential part of his narrative strategy, they are invariably foiled with a palpable element of humane sympathy for their victim; it is the situation or the perpetrator of victimization that is viewed with a detached attitude by the novelist -- never the recipient of comic treatment or the victim of irony. The novelist's sympathy whether in comedy or irony is with '*the persecuted minority*'. Many events in the novel bear this fact out : the encounter of Piggy with Ralph (*Lord of the Flies* pp.11-17), the murder of Simon (*Lord of the Flies* pp. 168-9), the rescue of Ralph from the hunters (*Lord of Flies* p.223) are some of these events.

In brief, the stylistic gear of the novel functions through a lucid, often poignant narrative, appealing characters, and a compact structure to create a fictional construct closer to Aristotle's notion of '*katharsis*' rather than to his '*mimesis*'. In doing so it provides us in Craig's words, '*with an imaginative experience which is necessary to our imaginative*

well-being', not merely through 'fabling but fabulation', enriching pure romance with allegory²³. The ensuing discussion of *Lord of the Flies* as an allegory attempts to show the relevance of Craig's comment to the novel.

2.2.5 ALLEGORY IN THE NOVEL

If allegory is seen as the hidden significance of any narrative, then the term fable has close affinity with 'allegory' certainly in the initial stages. Hence allied to the notion of the fabular mode of *Lord of the Flies* is the question of also applying the generic appellation 'allegory' to the novel. This issue needs to be closely examined for following reason. Though both these modes display the expediency of moving away from contemporary social reality, the fable playing down the allegorical possibilities seeks to create verisimilitude, operating through a pattern of symbols. As against this, the implicit nuances in an allegory subtly underlie the development of the plot. John S. Whiteley commenting on the comparative design of the two modes claims that in an allegory :

abstract meaning moves along in parallel to the surface story by way of one to one relationship Unlike allegorical figures, the full impact of symbols can be measured²⁴

only as the fable concludes. Thus, if the objective of fable is verisimilitude, the allegory according to Dante Alighieri,

is a truth hidden under a beautiful fiction (edè' una veritade ascosa sotto bella
menzogna --- literally a beautiful lie.²⁵

In *Lord of the Flies* when its theme '*the universality of evil as an innate human quality*' is viewed as signified by the tale, the allegorical aspect of the novel becomes clear. The moral is driven home when we see that even the basically good Ralph and Piggy, despite the best of intentions, are susceptible to evil. In an unguarded moment of weakness they become a party to the tribal war-dance that culminates in the brutal murder of Simon (*Lord of the Flies* pp. 167-175). By extension it is possible to view *Lord of the Flies* as multifarious allegory since the story of the castaways has multiple semantic significance:-

- (i) Literally, it is a survival tale of the young War-evacuees,
- (ii) Morally, it demonstrates evil in mankind through the susceptibility of all the boys,
- (iii) Politically, it warns of terrifying totalitarian propensities in Man signified through the awesome potential for it in Jack,
- (iv) Theologically, it endorses the Christian concept of Biblical 'fall' and of redemption through 'Christ' symbolized in Simon's death,
- (v) Psychologically, it explains human behaviour through an interplay of reason, passions and intuition in the human mind,
- (vi) Spiritually, it comments on the bleakness of human predicament in the absence of vision, guided by frailty of

reason and dominated by passions.

The four major characters Ralph, Piggy, Simon and Jack are seen to be the embodiments of the various shades of human life : its various propensities, its aspects and its abstractions.

The abstraction within its narrative structure gives the story a multi-semantic structure. The four major characters typify four universal aspects of human life: Ralph, Piggy, Jack and Simon can be seen to represent intelligence, commonsense, passions and intuition respectively. In accordance with the chosen 'shade' of allegory at a given moment these characters may be viewed in different light : Thus, Ralph can be considered as the average man's sensibility variously influenced by intellectual, sensual and spiritual energies. It may be thereby inferred that the average sensibility, neither immune nor prone to evil, surrenders reason to passions and smothers its spiritual yearning to become a victim as well as a perpetrator of evil, emanating from the innermost recesses of its being. In fact, Ralph's appealing looks, Piggy's gross appearance, Jack's dark foreboding countenance and Simon's vagueness further underscore the allegorical nature of these characters.

It can be argued that *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical work in the Classical as well as medieval sense of the term. According to MacQueen, it satisfies in addition to Dante's Theory of Allegory, ~~Quintilian's view of allegory as presenting 'one thing in words~~ and

another in meaning', more so his view of it as "something absolutely opposed to meaning of the words"²⁶. Further in fulfilling Quintilian's contention of allegory functioning through metaphor, simile, and riddle(aenigma), *Lord of the Flies* emerges as an allegory in its own right, even in the modern sense of the term. For, MacQueen is of the opinion that Quintilian's idea of the functions of allegory is developed :

in a way which bears a direct relation to the modern use of the term allegory²⁶.

The consistency of this statement can be borne out by referring to Harry Shaw's definition of the term '*allegory*' as an '*extended metaphor*', and when applied to a work of fiction one

in which the author intends characters and their actions to be understood in terms other than their surface appearances and meanings.²⁷

Incidentally, this aspect of allegory is often put to use by the novelist in a most ingenious manner in his later fiction.

2.2.6 LORD OF THE FLIES AS REALISTIC FICTION

But in evaluating the semantic potential of the allegorical element in *Lord of the Flies*, one cannot overlook the sense of reality that marks this novel. Commending its '*novelistic diurnality and mundanity*' Barbara Everett claims that

Golding can moreover achieve a degree of mimetic reality, of fidelity to sense-experience, not surpassed in recent fiction.²⁸

In the light of this generous but well-deserved appraisal it is natural to examine *Lord of the Flies* as realistic fiction.

Although the novel can be easily identified as a twentieth-century-inversion of a nineteenth-century-romantic-tale, it is the inversion that infuses into the work an element of realism and moreover of 'history'. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor maintain that

Fiction as history tries to persuade us that it is merely a transparency through which we view a complicated phenomenal world, its persons and places empirically true.²⁹

When seen in circumspect, the fictional element in the novel comes vividly alive : the island as well as its inhabitants have an existence which is natural as it is vivid. Descriptions are imaginatively used by the novelist to heighten elemental beauty and awe, as also to intensify the dramatic moments in the novel. The description of the beautiful conch, (Lord of the Flies p.17) Simon's communion with nature (Lord of the Flies, pp. 61-2), the conduct of their meetings (Lord of the Flies pp. 86-100) are extremely life-like. The suddenness and brutality of Piggy's end is shockingly vivid :

He fell forty feet and landed on his back across that square, red rock in the sea. His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit like a pig's after it had been killed. Then the sea breathed again in a long, slow sigh, the water boiled white and pink over the rock, and when it went sucking back again, the body of Piggy was gone. (Lord of the Flies p. 200)

So also, the tragic appeal of Simon's dead body gently claimed by the tide is evoked with a rare poetic skill consistent with the dramatic intensity of his end :

The great wave of the tide moved further along the island and the water lifted. Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellation, Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea (Lord of the Flies p. 170)

Another feature of Golding's technique that gives the semblance of reality to *Lord of the Flies* is its characterization. In attempting to flesh out his truth he etches out his characters in all the spontaneity and natural appeal of their childhood :

His children are not juvenile delinquents but human beings realising for themselves the beauty and horror of life³⁰.

Interestingly, dialogue often hangs a little heavy on the slender shoulders of his boys. For instance, one may cite Simon's discourse with '*Lord of the Flies*' (Lord of the Flies pp. 157-9) or Piggy's rational arguments. But the actions and reactions of the boys in relation to events and situations are tapped captivatingly. Particularly touching is Percival's response to the invitation to speak during the assembly and his reaction to fear and insecurity :

At first he was a silent effigy of sorrow; but then the laceration rose out of him, loud and sustained as the conch (Lord of the Flies p. 95)

Similarly, the ambience of scorn and ridicule in the boys' response to '*Piggy*'; their fluctuation between the fear of the beast and the longing for adventure; their split loyalty to Ralph and Jack over the issue of rescue and hunting; their near-unanimous scoffing-attitude to the '*batty*' Simon are most effective in their ability to convince and to appeal to the reader's sense of reality.

Further, the choice of the story highlights considerably the novelist's endeavour to relate a grippingly realistic tale of adventure. Whatever its semantic potential, its quick moving action, arresting narrative and vivid drama give the lie to the fabular motives of *Lord of the Flies*. If the thematic significance is successfully driven home, the credit is due to the plausible vehicle of a convincing story that enfolds the abstract theme. The novelist has artistically posited his thematic concept behind the flimsy yet authentic veil of physical reality. His priorities in this novel apparently move from visual fiction and linguistic precision to dramatic enactment to the pre-determined thesis. Thus in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding's priority is clearly the fictional vivification of actuality. For him,

Physical realities.....must convince before what is revealed through them can earn imaginative assent... but the authenticity of each step depends on that of the one before, and all are grounded in the original undoctored sense perception³¹.

This judicious assessment of the fictional potential of *Lord of the Flies* by Mark Kinkead-Weekes endorses the enticing evocation of physical reality through sense perception and through synaesthetic stimuli attempted by Golding.

2.2.7 THE MYTHOPOEIC ASPECT OF *LORD OF THE FLIES*

Thus, asserting the presence of the fictive mode in *Lord of the Flies* posits a new angle of reevaluating its allegorical potential and its fabular structure. This intricate balance of

realistic texture and symbolic structure is apparently a carefully worked out novelistic device to make the theme fully immune to the twin-risks of readerly rejection as well as incomprehension. The novelist is obviously attempting to provide a sociological authenticity and psychological accuracy to human behaviour in his story while creating a morally tangible environment to develop his thesis. This is of paramount significance to Golding in his endeavour to uncover the fundamental issue of human existence - the essence of being - through the use of allegorical devices.

In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding seems to identify the essence of being as evil. To achieve this identification, he manoeuvres to bind together the various strands of allegory into a comprehensive myth about the innate evil in humankind as a species. As a result *Lord of the Flies* can be seen as a potent myth underlying the subtle urge of its creator to explicate the most basic issue of life -- the human condition -- simultaneously on complex semantic levels so as to underscore its universality and inevitability.

The mythic identity of the novel appears persuasive on following two counts:

- (a) Golding's desire to be seen as a maker of myths rather than as a writer of fables, while accepting the fabular aspect of his own work³².

(b) Secondly, the intricate allegorical motifs in the novel seem to be interwoven with the typological, tropological and anagogical density of an almost crystalline nature. This crystalline quality of the novel approximates it in spirit, with a mode generally defined as a myth - both semantically and functionally³³.

To determine the locus standi of the novel as a mythic artifact, it is necessary to define the term myth. In *Myth and Literature* William Righter observes that :

Most definitions exist at a very high level of generality, and an admission of the multiple nature of the subject is built into them. There is usually agreement on the factor of narrative.³⁴

It would be thus useful to identify the common ground shared by some of the definitions of myth. These definitions would be useful to glean the salient features of the mythic mode and then apply them to *Lord of the Flies*. One of the commonly known definitions of the mode is that :

myth is a narrative, irrational ... storytelling of origins and destinies, the explanations ... of why the world is and why we do as we do; its pedagogic images of the nature and destiny of man

This is Warren and Wellek's view of myth. While Alan Watts regards it as demonstrative of :

the inner meaning of the universe of human life;

while for David Bidney it is :

a universal cultural phenomenon originating in a plurality of motives and involving all mental faculties³³.

The above definitions throw up the following identification marks of the mythic mode: narrative form, not always rationally satisfying, attempted explication of the complexity of human life, drawing on cultural resources and having multiple motives and involving all mental faculties.

Even a perfunctory analysis of the deep structure of the novel *Lord of the Flies* will reveal its affinity to myth. In fact its allegorical pattern is closely intended to reveal the *per se* complexity of human life at all levels of understanding involving all mental faculties. To unravel such a cogent allegorical structure to the fullest, the exploitation of cultural resources is a natural sequel, a must.

In *Lord of the Flies* the structural ploys, verbal association, linguistic devices such as metaphor or irony, inter-textual allusions, religious implications and ethnic undertones all go to create a complex mythopoeic vision of human existence albeit pessimistic. The deviant use of the Biblical myth of fall; the reversal of the boys to savagery and ritual, the Christian and Pagan concept of sacrifice (subtly evoked through the death of Simon and Piggy); the idea of political scapegoat (Piggy and later Ralph); undertones of Id, Ego and super-ego; sociological taboos, inhibitions and class-consciousness; the fluctuating ethical code in relation to survival and rescue and above all the elemental symbols and metaphors -- all converge to transform the captivating

tale of castaways into a timeless voyage of humanity from eternity to eternity.

The symbolic pattern of the novel assumes archetypal proportions when viewed from this angle. The boat-shaped island in the remote sea :

swathed at midday with mirage, defended by the shield of the quiet lagoon but also '*faced by the brute obtuseness of the ocean*' (Lord of the Flies p. 122) is an overt metaphor for the journey of life. Its inmates now gloating on its bounty and now chastised by the raging swell of rain and storm, improvise in a Promethean manner the use of fire (through Piggy's spectacles) finally evoking it as a means of destruction (the forest is destroyed, a child with a mulberry-mark on the face is consumed, and the island is set to torch to evict Ralph from his hiding).

The grim irony behind Simon's prophetic words to Ralph '*you'll get back to where you came from*' (Lord of the Flies p. 122) only marks the metaphysical implications of the myth in a subtle manner. It is the final '*rescue*' back into the war-mongered civilized world, an over-sized extension of their island-life that makes the significance of Simon's unsuspecting prophecy apparent. Thereby his casual remark underscores the bleakness of human destiny constrained by the paucity of human endeavour, the myopic reason and the absence of vision.

• It is thus easy to establish the presence of the mythic mode in Lord of the Flies, at least in its semantic aspect. But it is

imperative to analyse how the functional aspect of myth operates. In this novel. Roland Barthes' opinion of the function of myths in relation to the views some other critics³⁶ would be a favourable basis for this argument. For Peter Calvocoressi myth is necessary to justify 'a particular view of a particular society'; to Durkheim, 'the function of myths is to bind a society, create a structure governed by rules and habits', for Sorel 'to direct energies and inspire action ... by embodying a dynamic vision of the movement of life, the more potent because not rational, and therefore not subject to criticism and refutation... compounded of images that ... affect men ... as a ferment of the soul...'.³⁶

Almost antithetical to these more or less 'positive' attitudes to the function of myth is Roland Barthes' version of it. He maintains that :

Myth does not deny things, its function on the contrary is to speak of them; quite simply it purifies them and makes them innocent, fixes them in nature and eternity, gives them a clarity which is not of explanation but of statement... it abolishes the complexity of human action, gives it an elemental simplicity...³⁷

In relation to the above views of the function of myth, *Lord of the Flies* emerges as an exception. In its bleak pessimism it neither strives 'to bind a society' nor 'inspire action' nor again 'to justify a particular view'. However, through its formidable use of irony it functions through contradictions of these proclaimed functions. It reverts the accepted view of a human society and shows the 'complexity of human action'.

It can be, therefore, claimed that *Lord of the Flies* proves Barthes' thesis to a great extent by default and thereby successfully dispels his implied objection to a myth for being 'the a-political language' through which a society 'beguiles' itself and its victims. In doing so, it also disproves Sorel's view of myth as a 'marvelous inspiration' or Durkheim's view of 'the social utility of myth' or Calvocoressi's view of it as 'justification of accepted view'. These views are nowhere endorsed by Golding's myth, nor does his myth 'purify' anything as Barthes contends.

Golding's use of mythical structure in *Lord of the Flies* clarifies and so simplifies fundamental issue of life. But as it is the 'negative' aspect of reality that he speaks of, he makes a positive contribution to humanity unlike what Barthes' comment indirectly suggests. Golding's myth seeks to 'understand' more than to 'state' or 'to explain away'. Hence he creates a thought-provoking myth in his own capacity. This is clear from his subsequent novel that tries to probe into the nodal root of his previous myth centred on universality of Evil.

2.2.8 POLYSEMOUS NATURE OF THE NOVEL

Thus *Lord of the Flies* can be viewed as a myth both semantically and functionally, although it functions mythically not in the accepted sense of the term but rather in an

'experimental' manner. In doing this, Golding has created a viable position for himself and his work in the realm of contemporary fiction. At its worst the novel may be described as a well-narrated fiction with uncut corners of fable exposing its mythogenic potential. But at its best the work has to be termed as a 'polysemous' novel striving to overcome the virtual schism between fiction and non-fiction generated by contemporary critical discourse and fostered by the novelistic allegiance to either the traditional social novel or avant-gardism. The indistinct generic visage of this novel is a successful experiment demonstrating Hayman's opinion of the contemporary novel, that:

between the extremes of retrogression and the extremes of experimentalism, there is a great variety of possibilities³⁶.

2.3.1 NEW POSSIBILITIES IN *THE INHERITORS*

In fact, Golding's next novel is an illustration of some of these possibilities. Experimentating once again with theme and structure, *The Inheritors* (1954) takes off from the point where the *Lord of the Flies* (1954) has left --- the loss of innocence - to probe into its nodal origins, in the evolutionary cycle of mankind. In doing this, the novel overturns the spirit of H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* with its myth of civilization; Frank

Kermode aptly captures the different attitudes of Wells and Golding to this myth of civilization :

to Wells the success of the high-foreheaded, weapon-bearing, carnivorous homo sapiens was progress, but to Golding it was the defeat of innocence, the sin of Adam in terms of a new kind of history³⁹.

Thus setting the pre-lapsarian innocence hypothetically in the cradle of humanity, Golding founds his thesis of moral lapse in mankind in the Darwinian struggle for survival. In the novel it assumes the form of an almost unilateral affrontation between the Homo Sapiens and the Neanderthals. This gives *The Inheritors* the semblance of a prehistoric tale set in remote times, in a remote locale among remoter men. Described often as a gripping tour-de-force, this novel has modal affinities to fable, allegory, myth, and fiction, perhaps to science fiction :

... if it is science at all : taking us backward as space fiction takes us forward⁴⁰.

However, in spite of creating an extremely life-like fictional experience, it is often felt that the novel does not present contemporary social reality. Peter Green in his useful article⁴¹ contends that Golding has perhaps '*reshaped Neanderthal Man to suit his particular moral purpose*' by overemphasizing their primal innocence without any mention of '*their undoubted cannibalism, or primitive tool-making or glimmer of magic*'. He also refers in passing to a recent discovery of '*twelve million years old skeleton*' indicating the contemporariness of the Neanderthals and

Homo Sapiens 'over many thousands of years'. He points out that this evidence gives 'an unexpected and unfortunate twist' to the underlying symbolism of the novel⁴¹. Nonetheless, Green acknowledges the 'self-contained' nature of the novel and concedes that it stands or falls 'without reference to its historical validity'.

Without undermining the considerable contribution of such insightful analysis to critical discourse, it has to be contended that revised scientific or historical data cannot impair the imaginative or creative achievement of a work of art⁴². However, it may invite new interpretation of the theme in question. Moreover, it has to be conceded that a novelist, particularly a writer of fiction, exercises a certain degree of 'poetic licence' often 're-creating' reality to enhance his theme. Golding cannot be an exception to this general rule.

Further, Green's claim regarding new anthropological data has to be placed alongside Golding's comment that :

Neanderthal man hasn't canines, so that if there's going to be a destructive animal of the two, it's going to be homo sapiens, homo sapient sapiens and not homo-Neanderthalensis⁴³,

Again Golding's claim that the Neanderthals 'were more like my Neanderthal men than Wells' based on the evidence of the Archaeological excavations carried out by American archaeologists in Shannedah in Persia appears convincing.

Notwithstanding such points of details, Golding's work contains

an ingenious thesis with apparently close thematic linkages with his previous novel, inspite of a totally alien milieu and an equally distinct plot. In addition to this affinity, *The Inheritors* shares with its more illustrious fore-runner two other aspects.

(1) Subversion of a dominant myth of progress inherent in Wellsian theory, just as *Lord of the Flies* turned over the myth of racial superiority in the Bellantyne tale, *The Coral Island*,

(2) Adoption of a pre-formulated thesis for the novel while adapting a literary foil to foreground this thesis.

This gives his work an allegorical or fabular tinge. Before analysing it in terms of these modal varieties it is necessary to refer in passing to its plot.

2.3.2 *THE INHERITORS* : THE PLOT

The novel hovering around '*the survival theme*' opens on a domestic note. A group of eight Neanderthals are returning rather prematurely to their spring abode in the mountains after an extremely harsh winter. There are indications of an imminent ice-age; there is shortage of food on the mountain top and consequently their very existence is threatened. To make matters worse, their old leader Mal dies and Ha, the intelligent male adult and a likely leader, disappears in mysterious circumstances. The *Homo Sapiens* raid their camp and abduct their children Liku and New One. The Old Woman, their fire-bearer, dies as a result of this

raid and Nil, mother of the New One, is probably killed.

Only Lok, the naive protagonist and his more perceptive mate Fa, survive. In their attempt to locate and retrieve the children, they observe the Homo Sapiens closely. However, given their innate innocence and infantile perception they fail to recognize them as the potential enemy. Ironically, they are irresistibly drawn to the Homo Sapiens and nurse a secret desire to imitate them.

However, after their nocturnal vigil up the tree overlooking the Homo Sapiens' camp-site, Fa develops a reasonable 'understanding' of the cannibalistic tendencies of the Homo Sapiens. But pathetically, she fails to convey this new-found knowledge, as also the information about Liku's ritualistic murder to Lok, given her inability to conceptualize. Lok, having fallen asleep in the nick of time, has not witnessed the gruesome scene.

Hence during their final bid at rescue, he unwittingly upsets Fa's attempt to rescue the New One, by rousing the Homo Sapiens. As a result of this Fa is carried over the waterfall to her death. Lok in his loneliness and misery, becomes the same hunted animal as Ralph in *Lord of the Flies*. In his grief, he folds himself into the earth in order to die. A thundering avalanche probably seals his end.

2.3.3 IRONY IN *THE NOVEL*

As in *Lord of the Flies*, a sudden ironical twist is given to the narrative at this point. This proffers a new perspective of the action, presented so far from the point of view of the Neanderthals. The sudden close-up of the Homo Sapiens sailing away in their dug-outs to the safety of the plains beyond 'the fall' generates an empathy in the reader. This vicarious view of the fear-and-guilt-ridden Homo Sapiens offers an insight into the motives and behaviour of these 'bedeviled' men. They appear as a psychologically and morally exhausted tribe, bearing the indelible mark of their own deeds against the innocent Neanderthals. New One's adoption by Vivani and Tanakil's lapse into insanity are their constant reminders of this guilt.

As the pre-formulated thesis is revealed by the gradual development of the novel, the fable is easily identifiable. Evil that man has as an innate quality becomes his anthropological inheritance -- the emblem of his racial fall. The irony behind his progress becomes apparent when the loss of innocence is seen to be its gross price. The novelist has made his fable starkly clear in ensuring not merely the suppression of one group by another but the supplanting of one tribe by another involving the latter's racial extinction. What is significant, this extinction does not occur through an equitable pitting of forces; it is, rather, wrought through a ruthless exercise of cunning, cannibalism and

advanced resources against an unsuspecting and unhostile adversary. Apparently, the Neanderthals have become a projection of the fear and the hostility of the Homo Sapiens themselves, as the boys in *Lord of the Flies* had projected their own fears into a non-existent 'beast'.

2.3.4 FICTIONAL ELEMENT IN *THE INHERITORS*.

However to drive home the full import of his fable Golding invests it with a fictive texture, blending his fecund imagination with his abundant archaeological and anthropological experience⁴⁴. This provides a scientific basis to his fiction. It also provides the scope to create an imaginative artifact as a receptacle for his multipronged structure focussing on the racial annihilation of the Neanderthals.

To give a rare tragic appeal to this novelistic experience Golding uses two technical devices. He invests his 'people' with a basically humane temperament, a cohesive group-identity and elementary perceptive ability :

Yet for all their perceptual and intellectual limitations,
he endows them with :

a code of ethics ... a deep and humble sense of their own limitations, and a faith in
the divine power and goodness of the earth⁴⁵.

Secondly, he assumes an initial narrative perspective from the standpoint of the Neanderthals -- the apparent victims -- refurbishing it at the end with an ironical inversion of the

narrative from the point of view of the Homo Sapiens -- the apparent perpetrators of victimization or evil.

This helps the novelist to ensure the feel of reality in the narrative in a paradoxical way. Through the novelist's narrative technique the reader can easily identify with the protagonist Lok despite his simplistic attitude to life and his conceptual paucity. But at the end of the novel, the reader can also withdraw from him abruptly, without any loss of sympathy or understanding, to identify with the Homo Sapiens -- with whom the reader belongs in the natural order of things -- with a newfound empathy. Credibly, Golding achieves this unique feat without in any way undermining the artistic appeal of his work, or without compromising the authenticity of his fictive experience. This establishes its general appraisal as :

a more brilliant tour de force' than *Lord of the Flies* ...with ...Golding's extraordinary gift for identifying himself, in an empathic sense with beings totally beyond the normal range of human creative awareness.⁴⁶

Golding's achievement of the '*feel of fictional reality*' is more commendable because *The Inheritors* poses problems that did not occur in *Lord of the Flies*. In the latter, verisimilitude and psychological facets of the characters had assisted description in the narrative. These were experiences well within the reader's perceptual and imaginative ken. But in *The Inheritors* the personae being pre-historic creatures in a remote spatio-temporal context, an imaginative environmental reconstruct

is difficult for the reader. Further, their infantile perception makes the narrative somewhat obscure since it is narrated through their level of perception and from their point of view. So, the imaginative identification is possible only at the basic level of instincts and sensations.

Golding overcomes the difficulty of realistic re-enactment of events and circumstances by exploiting human sensations and the use of his resourceful language. Even at a particularly intense, dramatic moment, Golding appeals to his readers' sensibility at the primary level of sensations. For instance, in an acutely realistic portrayal of Lok's fatherly grief on finally discovering Liku's death, Golding's compact poetic expression stirs the deep wells of emotional response in the reader.

Suddenly, noiselessly, the lights became thin crescents, went out, and streaks glistened on each cheek... The streaks on the cheeks pulsed as the drops swan down them, a great drop swelled at the end of a hair of the beard, shivering and bright. (The Inheritors p. 220)

To convey a sense of reality, the novelist often adopts the innovative device of coining an adequate expression to meet the requirement of the 'people's' point of view, such as :

Lok's feet were clever. They saw. They threw him round the displaced roots of the beeches, leapt when a puddle of water lay across the trail (The Inheritors p. 11)

Golding's facility with the verbal medium is exceptionally well displayed in *The Inheritors* -- better than in any of his other novels. His use of '*words in unexpected disjunctive combinations*'

in league with a 'vivid dynamic and detailed imagination'⁴⁷, give a firm realistic texture to his elusively complex allegorical structure. Thus *The Inheritors* approximates to an enticing work of fiction with multifold semantic implications elevating the inherent fable to great allegorical potential.

2.3.5 ALLEGORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NOVEL

The comprehensive allegorical significance of *The Inheritors* rests on the myths concerning the concept of either human 'fall' or human progress. Golding draws the sustenance for his allegory by re-interpreting, often demolishing some of these popular, even archetypal mythic patterns. He constructs his own mythic artifact. It is thus necessary to identify the allegorical motifs of *The Inheritors* in order to probe into its mythic implications.

The following significant allegorical patterns emerge through the fable contained in *The Inheritors* :

(a) Anthropologically, it contains the subversion of the Wellsian myth of civilization, as Golding's use of an excerpt from Wells' *The Outline of History* as the epigraph to his own novel shows:

.....We know very little of the appearance of the Neanderthal man, but this ... seems to suggest an extreme hairiness, an ugliness or a repulsive strangeness in his appearance over and above his low forehead, his beetle brows, his ape neck, and his inferior stature Says Sir Harry Johnston, in a survey of the rise of modern

san in his Views and Reviews : 'The dim racial recedbrance of such gorilla-like
monsters,' with cunning brains, shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and
possibly cannibalistic tendencies, may be the germ of the ogre in folklore ...'

Interestingly, Golding does not differ substantially from
the theory of evolution, nor from the physical description of the
Neanderthal Man. He refutes it in spirit, in order to base his
moral allegory on this subtle refutation.

(b) Sociologically, it endorses the general belief that '*might
is right*' whether physical or intellectual; and also
underscores the veracity of '*the survival of the fittest*' through
its pointed irony.

(c) Morally, it is a poignant testimony to the overthrow of
innocence and piety by cunning and violence. The apparent
victory of Evil over Good involving the inheritance of a vitiated
paradise illustrates a complex tropological dimension of human
experience.

(d) Spiritually, it is the evolution of guilt, the concept of
sin and cause for '*fall*', inextricably related by the element
of inevitability governing the state of being and becoming.

(e) Theologically, it deviates from the Christian concept of
'*Original Sin*', in making our human ancestors depraved, while
the creatures whom they supersede appear as anthropological
counterparts of the Biblical Adam and Eve.

It can be noticed that the conflict between the Neanderthals
and Homo Sapiens assumes diverse significance in accordance with

the allegorical point of view with which it is interpreted. The sweep and the range of the symbolic pattern is copious enough to contain the tremendous demands made by the allegorical structure of *The Inheritors*. This versatile and dense symbolic conglomeration posits the allegorical strands with powerful mythic connotations. Some of these significant symbolic patterns are:

(i) Lok and Fa as the innocent inhabitants of a sin-free paradise; these ironical counterparts of Adam and Eve are expelled permanently from their paradise due to the 'fall' of Homo Sapiens.

(ii) Concept of 'fall' as treated by Golding --- in the 'fall' of the Neanderthals lies the material growth of the sinners as inheritors while ironically in this growth lies their moral fall; similarly, in their physical 'fall' lies the salvation of the Neanderthals in being protected from any loss of innocence.

(iii) The elemental benevolence of the Neanderthals is marked by their mortal fear of water, symbolising the stream of life. They blend well with darkness, forest and so on. Their worship of Earth as a Goddess symbolises the adoration of the vitalizing life - principle or vitality. Her sanctuary is ice or condensed water. The Homo Sapiens deify a stag, a transient principle of life. They feel 'bedeviled' in the forests (just as Jack had felt that he was being 'stalked' in the forest in *Lord of the Flies*) and consider the innocent Neanderthals as 'devils'.

(iv) Lok and Fa climb a dead tree, symbolic of the tree of

Life, devitalized into dry wood, symbolic of their imminent death and the image of the cross that the 'New Men' will have to carry as a result of this.

(v) The communal-identity of the Neanderthals reflects not only harmony and a telepathic^L togetherness but also non-evolution of individuality. Conversely, the highly individual traits of the Homo Sapiens indicate their individuality and the emergence of 'ego' in them, attendant with all the psychological conflicts and trauma, in this they appear as the veritable ancestors of human beings.

2.3.6 MYTH IN *THE INHERITORS*

Such multiple approaches to the inner exploration of human condition gives mythic dimensions to *The Inheritors* inviting interesting speculations about the mythic vision of the novelist. In artfully weaving together the varied fibres of allegory into an organically structured myth, Golding's narrative displays a stunning vitality. Without any authorial digression, either overt or covert, Golding blends all allegorical interpretation into a coherent artifact showing no structural fissures nor textural blemishes.

In fact, the novel presents the paradox inherent in the theme. In the fall of the Neanderthals lies their gradual perceptive growth, which could have eventually led to the acquisition of an

ability to conceptualize and thereby to the evolution of intelligence, had their racial extinction been averted by chance. Towards the end of the novel Lok, who was initially reluctant to cast away the arrow hit at him, is able to run to safety as Chestnut-head is trying to get the bow ready. There is a pointed clue to his perceptual development, when in his newfound Malness he knew that certain things were gone and done with like a wave of the sea :

knew that the misery must be embraced painfully as a man might hug thorns to him .. (The Inheritors p. 194).

Ironically, the new men in their superior state of evolution, perhaps civilization, are still 'a people of the fall'. In proceeding to a more secure living they have tasted of sin and guilt; they have killed Liku but have also sacrificed the sanity of their own Tanakil, making her an emblem of their sin. In Lok's final self-annihilation in misery as if embracing 'thorns' he becomes a Christ figure, as also a non-Christian archetype of sacrifice of an innocent for the sinner. New One, carried away by the Homo Sapiens is, symbolically, both the emblem of sin and the token of 'atonement' being a constant reminder of guilt and consequent remorse to them.

In an ironical way the Homo Sapiens have inherited from the Neanderthals not just a new lease of life but also the cross of their own fall. In the unwitting sacrifice of the Neanderthals lies the spiritual degeneration of the New Men. Yet, paradoxically,

latent in this spiritual lapse is their consciousness of sin, attendant guilt and a trace of what will be developed in their successors as '*conscience*'. Although not apparent to him, Tuami, the tribal artist already experiences the throes of conscience, feeling :

haunted, bedeviled, full of irrational grief ... emptied, collapsed realising a new level not only of land but of experience and emotion (The Inheritors p. 225). With a finer sensibility than that of the average Homo Sapien, Tuami voices the helplessness and thereby the inevitability of their actions. In not attempting to justify their culpability, Tuami's traumatic soul-searching becomes potently significant. In asking, '*What else could we have done ?*' he gives expression to an agonizing helplessness. Just so, in uttering '*If we had not we should have died*', he voices the vague instinctive emphasis behind their culpability. [The Inheritors, p. 227-8]

Apparently, Golding tilts the balance of novelistic justice evenly. The Homo Sapiens are certainly not '*the meek and the humble*' who should inherit the earth. But their inheritance has been as much a result of inevitable circumstances as of their wilful actions. Further, the Neanderthalers unwittingly hasten their own extinction. For all their goodness and piety, they are incapable of meeting the challenge of survival in an hostile environment. They are as much the victims of the Homo Sapiens as of their own perceptive debility. The onset of the

avalanche (The Inheritors p. 232) further underscores the inevitability of the annihilation of the 'people'.

Thus, the myth powerfully sprouting from Golding's fable takes the entire humanity within its sweeping range. Golding's mythic vision relates with an authenticity and inevitability the pre-lapsarian ancestry of mankind, its traumatic pursuits and its uncertain future. Far from toppling the Homo Sapiens from their Wellsian position, he re-instates them to their rightful status in the evolutionary hierarchy --- in every sense of the word evolution. For this, he withdraws instinctively from 'the red creature' and draws closer to Tuami for a new perspective. To Tuami more than the others, for he possesses the artistic insight, perhaps intuition; it is Tuami who undergoes a psycho-spiritual transformation of sorts. In realising the futility of revenge and in recognizing the value of sublimation of grief and passion through art, he offers 'an answer', 'a password' to the problem of human suffering under a moral guilt.

The ontological undertones are undoubtedly there, but in an indistinct aspect -- befitting Tuami's intellectual position. However, the typological design of the myth is eloquent enough:

The world with the boat moving so slowly at the center was dark amid the light, was untidy, hopeless, dirty (The Inheritors p. 225).

The symbolic motifs that further support this existentialistic

gestalt are also abundant : the mountains or 'the darkness under the trees' where they feel 'bedeviled', their erstwhile journey 'up the river towards the fall' and their present voyage upstream 'beyond the fall'; their preference to 'keep to the water and the plains' and Tuami's desire to 'see if the line of darkness had an ending' (The Inheritors pp. 231-3), These are all, significantly, the symbols for contemporary human anxiety and apprehension regarding existence; it also reflects Man's struggle against his natural grain in an attempt to achieve security and happiness in the face of vague, unidentified fears and instincts.

2.3.7 COHERENT GENERIC STATUS OF THE INHERITORS

In a nutshell, The Inheritors can be viewed as a cogent mytho-fabular fiction in the contemporary sense. It is a great development over its predecessor in terms of theme, structure and vision. In Lord of the Flies, Golding had unstintingly demonstrated the tragic human condition, susceptible to an universal inclination for evil. In The Inheritors, the novelist has somewhat relented from that position. He concedes the wilful nature of Evil, but whereas it had been perpetrated within the possibility of choice in Lord of the Flies, in The Inheritors there is little choice given to the Homo Sapiens. But both the novels underscore the development of perceptive faculties as the source of fall. Golding claims that 'the Fall is thought, the Fall

is self-awareness'; in the absence of thought, language and ego
'it is difficult for the fall to take place' since one can do
nothing but 'what is absolutely natural' to oneself⁴⁸. Thus
in Golding's opinion the paradox of human existence is 'that Man's
Fall is really Man's emergence'.

The Inheritors enfolds this summation compactly within its
intricate structure, displaying a definitely more coherent generic
identity than its predecessor, despite its tremendous semantic
potential. The crudeness of the fable and extrinsic strands of
allegory in the earlier novel have been drawn into a masterful
narrative. Overt narrative devices, such as authorial comment or
use of mouthpieces is avoided by making the experience more
authentic and the personae more convincing. In spite of considerable
semantic demands, the fiction is free from didacticism and obtuse
metaphor. Stylistically, it is an achievement Golding was not
to equal in his life-time. It remains a testimony to

Golding's apparent synthesis of the scientist's, technique of isolated experiment,
the fabulist's device of simple allegory, and the mythmaker's appeal to basic human
drives and fears.⁴⁹

In fine, it is a commendable fictional achievement that
looks ahead to new experimentation with theme and technique in
the novel to follow: *Pincher Martin* is such an experiment with
a contemporary Ego placed within the bell-jar of an Existentialist
configuration of conditions.

2.4.1 THE THEMATIC CONTINUITY IN *PINCHER MARTIN*

The survival theme, dominant in his two earlier novels, is also the central motif in Golding's *Pincher Martin*. The novelist uses the saga of Pincher's survival on a bare rock in mid-Atlantic as a strategic ploy that focuses attention on the novel as a gripping tour-de-force while cloaking the inherent '*moral programme*' of the novel. This gives the novelist greater leverage to develop the related ideas of rationalization and survival as the outcome of human evolution and helps him analyse them in social and metaphysical terms.

In *Pincher Martin* Golding's concern is directed to contemporary man and his existentialist predicament. Probably as an extension of his desire to do justice to the Homo Sapiens, this novel analyses contemporary Man's severance from innocence and his alienation from God. To put across this theme, Golding selects a carefully '*pruned*' protagonist, brutally rational and convincingly contemporary⁵⁰. He, operates within the extremely narrow confines of his over-inflated ego dictated by his elemental quality -- Greed. However this is not apparent at the outset, when Pincher Martin is seen pitted against a particularly hostile environment in an unequal contest for survival.

2.4.2 *PINCHER MARTIN* : THE PLOT

As the novel opens, the reader comes upon Martin quite

unsuspectingly. Christopher Hadley Martin is submerged from the bridge of his destroyer during the second World War. The reader finds him fighting against all odds, on the verge of being dead, with just an insurmountable will, endeavouring to survive. His slow tortuous climb up the rock, his carefully thought out plan to make his miserable existence as tolerable as possible, his frantic bid to fight fatigue and mental strain is all brought into relief so vividly that one's initial reaction to it is of spontaneous admiration and sympathy. In this sense, Martin's struggle for survival becomes Promethean in proportion to his saga of survival as a solitary man on a solitary rock undergoing every imaginable elemental suffering. Added to this ordeal is his constant strife to ward off dreams and hallucinations that come naturally to an over-exhausted body. Immediately the reader's heart goes out to him in a natural impulse of admiration of the heroic.

2.4.3 FICTIONAL ELEMENT IN THE NOVEL

Such reader-response coupled with Golding's undeniable talent to '*overwhelmingly persuade*' the reader that this is a real man on a real rock⁵¹, gives the novel its appeal as realistic fiction. Golding works to make us experience Pincher Martin's ordeal as directly as possible. What is more, he insists not merely on the immediacy of the situation but on the sensations it is capable of generating. The castaway's predicament, in an environment :

crushingly alien to him, the struggle to stay alive and sane; the physical and mental deterioration; the madness that is convincing on a naturalistic level before it is anything else⁵²

is vividly re-created. But it becomes apparent as the novel progresses that such 'immediate' reality is not the novelist's ultimate objective. It is Golding's technique :

to make the apparent seem real before he allows the symbolic quality of the action to appear overtly⁵³.

In fact, the structure of the novel demonstrates well enough that the realistic narrative is merely a superficial dimension of the plot. No doubt the surface structure is crowded with overwhelming details, with a view to have a grip on the reader's emotional response to the narrative. However this seems to be the novelist's initial advancement into the reader's attention so as to claim his unguarded response as the story progresses. Thus the solitary - man - against - universe is an intelligent bait that Golding proffers to reclaim an unsuspecting response from his unwary readers.

There is a discordant note right from the beginning somehow inconsistent with this 'seemingly' heroic struggle for survival. But being an extremely low-key note it is not discernible during an initial reading of the novel. On a careful second reading one realizes that it is not just the normal instinct for survival but the monstrous ego of an extremely self-centered creature that eggs him on to live at all cost. The narrative makes it quite clear

that, there would not have been terror or panic on Martin's countenance :

could he have controlled his face, or could a face have been fashioned to fit the attitude of his consciousness where it lay suspended between life and death that face would have worn a snarl. [Pincher Martin, p. 8].

His thoughts even when they are '*disconnected but vital*' show a self-preoccupation, peculiar in the circumstances, but all the same one that gives him '*a sudden surge of feeling that had nothing to do with the touch of sea*'. His thoughts in their most disorganised form are '*I won't die. I can't die Not me - Precious*' [Pincher Martin, p. 14]

It is this demonic urge for self and survival that is traceable as a pattern through all his hallucinatory flash-backs that his unrelenting subconscious, '*the globe of darkness*', persistently brings back to him. His calculating brain, which recognizes no value other than self-preservation, is prepared to go to any extent to promote and preserve self. His is the cosmic case of a rationalist through and through, floating directionless in the vacuous sea of reason, devoid of spiritual insight and condemned to obsessive self-preoccupation.

Although his six-day long ordeal is comparable to that of Crusoe, he is a despicable human specimen unlike Crusoe. What is more, Martin is never rescued :

The bleakness of his solitude offers no security against introspection and, as his selfishness comes to comprehend the self it serves, his personality disintegrates⁵⁴.

Tormented by hallucinations and self-loathing he lapses into insanity and dies during an 'apocalyptic storm'. Inconsistent though it might be with the expected norms of mundane reality, such an ending would have given the novel at least a semblance of realistic fiction. But this is not so.

2.4.4 THE IRONICAL REVERSAL IN THE NOVEL

The novel has the characteristic Golding-reversal at the end. There are Mr. Davidson and Mr. Campbell on a remote island in the Hebrides where they speak of Martin's body which has been washed ashore nearly a week back. It is clear that Martin has died immediately on falling into the water without much struggle and hence without much suffering. What then is this week-long struggle on the mid-Atlantic rock ? Going back to the clues, one finds a constant reference by Martin throughout the novel to the boots that he repents for having kicked off and the end particularly makes it clear that '*He didn't even have time to kick off his sea-boots*'. [Pincher Martin, p. 208]

Thus the sea-boots are used as an important narrative device to show that Pincher Martin died within a few seconds of his having fallen into the water. This makes the improbability of his rock-existence all the more glaring. Obviously, Golding has written about a dead body with a stubborn sub-conscious that dares survive for nearly a week.

2.4.5 THE FABLE IN *PINCHER MARTIN*

Golding has enfolded a potent fable into the obscurely patterned 'programme' of his novel. This fable shows on the one hand the dangers of relegating to the backseat an essential aspect of human nature treating the emotional, instinctive, irrational element simply as if it did not exist. Golding makes effective use of irony and parody to manipulate his complex fable, giving his novel a multi-generic identity.

The fable operates on various levels simultaneously with the help of two structural devices -- the character of the protagonist and his experience on the rock. The protagonist combines many roles in himself which become significant vis-a-vis his struggle for survival in the light of his memory flashbacks on the rock. Pincher Martin emerges in the novel as a grim inversion of Everyman; he is also seen to be the very incarnation of the vice of Greed; his Promethean stance projects him as the mythic representative of human suffering in a metaphysical context; while his vivified predicament as a castaway underscores his affinity to the likes of Robinson Crusoe.

As such, in accordance with his complex roles, his 'suffering' also adorns distinct shades of interpretation. With Pincher's development as the ironical Everyman in the novel, his experience assumes the form of an allegory; his crystalline quality of Greed as his basic element along with his theatrical background makes the

enactment of his rock-existence into a morality play. Similarly, his assumed Promethean attitude elevates the seeming drama of human endurance and defiance to the height of a mythic experience. Such a mythogenic self-projection of Pincher Martin is further assisted by his dramatic evocation of or allusion to dramatic personae such as King Lear, Ajax, Atlas among others.

Thus, it would be interesting to work out how Pincher Martin stands as a novel. However, this will be possible only if Pincher Martin is analysed in each of its modal existences. In view of John Peter's insightful comment that :

a novelist depends ultimately not only on the richness of his materials but on the richness of his interests too; and fable, by tying these to a specific end, tends to reduce both⁵⁵

a challenging task underlies this analysis : it is to ascertain whether the generic diversity has enriched the fable to give it a desirable potency as a novel; or whether the fable has imposed a restrictive pattern that has drained the vitality of its fiction.

2.4.6 ALLEGORY IN THE NOVEL

In the subtle significance of the novel as in the controlled approach of the novelist to its complicated pattern, the novel has the appearance of an allegory. But in view of its central theme regarding the spiritual blindness of contemporary man, this novel seems to be an irony of a conventional allegory. The character of the protagonist who is an inversion of Everyman further supports

this notion. Martin who is Christ-bearer turned to a 'Pincher' is only a seeming representative of ordinary human beings. He is exceptionally depraved and intentionally wicked. In fact, his chosen adversary-cum-friend Nathaniel Walterson who is Goodness incarnate doubly underscores the inverted allegory involved. Nat is Pincher's only friend, whom he reluctantly loves, yet 'hates quiveringly' and even contrives to have killed.

Through the various shifts in narrative, attained via Pincher's hallucinatory flashbacks, it transpires that he is basically an evil character. There is no clue given anywhere in the novel to indicate Martin's development from natural innocence to depravity. This diminishes the relevance of Martin's situation to that of ordinary humankind. The coda at the end of the novel further justifies the irony underlying the allegory in *Pincher Martin* through its exposition of Pincher's post-mortem existence. After all, it is an improbability that cannot be the symbolic enactment of general human predicament. In fact, Golding has claimed that :

The story is intended as only an analogue for the real world because in itself it is both a 'psychological impossibility' and a 'theological one'⁵⁶.

Thus to regard the allegory motif as anything more than a structural device would be claiming too much.

However, by extension Pincher and Nat together represent an allegory of contemporary existentialist trauma, born out of a

fiercely rationalistic attitude to life and an acute apprehension of after-life due to the absence of any spiritual vision. Arnold Johnston's observation that :

Christopher Martin may be seen as Everyman only in a contemporary and limited sense⁵⁷ applies to the protagonist in both his Cartesian reason and his refusal of his own spiritual dimension, so typical of modern man. In his excessive egotism Pincher does not reckon the need for the light of spirit to illumine his 'dark centre', even when it is offered to him by his friend Nat.

2.4.7 THE AFFINITY OF THE NOVEL TO A MORALITY PLAY

The affinity of the novel to a morality play further elucidates the allegorical element in the novel. In fact the novel seems to be a carefully prepared theatre in which Pincer Martin, an actor by profession and a poseur by preference enacts the drama of his life. The continual allusion to theatrical terms, the display of the masks of seven deadly sins in the costumier's 'crypt' during Pincher's theatre days, the reference to his 'doubling' as Greed in a morality play and his own erratic allusions to plays like King Lear or Hamlet -- all indicate a painstakingly erected structure of a morality play within the novel.

But like every other action, thought or stance of Martin, his morality play is also an ironical creation and his various roles in it are parodies of the original. Of all his roles, the role of Greed suits him perfectly. Pete, Martin's producer describes Greed,

while on an inspection visit to the 'crypt' thus :

This painted bastard here takes everything he can lay hands on .. the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman. He was born with his mouth and flaps open and both hands out to grab. [Pincher Martin, p. 128].

This applies to Martin to the letter.

'Drama' becomes an appropriate description of Pincher's pretence of life and his defiance of death. The stage for Martin's illusory rock-existence is suitably make-believe. It is a construct of his own mind : an imaginary rock, created out of the 'memory of a decaying tooth'. Alternately his mind, described as the 'Globe', is 'the stage' where most of the action of his play occurs through a series of hallucinatory flash-backs. Ironically, Martin's play-acting is his final bid to grab a role that is not his. His every action and word on his imaginary Rockall is an ironical exposure of self-centered hubris, struggling to survive by creating an illusion. Thus

Martin is no more Everyman in Goldings's morality play than in Pete's, but like the 'Pincher' he is, Martin attempts to usurp the role.⁵⁸

2.4.8 MYTHIC ELEMENT IN *PINCHER MARTIN*

In fact it is Pincher's many roles that give a multi-structural entity to the novel. His evocation of Prometheus gives a mythic dimension to this novel both existentially and eschatologically. In Hynes' words :

Pincher Martin is an eschatological novel, a myth of dying; nevertheless it is more concerned with life than with death... 59

This can be seen from the spatio-temporal ambiguities that focus the twin realities of human life -- the existentialist reality trapped within the Cartesian universe of Reason and the other reality simply unknown to 'the modern heir of Descartes' except through his 'heroic' denial of it.

Thus Martin's chosen Promethean attitude in being a parody of 'heroism' becomes an ironical myth of a contemporary being in his fierce endeavour to preserve his identity. In fact, his egotistic assertion 'I am what I always was' coupled with the frantic self-assurance of simply 'I am ! I am !' exposes his self-centered reality. When placed beside the enormity of Pincher's blasphemous defiance of death in sheer fear of self-annihilation, the dilemma of contemporary man torn between scepticism of after-life and the apprehension of after-death becomes apparent.

Thus, the myth is unmistakably there in Pincher Martin. The cross that contemporary man carries on his shoulders may be as divorced as possible from spiritual devotion with which he claims to have no truck, the inevitability of divine grace to redeem him in the end is beyond doubt. All the efforts of man to run away from the darkness of his heart are pointless. His every effort is remote-controlled by his 'dark centre' -- the mystery of spirit that he either keeps denying or prefers to brush aside as merely the erratic subconscious mind. But ultimately, it is the

subconscious that carries the burdens of our guilts and lapses. As such, the subconscious is the post-lapsarian man's anthropological inheritance that Golding has tried to trace back to his Homo-Sapien ancestors, in *The Inheritors*. The line of darkness that was evident to Tuami, the artist - as he sailed beyond the fall to the safety and survival of the plains - has probably crystallized as the 'dark Centre' that dominates Pincher's existence on the rock. The voyage towards growth and civilization has ironically proved for humankind a mere rat-race on a circular track. In the words of Johnston,

despite the rationalistic approach -- and because of it -- the modern mind has steadily refused to confront the darker side of human experience... . 66

In this sense, Martin becomes the representative of modern man.

If man has 'progressed' in the material and sociological sense, he has regressed in the spiritual sense. The fear and guilt from which the Homo-Sapiens had run away have only caught up with their inheritors, now occupying the very depth of their being. From this there is no escape except to suppress it on the conscious level as long as one can. Thus, man in his fear and ignorance has conveniently placed the lid of inhibitions and taboos on his subconscious mind -- delegated to a grudging existence below the acceptable conscious mind -- sweeping all doubts, fear and guilts promptly under the carpet of rationalization. But it cannot be done forever. There has to be a final recognition of the ultimate

situation and Pincher's predicament is the archetypal realization of that situation at its most exclusive.

2.4.9 SEMANTIC AND GENERIC COMPLEXITY OF *PINCHER MARTIN*

Since the novel tracks down man's existentialist trauma to his basic element -- his '*dark centre*' distinct from his physical existence -- it is interesting to assess how the work supports the weight of its semantic complexity and '*moral programme*'. The novel encapsulates varied modal possibilities for condensing its fabular essence in a crystalline organic structure. This naturally posits the novel with the challenge of aesthetic demands to convey its thematic potential without compromising the convention of form, as also without surrendering to the temptation of the life-like enactment of a soul-less reality.

Apparently *Pincher Martin* meets this challenge adequately with its dense texture enriched with allusions, ambiguity and symbolism giving evidence of a complex narrative structure. Golding's sublime imagination and his compact use of language particularly balance this delicately contrived equipoise between fable and fiction. In fact imagination and expression blend with such effortless precision as to make the apparent simplicity a clue to the thematic obscurity. However this paradox underscores the equability of fiction with fable. It indicates above all that the language is potently activated to suit the patterned meaning of the fable

without diminishing the modal facets it seems to adorn at a given moment in the novel.

In *Pincher Martin*, Golding's noteworthy achievement is that the mode of narration, the operating mood and a given fictional moment synchronize so that no event occurs without its cohesive contribution to the narrative. The well-worked out time-shifts of the narrative facilitate the furtherance of the multifarious thematic asset of the novel, while assigning many angles of generic status to the theme. The narrative shifts ascertain three temporal dimensions simultaneously operating in the novel, determining the predominance of one particular generic strand over others at a given moment.

Thus, at the outset when the narrative concerns the illusory present of the protagonist -- his self-created reality of rock-existence -- the novel presents the façade of realistic fiction. Though vividly etched out, this mode of fiction is only apparent and therefore consistent with the virtual reality of the castaway's predicament. In a metaphysical sense subsuming the present, this realistic mode can be seen as an allegory of the protagonist's spiritual ship-wreck and his self-exile on the tortuous rock of egotistic hubris eaten to the core by moral decay. Thus realistic fiction operates in the context of the present spatio-temporal considerations which in the novel are illusory. Thus the realism of the narrative is in itself insignificant except as a narrative

device.

Similarly the motif of the allegorical drama-cum-morality play powerfully imposes the 'actual' reality of the protagonist's past over the subtle surface of his past to which he conveniently and consciously relates. Since the past that the protagonist's hallucinations throw up 'is' real, the dramatic technique is effectively utilized to bring it into focus. Drama being a mimetic art, the use of dramatic technique heightens the irony of Pincher's situation -- he pretends to 'live' illusion while his dramatic propensities recreate the reality that he would prefer to forget. The dramatic technique works through memory-flashbacks of the protagonist. It involves his past - interactions with others presented objectively through recollected dialogue. The significance of this objectivity becomes obvious when compared with the subjectivity of the vividly depicted verisimilitude of the imaginary rock in an illusory present.

However when Pincher's physical death, preceding his rock-existence is revealed, the motif of allegory becomes insufficient and the morality play yields place to more intense drama involving the shock of a reversal -- the revelation that Pincher had died even before he could 'kick off' his sea boots. This revelation renders his whole rock experience the status of a post-mortem existence that becomes by extension a metaphor with universal implications. All the time, while Pincher had been furiously creating for himself his

present and the reader had been reconstructing his 'past' through the memory flashbacks, the novel was concerned with the 'future' of an unrelenting, egotistic being. In its concern with 'future', in relation to the 'past' and the momentary 'present' of Pincher, the novel adopts the form of a myth. Pincher by extension becomes the archetype for the Being that refuses spiritual existence, denies any metaphysical aspect of life, defies God and resists Grace, thereby creating his own Hell.

Pincher's post-mortem 'life' is to be analysed, in terms of an eternity without the dimensions of space and time. In the words of Golding :

just to be Pincher for life is purgatory, to be Pincher for eternity is Hell.⁶¹

The thrust of the theme thus reveals the imprint of myth on the narrative when the novel focuses on the likely 'future' of the protagonist. In fact at Pincher's being reduced to a pair of red 'claws' worn away by the Black Lightning, the realistic strain of the protagonist's life and the allegorical motif woven into it both yield place to a sudden shift in the spatiotemporal context of the narrative to bring in a new perspective that transcends the context of both space and time.

This is subtly conveyed to the reader through the dialogue between the two characters, Davidson and Mr. Campbell, who enter the narrative. Their respective approaches to Martin's death and suffering lend the desirable element of ambiguity to Martin's predicament : it becomes by turns an individual's momentary

experience 'as well as the timeless concern over universal human condition. Thus the element of ambiguity transforms the casual conversation into a vital structural device and a comment on the entire narrative. This elevates the fable organized around the trauma of a ship-wrecked sailor to a myth of humankind in its role of 'spiritual castaways'. It can be thus deduced that Pincher Martin is a novel with an intricate symbolic structure having a multiple semantic pattern that emanates from a complex theme. Significantly the apparent obscurity of the narrative and the ambivalent perspective of the thesis divulge the mythopoeic essence of the novel while making it an unique fictional experience 'profoundly attuned to contemporary sensibility'⁶².

2.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be argued that Pincher Martin is the culmination of a process of 'experimental' novel-writing that began for Golding with Lord of the Flies 'worked out carefully in every possible way' so as to make the 'programme' of the book its meaning. In decoding the seminal idea of the universality of evil in mankind, Golding attempted a fictional experiment that was to be the embodiment of his thesis. The stupendous success of that novel is a living testimony to the fictional appeal of this experiment inspite of its fabular thrust, its overt symbolism and over-explicitness. Added to these shortcomings, Lord of the Flies had to

cope with the challenges of a structure with many generic facets, in its obvious *'compromise of proselytism and art'*⁶³. However in contending with these several demands, the narrative displays the author's mythopoeic power to transcend the programme of his fable to make it a gripping embodiment of a fiery and disturbing story.

The *Inheritors* reveals *'Golding's real power, the true nature of his mythopoeic obsession'* in its enactment of the homo sapiens' progress which is the :

defeat of Innocence, the sin of Adam in terms of a new kind of history⁶⁴.

Though an experiment in trying to embody a new concept or a new thematic perspective, *The Inheritors*, unlike its predecessor, is a great achievement in terms of its compact structure, excellent narrative technique and succinct poetic language. It shows greater freedom from the overt manipulations and didacticism that marred *Lord of the Flies*. In another sense, too, *The Inheritors* is an experiment. It boldly undertakes to work with the restricted faculties, limited perception and poor experience of simple-minded Neanderthals. The complex generic levels are operative in this novel too. Yet, it shows Golding's:

surer grasp of his symbolic structure, weaving together myth, religion, anthropology, psychology and sociology

to produce a complex moral formula *'in the context of a thoroughly engrossing story* having considerably curtailed his

earlier tendency to didacticism. Thus the novel stands as a major accomplishment of the *experiential phase* of the 'Golding Novel'. To use Kermode's words, 'written presumably at white heat It has not been surpassed'⁶⁵.

However the most crucial novel in the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' is undoubtedly **Pincher Martin**. It is a vital link between the novelist's early experimental endeavors and the subsequent socially-prone fiction of this stage. Incorporating the '*habitual devices*' that the 'Golding Novel' utilizes -- the confrontation scenes, the reversal at the end, the '*exiled*' fictional milieu -- **Pincher Martin** initiates some new techniques that sets off the 'Golding Novel' firmly towards its *social phase* that is manifestly recognizable through **The Pyramid**.

Deprived of the adventitious merit of **Lord of the Flies** and containing hardly any story-line, **Pincher Martin** is a daring experiment in narrative skill and structural devices. Ostensibly allegorical and fundamentally dramatic in technique, the novel is a wonderful achievement that combines the import of an overpowering myth with the impact of a real experience out of a nightmarish illusion of a '*theological impossibility*'. However, the significance of the novel is not confined to its being an accomplished artistic experiment. It marks a point of departure for the 'Golding Novel' in more than one ways, poised as it is for its

onward march into its next phase --- the *transitional phase*.

However, it is necessary to ascertain the status of the 'Golding

Novel' at the end of this discussion of the *experimental phase*

In spite of the fact that Golding's narratives do carry more meaning than which is conveyed by the character or the novelist, the novels do not become skeletons of fables nor images of ideas. Nor do they contain abstraction to the extent that they could be considered merely fables. Though allegorical, they are essentially embodiments of life-like action; and being myths they retain an element of the fictional with the notable absence of the legendary. Thus

it seems better to be content with calling them simply novels, while recognizing that they have certain formal properties that distinguish them from most current fiction.⁶⁶

It is with this insight into the 'Golding Novel' in its *experimental phase* that this discussion will proceed to analyse it in its *transitional phase* in the following chapter.

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41. Peter Green, 'The World of Golding', **William Golding :**

- Novels, 1954-67, p. 88.
42. Green's said article is itself an acknowledgement of Golding's achievement.
 43. William Golding in a panel discussion compiled by Punitha Sushila, *Literature Alive*, vol.2, No. 1, June 1988, p. 17.
 44. Golding's versatile interest in these areas has been revealed in *The Hot Gates*, (London Boston : Faber and Faber, 1965) and has been referred to by critics such as Peter Green, Stephen Medcalf among others.
 45. James Gindin, '*Ginnick*' and Metaphor in the Novels of William Golding', *William Golding : Novels 1954-67*, p. 69.
 46. Green, '*The World of Golding*', *William Golding : Novels, 1954-67*, p. 85.
 47. Medcalf, *William Golding*, p. 7.
 48. '*William Golding*', in a panel discussion, *Literature Alive*, pp. 15-6.
 49. Johnston, *Of Earth and The Darkness*, p. 22.
 50. Golding has said of Martin, '*He's fallen more than most. In fact I went out of my way to damn Pincher as much as I could by making him the nastiest type I could think of*' See his

- interview with Frank Kermode, *'The Meaning of It All'*, **Books and Bookmen**, p. 10.
51. Kinkead Weekes and Gregor, **William Golding**, p. 121.
 52. *Ibid* p. 121.
 53. Samuel Hynes, *'On Pincher Martin'*, in **William Golding : Novels 1954-67**, p. 1126.
 54. Peter, *'Golding's Fables'*, **William Golding : Novels, 1954-67**, p. 41.
 55. *Ibid* p. 35.
 56. Tiger, **Dark Fields**, p. 102.
 57. Johnston, **Of Earth and Darkness**, p. 45.
 58. *Ibid*. p. 41.
 59. Hynes, *'On Pincher Martin'*, **William Golding : Novels, 1954-67**, p. 132.
 60. Johnston, **Of Earth and Darkness**, p. 45.
 61. William Golding to Virginia Tiger. See **The Dark Fields of Discovery**, pp. 102-37.
 62. Kermode, *'Intellectual Economy'*, **William Golding : Novels, 1954-67**, p. 53.
 63. Peter, *'Golding's Fables'*, **William Golding : Novels, 1954-67**, p.

36.

64. Kermode, '*Intellectual Economy*', *William Golding : Novels, 1954-67*, p. 60.

65. *Ibid*, p.60.

66. Hynes, '*Moral Models*', *William Golding : Novels, 1954-67*, p. 98-9.

CHAPTER THREE.

TRANSITIONAL PHASE

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two an attempt was made to identify the essence of the 'Golding Novel' and to analyse the novels of the *experimental phase* in this light. This Chapter intends to study the transitional development that culminates in bringing the 'Golding Novel' gradually closer to the traditional English Novel while yet retaining its distinct characteristics. The novels of the *transitional phase* will be therefore discussed in this chapter to illustrate this subtle development.

Golding's *Free Fall* (1959) and *The Spire* (1964) best illustrate this process of delicate balance between his earlier singular '*experimental*' approach to novel-writing and his gradual tilt towards the traditional novel in trying to meet the growing demands of his themes and those of his reading public. They are identified here as the novels of the *transitional phase*.

Incidentally, *Free Fall* and *The Spire* along with *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin* belong to the first decade of Golding's career as a novelist. Thus together they afford an insight into the Initial Stage of his development as a novelist which is considered through two phases in this study, namely, the *experimental* and *transitional* phases. It is interesting to observe that in the first decade of novel-writing,

Golding shows a deviation from traditional and a gradual return to it.

3.1.2 NOVELS OF THE *TRANSITIONAL PHASE*

Free Fall and *The Spire*, together with the three novels discussed earlier, offer a perspective on Golding's novels. Thereby they help trace, in retrospect, the decade-long process of growth of the 'Golding Novel' and illustrate the course that Golding's imagination pursued during the Initial Stage of his novel-writing. They also help in determining the change in the novelist's point of view during this period, the degree to which contemporary influences might have precipitated such a change and the probable reasons for it.

Besides being novels that belong to the *transitional phase* of the 'Golding Novel', the two novels merit discussion also for the following reasons : -

(i) The two novels have related themes : *Free Fall* questions the manner and the moment of 'fall' in the life of a contemporary creative artist from innocence to an awareness of sin. *The Spire* questions the motives, whether manifested or not, behind an individual's actions that lead to his fall despite his laudable intentions and beliefs.

(ii) They indicate Golding's ease in handling narrative technique. In *Free Fall* he uses first person narration for the first time.

Even when re-investing previously exploited technique, Golding's facility in doing so is evident in *The Spire*.

(iii) The characterization in these novels shows a definite upsurge towards aesthetically more satisfying character-creations than hitherto achieved by Golding.

(iv) The confrontation scenes so vital to the 'Golding Novel' show, in these two novels, a definite development in terms of the novelist's strategy in utilizing them.

(v) The social milieu in these two novels also highlights the transition in the 'Golding Novel'.

Hence, by discussing these two novels together as constituents of the *transitional phase* of the 'Golding Novel', it will be possible to reveal the nature and the scope of transition in Golding's career. In other words, an analysis of the two novels will be useful to discuss the following issues: What sort of qualitative changes enter the 'Golding Novel' during this phase; whether these changes enhance its fictional potential; if so, to what extent; and further, whether these changes help to navigate it towards the second stage of its development, the Social Stage. Further, being the constituents of the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' an analysis of the transitional features of these novels will facilitate the intended discussion of the structural narrative and perspectival features of all the five novels of the Initial Stage at the end of this Chapter.

3.1.3 THE NATURE OF TRANSITION

In *Free Fall* and in *The Spire* there is a distinct change in the novelist's approach to the story and its presentation. The prominence enjoyed by '*pre-conceived thesis*' in *Lord of the Flies* or *The Inheritors* is gradually side-tracked in *Free Fall* and *The Spire*. In fact, these novels can be enjoyed in themselves without the constraining interference of a fable. Again, these two novels deviate noticeably from Golding's earlier preference for exclusively isolated locale, thematic didacticism and a rather unconventional milieu. This can be best illustrated by returning briefly to the novel immediately preceding *Free Fall* -- *Pincher Martin*.

In *Pincher Martin* Golding had, to some extent, relaxed his grip over the '*controlled and isolated*' milieu of his earlier novels, making a reluctant way for social interaction, without entirely surrendering his '*insulated fable*'. It gradually paved the way for character development and emotional relationships in the novels of the *transitional phase* namely, *Free Fall* and *The Spire*. Incidentally, in *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* too, there had been a fair attempt at character-delineation but being functional, perhaps incidental, it left much to be desired in terms of aesthetically satisfying characters.

• The action in these novels develops more or less inevitably :
evil is seen to emanate from mankind itself as in *Lord of the*

Flies; or circumstances make a certain line of action unavoidable as in *The Inheritors*. In *Pincher Martin*, too, characterization is in no way causally instrumental to the plot. Yet, in exposing the '*intentional Pincher*' in Christopher Hadley Martin, Golding opens the social avenues to his fiction, yielding place to complex human relationships and a causally viable plot in the subsequent novels.

The suggested emotional relationship between Mary and Nathaniel in *Pincher Martin* is the first of its kind in the '*Golding Novel*'. Incidentally, *The Inheritors* portrays a furtive sexual congress between the tribal artist Tuami and Marlan's woman Vivani. But there is hardly any palpable emotional basis provided for it. Thus, the social milieu enters Golding's fiction from the back-door through the memory flashbacks of *Pincher Martin*. They project his erstwhile social interaction, his relationship with others or rather the absence of it, reveal his '*character*' and thereby his social environment to a limited degree. Ironically, the '*loathsome glimpse*' of Pincher's hideous social behaviour including his sexual exploits and moral depravity is vital in one's refutation of Peter Green's charge that :

Golding's imagination has always worked at a fair remove from the full body of human life¹.

This '*loathsome glimpse*' in *Pincher Martin* is not a blemish in Golding's art but rather an effective technical device to make:

is central character as bad as he possibly could be so that there would be no doubt as to what was happening².

Nonetheless, it testifies to the novelist's skill to create a social milieu, however loathsome, that was to be exploited by him in the subsequent novels of the Initial Stage. In *Free Fall* and *The Spire*, he also undertakes the challenge of a more developed social interaction that is kept at a low ebb in *Pincher Martin*.

Perhaps related to the limited exposure given to social interaction in the novels of his *experimental phase* is Golding's concern with 'being' rather than with 'becoming'. Whether in *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* or *Pincher Martin* the novelist's prime concern is with the innate condition of his protagonist and by implication of mankind. The main thrust of the argument is merely on the surfacing of evil in Man. This somehow reduces the intensity of the novelist's probing approach into the intrinsic evil in Man to a revelation of what appears to be the nascent aspect of human nature -- the essence of being.

This observation is further bolstered by the fact that there is no justification of how man becomes depraved; there is, in fact, no attempt made to trace his departure from what is supposedly Goodness or Innocence to what is recognizably Evil, Cunning or Greed. In other words, in all the three novels of this phase namely, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*, the 'Golding Novel' focuses on surfacing the 'darkness of

man's heart' or the basic propensity to evil in mankind without making it casually viable. This is perhaps necessary to the thematic thrust of these novels. Golding has proclaimed emphatically that for a novelist, it is :

the basic human condition where his true business lies. If he has a serious, an Aeschylean, preoccupation with the human tragedy, that is only to say that he is committed to looking for the root of the disease instead of describing the symptoms
our real job is to show it sub specie aeternitatis³

Such preoccupation with '*being*' requires a deep penetration into an individual's mind or into a situation in itself to '*recognize*' the various shades of '*reality*' involved. The inquiry into '*becoming*' necessitates an explanation of the transition from **Innocence to Fall** through the exercise of *free will*. In the later novels of the Initial Stage, Golding concentrates on the departure from '*being*' to '*becoming*'. This, naturally, ropes in such related issues as social environment and social intercourse that activate the process of this transition. It is thus that in **Free Fall** a more detailed social context is pinned on to Sammy's self-interrogation and to Jocelin's self-deception in **The Spire**.

But, as the focus in these novels is yet on the individual and not on the society at large, these novels fall short of being described as the fully '*social*' novels. However since a departure towards the '*social novel*' is already

discernible in them, they had best been considered to approximate to the *transitional phase* of the 'Golding Novel'. Between them, *Free Fall* and *The Spire* mould the already socially oriented 'Golding Novel' at the end of its *experimental phase*, firmly towards social fiction.

As the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' concludes with *The Spire* (1964), Golding's approach, technique and concern become fully tuned in to undertake his maiden social theme in *The Pyramid* (1967). However, to unravel this process of change, it is imperative to discuss not only the novels, *Free Fall* and *The Spire* but also the position of the 'Golding Novel' in terms of its narrative, structure, characterization, and theme. This will elucidate Golding's basic thematic preoccupation by unfolding his style and vision at the conclusion of the decade-long novel-writing of the Initial Stage.

Presently, the focus of this study will be on *Free Fall* and *The Spire* to discuss their thematic potential in order to discern their thematic continuity from the *experimental phase*. Along with this approach, an inquiry will also be made into the main features of the novelist's departure from his earlier extra-fictive, fabular mode of novel-writing and his professed inclination for moralizing and allegory. Finally, the process of transition will be elucidated by a novel-wise comment on the fundamental aspects of the 'Golding Novel' -- structural,

narrative, perspectival -- together with an assessment of Golding's style and vision.

3.2.1 THE PLOT OF *FREE FALL*.

The issue to be explored in *Free Fall* is not merely the human condition as it is, but the understanding of how and why it is so. This makes the novel seem thematically obscure although the plot is quite simple. Narrated by the protagonist, it centres around Sammy's urgent quest for the precise moment of his own fall in an attempted retracement of his past life. He finds his babyhood in a slum, warm and transparent and himself floating '*through life like a bubble, empty of guilt*' [*Free Fall*, p. 29]. Dominated by the twin-influences of his Ma '*as near a whore as makes no matter*' and Evie '*a congenital liar*', Sammy discovers a strange security in his childhood. For him, Rotten Row is :

roaring and warm, simple and complex, individual and strangely happy and a world unto itself [*Free Fall* p. 33].

As a part of his '*masculine triangle*' Sammy's boyhood oscillates between the daredevil Johnny Spragg and Philip Arnold '*with a mind like a damp box of matches*' [*Free Fall* p. 47]. Of his life with Johnny Spragg, Sammy the adult admits that he '*can only guess our innocence not experience it*' [*Free Fall* p. 45]. But he confesses on hindsight that none had '*altered my life*' as Philip altered it' [*Free Fall* p. 47]. At Philip's insinuation he attempts to desecrate the alter of a local

church; slapped by the Verger his mastoid infection bursts and he is hospitalized. This leads to his association with the paranoid Rector Watts-Watt and eventually to Sammy's life in the rectory under his guardianship, on Sammy's mother's death. To this point Sammy is convinced of his freedom :

I was innocent of guilt, unconscious of innocence; happy, therefore, and unconscious of happiness (Free Fall p. 78).

Next he remembers his hopeless infatuation for Beatrice Ifor and finds himself '*beyond the taste or hope of freedom*'. Although he has lost the freedom to choose he has not yet fallen. His life at this stage is an account of his overwhelming longing for the simple and inhibited Beatrice. As such, his loss of freedom is related to his yearning to understand and communicate with Beatrice. However, lurking below his desire to know is the obsession to possess so that, eventually his exalted aspirations to '*adore*' her, to identify with the very core of her being, manifest themselves in the form of a crude sexual exploitation. In a rare twist of irony, Sammy's ideal love is self-strangled by his confused, perhaps egotistic approach to it. As S.J. Boyd notes :

Sammy is inclined to make a religion of love, he seems to worship Beatrice, yet the true object of his worship is pleasure or self-gratification⁴.

3.2.2 ELEMENT OF IRONY IN THE NOVEL

The element of irony seems to be operating in Free Fall from
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this point onwards. For Sammy, their relationship springing from true love and seeking '*fusion and identity*' becomes -- through his physical torment of Beatrice and through her inhibitions and passivity towards his sexual approaches -- a series of agonizing experiences :

What had been love... what was to be triumphant sharing... became a desperately shoddy and cruel attempt to force a response from her somehow. Step by step we descended the path of sexual exploitation until the projected sharing had become an infliction [Free Fall p. 123].

Inevitably running away from Beatrice, he turns to the '*liberated*' Taffy delegating Beatrice to oblivion, a mere '*skeleton in the cupboard*' [Free Fall p. 128]. Ironically again, Beatrice is not just a metaphorical skeleton in Sammy's life, she has become in reality a mere vegetable, a lump of flesh in a lunatic asylum, perhaps '*the very bone that had coarsened*' [Free Fall p. 242]. In fact, Sammy's meeting with her is reminiscent of his memory of the retarded Minnie in his nursery school. For the adult Sammy, the truth behind his love now is crystal clear. Instead of ennobling his vision and enriching his life in a sublime way, it has activated a process of spiritual degeneration leading him back to the rock bottom of regression -- a feeling of atavistic loathing for the object of his love coupled with an irremedial self-loathing.

Interestingly, Sammy had first seen Beatrice for as a model sitting in front of a painting of the Palladian Bridge and

had discovered :

... there in her face and around the openness of her brow, a metaphorical light that none the less seemed [to him] to be an objective phenomenon, a real thing. [Free Fall p. 222]

By extension, Sammy can be viewed as a parody of Dante. But as Virginia Tiger observes :

where as to Dante Beatrice becomes an instrument of contemplation, exaltation, and finally salvation... to Sammy she is merely an instrument of lust.⁵

There are clues and motifs in the text to support such an ironical allusion to Dantesque vision of love. In a significant reversal of Dante's discovery in the woods, Sammy the artist also discovers himself in a wood. But he discovers the wrong dimension of himself and makes the wrong choice -- not in the choice of his goal but in his means to it. Taking a cue from the advice given to him by his Headmaster he pledges to stake 'everything' for the sake of attaining Beatrice. But unfortunately in so doing, he elevates neither her nor himself, rather, degrades both.

In another Dantesque parallel, although he has destroyed his Beatrice by making sex the instrument of his recognition of her essence, he intuitively catches through his art the sublimity and the calm repose of her Being. In spite of his obvious efforts 'to catch the terror' on her face he finds :

there was no terror to catch. There was dog faith and big eyes and submission, Beatrice looking as though she had been blessed [Free Fall p. 124].

The irony in the novel does not confine itself to Dantean allusions alone : it also amplifies the futility of Sammy's chosen world as well as the manner of his discovery. In an artistically construed confrontation scene, Sammy as a P.O.W. is put through a terrifying experience by the German psychiatrist, Dr. Halde. After a rigorous cross-examination Sammy is confined to a dark broom closet. In his terror and solitariness, the awesome fear of the dark from his boyhood days at the rectory takes possession of him. In an insane moment of self-infliction, Sammy experiences in exaggerated proportion the terror and the despair of his past life in his chosen world. Stripped to his core, he discovers with newfound insight, the compulsively suppressed dimension of his self -- the metaphysical. While this redeems him from his sinful past, it does not relieve him from the guilt for his actions towards Beatrice.

However, in part, the onus for his treatment of Beatrice can be traced back to Miss Rowena Pringle's religion-class and her 'crucifixion' of child Sammy. Hence Sammy's is the unknowing manifestation of the inferiority complex and the guilt that she has heaped on him. As he says in hindsight :

Guilty as I; therefore wicked will I be ... Guilt coaxes before the crime and can cause it. [Free Fall p. 232]. .cw 12

There is another angle to his guilty actions and they relate to his chosen preference for a world of sanity and logic over his spontaneous recognition of an irradiated spiritual universe.

Ironically, his choice is no more rational than his self, as he admits :

I know myself to be irrational because a rational belief dawned in me and I had no basis for it in logic and calm thought (Free Fall p. 226.).

This choice is dominated by his liking for the warm humanism of the rationalistic Nick Shales with his '*stunted universe*'. It is also a reaction against the persecution and the vicious treatment of himself at the hands of Miss Pringle -- a thwarted spinster.

No doubt, Sammy's chosen victim is the idol of his adoration, but none the less he does '*crucify*' her :

But much responsibility for her crucifixion rests with Miss Pringle, whose lessons made Sammy's feelings about sex, religion and class such a deadly mixture of attraction and repulsion, love and hate. The guilt that was her gift to him prompted his guilty action towards Beatrice.⁶

In all probability, it was an unconscious infliction but it was, nonetheless, an infliction. In fact, Sammy's comment about Church and class, during his obsessive pre-occupation with Beatrice is self-explanatory :

church of England was top and bottom; chapel was middle, was the class grimly keeping its feet out of mud (Free Fall p. 101).

By extension, Sammy's cruel inhuman treatment of Beatrice can be seen as his instinctive act of dragging these clean '*middle class*' feet into the mud of sin and self-condemnation. It might have been an unconscious act, perhaps even an helpless

one, but it is the source of his life-long guilt.

3.2.3 THEMATIC CONTINUITY WITH THE EARLIER NOVELS

At this point Sammy becomes a point of thematic attachment to *The Inheritors* as well as to *Pincher Martin*. He is the more advanced inheritor of the tribal artist Tuami at the end of *The Inheritors* -- with his seared artistic sensibility, burdened with the guilt and the helplessness of the situation. Whereas Tuami had the consolation of his art, Sammy with his more developed awareness of sin is doomed to wallow in paramount guilt. Unlike Tuami, he is an aspirant of the twin-worlds of matter and spirit simultaneously and, therefore, doomed to a condition of *free fall*.

He has tasted of Grace but has not realised its essence in repentance and total acceptance. He finds the whole world transfigured after his apocalyptic experience in the dark cell into '*a universe of brilliant and fantastic crystals*' [*Free Fall* p. 186]. Yet, he fails to get over his past life and his '*probable*' guilt for '*tipping*' over Beatrice. Thus, he remains indefinitely outside the gravitational pull of both the worlds. For him '*both worlds are real. There is no bridge*'. [*Free Fall* p. 293].

Despite this Sammy the protagonist is a contemporary '*bridge*' between *Pincher Martin's* egotistic denial of everything but self and *Nathaniel's* total acceptance of a benevolent Absolute. His

cell-experience is, thus, equable with Pincher's rock existence. His approach and motives are diametrically opposite to those of Pincher, although both of them launch a relentless search. For Pincher, it is a search or rather a preservation of Ego at all costs -- even in the refusal of the Ultimate Reality from his microcosmic universe. For Sammy, the search has begun after a dissolution of Ego and it re-affirms what he had always known, believed but consciously denied.

In retrospect he is an adult version of Ralph in *Lord of the Flies*. Having lost his innocence Sammy looks with gloom towards the inadequacy of reason but cannot bring himself to embrace the reality of spirit in a wholehearted gesture of total surrender. In this, he is reminiscent of the young Ralph -- about to step into an adult world full of evil, chaos, violence -- grieving over the death of Piggy, his 'true' friend but not yet awakened to the sublime sacrifice of Simon. But whereas Ralph is 'ignorant', Sammy is not. However, his dilemma is the tug-of-war of modern Man -- the dilemma of existence, an insoluble perennial problem. It is thus that :

Free Fall is core of a puzzle fragmentarily solved than a mystery to be known⁷.

However, if Sammy's dilemma be viewed as an archetype for contemporary life then its puzzlement lies not in its problem so much as in its solution. Sammy's problem is not in identifying either his 'fall' or his loss of freedom. He has even isolated the moment of his fall as the instant of his conscious choice made to

sacrifice 'everything' for the love of Beatrice. Again, he has also identified the moment of his crossing the bridge and the reader knows that it is the point of accumulation at which he falls 'in action'. But Sammy's greatest problem is of communication not only with his reader but himself. So, he fails to grasp the significance of the resurrection he undergoes, thereby failing also to achieve an all-inclusive perspective of his 'obscure' predicament.

3.2.4 THE ELEMENT OF OBSCURITY IN *FREE FALL*

The obscurity in the novel springs from his failure to understand what he has recognized. This results in Sammy's relentless efforts to re-run the film of his life, scrupulously going over all possible actions and interactions to probe into the manner and the cause of his fall. He has come to understand that his association with Beatrice is just the overt manifestation of his 'fall'; his real fall was the ruthless resolution to pursue this love at all cost. His loss of freedom precedes his enslavement of her through entreaty, cajolement, over-bearingness and even pretence of insanity. His crossing the bridge in desperation is the snowballing 'act' of his moral fall, while it is the end-point of his 'free' choice. In spite of knowing this, Sammy desires to probe into the complexities

of his adolescence to review the crisscross of influences that might have precipitated his 'fall', perhaps 'tacitly' even caused it.

This process of isolating an impact born of a conglomeration of interactions is essentially subjective, almost irrational. Hence, in spite of revealing to Sammy the likely influences, it cannot objectively satisfy him or even his readers :

If *Free Fall* seems to be the most elusive and difficult of Golding's novels, it is because Golding is now questioning the nature of understanding itself.⁸

This difficulty is further complicated by the nature of Sammy's quest, set in the midst of the chaotic contemporary situation. Its patternlessness, vagaries, spiritual void, pragmatism, conceptual paucity, inherent scepticism, impinge on the free analysis of data. Hence, Sammy is doomed to hang in an unsteady balance of doubt, not able to believe in 'some simple knowledge, some certainty to die' (*Free Fall* p. 172) or to live. His problem becomes complicated not in itself but through the opacity of his contemporaneous vision :

Even love in *Free Fall* partakes of the qualities of the modern world; it is cruel, dirty and violent.⁹

Moreover, the reader's view of the obscurity of Sammy's quest revealed through his autobiographical narrative is a testimony to the clarity that Redpath notes in Golding's novels. 'He observes that :

behind the opaqueness of the texts, there is a clarity, a truth, which the author is trying to make us see but which is almost impossible to describe in plain language.¹⁶

3.2.5 THE METAPHORICAL AND THE EXTRA-FICTIVE ELEMENT IN THE NOVEL

Taken in this extended sense *Free Fall* becomes much more than the disturbing soul-searching of an over-sensitive artist. It assumes the archetypal dimension of contemporary existentialist reality -- trauma and despair only partially alleviated by faith. However, the novel forcefully conveys the significance of the acceptance of and the surrender to the Divine Will, through Sammy's agonizing inability to do so. In brief, the novel is an attempted crystallization of the inevitable vicious cycle of contemporary human experience moving from **Absence of Faith** -> **Rationalization** -> **Egocentricity** -> **Despair** -> **Absence of Faith**.

As such the allegorical aspect of the novel becomes apparent when it is seen to transcend the '*programme*' of the novel. This allegorization also becomes the mythic condensation of the universal dilemma of existence into an individual experience. In revealing the '*reality*' behind Sammy's predicament, the novelist plots the whole range of human predicament and tacitly suggests a solution. Golding's own comment offers the necessary evidence for such a conjecture :

Always the truth is metaphorical ... The fabulist is a moralist. He cannot make a story without a human lesson tucked away in it ('*Fable*', in *The Hot Gates* p. 85).

It is clear that *Free Fall* continues the tradition of the

fabular and the mythic mode of its fore-runners albeit in an extremely subtle manner, letting fiction assume foreground. In doing this it foreshadows *The Spire*.

3.2.6 MYTH AS A SIGNIFICANT DEVICE OF AUTHORIAL QUEST

This technique of using myth as an instrument of his quest in *Free Fall* is further perfected by Golding in *The Spire*. In his first three novels, the myth underlying the plot was of primary importance. The end of his fables in each of his earlier novels was to arrive at this self-explanatory myth : in *Lord of the Flies* Golding had craftily enclosed in his fable the myth designed to identify the evil in mankind; in *The Inheritors*, the myth regarding man's loss of innocence was suitably distanced in time and space so as to give it desirable authenticity and acceptability; in *Pincher Martin*, the myth tries to explain the relation between Divine Grace and Retribution and human depravity and the willingness to repent.

But in *Free Fall*, myth is not used in the underlying scheme of the plot as a handy device to explain man's 'fall' from the free state of his 'Being' to the fallen condition of his 'Becoming' through his own 'free' choice. Sammy becomes the symbol of the average 'fallen' man who does not know how and when he has incurred the loss of his innocence even though all his actions have been the result of his own choice. Thus, symbolically Sammy's quest for

the truth that lies behind his awareness of sinfulness becomes the tool of discovery for mankind in general to map out its course from innocence to fall. In the opinion of Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor:

Golding can be seen to have gone behind *Lord of the Flies* and Pincher Martin to show that there is an innocence in childhood and that the child does not automatically father the man. He has re-phrased *The Inheritors* so that, in child and man, Lok again faces Tuami across the Gap between innocence and experience.¹¹

Interestingly, if Sammy locates this 'Gap', it is Jocelin in *The Spire* who fathoms it.

In *The Inheritors* the reader's identification with the simple Neanderthals is near-complete. But the novelist's concern to make the credibility of his myth consistent with the rationale of his plot draws the reader abruptly away from the pathos of Lok's self-extinction to the turmoil of Tuami's mind. So that the reader is somewhat baffled by the sudden realization that he belongs rightfully with Tuami and his tribe and not with the Neanderthals.

In *Free Fall* such an inconsistency is not experienced by the reader at any moment. The flitting sense of superiority that the reader has experienced to lesser or greater degree with the earlier protagonists is absent in *Free Fall*. Sammy Mountjoy remains a sympathetically analyzed and accepted character even at the moment when the most sinful side of his nature is revealed. The identification with his predicament becomes the easier for

the reader. But only because his life is his own, and not a pattern for all mankind, the reality he discovers momentarily is not sufficient to satisfy the reader in the ultimate analysis of the novel.

Sammy has come to understand that life is like the Sphinx's riddle, with its answer indicated in the words of the Camp Commandant who says '*The Herr Doctor does not know about peoples*' [Free Fall p. 253]. Since the answer to the Sphinx's riddle is man, it cannot be solved rationally by interpreting human mind. Human life is a mystery to be revealed than a puzzle to be solved. Hence, the note of incompleteness of solution and the opacity of vision that one experiences towards the end of Free Fall.

Notwithstanding such an incompleteness, the novel is a singular achievement. In fact, Sylvère Monod deservedly commends it as :

The least insular of Golding's novels so far, *Free Fall* is in many ways a new departure in the author's career¹².

While agreeing with Monod's assessment of this departure, it is necessary to analyse its significance as an evident transition in the development of the '*Golding Novel*'.

3.2.7 TRANSITION IN *FREE FALL*

The departure in *Free Fall* assumes the form of a gradual transition towards social fiction in the second stage of the

'Golding Novel'. This transition develops greater significance in the context of the next novel of this phase, *The Spire*. However, it would be advantageous to briefly dwell on the striking features of this transition during the *transitional phase* as it is identifiable in *Free Fall*. The most significant feature of the transitory step in the 'Golding Novel' at this point is the development of a more identifiable protagonist. Sammy is by far the first protagonist in Golding to have a definite acceptability and credibility in the reader's estimate.

Despite the unmanned void of Sammy's existentialistic enigma, Golding attempts something different in *Free Fall*. He offers his reader the opportunity to discover the mystery of life by coming as close as possible to the protagonist. He does this by making Sammy Mountjoy more accessible and human than his earlier protagonists. Sammy is portrayed with an apparently off-handed ease, interestingly significant in Golding's *modus operandi*, giving the character a casual and true-to-life tone. He becomes a credible and easily acceptable protagonist. His latent intuitive spark, natural to a creative artist, is convincingly enough, concealed by his chosen preference for a rational and empirical approach to life.

A marked amelioration over Pincher Martin, he is simply and naturally a bundle of contradictions -- torn between the world of spirit and the world of matter -- unknown to himself. It is easy

to identify with him than with any of the earlier 'Goldingian' protagonists. His 'fall' is understandably within the range of probability unlike Pincher Martin's depravity which is more akin to that of an allegorical 'badman'. Pincher's depravity can inspire neither sympathy nor understanding so necessary to the reader's identification with a protagonist.

In Sammy's case the identification of the reader with him is near-complete because the reader's predicament is not any the different from that of the protagonist. However, this does not imply that Sammy's life is a prototype for his reader in toto. While Sammy in his 'fall' and in his 'soul-searching' may be viewed as representative of modern humanity, his discovery is not typical in that it is a result of 'his' life -- made up of individual experiences and hence unique.

The significance of the transition in *Free Fall* is thus related to the development of Character and context in Golding. This can be better understood in relation to the earlier Golding-protagonists of the *experimental phase*. In *Lord of the Flies* while the boys are created in a true-to-life manner as 'real' boys, their environment and experiences in that environment cannot be shared by the reader. They remain accepted but not always convincing or probable.

In *The Inheritors* the remoteness of not just the environment but of the psycho-moral status of the protagonists rules out any meaningful identification. The reader can only offer sympathy

perhaps understanding. But the reader's conceptual superiority to Lok and perceptual superiority to Tuami comes in the way of his whole-hearted acceptance of both of them. In the case of **Pincher Martin**, the reader begins to view Pincher with sympathetic understanding but gradually withdraws from him in disgust and shock at his *'exceptional'* moral depravity.

Interestingly, such a transition in terms of character-creation is also related to a noticeable change in the use of novelistic devices in the *'Golding Novel'*. The development of Sammy as an acceptable character, therefore, indicates a transition in Golding's technique of presenting him vis-a-vis his condition. His gradual self-revelation is proportionate to the reader's understanding and sympathy. It goes on fluctuating all through the novel depending upon the nature of information divulged.

In **Pincher Martin** the reader's sympathy for the apparently *'heroic'* struggle of the protagonist is eroded stage by stage, just as he is brought closer to the reality of Pincher's life. In the case of Ralph in **Lord of the Flies** the reader can sympathise with him and experience the pathos of the events leading to Simon's death. But there is a feeling that this disaster could have been averted with a change in place and occasion. The plot has the feel of being artificially contrived to reach the desired culmination. Hence even while the reader can enjoy the story or be disturbed by

it, he is in some strange way distanced from it. The same is true of *The Inheritors*. But in *Free Fall* the reader's response is complex as is Sammy's life. The credit for re-creating this complexity goes to Golding's subtle technique.

In *Free Fall* the social environment often appears to have been brought into the narrative to assist the delineation of the theme. But at times it blends in with the narrative giving the impression that it has come in innocuously. However, *Free Fall* deserves credit for bolstering another aspect of Golding's technique as a novelist that was to be shortly re-invested in *The Pyramid*. In *Free Fall* Golding avails for the first time of a densely populated plot and devises a bold innovation hitherto avoided or not found necessary -- the use of a full-blooded relationship between his characters. He had attempted something close to this in his *Pincher Martin* but :

so loathsome is the glimpse given of man's social behaviour, one returns to the bare wind-swept rock with a sigh of relief¹³.

While none would disagree with this observation about *Pincher Martin* made by Green; the censure implicit in its veracity and forcefulness draws attention to Golding's accomplishment of a social context in *Free Fall*.

It is evident that Golding could not any longer steer clear of the demands of the social novel. Even while he appeared to be preoccupied with issues metaphysical in nature, it was impossible to isolate his themes any longer without prejudice to his

reading public. His *Pincher Martin* was misread and met with an uncomprehending reception from reviewers¹⁴. This might have given Golding the push towards the socially oriented novel in *Free Fall*.

But despite the beginning of social fiction in *Free Fall*, Golding's art as a social novelist benefits in terms of technique in *The Spire*. His psycho-analytical approach in *The Spire* along with his undoubted mastery over the professional details of the actual construction of the spire go a long way in giving the final touches to his new-found approach to fiction. The enactment of the drama in *The Spire* is achieved without anywhere compromising the social reality in which its characters are placed. While Golding's discernible aim is to offer the spire as a probe into the mind of his protagonist, it nowhere seems to be an external device thrust superficially for the purpose. Thereby, it affords a convincing note to the dramatic intensity that it is instrumental in creating. Moreover, *The Spire* serves as a demarcation of Golding's effortless artistry, at the close of the Initial Stage having overcome the :

predominant tensions of his artistic problems leaving the artist free for further explorations¹⁵.

3.3.1 *THE SPIRE*

In *The Spire* the whole perspective of Golding's concern with the nature and the condition of mankind becomes clear. He had

attempted to explore the evil in human nature right from his first novel *Lord of the Flies* and had continued this exploration in *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*. He had discovered evil to be universally present in mankind; tracing its source to the evolutionary cycle and its consequence to the total depravity that springs from unrelenting reason and a denial of spirit.

But when he came to *Free Fall*, Golding realised the impossibility of explaining the cause for human suffering in terms of one's preference for rational materialism over intuitive spirituality. The thrust of his argument is that Sammy Mountjoy lacked the insight to accept his own recognition of spiritual reality due to his chosen path of materialism. As his choice is an inscrutable paradox of human life, neither can Sammy understand it nor Golding explain it.

Despite this Golding suggests the key to both Sammy's predicament and his own novel through his reference to 'the *Sphinx's riddle* [*Free Fall* p. 253]. The reader with an initiative streak recognizes Sammy's condition and thereby resolves the mystery of human life. But for a more rational reader *Free Fall* entails an enigmatic duality :

a confession of failure and a confession of growth¹⁶.

The failure underscores the novelist's inability to reveal Sammy's enigma to the fullest. But 'this failure' indicates Golding's new-found approach to the complexity of existence -- his unwillingness to demystify the enigma of life reductively.

However, in *The Spire* Golding adopts a decidedly more convincing approach to his theme than in his earlier novels. To make his vision of the dual aspects of reality accessible to his reader, he lets him share the protagonist's intimate experiences of the duality of life -- revealing the truth buried under the façade of motives and intentions. Thus the difference between the reality that one believes in and the reality that one experiences, as intentions translate into actions, becomes apparent to the reader. To use Skilton's words, Golding ensures this shared perception by working :

through a single refracting consciousness, and the value of the novel lies to a very large extent in his ability to involve his reader in the working of a totally alien mind.¹⁷

Dean Jocelin, the protagonist of *The Spire* is the reader's parameter for this understanding of reality. Jocelin is somewhat like the spire that he wants to build -- a scale for the seen reality on the conscious level and for the unknown reality operating on the subconscious level of mind. Just as the 400 feet high spire becomes an emblem of Jocelin's recognition of what he does and why he does it, so also Jocelin's actions and his intentions become for the reader a symbol of the complexity of life, at once palpable and intangible. In Johnston's opinion :

He is perhaps the final step in Golding's exploration ... of the related problems of vision and delusion, creation and communication -- indeed, of his own approach to fiction.¹⁸

The ensuing analysis of the novel will substantiate this remark.

3.3.2 THE PLOT OF *THE SPIRE*

The *Spire* begins with a warmth of exultation and a pure joy of a vision being realised. The plot concerns the obsessive ambition of Dean Jocelin who believes that he has been chosen by God to erect a 400-foot spire over his church. But this joy is only short-lived. Soon all kinds of hurdles and problems come his way. The foundations, dug up to judge their capacity to bear the weight of the spire, reveal that they are resting over a swamp. The walls of the existing structure having been brought down, the service in the Cathedral is discontinued. The whole place becomes one infernal cavern of dust, noise and pollution. During the rains there is seepage from the church graveyards into the dug-up trenches causing unbearable stench.

Roger Mason, the master builder, advises against the building of the spire over the weak existing structure. But Jocelin, blinded with his hubristic '*vision*', refuses to acknowledge anything that is likely to thwart his project. In the face of mounting liabilities, he insists on building the spire at any cost. The pagan workmen forced on such a perilous project pick on the disabled church verger, Pangall, as a fool to ward off evil. His complaints of persecution and violation of his privacy go unattended. In fact, Jocelin turns a blind eye to every violation of morality in his church, in a ruthless perseverance of his vision. In his deluding faith, he views

every corrupt activity that the spire brings, in its wake as the necessary cost of accepting divine will.

In this ignorance, he fails to realise that he actually considers the spire as an instrument of self-glory and the Church as an embellishment to his own ego. His mislaid Faith sees no Reason and is thereby distorted into an egotistic obstinacy of Will. As a result of this, the spire develops not into a '*diagram of prayer*' as intended by Jocelin, but into '*Jocelin's folly*', an expression of his repressed psycho-sexual obsession, for Goody Pangall, his daughter-in-God.

This lack of perception in Jocelin is, perhaps, an extension of his self-deception and his subconscious defense against the truth he desperately refuses to acknowledge that :

his phallic ambition to erect the spire is connected to his interest in Goody¹⁹. To further guard his delusion of faith from any exposure to truth he avoids all related issues. His solution is simply to '*put aside all small things*', *If they are part of the cost, why so be it*'. For himself the option is to '*climb away from all this confusion*'. [The Spire p. 100].

Perhaps as an off-shoot of this attitude, he overlooks the amorous '*net*' that is ensnaring both Roger and Goody. He places a convenient cover of ignorance over the ritual murder of Pangall at the hands of the panic-stricken workmen when the bogged foundations start moving; he condones the adulterous alliance between Roger and Goody in '*the swallow's nest*' so as to

keep Roger from quitting work. He even consents to the 'sinful' money his aunt Allison, the late King's mistress offers for the work.

3.3.3 IRONY IN THE NOVEL

However in an ironical turn of events, so typical of the 'Golding Novel', the awareness of all the things from which he had been seeking release through a subconscious pretense of ignorance, slowly dawns on him. Through the mistletoe berry, he is forced to acknowledge that Pangall is buried into the pit 'yawning at the crossways as a *'grave prepared for some notable* [The Spire p. 156]. When his workmen knock off work on mid-summer's Eve, he comes to know that they are devil - worshipers. He is now able to see that the pagan workmen have sacrificed Pangall to propitiate the evil spirits.

In his newly attained humility he is able to understand that the spire is perhaps balanced by :

poor Pangall, crouched beneath the crossways, with a sliver of mistletoe between his ribs [The Spire p. 212].

The implication of Pangall's murder generates considerable perceptive leap in Jocelin as well as in the reader. It is clear, to use Kinead - Weekes and Gregor's words, that

Misshapeness and Impotence are ritually murdered. The sacrificial victim is built into the pit to strengthen the inadequate foundations.²⁹

The grossness of his abusively self-assertive Will begins to

further reveal itself to Jocelin, through a series of events. As a result of an assault on Roger by his crude, loud-mouthed wife Rachel, Goody has a traumatic miscarriage followed by her own tragic death; Roger takes to drink and quits work; Jehan, his assistant, loosens the steel band prematurely, thereby leading to a weak sub-structure; the papal emissary from Rome who comes to hold an inquiry into affairs of the Cathedral church and Jocelin's activities brings a Holy 'nail' instead of the expected funds for the spire. During the inquiry Jocelin has the opportunity to analyse his own past actions and intentions. He comes to recognize himself as :

... a building with vast cellarage where the rats live; and there's some kind of blight on my hands. I injure everyone I touch, particularly those I love (The Spire p. 216).

Ironically, in spite of his new-found perception Jocelin has not attained a comprehensive insight into the situation. He can see himself as the agent of persecution but not as the persecuted 'totemic figure' of the workers. However, the reader realises with Virginia Tiger that :

Pagan scapegoat is supervised by Christian Fool and while one is murdered, the other is merely taunted²¹.

It is in this 'folly' of faith, that Jocelin makes headway into the reader's sympathy despite his 'hubristic' vision so sacrilegious in a priest, more so in the Dean of the Cathedral of Our Lady. In a rare irony of the situation the reader is convinced that Jocelin

is genuine in his delusion of faith; that, if he is pretending, it is not a conscious pretence. He is aware of the unreasonableness of his action but he believes :

It's God's Folly. Even in the old days he never asked men to do what was reasonable. Men can do that for themselves... But then out of some deep place comes the command to do what makes no sense at all--- to build a ship on dry land; to sit among the dunghills; to marry a whore; to set their son on the altar of sacrifice. Then, if men have faith, a new thing comes. (The Spire p. 121)

During a raging storm the spire is threatened by collapse. Jocelin dares the onslaught of wind and rain to climb up to the top of the spire and 'nail' it to the sky with the hope of securing it against any destruction. The spire, damaged but secure, survives the storm -- an all-time memento to Jocelin's faith and folly -- emblematic of what Kermode calls :

the hopeless conflict between the kind of love he thought he had, and the kind that really made the vision²².

What follows is the final reawakening of Jocelin's dormant mind and the re-assertion of his misguided faith. After the ultimate dissolution of his pride there is the regeneration of genuine humility. As the last traces of his ego devolve he throws himself down from the spire with a prayer that he may be built in with the rest of them. This gesture is a token of his total surrender to the will of God.

With a broken back but a brimming heart, he visits Roger in his poverty-stricken surroundings to ask for his forgiveness. On the way, he has a beautiful vision of an apple tree in full bloom

beyond a compound wall, and of a graceful kingfisher momentarily gliding past, probably never to return. The milk of human kindness comes home to Jocelin through those he used to ignore, scorn or patronize. It is Rachel who saves him when he is beaten almost to death by the angry mob. Father Adam whom Jocelin had always ignored, now becomes his confessor.

Finally on his death-bed gazing on the blemished spire, that maimed yet beautiful emblem of faith and folly, Jocelin realises that terror and joy are the same. The spire seems to him to be like '*an upward waterfall*' cascading heavenwards. This flitting vision of beauty erases the barriers of constriction in Jocelin releasing him into the abundance of Grace through a peaceful death.

3.3.4 THE RELEVANCE OF THE NOVEL'S THEME TO GOLDING'S QUEST

The Spire appears to be the watershed in Golding's quest to unravel the mystery of life. It is the culmination of his undeniable urge to bridge the gap between the physical world and the world of spirit with the help of individual sensibilities. It takes Sammy's exploration in *Free Fall* to the opposite extreme and begins anew to arrive at a positive gesture of assent however momentary or flitting in its vision. Sammy had innocence when he had chosen the physical world with its rational explanation. Jocelin, on the other hand, had clung like a

drawing man to the vestiges of an egocentric ambition, in the delusion of faith, refusing to yield to any sense or reason. But in between Sammy's loss of freedom and in Jocelin's gain of faith, William Golding has captured the reality of human existence. The novel is thus an answer to Sammy's disillusioned discovery that '*there is no bridge*'. In noting the potential of the novel, Johnston deservedly remarks :

Indeed the motif of tragic self-discovery present in all of Golding's novels finds its most satisfactory -- certainly most classical-dramatization in *The Spire*.²³

The novel begins with the semblance of a vision and an inspired zeal to realise it. It concludes with the humble acceptance that one is only human and that the roots of the highest spiritual desires may be traced in this '*pit*' of flesh and decay -- the human body in its earthly surroundings. What one believes to be the vision may be thus merely the sublimation of a repressed desire. The overpowering human will can find self-realization only in complete spiritual surrender. Not the denial but the total acceptance of mundane reality alone can assist humankind to transcend the material world :

all the way to infinity in cascades of exultation that nothing could trammel (*The Spire* p. 223).

With this perception Jocelin is able to resolve his life-long conflict of desire and anguish through a simple sublimation. Thus the red hair that had seductively haunted him from beneath Goody's wimple, preventing prayer and creating torment even after her death,

is no longer resisted as Satan's doing. They now become for Jocelin on his death-bed :

a tangle of hair, blazing among the stars; and the great club of his spire lifted towards it ... that's the explanation ... Berenice. (*The Spire* p. 221)

One agrees with Kermode's opinion of this sublimation that :

The antimonies of love are reconciled there²⁴.

3.3.5 A CULMINATING ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INITIAL STAGE

Being the final novel of the Initial Stage it is necessary to assess the novelist's achievement in *The Spire*. Created with extraordinary semantic and dramatic intensity, *The Spire* is an intricate fictional artifact. Richly endowed with motifs of imagery, the novel attains a substantial fictional reality through its concentrated linguistic potential. While the action adheres to a straight-forward linear development in the sequence of the physical events, the narrative simultaneously operates significant time-shifts involving Jocelin's discoveries about himself, his past, and his motives.

Thus, the actual activity of building of the spire offers the reader one point of view of the narrative -- that of the protagonist. While his constant shuffling of past events in his mind sheds a different light on the reader's understanding of the protagonist, and his self-deception. With the subtle confrontation scene, Jocelin discovers a hidden dimension of motives behind his own actions and from this point onwards there is a sudden ironic

reversal of everything that has preceded the construction of the spire. This proffers the necessary third dimension of psychosexual intricacy behind human ideals and their realization. The reader's perspective is thus enriched substantially to grasp the reality of Jocelin's vision and its realization.

Undoubtedly, the central motif of the symbolic fabric in the novel is the spire. In relation to the spire, every event, interaction, thought or image has significance. It is the diagram of the highest prayer, it is also a phallus. The cathedral is 'a bible in stone'; but it is also a man lying in a marsh, as the model of the projected building indicates :

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 outspread. 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 [The Spire p. 4].

Rooted as it is in the stinking pit on marshy land, the spire is an emblem of human faith rooted in desire and lust, aspiring to new vistas of vision and worship. By extension, it is a ship, denoting the voyage of life, built of oak and endangered if the wood is not seasoned. The wood imagery brings with it the implication of growth and decay. It also alludes to the ritual murder of Pangall giving it the mythic dimension of the sacrifice of the innocent for the growth of the sinner, of the maimed outcast for the entire flock, of the vegetation God symbolic of

rejuvenation, of 'a state of religious innocence' to be sacrificed for the growth of a new enlightenment²⁵.

The authentic, true-to-life characterization in **The Spire** assists the skillfully patterned motifs of imagery to generate its crystalline semantic potential without disturbing the intrinsic dramatic element in the novel. In the hitherto not achieved depth and diversity of his characterization, Golding concedes to the primacy of substance over structure. In creating more vital, and exquisitely human characters than ever before, the novelist recreates -- through a viable social canvas complementing the enactment of the central drama -- a social reality consistent with the spirit and the beliefs of the contemporary society. As Arnold Johnston rightly points out :

Working with material that most modern authors -- well-acquainted with Freud -- would recoil from for its apparent obviousness, Golding creates a complex structure of plot and characterization that acknowledges the fact of psychological motivation, and yet transcends it by relegating it to its proper place in the larger sphere of human reality.²⁶

Few novelists would qualify for such well-deserved commendation and fewer critics would give it so aptly and so unhesitatingly. This happy combination of creative caliber and critical acumen go to show the unchallenged position of **The Spire** as the culminating work of the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel'.

The Spire is felicitously also the best evolved of all his previous narratives. Golding's unmatched talent for narrative and

his loaded, but simple language are the main planks of his cohesive artifact. The unique feat, he achieves in *The Spire*, is the suppression of the narrative persona with a skill unparalleled in his fiction so far.

This accounts for the intimacy as well as the authenticity of the narrative although it leads to the inevitable obscurity in the novel. But unlike in *Free Fall*, *The Spire* is not ruined by the subjectivity of an autobiographical account. The saving grace of *The Spire* are Jocelin's own revised points of view and the counter comment or corroboration that the other characters give them.

Also assisting the reader's perspective of the dramatic nucleus of the novel is Golding's lucid, albeit economical, linguistic precision. The expression at all stages of dramatic intensity is basically facile. However, its compactness is necessitated by the semantic complexity of the novel, unyielding to any simple, single interpretation.

In attempting to capture the intransigent nature of reality through the paradox of faith and folly the novel has attained to its sculpted near-perfection. In the words of Stephen Medcalf :

This is Golding's and *The Spire's* utmost reach into what cannot be expressed - his final raid on poetry²⁷.

3.4.1 THE INITIAL STAGE OF THE 'GOLDING NOVEL' : AN ASSESSMENT

Such unstinted appreciation carries with it the onus of establishing the credibility of the claim. As such it is necessary to analyse *The Spire*, if not with the rather generous notion of it being an unique work, at least as being the significant work of Golding's novelistic oeuvre so far. This analysis will benefit from a comparative discussion of all the novels of the Initial Stage of which *The Spire* is the final component.

A novel-wise survey, in brief, of the fundamental aspects of Golding's novel-writing at the end of the study of the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' will also contribute to this endeavour. Further, having established the thematic linkages in the novels so far, a sequential comment on their Characterization, Narrative Technique and Point of View will also be useful to endorse the position of *The Spire* as the culminating achievement of the 'Golding Novel' at this stage. Among other things, it will help determine the degree of transition in the 'Golding Novel' and will indirectly divulge the novelist's stylistic, structural and narrative potential offering thereby a perspective on the 'Golding Novel' at the end of its Initial Stage.

3.4.2 CHARACTERIZATION OF THE INITIAL STAGE

As character is the most fundamental tool with which a novelist

operates, it is natural to begin this discussion with a detailed comment on the elaborate use of Characterization in the 'Golding Novel'. Character being the medium that renders action causally viable, the functional aspect of Characterization is vital. However it is also a structural device with which the novelist works. In this capacity character contributes as foil, as source of corroboration, as narrative ploy, as an integral part of the design of the work and so on. But it is the novelist's view of character that assigns it one or other of its roles or both. It is thus interesting to analyse Golding's use of Character.

When the term Character is stretched to embrace the complete range of the 'Golding Novel', two distinct modes of characterization emerge. For the sake of convenience, these will be denoted by the terms the ordinary and the 'extra-ordinary' characters. It is necessary, at this stage to explain what is implied by each of these terms.

In the context of the 'Golding Novel' the term ordinary suggests those characters that are created within an average range of human experience and capabilities. They operate on a normal plane of probability and authenticity, possessing reasonable leverage in the plan of the novel. In brief, they have a potential that is securely within the bounds of the rational perception of the reader. Likewise, these characters felicitously remain within an easy range of the novelist's

creative faculty.

On the other hand, '*extra-ordinary*' characters invoke a more-than usual exercise of the novelist's imaginative faculty and of the reader's intuitive ability. In spite of this, the '*extra-ordinary*' characters still remain elusive and mysterious : known but not entirely perceived. The reason for this elusiveness is the presence of a paranormal capacity in these characters. As a result of this, their experiences remain outside the ken of average perception.

EXTRA - ORDINARY CHARACTERS

One can discern a commonness in Golding's approach to '*extra-ordinary*' characters. In addition to their paranormal capacity or innocence, two commonly shared attributes of '*extra-ordinariness*' are discernible in some important characters of '*Golding Novel*'.

i) A propensity to death or mental disorder can be regarded as an extra-ordinary trait. Simon, Nat or Pangall in the early novels of Golding face death, while Beatrice in *Free Fall* is confined to a lunatic asylum. Liku in *The Inheritors* is killed, Tanakil becomes mad, while Lok embraces self-extinction.

ii) A physical or psychological debility can also be a parameter to single out '*extra-ordinary*' characters. In *Lord of the Flies*, Simon stammers and has epileptic fits, in *Pincher Martin* Nat is awkward and gawky; Beatrice in *Free Fall* is

timid, dull and possibly confused in mind, Pangall in *The Spire* is impotent and crippled.

Interestingly, it is not that the 'extra-ordinary' character remains totally elusive throughout Golding's fiction. Towards the latter part of his Initial Stage of novel-writing a beginning in the direction of 'grounding' his extra-ordinarily endowed characters is already made. As early as *Free Fall*, Beatrice's physical appearance, her terror-stricken eyes are focused. Her helplessness and vulnerability is also brought to the surface. Similarly in *The Spire* Pangall is a down-to-earth church-attendant who is crippled physically but is sacrificed due to debility in order to ward off evil. The paranormal status of these characters is not brought into focus; rather it is cloaked with doubtful sanity or with vulnerability to ridicule.

Initially, the 'extraordinary' characters were probably intended as merely functional creations. During the *experimental phase*, at least, this is the impression they give: whether Simon in *Lord of the Flies*, Liku in *The Inheritors* or Nat in *Pincher Martin* they are all purely associated with the furtherance of the plot. They are left intentionally vague being 'Christ-figures'. Even Beatrice in *Free Fall* is not fully developed as a true-to-life character. Only Pangall in *The Spire* seems to be a convincing character.

ORDINARY CHARACTERS

Golding's major protagonists, Ralph, Lok, Pincher Martin, Sammy Mountjoy and Dean Jocelin who belong to the first phase of his novel writing are all basically ordinary, normal and life-like characters. What is interesting, they are all conceived in this life-like vein by minimal strokes of craftsmanship. A few clues leading to their attitudes or their responses to a given situation are generally exploited by Golding in order to vivify them.

In the case of the major characters in *Lord of the Flies*, mostly the response of the young boys to the various demanding circumstances in the novel is utilized to highlight their individuality and mental as well as emotional state. The reaction of Ralph and Piggy to their being marooned on the tropical island is an useful illustration of this fact : Ralph's is an expectedly excited response of joyful abandonment; while Piggy's concern for getting back home safely marks him out as a typical character right from the beginning. Similarly, the propensity to evil in the authoritarian Jack is singled out at the very moment when he arrives on the scene of the meeting in command of his choir boys. So is the malignant nature of Roger highlighted at the very outset.

Physical description of the characters in *Lord of the Flies* is restricted to the minimum necessary. Instances of this

feature are the sketch of the 'ungainly' Piggy and of the little boy, 'feared' to be probably consumed in the fire, specified by the 'mulberry' mark on his face. Otherwise, the novelist has met well the challenge of maintaining the identity and individuality of a score or two of boys without resorting to conventional mode of character-development through elaborate use of language and incident. With an extremely economic use of words and action the novelist has succeeded in creating at least half-a-dozen boys who linger in our memory as realistic individuals. In the words of C. B. Cox :

His children are not juvenile delinquents, but human beings realising for themselves the beauty and horror of life.²⁸

The affectionate twins Sam-n-Eric, conspicuous by their name, speech as well as mutually spontaneous action; the freckled, foreboding, no-nonsense look of Jack, his love of and facility for hunting, his easy lapse into a self-appointed tribal chief; Roger, his cruel and natural lieutenant; the 'little'uns' with their fear of darkness and the 'beastie' and above all Ralph, child-like understandably torn between the need to act responsibly and the natural urge of a twelve-year old for adventure and peer-groups.

However, this is not to be taken as testifying to an immaculate character canvas in *Lord of the Flies* realised with the most crystalline use of colour, life and imagination. Golding's result in characterization in *Lord of the Flies* does

reveal a few incongruencies. In spite of all his attempts, the use of speech denudes his characters, particularly Piggy, and Simon of their child-like nature. The arguments used by Piggy in favour of the use of fire as a signal for ships and the whole sequence of Simon's dialogue with Lord of the Flies, illustrate between them the unpalatable presence of the novelist within an easy reach, giving the impression of 'prompted action'. In fact, this 'orchestrated' scheme of action and dialogue tones down the mimetic excellence of events and thereby the value of characterization in Lord of the Flies.

But these limitations are none the less necessary flaws to the design of a fable that the novel, Lord of the Flies, carries along its story-line. However, in the two subsequent novels that belong to the *experimental phase* of Golding's novels, these artistic lapses are considerably improved upon. In *The Inheritors*, for instance, all the characters are enlivened by a subtle use of language poetically enriched and sensuously picturesque.

We notice that Lok's feet are 'clever' and they 'see', that Mal is 'child-like' when he folds himself into his grave and that he is an extremely loving patriarch when he advises them against tasting the weakness in his bones. Similarly, the strong bond of fatherly love that Lok has for Liku; Fa's prudent, enduring feminine strength; Lok's innocent, simplistic

view of the 'new men'; Ha's brief but self-assured appearance as a likely group-leader; the Old Woman's particularly dull picture in the background as a passive yet necessary source of calm authority -- all these are Golding's superbly created specimens of an anthropological group with which the reader is not acquainted at a primary level.

Yet, the novelist has realised them with an imaginative streak and perceptive ability, not easily paralleled in contemporary fiction. Particularly considering the constraints on the narrative persona, who functions through Lok's restricted faculties, this is no mean achievement for the novelist.

On the other hand, Golding is equally at home in the more 'human' of the characters too. These are the homo-sapiens who resemble our conception of humanity in their passionate outbursts, emotional entanglements, moral culpability and intellectual prowess. Through the use of incident and response the novelist effectively reveals them as individuals in their own right. Thus develops the promiscuous frivolity of voluptuous Vivani; the endangered leadership of the cunning, insecure Marlan; the conflict in sensitive Tuami; the crisis in Tanakil leading to her insanity after to Liku's death and above all the sublimation of the starved motherly instinct in Vivani through her attachment to the abducted New One. Considering the constraints of a pre-historic plot on the novelist, one tends to agree

with Johnston's assessment of his characterization :

Despite the fact that Golding carefully constructs his character and situations,

The Inheritors shows greater freedom²⁹

from the blemishes of Lord of the Flies.

Having commented on Golding's artistic success with Character in The Inheritors, it is sufficient only to make a passing reference to his characterization in his subsequent novels, Pincher martin, Free Fall and The Spire. In Pincher Martin Character is sparse, since most other characters except Nathaniel, figure only as an indistinct foil to the protagonist in order to focus his character. Curiously enough, all other characters except Davidson and Campbell appear exclusively in Pincher's hallucinatory memory-flashes. Even Davidson and Campbell make only a brief and a 'purely functional' appearance at the end of the novel. So, the only noteworthy character is Pincher, the anti-heroic central persona.

Pincher Martin is an unusual character in Golding to say the least. He is an 'ordinary' character to the extent of appearing like average individuals. But in respect of his inhuman 'ego' he is an 'extra-ordinarily' degenerate character, consciously created that way by Golding as a structural device. He emerges in his 'distinct' depravity through use of :

sketchy stills falsifying assumptions about character and relationships which we may

tend to think of as axiomatic for the novel³⁰.

But this is less a weakness of characterization than a strength

of technique in Golding and a requirement of his theme. As such, Pincher Martin can be seen as a '*bold experiment*' of the '*Golding Novel*' on the threshold of its *transitional phase*.

In *Free Fall* and *The Spire*, the novels of the *transitional phase*, Golding follows a different approach to characterization. In both these novels the protagonists are vividly etched out in their essence : the one as initially innocent, the other as ignorant. In *Free Fall* the use of physical attributes is hardly made, since it is an autobiographical account of the protagonist. Sammy's development from idealistic adoration of Beatrice to his physical molestation of her is beautifully exploited by Golding in sketching his character.

In *The Spire* the physical appearance of Jocelin is beautifully exploited by Golding to bring his character into focus. But Jocelin being an extremely well-developed character, he will be separately discussed at a later stage as an index of Golding's characterization of the Initial Stage.

An important development in the Characterization of the '*Golding Novel*' during its *transitional phase* is the emergence of women characters. Similarly, the minor characters of Golding now become significant in their own right, over their earlier status as merely functional devices. Hence these two groups of character need sufficient elaboration. As such, in the ensuing discussion they would be sequentially dealt with .

WOMEN CHARACTERS

Interestingly, the evolution of women characters in Golding has been rather delayed. The nature of the plot concerning pre-adolescent boys in *Lord of the Flies* had precluded the need for women characters. Even in *The Inheritors* the creation of women characters is purely functional. They are more of allegorical conceptions than human beings. They signify certain ideas or propensities in the group such as the association of the Old Woman with religious function as the fire-bearer and priestess, the depiction of Nil as a lactating mother of the New One or the role of Fa as a companion for her male counterpart. Although Fa's marginal perceptive superiority to Lok and her barrenness is focused, she is not given any leverage as a 'woman' in the novel.

The Homo Sapien women are also not convincing due to their lack of emotional depth. Of them, Vivani is more prominent and she displays a temperament for self-indulgence and sensuality. The two young girls Liku and Tanakil are not given enough scope in the novel to function in their capacity as females. They are etched out as basically children representing two distinct groups.

During the *experimental phase* Mary Lovell in *Pincher Martin*, though a vague 'still' in Pincher's hallucinatory landscape, displays the first streak in Golding of a woman with a

substantial socio-psychological dimension. Pincher's social prejudice is directed towards his hatred of her, as much for her social status as for a her preference for Nathaniel. Beatrice (for in *Free Fall* is an elaborate and lively development of Mary Lovell. Interestingly, Sammy's social bias towards her middle class situation is also aired as was Pincher's in the earlier novel (*Pincher Martin* p. 147- 152). Sammy makes a snide reference to her social status that reveals his own unconscious class prejudice :

She was lower middle class where the instinct or habit was to keep what you had intact. It was a class in those days of great power and stability, ignoble and ungenerous. (*Free Fall*). p. 92]

However Beatrice does not come off as an authentic individual. She remains an elevated ideal and an atavistic object by turns. She is the point of reference for Sammy's movement from **innocence** to **fall** to **perception** of depravity in himself.

In a similar way, Goody Pangall the care-taker's wife in *The Spire* is a point of reference for Dean Jocelin's growth from **self-deception** to **fall** to **self-perception**. Goody is a minimally displayed but highly vivified character in Golding. This vivacious, simple, impressionable girl culminating into a vulnerable, compromising, exploited female is a fore-runner of more challenging feminine characters in later Golding, such as Evie Babbacomb in *The Pyramid*, Mary Lou in *Paper Men* and Marion Chumley in *A Sea Trilogy*.

THE MINOR CHARACTERS

The minor characters in *Free Fall* and *The Spire*, who are revealed effectively and contribute to the panorama of Golding's characterization, are also worth a mention. They work as contrary pairs influencing two opposite aspects of the protagonists' personality. In *Free Fall* they are : the adventure-loving, simple Johnny Spragg and the cunning, exploitative Philip and the rational humanist Nick Shales and the priggish thwarted spinster Rowena Pringle. In spite of appearing as novelistic devices these characters are far from being vague and dull cutouts.

The warmth and affection that Johnny or Nick Shales exude is touching. Although Philip is presented as prodigiously scheming, he does not ring hollow. Rowena Pringle with her ruthless torment of a defenseless Sammy may seem jarring but given her circumstances she becomes realistic and convincing. Above all, there are of course, Sammy's Mother - a character *kicking* with life, realised with a few bold but effortless strokes - and *Evie*, the custodian of Sammy's innocent world of infantile fantasy.

The Spire also has its twin sources of influence and comment on Jocelin. Roger Mason and Pangall from among the laity and father Ansaem and Father Adam from the clergy constitute these sources. Of these, the first two are superbly enacted -- each justifying his spacio-temporal context and above all his human

propensity. The other two characters like the dumb sculptor and aunt Allison are more or less functional, but they are still given a distinct identity of their own. In the words of Arnold Johnston :

Notwithstanding the difficulty of relating character to period, the characters are Golding's most vital, most human, exhibiting a range of motivation and behaviour, a capacity for dynamic interaction, far beyond that seen in any previous novel.³¹

✓ JOCELIN AS THE YARDSTICK OF CHARACTERIZATION

However, his Dean Jocelin more than makes up for all Golding's self-imposed restrictions with regard to the time and the context of his story. In the ultimate analysis, although Jocelin is envisaged as a larger than life individual, he is nowhere seen to be less than human or more than of his age. In spite of his contemporary context, his universal predicament and human limitations do not encourage a psychological estrangement from him in the reader.

Similarly, his spiritual evolution at the end does not hinder the flow of sympathy and understanding towards him. By far, Jocelin remains one of the best delineated characters in Golding at this stage. Golding has created him by a judicious balance of descriptive, linguistic and mimetic artistry that is not easy to come by. In fine, Jocelin is the matrix of :

a new deepening of characterization, a wider range of human relationships, and a sense of the world at large, giving *The Spire* claim to the social dimension that seems lacking in Golding's previous novels.³²

Golding's novels of the Initial Stage, ending with *The Spire* (1964) display a gradually progressing ability in character-creation in the novelist. Beginning with incident and verbal description as his method in *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Golding moves on to linguistic innovation and character-response-to-situation as the instrument of characterization in *The Inheritors* (1955). While memory - stills and psychoanalytical approach is exploited in *Pincher Martin* (1956) to throw character into relief, social canvas, which has developed into a steady dimension of the 'Golding Novel' by now is utilized for character - delineation in *Free Fall* (1959) and *The Spire* (1964).

Through the employment of character foils and social interaction as the medium of character development, Golding is able to bring his characters into a more objective focus. Thus the subjectivity that could erode Sammy's self-portrayal is prevented even as Jocelin's ignorant vanity is countered by the different perspectives that other characters make possible. Thus by the end of the Initial Stage, Golding's characterization responds to a humanistic scale of assessment both in terms of the complexity of character and its delineation.

3.4.3 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AND POINT OF VIEW

The extensive depth and variety of Golding's characterization affirms the richness of the novelist's imagination. The vivid,

growth-prone characters in Golding are a testimony to the ability of observation and vivification that he skillfully displays. But what is even more significant is that the characters are an integral aspect of plot. In fact, they are the devices that make the plot causally viable.

Thus as a natural sequel to characterization, this discussion will briefly concern itself with the plot, narrative technique and point of view in the 'Golding Novel'. These planks of its structural homogeneity and textural density will be dealt with in a novel-wise order consistent with the development of the 'Golding Novel' during its Initial Stage. However, in view of the detailed discussion of the plots of individual novels already undertaken in this study, there will be only a passing reference made to them. The question of plot in the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' will be discussed as a point of attachment for the analysis of Golding's use of narrative technique and point of view during this stage.

Golding's initial plots have a penchant for encoding an all-too-obvious fable. This diminishes their fictional potential by giving their themes the appearance of being fables, myths, allegories over their primary existence as novels. But conversely, they have codas that enrich the texture of these novels by affording them a rare density of content. In the opinion of Virginia Tiger, with whom one is inclined to

agree :

Following the plot's major movement there is a coda ending in each of the fables which reverses and often contradicts the implications of the first movement. But Golding intends the two perspectives to be linked.³³

During the *experimental phase* of the Initial Stage, the plot of the 'Golding Novel' is generally sparse and almost congruent to the story-line. So the plot seems to offer a singular point of view, carefully fed into the fable and subverted at the end by an intentional reversal of the events in the novel. However, the forcefulness of these early plots can be best brought out by identifying the use of narrative devices that bring more than one point of view into play.

REVERSAL AS A NARRATIVE DEVICE

A significant narrative device that is common to all the early plots in Golding is the use of reversal. It is interesting to see how this reversal operates in the 'Golding Novel'. In *Lord of the Flies* the sudden rescue offered at the end ironically underscores the futility of this rescue and also indicates indirectly the degree of understanding that Ralph has attained.

In *The Inheritors* the sudden detachment from the Neanderthals -- on the brink of extinction and drawing closer to the progressing Homo-Sapiens -- is once again an ironical device for the reader's identification with the 'fallen'

Homo-Sapiens. Pincher Martin also makes use of the reversal of the plot by disclosing that Pincher had died long ago and thereby demonstrating the improbability of his exchatological experience. The use of casual conversation as a focal point of reversal is also well displayed in Pincher Martin.

In Free Fall, reversal does not assume the form of irony so much as of a paradoxical incompatibility between Sammy's experience and his 'knowledge'. The Spire takes this new approach to the end of the novel a step further. Through an extremely well-organized linear narrative the author uses significant time-shifts to project Jocelin's ignorance of self and subsequent self-perception. At this stage, there is a reversal to linear narrative again, in which the point of view of the protagonist becomes significant.

The reader is able to share his perception of the duality of life and to sympathise with his ultimate 'knowing' acceptance of it through a humble 'Now -- I know nothing at all' [The Spire p. 223]. Thus, whether as an ironical re-view of the situation, or as a glimpse of the incompatibility of existence or as an ultimate resolution of its paradox, the reversal, is integral to the theme.

USE OF THIRD PERSON NARRATION

During the Initial Stage of his novel writing, Golding makes

use of the third-person narration in all his novels except in *Free Fall*. This gives the author omniscient the privilege over the denouement of action to project a desired point of view with greater facility.

In *Lord of the Flies* the author omniscient is seen to be manoeuvring, pulling strings and developing an essentially gloomy and pessimistic point of view. But this does not become immediately apparent. In its linear progression, the novel reads like any traditional adventure-story seen from Ralph's point of view. But the carefully woven structure of events makes a second point of view possible, particularly the one offered through the character of Simon. So much so, the universality of evil develops as a theme only when the reader shares this point of view.

In fact, the novelist has made an extensive use of an explicit symbolic pattern to assist this omniscient point of view. The conch symbolizing order and freedom, Piggy's spectacles symbolizing the limited worth of civilization and its latent potential as a source of disaster -- all these are significant symbolic devices which along with the alternating action between the building of fire for rescue and hunting for survival stress the confused pointlessness of life without spiritual insight.

Ralph, with his alienated goodness, his endangered sensibility in the absence of any hope, and Jack, with his easy lapse into

savagery, his power-lust and his exorcism of fear through ritualistic war-dance, together underline the contemporary misgivings regarding the meaningfulness of life. They point out to the existentialist fears of the absurdity and futility of life. They also throw into focus the question of looking for any metaphysical anchor beyond life. This is the bleak vision of the novelist unredeemed to the end on which *Lord of the Flies* ends. But this dark vision develops only as a result of the two points of view that converge into the coda at the end.

In *The Inheritors* this vision impels a probing into the anthropological past of a humanity that has glumly accepted the Wellsian myth regarding the Darwinian theory of evolution as the ultimate comment on human destiny. The novelist develops his narrative once again with a dual point of view. The linear narrative contains an ironical re-construct of the fable of human evolution through the triumph of the cunning and the cruel over the meek and the simple. In this movement of the narrative the point of view is of the Neanderthals, achieved through a marveleous suppression of the narrative persona.

But, at a distinct point in the narration, the omniscient narrator suddenly de-links himself from his Neanderthal protagonist Lok and draws closer to the Homo-Sapiens. This closer view of the fear-ridden guilt-bearing Homo-Sapiens accentuates the objectivity of the narrative, even as it foregrounds the inevitability of the

damage done. In a way the close-up of the Homo-Sapiens Sailing beyond the fall symbolizes the ancestral 'fall' of mankind.

The narrative which now focuses the point of view of the Homo-Sapiens, helps the reader to identify with the turbulence and the guilt attendant to the condition of the Homo-Sapiens. This point of view also helps to uncover the mythic potential of the theme in signalling the Homo Sapiens as the fore-runners of Man's moral lapse.

The plot in Pincher Martin concentrates on this moral degeneration of Man in trying to analyse it to an extreme degree. However, the linear narrative develops through the point of view of the protagonist, wherein the omniscient narrator leads the reader through a Promethean struggle of an individual pitted against a malevolent Fate and unco-operative elemental forces.

But the subtle use of psycho-analytical technique assists the reader's exposure to the unimaginable depravity of the protagonist through sudden shifts in narrative time assisted by Pincher's hallucinations. This offers a different point of view, probably the narrator's. The effective use of psycho-graphic devices such as hallucinations, unwarranted recoil into memory lapses and delusion help to expose a horridly god-less egotist who proceeds to subdue everything in the universe including God for sheer physical survival.

* However, a rare stroke of irony emits into the narrative an

altogether different point of view, ostensibly of the author omniscient. The reader is shocked to discover the 'reality' of the horrendous exercise of the all-consuming Martin at survival. He realises that he has witnessed the illusory existence created by the tenacious ego of a man, dead six days ago. This new point of view yields an eschatological dimension to Pincher's experience wherein many narrative devices hitherto not fully comprehended become apparent. The dwarf floating in liquid become the paradigm of the rationalistic mind functioning in an existential void in the contemporary world devoid of any spiritual moorings.

NARRATION THROUGH AUTHOR - PARTICIPANT IN *FREE FALL*

Golding's whole approach to his plot changes when in *Free Fall* he adopts the stance of an author-participant. This autobiographical narration by Sammy ropes in the elements of subjectivity at the cost of reliable factual information. But it makes possible the unfolding of particularly personal or intimate experiences of the protagonist which are vital to the plot. The conscious re-enactment of past by Sammy with a view to discover the moment of his 'fall' partly guarantees the authenticity of this narrative. While the possible elements of nostalgia or inaccuracy of memory or even understanding with hindsight may somewhat colour its reliability. Sammy's own comment

is significant in this context :

Living is like nothing because it is everything -- is too subtle and copious for unassisted thought (Free Fall p. 7).

To combat this uncertainty Golding gives prominence to the problem of communication faced by the protagonist. It indirectly underscores the difficulty posed to the novelist -- the inability to intervene into the narrative and make it more eloquent or more meaningful. Superficially, the plot concerns the autobiographical discourse of a contemporary artist. Given its spatio-temporal context, this discourse in its linear progression assumes the form of a narrative that foregrounds the joys and the trauma of growing up of an artist in a contemporary existentialist world. The emerging point of view is of the author-participant who seems to direct the narrative into the traditional genres of Bildungsroman or Künstlerroman. However this narrative mode presents Sammy with a natural lacuna that Sylvère Monod describes thus :

All his elaborate effort to see, to understand, to communicate with himself, is adulterated by unconscious insincerity and by moral blindness.³⁴

The novelist is, apparently, not satisfied with this single point of view. He has invested in the narrator's concern for discovering the moment of his fall, a metaphysical query; it posits the reader with another point of view concealed in the intricate patterning of events and influence underlying the frequent shifts in narrative time. This point of view throws up the question of moral culpability and seeks to assign moral responsibility for the 'fall'

of the protagonist to one or the other of the complex influences that colour his growing years.

SELF - ENCOUNTER AS A NARRATIVE DEVICE IN *FREE FALL*

However Sammy's '*self-encounter*' in the prison suddenly jeopardises this point of view; for, this encounter discloses Sammy's insight into the Spiritual reality of life and accentuates his indelible feeling of remorse. If this insight relieves him of his existentialist fears it does not alleviate the burden of his guilt in having destroyed the very object of his love and adoration - Beatrice Ifor - in trying to physically '*possess*' her. This psycho-analytical point of view reveals both the moment as well as the source of his fall to Sammy.

This point of view explains his perpetual guilt in spite of his having discovered pure joy around him. It also helps the reader gains to understand what Sammy fails to explicate in his narrative his being suspended in a state of '*free*' fall between the worlds of spirit and matter. Through the application of psycho-analytical approach the reader gains an insight into Sammy's condition as resulting from '*spiritual schizophrenia*': when he refuses the spiritual inclination of his own being, he does it as a reaction to Rowena Pringle; so also his choice of rational approach to life is biased by his love for the '*humanistic*' Nick Shales. But in the exercise of his will he is not

free to break from the one totally nor to adopt the other in its pure spirit. Hence, even when he recognizes his condition of being suspended, he cannot revert the damage done already. For him both worlds exist and there is no bridge; he cannot reconcile the two worlds since his actions have been the irreversible consequence of his split beliefs.

This narrative device in *Free Fall* becomes clearer when its principle is seen in operation in *The Spire* in the life of Dean Jocelin. Jocelin has just one major flaw -- his egotistic faith. But it is only faith that dominates him; reason does not enter his domain at all. Hence if he fails, he fails due to misplaced faith not as Sammy does as due to reason. Further, when he recognizes his sin and has the awesome realisation of his guilt he reacts differently from Sammy. Instead of being weighed down by guilt alone, he is elevated by humility too. His unconditional surrender of ego releases genuine faith, and helps him to blend the words of matter and spirit, thus resolving his crisis.

CHARACTER AS NARRATIVE DEVICE

Another narrative device that is put to effective use in *The Spire* is the relation that other characters have to Jocelin, as also their comments to and about him. This helps us to see all important incidents in the novel initially from the point of view

of Jocelin and them, to revise them in the light of what elicits from the other sources in the narrative by way of dialogue, comment or sheer interaction. Through a suppression of the narrative persona a credible, detached perspective emerges in the novel. Although an apparently third-person narrative is resorted to in *The Spire* an extremely limited use is made of this technique of narration. In fact it is used not so much to relate as to create curiosity by giving clues and to fill in necessary gaps of information. Most of the action is enacted through Jocelin's interaction with others, his dreams and his point of view. Like all its predecessors *The Spire* with its limited view point :

forces the reader to see first with the protagonist's eyes before becoming a detached observer of the story's ironies and complexities.³⁵

The complete subversion of Jocelin's misplaced faith into self-loathing is beautifully achieved by exposing his simplistic beliefs and egotistic principles. However, the genuineness of his vision is fostered by his wholehearted efforts by and the evidence of his journal. Thus in a kaleidoscopic approach, Golding brings various narrative devices into convergence to offer a three-dimensional view of reality : as seen through the eyes of Jocelin and his subconscious, through the eyes of various characters and finally, through authorial vision subsumed in Jocelin's new-found vision.

It can be seen in retrospect that Golding's plots have become

more and more flaw-less with the development of his narrative technique and the use of structural devices. The linear narrative in *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* is slowly replaced by the elusively linear-seeming narrative in *Pincher Martin*. In *Free Fall* and *The Spire* a challenging combination of linear narration and reversal of narrative - time is used to create novels at once structurally compact, complex and realistic. *The Spire* displays this compactness of narrative structure more effectively than all its fore-runners. As such this feature of the novel deserves a special mention as an illustration of Golding's talent for creating a cohesive narrative structure with patterns of symbols and imagery.

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF *THE SPIRE*

The compact structure of the narrative in *The Spire* considerably helps a unified perception of the novel's central theme -- the duality of human life -- through the choicest use of certain clusters of images occurring almost innocuously. The elemental images such as, water, earth, light, fire are exploited with a masterful precision. The rain and water-spread-corruption gives Jocelin the feeling '*that his first whiff of the pit began something new*'. It links later with '*the marsh*' of his sexual dreams, the '*dark waters that seem to rise in him*' and finally with the vision of the spire as the '*cascading waterfall*'.

Light and darkness, depth and height, stink and joy are beautifully related to the spire and the pit, the vision and the delusion in overlapping patterns symbolizing the spiritual and the mundane.

Another skillfully utilized image-cluster is of animate beings. The reference to the birds such as crow-raven-eagle - kingfisher or animals like bull-stallion-bear effectively conveys the dubiousness of human perception. At the same time such a reference accentuates the significance of personae and their status at different moments in the novel. Similarly, plants and trees operate at significant stages in the novel to underscore the sprouting of Jocelin's understanding. Particularly, the spire as a burgeoning '*plant with faces*' conjoins the various images of it as The Tree of Life, the Tree of Knowledge and the symbol for the essential unity of experience in Jocelin's mind. The use of snake imagery also indicates the allusion to the Tree of Knowledge as well as to the phallic symbolism behind the spire.

The conspicuous structural device that Golding has utilized in *The Spire* is the relation of the spire to the development of his plot. The construction of the spire coincides with Jocelin's fall. The various stages of construction as well as the seasonal cycle help to reveal a snow-balling of Jocelin's errors of omission and commission as also his degenerations as an individual, a priest and a Dean. Thus emerges an impersonal psycho-analytical point of view which

identifies the spire as the emblem of Jocelin's suppressed psycho-sexual desire and an index of his moral degeneration.

The Spire has a structure at once precise and geometric as well as vital and cohesive. Hence this compact structure of the novel can be likened to an exquisitely constructed archaeological marvel such as the spire itself. Alternately its organic quality behoves comparison with an animate object such as a tree in blossom. The organization of important events and incidents gives the novel its sculpted surface-structure. Whereas the carefully planned shifts in time make a variety of interpretations of the novel's thematic potential possible, thus giving it an enriching organic form.

LANGUAGE AS A NARRATIVE MEDIUM

However, while assessing Golding's indubitable narrative skill and his ingenious structural devices facilitating complex points of view a mention needs be made of his flair for linguistic innovation and easy movement of action. The tempo of events and his pithy language are the dual aspects of his fiction that guard against the seeming 'incomprehension' of his plot. In fact, the unavoidable pitfalls of didacticism that at times mar his early novels, particularly *Lord of the Flies*, are balanced by moments of poetic intensity that capture the essence of the drama of life. Golding's lucid language, in its vivid

re-enactment of the pathos of experience, is a major strength of his narrative, redeeming it from the dangers of lifeless mimeses and limitation of monotony.

A particular mention of the novelist's talent for linguistic experimentation in *The Inheritors* needs to be made. For any novelist the conceptual paucity of his characters would have been an insurmountable handicap. But without being inhibited by the elementary perceptive ability of Lok and Fa, Golding is able to evoke the poignant drama of the Neanderthals' experiences with an efficacy perhaps unmatched in contemporary fiction. Through innovative verbal usage and through synaesthetic devices, Golding captures for the reader an overwhelming experience of his protagonist. Ironically enough, his protagonist is himself innocently unaware of it and is unlikely to comprehend it in its totality.

In *Pincher Martin* Golding returns to his usually simple, compact narration ably assisted by the hallucinatory 'pictures' of the protagonist. In *Free Fall* Golding's success in linguistic skill needs to be assessed in the context of an autobiographical narrative of his protagonist, Sammy. The novelist is successful in convincing the reader that the narrator is Sammy and not himself. Sammy's dual perception, his obscure position, his confused self-condemnation are all duly reflected in his typical linguistic usage.

In *The Spire* Golding's linguistic talent attains to new heights

of felicitous achievement. Its hall-marks are the use of an enriching imagery, a humane tone and an impersonally sympathetic narration. With his narrative precision, unembellished expression and verbal innovation, the novelist creates a fictional experience both movingly dramatic and exceptionally aesthetic.

3.4.4 AUTHORIAL VISION AT THE END OF THE INITIAL STAGE :

In fine, *The Spire* may be viewed as the culmination of the novelist's quest into human condition begun with the sombre pessimism of *Lord of the Flies*, that '*man produces evil as a bee produces honey*' [*The Hot Gates* p. 87]. By revealing the translucent reality between humanity and an intransigent Absolute -- behind the shroud of an intractable self -- the novel assents to an optimistic view of existence. In so doing, it concurs with the possibility, hinted at in *Free Fall*, of bridging the gap between the phenomenal and the intuitive experience. Jocelin's final gesture of assent is by implication the assent of the novelist to the presence of ultimate Grace in life.

The novelist's vision can be thus seen to gradually widen into an optimistic acceptance of benevolence in life in Jocelin's '*gesture of ascent*' [*The Spire*, p. 223]. For Golding, too, this is a positive leap forward from the bleak hopelessness of the '*darkness of man's heart*' experienced by Ralph at the end of *Lord*

of the Flies and the line of darkness that Tuami apprehensively watched in *The Inheritors*. Conjoining the hubristic egotism of Pincher's illusory creation of God and Nathaniel's 'art of dying into Heaven', Golding discovers the pattern of existence paradoxically in its patternlessness. In this discovery the novelist's vision unites in one exploratory strand :

the concerns of both *Pincher Martin*, which examines man's attempt to impose reductive patterns on the universe, and *Free Fall*, which examines his attempts to confront and communicate its complexity.³⁶

In one Promethean moment, Golding's protagonist befitting 'a tragic hero in the Euripidean tradition'³⁷, resolves the ironical pretence of Martin's egotism and Sammy's bewildering dilemma : 'To communicate is our passion and our despair' (*Free Fall* p. 81).

Not only in terms of its vision, but also in its style *The Spire* is a marked achievement over its fore-runners. Notwithstanding the commendable headway made by *Free Fall* in the transitional process of the 'Golding Novel', *The Spire* has been described as :

the greatest of Golding's novels so far, but [also] one of the most ambitious and fascinating novels of the century.³⁸

3.5 CONCLUSION

In summing up it has to be acknowledged that all through the Initial Stage the 'Golding Novel' comes to rely heavily on the use of fable, myth or allegory and the exploitation of well-known literary foils to vitalise its plots. But this does not

necessarily imply that Golding's plots are incapable of acquiring an identity as plots of novels proper.

Even without relating it to the Ballantyne tale, *Lord of the Flies*, would have been an extremely realistic, if somewhat didactic, adventure story. *The Inheritors* is a gripping tour-de-force with or without the Wellsian myth based on the Darwinian theory in mind. So does Pincher Martin give a worthwhile account of itself as a powerful psychological novel with no assistance from either the myth of creation, or shipwreck stories such as *Robinson Crusoe* or the 'Taffrail' tale. *Free Fall* minus any allusion to Dante's *Divine Comedy* is still a disturbing autobiographical narrative. Just so, the psychological conflict in *The Spire* is significant and realistic even without the Trollopean context thrown in for a good measure.

There is little doubt that at the end of the Initial Stage, the 'Golding Novel' stands up to the test of being versatile and compelling fiction. Golding's originality of approach to his theme, true-to life characterization, artistically handled narrative and insightful points of view go a long way in underscoring the reputation that he has earned for himself over the years. It is true that the sensation that *Lord of the Flies* had created was unique in the history of the 'Golding Novel' and has not been since equalled. Even so the 'halo' that associates itself with the name Golding has not diminished. In spite of a

fluctuating critical reaction to the 'Golding Novel' during the first decade of its existence, there is :

still a feeling that if any post-war novelist would write a novel that would live for its time ... that novelist would be William Golding.³⁹

The subsequent course of the 'Golding Novel' has duly vindicated Don Crompton's perceptive assessment of the novelist's calibre -- notwithstanding the seal of 'obscurity' or 'incomprehension' against his novels.

There is a reason for such confused or complex responses to the 'Golding Novel' during this stage. A glance at the early reviews of Golding fiction, reveals either a misplaced admiration or a hasty criticism. The main cause for this is Golding's modus operandi. He is not just a raconteur; he aims at much more in spite of his masterly technique of story-telling. Each time he narrates a story, he endeavours to communicate a unique experience, trying to reach the deeper recesses of his readers' sensibility.

In other words, the attempt in a Golding novel is at an interaction in terms of conveying several points of view of the given situation and invoking a response that aims at a shared perception. This is why most readers who look to fiction as a main source of diversion or entertainment find the 'Golding Novel' abstruse. This is particularly true of those readers who are reluctant to undertake the intellectual challenge suffused into his themes by Golding.

In themselves, his novels are hardly recondite or narrated in an obscure manner or in a difficult language. They are more like compact patterns of simple, relevant themes constructed with stimulating clues. But they expect an intelligent and willing readership keen on unravelling the complex thematic puzzles that these novels pose. Frank Kermode has rightly summed up this paradox of complex facility :

Golding's novels are simple in so far as they deal with the primordial patterns of human experience and in so far as they have skeletons of parable. On these simple bones the flesh of narrative can take extremely complex forms.⁴⁰

It is this '*intellectual economy*' of the '**Golding Novel**' that draws a reserved or an '*uncomprehending*' response from his early reviewers and critics alike.

Probably in a spontaneous response to the popular reluctance to come effortlessly to his fiction or perhaps baffled by the charge of being uncomprehending, Golding chose to alter the course in the late 60's. But viewed from another angle Golding's approach to his fiction had hardly ever been static or repetitive. In fact, in his inimitable style, Golding has expressed his unwillingness to go over the same path twice. He has claimed that '*I envy the people who can write the same book over and over again*' [**A Moving Target** p. 198]. As such his second book is noticeably different from his first and the third from the second. Above all in all these three novels of the *experimental phase* this is a conspicuous innovation combined with elimination of some aspects of novel-

writing that he did not consider vital to an imaginative fictional artifact. As such didacticism and fable slowly yield place to more fictional but mythopoeic creations of the *transitional phase*.

During the *transitional phase* all aspects of novel-writing are so well-blended by Golding that already an impressive work of fiction is created in *The Spire*. It is true that the 'Golding Novel' became fully entrenched in a social milieu with the publication of *The Pyramid* (1967). Though his novels had already begun to lean more and more towards a broader social canvas as early as *Free Fall* (1959), their thrust had been on focussing the individual sensibility as late as *The Spire* (1964).

With *The Pyramid* this concern with individual is subtly but definitely supplemented by an analysis of the social context. Even Golding's novellas, *The Scorpion God* (1971), though in part written long before, still hold the social environment prominently in view and foreground the destiny of the societies in which their respective plots are pitched.

An insightful observation of the 'Golding Novel' in its Social Stage will reveal that it has finally heeded to the advice of Kingsley Amis to turn 'to the world where we have to live'⁴¹, away from 'the narrowness and remoteness' which was the preferred habitat of the likes of Pincher Martin or Lok : one that came

forcefully . alive but nonetheles remained alien. The Pyramid is
an indication that Golding has needed the advice !

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CHAPTER FOUR

GOLDING'S SOCIAL NOVEL : MORAL PHASE

4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The transition from the medieval world of *The Spire* (1964) to the more contemporaneous canvas of *The Pyramid* (1967) can be likened to a long leap for the 'Golding Novel' -- not so much in the temporal sense, as in terms of William Golding's approach to fiction. In fact this leap marks the advent of the Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel'. Thus as a work of fiction *The Pyramid* is crucial to the understanding of the changes that become discernible in the 'Golding Novel' during the second stage of its development. Published towards the end of the sixties, *The Pyramid* is significant because it is through this novel that Golding finally steps over to 'the English Novel's central tradition'¹.

However, such a claim does not in any way simplify the perception of the 'Golding Novel' into the 70's or through the decades that follow. It rather complicates one's assessment of the 'Golding Novel' by pointing out new avenues of thought. This can be seen from the hindsight that the half-a-dozen subsequent works of fiction published to date by Golding offer us.

The 'Golding Novel' had been described by sympathetic critics² as fiction with a multi-modal visage, generally belonging to the broad confines of the novel. Now its being ushered into the tradition of the English Novel poses a problem since the post-War

English Novel is itself a much-forked road. It has hardly retained a cognizably homogeneous tradition. Diverted as it has been from the mainstream of the European novel, it has often been accused by critics such as Gilbert Phelps, of degenerating into "parochialism and defeatism", rarely attaining :

a unified vision or the sustained solidity of achievement that rises from it³.

Despite this grim assessment, it has to be conceded, that the realistic social novel has withstood the onslaught of the post-War whirlwind of changes, protests and disillusionment. As such it comes closest to the traditional English Novel as we understand it. Thus it is only appropriate to view *The Pyramid* keeping this perception of the traditional English Novel in mind.

But then, though *The Pyramid* and all subsequent fiction published by Golding, has an obvious realistic - social dimension, there are nonetheless distinct thematic ramifications to it, making a phase-wise approach not only feasible but necessary. Again, there are clear indications, at this stage, of Golding's revised attitude to his earlier pessimistic view of universal human depravity. Reverting from his much publicized views on 'evil in mankind' aired in his oft-quoted essay 'Fable', in the *The Hot Gates*, Golding has to a perceivable degree reclaimed his original optimistic stance towards humankind.

Probably as a result of this reclaimed view-point, the novelist's approach during the Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel' manifests a distinct thematic thrust in individual novels, despite a

common socio-realistic mode. For instance, the focus of the earlier themes of the Social Stage is on the socio-moral basis of human life; the two following novels -- not chronologically sequential -- show a clear concern with themes of 'metaphysical' nature; while the last published trilogy - though its constituent novels were published over a decade -- displays a clearly amalgamatory streak.

Thus, notwithstanding the beginning of the Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel' with *The Pyramid*, it is important to identify the direction of the novelist's approach to his themes and its relevance to his concern with 'human condition'.

In view of all this, all the works of fiction -- including the three novellas of *The Scorpion God* -- will be discussed in three different phases in three subsequent chapters of this study. These phases have been identified for convenience as : the *moral phase* consisting of *The Pyramid* and *The Scorpion God*, the *metaphysical phase* consisting of *Darkness Visible* and the *Paper Man* and the *final phase* consisting of the last published fictional work of Golding, *The Ends of The Earth : A Sea Trilogy*. Of these three phases, the *moral phase* will be discussed in the present chapter. However, before any pertinent analysis can be made of the *moral phase*, it is essential to clearly understand Golding's moral position.

4.1.2 GOLDING'S MORAL POSITION

Golding displays, both in and out of fiction, a strong

inclination towards a clearly moral stand-point for mankind. Hence it stands to reason to make some reference to his moral position vis-a-vis the advent of the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel'. Fortunately, it is not difficult to trace the development of his moral vision as a novelist. For, he has revealed, from time to time, his moral concern over '*human condition*'. It should be, therefore, interesting to review his moral concern in the light of his opinions on the matter. This would elucidate the metamorphosis that his moral point of view has undergone over the years after the publication of his maiden novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954).

Speaking of the genesis of the unredeemed pessimism in that novel he had admitted, during a lecture in 1962, that he :

believed then, that man was sick - not exceptional man, but average man.

However, during the same lecture he had also indicated that he was not always so pessimistic with regard to human morality by revealing his pre-War belief "in the perfectibility of social man", and in :

a re-organization of Society, [adding that] It is possible today I believe something of the same again. (*The Hot Gates*, pp. 86-87).

This hesitant admission of belief is an index of Golding's changed attitude to human morality : a departure from the total loss of faith in Man during the early fifties to a reluctant assent of resurging hope in '*human perfectibility*' and towards the need for social '*re-organization*' in the early sixties. As recently as 1976, Golding conceded in his '*Address to Les Anglicistes*' that those years of bleak pessimism were :

years of wordless brooding that brought me not so much to an opinion as to a stance. [A Moving Target, p. 163].

He admitted in '*Utopias and Antiutopias*' in 1977 that he no longer felt '*so antiutopian*'. Further, Golding has proclaimed in warm enthusiasm seemingly so uncharacteristic of him that "We need more humanity, more love" [A Moving Target, p. 212]. Beginning with a somewhat hesitant confession of this retrieved optimism in 1962, he has come out, with "the distilled wisdom of fifty years", strongly in favour of a sound moral proposition in 1977 that "We must produce *homo moralis*" [A Moving Target p. 184].

Interestingly, appended to this moral proposition is what he has termed rather self-deprecatingly as :

my only contribution to political thought large enough to be inscribed on a postage stamp.

In his own words :

It is simply this. With bad people, hating, uncooperative, selfish people, no social system will work. With good people, loving, co-operative, unselfish people, any social system will work. It is, then, a moral question. [A Moving Target p. 184].

Somewhere between the above two concessions of varying degree made by Golding, in a more hopeful and less recalcitrant attitude than before to human society, lies Golding's stance towards his own social fiction. It is of no little significance to a serious student of the '*Golding Novel*' that his most widely accepted work of realistic social fiction, *The Pyramid*, was published in 1967 -- during the period between Golding's tentative acknowledgement of the need for proper social order and his forceful plea for a need for

mankind to evolve to a higher status as moral beings. Obviously, the moral basis for a genuinely 'social' life was dominant in his mind at this stage. His essays titled 'A Moving Target', and 'Utopias and Antiutopias' in *A Moving Target* (1982) make this socio-moral equation vis-a-vis the novelist's 'approach to a novel' quite clear. Manifestly depicting the stagnation of Stilbourne Society, *The Pyramid* is acutely concerned with the moral degeneration of contemporary society in the absence of any revitalizing values. Although the novel exploits the individual experiences and memories of its protagonist, they are incidental to the revelation of the moral paucity of society at large.

In fact, *The Scorpion God* (1971) published subsequently supports this conjecture about *The Pyramid* through its own thematic focus. Despite totally heterogeneous plots, the two works have easily recognizable thematic linkages and a complementary approach to the relevance of moral vision to social vitality. In the delineation of the social reality in these works lies what Trilling describes as '*moral realism*' -- another name for 'the perception of the dangers of the moral life itself⁴'.

It is, therefore, useful to see these two works in their unified thrust, as constituents of what may be termed for convenience as the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel'. Hence, in this chapter we will undertake a detailed analysis of the thematic potential of these two works. Such an analysis will reveal the

distinct affinity of theme and vision that these two works of fiction display despite structural, contextual and narrative diversity. This will also facilitate the evaluation of the 'changed face' of the 'Golding Novel' during the Social Stage with its three distinct phases. Similarly, in keeping with the strategy adopted at the end of Chapter Three -- a chapter that rounds up the discussion of the Initial Stage -- an in-depth analysis of Characterization, Narrative and Point of View will be attempted in Chapter Six.

This discussion will entail an overview of the 'Golding Novel' after duly commenting on its structural, narrative and perspectival aspects. Such an overview will contain a discussion on the validity of the monolithic status of the 'Golding Novel'. It will also establish the relationship of this 'phase-wise' approach to its monolithic status and reveal the relevance of this study to the 'Golding Novel'.

4.1.3 THE PYRAMID : A SHIFT IN GOLDING'S APPROACH

As this discussion is aimed at an analysis of the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel', there is an evident need to understand the clear shift in the novelist's approach in *The Pyramid*. In fact, only after inquiring into the need for such a shift, its nature and its significance, a meaningful understanding of the thematic potential of the novel will be possible.

When one thinks of the singular path that Golding has trodden for over a decade, a host of questions spring at once to mind : Was Golding finding his own brand of writing monotonous ? Did he find 'his' type of novel unyielding in terms of literary success or creative fulfilment ? Was it no longer an adequate vehicle for his vision in life ? Or was Golding unable to suppress the much-spoken of streak of humour and wit in himself ?⁵ Did he perhaps feel that humour would meet the demands of his present theme more squarely than a serious attitude? Or was there some other reason altogether for this change ?

The answers to these questions can only come nearest to being shrewd guesses. Nonetheless, these answers will together point out a hazy landscape of probabilities related to the need for a change that Golding may have perceived. It is unlikely that a creative artist should be true to his imaginative potential and yet desist from breaking new pathways. Golding who claims to be an '*empiricist and pragmatist*' has admitted in no uncertain terms :

My approach to a novel, then, is a confusion in itself, a hand-to-mouth thing ... But my confused methods have been applied to novels during a generation in which the unreasonable, the confused and haphazard are loose in the world and raging there ... that even in my fumbling, guess and hesitation I should mirror the world round me (A Moving Target p. 167).

It is fairly clear that Golding's changed approach in *The Pyramid* is not an accident nor is it a deliberate attempt. It is an imaginative coincidence where the theme and the plot meet in an

author, on the lookout for an adequate vehicle to put across his vision of the world around him. Thus it is the fusion of theme and vision that decide what the novelist's approach to the plot should be. Here again, we have Golding's own view of this process :

The writer does not choose his theme at all. The themes choose the writer. (A Moving Target p. 168).

In these couple of pithy sentences then are the answers to most of the questions raised earlier in this discussion. Golding's choice of his theme, his choice of social fiction as the means of putting it across, and above all the use of his irrepressible humour as an essential element in his novel -- all become understandable in the light of his own comments regarding the 'novel'.

It is also quite likely that Golding visualises the contemporary society as poised for imminent change : either ideologically moving towards such a change or pathologically needing it. This might have to a great extent influenced the choice of social themes for 'Golding Novel' at this stage -- themes centering on the issue of social stagnation, the need for change and the quality of change suitable to revitalize a moribund society. Perhaps *The Pyramid* and *The Scorpion God* are Golding's attempts to awaken the contemporary sensibility to an immediate issue that has been clinched thus by Trilling :

It is probable that at this time we are about to make great changes in our social system. The world is ripe for such changes, and if they are not made in the direction of greater social liberality, the direction forward, they will almost of

necessity be made in the direction backward, of a terrible social niggardliness.⁶

A careful analysis of *The Pyramid* will reveal just such a social system adhering to obsolete social norms unable to substitute them with positive social values, thereby degenerating into a moribund community justified by its appellation '*Stilbourne*'.

In order to expose the sham values practised under a sly cover of social propriety, Golding reverts to humour, often coarse and raw, to penetrate the invisible, almost invulnerable, sheath of hypocrisy and snobbery thrown over all social interaction in *Stilbourne*. This had been long overdue in the '*Golding Novel*' considering Golding's concern '*to mirror the world*' around him. Despite his gradual incorporation of social context into his previous novels :

what had never really come into focus was the social determinism of the English class system, about which ... Golding felt strongly⁷.

As a natural consequence of this new focus on social incongruity, a distinct feature now makes its appearance in Golding's fiction -- his comic treatment of the theme in *The Pyramid*. His novels had so far given the impression of a grim and determined sensibility bent on uncovering the dark, unfathomable dimension of human existence. But in *The Pyramid*, Golding appears to have relented from his severe and no-nonsense attitude.

However, concessions have to be made to Golding's occasional handling of the comic situation or character even as early as *Lord of the Flies*. The character of Piggy in that novel is a

living testimony to Golding's skill in handling comedy, particularly the presence in the novelist of the humorous and observant vein so necessary to comedy. Moreover, Piggy's portrayal in *Lord of the Flies* generates in the reader the subtle recognition of the English social hierarchy as well as of the novelist's acute awareness of its ills. In fact Golding's caustic comment regarding the rigidity of the English society reveals the extent of his resentment of it. He has said without mincing words :

I think an Englishman who is not aware of the classic disease of society in this country, that is to say, the rigidity of its class-structure -- he's not really aware of anything, not in social terms⁸

Given Golding's awareness of this social ailment, Piggy as the natural victim of the whole group, appears to have been picked up by the novelist not so much by accident as by design. Golding may have chosen him perhaps by an unconscious desire to underscore his own deep-rooted resentment of the hypocrisy and social discrimination that lie immediately below :

the dreadful English scheme of things... which so accepted social snobbery as to elevate it to an instinct [*The Hot Gates* p. 168].

In fine, in this spontaneous revelation⁹ of the social reality in *Lord of the Flies* are concealed the seeds of Golding's otherwise dormant comic sense and his sharp attunement to the English social structure with those 'unbelievable gradations' [*The Hot Gates* p. 168].

In fact, the attitude of the rest of the boys to Piggy's name, his 'as-mar', his ungainly obesity, his myopia and his precocious commonsense expressed through his inimitable country accent -- are all a pointer to Golding's shrewdly perceptive eye, his facility in capturing the precise mood in words and above all, his stunning ability to draw with the minimum of strokes a vivid picture of an ungainly boy in his lower-middle-class milieu.

This delicate social equation seems to be often lurking behind Golding's thematic pre-occupation, unexpectedly surfacing through a casual phrase or two; it is there to be instinctively recognized by the reader than to be grossly exhibited by the novelist. In *Pincher Martin*, for example, the protagonist's sneering and vicious attitude to Mary Lovell and his '*need to assert and break*' her goes a shade beyond his all-engulfing ego and his fear of the '*summer lightening*' that subconsciously terrifies him. It is related in some strange way to that "accent immediately elevated to the top drawer" that he succeeds in reducing to :

Nothing out of the top drawer now. Vowels with the burr of the country on them

[*Pincher Martin* pp. 149-52].

This off-handed affinity with the mode of the social novel is discernible also in *Free Fall*, but to a larger extent. In this novel Golding's portrayal of Sammy's preoccupation with his own fall runs parallel to his often humorous but at times touching reference to Sammy's social background. For that matter, Sammy is the first Golding protagonist that the reader is able to

satisfactorily 'place' in social reality. The casual comedy that recreates the quarrel between Sammy's Ma and her neighbours at the bog, the few seemingly indifferent strokes that describe the drink-sodden old soldier -- the watchman of Sammy's school -- are in themselves examples of Golding's formidable talent in handling social fiction with unmatched facility.

In *The Spire*, the requirements of the story preclude the possibility of humour or light banter from coming into the narrative. Yet, the minute observation of human temperament and passions combine with an amazing imaginative skill to create a social milieu at once contemporary and convincing. Such an ability to blend these twin aspects of humour and social reality in his novels go a long way to support Golding's sway over realistic social fiction displayed in *The Pyramid*, albeit with a spirit of 'innovation'. As Skilton's perceptive assessment notes :

In being a funny book with serious things to say, *The Pyramid* belongs to an important tradition of comic social fiction ... But far from sharing in the sentiment and nostalgia ... Golding's comic masterpiece is filled with laughter caused by discomforting awareness of the limitations and absurdities of life. The writing is witty, as the tradition demands, but the author risks destroying the delicate web of English Social comedy ... in order to brace it once more with a satisfying rigor of thought.¹⁰

However, there is a reason for the so-called 'risks' that the novelist takes in *The Pyramid*. In fact, this novel is a challenge

to Golding's creative genius. Having boldly made new in-roads into the mode of English Social comedy the novelist is not content to toe the line (its) of mild provocation of thought through indulgent humour and restrained sarcasm fringed with perhaps a tinge of nostalgia.

Golding aims at more than an indulgent provocation of the reader's intellectual response to a tolerated social impropriety. His is a strong albeit subtle indictment of the reader's whole complacent smugness towards that gross social evil -- class complex born of moral paucity -- with its deep-rooted social prejudices leading to inhuman social discrimination.

As such, the comic episodes centring on Oliver strive to reveal more than the protagonist's development from self-deception to self-perception. By extension, Oliver can be viewed as an index of the reader's recognition of his own moral culpability -- his instinctive complicity in the violation of all human values under the gloss of social propriety. It is this serious moral concern that gives the delicate fabric of comedy in *The Pyramid* its 'rigour of thought'.

4.2.1 THE SOURCE AND THE STRUCTURE OF *THE PYRAMID*

Interestingly, the source material that embodies the skeleton of the plot in *The Pyramid* is quite recognizably drawn from Golding's own childhood environment in Marlborough. Significantly, even the landscape that entombs the stifling social structure in the novel is fairly akin to Golding's childhood - Marlborough --

suitably concealed behind the new identity of 'Stilbourne' -- with the unmistakable spire in the background and the vicinity to Barchester. What is more, the tongue-in-cheek attitude, which describes this nuclear society is, in all probability, a retracement of Golding's vivid childhood imagination :

 saturated with what was to become an important part of his fiction¹¹, and his ill-concealed scorn for a snobbish social structure that stifles individuals and warps individuality.

Paradoxically, however, despite the presence of this persistent echo of the novelist's autobiographical details in *The Pyramid*, its three component novellas in no way reflect the personality of the novelist nor his professed views or otherwise. In the opinion of John Bayley

 Their secret is in their lack of build-up of a world with a complete inner coherence of its own based on the world-view, and thus on the personality of the author ---¹²

Such an '*impersonality*' is particularly commendable in a theme that inevitably pulls the novelist into its vortex, being set in a socio-psychological terrain identical to that of the novelist's own. Golding's success in this impersonal approach to an issue with unavoidable personal ethos lies in the organic structure of his unconventional narrative :

 Form in his work itself eliminates not only the artist who fashions it but the self which the novelist normally gives to things, and with which he becomes inescapably identified¹³

A brief analysis of the three-tier pyramidal configuration of the novellas in *The Pyramid* will demonstrate the efficacy of form as

it is used by Golding. The structure of the novel has an innovative three-story segmentation, each of which is basically independent of the other two. Incidentally, two of these parts had been published as short stories -- the first in *Kenyon Review* under the title '*On the Escarpment*' [pp. 311 - 400] and the third in *Esquire* as '*Inside a Pyramid*' [pp. 165 - 269]. But this does not imply that the three sections are merely superimposed on the general outline of the plot to '*manufacture*' a novel. In fact the narrative structure of *The Pyramid* is symbolic of the pyramidal gradation of a rigid social structure.

There are subtle linkages in the theme skillfully woven into the story as vital clues through what Avril Henry describes as "a careful time - structure".¹⁴ These help to underline the central statement of the novel. In *The Pyramid* time-shifts are exploited with great success as in the case of the '*pictures*' in *Pincher Martin*. Throughout this brief series of narratives the protagonist Oliver's youthful self-absorption and his painfully slow growing up is utilized as the interlocking pattern of the trilogy. This gives the novel a compact structure and a thematic coherence.

This novel is however, pointedly different from its predecessor in its approach to the theme. The setting is contemporary -- although the title is reminiscent of an ancient architectural marvel like that of *The Spire* -- and the tone and the concern of the

novelist is now different. From the vision of misplaced faith of the cleric in the middle ages in *The Spire*, the novelist reverts to the moral blindness of the protagonist in *The Pyramid* who fails to understand all those who come closest to him. In fact, he is entombed in the 'pyramid' of his own social restrictions and inhibitions. Thereby the protagonist becomes an epitome of the social pyramid which the novelist erects through his trilogy.

Oliver's is the typical case wherein the human capacity for understanding is benumbed by social prejudice and pressure. It decays into a desire for exploitation, ridicule and lack of sympathy, thus failing to achieve that vitalizing human emotion : **Love**. By extension this applies to the whole decadent society corroded by an acute class-complex. It hinders any humane response towards the stray individuals who deviate from the social norms rooted in hypocrisy and pretence; they thus become victims of a subtle ostracism and a supercilious contempt from the same snobbish society.

The narrowed scope of this novel is reminiscent of Jane Austen's novels in that the focus is on the bourgeois life in an English provincial town. Hence, while the morals of the society occupy the novelist's attention, its manners hold the centre of his canvas. Thus the tone of the novel is also suitably controlled by the demands of the theme. There are captivating hilarious outbursts but instead of the Austenian humour of

indulgence and acceptance there is now the prickling note of mockery and scathing sarcasm seeping into the narrative. The underlying edge of irony cutting into the reality behind the polished façade of projected decency and superficial sense of propriety is apparent. The picture of an outdated snobbish society decaying, yet desperately clinging to an illusion of survival emerges through :

the attempt in *The Pyramid* at least to overlook, in fractured twentieth century terms the territory of Jane Austen¹⁵.

The innocuous tone of the narration adds considerably to the richness of the social reality that Golding peels off layer after thin layer. This is the more commendable considering that Oliver is himself the narrator throughout the three segments of *The Pyramid*. While tracing his own growth from adolescence to middle-age he develops from ignorance and hypocrisy to humility and understanding. In this process of attaining maturity, he acts as a reflector of his socio-ethical environment, most of the time, inadvertently.

4.2.2 THE PLOT

The first novella deals with the young Oliver in his eighteenth year, on the threshold of higher education, in the early 30's in Stilbourne near Barchester. He, like his creator, is at the crossroads of an academic career with his spirit longing for music and the down-to-earth prospects of a career in chemistry

inevitably pushing him towards Oxford. There is another more private issue tossing him apart : his purely ideal but totally one-sided passion for the soon-to-be-married Imogen Grantley and his urgent desire for the 'accessible' Evie Babbacombe 'the local phenomenon'. Ironically, he pursues the latter as a remedy for his hopeless infatuation for the former as if he "was forced into some competition with her" [The Pyramid p. 42].

After a brief but 'suggestive' rivalry over Evie between Oliver and Bobby -- the son of Dr. Ewans, his father's employer -- Olly, 'devious and calculating', succeeds in seducing Evie. Unfortunately, she is just 'this hot bit of stuff' [The Pyramid p. 75] in Oliver's view but he would like to exploit her 'availability'. The chance discovery of the marks of flagellation on her posterior provides him an opportunity to do this. In sheer mortification she confesses, an early association -- probably with captain Wilmot, a wheel-chair ridden war-victim -- because she 'was sorry for 'im' [The Pyramid p. 90]. Oliver's reaction to this is two-fold "a laugh of sheer incredulity" and "a heavy leap" of his heart that he was assured the use of this "life's necessary unspeakable object" [The Pyramid p. 90-91].

But Evie sees through his intentions and outplays him. As a result, Oliver, discovered by his father's binoculars, is left to wilt in guilt and humiliation. Meanwhile, Evie leaves Stilbourne for London, the immediate cause being not Oliver but Dr. Jones

who assists Dr. Ewans. Two years later Oliver, home from Oxford, meets Evie at the country fair. Oliver's seemingly innocent toast '*Bottoms up!*' brings Evie's pent up hatred for Stilbourne's smugness to surface. Emboldened by drink, she accuses Oliver of having raped her at fifteen, thereby assuring that he is properly '*done in*'. Yet in spite of his '*shame and confusion*' Oliver sees :

a different picture of Evie in her life-long struggle to be clean and sweet. It was as if this object of frustration and desire had suddenly acquired the attributes of a person rather than a thing [The Pyramid p. 90-91].

He realises that he has lost an opportunity for a fruitful relationship. He is thus left to brood on '*this undiscovered person*'.

The second segment of *The Pyramid* finds Oliver home for Christmas at the end of his first Oxford term and in time for the performance of *King of Hearts* to be staged by the just revived Stilbourne Operatic Society (S.O.S). This farcical staging of the opera provides an occasion for Oliver to get acquainted with the producer Evelyn De Tracy and for the reader to fathom the subterranean currents of Stilbourne's social climate. Through Evelyn De Tracy's candid assessment Oliver is able to see Imogen as "a stupid, insensitive, vain woman" who, has "a neat face and just enough sense to keep smiling" [The Pyramid p. 145-6]. He is thus cured of his calf-love for her.

But when Evelyn De Tracy, encouraged by Oliver's easy rapport

and his urge to know the 'truth of things', attempts to reveal the truth about himself to Oliver, he comes to a dead wall. Having seen the snapshots of the transvestite Evelyn dressed as a ballerina in the company of a 'thick young man', Oliver is neither perceptive enough to see the truth of life nor mature enough to accept it. He laughs 'Until it hurt'. Evelyn is naturally affronted and distanced. Oliver has once again lost an opportunity of understanding and accepting another human being. In his blind smugness he has forgone another chance to escape from the mausoleum of the Stilbourne - pyramid into the freedom of reassuring humane love.

It is, however, in the final part of **The Pyramid** that Oliver comes to terms with himself and with Stilbourne. The third novella is thus the necessary super-structure that closes in the social pyramid in Stilbourne and illustrates the atmosphere of claustrophobia and decay that operates there. The middle-aged Oliver is reluctantly on his way back to Stilbourne "detached, defended by steel, rubber, leather, glass" with his decade-long "determination never to return" replaced by "no more than mild curiosity" [**The Pyramid** p. 158]. On the way, he learns of the death of his music teacher 'Bounce' Dowlish. He has always considered this ungainly, masculine, severe specimen of humanity with apprehension and distate. These feelings have been doubly reinforced into a sullen resentment for her as a result of his

mother's persistent protestation of his 'devotion' to Bounce during his childhood and of his own indifferent opinion of her life during his grown-up years.

At her elegant memorial thoughtfully engraved with the words 'Heaven is music', the feelings he experiences are inappropriately of gladness and of a relief from her. Yet some strange sentiment takes him to a heap of half-burnt relics behind her house. 'Bounce's 'true' reaction to her supposed devotion to music and the irony of the phrase 'Heaven is music' hits him in the eye in the form of an extraordinary, ill-consumed bonfire. Traces of music worth a fortune are hideously strewn about, along with a smashed bust of Beethoven, a half-burnt photograph of her father and his near-destroyed metronome -- all unmistakably evidences of a life-long saga of agony and endurance. In that split-second, Oliver re-lives the trauma of Bounce's life from the cradle to the tomb, unrelieved except for a brief phase of soothing insanity.

He perceives with his new-found insight the harsh treatment of Bounce by her eccentric father, himself a failed musician :

preoccupied with some absolute before which people were shreds and tatters [The Pyramid

p. 163];

the glib manipulative Henry Williams with his sweet talk and his materialistic attitude of 'Using a sprat to catch a mackrel' [The Pyramid p. 180]; and above all the silent contempt of the neighbourhood until :

She had become one of those cases on which Stilbourne turned its corporate back [The Pyramid p. 207-8].

The unfairness of it all becomes apparent to him. The biting irony of a life 'sacrificed' to music also becomes clear to Oliver, as he recognizes in Henry Williams' countenance his 'own face'. Finally, the understanding that had eluded him at all crucial moments of his life dawns on him in Henry Williams words 'Quick to feel, slow to learn. That's me' [The Pyramid p. 216]. In his worship of 'the god without mercy' [The Pyramid p. 159] he 'would never pay more than a reasonable price' [The Pyramid p. 217], that is why he had never loved and lost. Rather he had never lost but had never loved either! Thus the touching moment of the novel is the final moment of Oliver's self perception and his acceptance of his own sense of guilt. It is this resignation to his own weakness which engenders human sympathy in him, may be a trifle too late in his life but certainly at a very late stage in the novel!

4.2.3. INVERTED SYMBOLISM IN THE PYRAMID

The above discussion reveals the semantic and symbolic richness of the novel, The Pyramid. But here the symbols are not explicitly emblematic as they were in The Spire. They are loaded with suggestive meaning which has to be indirectly worked back after pulling aside the blinds of irony to uncover their implicit symbolic potential. Throughout the novel, this strategy can be

used to look beyond the superficial meaning of things; to read the quivering pathos of life under the straight-faced humour and to grasp the significance of the tragic reality of life conveyed by the novelist through his mild comedy. In this, Golding shares the perception of those great novelists, who Trilling believes, know "that manners indicate the largest intentions of men's souls as well as the smallest and they are perpetually concerned to catch the meaning of every dim implicit hint."¹⁶

In fact, every segment of *The Pyramid* can be suitably analysed to demonstrate how an inherent symbolic clue is operating in it under an apparently innocent phrase and below the cover of irony or pun.

In the first novella, Evie Babbacombe's lost locket with the inscription '*Amor vincit omnia*' is a potent illustration of this backward play of implicit symbolism. The inscription means '*Love conquers everything*' but Oliver understands it as '*Love beats everything*'. In fact through this literal understanding Oliver, demonstrates his own attitude to life and love in general. To him both these are contests whereby one has to '*beat*' the adversary and win at all costs. Applied to Evie's particular case it has horrifying undertones. Evie is the simple, beautiful and innocent young girl degraded by the snobbish Stilbourne society. She is almost '*beaten*' out of all her innocent dreams and aspirations for future. In fact her whole personality is shaped by

being 'beaten' to order. Her father with his leather belt with its brass studs; Captain Wilmost with his wheel-chair and his "braided whip" [The Pyramid p. 101], and finally Olly who uses his peculiarly "octave technique, fortissimo, sforzando in the pit of the stomach" [The Pyramid p. 31] to 'beat' Bobby out of his mutual infatuation for Evis are all a party to her inhuman exploitation. She turns to each of them for love but they invariably beat a hasty retreat leaving her to face the music.

In fact 'beating' every other exploitative gesture is the horrifying hinted-at-incestuous relationship to which Evie alludes in her drunken outburst at the Crown while daring Olly into "telling an' laughing" about "Me 'n' Dad" [The Pyramid p. 110].

But in spite of all this, she remains 'unbeaten' to the end. She does not become a warped person seeking release in insanity the way 'Bounce' Dowlish does. Even in her hatred for Stilbourne she is only fair. She does not practice devious strokes as Olly does with Bobby during their boxing match just to 'beat' him at his own game. She has courage to stand in the face of social snobbery, and shows tremendous maturity at her young age of eighteen when Olly first seduces her. What is more, she has a touching vulnerability in spite of her tough exterior which Olly spots but does not sensitively tap, preoccupied as he is with social propriety.

Ironically, Oliver suppresses his "sudden realization of what a dreadful thing it was to be a girl" [The Pyramid p. 81] in order to

manoeuvre Evie for further gratification of his passion until she is forced to 'beat' him at his cleverness by her own bold craftiness. Whereas Oliver suppresses his natural artistic sensibility "with that capacity for long and deep calculation" [The Pyramid p. 26] merely because of his desire for social acceptance, Evie who has nothing to gain from society and everything to lose retains her love for music. Due to Oliver's insensitivity their chords do not vibrate. There is only discord though they could "have made something, music, perhaps, to take the place of the necessary, the inevitable battle" [The Pyramid p. 111] with some understanding on Olly's part. Thus he is left with the remorse of what-could-have-been! But Evie is the same unpredictable girl in spite of her recent London-acquired sophistication. Thus in one sense Evie with her social degeneration scores a moral victory over Oliver's social prosperity and moral bankruptcy, when she is instrumental in giving him the qualms of conscience. In a way Olly's remorse shows that '*Amor vincit omnia*' - Love conquers everything. It certainly 'beats' Olly, at any rate.

In the second segment of *The Pyramid*, Golding's device is the use of bubbling comedy to uncover the hidden nuances of social disparity. But he aims at something altogether different while he seems to be concerned with the exposure of the delicate hem of the social fabric. Through the disastrous performance of the

sentimental operatta *King of Hearts* by the Stilbourne Operatic Society -- under the direction of the effeminate and grotesque Evelyn De Tracy -- Golding draws us to an emotional paucity among the Stilbourne residents symbolized by the initials of their Operatic Society -- S.O.S. In particular, Golding appears to be holding up Oliver as a moral pauper, although he could have aspired to be a '*King of Hearts*' with just a little willingness to accept others rather than always to be acceptable to others.

Thus the cue to the understanding of this section of *The Pyramid* lies in the phrase '*King of Hearts*'. The entire hilarious mis-performance of the opera is the key to the real significance of its title. The irony of "this outrageous exercise in bucolic ineptitude" [*The Pyramid* p. 146] is that the lead roles are entrusted to the insolent and totally unmusical owner and editor of the '*Stilbourne Advertiser*' Norman Claymore with his gnat-like voice and his wife Imogen Grantley who is vain and insensitive. Yet De Tracy manages to put up with them and with a hundred other little oddities that spring up from their vanity in the cause of '*ten guineas*' [*The Pyramid* p. 146].

Unlikely though it may seem, it is Evelyn De Tracy who appears gallant enough to be the '*King of Hearts*' despite his ludicrous dress and his ridiculous tick of shaking uncontrollably at his knees. Oliver finds his influence strong enough to prompt an

alteration of the layout at the imposing 'Crown'. This coming from the acutely society-conscious Oliver is no mean testimony. Notwithstanding his grotesque appearance, De Tracy has the insight into 'the characters' of Stilbourne with whom he has to deal. He has not only the skill to put up with them but also the tact to keep the bubbles of their vanity intact. Even when he admits that he has been 'excruciated' by the experience he has the sense to realise that it is not even in the cause of art. He alone has the clarity of vision to see Oliver as the 'first' human being involved in the whole pathetic exercise of the staging of the operetta. Oliver finds him 'very clear and lovable' in the middle of a 'slight mist' [The Pyramid p. 148]. It is he who 'frees' Oliver from his undeserved infatuation for Imogen Grantley by curing him of his 'hangdog adoration' [The Pyramid p. 144].

Yet, Evelyn falls the reader's estimate of his gallantry and warmth somewhere, when he decides to 'escape' having failed to inspire in Oliver any 'perception' of the reality of life. Thus, he forfeits his claim to the Kingship of hearts while qualifying for the emotional maturity required for it. At best, he remains a comic but a lovable character who deserves sympathy and affection but who does not command it. However, he deserves recognition for being the first impartial critic who shows Oliver's development from the crude unfeeling, exploiter in his pre-Oxford days to being the earnest seeker after 'the truth of things' [The Pyramid p. 148]

after his term-long stay at Oxford. Thus one is tempted to assess Oliver against this emotional development in the context of the whole novel to see whether he deserves being considered the 'King of Hearts'. At least from his immature reaction to De Tracy's attempt at self-revelation he comes through as an insensitive and as yet emotionally underdeveloped individual, who presently falls short of this epithet.

One turns to the final novella of this trilogy in the hope of deciphering the subsequent emotional growth of Oliver in order to estimate his moral status as the likely 'King of Hearts'. This top-most structure of *The Pyramid* is a highly significant tragicomic segment. As in the other two parts of the novel, even here an epigram, '*Heaven is music*', works its way to being an euphemism. Miss 'Bounce' Dowlish with "that pathetic, horrible, unused body" (*The Pyramid* p. 213); with even young Oliver having recognized '*the limitations of her musical world*' hardly deserve such an epithet. In her manly, earnest but pathetic pleading of Henry -- '*All I want is for you to need me, need me!*' -- she becomes an object of pity. In fact, her whole traumatic, pathetic life is a pointer to this.

Despite her life-long devotion to music, whether voluntary or not, she finds peace only when she lapses into insanity. After being '*put away*' she comes back cured to return to her original status of being an eccentric. Stilbourne, with its usual

coldness, turns its corporate back on her. Henry Williams, whom she has given social status through her whole-hearted financial support, is willing to pay only a 'reasonable price' of a lukewarm sop to her overwhelmingly pathetic emotional craving. But promptly on her death he builds the marble monument with engraved 'immortals' and the ironical inscription 'Heaven is music'. During her whole life-time Music has been her bane, her torment, her illusion, her mill-stone.

Instead of being fortunate enough to lose herself in the soothing realm of music, she is placed at the tormenting periphery of reality and make-belief desperately compelling a livelihood out of the music for which she has no real aptitude. Being a warped initiate into the world of music, thanks to her father who was a 'failed musician', she unwittingly extends similar torture on her pupils in her attempts to 'teach' them. The growing emotional void of her life teaches her some uncanny sense, even as she descends deeper into insanity. Finally on her return home from the asylum she confesses to Oliver that she would rather save 'a budgie' than a child from a fire.

Music thus takes the total emotional toll of her life. We are given to understand that before her death she destroyed every manifest sign of music around her. Thus, 'heaven is music' becomes a mockery of its own significance when used in the context of 'Bounce'. Further, the refrain becomes an ironical comment on

'what is' and what 'could have been' Bounce's life, but, for music. Music has made her life an unendurable tragedy. However, for Stilbourne's smug world this music is the pretext of sending 'radar emissions' into her shut-off existence to uncover unpalatable facts about her pitiable life in order to afford hollow sympathy, indifferent censure and suppressed ridicule.

It is music really that has killed her, even while she was alive. If 'Heaven' be used in the narrowest context of being synonymous with death then alone she lives up to the inscription 'Heaven is Music'. Thus having such an inscription on the monument of her death speaks volumes of the shoddiness, crassness and unfeeling nature of the mind that devised such an idea. Given our knowledge of Henry Williams while it is very difficult to envisage this to be a purposeful act, it is not impossible to view it as a psychological 'faux pas'.

4.2.4 THE PYRAMID AS A NOVEL OF THE MORAL PHASE

In conclusion, it may be said that the title of the novel takes on a new shade of meaning, thereby offering a new angle to the understanding of the novel. Using Oliver as the metronome, the reader can vibrate in tune with 'the crystal pyramid' of Stilbourne that reveals itself gradually through the novel. The vital perception of Stilbourne that comes through towards the end of the novel is what Oliver describes as 'Stilbourne was like anywhere else

'after all' [The Pyramid p. 157]. If we have seen Stilbourne, as a derelict monument to the decomposing social corpse at a given time and place, then we realise with Oliver's worldly wisdom that it could be 'at *sometime anywhere*'. An intimately close-knit society without snobbery and hypocrisy is not possible. In essence what decays is not the social structure but the morality of the people: they cling to obsolete values when the social fabric on the verge of disintegration, is crying out for a revitalization structurally as well as organically.

Even in *The Pyramid*, it is not the class-structure that gives rise to the smothering atmosphere of apathy and resentment in the social pyramid of Stilbourne. It is the class-complex of those in the higher echelons of society clinging desperately to a bourgeois structure that has already cast away its erstwhile vivifying determinants of social respectability. Presently, this society has adopted as its desirable goals the pursuit of economic prosperity and social propriety through a calculating and cowardly materialism. In such a scheme of life, the finer sentiments and the better judgment of an individual do not matter. *The Pyramid* reflects this precarious social condition more than the ugly social structure. '*The pyramid*' that Golding visualizes is a monument to humankind whose morals have decayed, and manners have become stultified and rigid. The lifeless inmate of this intimidating structure is the human heart that has lost its

vitalizing spirit of love.

The epigraph of the novel ironically underscores this unpalatable fact : *'If thou be among people make for thyself love the beginning and the end of thy life'*.

As the epigraph chosen from the inscriptions of the Egyptian monarch Ptah-Hotep shows, humanity has come to ignore, what it had valued since its infancy, in its present rat-race for 'success' dominated by the 'scientific' spirit. Oliver's prosperity bought 'cheaply' by foregoing a career in music in exchange for one in chemistry; Henry Williams' imposing monument to Bounce that 'spared no expense'; Evie's underlying defiance that asserts itself with a determination after she "had hitched herself up a couple of degrees on our dreadful ladder" [The Pyramid p. 103]; De Tracy's putting up with the individuals he totally sees through for the sake of ten guineas and a third class return ticket - are all tell-tale signs of the worship of materialism. The epilogue to the novel should properly read *'If thou be among people make for thyself lucre the beginning and the end of thy life !'* Though in a different form from his earlier novels, Golding's undeniable 'reversal' is there in The Pyramid too ! As usual it comes suddenly and shockingly as a sting in the tail.

For the ancient Egyptians, the pyramid symbolised the faith of a whole race, of an entry into a definite future life more than being a monument to the dead or to the dying. The Pyramid of

Stilbourne is a bonsai of contemporary humankind that professes love and life but practises a way of stagnant living that ensures the petrification of their very spirit. The pyramid as monument to death had implied a faith in life and in the living but the pyramid in the novel is emblematic of the existence of a humanity that has died in spirit. This paradox becomes apparent on placing *The Scorpion God* alongside *The Pyramid*.

4.3.1 THE SECOND TRILOGY OF THE MORAL PHASE: THE SCORPION GOD

Coming to *The Scorpion God*, the second trilogy of the *moral phase* it may be inferred with some justification that the only steady feature of Golding's fiction is its unpredictability. For despite ingenious thematic linkages, no two Golding novels have anything similar to offer in terms of plot, technique or presentation. Even so, the leap from the contemporary canvas of the social fiction in *The Pyramid* to the exotic backdrop of *The Scorpion God* (1971) is a far cry for the 'Golding Novel'.

Considering the course that the 'Golding Novel' has pursued so far, one is surprised by the 'kind' of change that *The Scorpion God* offers. The very basis for the novelist's much-spoken of 'concern for mankind' seems to be jeopardized by the three novellas constituting *The Scorpion God*. In terms of theme, plot, vision, as well as technique, this work is baffling even by 'Goldingian' standards, given their 'rough - edged qualities that administer a

new shock of surprise¹⁷.

Despite the impression created by a superficial reading of *The Scorpion God*, Golding's concern with mankind has nowhere diminished in its seriousness, although its urgency has somewhat blunted with the passage of time. After the long-enduring stage of relentless probing into the nature of human predicament, he has presumably become mellowed in his attitude. Thus, after his persistent diagnosis of human ills in his earlier stage of novel-writing he has had a glimpse of hope for individual Man in *The Spire*, however remote. Hence Golding has now come to a stage of analysing the human ailment in its social context but with a more congenial point of view.

However, the result of his '*findings*' regarding the human condition should not be confused with the blandness of his manner in pronouncing it. It is to be accepted that his long association with the universally rampant '*disease*' of mankind has to a certain extent enured him, thereby making his tone milder and therefore more accessible. This is hardly an indication that Golding's seriousness or his pre-occupation with Man has yielded place to frivolity and obtuseness. It has, in all appearances altered its manifest image by deviating into a seemingly light-hearted portrayal of ancient social groups. The novelist has thereby fulfilled a long-due need for change in the '*look*' of the '*Golding Novel*'. Thus what might be hastily brushed aside as a

loss of face for the novelist might be viewed as an enriching and essential 'face-lift' for the 'Golding Novel'.

Significantly enough, this changed approach of the novelist to mankind and its ills synchronises with his changed attitude to fiction in general and to his theme in particular. This was apparent in *The Pyramid* (1967) which marks the beginning of the Social Stage of his fiction. During its Initial Stage the 'Golding Novel' had trodden a different path right from the beginning. It is a well-known fact that Golding's maiden novel *Lord of the Flies* had sprung into existence from his conviction "that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creature ... and that the only enemy of man is inside him" [*The Hot Gates* pp.87-9]. It conveyed in Golding's own words :

a trite lesson ... but one which I believed needed urgently to be driven home.

Thus the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' is marked by a persistent inquiry into the life of human beings to pinpoint how it would be conditioned 'by *their diseased, their fallen nature*'. Thus the novels *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall*, *The Spire* are all studies of an individual but '*fallen*' Man. Even *The Inheritors*, while making use of two social groups, is more concerned with the evil that enters human evolutionary cycle through the Homo Sapiens' '*lapse*'.

However, when Golding ventured on his second stage of novel-writing with *The Pyramid* (1967) he had in all probability come to terms with the mystery of existence. The ambiguity that is often

noticed in his *Free Fall* (1958) and *The Spire* (1964) but not in *The Pyramid* (1967), nor in *The Scorpion God* (1971), is a pointer to this. It is the complex nature of this mystery in the earlier novels that defies explanation and thereby gives rise to an obscurity resulting in ambiguity of interpretation. What is more interesting is that Golding's insistence 'upon mystery of the neglected or perhaps forgotten religious dimension of human experience' had been by his own confession :

a deliberate course ... a sort of counteraction, or corrective to our diminished sense of the numinous¹⁸.

Having thus geared himself with an understanding of the mystery underlying human experience, Golding was at a proper stage to analyse the social structure that governs human experience. Such an analysis of the social groups becomes necessary because it is the human society that has inherited the moral bankruptcy of the post-lapsarian homo-sapiens. It is therefore natural that a scrutiny into the historical past of human social groups should fascinate a novelist with Golding's curiosity and keen insight. It is this fascination with human society in its hazy infancy that probably lies behind the genesis of the novellas in *The Scorpion God* (1971):

whose very assurance related them more to *The Inheritors* than to any new departure in terms of art¹⁹.

This observation of Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor can be accepted mainly with regard to the remote context and the exotic setting of the novellas of *The Scorpion God*. But thematically speaking, they

display a greater affinity to **The Pyramid**.

4.3.2 THEMATIC LINKAGES : *THE SCORPION GOD AND THE PYRAMID*

As a trilogy comprised of three distinct novellas, **The Scorpion God** derives its name from the novella that centres around pre-dynastic Egypt. '*The Scorpion God* is probably an allusion to the first monarch who unified the upper and the lower Kingdoms of the Nile valley and established the pharaonic dynasty. Thus, the story of the first novella is woven around the unquestioning belief of the ancient Egyptians in their myth of creation and existence associated with the annual flooding of the Nile. Given Golding's life-long fascination with Egypt in her marvellous combination of sacred awe and miraculous pragmatism, the choice of his plot seems no accident. [The Hot Gates p. 71 - 82].

But one tends to agree with Medcalf that for all his :

fascination with the magic of Egyptians, with their spiritual pragmatism he is fascinated too by the Greeks who worked their way to doing without magic²⁰.

Hence curiously enough, the third novella in **The Scorpion God**, *Envoy Extraordinary* concerns a Greek philosopher-scientist who brings to Imperial Rome three unlikely gifts born of his scientific discovery that threaten the very existence of the civilization.

Nestling between these two novellas is *Clonk Clonk* a story set in pre-historic Africa dealing with the members of a primitive tribe only a little advanced over Golding's innocent Neanderthals in **The Inheritors**. Golding has suggested that he included *Clonk*

Clonk as the middle piece in *The Scorpion God* to : 'keep the other two ... apart'²¹. This off-handed remark serves as a veritable instance of the intended or inadvertent design that goes into a 'Golding' work. As Stephen Medcalf has rightly pointed out :

It is impossible to forecast what he deliberately designed and what he did not or what indeed he actually designed to come up, like a spring whose course has been so deeply buried it has not been felt ...²².

Added to this is Golding's deep-rooted inclination for what is primitive, uncorrupted and natural in human society.

Between this design and this spontaneity of Golding, oscillates the thematic significance of *The Scorpion God*. It appears as a refreshing portrayal of the exotic 'nowhere land of phantasy'. Nonetheless, it carries the potential of being an organic sequel to *The Pyramid* re-enforcing its thematic nuances through its own semantic intricacy. Philip Redpath opines that :

change is the predominant theme of both texts : evolutionary change from the pre-historic Africa of *Clonk Clonk*, through pre-dynastic Egypt in '*The Scorpion God*', the Roman Empire in '*Envoy Extraordinary*', to a twentieth century English community in *The Pyramid*.²³ .lh 16

Redpath's comment establishes 'change' as the common thematic motif that operates in *The Pyramid* and the three novellas of *The Scorpion God*. A brief reference to theme in each of these novellas will divulge their semantic potential and show their relevance as works of the moral phase of the 'Golding Novel'.

The story of '*The Scorpion God*', as those of the other two

novellas, is in no-way related to *The Pyramid*, which is about the stultified life in a contemporary English township. On the other hand '*The Scorpion God*' is based on the legend of the ancient Egyptian belief in the continuity of the transient life in the '*Moving Now*' into the eternal state of the '*Motionless Now*'. Thus the Egyptians in the novella embrace the death of the body as an essential corollary that will ensure the changeless state of the spiritual life believed to be an uninterrupted continuation of the worldly existence.

But '*The Scorpion God*' conceals a profounder thematic pattern that can be better organized in association with that of *The Pyramid*. It can be noticed that both, the inhabitants of Stilbourne in *The Pyramid* and the ancient Egyptians in '*The Scorpion God*', are governed by a common notion --- resistance to change. However, their respective objectives behind the reluctance to change are poles apart; in *The Pyramid* material prosperity and social respectability are the desired goals; while for the ancient Egyptians realization of a grand spiritual vision is the desired goal. In both the societies, outsiders act as the agents of change --- in Stilbourne it is Henry Williams, whereas in ancient Egypt it is the Liar. Despite this commonness there is a difference in the attitude of the two social groups to change. In fact, their degree of reluctance and the intention behind such a reluctance further amplifies this difference.

In *The Pyramid* it is an essentially material and secular concern that curtails any free movement of ideas or of individuals on the social ladder. It is the predominant social bias of the Stilbourne residents that controls any social intercourse. Thereby it stagnates their morally degenerate existence into what may be described as a parody of the Egyptians' 'state of

Motionless Now. The only permissible token of social change in Stilbourne is material prosperity. It is thus that an unknown stranger like Henry Williams can gradually attain for himself a higher social identity; Evie is able to gain a couple of inches on the social ladder; Olly can bring himself to re-visit Stilbourne only after having secured a formidable protective gear of material prosperity.

In brief, *'the key'* to possible change in the stagnating tomb of the Stilbourne pyramid is *'lucre'*. But this key to social change is hardly a rejuvenating element for the Stilbourne society which is fatally characterized by decay of morals and has died in spirit. So the material prosperity that gives a semblance of mobility to the rigid social structure is in reality just a superficial existence devoid of any vitalizing spirit.

On the other hand, for the ancient Egyptians their spiritual rigidity entails a physical threat of stagnation and probably of social extinction. All the mores that govern their life appear to be directed towards achieving a total elimination of life. Their unswerving, blind faith in the supernatural powers of Great House -- his ability to hold the sky up, to raise the level of the Nile waters, to ensure the common weal in death as in life -- condemns them to cling to the hope of *'life'* while enduring an existence completely at the mercy of natural elements. Their concept of an eternal life with its calm acceptance of death is admirably pragmatic in spiritual terms. But it has blunted or perhaps even erased their natural impulses including their survival instinct. Although claimed by the Head Man to be based on reason and ascertained by known facts from time to time, the faith of the ancient Egyptians makes a secure *'normal'* worldly life impossible. For while it concedes the presence of *'deep, unspoken'* human

desires, it rules that -- 'by the laws of nature -- they cannot be externalized' [The Scorpion God p. 55].

In *Envoy Extraordinary* the Alexandrian librarian-turned-scientist is the successor of the Liar and the fore-runner of Henry Williams as the agent of change that comes to an unsuspecting society. He represents the threat posed by change-obsessed individuals to societies in the infancy of human civilization. In him, Golding presents the stark and insatiate curiosity of a myopic votary of scientific progress.

In other words, *Envoy Extraordinary* is Golding's shrewd but comic portrayal of a discomfiting probability in remote past when human history was not even recorded. The Emperor and Phanocles symbolize the fundamental conflict between the continuity of tradition and the need for change which forms the basis of human civilization. In *Envoy Extraordinary* this conflict assumes the form of an interplay between the preference for an unchanging order based on the simple faith of a superstitious but sympathetic people and the revolutionary zeal for drastic change that the egotistic mind of a rational thinker insists on.

Thus *Envoy Extraordinary* can be seen as an intelligent and witty comment of its author on the relation of change to human life. It foregrounds once again, though with a more humorous and forthright manner this time, what *The Pyramid* has already hinted at in a subtler way: change that comes externally through egotistic individuals is nearly always superficial and materialistic. The society onto which such change is craftily grafted is denuded of the basic human values of love and empathy.

Consequently, such a society promotes a pursuit of shallow materialism totally oblivious to the moral or spiritual well-being of individuals and society. Naturally, such a situation comes to

pass because the change thus brought about is a super-imposed condition that smothers the natural buoyancy of life. It does not extend to the concerned society the option to become acquainted with the real motives behind the expected change nor with its consequences that may contain the seeds of catastrophe, likely to manifest themselves often in a drastic manner.

However, this is not to deny the importance of change in life. In *Clonk Clonk* Golding shows the significance or the inevitability of Change in life. Life that stubbornly refuses to change is fore-doomed to stagnation and decay. The organic nature of life pre-supposes the development and the need for change. But such a need for change is, more often than not, an internal symptom of social condition with which it has to grapple and come to terms. No doubt, it is hard to foresee that need for change and it is even harder to accept it. This is particularly so in the case of a normal, coherent and contained social group as that of the Leopard-men and Bee-women in *Clonk Clonk*. Yet, the precondition of normalcy, in accordance with the accepted norms of a society as the basis of social intercourse, envisages the possibility of an abnormal situation. Such a situation may need a special approach and may thus entail change in the accepted routine or norms of the concerned society. If such a social group is fortunate enough to be endowed with resourceful and intelligent individuals like Palm, the required change can be uneventfully incorporated without disturbing the harmony of group-existence or even without creating any fissures in the organic homogeneity of the social structure.

In fine, change is the common thematic link that *The Pyramid* and the novellas of *The Scorpion God* have as the main plank of their narrative structure. A novella-wise discussion of the structural features of *The Scorpion God* will further reveal their thematic

potential. A separate discussion of each of the three novellas of *The Scorpion God* will also divulge thematic linkages among these works. However, to reveal their thematic continuity they will be discussed not sequentially but in the order of their thematic affinity.

4.3.3 THE STRUCTURE OF *THE SCORPION GOD*

In all the three novellas of *The Scorpion God*, crisis threatening the stability and the integrity of a social structure is envisaged as the central motif of the story. In '*The Scorpion God*' and *Envoy Extraordinary*, this crisis manifests itself through a conflict centering on two individuals with the destiny of a whole society hanging in balance; in *Clonk Clonk*, the crisis is within an individual threatening him with social rejection and loss of social status.

The conflict in '*The Scorpion God*' and *Envoy Extraordinary* is in essence between the revolutionary upholders of material advancement and the traditional custodians of the spiritual and the irrational. In the first novella the former triumph, while in the other the latter are given a new lease of life. This structural plan assumes great significance since '*The Scorpion God*' was written 'to go with' *Envoy Extraordinary*.

In view of this authorial intention, the structure of *Clonk Clonk* needs to be analysed. Here also two individuals stand out not as adversaries, but as complements to each other -- their particular proclivities conferring on them a degree of separateness and consequently some self-awareness²⁴. One of them, The Chimp is physically weak but of sharp intuitive perception; the other, Palm, despite her mental 'peculiarity', is endowed with exceptional intelligence and a sensitivity to her

environment. Together they represent the delicate balance between change and stability; this transitory balance rooted in integrated human personality confers a wholesome stable life on Man. In the words of Philip Redpath :

Man's imagination, his sympathy for people and objects around him, and his capacity to believe in what cannot be empirically verified, are all necessary if he is to remain a creature capable of living in and with the universe²⁵.

Golding's protagonists in *Clonk Clonk* are the living illustrations of this requisite.

In the three novellas, an impersonal omniscient narrator operates. As against the first-person narration of the three interconnected but distinct stories in *The Pyramid*, there is third-person narration in the apparently unconnected novellas of *The Scorpion God*. The highlight of this narration is its buoyant humour and mild sarcasm. This is particularly so in *The Scorpion God* and *Envoy Extraordinary*. Despite this sarcastic, often ironical, attitude of the novelist, the balance of the narrative is nowhere permitted to tilt in these stories.

In *The Scorpion God* while the pinprick of sarcasm is directed against the rebellious iconoclasm of the egotistic Liar, it is equally picquant towards the reductive pseudo-rationalism of the orthodox Head Man. Similarly in *Envoy Extraordinary* though the novelist's sympathy appears to be with the down-to-earth Emperor, the myopic rationalism of Phanocles -- the hubristic votary of progress -- is nowhere projected to disadvantage. In this gentle equipoise between the polarities of dramatic

conflict lies the narrative excellence of the otherwise ordinary novellas. Golding's effusive comedy helps to maintain this feather-touch equipoise.

A reference to two critical assessments of the situation in *The Scorpion God* will illustrate Golding's rare narrative talent in -- 'revealing enough' to provoke thinking without 'exposing excessively' to colour that thinking. This approach encourages diverse and convincing interpretations of the same situation. For example, Virginia Tiger opines that "it is the freethinker -- the man who explodes religious orthodoxy -- who emerges as the spokesman for the imagination"²⁶ in *The Scorpion God*. This would imply that the Liar, who breaks the religious orthodoxy in the system represented by the Head Man, is such a spokesman. For it is the Liar who challenges and defeats the spiritual outlook of the Egyptians. But according to Redpath :

The Liar, an outsider, who challenges this outlook seems to be the spokesman for life and change. Because the Egyptians believe that to die is to enter eternal life, the Liar has to argue in paradoxes ... But Golding also uses paradoxes, for his sympathies lie with the Egyptians rather than the Liar. Golding sympathises with the Egyptians for one reason : their imaginative beliefs²⁷.

It can be easily noticed that the above two critical positions together constitute a paradox of interpretation. Such a paradox testifies to Golding's technique of maintaining the ambivalence of his thematic proposition and so making it consistent with the nature of actuality. Perhaps this paradoxical approach owes its

origin to Golding's own youthful dilemma : his beliefs, and preferences fluctuating between the irrational and the logical, the spiritual and the scientific. In his travelogue, **An Egyptian Journal**, Golding has candidly aired this fluctuation :

...I could more readily believe in Ra, Isis and Osiris than in the Trinity. To me the contradictions of Egyptian beliefs were not implausible Yet all the time ... my preoccupations were with the rationally explored and logically treated discoveries of scientific archaeology ! [An Egyptian Journal p. 10].

What is more relevant, Golding has confessed that this led to a 'tension', though it "died a natural death as I grew older and was more caught up in life and love around me than in an imaginative dialogue with death and magic" [An Egyptian Journal p. 10].

It may be argued that while Golding's personal tension died a natural death, his basic pull between the twin-aspects of experience -- scientific and spiritual, rational and imaginative -- persisted. Perhaps this magnetic pull has become absorbed in his personality and so peeps over the seams of his plots or over the shoulders of his character. It certainly does so, in the case of *Envoy Extraordinary* in the persona of Golding's natural philosopher, Phanocles, as in the case of the earthy, logical '*Liar*' in '*The Scorpion God*'.

Despite Golding's disenchantment with superficial progress and reductive rationalism, neither of these characters are given a raw deal. As the Liar in '*The Scorpion God*' is firmly rooted in reason, conviction and self-assurance, so is Phanocles formidably placed in

his universe of empiricism and logic. While the Liar's conflict was with a whole system, it was mainly directed to a clash with the Head Man in his orthodoxy. Phanocles in *Envoy Extraordinary* is pitted against the complacent acceptance of a benevolent order represented by the Emperor. Both these characters become the focal points of the two novellas, otherwise so distinct, in being undesirable harbingers of external change. In this, they reveal the common concern of the two works, notwithstanding their unrelated plots. As Julia Briggs points out :

Both are concerned with the limitations, risks and actual dangers of a world view narrowly based on logic, rationalism and faith in scientific progress, but otherwise they have little in common²⁸

Although Liar, the votary of progress, wins at the cost of spiritual pragmatism of the ancient Egyptians, the Greek scientist meets his match in the prudent Emperor. The latter ironically 'rewards' him with an ambassadorship tantamounting to expulsion, for the progress that he does not want. Thus despite the preoccupation with progress, the novelist's sympathetic chord with the simplistic, the natural and the imaginative is fairly discernible.

Clonk Clonk deserves special mention in that its narrative is nowhere marred by undue sarcasm. The delicate empathy of the narrative persona is always with the dramatics personae -- Palm and the Chimp -- probably because both are 'suffering minority' : Palm is the victim of her mental disturbances, and the Chimp of his

physical debility. This is the likely reason behind the sympathetic narration supported by minute observation and an imaginative resolution of the conflict in the two characters. The manner of the resolution of the crisis by the mutual complementing of needs and liabilities in *Clonk Clonk* indicates the use of 'the semi-didactic mode' as in the other two novels.

While the Liar and Phanocles were the instruments of external change, Palm in *Clonk Clonk* is the source of intrinsic change brought about naturally and imaginatively. Apparently *Clonk Clonk* with its two companion pieces is intended as an insightful literary creation 'to proffer a viewpoint'. After all, as Redpath opines :

To discover a perspective which reconciles change and stability with man's intellect and imaginative vitality is in part to discover what it means to be human.²⁹

Golding offers such an ingenious and resourceful reconciliation through Palm's assured and prudent stance in her august position as she-who-names-the-women. Through her astute decision to install The Chimp as her Leopard-man, she rehabilitates him and regenerates her own waning vitality. But, for this she has to go beyond the intellectual limits set by her society. It is not possible to surpass old ideas and adopt new ones without facing rejection. Yet Palm dares this risk 'in order to find meaning in life'.³⁰

While Golding's thematic focus is clear enough in *The Scorpion God*, its thrust becomes even more pronounced because of the balanced use of point of view in these novellas. In the *The Scorpion God*

the Liar's point of view is mainly projected, although the novelist hardly sees eye to eye with him. In a subtle reversal at a later stage, we are also given the Ancient Egyptians' point of view. But that is essentially lop-sided since the spokesman for this view is the Headman -- the prisoner of his own fallacious and reductive approach to knowledge. But it is, once again, the point of view of the Liar favouring 'survival' and professing common sense over blind spiritualism. Through the human, fragile Pretty Flower, the novelist voices the unavoidable pitting of normal impulses and urges against unassailable ideals in an unduly repressive system. The overall perspective one has is of a plea made for free exchange of ideas and an open attitude to human liberty in relation to the rigid social structure. But this can be better appreciated in collation with the other two novellas.

Envoy Extraordinary fluctuates between a few overlapping points of view -- the point of view of a persecuted experimentalist represented by Phanocles; that of the bored pseudo-intellectuals, looking askance at new developments in their need for sheer diversion, represented by Mamillius; that of the ordinary man preoccupied with his petty interest as represented by the Captain or Posthumus; and that of the insightful visionary, concerned with the destiny of mankind in relation to the universe, represented by the Emperor. In the final analysis, the points of view of Phanocles and The Emperor become

juxtaposed as being authentic. But The Emperor's preferment of the pressure cooker over the warship, explosive or printing press indicates that he is not averse to material progress or experiment -- provided it assimilates into the existing harmonious way of life without drastically overturning it.

In *Clonk Clonk*, the end demonstrates the harmonious meeting of these two points of view. But the story of this novella is narrated from the points of view of the resourceful, intelligent authority vested in Palm and the vulnerable, defenseless social reject, The Chimp. In their instinctive, perhaps impulsive, association lies the solution to issues in all the novellas of *The Scorpion God* and *The Pyramid*. Palm is the agent of the essential social therapy -- the source of authority with marked limits; the fountainhead of self-awareness; the well-spring of human sympathy and the bed-rock of calm assurance. She instills in her rigid social group a reassurance of stability but she also incorporates the subtle change necessary to strengthen this stability without destroying its integrity as a group. Though simplistic in nature, a solution is significant because it protects the individual against the society without placing one against the other.

The merit of *Clonk Clonk* lies in this optimistic opening that Golding makes for mankind. Not only through its mild humour and sympathetic treatment but also through its tonal variation, this

work justifies the creation of *The Scorpion God* which had been written off as 'little more than a holding action'³¹. Through its effusive language and sparse but prominent lively characterization *The Scorpion God* gives ample evidence of an earnest attempt, however lighthearted, of Golding's new willingness to treat the human dilemma "movingly, gently, even genially"³². A separate discussion of each of its constituent novellas will illustrate this attempt further.

4.4.1 THE PLOT

The Scorpion God opens on a ritualistic public performance of Great House -- his seven-yearly marathon to ensure the rise in river waters. He is being prodded into completing his ritual run by his favourite companion, Liar, an outsider acquainted with men in alien lands living with 'strange notions' of life. When he is about to complete his ritual run, the exhausted Great House is virtually tripped by the Blind Man. He wants to inform the God of the imminent calamity threatening the spiritual and therefore the material well-being of the people -- the effeminate son of Great House is prematurely going blind at ten.

The collapse of Great House and his failure to complete the ritual signals the onset of 'the beginning'. It is thus necessary to reassure the people of his divine capacity during a royal banquet. At the Liar's insistence, Pretty Flower desperately

attempts a provocative dance to seduce her father into an incestuous copulation necessary to testify the invulnerability of his divine powers. But to no avail. His second failure of the day underscores 'the beginning' of his post-mortem existence. After due preparations he is to be interned into his eternal dwelling along with his stone dummy and all his household attendants but the Liar. The Liar refuses eternal life heretically "Because this one is good enough" [The Scorpion God p. 40]. Considered 'unclean' he is disposed off to 'the pit' among "the refuse, the bones, the decaying meat, the slimy vegetables and stained stones" [The Scorpion God p. 45].

As expected by everyone, and in accordance with Great House's promise before his 'beginning', the river waters rise but soon move towards the precarious notch of calamity. Head Man in his simplistic vanity believes "that all knowledge is my province. What a man can know, I know" [The Scorpion God p. 51]. Accordingly, when he attempts to discover the reasons behind such heavenly wrath, he stumbles upon the illicit sexual relationship between the Liar and Pretty Flower. He is convinced that such sexual aberration "across the natural borders of consanguinity" is responsible for the calamity. [The Scorpion God p. 55]

To appease the God's anger the Liar is to be forcibly sent to 'life' but he refuses to co-operate. When cornered into self-preservation he escapes after killing a few and 'stinging' the Head

Man mortally. The novella ends on an optimistic note, with Pretty Flower approaching the Liar with "the beginning of a smile ... henna'd palms outward, gesture reserved for revelation" [The Scorpion God p. 62] Thus his elevation to the position of 'The Scorpion God' appears to be imminent ... '

But obviously the significance of the story is far from one's grasp if this is the point of culmination that one is content to attain. The farthest one can go from such a critical position is to draw the general line of demarcation between the realms of faith and reason; the Egyptians representing the one, the Liar the other. The natural conclusion to follow such a premise would be to underscore the disintegration of an ancient culture based on unprogressive faith and the revival of a moribund cultural group by the pragmatic approach of the Liar -- an individual possessing vitalizing reason. But there is more to the novella than what meets the eye.

4.4.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *THE SCORPION GOD*

To understand the implicit significance of this novella, it is essential to see through the inherent contradiction in the ancient Egyptian way of life. For the ancient Egyptians their king, Great House, is their God, who invests life with the capacity for survival and sustenance. It is believed that through his mystic powers the Nile waters rise to different levels vital to the

existence of life in the kingdom : the Notch of Sorrow, the Notch of Excellent Eating and the Notch of Great Calamity. These indices of heavenly Grace or Wrath are related to the preferences of the periodic public performances of Great House implying that the God has to periodically put his divine strength to test.

The ancient Egyptians, with their profound faith in the changelessness of life, desire to preserve the essence of life even after death. The myth that governs their faith is of life's rejuvenation into an eternal stasis through dying. So it is death which appears to them the desirable goal of existence and not life. Life becomes merely a transitory phase equivalent to death which copies the timeless existence that is to follow it. Hence even the day-to-day life of the ancient Egyptians sustains under the contradiction that it is 'death'.

Interestingly, it is the Liar who sees the dichotomy in the Egyptian concept of life. With his reason, he is able to see through the contradictions of their spiritual notions that do not take cognizance of the physical reality of 'the Moving Now'. Thus he is able to use his own commonsense to make a new 'beginning' -- not in the Egyptian sense -- by laying the foundations of an empire and a new social order. He ushers in a new order of things in a society poised for development and security, but in achieving this goal, his myopic view of life has sacrificed the mystery of a vision -- both noble and complex. In this sense it is a survival

dearly purchased.

As an outsider who sees the need for change, the Liar compares well with Evelyn De Tracy in *The Pyramid*. Evelyn also recognizes the Stilbourne residents for what they are -- materialistic, devoid of understanding and generally stagnant, being ignorant of the truth of things. But he is not instrumental in bringing any alteration to the Stilbourne-way of living. He fails even in the case of Oliver -- who has some potential for understanding -- to arouse sympathy and courage necessary to face the truth of life. He can only escape from the oppressive climate of Stilbourne and he escapes in two ways -- first by heavy drinking and later by an omnibus into which he curls up significantly in a foetal position, after being pushed onto the bus by Oliver. This attains special significance considering his peculiar sexual status : he is thus, in relation to Stilbourne, a forcibly ejected foetus who may hopefully survive in an alien atmosphere somewhere else. In another sense, he may be seen as a stranger twice over who comes to a dying society, diagnoses its ailment but is a failure in treating it and goes away leaving it static and decadent.

As against this, the Liar is equally a stranger to the Egyptian way of life. But he is capable not only of surviving in it but of becoming an asset to the Great House in Life as also in death. With his shrewdness and reason he succeeds in overcoming a whole system inclined to compromise him or failing which to forcibly send him to

his 'life'. In a rarely contrived moment, we see the Liar before the Head Man also in a foetal position like Evelyn in the omnibus in *The Pyramid*. But while Evelyn seemed like a drowsy, helpless, snake, the Liar gets himself "into a parody of the foetal position, but no foetus was ever so tense, so quivering. No foetus ever stared so, up, sideways and round" [*The Scorpion God* p. 57]. By extension we see him as empowered with the energy to intrinsically vitalize his very environment by instilling something of his own quivering mobility into the rigidity and stagnation around him. This vitalizing impact can be seen personified in the transformation of Pretty Flower. "She was changing too ... As if some perfume concealed in her body was taking aromatic and excited charge ..." [*The Scorpion God* p. 62].

However, the persistent issue to be analysed is Golding's moral view of the relative changes that occur in '*The Scorpion God*' and in *The Pyramid* due to the association of these societies with strangers or outsiders. We are never shown what the new order is like in *The Scorpion God*. However, we are free to infer its nature from the character of its inaugurator, the Liar. In the case of *The Pyramid*, we see that the sign board '*Stilbourne*' has not only grown in clarity but also in dimension, when Oliver returns to it after decades, thanks to the influence of the 'outsider' Henry Williams. Superficially, the place has changed its look but its decadence is underlined as being intensified and universalised

when Oliver finds that Stilbourne could be like anywhere else. Stilbourne is a paradigm of twentieth century morals -- shallow, materialistic and hence moribund. Such a condition reflects the lack of love and sympathy caused by spiritual impoverishment that the contemporary man has inherited from the societies governed by ruthless reason and mean materialism ever since human history began. But the beginnings of these morally decaying civilizations can be traced effortlessly to the corrupting inroads made into them by commonsense and materially-bound-progress institutionalised in the character of the Liar. Another similar votary of progress in *The Scorpion God* is Phanocles in *Envoy Extraordinary*.

4.5.1 THE PLOT OF *ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY*

The simple plot of this novella revolves around a revolutionary Greek scientist. In his zeal to change the face of this universe Phanocles suddenly descends upon the undisturbed life in imperial Rome with his trio of inventions : a pressure cooker, an explosive and the printing press. However as Julia Briggs opines, "The variousness of these makes them a little unlikely as the brainchildren of one man, but this is, after all, a *jeu de'esprit*"³³. He seeks the assistance of the Old Emperor in this 'Promethean' task. Initially, Phanocles interests the Emperor for diverting his favourite, albeit illegitimate, grandson Mamilius,

through his mysteriously veiled sister, Euphrasyne. He permits Phanocles to improvise a warship from a corn-barge merely to humour the latter. But his operation proves perilous. On being informed of it, Posthumus, the Heir Designate returns hastily from his expedition to stamp out any threat of insurgence and to install a regency.

Due to the unpredictable behaviour of the warship 'Amphitrite', many of Posthumus' ships sink along with her. Fortunately, the Emperor and Mamilius are saved from a bloody end at the hands of the enraged Posthumus by Euphrasyne -- the hare-lipped sister of Phanocles. She operates the propeller of the explosive set for demonstration at the harbour destroying Posthumus along with his army.

Saved from imminent death, the Emperor is faced with the pathetic prospect of having Mamilius as his successor while he would rather have had the ruthless Posthumus, "who would have murdered half a dozen people and given justice to a hundred million" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 176]. Although thankful that Phanocles' invention has saved him, the Emperor is also aware that "the world has lost a bargain" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 176] in the death of Posthumus. He is in no way inclined to have another warship built or an explosive invented. He admits :

that the experimentalist in me was interested in her atrocious activities, but once is enough. [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 176].

He is convinced that the best course of action would be to

"restore Jove's own bolt to his random and ineluctable hand"
[*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 176].

The Emperor knows well enough that science can interfere with the progress of normal life but cannot improve it without distorting or hampering its natural flow. Thus, despite being kindly disposed towards the pressure cooker, he will have none of Phanocles' more ambitious projects, particularly his printing press. In fact, the shrewd Emperor realises that the only way to rid his empire of the unrelenting, 'Hubristic' obsession of Phanocles with science and reason is 'to reward' him with an ambassadorship of remote China. Thus Phanocles is made *Envoy Extraordinary* to China. Interestingly, the last piece falls in place since it was in China that gun powder and printing made their first appearance.

4.5.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NOVELLA

Although the conflict depicted in the novella is between the tradition - loving Emperor and the change-obsessed Phanocles, it has deeper thematic undertones. In essence, it symbolizes the eternal clash between the perpetuation of an existing order and the initiation of unexpected change. *Envoy Extraordinary* is the novelist's attempt to analyse, all over again, the rationale behind change for its own sake brought to any unsuspecting society -- one that is self-contented and complacent left to itself. This

complacent attitude of the ancient Roman society is reflected in the unshakable premise of Mamilius "Everything has been invented, everything has been written. Time has had a stop" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 120]. Phanocles brusquely brushes aside this complacence with his perpetual wonderment at the "ocean at our feet of eternal relationships to examine or confirm" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 128]. But despite his claim of having passed his life "in a condition of ravished astonishment" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 129], his is apparently a short-sighted astonishment. He considers the universe to be governed by scrupulous, unchanging laws, making no allowances for the undeniable reality of 'poetry, magic, religion' of which his contemporary society is fully convinced. If this society needs any change it is merely of a diversion from boredom as Mamilius explains, "Time stands still. There is eternity between a sleep and a sleep. I cannot endure the length of living" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 118]. But Phanocles with his highly reductive approach to knowledge lives in a narrow universe closely guarded by science and natural law where questions such as, "of what importance is the bedding of individuals" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 128] are totally irrelevant. Hence diversion to him appears to be an undesirable distraction.

His concept of the universe rests squarely on reason and empiricism alone, with imagination and mystery being ticked off as dispensable commodities. It does not embrace the "all in all and

all in all - the totality God and man and everything else that is in every state and level of being" but rather relies on "the universe we know through our eyes at the telescope and microscope or open for daily use" [*A Moving Target* p. 201].

Thus Phanocles' rational approach is highly unsuited to the simplistic faith of a society considering beauty to be 'a *living proof and epitomes of magic*'. In his stunted universe human beings are an unwelcome intrusion and human relationships are dispensable complications. His preoccupation is to discover relation of matter to matter, not of man to man; to observe how "each substance has affinities of an eternal and immutable nature with every other substance" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 128].

In his strange insistence on rigidity of universal phenomena, Phanocles has a curious resemblance to the Head Man in *The Scorpion God* although in terms of their general attitude to the Universe they are diametrically opposite. While Phanocles considers that the 'universe is a machine' regulated by natural laws and poised for change, the Head Man looks upon the universe as a static eternity to be understood by knowledge that is irrevocably rigid. Interestingly, both of them follow a highly reductive approach to knowledge although they begin from opposite directions.

The Head Man begins with questions which according to him have unchanging facts for answers, such as, "who kept the sky up?" or "who ... made the river rise?" [*The Scorpion God* p. 50]. Little

does he realise that his very approach is rooted in fallacious presumptions. Although Phanocles declares that :

I can move in the world of substance and force ... so I can have my way with the universe [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 128]

he fails to acknowledge the presence of some energy in the Universe imperceptible through empirical reasoning. The Head Man who swears by "his capacity to look at facts" and rests his reasoning "against the granite durability of rational demonstration" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 50] lacks empiricism and reason. Thus he stumbles against his own superstitious premises. Phanocles, while he has these abilities in excess fails to invoke the power of imagination in his approach to the Universe. He thereby fails to witness the miraculous power in operation there. In his ignorance of the larger reality, he acts as an agent of change in a society content with its immediate material environment and convinced of this larger reality through imagination and belief.

Fortunately for Imperial Rome, the Emperor is able to avert the imminent disruption of its material as well as moral life. He can see through the obsessive empiricism of Phanocles which prompts him to be 'hubristic' and alone in his "Universe with natural law and (where) people are an interruption, an intrusion" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 173]. He acknowledges to being "selfish too and alone - but with the shape of people acknowledged to have a certain right to independent existence" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p.

1731. He, therefore, firmly restores to 'Dove's ineluctable hands' the power that the self-centered ambition of the natural philosopher had attempted to invoke. But the Emperor has been able to win only a temporary respite for mankind, as the development of human history to date well illustrates.

In fact, in the Emperor's caustic words to Phanocles lies a warning for future :

Your single - minded and devoted selfishness, your royal preoccupation with the only thing that can interest you, could go near to wiping life off the earth as I wipe the bloom from this grape (*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 173).

A blind obsession with the stupendous power of science is bound to release destruction and de-humanization in the garb of progress and freedom. The freedom that Phanocles proffers was from work and thus the progress he avows of is material advancement.

Fortunately, humanity at that innocently simple stage of development preferred to be left to its own lot, professing different values of life and believing in an unalterable, unquestionable fate. Phanocles, with his revolutionary views and absurd inventions is, therefore, seen as an intruder, an undesirable element. The Negro slave who attempts to kill Phanocles, far from appreciating the release from hours of rowing that Phanocles' improvised ship can give him, resents the loss of most natural and Fate-ordained work for himself. Similarly, the Captain does not find the prospects of battles -- easily won with the help of explosives -- glorious. Instead, he

grudges the loss of opportunity for valour and lack of scope for other incentives of battle including booty. Moreover, he acknowledges that it 'Makes a change' [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 167].

It is thus easy to recognize that Phanocles belongs with the Liar in *The Scorpion God* to the category of 'outsiders' who are harbingers of revolutionary but 'undesired' change to a contented and un-self-conscious society. He shares with the Liar his unyielding insistence on his own pragmatism. He also has in common with the Liar his stubborn resistance to the plain tradition - bound existence of the society to which he has come with his unrelentingly rational point of view. Further, like the Liar, he has a harsh intolerance towards existing mores and values of life and above all a total unconcern for the unpredictable future, he is intent on shaping for the ancient Romans. However, Phanocles is not permitted to have his way, as Liar has had his own.

Though thwarted in his designs, Phanocles becomes an epitome of the unknown and unrecorded attempts both before and after him of innumerable natural philosophers: those that must have invaded and brought under their rational sway so many unresisting and unsuspecting societies at various stages of human civilization. The Emperor had the prudence, and the authority to resist the onslaught of Phanocles' inventions with their royal unconcern for outrageous consequences. But present human condition amply demonstrates that

the Emperor had few allies or successors during the subsequent course of history.

His immediate relinquishing of the throne in favour of the ridiculously 'weepy' Mamilius is symbolic of the probability that might have set in motion the cycle of 'progress' for humankind. The emperor knows that Mamilius "will be a terrific Emperor. Better than Caligula but less talented than Nero" [*Envoy Extraordinary* p. 172]. There is thus scope to conjecture that his empire will be thrust into anarchy and unrest due to his insane decision-making. The consequent disenchantment could offset the need to seek redressal in the form of change at some indefinite future stage. Thereby, an environment conducive to the rampant rationalism of the likes of Phanocles could develop eventually culminating in the 'omnivorous' materialism in the character of Henry Williams in **The Pyramid.**

By extension, it is possible to view Mamilius as the precursor of the weak-willed individuals who become unwitting instruments of reckless change even when they are incapable of arresting its undesirable development or of directing it within a secure limit. His 'weepy', feminine nature places him mid-way between the 'effeminate' Evelyn de Tracy' and Bounce in **The Pyramid.** Evelyn is wise to see what is amiss in Stilbourne but too weak to resist it; while the 'manly' Bounce impulsively initiates and establishes Henry Williams in Stilbourne, but is too

weak to bear the consequences of her action with 'sanity'. By extending one's brief a little further, one may even suggest that at the head of this line of tools of change stands the charming Pretty Flower. She fails to resist the reasoning of the Liar even when she is convinced of the enormity of their spiritual lapse and so becomes his ally in bringing change to her unwilling society.

But these are mere conjectures. The reader has no clue as to Mamilius' course of action on becoming emperor. He has just the earlier exposure to the immature and impractical Mamilius. But he serves as an imaginary parallel to nameless potentates and heads of various social groups who might have guided the destiny of their respective societies in a manner that leaves much to be desired, viewed from the hindsight that the contemporary life affords.

4.6.1 CHANGE AS THE CENTRAL MOTIF IN *CLONK CLONK*

Change is once again the central motif in *Clonk Clonk*, the second novella of *The Scorpion God*. But this time, it is not externally thrust upon an unwilling society. In fact, it is generated rather spontaneously due to the prevailing circumstances, through the resourcesfulness and ingenuity of an individual within the group. Golding, beautifully, illustrates this gentle surfacing of change among the inmates of a close-knit society set in the idyllic surroundings of pre-historic Africa in his novella *Clonk Clonk*.

This little group lives in unbelievable bliss, secured by the warmth of inter-dependence and regulated by simple but firm guidelines evolved naturally over the ages. They are only a little advanced over the simplistic and innocent Neanderthals in The Inheritors. Hence, theirs are the genuine joys of an uncorrupted life. But their innocence is qualified by their basic awareness of the demand of survival : the need to frame simple rules of living and to adhere to them, unwaveringly.

As a result of this, the women have a community of their own headed by Palm, the namer of women, who is accepted as the natural leader of the whole society. This is consistent with the role of women as being more hard-working, mature and more closely acquainted with the mystery of procreation -- which they are believed to miraculously manage with the undoubted blessings of the Sky Woman. On the other hand, the men appear to be a pampered and a tolerated species, little advanced over children in their ignorance as well as in their modes of enjoyment.

Each group operates strictly in accordance with its own priorities, with broadly tolerant opportunities for social interaction that ensures harmonious co-existence. The men prefer hunting, playing the flute or the three-stringed bow and in general they enjoy themselves through singing and other amusements. Women gather honey, eggs and fish and keep a steady source of food available for the whole community even while entirely taking over

the responsibility of the children and the aged. They have a more mature approach to life than their male counterparts and have a more 'adult' and elaborate manner of amusement.

The conflict in this ideally smooth life arises in relation to two individuals, Palm and a young male named Charging Elephant, who is later called mockingly as Charging Elephant Fell On His face Before An Antelope. Palm is given to vague mental brooding and has strange perceptions whereby she suddenly feels benumbed in mind by their sheer novelty and apparently unrealistic nature. She feels that she goes 'clonk!' in mind. In a similar way, Charging Elephant who has a weak ankle goes 'clonk!', when his ankle gives way at the most crucial stage of action such as hunting.

Due to this weakness, Charging Elephant becomes a target of group-ridicule as The Chimp. Affronted and aggrieved by the stigma of ridicule The Chimp leaves the group in defiance and comes impulsively back to the camp-site in distress, where only the women are celebrating a new childbirth by having an 'intoxicating' get-together. As he unexpectedly comes upon the women-folk during their nocturnal celebration, he is absorbed in their midst by their warmth and acceptance. His initial reluctance and fear is gently undone by the cunning and knowing approach of the group. Eventually, he is led away to Palm's dwelling in effusive spirits and in soothing intoxication.

The next day the Leopard-men return from hunting with another

leopard and no meat. Chimp who had slunk away from the Leopard-men in shame and anger is now formally re-instated by Palm as her Leopard-man in the presence of the whole tribe. With this significant change Chimp's nomination as an elevated member of the group is guaranteed through his new appellation as The Water Paw and Wounded Leopard. His physical debility is now marginalized and he is accepted honourably back into the group. Along with the solution of his problem, which is of a physical nature, Palm's mental disturbance is also automatically sorted out. In bestowing an assuringly steady relationship on The Chimp, Palm is herself reassured of her youth and womanhood and is in turn relieved of her acute loneliness following the death of her Leopard-man.

4.6.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *CLONK CLONK*

In conclusion, *clonk clonk* seems to be an absurd yet natural solution that the novelist holds forth to the change-mongering contemporary world. Probably realising the unlikelihood of such an answer to the problems of modern life Golding posits it in the remote pre-historical times. But the point that the novella scores is doubtlessly clear. Every vital and growing society seeks and needs change either consciously or unconsciously. But such a change can be best availed of when it surfaces intrinsically or spontaneously as in the case of the Leopard men and Bee-women in *Clonk Clonk*.

Although presented as an unexpected return to the campsite, The Chimp's arrival is more of a 'home-coming' than a return home. It is primarily a psychological and instinctive reaction rather than a mere physical and impulsive act. The fury that Chimp experiences, his pathetic humiliation and his ultimate breaking down into heart-rending Ma! Ma! are all a pointer to his emotional insecurity and his urgent need for sympathy and reassurance. It is no co-incidence that he comes to the women folk: they are strangely associated with The Skywoman, their mysterious Deity, and are therefore the likely possessors of a mystique which is theirs alone. So returning to the women does not imply just a retreat into the nearest stage to infancy. It signifies an attempt to recoil into the warm, secure and unsevered bond of prenatal existence, implying the spontaneity of love and the need for company. The Chimp is propelled by filial instincts to the company of the women, perhaps unknown to himself. In this act of seeking solace from a maternal source, The Chimp is highly reminiscent of Lok's desperate unfolding himself into the earth in a foetal position in an attempt to die in *The Inheritors*. In a reversal of this association one can see Lok as the symbol of a group that fails to regenerate the meaningful change necessary for survival and so perishes as a result of this failure.

4.7 CONCLUSION

As the first trilogy of the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel', The Pyramid is a significant work due to its strategic position in the development of Golding's career as a novelist. One of the early reviews of the novel clinches this matter in a nutshell:

To the reader familiar with Golding's other novels, *The Pyramid* will astonish by what it is not. It is not a fable. It does not contain evident allegory, it is not set in a simplified or remote world. It belongs to another, more commonplace tradition of English fiction³⁴

Yet the novel does not toe this '*commonplace tradition*' blindly. In structure, tone and theme it displays the novelist's revised attitude to human morality. Suitably sandwiched between the conclusion of the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' and the onset of new challenges to the 'Golding Novel' in its Social Stage, *The Pyramid* reveals interesting modulations in the approach of the novelist to his work. These modulations can be broadly identified in

- (i) the departure from his own established practices by Golding,
- (ii) the re-investment of well-exploited devices by the novelist,
and
- (iii) the breaking of new grounds of stylistic and visionary potential.

A quick glimpse at the structure, the narrative and above all the thematic concern of *The Pyramid* will help to map out the changed countenance of the 'Golding Novel' at the beginning of its *moral*

phase.

Up to *The Pyramid* (1967) the social scene never enjoys primacy over the theme in 'Golding Novel'. It is always secondary, contributing to the central theme in an unobtrusive way. Of course, in novel after novel, the social setting is definitely more skillfully utilized by the novelist but it is never permitted to overshadow the theme of the novel. Even as late as *The Spire* (1964), the social canvas is not brought into focus at any stage in the novel to provide an insight into society. It always blends with the theme throwing into relief the psycho-sexual and moral aspects of the protagonists's individual '*vision*' and its dire consequences.

It is in *The Pyramid* that this convention breaks noticeably for the first time. For, in the words of Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor :

Golding's aim differs radically from the massive inclusiveness, the steady and continuing concentration of *The Spire*³⁵.

The social hierarchy in Stilbourne is of paramount importance to highlight the moral degeneration of its inhabitants. So Golding's comedy of manners now focuses on society at large, which is corrupt and materialistic, lacking in human understanding and capacity for love. Only De Tracy who belongs to Barchester and not to Stilbourne -- and significantly enough sexually indeterminate -- is endowed with understanding and insight. Another doubtful case who purports to rise above the petty dictate of Stilbourne-mentality is of 'Bounce' Dowlish -- but only when she becomes a '*mental*' case

herself. Even Evie and Oliver who break their 'umbilical chords' from being 'the Stilbourne foetuses' are not accorded the wholesome status of becoming individuals who develop into warm, unwarped and normal human beings. Their development is only marginal and leaves much to be desired.

Such an approach to his novel-writing cannot be accidental in a novelist of Golding's calibre who has admitted to having worked out all the details of his very first novel with minute care [The Hot Gates p. 90]. Evidently, with the tentative vision that the novelist had given his protagonist in *The Spire*, he had freed himself of an overpowering urge to explore further into human depravity. For over a decade he had been groping for the reason as well as the solution to such depravity, often using an individual's moral condition to map out the general landscape of the metaphysical realm beyond the sphere of the ordinary human experience. With *The Spire* he manages to make a breakthrough into the grey areas of human experiences; he is, thereby, in a position to break new ground in his subsequent fiction.

The Pyramid is a marked departure from the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' that was so desperately preoccupied with the intransigent reality of experience so as to turn to the phenomenal world almost on second thought. In its felicitous depiction of contemporary social reality, moreover with its newfound solicitude

with social morality, *The Pyramid* infuses a hitherto untapped vitality into the 'Golding Novel' deserving elaborate discussion. To a large extent the vivified contemporary canvas is instrumental in instilling new vigour into the work.

But to an equally significant degree this is due to the nature of the story revolving around the most imposing decades of this century in an extremely effortless manner. "Placed at first in the 1920^s and extending through to the 1960^s, the plot consists of a first person narration of three interconnected but distinct stories.³⁶ Wide-ranging enough to span the broad social spectrum in those perturbed and volatile decades of contemporary life, *The Pyramid* offers not only a familiar context but an identifiable one.

As with the plot and the setting, so also with the structure, *The Pyramid* displays some innovation. Largely reminiscent of Pincher Martin's memory flashbacks and Sammy's autobiographical reshuffling in *Free Fall*, *The Pyramid* invites comparison with the structure and the narrative mode in these novels. However, it lacks the incoherence of the one and the ostensible motives of the other. In fact, Oliver's narrative is a long way from the erratic hallucinations in *Pincher Martin* as well as from the apparently discontinuous temporal rewinding in *Free Fall*. In its relaxed, rather simplistic-seeming, re-enactment of the past, *The Pyramid* supports the linear movement of the narrative by occasional but significant temporal shifts. In

this the novel is a concrete illustration of Sammy's percept of the two modes of time :

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 (Free Fall p. 6).

A distinct structural innovation in The Pyramid is its three-segment-constitution -- each related to one event in the protagonist's life -- aiming at a fairly complex analysis of social relationships. A comprehensive portrayal of social reality through the depiction of individual predicament is the mainstay of the narrative in this trilogy. Through its connected yet independent trio of episodes this novel reveals the complicated social equations in a small town. In its attempted coverage of the complex social fabric of a typical English provincial town -- between the two World Wars and a little after -- The Pyramid places a figure on the sore spot of contemporary human existence -- not essentially English but Global.

Significantly this is done without much effort through :

a series of brilliantly-placed puns or Freudian double-entendres - which are both very funny, and open up sudden, unexpected and savage depths of meaning³⁷.

The Stilbourne-society in The Pyramid comes through as a bonsai variety of the inhuman materialism rampant in the world on a gigantic scale. Oliver's final recognition through Henry Williams is:

of the deep thing lying in him, the reason for it all ... the thrust not liked or enjoyed but recognized as inevitable, the god without mercy (The Pyramid p. 157);

it is the ultimate diagnosis of an universal ailment -- ruthless materialism without moral vision -- both tragic and fatal.

Moreover, Oliver's recognition is significant in the innocuous way in which it surfaces : almost drawn out by his now-mellowed perception with a humility magnetic in its implication and tragic in its delay. Since, the intrinsic quality of Oliver's perception is built on the substantial reality painstakingly created by Golding mainly drawing inspiration from his own life, **The Pyramid** has been considered by Johnston to be Golding's :

first real "autobiographical" novel ... sufficiently justified by thematic and technical necessity³⁸.

In view of the intimacy of tone and the background -- to some extent the emotional temperament too -- of Oliver and his creator, the novel does, indeed, seem autobiographical. But this semblance need not be over-stressed. In this capacity the novel looks forward to a new mode of narrative and looks back to the novels of the Initial Stage in its utilization and modification of details from identifiable sources. In this apparently first-person narrative with obvious autobiographical undertones Golding's narrator seems:

to take us further away from Golding himself, while not achieving that other identity of novelist as character³⁹.

Such an impersonal narrative even in a seemingly autobiographical work is a marked achievement of the 'Golding Novel' in its *moral phase*.

The novel is full of corresponding details from its author's life, as revealed by Golding's autobiographical essays '*The Ladder and the Tree*' [The Hot Gates p. 166-75] and '*Billy the Kid*' [The Hot Gates p. 159-65]. Some of these are: the portrait of Oliver's father, the crisis in Oliver's scholastic career over the choice of science or arts, Oliver's social perception, the idea of an intricate social structure in *The Pyramid* and the concept of social respectability as related to social hierarchy. However most of these features are not adopted de facto from Golding's life but adapted often with his inimitable ironical note. Olly's scientific career over his natural preference for music is an instance of such irony. Such devices give a distinctness to Olly's experience without violating the individuality of the novelist's experience.

Some of these notions have their fictional root in earlier novels: Thus, Olly's sneering condescension to Evie is an inversion of Martin's social prejudice against Mary Lovell in *Pincher Martin*. Similarly, the portrait of Olly's father is a more lively development of Nick Shales in *Free Fall*, drawn probably from Golding's own father Alec Albert Golding⁴⁰. The thwarted spinster Rowena Pringle warped and cruel, in *Free Fall* becomes the pathetic, thwarted and later insane '*Bounce*' Dowlish in *The Pyramid*. The stultified, rigid social norms and the inhuman indifference behind the facade of social propriety in *The Pyramid*

is evidently recreated by Golding from his own experiences as he indicated in '*The Ladder and The Tree*' :

In fact, like everybody except the very high and the very low in those days, we walked a social tightrope ... (*The Hot Gates* p. 168).

Even the characterization in *The Pyramid* is certainly a fuller and more vivified depiction of some of Golding's earlier characters. Often their individual traits or typical qualities are unmistakably underscored; Sometimes trace-elements in a temperament are developed into a rounded and life-like portrayal. The human dimension of characters is now happily highlighted in a noticeable improvement over the early characters. By far *The Pyramid* posits the 'Golding Novel' firmly in its social environment -- competing perhaps only with that of *The Spire* -- with its petty cares, minor scuffles and ordinary conflicts. But in so doing, it invests into the 'Golding Novel' a new insight into the substantial experience of life, ordinary yet significant.

Having assessed the contribution of *The Pyramid*, the first trilogy of the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel', it is useful to analyse the second trilogy of this phase, *The Scorpion God* to assess its contribution to the 'Golding Novel'. It has to be noted here that *The Scorpion God* does not '*chronologically*' belong to the *moral phase* because two of its constituents *The Scorpion God* and *Envy Extraordinary* were published in a volume of fantastic short stories *Sometimes Never* in 1956. As such it would not be appropriate to

consider their contribution in terms of narrative, structural and perspectival techniques during its Social Stage to the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel'. But as a matter of critical interest some discussion of these features would be undertaken in the following analysis of *The Scorpion God*.

Again, since they were published in 1971 along with a companion piece *Clonk Clonk as The Scorpion God* their thematic contribution to the *moral phase* is significant. But some reference to the novelistic features and the critical reputation of these novellas is necessary to foreground their thematic significance. This will demonstrate the import of their theme and justify their inclusion in this study as the works of the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel' despite chronological disparity.

It is useful to begin with the common critical notions regarding the three novellas: they have meagre plot structures; the narrative tone is so exceptionally light-hearted as to often seem banal; the novellas do not seem to have any sort of inter-locking structural device to show their thematic affinity. They use the usual 'reversal' technique so common to Golding's themes, and above all, the delineation of the story appears to have been tailor-made to achieve an expected resolution bordering on the common-place. In short, *The Scorpion God* appears to have been intended as a long 'over-due' diversion that comes like an unexpected windfall to the reader. Set in remote times and in exotic surroundings the

three novellas, no doubt, make interesting and for once, even entertaining reading. But, apparently, that is about all.

It is perhaps for these reasons that the critics have found little to commend in *The Scorpion God*. Probably the critics have been taken in by Golding's comment on his fictional treatment of historical material that :

to some extent, I'm sending up the idea of history, and have my tongue in my cheek much more often than people suspect⁴¹.

Hence they have spoken of *The Scorpion God* rather disparagingly.

Julia Briggs is of the opinion that :

The book lacks a deliberate unity, other than its descent into the dark backward and abysm of time⁴².

Another eminent scholar of Golding's fiction Virginia Tiger has also conceded a subordinate status of being "minor Golding" to *The Scorpion God*.⁴³

But nothing short of indiscretion should encourage a serious reader of Golding's fiction to be carried away by such surface critical opinion. It is unlikely that Golding should fully yield himself at a single interpretation. Thus, it is necessary to carefully penetrate the novelist's jeu d'esprit in order to fathom the thematic complexity submerged under that mask. This naturally draws attention to the simple but compact structure and the breezy narrative in this work.

*Organized around a single episode each, the three novellas display an amazingly cohesive pattern. In '*The Scorpion God*', it is

the calamity brought on by the death of Great House and resolved through the pragmatic rationalism of the Liar. The diverse inventions of Phanocles are the source of a likely calamity in *Envoy Extraordinary* which is diplomatically precluded by the shrewd Emperor. Finally, in *Clonk Clonk*, the calamity assumes the subtle form of psychological insecurity, it is surmounted through a mutual reassurance at the behest of the resourceful Palm.

An outstanding feature of these novellas is their mild and indulgent humour. Narrated in a lucid, simple language so characteristic of Golding, the novellas show a conspicuous absence of the element of obscurity and incomprehension common to other Golding novels. However, they share their subtle divulgence of thematic potential through a covert design.

Another notable feature in common with the rest of the Golding canon is that the three novellas display the spirit of the age in which they are set. However, this is not achieved through a blind adherence to chronological and spatial details but rather through an imaginative re-creation of the historicity of the age with the help of human interaction. Such an interaction bolsters the authenticity of the overall spatio-temporal context of the novellas and testifies to their excellent characterization, particularly that of *Clonk Clonk*.

Though the three stories of *The Scorpion God* treat apparently simple issues of life, they do so through interesting characters.

In these novellas Golding creates anti-heroic protagonists : The Liar, Phanocles, and The Chimp. All of them at one point or another become social victims and illustrate the various options open to an individual disclaimed by society. The Liar is intimidated into an offensive as a means to 'survival' and self-preservation; Phanocles, complaining of persecution, seeks patronage and avoids confrontation. The Chimp experiencing overwhelming insecurity on rejection displays vulnerability and a total lack of any self defense. Of the three protagonists The Liar is convincing but appears to have been drawn along the lines of Herodotus. Phanocles is a more realistic character in his one-track mind and short-sighted preoccupation. The Emperor is a warm, genial and down-to-earth character, somewhat like his creator -- given the curiosity, experimentation and humane sympathy but retaining the undefiled love for vision, poetry and the mystique of life.

However, the character of Palm in *Clonk Clonk* is the staying grace of The Scorpion God and a startlingly new achievement for Golding. She is one of his best delineated women characters. Surprisingly, she draws little from his earlier female characters like Mary Lovell in *Pincher Martin*, Beatrice Ifor in *Free Fall*, Goody Pangall in *The Spire* or even Evie Babbacombe in *The Pyramid*. She is closest to Fa and the Old Woman -- the Neanderthal women in *The Inheritors* -- but not merely in their pre-historic context : she shares with Fa her intelligence and her acute sensitivity to

nature; with the Old Woman she shares her quiet authority.' But beyond these common traits there is an abundant vitality, astuteness, feminine grace and maternal warmth in her which is admirable. In the words of Julia Briggs :

She is the most attractive of Golding's women characters; the way instinct, impulse and feeling press upon her more ordered thoughts of duty and responsibility is imaginatively conveyed⁴⁴.

Thereby she becomes the paradigm for the novelist's thematic concern in the *moral phase* -- the spokeswoman for affection and understanding as the basis for social change or stability.

The endeavour in this discussion has been to uncover the delicate pattern of thematic linkages deftly glossed over by the vivacity of the narrative or by the subtler nuances of the organic structure employed here. Perhaps Golding's light-hearted statement about his '*sending up the idea of history*' might be only a ploy to send his would-be critics and source-hunters up the wall rather than to take his readers for a ride. His disenchantment with these two species of '*paper men*' has been amply brought into focus through his comments in and out of his fiction. He has even confessed :

that for better or worse my work is now indissolubly wedded to the educational world.

I am the raw material of an academic light industry (A Moving Target p. 169).

In all probability, Golding might have adopted the attitude of the ancient Egyptians for whom he has legendary admiration. He has claimed on the basis of Herodotus' evidence :

that the Egyptians do everything in public that other people do in private⁴⁵.

So, this may be Golding's way of publicly confounding his hasty critics by ensuring that they desist from dissecting his novellas in a hasty discovery of the alleged '*Golding*' :

fixed in one not very decorative gesticulation, a po-faced image too earnest to live with

(*A Moving Target* p.169).

For, despite their façade of light-hearted story-telling, the novellas of *The Scorpion God* contain implicit thematic nuances that show a clear affinity with those of *The Pyramid*. Together the two works make a strong plea for moral values as desirable ingredients of social vitality.

Yet, despite their strong plea for moral values as social desirables, the strategy used in the two works is different. *The Pyramid* shows the dire need for love and sympathy by showing a society glaringly devoid of these values. In *The Scorpion God* each novella demonstrates this by focusing on imminent change in social structure and its resultant condition vis-a-vis that change. Thus the novella *Clonk Clonk* subtly accentuates the vivifying power that love and sympathy can instill into any social structure to save it from degeneration. These eternal moral values can rejuvenate any burdensome existence into one blossoming with vivacity and hope. Apparently, Golding positioned this novella between '*The Scorpion God*' and *Envoy Extraordinary* not merely 'to keep the two apart' in a literal way. Given Golding's penchant for subtlety of technique, his theme in the three novellas -- the reluctance to and the

inevitability of change in human life -- needs to be elucidated.

In the words of Redpath :

Golding does not say what man's future is since that is a task for something more omniscient than a novelist, but he does say that a change must not deprive man of his humanity.⁴⁶

In '*The Scorpion God*' he shows change that establishes a pragmatic social order founded on reason at the cost of imagination and faith; in *Envoy Extraordinary* he demonstrates the heartless egotism of pure reason bent on disrupting the self-complacent society with its simplistic beliefs in imagination, and finally in *Clonk Clonk* he reveals the latent capacity of imagination and sympathy to instill change without disrupting social harmony.

Despite their insistent reluctance to change, the ancient Egyptians in '*The Scorpion God*' are shown to have finally precipitated into an unforeseen cycle of social change. They are pulled into the vortex of material advancement by the sheer survival instincts and the egotistic rationalism of the down-to-earth Liar. However, the persistent Phanocles in *Envoy Extraordinary* is authoritatively stalled in his wild designs of achieving material progress by the timely strategy of the old Emperor. So the ancient Egyptian civilization, given an impetus to change, symbolises a society pushed towards change from without. While the society that the Emperor is successful in protecting from undesirable change represents the conscious resistance offered to the forces of degeneration by the intrinsic capacity

in a society aware of its strength, preferences and needs. .Posed as it is between 'The Scorpion God' and *Envoy Extraordinary*, *Clonk Clonk* appears to be Golding's solution to arrest the deterioration of a morally-decadent society.

His plea is probably to preserve the intrinsic moral potential of such a society and prevent the invasion from the agents of superfluous change masked with elusive proposals of progress and freedom. Genuine freedom is the one enjoyed by the Leopard-men and the Bee-women in *Clonk Clonk* with their minimal demands on life and no aspirations for progress. Hence, they are able to cope with their peculiar problems, given the least resources to find a solution. Ironically, the problem of physical debility has grave implications to this hunting group and could have assumed serious dimensions if neglected. Similarly, an individual's need for emotional and physical companionship in a closely bound social group -- homosexual as well as heterosexual without the prick of psychosexual guilt -- would be a matter of great concern to the group.

But, by merely placing one problem along with the other, the liability of the one becomes the asset of the other. The maturity and the calm assurance that goes with the authority of Palm resolves the Chimp's problem of alienation and re-instates him within the group. Similarly, the youthfulness and vulnerability of The Chimp set the doubts of aging that haunt Palm at rest. Further her often-distracted-mind is now diverted into more youthful preoccupations of

love and childbirth. Just so, her maternal instinct is remotely satisfied in extending security and reassurance that re-habilitate a member of her own group. In fact, the onus for re-habilitating The Chimp, we see, is hers. For, he has survived in spite of his deformity due to the oversight of She Who Names The Women and oversees every new birth in the group -- that is Palm herself or someone who had preceded her in that august obligation. By extension, we can see Palm as a symbol of love and sympathy in the garb of intelligent authority -- an emblem, in brief, of social vitality without the loss of social harmony.

Palm is not intellectually so developed as to work out this formula of responsibility that underlies her action. But the perceptive reader finds it adequately satisfying. This simple solution of bringing together of two isolated members of a well-organized group into a mutually enriching relationship is a token of great hope for humanity in general and an indication of optimism in Golding in particular. It is an indication, above all, that not exclusion from the group but mutual inter-dependence is the basis of enlivening the process of existence. If the instinct to love and be loved is not subsumed in an individual, as it is today, humankind can rediscover the simple joy of living. But the complexity of contemporary life is so overpowering that perhaps it is an illusion to look forward to such hyperbolic optimism.

The lot of modern man lies with the likes of Phanocles, Liar

and Henry Williams in a naked pursuit of self-seeking materialism. However, when life comes to a breaking point with the strains of moral bankruptcy and spiritual loss the safety valve of contemporary life opens on the gray areas of experience -- abnormality, perversity or insanity. Those areas which we share with the 'Bounces', Evelyns, Babbcombes, Wilmots and scores of other nameless social aberrants of our own day.

From the calm spiritual pragmatism of the early Egyptians in 'The Scorpion God' to the hostile, insecure and degrading 'advancement' of the Stilbourne residents in The Pyramid has been an unenviable voyage for humankind, whether devised by Fate or arranged by Reason. Stray attempts at halting this downhill movement must have been made, as indicated by the efforts of the Emperor in *Envoy Extraordinary*, during the course of history. But these have been pocket-resistances with short-lived impact. Perhaps a lasting remedy lies in reverting to a more natural way of life. The way out of the dilemma of choosing between the spiritual death of an unresisting society and the emasculated surrender of a vainly resisting one, points to the unadulterated life of *Clonk Clonk*. Failing to trudge along this strait path, the humanity is bound to snowball the degeneration of Stilbourne in the 40's to the demonical outrage of the crazy 60's that one encounters in *Darkness Visible* in 'an even more contemporary world'⁴⁷.

In fine, the following observations can be made regarding the 'Golding Novel' at this stage :

(a) Golding discards the intense concern with humankind that had conditioned his novelistic approach during its Initial Stage particularly in the *experimental phase*.

(b) Social interaction now becomes a predominant factor in Golding's analysis of human life. Individual experiences are utilized as a necessary corollary to the issue of social and thereby of human morality as in *The Pyramid*; while in the novellas of *The Scorpion God*, the individual is pitted against the social structure to focus on the equation of change and stability in social life.

(c) Human reluctance to social change and the relation of social rigidity to human morality is the central theme of the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel'.

But apparently, Golding felt that linking the issue of human morality to the social structure was not adequate to reveal the contemporary Man in all his complexity. Perhaps he believed conversely that an in-depth analysis of a significant specimen of contemporary society would yield an incisive insight into the contemporary human complexity. At least, the choice of his theme in his very next novel *Darkness Visible* makes such a reading of his intentions seem likely.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE METAPHYSICAL PHASE

5.1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter follows the development of the *metaphysical phase* of the 'Golding Novel'. This phase constitutes the second part of its Social Stage and co-incides with the development of the 'Golding Novel' into the 80's. Two of the Golding's novels, *Darkness Visible* (1979) and *The Paper Men* (1984) best represent this phase, although they are not chronologically sequential. They are set apart by *Rites of Passage* (1980), a part of *A Sea Trilogy* (1991) which constitutes the *Final Phase* of the 'Golding Novel' to be discussed in the following chapter.

Darkness Visible and *The Paper Men* belong together since they represent between them two distinct trends of movement that the 'Golding Novel' has brought to the fore during its course of three decades from *Lord of the Flies* (1954) to *The Paper Men* (1984). One of these trends concerns the novelist's preference for certain combinations of plot and theme : initially, his inclination was for individual-centered, isolated plots with themes pertaining to 'survival' and 'fall'; later on, there was a significant switch-over to socially-oriented themes focusing the complex issue of social morality vis-a-vis social change. The other trend in the 'Golding Novel' is related to the novelist's creation of especially endowed characters: they are invariably gifted with a paranormal

capacity as 'voyant' or with a streak of artistic sensibility.. This characteristic enables them to have a better perception of human experience and sometimes, to have a vision of the 'deeper reality' of life.

These two trends felicitously meet in the two novels under discussion. The plots of these novels, though individual-centered, are neither isolated nor removed from the ordinary social reality. But their thematic concern is the revelation of intense and intimate experiences of the protagonists that can be best described as '*metaphysical*'. Significantly, both these protagonists are especially endowed : Matty in *Darkness Visible* is a '*visionary*' character: while Barklay in *The Paper Men* is a creative writer. Secondly, the novels are significantly placed in terms of their publication, one on the verge of the 80's and the other almost mid-way into that decade. Thereby, they facilitate the mapping of the possible deviation in the progress of the '*Golding Novel*' from its affinity to the realistic social novel during the *moral phase*, to its present concern with themes of '*metaphysical*' nature during the *metaphysical phase*.

5.1.2 NOVELS OF THE *METAPHYSICAL PHASE*

Interestingly, the two novels *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* -- while adhering to the tradition of the English social Novel in a broad sense -- revert, nonetheless, to an intense analysis of

individual experiences, albeit within a complex social context. Further, the prominent dimension of this exploration into individual experiences is markedly 'metaphysical', particularly in **Darkness Visible**. Hence, the novelist's approach to the narrative is appropriately ambiguous, even obscure. As Crompton has pointed out, Golding has significantly :

prefaced his *Darkness Visible* with Virgil's prayer as he set out to describe Aeneas's descent into the underworld and the forbidden sights he there beheld : *sit mihi fas audita loqui* -- may it be allowed to me to speak what I have heard¹.

Obviously the mysterious has to be cloaked in a garb of social reality to guard its inviolate nature. But, though the social milieu is realistically delineated, it is definitely secondary to the mystical experiences of the protagonist. This is also true of *The Paper Men*, albeit to a different extent.

What is more relevant in these two novels is the contemporary status of their respective protagonists. They both move through a recognizably familiar socio-temporal context set in England, during those sensitive decades midway between 40's and 80's. Golding's concern to place his protagonists within the readers' immediate range of experience is apparent here.

Even so, the likelihood of another reason for this proximity of context cannot be overlooked. In all probability such contextual proximity could behove a common socio-psychological proclivity between the protagonists and the readers; this could facilitate a more perceptive assimilation of the 'obscure' experiences of the

protagonists by the readers who are basically not tuned in to the metaphysical or the numinous plane of experience or perception. In fact, Virginia Tiger's assessment of the situation is extremely pertinent. One tends to agree with her comment that :

To Golding, contemporary man appears ill at ease with the ambiguous, the obscure meaningful, the mysterious, the unspecific, the tentative, the unexercised -- all that threatens the assumptions of the materialist who builds his worldview on collected facts. He must be positioned, somehow, to feel on his pulses, not as a supposition but as an imaginative experience, the unseen world ...²

Golding's greatest challenge in these two novels is to recreate the '*metaphysical reality*' imaginatively. One way of making '*this imaginative experience*' come alive to the reader is of placing him not only in a realistic milieu but in a familiar context with identifiable issues and problems -- whether socio-political or psycho-sexual. Golding experiments with such a resourceful canvas in *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* to foreground the metaphysical themes and their enigmatic aspects that relate these novels. Hence, they deserve to be discussed together in the present chapter. As both *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* focus on metaphysical speculations, this phase of the '*Golding Novel*' has been appropriately identified as the *metaphysical phase*.

There is another common feature that links these two novels -- the nature of their respective protagonists. In the '*Golding Novel*' there is a certain lineage of characters who have '*metaphysical*' experiences or who come nearest to having a

spiritual vision. This lineage is apparent in all Golding's novels barring *The Pyramid* and *The Scorpion God* that belong, significantly, to the *moral phase*. One can see that this lineage descends through two 'families' of character : the odd innocent and the degenerate creative artist. The former is generally a 'Christ-figure' and is sometimes invested with a 'visionary' status; Simon in *Lord of the Flies*. Nathaniel in *Pincher Martin*, Beatrice in *Free Fall* or Pangall and Jocelin in *The Spire* belong to this 'family' of characters.

The other 'family' of characters, comprising of creative artists, is endowed with a finer sensibility than average man as in the case of Tuami in *The Inheritors*, Sammy in *Free Fall* and Jocelin³ in *The Spire*. Blessed with intuition, they have an insight into spiritual reality, but they may not always understand its true significance. Interestingly, Oliver in *The Pyramid* is a gifted musician but his artistic ability is suppressed under a preference for chemistry; what is more relevant, he gains self-perception very late in life but it never attains any spiritual or 'metaphysical' dimensions.

In *Darkness Visible* and in *The Paper Men*, these qualities overlap in the two protagonists. If Matty is an odd, maimed 'visionary' character, he also has an artistic tendency. We are told that, 'he drew badly but with passion' (*Darkness Visible* p. 22). Similarly, Wilf Barklay the creative artist in

The Paper Men is also 'odd' in his own way and, what is more, he has an 'epiphanic experience' that resembles the 'mystic revelations' of Matty. Curiously enough, unlike his fore-runners -- Tuami who fails to understand his own dilemma and Sammy who does not comprehend the significance of his own spiritual insight -- Barklay understands the import of his experience.

Thus, both Matty and Barklay achieve an apocalyptic vision but it is presented in two distinct ways despite the use of a contemporary context in these novels. The significance of this distinct approach to their apocalyptic experiences can be better understood on analysing the placement of the respective protagonists in each of the two novels.

Darkness Visible places its 'visionary' but odd protagonist on the cusp of the shattering worlds of Lord of the Flies and Pincher Martin : the one poised for disaster, the other for damnation. His very 'entry' into the novel is significant : he emerges from a devastating conflagration similar to the one from which Ralph, in Lord of the Flies, had been rescued; unlike Pincher Martin, refusing salvation through destruction of self, he perishes into another holocaust to be spiritually healed and resurrected. What is more, during his life-time Matty is made the focal point of a degenerate world inhabited by the likes of Pincher Martin. In fact, Matty is the often-refused and unrecognized ray of hope in a world, desperate and hell-bent on destruction -- epitomized in the man-

made inferno on which **Darkness Visible** opens. 'But', as Crompton opines :

If **Darkness Visible** begins in a man-made inferno, it also begins with a miracle, for out of the fire and the exploding along the street walks a small child⁴

This nameless child pitted against the forces of evil is the voice of reassurance that the novel offers through its mysterious spiritual quest. As such, Matty's metaphysical experience is presumably 'unique' : a revelatory proclamation of a new order to the infernal world around.

However, in **The Paper Men** the strategy of the novelist vis-à-vis his metaphysical concern and the placement of his protagonist changes. Wilf Barklay is posited in a contemporary but ordinary world with a domestic, if somewhat literary background in common with the one Sammy had in **Free Fall**; perhaps qualitatively not too different from that of Tuami in **The Inheritors**. He is endowed with a peculiar intellectual terrain : he is sceptical and believing; scheming and vulnerable; artistic and unethical; degraded and self-perceptive. This admixture of contradictory shades of human nature relate him in varied degrees to the fraternity of creative artists in the 'Golding Novel' who precede him -- Tuami, Pincher, Sammy, Jocelin. Like Wilf Barklay, All of them except Tuami, had a glimpse into the mystery of life, but they had responded differently to this revelation.

The creative artist Tuami, in **The Inheritors**, had been sensitive to the grossness of the Homo Sapiens' moral lapse as a

group but he lacked the vision of the larger reality of life. Hence, his grief and guilt, while genuine, cannot be considered to have engendered a metaphysical quest. Pincher has a genuine metaphysical experience but being a fake artist and a fake human being, he refuses the vision of the metaphysical reality offered to him. Sammy in *Free Fall* recognizes the spiritual reality but in his split-loyalty to Reason and Spirit does not know how to unify the dichotomy of his understanding. Jocelin though not a creative artist by profession is still endowed with a formidable artistic vision to realise his faith through art. When he is offered a revelation, he grasps its significance but only on his death-bed. Wilf Barklay alone, recognizes his epiphanic experience in life as such. In this he has close affinity to Matty's experience with the glass-ball.

There is another aspect to this metaphysical quest that is common to these two novels. It is the presentation of wilful, inevitable Evil in them. We find it duly reflected in the 'Golding Novel', as early as its *experimental phase*, in Pincher Martin. Pincher's ruthless insistence on reason, his persistent abnegation of spirit and the egotistic indulgence in sheer sensual gratification snowballs into the horrendous pursuit of outrage by Sophy in *Darkness Visible*. However, in the 'Golding Novel' this type of demoniac evil is effectively pitted against a positive belief -- passive but overpowering. In Pincher

Martin, this benevolent force is externalized in the voice of sanctity offered by Nathaniel; in *Darkness Visible*, it is once again posited in the ugly, disfigured Matty.

But curiously enough, the forces of good and evil are not externalized in the moral or spiritual conflict in the novels that belong to the *transitional phase* of the 'Golding Novel'. In *Free Fall* the spiritual conflict is within Sammy; in *The Spire* this conflict is resolved in Jocelin's humble acceptance of the spiritual reality. In fact, this acceptance underscores the resolution of the crisis between Will and Faith in human life; it indicates the dissolution of human ego and the crystallization of faith into genuine sanctity. During the *moral phase* good and evil is analysed in a socio-moral context and never attains to the higher level of a complex metaphysical issue.

However, during the *metaphysical phase* Golding returns to the issue of Good and Evil with a forcefulness and clarity hitherto not attempted by him. As a matter of interest, this crisis between Good and Evil is now resolved 'in' the protagonist. *Darkness Visible* foregrounds just such a protagonist in Matty. In him the willing devolution of ego and a natural evolution of sanctity meet. While in *The Paper Men*, there is no such apparent attempt at self-abnegation in Wilf Barklay, there is a definite self-escapism. However, in him self-perception leads to self-surrender. He does not seem to attain sanctity, although

serenity, acceptance and joy -- the hallmarks of a saintly attitude -- become an integral part of his personality after his epiphanic experience.

Thus, to attain a unified understanding of Golding's different approaches to the metaphysical dimension of life, it would be advantageous to analyse the varied nuances of theme and technique in **Darkness Visible** and **The Paper Men**. He exploits these nuances ingeniously, in order to reveal to the extent possible, the overlapping strands of his metaphysical quest into human life. Golding's own comment on his themes and techniques that stem from his urgent metaphysical quest is quite eloquent :

They have been themes of man at an extremity, man tested like building material, taken into the laboratory and used to destruction; man isolated, man obsessed, man drowning in a literal sea or in the sea of his own ignorance (*A Moving Target* p. 199).

Nothing could be more epigrammatically said of either **Darkness Visible** or **The Paper Men**.

The implications of these diverse approaches to a common '*metaphysical quest*' will surface only on placing the two novels in perspective. As both, **Darkness Visible** and **The Paper Men** focus on the novelist's metaphysical concerns and speculations this phase of the '**Golding Novel**' has been appropriately identified as the *metaphysical phase*. Of the two novels, **Darkness Visible** will be discussed first, because of its significant position in the Golding Canon and its chronological precedence over **The Paper Men**.

5.2.1 THE SIGNIFICANT POSITION OF *DARKNESS VISIBLE*

If one does not consider the three novellas [written in part much earlier although published as *The Scorpion God* (1971) *Darkness Visible* (1979) follows *The Pyramid* (1967) almost after a decade. It is at an interesting stage of Golding's career as it is so distanced in time as to prompt an assessment of the novelist's change of approach to his themes and to fiction in general.

In fact, the long spell of creative silence that precedes *Darkness Visible* is significant in Golding particularly when weighed against the mystifying depths and baffling ambiguity of that novel. What is even more significant is that Golding has categorically refused to talk about this one novel which is so far the most complex of all his work⁵. Given Golding's willingness to talk extensively about his novels and his approach to life this refusal gives scope for interesting speculations.

Due to its inherent ambiguity, it is not possible to fully comprehend the thematic density and the structural complexity of the novel on a single level of interpretation. Conversely, if different readings of its semantic potential are placed side by side the ambivalent mystery boldly asserted by the novelist may be somewhat gauged. Moreover, it may illuminate the paradox of the novelist's calling - his dilemma. In Golding's own words :

It is our business to describe the indescribable. I prefer and at the same time fear the saying of St. Augustine Woe unto me if I speak of the things of God; but woe unto me if I do not speak of the things of God (A Moving Target, p. 202).

Incidentally, it is possible to read into the novel two distinct approaches of the novelist that should shed more light on its semantic significance. Structurally, Golding relates it to Ralph's disintegrated world at the end of *Lord of the Flies* deteriorating into Pincher's degenerate realm in *Pincher Martin*. While thematically, *Darkness Visible* has a close affinity to the spiritual quest of the novelist, manifesting itself through the dual aspects of terror and joy inherent in the cosmos. This spiritual quest is rooted in Golding's 'burning preoccupation to know 'what man is, whatever man is under the eye of heaven' (A Moving Target p. 199) and we have his own word for it :

The themes closest to my purpose, to my imagination have stemmed from that preoccupation, have been of such a sort that they might move me a little nearer that knowledge (A Moving Target p. 199).

In this sense, the theme of *Darkness Visible* is a bold step ahead in that direction : it is an attempt all over again, to understand and to reveal the unknowable metaphysical dimension of existence.

5.2.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

Ostensibly, the narrative traces the emergence of the 'foundling' Matty, his uncertain upbringing, eccentric nature and untimely death shrouded in mysterious altruism. But enveloping this

gloomy development of events is the poignant saga of an intense, moral conflict and an extra-ordinary spiritual experience. The shifts in the narrative effectively reveal the turbulence of a guilt-ridden being and his unequal resistance to all natural human propensities in lieu of atonement. This elevates Matty's unusual experience from the depths of eccentricity to the heights of metaphysical sublimity.

There are not-too-distinct sub-plots that operate fitfully to assist the main narrative. Pedigree's life constitutes one such sub-plot. Parallel to the main plot is the episode of Sophy and Toni, acting as a major structural ploy and having complex leverage within the narrative. It serves as a buffer, support, comment, complement as well as an antithesis to Matty's experience. It, thereby, helps to ground in the action which would have otherwise appeared to be the fitful fluctuation of an oversensitive individual between eccentricity and superstition.

The structure of the novel is inscrutably ambiguous leading to an enigmatic narrative. But it is achieved with dexterous facility: the sympathetic response generated for Matty through the third person narrative is guarded; it is precariously balanced between the eccentricity of his individual experience and the sincerity in his recording of them in his journal. Further, this sympathy in the reader is qualified by the general reaction of revulsion directed towards Matty almost at sight. However, there are a few exceptions

to this almost universal apathy to Matty -- the nurse who shows affection to him as a child, the vat who attends to him in Australia, Edwin Bell who recognizes the metaphysical dimension in him instantly and the sceptical Goodchild are some of them. Notably, all these individuals possess a higher degree of 'humane' sentiments and perception.

Probably due to its abstruse concern, the novel constitutes a three-tiered structure, ostensibly, like that of *The Pyramid*. But in *Darkness Visible* the three segments are neither related by the common factor of the protagonist's experience nor cemented together through his narrative, as in the previous novel. On the other hand, the strategy of the novelist has been to narrate the story through the point of view of two characters -- both pitted against one another in the general scheme of the novel but hardly acquainted with each other -- and then collate these points of view with a few others, so as to give a diverse perspective to the theme. Don Crompton is of the opinion that *Darkness Visible* :

clearly derives some of its strength from the three-fold division, the Hegelian form of thesis, antithesis and synthesis being particularly appropriate for the type of work it is.⁶

It can be seen that fire as an element is a significant structural motif of this tri-segmental novel. It is associated with the protagonist Matty and, curiously enough, water as an element is also utilized extensively in balance with it. These motifs assist

a deeper perception into the theme that is embodied in a narrative woven by an intricate pattern of incidents and coincidents, obscurities and ambiguities. To further facilitate this process of perception, it will be advantageous to discuss at length the plot of *Darkness Visible*. This is necessary because in assessing the counterpoise of obscurity and coincidence in the story, the acquaintance with certain seemingly minor details would be useful -- particularly those that have a bearing on the strange, uncommunicative and simplistic protagonist Matty.

There is another reason for such an elaborate analysis of the plot : its central plank is the gradual evolution of Matty's latent intuitive spark and the resultant elevation of Matty to a sanctified status. His first appearance in the novel is certainly as miraculous as his final consumption in flames⁷. In between these two points of attachment, his life is a series of uneventful interactions with others, dotted by a subtle pattern of his absurd actions. There is another episode in the novel that concerns Sophy. It is apparently unconnected but related tangentially through the kidnap-operation concerning the boy saved by Matty. Her demoniacal Will and a natural inclination to Evil are the two points of reference in Sophy's excessively eventful and wilful life.

To find the significance of Golding's metaphysical quest, through the juxtaposition of these two polarities, a synthesizing

perspective is offered by the end segment, appropriately titled, '*One is One*'. Incidentally, the titles of the earlier two sections of *Darkness Visible* are named after the protagonist and the antagonist, respectively. Thus, when the three titles are placed serially there develops an interesting equation : *Matty* : *Sophy* :: *One is One*. But it is more semantic than mathematical in nature; to discover its nuances, therefore, a minute analysis of its every quantum is vital. Hence, the need for an at-length discussion of the plot so carefully structured around these titles.

The first segment, '*Matty*' has the protagonist as its fulcrum. Beginning with his maiden appearance in the novel, it concludes with *Matty's* first glimpse of the Stanhope twins -- *Sophy* and *Toni*. The '*Sophy*' segment focusses on the development of the twins, their separate identities and their convergence over the common issue of kidnap operation. This operation opens in its repercussions the section '*One is One*'. A subtle pattern of linkages, offering thematic continuity and structural integrity to the work, can be seen operating in the three segments of the novel.

The three-tiered plot helps to give the narrative a many-sided existence. The first segment, '*Matty*', moves from a generally objective omniscient narrative to the naturally subjective record of *Matty's* journal. The second segment, '*Sophy*', reverts to the third person narrative but employs decisive shifts in narrative time to maintain a more or less objective presentation of an individual

seemingly normal and desirable yet socially aberrant and morally degenerate. The second segment counterbalances Matty's eccentricity through Sophy's self-confessed 'weirdness' thus offering two glimpses of the non-phenomenal reality -- one is Matty's total surrender rooted in sin and atonement, the other is Sophy's egotistic perversity relying on the occult and the outrageous, justified by her belief in 'entropy'.

The doubtful reliability of these two characters necessitates a sceptical or even cynical point of view. But tilting the balance favourably the third segment of the novel, '*One is One*', offers many more points of view of the narrative. In addition to the various points of view offered to the reader already, there is the 'seeker's' point of view through Bell, the agnostic's through Sim Goodchild and the converted-believer's through Pedigree. Besides these, the 'perplexed' point of view of the average individual suggested through the episode of the inquiry into the kidnap operation. But this kaleidoscopic presentation of view points does not disrupt the cohesion of *Darkness Visible*.

Some of these significant motifs are : Matty's initial emergence from and his final consumption in fire; the peripheral but mutual awareness of each other in Matty and Sophy; the young victim of the kidnap operation whom Sophy wants to kill and Matty saves; the presence of Pedigree, the pederast and the association of Sim Goodchild and Edwin Bell with Matty and Sophy separately. These

motifs help to give a compact structure to the novel. Further, they help to inter-lock the various segments of its plot to create a cohesive, if somewhat obscure, fictional artifact.

5.2.3 DARKNESS VISIBLE : THE PLOT

The novel opens on the War-day London in the grip of a devastating conflagration. Out of this walks Matty, with no antecedents, having '*had no background but the fire*' (*Darkness Visible* p. 171). He emerges in the novel straight from the holocaust of London Blitz, very much reminiscent of the all-consuming fire from which Ralph is '*rescued*' at the end of *Lord of the Flies*. It is the singular passion of this ugly, maimed protagonist to seek to erase the crushing guilt of the accidental death of a school-fellow. In doing so, he achieves self-immolation in the process of saving a child from being kidnapped and probably killed.

Being a foundling without identity, he is named Matty Septimus Windrove, although his last name keeps changing throughout the novel. Due to his half-burnt appearance, his life is a tale of rejection and antipathy. But poor Matty, unaware of his shortcomings, tails his teacher Pedigree taking his ironical words of appreciation at face value. Pedigree uses him as an '*ugly cover*' for his irresistible crush on the handsome Henderson. When Henderson is turned away by Pedigree, he falls to his death. The moral blame for this is placed on Matty's shoulders

by Pedigree.

Matty takes his words literally and decides to atone for his guilt. However, he is unable to stabilize, torn as he is between his searing guilt and his now-dominant sexual instincts. When peering aimlessly into a glass-ball displayed in Good-child's bookshop, during one of his frantic attempts to run away from himself, he has a rare experience of *'entering a still dimension of otherness'* [Darkness Visible p. 48] Later, when he wanders into the deserted Greenfield Parish church he is accosted by the questions *'who are You? What do you want ?'* [Darkness Visible p. 49]. At this particularly intense moment he attains the realization of his hopeless predicament hanging, as it were in :

balance with its two scales, the one with a man's face the other with a fire of anticipation and enticement and in the first exercise of his untried will he chooses the awareness that suffered [Darkness Visible p. 49].

Matty realises *'the impossibility of healing Pedigree'* [Darkness Visible p. 50] and the need to get away as far as possible from his troubles. Matty sets sail for Australia. Here, he accidentally comes across a copy of the Old Testament and adopts it in toto. Meanwhile, the question *'what am I?'* continues to haunt him. In one of his anxious bids to get away from the source of enticement, he penetrates deep into the continent where he has an absurd encounter with an aborigine. Matty takes what he believes to be his *'crucifixion'* with calm acceptance and fortitude as an eventuality that has taken care of his

enticement from 'the daughters of men'.

Matty returns to his Bible with double vigour. His peculiar actions are misunderstood by the Australian authorities and he is advised to return home. At this juncture he undergoes a weird planned exercise, involving his submergence under the 'stagnant waters of a decedent pool in a hot and fetid place [Darkness Visible p. 72] with a wick-lamp in his hands. After this moral ordeal, perhaps equivalent to his spiritual baptism, Matty returns home, now a deeply spiritual man. He starts having visions and two spirits begin to periodically visit him at night. As an evidence of his 'sanity' he begins to maintain a journal wherein his nocturnal meetings with the spirits, in addition to other details, are recorded at length.

On the advice of the spirits, Matty takes a new employment at an aristocratic residential school at Wandicott six miles off from Greenfield -- the school associated with Matty's guilt and Pedigree's curse. Matty is fore-warned by the spirits that his life's mission probably involving a child will be accomplished at Wandicott. He hopes, prays and patiently waits for the destined moment to unfold itself. In the meantime, he tries in vain to heal the pathetically disgraced Pedigree from his acute perversity -- paediphilia by now a chronic condition with the sickening old man.

At this time, Matty sees for the first time in Goodchild's book-shop the beautiful angelic twins -- the brunette Sophy and

the blonde Toni, a week from their tenth birthday. Their angelic looks set him to 'wishing that they were who I am for' and he adds them to his 'list for praying for' [Darkness Visible p. 102]. Incidentally, the twins are the products of the broken home of the Stanhopes. Brought up with total parental indifference, the girls set out to exploit their natural genius and irresistible charm to stun the world into recognition. Toni turns to revolutionary activities and thereby to international terrorism; while Sophy with her life-long passion for the 'weird' embarks upon 'a deed in the eye of the world -- an outrage, a triumph' [Darkness Visible p. 250].

Involved in drug peddling, Toni disappears for a while. Whereas Sophy, tired of planned sexual exploits by the roadside and 'bored' with manipulating others with her seeming innocence and demoniac will, turns to serious crime. She gangs up with a couple of army drop-outs, and goads them into an impossible kidnap-operation at the Wandicott school. At the critical juncture, Toni enters the scenario with her terroristic paraphernalia. But this meticulously, almost obsessively, planned operation is inadvertently foiled by Matty. He manages to save the kidnapped child, but is himself consumed by the devastating fire caused by bombing.

During an inquiry, it is found that the 'stables' had been bugged on suspicion. The video-recording reveals a spiritual séance in progress with Matty, Edwin Bell and Sin Goodchild as

participants. But on interrogation, Bell and Goodchild are unable to shed any light on the hideous crime. Matty's journal is picked up as evidence too.

In the meantime, Pedigree breathes his last in the Park. But in death he has a beautiful vision of Matty as truly innocent and loving; and *'this was such a joy of certainty that Mr. Pedigree felt the tears streaming down his face'* [Darkness Visible p. 264]. Then he is eased into death, free from the trauma of his incurable perversion and its attendant persecution.

5.2.4 ELUSIVE NATURE OF REALITY IN THE NOVEL

Although the novel concludes with the serene release of Pedigree into a peaceful death, it apparently leaves a feeling of being inconclusive. This happens because Pedigree's dying vision is of a healed and sanctified Matty, coming towards him to ease him into a calm death. While this indicates in Pedigree a revision of his life-long resentment and apprehension towards Matty, it does not sound convincing enough -- particularly when the events in the novel leading up to this re-estimate are rationally understood.

After all, what is the rationale behind the spectre of a dead man, seen by a dying man leading him gently to death? It may apparently mean nothing more than a delirious experience or paranoia at the moment of death. This dilutes the impact of the

novel's theme. But if the preceding events in the novel, having a direct bearing on Pedigree's death, are viewed in their metaphysical significance, his death becomes a significant conclusion to the novel. In the absence of such a point of view, it appears to lack the impact of finality that is often the hallmark of a resolution.

But this, in all probability, is the intended effect that the novelist has set out to achieve. What he has sought to convey is the essential reality behind human life, which is both elusive as well as inexplicable. As Pedigree says :

They call it so many things, don't they, sex, money, power, knowledge -- and all the time it lies right on their skin! The thing they all want without knowing it -
(Darkness Visible p. 264).

The nearest that the novelist can draw his reader to this intransigence is through a constant interplay of light and shadow. It portrays a palpable world of matter but pertains to a vague certainty beyond it. Hence, the structure of the novel *Darkness Visible* is a continual oscillation between certainty and uncertainty that the reader experiences. It is a pointer to the fact that the complexity in this novel stems from an ambiguity intentionally evoked. In the words of Virginia Tiger :

ambiguity in Golding's fiction is always instructive and designed to demonstrate the spiritual complexities inherent in any human situation since it is his conviction that paradoxically many explanations may be simultaneously 'true'⁸.

In *Darkness Visible*, Golding has marvelously reflected this many-sided transient truth behind human experience in all its

complexity. In fact, it is the complexity of the experience that creates a sense of obscurity in the novel.

5.2.5 AMBIGUITY AND CO-INCIDENCE AS NOVELISTIC DEVICES

Faced with the problem of surmounting this overshrouding complexity inherent in his theme, Golding has made resourceful use of structural as well as narrative devices in *Darkness Visible*. These devices are seen to operate in the novel, in a round-about way. Superficially, they appear to be further confounding the obscurity in the novel, thereby making it even more complex. They seem to do this by bringing in an element of ambiguity that complicates the interpretation of the complex reality : such is Matty's experience in the church when he makes some of the most vital and far-reaching decisions about his life. Although for Matty this is a genuine experience -- and we have no reason to doubt his conviction about it -- the reader's belief is swerved into doubt by making a reference to '*the voice of the curate*' [*Darkness Visible* p. 49] asking two pertinent questions : who are you? What do you want?

Again at the moment of this crucial decision the reader is made acutely aware that it was '*the first exercise of his untried will*' [*Darkness Visible* p. 49]. What is more, he is driven to this decision out of a momentary '*vision*' that he has of his own life.

The authenticity and therefore the reliability of this '*vision*' is open to doubt, although Matty's sincere reaction to it and

the rationale of his thought processes at that moment seem logical enough. Such an ambivalence always hinders an accurate unilateral interpretation of events and experience in the novel. In fact, there are a number of events that Golding utilizes to lend credence to the grey areas of experience in the novel. No doubt, they appeal to the reader's sense of belief but at the same time they seem to be shrouded in superstition. The guilt that Matty carries on his shoulders is of this nature.

Another way by which these novelistic devices seem to hamper a better understanding of the complex events in the novel, is by the use of co-incidence. An example of co-incidence is Matty's unconscious desire for Henderson's death and the boy's actual mortal fall. Co-incidence offers a rational explanation to point out the unlikelihood of any connection between these two issues. Thereby, it apparently robs the event of any 'metaphysical' significance by absolving Matty of any onus for Henderson's death; it does this by seeming to stress the sheer absurdity of any logical relation between wishful thinking and actual event.

It is revealed to the reader that *'Henderson's body had been lifted and a gym shoe found beneath - with Matty's name in it'* [Darkness Visible p. 35]. But what is not made clear either to the investigating authorities or to the reader is what Matty 'was understood to say that the shoe had been cast' [Darkness Visible p. 35] probably with a desire for Henderson's death.

This becomes stunningly obvious to the reader when the Headmaster in his retirement comes across a quotation from the Old Testament, *'Over Edom have I cast out my shoe'* [Darkness Visible p. 37]. He feels a little chill on his skin at the quotation which was a *'Primitive curse'*; he wonders, and with him the reader also wonders, *'whether he had the key to something even darker than the tragedy of young Henderson'* [Darkness Visible p. 37].

But during the inquiry Matty's words are cloaked in an impenetrable obscurity by making a misreference to Eden. What is stressed, on the other hand, is Pedigree's parting statement that Matty takes to his heart, as a just accusation of his guilt for Henderson's death. This seems consistent with Matty's sensitive nature, his hunger for love and his *'dogging'* Pedigree as the only person who loves him. However, when the spirits, who supposedly visit him, tell him that his spiritual face is also scarred, Matty's reaction of grief is so genuine as to bring his moral crime into focus, in wishing for Henderson's death in some occult way. But his occult capacity is almost always veiled by obscurity born of his irrational behaviour and his overtly superstitious actions.

But these are only superficial shortcomings of these devices. In fact, using them despite these shortcomings is the novelist's strategy. For, in the subsequent movement of the events in the

5.2.6 OTHER STRUCTURAL AND NARRATIVE DEVICES

The discrete and round-about way in which ambiguity and coincidence assist the revelation of the mysterious nature of events, also helps to identify the other devices -- both structural and narrative. Devices that are mainly structural can be chiefly noted as follows : - (i) the ambivalent character of the protagonist (ii) the use of a character foil. (iii) the operation of extra sensory perception in the two major characters.

Along with these devices, there are others that are basically narrative ploys, used to either demystify or authenticate or lend credibility to the apparently unplausible events. The obvious devices are (i) Matty's journal (ii) the account of the séance (iii) the allusion to the details in the video-recording (iv) the discussion between Sim Goodchild and Edwin Bell. However, before analysing the effectiveness of these basically narrative devices, the major structural devices will be discussed in a sequence as under :

THE AMBIVALENT CHARACTER OF THE PROTAGONIST

The character of Matty is a major device that assists the development of the translucent reality behind the events in the novel. On the one hand, Matty is shown to be a pious, spiritually evolved and sincere person who willingly accepts suffering as his lot. But, Matty is also presented, all along, as an unsympathetic, uncommunicative and not-particularly intelligent specimen of

humanity, constantly swinging between absurdity and normalcy of thinking and of behaviour. His social interaction, too, is tremendously limited, while his craving for affection is immense.

This glaring imbalance in his nature makes it hard to believe unquestioningly in his desire for the atonement of his sin or to escape from worldly enticement. Yet, the genuineness of his intentions, his unwavering will in offering himself unto his God, and his steely acceptance of his predicament lends an awesome credibility to his character. This credibility, which one recognizes intuitively, guarantees the reliability of his unique experiences even when they defy reason.

In fine, Golding's protagonist has been cunningly invested with a marked oddity while he is endowed with an integrity of character which is convincing without doubt. This oddity renders every action, experience or claim of Matty conspicuous, thereby placing it outside, the average range of possibility. However, the probity of his spirit and belief gives an exceptional dimension of probability to his experience. It also generates in the reader an exceptional willingness to believe in it, despite the oddity.

An example of Matty's odd behaviour cloaking the significance of an event can be noticed in his games with match-boxes, twigs and pots that draw curious onlookers. They are seen as the quirks of '*the strange man in black*' -- a mere pastime in themselves and nothing more. But these games are viewed as anti-nuclear

demonstration by the Australian authorities. However, the reader has reason to believe that these are Matty's attempts to answer the persistent question *'What am I for?'* [Darkness Visible p. 68]. In fact, the reader is told that they *seemed to interest Matty profoundly, though he could not tell why. Once or twice it was a whole mime that absorbed him* [Darkness Visible p. 68]. Interestingly, having seen these with the Abos, Matty is curious enough not only to try them but to consult his Bible.

Further there is a tacit indication that it is Matty's *'message'*. When he is pointedly asked by the State Secretary *'Do you have some kind of perception, some extra-sensory perception, some second sight - in a word, do you- see?'* Matty admits reluctantly that *'I feel!'* [Darkness Visible p. 71]. As if this indirect admission is not reliable enough, coming as it is from Matty, there is the State Secretary's clear comment on *'the context of the message'*; he tells Matty clearly *'you are wrong in supposing that people can't read your message, translate your language'* [Darkness Visible p. 70].

Although the reader would like to rely on the Secretary's prudent observation as a clue to Matty's spiritual status, he would be hesitant to accept Matty's acknowledgement of the same unquestioningly. There is no contradiction in this readerly response. Matty is generally confused about most ordinary things, while he is persistently wilful about popular superstitions or

obsolete religious observations, such as giving up speech as a heave-offering or his preoccupation about the number 666.

Yet, at the same time, his firm faith in '*the spirits*' and his whole-hearted obedience to their every command, however, undesirable to him, is a positive quality in the reader's estimate of Matty. The agony with which he reluctantly gets rid of his Old Testament at '*their behest*' is a pointer to this view. His calm acceptance and tremendous patience is also a strong recommendation in favour of Matty's spiritual strength. This spiritual strength is perhaps the secret of his self-effacement as a preparation towards an expected self-immolation that comes more than a decade later. But one is not sure being faced with pluralistic interpretation vis-a-vis the subjectivity of one's reading. By extending Wayne Booth's comment regarding critical pluralism to this context one may claim :

Each interpretation springs full-bodied from an assertion of a possible reading, not a possible writing¹⁰.

SOPHY AS CHARACTER FOIL

To this obscure picture of Matty in the reader's mind another equally mysterious though an opposite dimension is offered by the novelist. This is the gradual evolution of Sophy (and to some extent of Toni) from an extremely charming, intense and intelligent child into a stunningly beautiful, strong-willed femme-fatale -- with a natural inclination towards evil and an insatiate appetite

for outrage. In Golding's opinion there is an inevitable 'parallelism between intelligence and evil' just as there is an element of oddity or unbelievability in those intuitively gifted so as to make it 'impossible to portray that kind of figure' in a believably human way¹¹.

As an important structural ploy, Golding has utilised the strategy of pitting his protagonist against an antagonistic foil. But this foil comes into play entirely through chance or accident. There is no direct or intended conflict or even contact between Matty and Sophy except once. It occurs, when Sophy pretends to lose her engagement ring on the Wandicott school campus and Matty discovers her pretence without really understanding its implications. He realises that 'it is a challenge', but wonders, 'why did she give the sign to me?' [Darkness Visible p. 236]. In spite of his 'perceptive' nature it takes him 'all day to see she knew about signs and how to show them' [Darkness Visible p. 236]. Yet he is baffled by the question 'is she then disguised as an angel of light or is she a good spirit' [Darkness Visible p. 237]. Matty's bafflement consolidates the reader's hunch about Sophy and his quizzical opinion of Matty.

When Matty and Sophy are balanced against each other a lot of 'extra-ordinary' similarities come to the fore. Every time Matty takes an important decision, it is invariably a 'must' prompted by his faith that dwells deep inside him. Sophy, on the other

hand, acts with the fore-knowledge of 'of course' that comes with 'the naked realization of her own power over others'. She realises early in life that there was a 'dark direction at the back of her head' [Darkness Visible p. 134] and that she was different from the rest of the world in 'this ambushed separateness from which comes all strength' [Darkness Visible p. 134].

Just as Matty discovers spiritual solace enough in the copy of the Old Testament to discard his previous copy of the Bible, so also does Sophy learn more about her 'dark direction' and about 'entropy' through a random radio talk. In fact she soon discovers that 'the desire to be weird was like a taste in the mouth, a hunger and thirst after weirdness' [Darkness Visible p. 132]. Her obsession with evil is not any the less overwhelming or genuine than Matty's agonised self-ordeal in a conscious and wilful rooting out of all normal desires and passions as an atonement for his sin. Thus, even in their chosen path in life, they have the same wilful obsession though their goals are diametrically opposite. If Matty is one of Golding's 'saintly mystics', Sophy in Johnston's opinion as self-willed 'guilty' 'stands as Golding's most successful foil in a contemporary setting'¹². The intricate manner in which Sophy is pitted against Matty gives ample evidence of this observation.

PARANORMAL CAPACITY IN MATTY AND SOPHY

Apart from other similarities between Matty and Sophy, there is a vital factor that operates for both of them, in a crucial manner. In the absence of a better term, it may be called Extra Sensory Perception. For example, Sophy 'knows' from the moment she learns about Fido working at Wandicott school that she will coerce Bill and Gerry into kidnapping a child from that school. Equally so, does Matty know 'certainly', almost a decade before he actually saves the child, that he is intended for a child 'with an I.Q. of a hundred and twenty' [Darkness Visible p. 101]. The extra-ordinary feature of this fore-knowledge is that they actually get involved with a child, but both of them are unaware unto the last that they are associated with the same child.

Although, both Matty and Sophy seem to have an additional, rare dimension to their personality, it operates under the cover of accident in the novel. Interestingly, each of them represents a diametrically opposite approach to this paranormal quality. Yet, together they proffer a kind of double *entendre* to what is otherwise enfolded into the plot with a superficial veneer of 'oddity' or even 'weirdness'. It is this double-sight into the events of the novel that gives them a necessary aspect of probability or even of authenticity. What is particularly gratifying is that this does not disturb the tempo of the narrative nor does it rob the narrative of its credibility on the ordinary

level of experience.

Assisting these structural devices to further authenticate the events and experiences in the novel, there are some narrative ploys are skillfully utilized by Golding. The particular advantage of these narrative devices is their independence of the impersonal narrator operating in the novel. This independence gives them a marked credibility as instruments of corroboration, for which the narrator need hold no responsibility. Secondly, their independence of the impersonal narrator guarantees the inviolate nature of their irrational and mysterious element. This is particularly true of *Matty's Journal* which is the major narrative device that collaborates with the main narrative of the novel.

MATTY'S JOURNAL

This important document has been resourcefully exploited by the novelist in order to authenticate the unique and intimate experiences of his protagonist. More than being a haphazard diary kept by the ingenuous *Matty*, the '*most extraordinary reason*' behind its genesis is, in *Matty's* own words, '*to keep the book for evidence to show I am not mad*' [*Darkness Visible*, p. 86]. But over and above its significance as a testimony of *Matty's* sanity, it is his '*testament*' to his charge -- the unknown child he is supposed to be guarding -- who *Matty* believes '*shall bring the spiritual language into the world and nation shall speak it*

unto nation' [Darkness Visible, 101]. This belief, along with the allusion to the child having 'an I.Q. of a hundred and twenty', [Darkness Visible, p. 101] subtly indicates Matty's suggested status, like his namesake Mathew, as the prophet proclaiming the advent of a new Messiah.

In addition to this, the journal is also the corroborative evidence for certain mysterious events in the novel that cannot be otherwise accurately established. Some of these are : the prediction regarding Matty being '*near the center of things*' [Darkness Visible, p. 97]; the prophecy that Matty will perish in saving a child; the pretence of Sophy's lost ring; and Matty's abrupt interruption of the journal to leave for the second séance that '*never*' takes place.

The journal is also an ingenious means of verifying certain events that cannot be ascertained as credible in any other convincing way. The spirits mentioned in the novel become acceptable only on the basis of the events or incidents pre-saged by them to Matty during his nocturnal visions mentioned in the journal. Since these events occur as per Matty's claims in the journal, some credibility has to be accorded to his mysterious visions and also to the spirits. Some of the events accurately predicted by the spirits are : the '*eleven-years-in-advance*' intimation about Matty's '*charge*'; the indication, through their severe attitude to Matty, regarding the undesirability of Matty's

preference for the twins 'within a week from their tenth birthday' [Darkness Visible, p. 238]. Similarly, Matty's giving up his employment with Mr. Thornbury in Cornwall and his subsequent employment near about the boy, he is supposed to save, happens just as advised by the spirits' earlier. All these events coincide with his previously recorded statements in the journal. Thus, they underscore his mystique potential and also validate some of his 'apparently' incredible claims.

Obviously, the journal has a crucial narrative function. It decisively supplements the wryly ironic but rather unobtrusive omniscient narrator. Further, it accentuates the import of several vital issues in the novel : issues that are essentially ambivalent being unauthenticated or unverifiable in any way. Matty's journal validates their position by indirectly corroborating their existence or occurrence. In this, the journal facilitates the reader's comprehension of the nucleus of the novel in its intended metaphysical dimension. Again, through Matty's plain, confessional mode of writing and his sincere, ingenuous language the journal distinctly reveals the protagonist's touchingly simple, saintly personality.

THE ACCOUNT OF THE SEANCE

Another effectively wielded narrative ploy in **Darkness Visible** is the humorous, almost ridiculous, account of the

séance. This seemingly trivial situation in the novel is a shrewdly contrived narrative device. Initially, it diffuses the equivocal nature of Matty's ordinariness as a human being by revealing '*his disability, his deformity, his, one must so call it, handicap*'. It makes him in the eyes of Sim '*no longer a forbidding monstrosity but only another man*' (Darkness Visible, p. 231). But it also focuses the reader's attention on his mystique powers through Sim's response to Matty's random examination of his palm.

Sim experiences '*an awareness that stopped time in its revolution*'. To him :

the palm was exquisitely beautiful, it was made of light. It was precious and preciously inscribed with a sureness and delicacy beyond art and grounded somewhere else in absolute health (Darkness Visible, p. 231).

Despite Sim's trivial but persistent preoccupation to scratch his nose during their communion, he is unable to deny at the end, '*that something had happened*' (Darkness Visible, p. 234). This, coming from the more suggestible and willing Edwin would be nothing much. But in the sceptical Sim this grudging acceptance becomes very significant. When weighed against his initial '*embarrassment*' at Edwin's '*positive*' attitude to Matty's spiritual ability and his instinctive inclination '*to think that all this is nonsense*' (Darkness Visible, p. 207) his response to the séance shows a positive deviation towards Matty.

Again, his reaction -- during the inquiry into the kidnap-

operation -- to the discovery of Matty's journal is also significant. It is a two-fold reaction : he '*felt heartened by the idea of Matty's journal*' and '*Before he knew what he was about he found himself staring intently into his own palm*' [Darkness Visible, p. 261]. With the maximum explicitness at the narrator's command in the situation, Golding underscores the metaphysical implications of Matty's interaction with Sim and Edwin, through the most reliable sensibility in the situation -- the sceptical. This delicate upward curve of Sim's tentative belief in Matty's paranormal capacity is a gesture of assent. Edwin's wholehearted and enthusiastic conviction of Matty's spiritual prowess further bolsters it. Together they take the reader as close as possible to a mysterious reality that is intrinsically extra-sensory.

THE ALLUSION TO THE DETAILS OF VIDEO-RECORDING

The novelist has exploited the details of the video-recording to further amplify his ambivalent metaphysical theme. On the one hand, it corroborates the events leading up to the kidnap-operation; on the other, it refers to Sim's evidence during the inquiry. Mr. Justice Mallory describes it '*as a moment of low comedy in this terrible affair*' [Darkness Visible, p. 256]. Sim's reaction to his own appearance in the video-recording is extremely telling -- not with respect to the

kidnap-operation -- but in relation to his own lustful fixation for the Stanhope twins. He admits :

I had nothing to do with it. Nevertheless I am guilty. My fruitless lust clogged the air and muffled the sounds of the real world (Darkness Visible, p. 257).

In this equivocal allusion to '*the real world*' lies the elusive essence of his interaction with Matty. It voices his sense of regret for his own failure to reciprocate '*sincerely*' to a once-in-a-life-time opportunity. His regret is further accentuated by his spontaneous response of hopeful relief, at the mention of '*Matty's journal*' in the video-recording : '*There would be news of Matty -- almost a meeting with him*' (Darkness Visible, p. 261). The feeling of anticipation behind this response goes a long way to highlight the reality of Matty's position -- a reality which the '*perceptive*' Sim has distinctly realized, although the '*sceptical*' Sim rationally obstructs from surfacing.

THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN SIM AND EDWIN

This narrative ploy is exploited on more than two occasions in the final segment of the novel '*One is One*'. Every time the action in the novel, depicted in this section, impinges beyond the realm of sensory perception, it is given the necessary immunity behind the convincing cover of humour, scepticism, even absurdity. The series of discussion between Sim and Edwin regarding Matty are a suitable illustration of this phenomenon : the reduction of the extra-ordinary to the trivial to guard the inviolate mystique of

the one as also to protect the semblance of ratiocination behind the other. Through the delicate balance of the two, the novelist reveals the mysterious quality of experience involved.

The first occasion of discussion between Sim and Edwin manifests the natural clash of opinion, between the reluctant sceptic and the willing enthusiast, over the domain of the extra-sensory experience. This conflict represents the verbal version of the reader's ambiguous attitude to the same. The next discussion in the park, over Matty's para-normal capacity reveals Sim's '*cautious interest*' and confirms Edwin's overwhelming belief. Subsequently, they discuss Matty only briefly during their futile wait for the second meeting that never materialises.

On this occasion, Sim emerges as more '*perceptive*' than Edwin, despite the former's constant fluctuation between doubt born of triviality of experience and a certainty of a genuine experience, however trivial. But Edwin, though a believer '*with profound emotion*', is nonetheless, contained by his intellect and senses, in his interpretations of the extra-ordinary. It is Sim who admits :

we're not innocent. We're worse than guilty. We're funny. We made the mistake of thinking you could see through a brick wall [Darkness Visible, p. 258]. Moreover, he accepts He was right, you know. History is bunk. History is the nothing people write about a nothing [Darkness Visible, p. 258].

These two confessions coming from Sim go a long way in ascertaining the probability of Matty's experience, his impact

over Sim and of his 'role' in the general drama of events, in the novel. They are all the more significant in being articulated despite Sim's public humiliation -- during the inquiry and via the video-recording -- as a result of his brief association with Matty during the séance.

Further, highlighting Matty's saintlike stature is the spontaneous comment that slips out of Mr. Pedigree's lips to Sim and Edwin. After all those years of his hatred, resistance and disgust for the poor boy, his statement '*Matty was really honest, you know*' [Darkness Visible, p. 259] assumes sublime proportions to vindicate Matty's efforts to heal him; but more than that, it validates Matty's life-long belief and experience. Every structural and narrative nuance in the novel working thus through indirection is, in fact epitomized in Golding's use of the oxymoron *Darkness Visible* as the title of his novel.

5.2.7 *DARKNESS VISIBLE* : CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Golding's failure to capture fully in words, such an intensely spiritual experience as Matty's, is actually a testimony to the success of his endeavour. Had the mystery been decoded as easily as if it were a cross-word puzzle, its mystique would have been all but lost. The obscurity in the novel is, in fact, necessary to render the mystery of spiritual reality accessible to the reader's perception while yet upholding its

• natural inaccessibility that guarantees its sanctity. In this the obscurity has a 'positive function' in being 'productive' of meaning at the same time as apparently concealing meaning¹³.

It is thus easy to see the justification of the Miltonic Oxymoron 'Darkness Visible' as the title of this novel. In the Miltonic sense 'darkness' probably symbolizes the evil into which the erstwhile angels have fallen and the visibility in the darkness testifies to the traces of glory attendant to their earlier status. In Golding, however, 'darkness' has an apparently different connotation. He has claimed at one stage that :

god is the thing we turn away from into life, and therefore we hate and fear him and make darkness there¹⁴.

Implicitly, this 'Darkness' is the mystery and the obscurity that thwarts human reason from grasping the complex nature of the godhead and of the divine power that operates in the Universe beyond its ken.

It is, obviously, Golding's intention to make this mysterious experience of spiritual reality as closely accessible to his reader as possible. But given the limitations of human communication and understanding. These are experiences that have to be 'lived' and not shared through senses and reason. To communicate such experiences is, as Sammy in *Free Fall* claims, 'Our passion and our frustration' [*Free Fall*, p. 8]. In an attempt to overcome this frustration Golding has made use of obscurity to protect the inviolate status of Matty's spiritual experience and

of ambiguity or coincidence to uphold its complexities.

Golding's confessed inability¹⁵ to talk about this novel in particular, only confirms the impossibility of verbally communicating an overwhelmingly complex phenomenon. Further, this refusal also silently underscores the necessity of operating behind the film of ambiguity and coincidence. The novelist could thus encode through the intricate pattern of his plot the essential mystery of Matty's experience leaving it to an individual sensibility to tune in and perceive it. Going beyond this would have been an undoing.

Figuratively put, Golding's concern was to make 'darkness' visible. Naturally, only the minimal light would ensure visibility in pitch darkness. Too much of explicitness would dispel the darkness and denude the mystery of its hallow. The novelist has re-assuringly come close enough to the willing reader. The challenge is open to the perceptive reader to grope in the uncertainty of life's darkness, flicking the eyes of a deeper sensibility open so as to experience the '*Darkness Visible*' for himself. However, capturing this experience entails a paradoxical situation for the critic that Lodge has described in another context thus :

It is the irony of our position as critics that we are obliged, whatever kind of imaginative work we examine, to paraphrase the unparaphrasable¹⁶.

In the final analysis, *Darkness Visible* remains an eternal challenge to one's intuitive faculty. In its critical assessment it

has to be noted that this novel attempts the impossible. Both in terms of its sublime thematic potential craftily fed into its organic structure and in terms of its broad canvas relating the incongruous aspect of human experience the novel approximates to the reality of life - physical and spiritual. In fact, the novel may be likened to a prism through which the ordinary human experiences and sensibilities break through to refract the extraordinariness of life and experience. In his attempt to explore the intensely elusive quality of life, Johnston observes :

Golding creates a more convincing portrayal than ever before of the bonds between fate, free will, and accident, and of the ways in which human life partakes of both infinity and triviality¹⁷.

In blending these three controlling elements of human life, the novelist is able to achieve a perfect fusion of the duality of life.

Darkness Visible remains Golding's most complex yet also his simple most simple novel thus far. It embraces the obscurity of an infinite reality while seemingly attempting to portray the actuality of contemporary life during the last half-a-century. Through its exquisite tight-rope-walk between the ordinary and the extraordinary experiences, the novel switches from physical to metaphysical reality with a facility truly admirable. It is this easy shift from one angle of thematic perspective to another that justifies the position of **Darkness Visible** as a novel belonging to the *metaphysical phase* of the 'Golding Novel' during its Social Stage. Consolidating this shifting perspective of reality in

Darkness Visible, Golding offers yet another portrayal of the elusive reality of life in *The Paper Men*, the other novel of *metaphysical phase*.

5.3.1 FROM DARKNESS VISIBLE TO THE PAPER MEN

The curious switch-over from the intense, probative nature of the theme in *Darkness Visible* to the ludicrous exposure of the pretentious literary world in *The Paper Men* is significant in the 'Golding Novel'. The novelist attempts, once again, to analyse the *extra-ordinary* aspects of life but now his stratagem shows a marked deviation in his fictional approach.

The most striking feature of this deviation is the choice of Golding's protagonist : the jet-setting, crude and clownish Wilf Barklay is distinct from the 'eccentric', simple, odd but genuine Matty in *Darkness Visible*. This ageing, callous, self-absorbed protagonist of *The Paper Men* seems to be an ironical alter-ego of the novelist himself -- perhaps his indirect way of turning the tables on his would-be critics and biographers

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John Fowles' casual statement also gives an indication of this through the following claim made about his meeting with Golding:

He told me his new novel (*The Paper Men*, not then published) was to be about a novelist being persecuted by a literary researcher and we discussed briefly that aspect of both our lives; the letters, the academic visitors, the thesis writer¹⁹.

Considering that Wilf Barklay, also like his creator, sees

himself as a 'moving target' and given his 'treatment' of his 'academic counterpart' -- such an insinuation does not appear entirely baseless. However its significance need not be unduly exaggerated to squelch the deeper thematic perceptions underlying the drab clash of pseudo-intellectuals in the novel. It is this thematic perception that relates the novel to **Darkness Visible**, despite differences of technique.

A striking difference of technique in **The Paper Men** is the use of a plain, sparse canvas as against the complicated surface-structure of the earlier novel. Even the point of view is now exceptionally limited -- to that of Barklay -- in a distinct deviation from what Johnston has termed as '*a virtual cacophony of voices*'²⁰ in **Darkness Visible**.

The potent language, that had withstood the challenges of an obscure experience and ambiguous narrative in that novel is now *shown* to be unequal to the experience of the protagonist. Golding's resourceful use of a conversational tone and Barklay's often - inappropriate usage bordering on incoherence is intended to focus the inadequacy of language as a vehicle of intimate communication.

Thus, as a part of Golding's technique, language is now seen to be reduced to the ordinary, inadequate vehicle used by the writer -- not so much to describe or show as to make one 'see' for oneself -- not with the help of words but despite them. As

Kinhead Weekes perceptively remarks :

Since language warps or distorts reality, readers must be brought by the words to that point where vision can Laser-leap beyond²¹.

Barklay attempts precisely this when 'with garbled speech' he mumbles 'in a language which wasn't even English' 'but my native language' [The Paper Men, p. 126].

Similarly, the ingenious narrative strategy of **Darkness Visible** has yielded place to the 'most news-papery' and 'near-journalistic'²² reportage of a callous, disenchanting, clownish novelist. The erratic mode of this autobiographical, narrative, fluctuating between actual narration and reverie, loud thinking and delusion, is a far cry from the complex but compact narrative mode in **Darkness Visible**. As such, in all appearances, this novel comes through as Golding's most obtuse and unappealing-at-first-sight work, so far.

The reason for this sudden shift in novelistic gear, significantly when he comes to the creative artist, is worth discovering. The lack-luster clash-of-interests between two equally abject individuals from the literary world -- the eternally elusive writer with his untiringly inquisitive critic in hot pursuit -- is just a façade. No doubt, the glimpse of the world of letters that these 'paper men' present is at once hideous and depressing. But Golding wrings from this drab conflict, a unique metaphysical experience. Through the depraved sensibility of a sceptical individual the novelist is able to

foreground the spiritual gropings of contemporary Man.

In view of this, it is necessary to analyse Golding's strategy behind *The Paper Men*. The absurd-seeming plot of this novel could well be his way of launching an abstract metaphysical theme -- one that finds reluctant favour with the contemporary sceptical reader. In fact, the grudging readerly response to *The Paper Men* is a manifestation of the contemporary reluctance towards a metaphysical issue. But Golding's peculiar plot may also be an exaggerated presentation of the distasteful world of letters, with which he has put up for nearly four decades. His sardonic comment made during a lecture '*Belief and Creativity*' at Hamburg, on 11 April, 1980 is self-revelatory :

It gives me particular pleasure -- I might say peculiar pleasure -- to address you today in Germany, home of exact scholarship, because it was a German reference book which announced my death in 1957 (*A Moving Target*, p. 185).

While it is tempting to discover in the novelist's approach a certain writerly strategy in the face of readerly scepticism it is not always fully satisfying. Critics such as Don Crompton have, no doubt, found the novel '*directly related to the degree of tact with which Golding presents the manifestation of spiritual forces to a largely sceptical readership*²³'. But that may not be the entire rationale behind the so called 'tact'. There is another aspect to it. In Golding's own words :

No novelist in the second half of the twentieth century can be anything but part of a wide literary world that stretches from journalism to academia There is nothing in that world existing wholly to itself, nothing of crystal simplicity. There is no one who is creative without being just a little dissective, no one who is a mythologer of the unconscious without also being to some extent an analyst of the process by which he gets his daily bread (A Moving Target, p. 154-5).

This perceptive assessment of the literary art in relation to the academic world has a significant relevance to **The Paper Men**. Taken in the metaphysical sense, the theme of this novel shows Golding to be 'a *mythologer of the unconscious* as the novel duly illustrates. But in its mundanity the novel shows him as a novelist finely tuned in to the gross 'reality' of the literary world -- a perceptive 'analyst of the process by which he gets his daily bread'.

In fine, Golding's approach to the theme of **The Paper Men** should be viewed from different angles keeping in focus his own dictum : '*a writer's books should be as different from each other as possible*' (A Moving Target, p. 198). Considering a novel as a communiqué between a writer and his readers, the novelist's stance should be understood in relation to the action-reaction syndrome that underlies any communication. But knowing Golding's deep preoccupation with humanity, his relation to '*the phantasms that condition our world*' (A Moving Target, p. 186). one should not ignore the essential inner urge of the novelist to probe into that condition.

By his own confession, Golding :

is an ageing novelist, floundering in all the complexities of twentieth century living all the muddle of part beliefs (A Moving Target, p. 192).

But he is a creative artist, too, trying to evolve a configuration of these complexities so as to reveal their ambience. Again, it is equally undeniable that he is a 'living' creative artist, 'a moving target' defying 'a process of literary mummification' (A Moving Target, p. 185). All these diverse factors inevitably condition his choice of subject-matter, theme and technique, in each new fictional venture.

In a nutshell, then, the stance of the novelist is as 'elusive' as his theme. Behind every novel, lies not only a certain thematic concern but also a definite design on the readers -- the tact of dealing with the one without compromising the other. Of all the Golding novels, *The Paper Men* best epitomizes this delicate tact of its creator. Through its juxtaposition of an extra-ordinary metaphysical experience with an extremely ordinary sensibility in a recognizably crass context, the novel divulges its polysemous potential.

The Paper Men reflects the spiritual quandary of modern man; it also exemplifies the novelist's endeavour to embody an extra-ordinary issue in a context palatable to the sceptical readers. Moreover, according to Barbara Everett :

it is a novel capable of questioning the nature of that 'social reality which novels are about'²⁴.

This assessment of the novel is validated when its social context is

seen in relation to that of *Darkness Visible*. Though vivid and exquisite the social context had been secondary to the ultimate metaphysical reality in *Darkness Visible*.

The concern with extra-ordinariness of experience had been the focus of the metaphysical quest in *Darkness Visible*. The crux of its incompatible approaches to this quest had been embodied in Matty and Sophy. However, due to their paranormal capacities, these two characters had been, if not unconvincing, at least not wholly acceptable as average and down-to-earth. Their experiences, therefore, remained exceptional even if accepted. But the novelist's concern was neither entirely with the individual's experiences in themselves, nor with their social context as a '*created reality*'. It was with the '*actuality*' in which these experiences are rooted. Hence, Golding uses what Berklay has termed '*this contrast between psychological truth and disembodied background*' -- however realistic.

But given the pseudo-intellectual context of *The Paper Men*, it is necessary to foreground the literary actuality in a typical protagonist. For it would be perceived as probable only in an individual like Berklay - undoubtedly worldly and ordinary in all senses of the word. Such a protagonist -- not a Matty or a Sophy would really '*belong*' to mundane contemporary literary world and could therefore hopefully '*convince*'.

After all, the contemporary life towards the turn of the

century is not typified by the likes of Matty or Sophy, but by individuals like Sim, Edwin or even Pedigree : those individuals who are sceptical, sincere, foolish, learned, depraved and pathetic -- all at once. Matty and Sophy are the exceptional probes who measure the extent to which an individual can become morally depraved or evolve spiritually, given the potential and the inclination for it.

However, beyond this polarity of extremes, there are the ordinary human beings -- neither gifted with exceptional occult capacity nor driven by extraordinary desire to stun the world into recognition -- making the business of living their sole aim in life.

Yet, an 'extra-ordinary' experience may off and on fall to the lot of these unexceptionally ordinary individuals. Wilf Barklay in **The Paper Men** is such an individual. Midway between the self-willed depravity of Pincher Martin and the misdirected innocence of Sammy, Barklay is perpetually on the run until the reality accosts him in strange circumstances. The ensuing discussion of the plot will be useful to comprehend Barklay's strange acquaintance with this reality of life.

5.3.2 THE PLOT OF *THE PAPER MEN*

A detailed analysis of the plot will reveal the nuances of the theme and the rationale behind the skeletal structure of the novel. Pitched between the pursuit and counter-pursuit of two

Mephistophelean literary figures, the plot needs some elaboration to elucidate its metaphysical concern. In the absence of it, the novel reads like the commentary of some international car-race, merely dotted with a few memory-flashes of the protagonist's criminal past and his desultory present. However, the significance of this literary chase becomes clearer when seen in its thematic context and semantic potential.

Like his creator, Barklay becomes an international celebrity with his very first fictional attempt *Coldharbour*. Thereafter, he becomes an object constantly pestered, pried into and intruded by 'paper men', such as Rick L. Tucker, with the intent 'of making a professional meal' [*The Paper Men*, p. 11] of him. This self-appointed 'full professor of English Literature' is caught 'rifling' Barklay's dustbin, 'in the cause of scholarship' [*The Paper Men*, p. 14]. In an attempt to dig out spicy information on 'his raw material, the ore in his mine' Rick ruins Barklay's marriage to 'the integrated and moral' Liz having :

brought into the light of the day a set of circumstances thought concealed from the relevant person [*The Paper Men*, p. 15].

After a distasteful divorce, Barklay takes to travel over 'Europe and extensions' making 'the relatively cheap but also efficient milieu of the motorway in every country' his 'homeland' and 'way of life' [*The Paper Men*, 27]. During his sojourn in Switzerland, Barklay is once again accosted by the recently-married Tucker and his wife Mary Lou 'with the trans-

parent face of that beauty which must surely be holy and wise' [The Paper Men, p. 36]. Trying to get away, Barklay comes to weiswald with Rick in hot pursuit, perpetually pleading to be appointed his literary executor and later, official biographer. Wary of his '*long life of undiscovered crime*' Barklay knows that such a project will hold nothing but '*fixation, frustration, folly and grief*' [The Paper Men, p. 36]. But Rick does not give up easily. After failing to seduce Barklay into the signing of a contract by offering him Mary Lou, he pretends to have saved Barklay's life, by exploiting the latter's irrational fear of heights.

Barklay takes the only option he has known all along- '*hit and run*' - hoping to cover up his tracks. In Greece, he is disillusioned to know from a fellow-writer that his idealized '*Helen*' Mary Lou is now working as '*something*' for the philanthropist billionaire Halliday, who has set Rick after Barklay. After a hopeless stint '*right round the world*' he lands up in Rome via Africa and moves to an Italian island, having hallucinations of being pursued by '*Rick and Halliday and their Mafia*' [The Paper Men, p. 122]. During a visit to a Sicilian Cathedral to ward off time and perhaps to indulge his '*hobby with no genesis the hunting of stained glass*', he has a unique experience of terror on seeing an oversized silver statue

of Christ. On that tremor-shaken, volcano-ridden island, he knows 'in one destroying instant' that all his adult life he 'had believed in God and this knowledge was a vision of God' [The Paper Men, p. 123].

Treated for stroke, Barklay is acutely aware of 'the universal flail', 'The divine justice without mercy'. In a rare moment of reckoning, he finds himself 'contemplating a universal reality' beyond 'the nature of physical brain' [The Paper Men, p. 125] and knows it wasn't a stroke at all or 'if it was, the event was no more than co-incidence' [The Paper Men, p. 125]. This gives him 'perfect freedom' from the guilt he had always run from and he decides to see Rick 'having a definite need of him to complete things' [The Paper Men, p. 125]. In a pre-planned rendezvous at Weiswald, he systematically destroys any vestiges of self-respect or dignity that might have still clung on to Rick. In turn, Rick also tells him a few home - truths about the Barklay 'Halo' and the great English 'Tradition!'

Thus duly humbled Barklay plans to see Rick again at a future date. In the meantime, he believes that he suffers from the 'stigmata'. However, during one of his hallucinatory dreams, he returns to the Italian Cathedral where he had had his vision and suddenly discovers 'that the boil had burst, the pain and strain had gone ... and there was no more need to run' [The Paper Men, p. 161]. With the confidence that 'the rest of the journey

would simply be provided' he returns home to the dying Liz. But Liz dies without the final reconciliation : she, unable to believe in his new-found joy, and he, not knowing how to offer help. He intends to write an autobiography without any reservations and then give it to Rick. As a last rite Barklay sits down to type out the fag end of his autobiography 'Paper Men' when Rick unable to contain his desperation any longer, shoots him.

5.3.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF BARKLAY'S DEATH

Death comes to Barklay at a particularly calm moment when he is experiencing genuine happiness. In completing the final part of his biography he expects 'a kind of dying Freedom forsooth'. [The Paper Men, p. 190]. As such, his writing assumes the import of a 'rite of passage' : performed in unawareness that he may be actually proceeding on his ultimate journey presently. It may be an instinctive act, the chastening experience that safe-guards his imminent journey.

On the other hand, there is a possibility that he intuitively knew that this was his last act. For, he claims that 'I know with absolute, inward certainty that I have drunk my last drink' [The Paper Men, p. 190]. But he also knows that 'It may be a perious thing to write in view of the times the clown's trousers have fallen down' [The Paper Men, 190]. Superficially, these statements imply his attempts to give up drinking; they may thus

appear to be redundant. But the context in which these statements are made makes them semantically ambivalent. Barklay refers to his exquisite experience of serene joy, of freedom, of the bonfire of all his paper-effects as a 'rite of passage' just before he refers to his absolute certainty of having drunk his last drink.

Significantly, a little earlier, he has mentioned his stigmata -- the four wounds of Christ from which he believes to have been suffering and the vicar duly deflating his pride has mentioned the 'three crosses'. Barklay has calmly faced it : '*For me the peace and security of knowing myself a thief!*' [The Paper Men, p. 188]. Keeping all this in view, the bullet from Rick that finally kills him can be seen as the fifth wound. This is consistent with Barklay's erroneous or accurate belief that he suffers from the stigmata : '*Four of the five wounds of Christ. Four down and one to go!*' [The Paper Men, p. 187-8].

Given the enigma of the situation, the novelist cannot go beyond the acceptable limits of discreet and indirect suggestion without sacrificing the validity of his impersonal authority. He is constrained to narrate through Barklay. So, a tentative indication of his own imminent death is all that Barklay (or even Golding) can reveal at this stage. Without disturbing the authenticity of Barklay's experience or of Rick's desperation, the novel cannot reveal more. The inadequacy of language has

already been brought into focus by Barklay off and on during this narrative.

Keeping all these factors in mind, one realises that indirection is a strategic ploy of Golding. This use of indirection as a narrative device can be better appreciated in relation to his paradox of retaining the contemporaneity of the experience without foregoing its metaphysical implications. Ian Gregor's comment -- on such a paradoxical situations in contemporary fiction -- is fully pertinent to Golding's predicament in this narrative tight-rope-walk. Commenting on the novelist's dilemma, of wanting to convey his vision and yet to maintain his authorial distance, Gregor maintains that

Golding is a novelist writing in our times. He is not Dante or Milton; he is heir to all the possibilities of scepticism of contemporary writers of fiction, and nowhere does that scepticism express itself more fully than in the difficulty of locating the author and hearing his voice ...; every distinguished writer of fiction in this century has used a variety of stratagems to test out the authority of his vision and invariably it is through indirections that directions have been found out²⁵

Golding's presentation of the 'reality' behind Barklay's death, through effective indirection is borne out by the above statement. Further, Golding's building up of an indirect narrative through related experiences can be bolstered by discussing two earlier incidents closely related to the issue of Barklay's death. The first reflects his concern for the mundane life, the latter reveals his apprehension for the life after death.

Undoubtedly, Barklay's death at the hands of Rick has tremendous significance in relation to these earlier twin-experiences of terror closely linked to likely death. His actual death occurs at a particularly serene moment in his life and bestows a peaceful end to his physical existence. Viewed in relation to his earlier encounters with death, it has to be acknowledged that they have prepared him for this moment: the first one, by exaggerating his concern for survival; the other, by accentuating his self-effacing awareness of the Universal Reality. A brief discussion of these two encounters will elucidate this fact.

Barklay's first taste of imminent death is of his fall off the railing in Switzerland that he '*imagined*' was down the ghastly drop of Weiswald. This fog-enveloped '*slight*' fall was an intimate encounter with the idea of physical death for Barklay. His mental state at that moment in his own words:

was blind terror which I became, awareness of blind terror, incredulity. Then the animal took over, every nerve, muscle, heart beat, at top energy and speed, bent on denial of destruction [The Paper Men, p. 87].

But Barklay got off from his experience with -- little more than his fear for self-preservation -- a bruised ego for owing his life to Rick Tucker. At that moment, experiences that '*Terror was as much an element as space*' [The Paper Men, p. 87], yet his immediate instinct is for self and survival. The Absolute does not touch his psychological trauma even tangentially at this point.

Barklay's second death-like experience, in the Sicilian

Cathedral, is physically much less threatening than the first one. Still, it leaves a deeper physical damage of a stroke in its wake. But more than 'a leedle estrook' [The Paper Men, p. 124] it shatters the whole being of Barklay; batters and re-moulds his spirit. In that split-second, agonizing view of a statue of Jesus astride, Barklay sees the image of 'Pluto, the god of the Underworld, Hades, striding forward' [The Paper Men, p. 123], 'Fright entered the very marrow' of his bones, no doubt, but there was no thought of self in that terrifying instantaneous encounter. 'Surrounded, swamped, confounded, all but destroyed, adrift in the universal intolerance' [The Paper Men, p. 123], Barklay's awareness is only of the Absolute. Interestingly, this experience leaves him with no egotistic pre-occupation but rather with the humble realization that 'I had been planned from the beginning. I had my place in things' [The Paper Men, p. 124]. Thus fear for self-preservation in him is supplanted by a 'contemplation of a universal reality' [The Paper Men, p. 125].

It is this 'contemplation' that elevates Barklay's experience from the indignity of an unfortunate 'leedle estrook' to the awesome stature of a 'metaphysical encounter' with the Absolute. Thereby, Barklay's experience attains an extremely meaningful relevance to the 'metaphysical quest' in the 'Golding Novel'. In fact, by complementing Matty's spiritual elevation, Barklay's experience becomes the culmination of this quest in the 'Golding Novel' during

the appropriately - termed *metaphysical phase* of its Social Stage.

Just as Darkness Visible penetrates the opacity of fate, free will and co-incidence to accost the ultimate reality, so does **The Paper Men** break through the palpable film of phenomenal experiences to elucidate the grey areas of Fall, atonement and Grace. In accepting his depravity Barklay attempts atonement through self-revelation and thereby attains Grace. In his unconditional forgiveness, even love for Rick, Barklay reiterates Dean Jocelin's positive vision and his gesture of assent in **The Spire**.

5.3.4 THE FAUSTO-MEPHISTOPHELEAN ELEMENT IN **THE PAPER MEN**

Notwithstanding the relevance of Barklay's experience to the spiritual quest in the '**Golding Novel**', it is possible to divulge other thematic perceptions from **The Paper Men**. Viewed from a different angle, the novel reads like an account of how the two '*paper men*' have destroyed one another. Interestingly, this destruction can be better analysed in terms of a Fausto-Mephistophelean relationship between the two '*paper men*', Wilf Barklay and Rick Tucker.

This approach has two aspects : the need to question the moral implications of this mutual destruction and the necessity of establishing the deeper connotation of the term '*paper men*' applied to Wilf Barklay and Rick Tucker. The finer nuances of such an analysis will make for useful contribution to the original,

predominant theme in Golding : Man's spiritual blindness and his instinctive 'metaphysical quest' directed towards his own innermost being.

Related to this search for the ultimate reality in life is the question of moral integrity that has also been brought continually into focus in the 'Golding Novel'. This theme of moral integrity connects the two issues of 'mutual destruction' of Barklay and Rick and reveals their status as 'paper men'. However, the issue of moral integrity pertains to the allied question of Good and Evil and its position in the 'Golding Novel'. Hence, before tackling the latter question, it is pointless to explicate the former. Only after establishing the exploitation of Good and Evil in the 'Golding Novel', it will be significant to identify the nature of destruction that the two paper men confer on each other; that, in turn, will reveal their status as 'paper men'.

Good in itself, absolute and unadulterated is sparingly but boldly used in the 'Golding Novel'. Never depicted in the ordinary human characters for obvious reason, it is embodied in Golding's Christ-figures -- his 'Jean Vianney' figures -- such as Simon or Nat. Vaguely depicted, it is nearly always balanced by 'oddity' or debility of body. The only ordinary characters to be endowed with uncorrupted Good are the Neanderthals; these pre-humans earn this distinction perhaps due to their intellectual paucity. For, Golding 'equates thought with Fall' considering

thought to be :

this difficulty, this capacity, this incapacity to be whole-heartedly natural²⁸. Hence, even his amicable pre-historic protagonists, Palm and Chimp in *The Scorpion God*, are uncorrupted only 'proportionately' to their intellectual development on the evolutionary ladder. As such, Goodness as a concept is an abstraction in the 'Golding Novel' that is gradually attained by ordinary human beings 'after' the cognizance of their own depravity.

But Evil as a concept has been extensively exploited and daringly concretized in theme and character in the 'Golding Novel', particularly, during the *experimental phase*. In fact, it is a critical commonplace that 'Evil in mankind' is the theme in *Lord of the Flies*. Again, 'Evil' in human ancestry can be considered the theme of *The Inheritors*. By extending one's imagination, it is possible to see Pincher Martin as the thematic enactment of 'the self-destructing capacity for Evil in Man'.

In the subsequent novels of Golding, however, Evil does not directly converge on the thematic nucleus of the story. But alternately, it continues to dominate as character-embodiment in the 'Golding Novel' as late as its *metaphysical phase*. Sophy in *Darkness Visible* is only a female manifestation of the self-willed damnation of Pincher Martin -- perhaps, even more ruthless and less subtle than the latter.

However, Evil as a negative quality or a preternatural force is

never accepted or justified in the 'Golding Novel'. It is depicted with a vivified intensity, colour and authenticity that probably vindicates its irresistible appeal; but it is also revealed with a subtlety that underscores its perilous potential. Once more, Pincher and Sophy are two significant illustrations of such a depiction of unredeemed Evil that finally never wins. This indirectly suggests Golding's vision of life and the place of Evil in his 'world-view'. Since Golding, the novelist, always speaks through indirection, it is desirable to read indirectly into his intent behind the portrayal of Evil. As Bayley so observantly points out :

Evil, for example can be accommodated by reality as an accepted part of the total creation the writers offers : in Golding it remains unassimilated; unassimilated by, and as, art²⁷

For Golding, Evil has been a strategic device; in the case of Pincher, he has already made this explicit. In the case of Sophy also, one can see that she is created as a foil to Matty -- attractive, forceful, contrary -- to off-set his character, not to be identified with or to be accepted. Without doing anything expressly, the novelist has seen to this. One can sympathise with Pedigree, Tony, even Wilf or Rick but not with Sophy unto the last.

If this is Golding's strategy, where do Wilf Barklay and Rick stand in the wide range of Evil stretching from Pincher to Sophy? Before endeavoring to answer this question, it should be noted that Evil had varied manifestations in the 'Golding

Novel'. In the *experimental phase*, initially, it is externalized as the 'beast' in *Lord of the Flies*, or as the 'red-haired' Neanderthals in *The Inheritors*; but in *Pincher Martin* it is uncompromisingly internalized in the character of Pincher but without any causal rationalization.

However from the *transitional phase* onwards, Evil is more authentically internalized and convincingly projected through the protagonist's inner conflict subtly attached to his social interaction at various stages of his life. Thus there are Sammy, Joceline, Oliver, Matty -- each in his own way coping with the Evil in himself.

During the *metaphysical phase*, Evil is once again prominently externalized -- even projected into the social life-stream -- through crime, violence, sexual aberrations, psychological obsessions and moral depravity. Yet, there is a difference : in the first novel of this phase, 'Darkness Visible, Evil has a positive function : particularly in Sophy -- the most glaring personification of Evil in the 'Golding Novel'. For example of her fantasy about the kidnapped child, Don Crompton convincingly remarks :

This final identification of Sophy with Satan, bringing sin and death into the world, as a second challenge to God's authority, prepares the way for the last act of Golding's *Apocalypse* -- the saving of the child and the triumph of the forces of

good²⁸.

Matty's vision, his suffering and above all his sacrifice would have been all but futile without Sophy's unmitigated Evil. This becomes absolutely clear in view of the fact that Sophy has just a tangential connection with Matty's life and that through the kidnap operation.

But in the second novel of the *metaphysical phase*, *The Paper Men*, a new approach to Evil is discernible. Both the major personae of this novel are endowed with a fair degree of Evil along with the average proclivity for ambition and material success. In Rick Tucker, Evil is embedded in his coarse, repulsive, crafty and totally self-demeaning nature; in Barklay, Evil takes the form of his latent, guarded and extensive past-depravity far-reaching in its consequences. Pitted against each other, the two men in their ambition to literary fame and success destroy in addition to themselves, three other lives Elizabeth, Emily and Mary Lou.

Rick inadvertently activates this process of destruction through his mean 'rifling' through Barklay's dustbin revealing unsavoury titbits about the latter's association with 'Lucinda'. However, Barklay's own ugly past is the direct cause of their destruction. For it is his unearthed past that leads to his divorce and to the subsequent series of events that destroys them all. In the case of Mary Lou, particularly, Barklay is the unintentional but the more culpable source of destruction. He

had already 'tasted' the extremity of Rick's ambition to be appointed his literary biographer when Rick had tried to seduce him into consent through 'Mary Lou'. If Barklay wanted he could have precluded her further exploitation through Halliday, by giving Rick the authority to write his life. This was his moral obligation, for he knew her as 'a moral being' and was sorry for her. Despite this, he inadvertently destroys her along with Rick due to his continual disappearance and persistent refusal of Rick's request for permission.

But more interesting than their effect on others is the mutual impact of Barklay and Rick. Their mutual relationship can be best described as ironically 'Fausto-Mephistophelean' -- each trying to possess the 'soul' of the other and in the process destroying the other. In this, as a natural consequence, both 'indirectly' enact the Faustean archetype. Barklay is indirectly instrumental in giving Rick his lease of academic and other allied glories; but in exchange extorts a heavy price from Rick by his degradation and dehumanization -- first as an academician, then as a husband and finally, as a human being. He reduces him literally to a dog. Again, by continually flaunting the permission to be his authorized biographer Barklay ultimately drives him up to the wall, when Rick in total frustration shoots him.

In his turn, Rick also functions as a Mephistophelean-Faustean persona. In the words of John Baylay :

Golding's *The Paper Men*, we glimpse, among other things, the irony of a situation in which the critic biographer seeks to possess the writer by identifying him as a writer²⁹

Curiously enough, Rick is not only after the literary '*life*' of Barklay but his very being -- his most intimate self -- that he spares no efforts, money or qualms of conscience to possess and to destroy through his own '*literary pursuits*'. Ironically, when Barklay wants to write a totally self-baring biography and give it to Rick as his final '*rite*', Rick literally takes the '*life*' of his '*subject*' by shooting him dead.

There are clues enough in *The Paper Men* towards its Marlowian undertones. For example Barklay after his :

stroke looking for the primordial moment of will, own will ... voices the natural blasphemy of our condition, why this is hell nor am I out of it, Marlowe, q.v. [*The Paper Men*, p. 125-6].

Again, when Barklay tries '*to think the word "end"*' what his mouth '*said was "sin"*',; however, when he attempts to add more to the '*alchemy of one word*', what his mouth fashions is '*My Sin*' first and then '*Not-Sin-I-am-Sin*' [*The Paper Men*, l. 126-7].

However, should these clues ironically give a '*Faustean*' image to Barklay's experience, it does not thereby follow that Rick is his Mephistopheles. For, with precise deliberation and calm malice Barklay also works out the systematic destruction of Rick -- what little there is left of Rick after his '*seven years lease*' of his academic self to the other Mephistophelean character, Halliday. Rick has already lost everything he had deemed

precious at the time of his 'deal' with Halliday -- his career, his academic interest, his love for phonetics, even 'Mary Lou'. His seven-year sabbatical contract is due to expire thanks to Barklay's successful, hard-hearted elusiveness. In sheer desperation Rick concurs to a rendez-vous at Weiswald. Barklay with Shylockian ruthlessness extorts his revenge to the final drop of blood -- shredding the last vestiges of Rick's self-esteem to bits. Anthony Storr has described Barklay's cruelty as 'the sadism of power rather than of sex but sadism none the less'³⁰. In his sadism Barklay is a modern Mephistopheles.

Yet, despite this 'sadism' Barklay does not give Rick the authorization as his official biographer as promised. He keeps on dangling it before him and finally refuses it entirely. He does not disclose to Rick until the very end that he is going to write his own biography. Even in this delayed revelation there is yet a concealment. His intentions in writing it are two-fold: perform his 'rites of passage' -- to make an atonement for his past depravity through an accurate, ungarnished, detailed exposure of his own criminal past -- and to give the biography to Rick. But in the inadvertent concealment of this fact, he leads Rick to the extreme step of homicide. Whether intentionally or not, this becomes a Mephistophelean act of concealment or partial revelation. This contention about Barklay falls in place with Golding's comment about Mephistopheles in his 'Belief and Creativity' :

I guess we are in hell. We can say if we will with Marlowe's Mephistopheles, 'Why this is hell nor an' out of it'. But suffering as he was, Mephistopheles was still cunning enough not to give away the whole game' (A Moving Target, p. 281).

Golding's Wilf Barklay fits into his Mephistophelean picture to the extent of his failure to 'give away the whole game' to Rick. However, his intentions about Rick during the final phase of his writing are certainly not deceptive or insincere as they had been earlier. Hence, more than Barklay being a Mephistophelean figure at this point, it is Rick who acts as a desperate Faustus, at the end of his tether with that other Mephistopheles - Halliday.

Actually it is Halliday who sets the two 'paper men' against each other, through his unethical desire to 'possess' Barklay as a part of his literary 'spoils'. Through his plutocratic power he sets Rick on his ironically insatiate desire for 'knowledge' about Barklay so as to be privileged with shoddy academic success. But before Rick can achieve any of this, he has already lost his essential treasure : himself and his wife Mary Lou who is significantly 'not physical' but a 'moral being' (The Paper Men, p. 681).

However, in this Fausto-Mephistophelean reading of the novel, the inconsistency of this metaphor needs a mention. The novel has not been expressly written around the Fausto-Mephistophelean legend. But it is exploited subtly as an inconsistent motif on purpose. This inconsistency is also used in Barklay's initial 'mix-

up' over Christ as Pluto striding across the 'Hades' in his obsessive fear-terror almost-of 'Rick and Halliday and their Mafia'; it is also there in his confusion over Halliday as God; and in his deluded association of the old lady spinning outside the cathedral with one of the Fates and in his drink-sodden illusion of Mary Lou as Helen of Troy [The Paper Men, p. 68].

It is an intentional device probably used by Golding to underline the inconsistency of Good and Evil, belief and delusion; sin and awareness of life. To indicate, in other words, the hazy climate of self which is by turns one thing or another or everything including the Absolute. This justifies Kinkead-Weekes' comment that : *'Golding's fiction seems continually Manichean ... No seeing it seems, can be truly human that is not split, or even multiple; but no human seeing can be true unless all things are made one, if only for an instant'*³¹.

The inconsistency in *The Paper Men* exemplifies this 'Manichean' quality of Golding's fiction. As such, if Halliday can be viewed as a wily, cunning Mephistopheles wanting to possess unethically through his countless billions the 'soul' of a literary critic, he can be also viewed as the ultimate reality -- God. He terrorizes not because of his power, but due to the 'fake' nature of his creative writer fearing exposure and the willing 'offer' of self made at the altar of Memon by the literary

critic for shoddy academic plums. This indirectly reveals their status as '*paper men*'.

This '*fake*' quality of Barklay and the unethical '*sale*' of his professional position by Rick hardly makes them '*ingenuine*' as men of the world and men of letters. They are seen to be shadowy persons with no substance. In this respect they become '*paper men*' : lifeless caricatures of literary celebrities who make a living by paper, whether pages of literary work or bank notes; persons for whom human beings or human values don't matter, except as pretexts to more paper. For a hollow literary ambition, Barklay compromises his marriage, his literary merit, and himself. Just so, for empty academic pursuits, Rick literally stoops to a badger going to dustbins; to a private detective hired by Halliday; to a pimp who barter a devoted wife in the illusions of a futile academic career.

In this sense, whether physically, morally, psychologically and spiritually, the two men aligned with the literary world are despicable, loathsome fakes -- the genuine '*paper men*', inside-out. Between them they become ironically paradigmatic -- both as literary frauds and treacherous persons -- of contemporary life with its glittering pseudo-literati and glamorous scholar-scoundrels. This gives the novel its particular realistic punch, in spite of its newspaperly, incoherent, desultory approach. In the opinion of Barbara Everette :

The Paper Men happens to be the most newspaperly, the most socially realistic of all Golding's fiction, set (uncharacteristically) in the immediate present and taking the form of direct reportage by a novelist ... Yet this effect of near-journalistic world-touring, jet-setting surface is intrinsic to the book's illusory quality³².

Keeping the lack-luster, haphazard narrative in mind and in view of the sheer delusion, reverie, indirection, confusion, dream and vision vested in Barklay, the above comment is a just estimate of the novel. Further this estimate has a special import in that it draws attention to the structural and narrative features of The Paper Men so vital to the thematic quality of the work.

5.3.5 STRUCTURAL AND NARRATIVE FEATURES OF THE NOVEL

As a brief sequel to the thematic analysis of The Paper Men, its structural and narrative aspects also require elucidation. The narrative of The Paper Men has been likened to 'newspaperly reportage', to an inverted autobiography of sorts as well as to a:

passionate repudiation of a system that wants to elevate writers to a kind of priest-

hood³³.

As such, any analysis of the structure of the novel will perforce have to take cognizance of the above comments on its narrative. It will be, therefore, useful to briefly review them in the context of this discussion regarding the structural and narrative features of The Paper Men.

First of all, it has to be conceded that all the

above descriptions apply to the novel, but only partially. In fact, they are narrative devices that give the novel its desired structural potency and thematic cogency. For example, the language and the style of narration used by Barklay gives the novel the look of 'newspapery reportage'. But this is only a superficial impression that the novel offers. Its thematic content is so dense that the apparent reportage soon yields place to deeper semantic pre-occupations within the narrative by way of Barklay's intense experiences.

The narration of these intense personal experiences, assisted by the first person narrator and an obvious resemblance of the narrative persona to the novelist, together, give the novel an autobiographical appearance. Considering that Barklay's aim in writing it, is to thwart his would-be-biographer the novel becomes his autobiography. By implication, it is Golding's inverted autobiography for the novelist has to draw from his own life substantially. Although the substance thus drawn is strikingly and deliberately metamorphosed to suit Barklay's life, the indelible affinity of Barklay to Golding is obvious.

Many critics have found details, persons and events inverted from the novelist's life into his protagonist's life. Moreover, critics have found 'disconcerting resemblance' between the novelist and the novelistic persona. Barbara Everett, for instance, finds in Barklay :

a novelist some of whose data - the beard, the frame -- appear to belong to Golding himself³⁴.

Even Crompton, enlisting a whole lot of similarities between Golding and Barklay, concedes that *The Paper Men* 'is in some sense his autobiography'. But cautions that such similarities 'are no more' than traps for critical heffalumps, a form of crossed fingers that should avert further odious comparisons more than they 'invite them'³⁵.

This opinion of Crompton indicates a certain strategy behind the autobiographical resemblance noticed in *The Paper Men*. In view of the fact that discreet misdirection has always been Golding's strategy, Crompton's contention is quite acceptable. After all, his 'artist' protagonists have always shared his interests, his limitations, even his hobbies, over and above having their social environment in common with man.

Sammy takes from Golding his Manichean approach to the dual aspects of the universe; while Oliver draws from his creator his own middle-class milieu with all its biases, his preference for arts over science, and even his 'very trivial sort of spear-carrying'³⁶ acting. Even Pincher is no exception to this, far as his experience in the Royal Navy is concerned. But ultimately, these resemblances mean no more than ensnaring devices for hasty critics -- the likes of Rick Tucker. As such they had been best ignored being no more than traps.

In *The Paper Men* the inverted autobiographical motif is used as

a handy device to achieve the repudiation of a system Golding loathes. In order to expose it, he deliberately turns it on its head so as to reveal the ugly hypocrisy and the unimaginable compromises committed by the so-called men of letters. It is necessary for Golding to draw from his own life for his protagonist is a 'fake writer'. He cannot possess a genuine and rich literary or academic context and still remain convincingly 'fake'. It is more convenient, therefore, for the novelist to ironically turn the tables on his own experience of the literary world which by no means has always been exceptionally gratifying.

However, there is more to this turning of tables by the novelist than meets the eye. In his sparse structure of a near-skeletal plot Golding is faced with a singular problem : the difficulty of harnessing the risk underlying the exposure of the moral and artistic default of a fake novelist-protagonist to the challenge of creating a credible realistic fictional artifact. This difficulty is further confounded because the narrator is not Golding but the morally and creatively bankrupt novelist - Barklay.

To overcome this limitation Golding has made an ingenious use of two modes of narration; curiously enough, both these are through Barklay. The first mode of narration assumes the form of a fairly direct record of Barklay's life centering on Rick's pursuit of him; the second concerns Barklay's evasive,

hallucinatory narration of his own deluded flight from Self and Absolute. Both these records stem from a single situation : Barklay-on-the-run with Rick chasing him round the globe but they offer two points of view.

Of these, the first point of view posits the reader with an awareness of the unwholesome reality of the academic world, infested by unethical writers and critics; the second point of view enables an exploration into the psycho-spiritual development of the protagonist and his related moral transformation that occurs through this development. The two points of view offer a composite analysis of Barklay, the man and his vision of life. Despite the highly subjective nature of the autobiographical narrative in *The Paper Men*, it is never permitted to be precariously one-sided.

Interestingly, this single situation contains two major thematic movements. The surface structure embodies the theme of corruption in the contemporary literary world. But it also conceals the deeper thematic nucleus of contemporary spiritual blindness resulting in moral degeneration. Metaphorically, the structure of the novel can be described as exoskeletal : below the coarse, rough-hewn brittleness of the confusing narrative lies the vital fibre of the essential human predicament. However, only on penetrating the outer shell of the journalistic, autobiographical record of Barklay's life, this vital fibre can be perceived.

Incidentally, there is a reference to the exoskeletal nature of the narrator's mental condition in the novel that becomes emblematic of the narrative mode used by Golding. Barklay's fellow-writer and friend Johnny diagnoses Barklay's paranoid condition in a way that applies closely to the structure of the novel too. He says :

You .. have spent your life inventing a skeleton on the outside. Like crabs and lobsters ... So my advice .. is to get rid of the armour, the exoskeleton, the carapace ... [The Paper Men, p. 114].

The outer crux is Golding's way of revealing the hoax in the world of letters while the underlying pattern of reverie, dream, loud-thinking or hallucination reveals the moral degeneration of Barklay the man and the writer and his inner conflict leading to his apocalyptic revelation.

However, there are other narrative devices assisting the reader to make headway through a maze of hallucinatory scenes and memory flashes. Some of these are: the chance meetings of Barklay with his friend John St. John in Lésvos and later on at his club with Johnny and Clayton. His brief encounters with Elizabeth, Emmy and the priest also help in filling in the gaps in the narrative and assist the structural cohesion of the novel.

A significant structural device that the novelist has subtly planted in his novel is the use of certain characters as the matrix of Barklay's moral corruption and his spiritual evolution. Elizabeth is initially the index of his moral degeneration while at the end she becomes the instrument of fathoming his spiritual

growth. Similarly, Rick Tucker is the indicator of the extent of literary snobbery and corruption to which Barklay could have gone in the absence of his purging '*metaphysical encounter*' in the Cathedral in Italy. Again, Mary Lou is the scale with which to gauge his still-surviving aesthetic sense revealed through his idealized response to her beauty. Together, these characters infuse a 'human' normalcy to Barklay's character which makes it easier to believe in his moral elevation after his '*metaphysical encounter*' -- his pathogenic experience of what may be described clinically as a stroke or spiritually as a confrontation with the ultimate reality of existence.

Initially, the points of view of the other characters reveal the self-deception, self-centredness and self-degradation of Barklay through their own moral superiority to him at that given point in time. But at a later stage through their own inability to cope with the change in their circumstances or to grow through their own experiences they remain stunted or become even further degenerate.

Elizabeth, for example, initially strikes one as morally upright and perceptive. But at the end she remains rigidly self-righteous, unforgiving and unredeemed. Rick Tucker is viewed with ridicule and dislike but with sympathy at the beginning of the novel, when he is caught at Barklay's dustbin. But, eventually, he degrades into a ruthlessly manipulative Machivelli who

- deserves more scorn than pity from the reader. Through their own negative development these characters accentuate the moral elevations of Barklay after his exceptional experience in the Sicilian cathedral.

Golding's narrator is a worldly-wise but morally impoverished individual. All through, his mode of narration displays a not-too-high opinion of himself and a fundamental sincerity about his own artistic bankruptcy and spiritual blindness, that is somehow disarming. In his simplicity of acknowledging his own 'clownish' tendency, in his distant admiration of Mary Lou's adorable beauty and through his 'confessional', confused but reliable account of his own omissions and commissions Barklay makes inroads into the readers' sympathy.

Golding's way of validating this first-person narrative is through random corroboration via unexpected encounters -- such is Barklay's tête-a-tête with John St John in Lésvos -- and memory flashes. In this way Golding is able to sustain the authenticity of what could have otherwise become a highly subjective, delusion-corroded and illusion-prone account.

Another noteworthy feature of this narrative is its social reality. Notwithstanding the 'limited exposure' of the 'actual' social environment of the two contemporary literary figures, Golding succeeds in revealing the 'reality' of the literary world with all its hypocrites, parasites, moving 'targets' and 'stalking'

academic predators.

In this revelation of the '*literary-academic*' reality lies the success of *The Paper Men* as a novel belonging to the Social Stage of the '*Golding Novel*'. However, to justify its position as a constituent of the *metaphysical phase* of the '*Golding Novel*' during the Social Stage, it is imperative to assess its relevance to Golding's '*metaphysical quest*'. For this assessment Barklay's experience becomes vitally significant.

5.3.6 RELEVANCE OF BARKLAY'S 'METAPHYSICAL ENCOUNTER'

From Barklay's own record it is clear that his is a '*metaphysical encounter*' with the Absolute reality. This encounter, therefore, prepares him for any eventuality including his own death. However, if Barklay has had this experience, Golding has bestowed it on him. It should, therefore, be interesting to see where it belongs in the developing curve of Golding's spiritual quest. Further, how does it relate to the similar experiences of his erstwhile creative-artists - beginning with Tuami in *The Inheritors*?. And then, what is its relevance to the '*darkness*' that always impinges on such an experience in the '*Golding Novel*'?

The answers pertaining to all the questions regarding the relevance of Barklay's experience to the *metaphysical quest* in the '*Golding Novel*' go back to Tuami, the tribal artist in *The*

Inheritors. In fact, these questions stem from his unconscious grief for 'something' and his search for 'something else'. In the infancy of human evolution this overwrought artist has no rational understanding of sin and none of God either. Yet, his artistic sensibility has engendered in him a vague awareness of the moral lapse and the vacuous spirituality of the Neanderthals. As such, he grieves for the one and yearns for the other.

Hence, in his looking out for the 'end of darkness' [The Inheritors, p. p. 233] is latent the gesture of hopeful anticipation for mankind in the 'Golding Novel'. Nonetheless, it is at this stage an anticipation not immediately rewarded with a positive insight leading to a vision of spirituality. Perhaps Golding was, then, convinced that humanity in its cradle was not yet ready to frame its vital metaphysical query -- the fall and the moral culpability for it -- and so to receive any solution for it. As such Tuami discovers not what lay at the other end of the lake but just :

such a flashing from the water that he could not see if the line of darkness had an ending [The Inheritors, p. 223].

It is useful, at this point to re-iterate that Golding visualizes darkness as an appropriate metaphor for the contemporary Man's experience of and awareness of spirituality. According to Virginia Tiger, the contemporary man's :

interior landscape contains a central not comprehend dark which is accessible but elusive³⁷.

This view appears convincing when applied to the 'concept' of darkness in Golding's different novels. When uncomprehended, as in *Lord of the Flies*, this darkness is unredeemed Evil, when partially comprehended as by Tuami, it is an uncertain awareness of moral lapse perhaps of guilt.

Hence, *The Inheritors* more or less endorses the universality of Evil in *The Lord of the Flies* by merely rationalizing it. In other words the novel makes out a hopeless case for justifying the depravity of mankind. But in so doing, it seals humanity's fate by proclaiming the 'ancestral fall' of man, loud and clear. The creative artist Tuami -- the only sensitive human being -- discovers the futility of hatred and revenge. But he is unable to substitute them with any positive human value except for the sublimation that comes through art. His perception is partial and so he has no vision. His anticipatory glance meets the blinding glare of uncertainty not the irradiating 'halo' of understanding, suggestive of an end to the 'darkness'.

Significantly, 'darkness' for Golding at this stage is a concept closer to evil and malignity than anything more complex or positive. However, the concept gradually alters. In *Pincher Martin* 'darkness' assumes a clearer identity as the Absolute, the 'isness'. In Pincher's case it is 'the thing he turned away from when he was created' (*Pincher Martin*, p. 189). In fact, 'the silent indisputable creature that sat at the center of things'

• [Pincher Martin, p. 93] coincides with Tiger's description of it as:

The 'darker' dark or 'centre' inhabiting that darkness constitutes the ding an sich, the ineradicable entity or 'isness' of the unique character, his central organizing principle or Being³⁸

This view of 'darkness' is totally consistent with Pincher's attitude to his 'dark centre'. His refusal to acknowledge it and when that becomes impossible to pretend to explain it in Freudian terms :

I know my stuff just sexual images from the unconscious, the libido, or is it the id? All explained and known. Just sexual stuff what can you expect? Sensations, all tunnels and wells and drops of water [Pincher Martin, p.146].

In this persistent denial of or resistance to the 'dark centre' lies its acceptance. It is noteworthy that Pincher is a fake artist. His dabbling in dramatic art is no more than that of the boys' in *The Lord of the Flies* painting themselves with coloured clay -- a mere masking device for self and greed. Hence, the spiritual fumbling of Tuami, the genuine artist, however corrupt, does not come Pincher's way. In his ego-obsession he refuses to go beyond self to the Absolute. Golding's own comment about this is that:³⁹

God is the thing we turn away from into life, and therefore we hate and fear him and make a darkness there?³²

In Pincher's defiance of Grace and Benevolence, the 'darkness' in the 'Golding Novel' remains undisputed.

The next creative artist in Golding is Sammy -- ordinary, innocent and essentially insightful. But in his overdominant

• rationalism he fails to identify the 'metaphorical light' in Beatrice as the luminescence of Being and writes it off as a mere 'physical phenomenon'. Ironically, he recognizes the essence of his Being :

It is the unnamable, the unfathomable and invisible darkness that sits at the centre of him, always awake, always different from what you believe it to be, always thinking and feeling what you can never know it thinks and feels, that hopes hopelessly to understand and to be understood. [Free Fall, p. 8].

But, despite this recognition, he is unable to identify himself with it; he fails to overcome the duality of his beliefs -- incompatible and unmitigated. His darkness, therefore, remains his private bane, his torture. In Sammy's failure to trace the • bridge of acquiescence, the darkness in Golding endures.

It is Jocelin's artistic vision of faith in **The Spire** that leads him via his psychological obsession and egotistic ignorance to ultimate enlightenment. The dark gloom of guilt and grief is dispelled on Jocelin's death-bed when he recognizes the futility of his craving for God in stone and blood. In his final view of the translucence of the maimed spire lies his vision of ambivalence of Being and the Absolute.

But being a typical medieval cleric, Jocelin's history as well as his theology would give him the lie in a modern sceptical analysis. On the look-out for a more valid protagonist, Golding in **The Pyramid** picks up Oliver -- on authentic contemporary individual -- intelligent, artistic, successful, guilty and ignorant. But

- Oliver fails to perceive the reality of life because he is a bundle of contradictions. So despite his self-perception at the end he does not ask the basic questions that plague Matty in *Darkness Visible* : Who am I? What am I? What I am for?

Darkness never accosts Olly for he has not flicked open the eyes of his inner Being. He is content with the final recognition of his moral culpability -- just a step ahead of Tuami. It is Matty in *Darkness Visible* who takes this moral culpability farthest into an intense metaphysical quest into Being. But Matty is not an average man or a creative artist; he is a visionary.

Barklay in *The Paper Men* is the next creative artist who typifies the contemporary man in his pretence, ignorance, fear and elusiveness. In his context, his basic sceptical approach to life could be the darkness. It is within him, unknown to him, except for random moments of doubt or mortification that torment him. But during his long 'escape' from Rick and himself, he slowly finds his inner darkness externalized : his environment, therefore, becomes for him oppressive and claustrophobic. His refusal to take the ultimate irrational plunge into the abysmal depths of Being, his:

avoiding the centre ville, the dead centre, suddenly transforms an atmosphere with a luminescence in it into an atmosphere still darker than it had any right to be, seeing that the sun was brassy outside and most of the windows stark plain (*The Paper Men*, p. 122).

His fear of accosting the reality of Being can be also

comprehended through his acrophobia -- his acute fear of heights. Significantly, after he has had his encounter with himself he becomes capable enough to face the heights of Weiswald that had earlier given him the gitters.

Subsequently, he returns twice to the slope and braves the heights alone, to be blessed with a view of the beautiful sprawling meadow with cow-bells tingling in the distance. As against this, his cautious previous visit in the company of Rick had been aesthetically unyielding, except for his awareness of the melody of a single skein of falling water with a double voice :

There was the cheerful babble, a kind of frivolity as if the thing, the Forc, enjoyed its bounding passage downward, through space. Then running under that was a deep mediative hum as if despite the frivolity and surface prattle the thing sounded from some deep secret of the mountain itself (The Paper Men, p. 83).

But that double voice had not disclosed the intimate truth of life to him initially. Only after his terrorizing fall down the railing, Barklay recognizes :

the indifferent threat of the earth through the soles' of his feet -- 'not Gaia Mater but the space rock balanced between forces so that gravity exhibited itself with this ghastly indifference (The Paper Men, p. 89).

Below the 'penny' voice of the babble of Beauty he instinctively identifies the other dimension of this awesome reality - Terror. In this, he is very close of Sammy's view of the resurgent campsite after his 'broom-closet-ordeal' and to Jocelin's intimations of Beauty and Terror in the 'rose-coloured substance that glittered like a waterfall, an upward waterfall' [The

Spire, p. 223], through the 'panicshot darkness of his awareness'.

Thus Barklay, the contemporary creative artist, not only resolves the dual aspects of the Ultimate Reality as Jocelin had done before him; he reconciles the 'deliberately ambiguous' presentation of the elusive spiritual reality in the 'Golding Novel'. All along Golding had used darkness to metaphorize spirituality. But it had stood for different aspects of it at different stages of the 'Golding Novel'. However, the common chord that had interwoven these different aspects had been its moral concern and significance.

The absence of any moral awareness during the *experimental phase* had made the 'darkness' to be synonymous with Evil or depravity. The awareness of moral culpability with a dichotomic acceptance of twin aspects of reality in the *transitional phase* transformed darkness to an intense, individual awareness of one's own Being. In the novels of the *moral phase*, mainly *The Pyramid* just the moral culpability without spiritual awakening ensued an absence of 'darkness' but also of light. While during the *metaphysical phase* whereas an intense moral culpability, and an intense spiritual awareness engendered saintlihood -- the darkness comprehended fully but not to be communicated. As the 'visionary' Matty mentions in his journal :

it was not the spirits and it was not a vision or a dream it was an opening and again a most wonderful opening which even if it was a thing I was able to do it would not be lawful to describe [Darkness Visible, p. 237-9].

Only Barklay the creative writer is able to convey to the extent humanly possible the integrity of spirit in the ultimate analysis -- its moral significance, its individual manifestation as the Being and its cosmic pervasiveness as the Absolute. Significantly, even Barklay is thwarted in his endeavour to communicate comprehensively. Language is no longer equal to his purpose. It is an indirect admission of Golding the novelist, through his novelist-protagonist, of the limitation of language as a medium of communication of intimate experience. Matty before Barklay has already struggled with words that fall sparingly from his mouth like 'golf-balls'. Sammy, too, had conceded that :

I want to understand ... My art is not enough for me and again that To communicate is our passion and our despair (Free Fall, p. 7-8).

Despite all these natural hurdles Barklay's experience epitomizes the paradoxes of human understanding and of ultimate reality. In Barklay's experience - depravity, guilt, awareness of oneself, acceptance of the metaphysical reality and acquiescence of the undeniable unison of the self and the Absolute -- all blend to correlate the ultimate reality of life in its true ambience. Thus, he reveals what Golding had continually presented as the '*elusively ambiguous thing*' suggesting, thereby, what Tiger considers :

at one time the excessive isolation of the thing while, at other times, stressing the necessary interconnectedness of the microcosmic thing to the macrocosmic universe⁴⁰

In so doing, Barklay has in his experience reconciled the dilemma of Golding the creative artist. He has also resolved the contradiction of Golding's claim of being 'a universal passionist but a cosmic optimist' (A Moving Target, p. 201). After all, Barklay's experience concretizes within human constraints what Golding implied by the two synonyms :

Cosmos to mean ... all in all and all in all -- the totality, God and man and everything else that is in every state and level of being ... universe we know through our eyes at the telescope and microscope or open for daily use ... for what Bridges called 'Gods Orrery' (Moving Target, p. 201).

In this reconciliation lies the relevance of Barklay's experience to the 'metaphysical quest' in the 'Golding Novel'.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In concluding this discussion on the *metaphysical phase* of the 'Golding Novel', during its Social Stage, it can be substantiated that Golding is constantly re-charging his fictional potential from novel to novel. Constantly breaking new grounds in terms of plot and technique he has won the rare distinction of being a novelist whose no two novels are alike. In this, he has felicitously followed his own dictum that :

a writer's books should be as different from each other as possible. (A Moving Target, p. 198)

Nonetheless, it has to be reiterated that Golding's thematic concern has remained fundamentally unaltered despite its varied fictional embodiments. In fact, the novelist deserves credit for

his curious blend of 'belief and creativity'. In his challenging creation of a series of diverse fictional artifacts, he has consistently written about only one theme 'Of man and God' [A Moving Target, p. 192]. Nowhere is this thematic preoccupation more obvious and positive than in the novels of the *metaphysical phase*, namely, *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*.

Through these novels, the novelist has finally reconciled the dilemma of the creative artist to communicate -- 'the incommunicable' through the medium of ordinary experience and 'uninspired' language -- to an essentially sceptical readership. What is even more commendable is that Golding achieves this feat without in anyway undermining the fictional potential of these novels. It should be, therefore, interesting to analyse how Golding has surmounted the problems relating to his dilemma as a creative writer in the novels of the *metaphysical phase*.

In these novels his problem had been two-fold : to reveal the intrasingent facet of reality as distinct from the palpable reality of life and yet to conceal that he was doing so. Golding's solution to these problems has been, figuratively put, to pass through the horns of the dilemma. In both the novels, he has encoded his thematic content imaginatively in motifs of complexity and ambiguity; while he has effortlessly projected it within the identifiable parameters of contemporary time, space and experience.

In other words, while Golding concretizes his metaphysical

hunches or speculations through Matty's 'visions', or Barklay's 'metaphysical encounters' his fictional artifacts are firmly embedded 'in all the complexities of twentieth century living, all the muddle of part beliefs' [A Moving Target, p. 192]. It is not difficult to identify the strategy behind this approach adopted by the novelist during the *metaphysical phase* of the 'Golding Novel'.

Shrewdly perceiving that the contemporary reader would respond favourably to an identifiable spatio-temporal context, Golding has opted for a contemporaneous milieu in both **Darkness Visible** and **The Paper Men**. This has given the fictional experience enacted in these novels the acceptable dimension of social reality. Indirectly, this dimension of social reality immunizes the bulk of this experience from the charge of improbability.

Further, by throwing a thin shroud of ambiguity, even of obscurity, over the fictional experience Golding succeeds in safeguarding the credibility of the fictional reality and the validity of the mystifying experience of his protagonists. In fact, Golding ingeniously invests his protagonists with peculiar 'traits' to further support this inter-play of ambiguity and obscurity.

In **Darkness Visible** Matty is an 'odd' and visibly unsympathetic individual, while Barklay in **The Paper Men** is a delusion-prone, drunkard and 'clown'. These characteristics justify the out-of-the-ordinary-rung behaviour of the two protagonists. Moreover, this gives the novelist enough leverage to infuse within the narrative

structure certain events and experiences that can function in an ambivalent manner without prejudice to of these novels and without marginalizing their mystical ambience.

To bolster this operation of ambiguity and obscurity in the guise of the protagonists' 'oddity', Golding has endowed them with a physical deformity that accentuates their 'oddity'. In Matty's case, his half-burnt condition very naturally impairs his speech mechanism and so justifies his minimal use of the spoken word. In the case of Barklay, his 'estrook' convincingly sets aside his erstwhile facility with language natural to a creative writer. Thus, if Matty's physical 'agony' precludes elaborate speech, Barklay's psychological 'trauma' leaves in its wake the futility of words and language.

It can be seen that the novelist's strategy has been to minimise the use of spoken language as a vehicle of their experience by the two protagonists. This diminishes the possibility of any elaborate and subjective reference to their mysterious experience. Thereby, the novelist has to rely only on the use of indirect devices which cause incoherence and incomprehension resulting in the emergence of ambiguity. A close reading of the two novels reveals that ambiguity has a positive function in their narratives; it cloaks the mysterious status of Matty as a visionary in *Darkness Visible* and protects the validity of Barklay's experience without eroding it of its mystique.

An element of co-incidence is also used by the novelist to authenticate 'the mysterious' and to justify the incomprehensible. This device functions in two ways : it facilitates the acceptability of the palpable experience in a sceptical reader by offering a rational explanation to an event; while for the more 'perceptive' and believing reader it offers the means to 'see through' the façade of obscurity into the 'metaphysical reality'.

This 'dual-perception' offered by co-incidence can be illustrated by referring to each of the novels. In *Darkness Visible* co-incidence encircles the issue of Henderson's death since Matty's gym-shoe is discovered under his dead body. If the reader so desires, the discovery of the shoe can be viewed as a chance-occurrence. But if he is perceptive enough, he can relate the shoe to an ancient 'Biblical curse' through Matty's incoherent reference to 'casting' of his shoe and the headmaster's allusion to 'Edom'.

Similarly, in *The Paper Men* co-incidence enshrouds the central event in the novel -- Barklay's collapse in the claustrophobic Cathedral on the quake-ridden Sicilian island. Here, co-incidence functions as 'the basis for a whole series of events. Depending upon what credibility is given by the reader to this intimate experience, it becomes alternately an intense 'metaphysical encounter' or the fantasy of a delusion-prone victim of a 'stroke'.

However, it need not be concluded on the basis of Golding's use of co-incidence that he leaves these metaphysical experiences open

to vagueness or ambiguity. His technique of clinching the intransigent reality despite ambiguity surrounding it is admirable. Here, his use of narrative devices and multiple point of view becomes significant. Curiously enough these two devices complement each other.

In order to offer the primary account of his protagonists' experiences, Golding devises the use of the protagonists as narrator. In *Darkness Visible* Matty's journal gives an elaborate account of Matty's visions; his relation to other characters such as Sophy, Goodchild, Edwin Bell, Pedigree and others; his belief in his own experiences and his destined role as the saviour of the child. Barklay in *The Paper Men* has a further liberty in deliberating on his own 'metaphysical' experience, being the sole narrator in his autobiographical endeavour.

To weed out the element of subjectivity and 'eccentricity' that overcasts these narratives, the novelist has made use of multiple points of view that testify to the veracity of these narratives through corroboration or complement.

In *Darkness Visible* the State Secretary confirms the reader's hunch about Matty's mysterious capacity; Sophy complements Matty's apprehension about her through her own actions; Sim and Edwin validate Matty's claims about a likely séance through their discussion; they authenticate his paranormal capacity through their reaction to the earlier séance; the video-recording confirms the

conduct of this séance and their unconscious faith in Matty's extraordinary prowess; Pedigree's dying vision re-establishes Matty's visionary status.

The Paper Men also uses multiple points of view through Barklay. Interestingly, they neither corroborate nor complement his experience, rather they function through indirection and misjudgement to confirm Barklay's moral evolution after his metaphysical experience. Liz confirms the growth of Barklay's moral status through her own rigid, self-righteous and uncompromising approach to him on his return; the priest through his uncharitable remarks about the 'three crosses' reveals the advent of humility in Barklay after his experience in the Cathedral; Rick through his unrelenting ambition and subsequent degradation reveals the sea change in Barklay's moral condition as a result of his 'encounter' in the Cathedral. In brief, these characters act as many-sided moral probes that give evidence of Barklay's transition from depravity to moral goodness through their failure to gauge the range of this change in him.

In fine, Golding's novels of the *metaphysical phase* testify to his exquisite balance of technical intricacy with thematic density. In fact, the significance of these novels lies mainly in their semantic potential. Between them, the two novels finally clinch the elusive issue of human existence in terms of its ordinary complexity and extra-ordinary mystery. Whether it is Matty in *Darkness Visible*

or Barklay in *The Paper Men*, they come to a fundamental understanding of self in relation to the Absolute. Moreover, their self-perception is entirely within the context of their mundane existence. Despite this, each of them is able to achieve a 'metaphysical goal'. In Matty's case, he attains what he believes to be his self-realization through the atonement of his guilt; in Barklay's case, he is able to perform what he calls his 'rites of passage' before he proceeds on his ultimate 'journey'.

It is interesting to re-view, in brief, how the two protagonists proceed in the direction of their respective 'metaphysical' objectives. For Matty, the realization of his guilt early in life serves as a basis for his insight into his 'fallen' condition and the need for atonement. This encourages him to a life of ascetic simplicity and continual sacrifice intended as an 'offering' towards the atonement of his sin. Through the rigour and the simplicity of his living, he achieves self-realization through an intimate and mysterious acquaintance with the ultimate reality.

It is noteworthy that his sincerity and piety is genuine, whatever his spiritual practice. As a result of this, he is spiritually evolved despite the stigma of his initial moral 'crime'. He becomes instrumental in defeating the forces of evil by saving a child as per the 'prophecy' of the spirits who 'visit' him. In his final consumption in fire he 'heals' his scarred spiritual face and attains the sanctifying status of a prophet proclaiming the advent

of a Messiah through his journal.

In the case of Wilfred Barklay, his experience works the other way around. Unlike Matty, he refuses to acknowledge his depravity and continually runs from the actuality of his life. He is never likely to admit his guilt until an essentially '*metaphysical encounter*' batters him into self-recognition in the form of a massive '*stroke*'. This physically debilitating but spiritually enervating experience compels him to accept the Absolute he had always known and feared. This acceptance opens the flood-gates of his guilt. All the issues of his criminal past come back to taunt him. The torment of guilt generates in him the awareness of moral bankruptcy and spiritual longing teaching him to accept life on its own terms. He realizes the need for atonement and performs his '*rites of passage*' in the form of a candid, self-effacing and all-revealing biography. This gesture becomes emblematic of his humility and surrender to the ultimate reality of life.

The relevance of the semantic content of the novels of the *metaphysical phase* to the entire Golding Corpus can hardly be exaggerated. Together, the two novels have empowered, even inspired, the novelist to reveal an intimation of the mystery of life that has always lurked beneath his concern with humankind.

What is even more significant is that this intimation of the mystery has embossed a positive sign of hope on Golding's vision of life. In their optimistic assent of '*isness*', the novels of the

metaphysical phase have avenged the charge of pessimism made against Golding. The novelist has asserted his belief in Man and God • most emphatically in *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* -- without compromising his basic pre-occupation with human depravity.

Human depravity is central to his vision of Man's spiritual and moral evolution. Both the novels testify to this fact. In *Darkness Visible* the steep climb towards spiritual elevation for Matty begins in the recognition of depravity and it ends with his unequal endeavour to atone for his guilt. In *The Paper Men* the sudden overpowering spiritual insight leads to Barklay's recognition of his own depravity. Judging from merely 'human' point of view Matty's guilt extorts a disproportionately high physical and metaphysical atonement from him. On the other hand, Barklay is blessed with a metaphysical vision at a comparatively less intense moral or physical strife.

But keeping the limitation of human judgement in mind, one should attempt to see the two experiences in their larger context. In Matty's case, his destined role in life is more august and hence his tribulations in life are proportionately more demanding and severe, even exceptional. Curiously enough, they are capably taken on by Matty. He endures through his 'fiery' emergence in the novel with a determination and calm almost extra-human. His weird passage, submerged underwater with a wick-lamp held aloft in the hand, across the foetid stagnant pool in Australia is self-

engineered. It is a sort of spiritual baptism that prepares him for his final '*consummation*' in the explosion at Wandicott School.

Barklay's achievement is spiritually less glamorous and in range more individual than Matty's. Barklay has self-perception but it can save only himself -- not Liz, not Emmy not even Rick Tucker -- despite the best of his intentions. Matty, on the other hand, '*saves*' himself at a very high cost indeed; but he is able to '*heal*' Pedigree before he dies; he is able to '*touch*' Edwin and even the sceptical Sim '*spiritually*'; he averts a serious catastrophe; he inadvertently foils the evil design of Sophy; he saves a child who will presumably bring spiritual language into the world; and above all he attains an elevated position among the '*elders*' who visit him during his '*visions*'.

But despite this fundamental difference in the nature of the '*metaphysical experiences*' of the two protagonists, their utility lies in the clue they offer to Golding's novelistic vision. In essence it can be described as '*Christian*'. This is particularly so to the extent of the novelist's basic belief in '*fall*'. It can be seen as such in his concept of God, depicted by the spiritual reality and the religious practice that Matty's life unfolds. However, in his focus on the individual's strife for self-evolution, in the absence of any '*Saviour*', Golding's vision can be viewed as more universal than Christian.

Ultimately it is extremely difficult to nail down a writer's

vision of life, just as it is impossible to break through the codes of his mysterious intimations. In Golding's case, this is particularly so because he has claimed :

the privilege of the story-teller; which is to be mystifying, inconsistent, impenetrable and anything else he pleases provided he fulfills the prime clause in his unwritten contract and keeps the attention of his audience (A Moving Target p. 202).

This Golding has certainly done! So, just as the 'Golding Novel' steps into the *final phase* of its development with A Sea Trilogy, one's case for the novelist's vision has to temporarily rest on the modest assertion of Golding's hope for Man and belief in God.

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CHAPTER SIX

6(A) THE FINAL PHASE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The final work to be taken up in this study of the 'Golding Novel' is, incidentally, also the most ambitious project of the novelist. The three constituent novels of *A Sea Trilogy* (1991), namely *Rites of Passage* (1981), *Close Quarters* (1988) and *Fire Down Below* (1989), show not only the duration but the sheer extent of artistic labour that has gone into the creation of this grand fictional work.

In this challenging trilogy Golding appears to have re-invested all his formidable fictional devices while experimenting with a few innovative structural and narrative ploys to create a vigorous and significant artifact. As an extremely diverse work of fiction in terms of character, structure as well as theme this trilogy deserves to be considered a paradigm of the 'Golding Novel'. As such this feature of *A Sea Trilogy* needs to be elucidated.

The plot of this trilogy invites close scrutiny for its affinity with the earlier 'Golding' plots as well as for its bold innovativeness. As a natural consequence of this feather-touch balance between the habitual 'Golding-approach' to fiction and the ingenious departures of theme and technique, this trilogy captures Golding's vision at its most mellow. In fact, Golding's very choice of theme and protagonist in *A Sea Trilogy* is symbolic of his vision

of life. Malcolm Bradbury aptly describes the trilogy as :
probably his most optimistic and also his finest work, a careful questing towards utopia
whose deceptive horizons unfold one after another',¹

The subsequent discussion will duly reveal the optimism and the efficacy of this quest.

6.2.1 THE PLOT OF A SEA TRILOGY

Rites of Passage, the first novel of the trilogy, opens on a shipfull of passengers, naval crew, civilians and immigrants, on its way to Australia. Edmund Talbot, young and ambitious, is also on his way to the antipodes. Infused with high expectations, consistent with his exaggerated self-assurance and social status, he begins his voyage with a pas-faux. On a social visit to the surly and ill-tempered Captain Anderson, at a particularly inopportune moment, he is almost re-buffed. Cashing on the mention of his godfather by pandering his hopeful connection in the Australian administration in time to come, he is barely able to save his own dignity and undermine that of the high-strung captain.

Anderson, an absolutely authoritarian captain, does not take this forced compromise of his unquestioned supremacy over the shipmates lightly. He makes the humble, unsuspecting Parson Colley the object of his own ire.

On account of Anderson's arrogant '*disavowal of all clergy*' and his particularly '*crushing*' stance towards the helpless parson,

Colley is put through a victimization that makes him a miserable laughing stock throughout the ship.

In the meantime Talbot, having established his supercilious position on board, ventures into a flirtatious affair with the rather vampish and easily 'available' Miss Brocklebank. During the course of this crude 'amorous' interlude followed by an instant abhorrence of her, Edmund Talbot is more or less cut off from the affairs of the ship, mainly those of Colley. A long spree of foul weather attended by sea-sickness further distances Talbot from the ship's affairs and strengthens his prejudice about Colley.

As the ship nears the equatorial line all kinds of superstitions take hold of the fear-ridden psyche of the passengers, particularly 'the jolly tars and other inferior sort of passengers the emigrants and so forth' [Rites of Passage p. 188]. The high seas, with 'their power of isolating a man from his fellows', reduce the tiny ship-board world into a peril-conscious society in which the need to exorcise fear looms large. As such, with the tacit approval of the Captain, parson Colley is duly picked up during equinox as the natural victim to play the role of the comic fool.

Inebriated and frenzied, the shipmates put the parson through an extremely degrading exercise construed by the 'snarling, lustful, storming appetite' [Rites of Passage p. 238] of 'any but the most depraved of souls' [Rites of Passage p. 257]. As an off-shoot of his humiliation, poor Colley becomes the unfortunate prey of his own

weakness when he returns to protest against the impropriety of action addressed to himself. Forced to consume strong drink, to which he is unaccustomed, Colley is put through wantonly behaviour, probably culminating in '*fellatio that the poor fool was to die of*' [Rites of Passage p. 277]. Colley's death shatters Talbot's self-righteous aloofness and impels him to seek redressal from the Captain.

Talbot's '*arch mention*' of his journal intimidates the Captain into organizing an '*eye-wash inquiry*'. But nothing of substance is revealed to the inquiry committee of which Talbot is also a member. It is generally understood that intemperance in drinking combined with impropriety of social behaviour has driven the parson to will himself to death in sheer mortification. Talbot holds himself responsible for not living up to the poor clergyman's expectations of patronage and gentlemanly behaviour.

In the meantime, Talbot's well-informed attendant Wheeler disappears in mysterious circumstances. He is suspected to have '*fallen*' overboard. His disappearance assumes particular significance in the light of Captain Anderson's remark : '*that man must have ears and eyes all over him*' [Rites of Passage, p. 258]. As if to dispel this gloomy atmosphere Mr. Prettiman and Miss Granham declare their engagement and a certain Mrs. Roustabout gives birth to a baby girl. All this gradually helps Talbot to overcome his despondence and involve himself more and more deeply with the

matters of the ship as time passes on.

In *Close Quarters*, the second novel of *A Sea Trilogy*, he comes in more intimate contact with the life on the ship that lies beyond the range of his smug self-righteousness. This closer acquaintance with life begins with his desire to get an insight into his companions on board with a view to making them the subject of his unrestricted second journal 'to occupy himself in a voyage from the top of the world to the bottom' [*Close Quarters*, p. 4]. But before he has time to select the subject of his observation the ship is thrown into an emergency thanks to the irresponsible Deverel.

Deverel -- instrumental in the humiliation and subsequent death of Colley and overwrought with fear and guilt -- exceeds his already excessive affinity both to drink and neglect of duty. On this occasion, he leaves 'the half-witted Willis in charge of the ship' [*Close Quarters*, p. 25] and the ship having 'taken aback' is nearly capsized losing her top-mast in the bargain. Talbot acts most gallantly to help regain the control of the ship and has a serious concussion on his head. Lieutenant Deverel is severely reprimanded by the Captain for neglect of duty. Deverel does not take this show-down lightly and vows to avenge it.

In the meantime, another ship is sighted in the distance and a sudden hysteria strikes the ship-mates. Their dormant apprehension of an attack from the French now surfaces into a frenzied demonstration of nervous panic and valour by turns. During one of

the rehearsals for self-defense conducted on the gundeck, Talbot renews the injury he had sustained while heroically assisting, to regulate the course of the ship. What had been a concussion then, now becomes a wound and adds some colour to the preparations for battle that are presently afoot.

However, the ship-mates are soon relieved to know that the ship sighted was 'Alcyone', a war frigate of the Royal Navy on its way to India. They also learn of the happy tidings that Napoleon has been defeated and the war with the French has ended. Naturally, this mid-ocean encounter of the two ships offers some opportunity for celebration and merriment to the people and entails an amorous entanglement for Talbot. A ball is duly organized on board and Talbot has an opportunity of furthering his acquaintance with Miss Chumley whom he had met earlier in the day during a dinner on board 'Alcyone'. She is the 'protégé' of Lady Somerset, the wife of the Captain of Alcyone.

Brief, though it is, this acquaintance intensifies into fervent feelings of love in Talbot. Already weak from his head injury and loss of blood, and delirious with fever, Talbot overwrought with love begs to be permitted to sail to India, along with Miss Chumley. However, he is firmly dissuaded from such a reckless design and confined to his cabin as a result of his delicate condition while 'Alcyone' sets sail to India.

The convalescing Talbot discovers, to his great surprise, an

officer from 'Alcyone', Lieutenant Benét, on board in exchange for Lieutenant Deverel who had got himself in hot water. Placed under open arrest and prohibited drink, Deverel had nonetheless accosted the captain on the night of the ball. To avoid the unpleasantness of a courtmartial and a threat to both their careers, the captain had shrewdly packed him off to 'Alcyone' on the advice of Sir Somerset, the captain of 'Alcyone'. Thereby the captain had rid himself of a drunken, unruly element and his counterpart of a suspected paramour of his wife.

Talbot also makes the shocking discovery that Wheeler who had 'fallen' overboard has been picked up by 'Alcyone' and restored to his original ship. Before he has time to digest these unexpected happenings Talbot finds a clash of personalities afoot over the conduct of the ship's course and her condition. The enthusiastic Benét, convinces the captain to take up careening operation to clear the weed off the hull with the help of a dragrope, so as to accelerate the progress of the ship. This is in contradiction to the advice of first Lieutenant Charles Summers who considers such an operation too risky for the old hulk to brace mid-ocean. In fact, Summers suggests 'frapping' in order to secure the rickety ship against the disintegration of its planking enroute.

The message, in short, is loud and clear the ship may give way any time, with or without the elaborate endeavours of the officers to safeguard her. An absolutely unnerved society on board watches in

helpless silence as different marine operations are alternately conducted; they digest news after news of the further deterioration in ship's condition as well as in her apparatus. A spirit of despondency and fatalistic acceptance hits the in-mates of the ship. Wheeler, already through a horrifying drowning experience once, and convinced that his life on board is in 'peril', looks up to Talbot for protection. But when the latter fails him, he turns quietly to death. Taking Mr. Brocklebank's blunderbuss, he shoots his own head off right in front of Talbot's eyes.

This gruesome death is a fresh reminder to Talbot of his own indifference to others and his reluctance to help others in spite of his noble claims to the contrary. Perhaps due to this realization of his own limitations, Talbot becomes more perceptive in his approach to his shipmates. The finer aspects of others' nature become obvious to him. Much as he dislikes Lieutenant Benét for being too perfect, Talbot recognizes the latter's competence in marine affairs and above all Benét's exceptionally amicable relation with the Captain. Gradually Talbot becomes more considerate and understanding even to his socially-inferior fellow passengers and naval crew.

In fact, at the beginning of **Fire Down Below** Talbot arranges through the good offices of Benét to have the half-witted, comatose midshipman Willis rescued from death. In a rare exercise of tact Talbot successfully saves the boy, 'condemned to spend alternate

APPENDIX

1. William Golding : 1985 : William Golding's Pincher Martin and The Sea.
Journal of Shivaji University,
Kolhapur. Vol. XXIII. P-5To9.
2. William Golding : 1993 : Golding's Ralph : 'A Flickering hope for humanity',
Journal of Shivaji University,
Kolhapur.
3. William Golding : 'William Golding's The Spire', (in Marathi)
Published: Maharashtra Sahitya Patrika,
Pune, Oct. To Dec. 1993 P 126-129.
4. William Golding : 'William Golding's Inheritor' (in Marathi)
Accepted ; Maharashtra Sahitya Patrika,
Pune.
5. William Golding : 'William Golding and The Sea', (in Marathi)
Accepted ; Maharashtra Sahitya Patrika,
Pune.
6. Somerset Maugham's Julia and R. K. Narayan's Rosie :
A comparative study of Characters;
(in Marathi) sent to Sahitya Patrika,
Pune.
(in English) sent to Literary Criterion,
Bangalore.
7. William Golding : Jocelin ; 'A Sinner Saint', (in English)
sent to Journal of Literary Criticism,
Allahabad. 1993.

watches astride the top-mast by the captain as a punishment for his erstwhile incompetence. Significantly, Talbot is able to help the poor oaf without getting into any altercation with the surly captain. This shows a marked development in Talbot's approach to others.

In the meantime, trouble still brewing on the ship intensifies into an open conflict between first Lieutenant Charles Summers and the ever-enthusiastic Lieutenant Benét over the issue of repairing the *'wooden shoe'* of the top-mast. Benét successfully convinces the captain through a *'model'* demonstration that red-hot iron can be used to secure the mast in position. However, Summers, the *'mildest of men'* is dead against this risky measure for it may turn out to be too dangerous. *'Any mistake and the foot of the mast may slip and go through the ship's bottom'* [Fire Down Below, p. 22]. The situation comes to such a pass that even Summers expects that he *'may go so far as to make a formal protest at the appropriate time'* [Fire Down Below, p. 23].

However, despite this note of dissent and other practical difficulties such as availability of charcoal, the Captain sanctions the conduct of the operation to repair the keelson. The news inevitably spreads across the ship and further deteriorates the atmosphere already vitiated by foul weather, unpredictable currents and the *'despairing crew'*. This activates the latent animosity and irritation amongst the ship-mates by encouraging a brusqueness of

manner and sparks of temper. Alternately though, the haplessness of their condition helps to erode earlier biases and resentments thereby fostering a new sense of intimacy and willingness to understand.

As a result of this paradoxical situations Talbot has an opportunity to get acquainted afresh with the apparently eccentric Mr. Prettiman and his stern wife -- the former Miss Granham. But his relationship with the sunny Benét deteriorates in spite of all his tact to cultivate the man as a necessary source of first-hand information about '*Alcyone*' and her inmates, particularly Miss Marion Chumley. In fact, their mutual dislike and rivalry leads to an altercation in Mr. Prettiman's cabin causing his fractured leg unbearable injury. This creates a scene in which Mrs. Prettiman denudes Talbot, in no uncertain terms, of all his self-assurance, '*even perhaps the bravado of carelessness*' and reduces him to an object '*crushed by humiliation and grief*' [Fire Down Below p. 151] for whom even the sympathy of the butler Bates is too great a solace.

Even as Talbot is nursing his wounds, the ship is thrown into a terrible tempest that tests at once the grit of the crew and the capacity of the now-repaired shoe of the mast to withstand this nightmarish experience. Soon, calmer weather is restored and the ship makes good progress. This ensues for Talbot an intimate relationship with the Prettiman's and a period of cherished

enlightenment. To his great surprise Talbot discovers that he has simply discarded his upbringing 'as a man might let armour drop around him and stand naked, defenseless, but free' (Fire Down Below p. 205).

But Talbot is not permitted to relish his new-found freedom for long. Even before he has time to ruminate on the peculiar circumstances in which he finds himself, they sight ice. This entails an extremely perilous struggle with the elemental powers -- an unpredictable range of icebergs, deceptive current and an unfathomable sea. Finally the current, tossing the ship like a toy, subsides and in an incredulous series of events the ship makes headway towards the shore at Sydney Cove.

As the passengers go their different ways, Talbot embarks upon his prospective career as fourth secretary to the Governor at the residency house. He is able to obtain for Charles that long-promised promotion to captaincy through the good offices of Captain Phillip, the Governor's deputy. But the circumstances that operate in the achievement of this promotion rob Talbot of all satisfaction of keeping up a promise. What is particularly deflating to him is that both Anderson and Benét have pressed Charles' claims rather than hindering them.

Ironically, this turns out to be a temporary elevation to captaincy for Charles, involving the charge of a superannuated, permanently moored old hulk. In another stroke of irony the

harboured ship catches fire due to the red-hot iron, still smoldering in the wooden shoe of the top-mast, just as Charles had warned and feared. He perishes in the conflagration despite Talbot's heroic attempt to risk his own life to save him. As if to fill Talbot's cup of misery to the brim, news of his god-father's death comes from home and his whole future lies crumpled at his feet.

However, inimitable fate intervenes once again to provide an out-of-the-blue happy outcome to Talbot's voyage. Thanks to Napoleon's escape from Elba and the resumption of war, Admiralty dispatches '*Alcyone*' from India to the antipodes. Talbot is unexpectedly with Marion Chumly once again and is happy to discover that his passionate love is reciprocated. Fortune favours him again by elevating him to the Parliament through his god-father's '*rotten borough*' and neutralises the uncertainty that had cloaked his prospective marriage to Marion. As the journal ends the post-script of a self complacent middle-aged Talbot written for posterity puts the final seal of authenticity on his happiness during his erstwhile life at home.

6.2.2 THE STRUCTURE

Constituted around some sort of a journal maintained by Edmund Talbot, *A Sea Trilogy* has an intricate structural pattern at once contemporary and modern. Although it is manifestly the account of

an adventurous expedition of a ship-load of passengers to an unknown continent undertaken during the last century, the narrative is insightful and interesting even to a contemporary reader. It is innovatively endowed with novelistic devices that ensure an aesthetically satisfying fictional experience. Infused with an ingenious, often subtle, technique *A Sea Trilogy* displays a powerful combination of narrative, structural and perspectival strategies so far unattempted on such a wide-ranging canvas by the novelist. In view of this challenging endeavour, the analysis of the structure of this trilogy becomes significant.

A Sea Trilogy comprises of an unsystematic journal fitfully written by Edmund Talbot during his long voyage to the antipodes. In the three constituent novels of the trilogy, this journal is the ostensible narrative source for the reader, but in each of the three novels Talbot's journal has a different objective and performs a distinct function. This helps to interlock the narrative structure of *A Sea Trilogy* and give a coherence to its extensively wide account of events, individuals and experiences. 'Edmund Talbot's journal', to use Crompton's words, 'though by no means a document to be taken at face value, offers its reader ... an untypical sea story ...'.² A novel-wise discussion of its structure will reveal this fact.

In the first novel of the trilogy, *Rites of Passage*, the journal is maintained by Talbot to humour his patron. He confesses

• having undertaken it at the behest of his 'Honoured god-father', apparently an highly influential aristocrat, to keep him informed as well as entertained by contriving to 'conceal nothing' (*Rites of Passage*, p 11. Only in *Fire Down Below* Talbot understands the 'implications' of this all-revealing account : it is a 'tacit hint' he has been given to keep a tag on the social reformer Mr. Prettiman who is obviously an undesirable element for the Home Government. But Talbot's raw and inexperienced enthusiasm fails to perceive this subtle motive. His journal is, therefore, an inadvertently all-revealing account of himself and his own egotistic, supercilious attitude to others.

• However, there is another narrative within this journal that indirectly re-focusses the whole series of preceding events so humorously and sarcastically noted by Talbot. This second narrative functions as an ironical reversal of Talbot's ignorant and confident observation. This narrative suddenly comes upon Talbot and the reader as a chance-discovery of a confidential letter written by the soon-to-die Parson Colley to his sister back home. This epistolary communiqué becomes a vital, intimate constituent of the novel's structure.

There is yet a third narrative source concealed in *Rites of Passage* : it is the drunken, intimidated, partially confessional account of Lt. Deverel's shameful participation in the dehumanizing ordeal of the Parson during equinox; it is also an indictment and a

revelatory source of information on the Captain's abnormal dislike of all clergy and his sadistic, silent approval of the harmless Parson's public humiliation.

Of these three versions within the narrative, Talbot's account more or less faithfully notes the shipboard developments in their chronological sequence. The other two narratives effectively operate time-shifts and become instrumental in offering renewed perspective of the same events, situations and individuals to Talbot as well as to the reader. Of these two accounts, Deverel's is important to the extent that it refers to circumstances outside the life on board and yet vital to the understanding of them. Its telescopic revelation is just as necessary to Talbot's painfully dawning self-perception as is Colley's letter with its temporal shifts to events on board that Talbot has either skipped or missed entirely or even mis-read.

In their combined impact these two narratives, within Talbot's overall narrative account, are instrumental in giving Talbot the qualms of conscience so essential to his moral development witnessed through *Close Quarters* and *Fire Down Below*. The real significance of Colley's letter and Deverel's drink-induced confession lies in their insightful operation by the novelist. Both occur in a totally unrelated manner and at an entirely unexpected moment in the novel. Coming from diametrically opposite personalities, they become reliable sources of information and corroboration for opposite reasons. In Colley's case it is his intimate pouring of heart to

his sister that authenticates his account; in Devereil's case it is his fear and guilt that eject his suppressed thoughts in the form of a confession brought on by intoxication.

However, Colley's letter deserves a special mention due to its versatile narrative role. In its humble, confessional and forgiving tone, the letter approximates to Talbot's as well as reader's moral sounding board. The unnatural circumstances in which this letter is written makes it the most strategic and multi-functional motif of Golding's fictional design in *Rites of Passage*.

The letter of Parson Colley necessarily reflects not only the character of its composer but also that of Talbot. Thereby, its perusal activates a process of re-analysis in the reader and that of self-perception in the egotistically narrow-minded Talbot. Through its humble affirmation of faith in God and a humane understanding of mankind, Colley's epistolary account authentically but inadvertently overturns the self-righteous, biased and hence inaccurate version of Talbot's journal. Colley's letter is, however, not so much of an indictment of Talbot's view by Colley, as it is the cause for the generation of self-indictment in the supercilious Talbot. In fact, the letter is an innocent re-statement of Lt. Charles Summers' unceremonious summing up of Talbot's privileged self-righteousness. In thus complementing Lt. Summers' point of view, it unintentionally but authoritatively reverts Talbot's ignorant and opinionated view of persons and situation.

But over and above this, the letter has a vital function in the novel : it protects the novelist's essentially impersonal narrative role without jeopardizing the fictional calibre of the novel. No doubt, the novelist enjoys considerable narrative freedom -- through the protagonist's journal -- to make in-roads, into what he calls, the '*the reader's instinctive complicity*' (A Moving Target, p. 194). But the fictional integrity of his work depends upon an objective analysis of events, individuals and motives. Only alternate points of view can make this possible. Colley's letter helps the novelist to inform, shock, correct and fore-warn his reader, without bias to his authorial impersonality and freedom.

In fine, Golding's technique in this novel has been to exploit what Malcolm Bradbury describes in another context, as '*the strategy of ambiguous revelation*' by putting up '*a substitute author-figure who is both powerful and deceptive*'³. If Talbot's narrative gives a lie to this description Colley's letter confirms it.

Together, the two narratives form the basis for the narrative structure of *Close Quarters*. In this second novel of A Sea Trilogy, Talbot's revised view of his own actions and thoughts as also his guilt-induced intention of objective analysis springs from his partial moral insight over his erstwhile moral blindness.

The letter of the parson is not only instrumental in giving Talbot a more sympathetic view of events and persons, it is also a lesson in self-perception and a keener observation of the entire

situation on board the ship. This insightful reevaluation burgeoning in Talbot becomes the structural basis for the next novel of the trilogy, *Close Quarters*.

Incredulously enough, Talbot in his new-found sympathy and perceptive analysis decides to make his journal in *Close Quarters* a spontaneous account independent of his Godfather's wishes or indulgence. In so doing, he returns to an analysis of the ship-board life and circumstances with an hitherto unexercised objectivity. Thus, his next journal-account brings him in '*close quarters*' with the reality of life : this helps him to revise his earlier top-sided opinions favourable to the aristocracy and patronizing to the gentry. Now, every single event that concerns the destiny of the ship and its inmates is seen objectively by him. Some of these are : the loss of the top-mast; the preparations for an expected battle with the French; the sighting of *Alcyone*; the social intercourse between the two ships and its repercussions.

Interestingly, the structure of *Close Quarters* depends entirely on Talbot's revised attitude and his empirical account of the important events that occur as a result of the sighting of *Alcyone*. The narrative structure is erected around these important events : Talbot's head injury during the top-mast-emergency; his formal visit with the Captain to *Alcyone*; his falling in love with Miss Chumley; the evening-entertainment organized on board Talbot's ship; the return of Wheeler, believed to have been drowned; the mutual

exchange of their Lieutenants, Deverel and Benét, by the Captains of the two ships and the suicide of Wheeler in Talbot's presence.

In fact, Wheeler's helpless suicide and Talbot's visit to the bowels of the ship after his delirium are the two major structural devices -- other than his acquaintance with Miss Chumley -- that reveal his 'self' to Talbot. If the first event shakes him into the recognition of the crass indifference he has shown to the man, the second cuts him down to size from his self-elevated 'Lordship'. His visit to 'Alcyone' and the ball on board his own ship foreground the untapped emotional potential in Talbot. They reveal not only Talbot's delicacy of love and his refinement of nature but also his boisterous enthusiasm aggravated by his delirium.

These events release an even greater flood of humane feeling and consideration, than before, in Talbot, making his account more reliable, insightful and candid. In his tormenting love for Miss Chumley and his traumatic memory of Wheeler's death Talbot is mellowed, subdued and humbled by life. The sparks of love and grief make him warm-up towards his ship-mates. Yet, the need to further stoke down the fire of egotistic over-confidence in him is still there.

It is this need that becomes the basis for the structure of the narrative in the final novel of the trilogy, *Fire Down Below*. In a new-born desire for love and affection Talbot's human interaction attains the additional dimension of sympathy and understanding.

This gives him an entirely new perspective on life. His earlier prejudicial dislike for individuals like Mrs. Prettiman, or Captain Anderson is slowly replaced by a gradual acceptance even a grudging admiration for them. While his exuberant admiration for his friend, Lt. Summers' now puts him in a quandary due to the latter's rigid conventionality and resistance to change, Talbot's erstwhile scorn for Mr. Prettiman is now replaced by a genuine devotion to him as a free-thinker and social reformer.

This also helps us to recognize the alteration, good as well as bad, that has developed in them as a result of this long voyage. Thus, the rigidity of Charles Summer's nature throws the reliability associated with his point of view into doubt; on the other hand, Talbot's pruned ego and increasing humility makes for better sense and greater reliability. Similarly, despite his foul temper and vicious bias against the clergy, Captain Anderson surprises by his steady and bold character, so as to render the neglect of his point of view incorrect. The independent minded Mrs. Prettiman and the rational humanist Mr. Prettiman also compel a re-assessment of their points of view in the changing context. Thus they substantially contribute to the structural cohesion of this work.

But the structure of **Fire Down Below** mainly circles around Talbot's dawning sense of moral propriety, his struggle with conventional beliefs and his final emergence as a free-thinker. Thus, his interaction with the Prettimans, with Lts. Summers and

Benét and his various adventures during the final leg of the voyage become central to the narrative structure of the novel. The narrative culminates with the arrival of the ship at Sidney Cove.

Here a whole conglomeration of events overwhelm the unsuspecting Talbot with an unexpected frequency enough to throw him into the pit of despair and grief until fate finally smiles on him. Some of these events are : the news of the death of his god-father, the tragic death of Summers despite Talbot's heroic attempt to save him at the cost of his own life and the unexpected arrival of Alcyone to the antipodes leading to the final resolution of Talbot's personal problems through a sudden favourable reversal of events. This naturally draws attention to the thematic potential of *A Sea Trilogy* in order to unravel the significance of the structural features of this work.

6.2.3. THE THEMATIC POTENTIAL OF *A SEA TRILOGY*

In discussing the thematic potential of *A Sea Trilogy*, a striking feature needs to be elucidated : the trilogy reflects the overall pattern of thematic motifs underlying Golding's fiction. In fact, this resemblance of theme goes back to Golding's early poems. Critics such as Virginia Tiger and Arnold Johnston⁴ have referred to this thematic recurrence in Golding's fiction from his early poetry. In his insightful article, '*The Novels Foreshadowed : Some recurring Themes in Early Poems by William Golding*' Cecil W. Davies has noted

that some of Golding's poems are '*strangely prophetic of the singleness and isolation of Golding's mature work*'⁵. Commenting on the thematic motifs in Golding's poetry and their recurrence in Golding's mature fictional work, Davies has also identified some favourite image-patterns of the novelist such as sea and rock, the uninhabited island and so on.

Using this critical insight as the basis, it is worthwhile to analyse *A Sea Trilogy* so as to discern the relevance of its thematic potential to Golding's erstwhile thematic focus. To facilitate such an analysis, it is useful to briefly re-view the phase-wise thematic development evident in the '*Golding Novel*' during its two major stages -- the Initial Stage and the Social Stage.

During the Initial Stage, the '*Golding Novel*' reveals two prominent thematic stands : the concern with survival and the issue of fall. In the novels of the *experimental phase*, the theme of '*survival*' is predominant while the '*fall*' motif subtly underscores it. The issue of the physical survival of the boys in *Lord of the Flies* is confounded by their '*fall*' into a bestial condition; *The Inheritors* focusses on the threat to the '*survival*' of the Neanderthals due to the '*fallen*' condition of the Homo Sapiens; in *Pincher Martin*, the twin issues of '*survival*' and '*fall*' are so intimately bound that the novel becomes a veritable question mark aimed at the contemporary man's fast-eroding sense of the numinous and his existentialist quandary.

Free Fall and The Spire, the two novels of the *transitional phase* of the Initial Stage, emphasize the awesome '*complicity*' of *human will*' in Man's fall, making his physical survival traumatic and his metaphysical salvation obscure. Taking a cue from Pincher Martin, Free Fall also throws the conflict between the rationalism and spirituality into focus through the protagonist's split-loyalty to the physical and the metaphysical reality. The Spire resolves this conflict through an unconditional acceptance of human depravity and an acquiescence of the '*divine will*' to attain ultimate salvation.

This brief glimpse of the thematic thrust of the novels of the Initial Stage shows a recurring thematic pattern. It ends with a positive vision of the spiritual reality as the fountainhead of human survival and of human fall as rooted in human ego.

The thematic concern of Golding's fiction during the three phases of the Social Stage is somewhat re-organized, though not entirely altered. Instead of placing the focus of the theme on mankind in general through an impersonal analysis of individuals or groups, there is now a noticeable emphasis on self-analysis as the stepping stone to self-perception. As such, the novels of the Social Stage illuminate man's '*self-ignorance*' and reveal his '*self-deception*' to be the cause for jeopardizing his '*survival*' -- social, physical or metaphysical -- through moral '*lapse*'.

In the first work of the *moral phase*, The Pyramid, the

protagonist's self-perception ends with an awareness of his moral depravity but does not indicate any remedy for moral well-being. His excessive concern with social survival appears to be his moral bane. The other novellas of this phase **The Scorpion God** further underline the related issues of social survival and moral depravity.

In the novels of the *metaphysical phase*, **Darkness Visible** and **The Paper Men**, the 'self-perception' of the two protagonists, leads to their development from moral lapse to 'spiritual salvation'. Both Matty in **Darkness Visible** and Barklay in **The Paper Men** are acutely aware of their own moral depravity and sacrifice their survival in society for different reasons. Matty has a firm metaphysical objective before him from the beginning whereas Barklay suddenly discovers it. The need for metaphysical survival leads to their self-perception and consequent moral evolution, albeit to different degrees.

During the *final phase* **A Sea Trilogy** becomes the vehicle of Talbot's voyage from ignorance of self to an awareness of self. Although this self-awareness is not so intensely 'metaphysical' as Matty's as to bring a spiritual evolution in its wake, it is also not so short-sighted as Oliver's to end on a note of shame, guilt and withdrawal. Talbot's moral resurgence is somewhat like Barklay's; it manifests to Edmund Talbot his own moral paucity but also gives him the opportunity to make amends for it to the extent possible. In fact, his risking of his own life to try and save Lt. Charles

Summers from the burning ship can be viewed as Talbot's moral atonement for the Colley he could not save.

Oliver in *The Pyramid*, a novel of the *moral phase*, had self-perception but was offered no opportunity to remedy his past. In *A Sea Trilogy* Edmund Talbot is closely akin to Oliver in his narrow-minded, snobbish and self-centered approach. But he grows during his year-long voyage by leaps and bounds. He is able to cast aside the 'armour' of social security, privilege, and snobbery and stand 'naked' but 'free' in his new-found humane sympathy, understanding, objective observation and moral propriety.

In an insightful analysis, he finds his friend Charles admirably reliable but wanting in pragmatic and empirical approach. Even so, he is genuine enough in his love for Charles to risk his own life for him. Such a development in the Talbot of *Fire Down Below* is estimable when placed against his initial moral reluctance to visit the dying Colley overcome only by Charles' appeal to his social position in *Rites of Passage*. This moral evolution in Talbot is the direct consequence of his exposure to the complex reality of life in *Close Quarters* and his intense awareness of his own moral failure to avert Wheeler's horrifying suicide.

This perception, enables Talbot to find the relevance, an of individual's essence -- his '*Scintillans Dei*' -- to that of the Absolute Good. He also becomes aware of its manifestations in the universe through multi-farious aspects of reality -- religious,

social, political and spiritual. Interestingly, this awareness comes to the protagonist through his tedious and perilous sea-voyage which is emblematic of Golding's technique of quest and self-discovery. Hence it is useful to analyse the 'element of quest' in *A Sea Trilogy*.

True to the 'Golding tradition' of quest as the focal thematic motif, *A Sea Trilogy* also reveals 'quest' as the nucleus of its thematic organization. In addition to this central plank of thematic development other strands of theme also converge into *A Sea Trilogy* to create a complex and multifarious artifact. Significantly, 'journey' as the symbolic vehicle of the main theme of 'quest' throughout the 'Golding Novel' is concretized in the form of a sea voyage in this ambitious work.

In *Lord of the Flies* an unrequisioned air-voyage had brought the young boys to contend with the reality of life in the allegorical 'static voyage' on the boat-shaped island. Although Ralph does not have a meaningful vision at the end of it, his insight into the depravity of mankind is deep enough to reveal his self-discovery.

In *The Inheritors* the voyage upstream is vital to the understanding of Tuami. For Lok, the spectacle of the dead Old Woman and later of Fa moving out into the mid-stream over the waterfall engenders the awareness of futility in life. For Pincher Martin too, his voyage from self-obsession to self-annihilation

becomes significant in the context of his eschatological voyage on the imaginary mid-ocean-Roackall in an un-sought-after quest of an unredeemable Ego.

Free Fall and *The Spire* reveal the quest motif in the psycho-analytical context of the protagonists' self-perception. Theirs is the journey of the human ego over the un-mapped terrain of human intentions and limitations. *The Pyramid* shows a protagonist who discovers himself -- not through voyage or journey proper -- but certainly when he goes away to Oxford in his teens and returns home to Stilbourne in his middle-age. His self-discovery is more socio-moral than psycho-spiritual.

Darkness Visible and *The Paper Men* elevate the dimension of 'quest and self-discovery' of their respective protagonists to the 'irrational' and the metaphysical level. In these novels, journey becomes the central supportive element for quest. In fact, in both these novels the quest for self ends in self-perception and in the case of *Darkness Visible* perhaps in self-realization.

Talbot in *A Sea Trilogy* is also true to this uninterrupted process of quest through voyage in the ordinary as well as extraordinary senses of the term. In this he is a paradigmatic protagonist of the 'Golding Novel', for whom 'voyage ... is a matter of social, emotional and psychological exploration ... to discern a basis for personal authenticity'⁶.

A brief re-view of the thematic conflux in *A Sea Trilogy* will

reveal the relevance of this observation. Talbot's voyage is certainly a significant departure from his earlier social biases towards a more democratic and liberal acceptance of his ship-mates for what they are. But in achieving this liberal attitude he has to grow -- rung after painful rung -- in terms of his emotional maturity. This naturally involves a tremendous compromise for an unrelenting egotist like Talbot.

In fact, it entails a formidable psychological '*self-encounter*' for him. It begins for Talbot in self-deception -- in line with his forerunners in the '*Golding Novel*' -- and ends in self-perception through an utterly painful self-exploration. This psychological engagement finally helps Talbot to come to terms with the harsh but complex reality of life : of its constant play of stasis and kinesis, of achievement and loss, of reality and illusions.

In fine, Talbot's voyage of self-discovery is an unintended quest that reveals the tentativeness and relativity of all experience : of sorrow and joy; of success and failure; of ignorance and understanding; of alienation and of belonging. His different co-voyagers are in fact his various land-marks of having covered a specific mileage of experience. They help him to fathom his own experience in all its depth and intensity.

The first jolt to his over-powering confidence comes in *Rites of Passage* from Wheeler's matter-of-fact summing up of events and persons including the condescending Talbot. In *Close Quarters*, he

is once again instrumental in shaking off the last vestiges of Talbot's vain aloofness that distances him from his ship-mates even during crisis, often at the cost of their lives. The gruesome suicide to which Wheeler is drawn -- and to which Talbot's blind indifference has thrown him -- finally helps to pull the blinds off Talbot's sense of moral propriety. It destroys the remnants of social privilege that hold Talbot back from spontaneous, humane response to others.

Colley's self-willed death in *Rites of Passage* had silently indicted Talbot for this failure. In *Close Quarters* Wheeler's suicide further accentuates the indictment. Whereas in *Fire Down Below* Lieutenant Charles Summers' sudden withdrawal of intimacy gives Talbot the taste of indifference-minus-understanding and of hostility born of petulance. Mrs. Prettiman's caustic assessment of his superciliousness and Mr. Prettiman's gentle witty liberalism throws Talbot further into self-discovery. It humbles his vanity and supplements the uncharitably sharp chastening that he receives from the deck-hands during his visit to the lower-most portion of the ship -- his allegorical journey to the navigational underworld.

This humility helps Talbot to face the harsh, unpalatable reality of life towards the end of his voyage when he becomes almost a marginalized specimen of humanity on board.

Irresistibly drawn to the liberal socialism of Mr. Prettiman, Talbot is gradually estranged from Charles who had once helped him

'escape from a certain unnatural stiffness, even hauteur ...' [Fire Down Below, p. 281. Accused of being 'loveless' by the rash Lt. Benét, Talbot is discomfitingly enlightened by the perceptive remark of Mr. Prettiman that 'You started your voyage with the objectivity of ignorance and are finishing it with the subjectivity of knowledge, pain, the hope of indulgence' [Fire Down Below, pp 282-31.

Just as he realises how oppressive life can be, the sighting of perilous ice-range entails an hair-raising encounter with death and helps to pull him out of the doldrums of despondency. However, on landing he is soon restored to 'a state bordering on the morbid', when unsavoury circumstances hit him in rapid succession. His God-father's sudden death seals all his hopes of any rise from his position as fourth secretary to Governor in the near future; he misses his shipmates and feels friendless, alienated and miserable. Charles' unfortunate death in the holocaust finally reduces Talbot to one who 'knew grief feelingly'.

Yet, these experiences are vital to his self-perception. In fact he concedes that 'It was in the driest and emptiest, of interior illuminations that I saw myself at last for what I was ...' [Fire Down Below, p. 282]. Nonetheless, he has the grit to brace up and face the future. Perhaps the credit for this courage goes to his ennobling discourses with Mr. Prettiman. The social philosopher inspires him into recognizing 'my spark ... my scintillans Dei' as

'a fire down below here' the spark of the Absolute, 'of the fire of that love, that *Kápis* ...' [Fire Down Below, p. 219]. This helps Talbot to understand others. He realises that Charles' 'ideas had been tested in the fire of his religion, Prettiman in the cruelties and torments of social condemnation, derision, dislike' [Fire Down Below, p. 210].

These various encounters with self and others help Talbot to understand himself as a political animal with his spark 'well hidden'. Yet, he has the express intention to exercise power for 'the betterment of his country and 'for the benefit of the world in general'. It is possible to see Talbot at the end of his voyage as a man with an insight. He is able to perceive the voyage as more than a simple adventure. He realizes :

What ramifications it had, what effects on the mind, the nature, what excitement, what sad learning, what casual tragedies, and painful comedies in our rendering old hulk !

What shaming self-knowledge! [Fire Down Below, p. 212]

Although in his excessive grief and acute loneliness at Sidney Cove, Talbot is wont to believe Mrs. Prettiman that this voyage 'was no *Odyssey*, no paradigm, metaphor, analogue', it has precisely been these very things : a 'type, emblem, metaphor of the human condition' [Fire Down Below, p. 275-6]. In fact, by creating a sea-voyage emblematic of human condition Golding has created through *A Sea Trilogy* a paradigm for the 'Golding Novel'. For whatever the technical innovations or structural departures of these three novels, thematically they are contiguous with their fore-runners'

pre-occupation with 'human condition'. As Malcolm Bradbury points out :

They are still about the ambiguity of human nature, the tug of primitivism, the presence of evil, the formlessness of experience, the uncertainty of progress : but more than ever they suggest the value of quest, creativity, order and aspiration, however strangely founded in humanity these things may be⁷.

While this element of thematic contiguity makes the 'Golding Novel' out as a continual quest into the human condition, it shows A Sea Trilogy to be its culmination -- and therefore the point of convergence for the two stages of the 'Golding Novel'.

6.2.4 A POINT OF CONVERGENCE : FINAL WORK OF THE SOCIAL STAGE

To a remarkable degree this work weaves together the varied elements - homogeneous and heterogeneous - that go to compromise the two stages of 'Golding Novel'. What is even more significant is that this trilogy conjoins the multifarious thematic presentations of Golding's fundamental concern with human condition in all his novels so far. Further, it helps to see Golding's work spanning almost four decades as a cohesive and organic effort. In fact, A Sea Trilogy is the essential motif that completes what may now be termed as the unified structure of the 'Golding Novel'.

In being a point of convergence for the two stages of the 'Golding Novel', A Sea Trilogy is a journey come full circle in many senses of the term. It begins in Rites of Passage with young

Talbot's 'passage to the other side of the world ... from the south of Old England to the Antipodes ...' [Rites of Passage, p. 31. After some intimate experiences that life offers Talbot in *Close Quarters*, this sea voyage concludes on a note of safe arrival in Australia and a suggested return home to England in *Fire Down Below*.

However, the Talbot who disembarks is not the same cock-sure youthful aspirant 'determined to use this long voyage in becoming wholly the master of the sea affair' [Rites of Passage, p. 61. Ironically, this geographic and navigational odyssey has engendered a sea-change in him. He has had 'to undergo his rites of passage in the bitter realization that he has dodged his human responsibilities ...⁸'. He becomes a man totally re-fashioned by the pangs of love and the ordeal of self-perception.

Thus, in a way *A Sea Trilogy* entails a chastening voyage of life for him and in this he is the successor of a long line of protagonists in the '*Gloding Novel*'.

In addition to the literal as well as the metaphorical relevance of the voyage in *A Sea Trilogy* to the development of the '*Golding Novel*', it also has a symbolic relevance to it. This symbolic relevance can be comprehended only on unravelling the varied semantic pattern woven into the narrative structure of this trilogy. Quite simply, the plot centering on a sea voyage is in itself a fundamentally cogent symbolic motif that reveals this semantic pattern.

In fact, this sea voyage from one end of the world to another undertaken by an egotistic, ignorant, aspirant in his early youth is symbolic of the '*Journey of life*'. By implication it is possible to view multiple allegorical nuances in it. By extending its allegorical significance to as many aspects of human life as possible, the voyage can be made to divulge plural themes : in psychological terms, it can be viewed as a journey from unconscious egotism to awareness of one's mental landscape of motives and complexes that impel one to act in a particular way; in sociological terms, it is a socio-political exodus of a motley cross-section of people to a new colony implying numerous social equations, economic constraints, intellectual ambitions and political manoeuvrings; in moral terms, it is a growth from ignorance of depravity in oneself to the perception of one's own ethical paucity and in spiritual terms, it is an evolution from the gloom of spiritual vacuum to the gleam of spiritual insight.

Thus, the overpowering symbolic motif of voyage has multifarious allegorical relevance to the entire Golding fiction beginning with the *Lord of the Flies*. If the voyage in *A Sea Trilogy* be viewed as the spiritual voyage of mankind it bears close resemblance to the suggested voyage in *Lord of the Flies* with its '*boat-shaped*' island; this voyage has all the multiple allegorical shades already discussed above. The beginning of this '*Journey of humanity*' can be traced back to the furtive escape of the guilt-

ridden Homo Sapiens in their 'dug outs' towards the plains beyond the 'fall' in *The Inheritors*. In fact, the island habitat of the Homo Sapiens looking across to the overhang of the Neanderthals above the 'fall' is symbolic of boat or ship motif suggesting man's voyage in an unpredictable sea of passions, desires and ignorance. So is Martin's islanded 'Rockall' in *Pincher Martin* on which he relives his imaginary post-mortem journey from perpetuation of Ego to dissolution of Self for the Ultimate.

Even during the *transitional phase* of 'Golding Novel' this voyage reveals different symbolic connotations. In *Free Fall* the journey of humanity through the metaphysical realm is well indicated despite the absence of sea, island or ship motifs. Here the ironical Dantesque allusions to the journey through Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso work through indirection and reversal. The other novel of the *transitional phase*, *The Spire* shows an indirect affinity to a ship through tacit allusions to Noah's arc or to building of 'a ship on land' or to a journey of a human soul suggested in the flight of a kingfisher over the water 'through panic-shot darkness'.

During the Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel' also, the theme of a symbolic journey is underpinned to each of the themes during 'moral' and 'metaphysical' phases. If *A Sea Trilogy* be considered a symbolic journey from moral blindness to moral enlightenment then Talbot's embarking on his voyage at its beginning certainly bears an

ironical resemblance to Oliver's expected embarking on his career at Oxford in *The Pyramid*. The rigid, stratified, God-less atmosphere on board the ship in *A Sea Trilogy* is very much akin to that of the unpious, unfeeling, claustrophobic, and purely materialistic social climate in *The Pyramid*.

It is also possible to see symbolic affinity between the voyage in *A Sea Trilogy* and the developments in *Darkness Visible*. In both, an actual voyage to Australia has significant contribution to make to the theme. Matty discovers himself, his true vocation in Australia; he even has his spiritual 'baptism' there. So also Talbot's self-perception is complete at Sidney Cove; he makes his major decision in life there. Both the protagonists' return to England signals a major transition in their life: in Talbot's case it involves his material future, in Matty's case it concerns his 'spiritual future' - his 'consummation'.

Talbot's moral regeneration and spiritual awakening during his voyage is also closely like that of Wilf Barklay's experience in *The Paper Men*. Just as Talbot gains self-awareness during his sea-voyage, so also Barklay's self-perception gradually emerges during his blind bolting up and down the 'roads, motorways, the autoroutes, autostrads, autobahns, autoputs from Finland to Cadiz' [*The Paper Men*, p. 25].

In fine, the symbolic relevance of the voyage motif can be traced back to all the novels of William Golding. Even in his three

independent novellas of *The Scorpion God*, the societies in relation to change can be viewed as social groups in constant flux despite superficial rigidity. In this, they show a clear affinity to the in-mates of the ship in *A Sea Trilogy*. The social group on board the ship also resists abrupt change in all ways, but nonetheless it succumbs to it : often yielding to surface-change as in *'The Scorpion God'*; sometimes giving way to subtle intrinsic change as in *Clonk Clonk* but rarely able to stall undesirable change as happens in *Envoy Extraordinary*.

However, if organic change in a social structure or group be viewed as its voyage -- either upstream to progress or down to retrogression -- then voyage becomes an apt symbol for the change evident in life in all senses of the word. As Don Crompton points out *'the voyage as a metaphor for life itself is one of the oldest and most powerful of images, going back at least to the Odyssey'*⁹. With such an illustrious ancestry, the voyage motif as a recurring image in the *'Golding Novel'* becomes extremely significant. Whatever else it is or it is not, the society one encounters all through Golding's work is vital and change-prone . The essence of *A Sea Trilogy* lies in its revelation of this change in its comprehensive aspect. Thereby, the trilogy becomes a point of convergence within the *'Golding Novel'*.

6.3.1 SOCIAL STAGE OF THE 'GOLDING NOVEL' : AN ASSESSMENT

Considering *A Sea Trilogy* as the culmination of a metaphorical voyage of the 'Golding Novel', requires substantiation in terms of an overall review of the fictional development of the 'Golding Novel'. This necessitates a novel-wise discussion of the various aspects of Golding's fiction such as Plot, Characterization and Point of View in order to elucidate the style and the vision of the novelist. Since a similar discussion concerning the novels of the Initial Stage has been already undertaken in Chapter Three, the present discussion will confine itself merely to the novels of the Social Stage -- beginning with *The Pyramid* (1967) and ending with *A Sea Trilogy* (1991). By collating the observations of these separate discussions of the fundamental fictional aspects of the two stages of Golding's fiction, it will be possible to ascertain the structural, narrative and perspectival development of the 'Golding Novel'. Further, this will also facilitate the attempt to view *A Sea Trilogy* as an index of such a development.

THE EXCLUSION OF *THE SCORPION GOD*

At this juncture, it is essential to point out that this discussion will proceed in the sequence of the three phases of the Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel' namely, the *moral*, the *metaphysical* and the *final* phases. However, the second work of the *moral phase*, *The Scorpion God* (1971) cannot be considered as an

indicator of the 'phase-wise' development of the fictional aspects of the 'Golding Novel'. Its three constituent novellas have been written and published at different points in time. Of these, *Envoy Extraordinary* appeared in 1956, 'The Scorpion God', according to Virginia Tiger, 'was apparently written between *Free Fall* and *The Spire*, though it remained unpublished. The third *Clonk Clonk* was written just before its publication'¹⁰.

Therefore, this work cannot be properly viewed as the matrix of the development of the Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel'. In fact, these novellas cannot be considered to be the parts of a single fictional artifact, although their being published together during the *moral phase* is thematically significant to the findings of this study. In fact, one tends to agree with Virginia Tiger's opinion of the hiatus in this work. 'Perhaps this hiatus explains why, though there is thematic consistency of a sort, the method of the three is dissimilar'¹¹. Hence, although the fictional feature of *The Scorpion God* have been critically analysed separately in Chapter Four the sake of interest, they cannot be included in the phase-wise analysis of the 'Golding Novel' for obvious reasons.

In the absence of *The Scorpion God*, *The Pyramid* will represent the fictional features of the 'Golding Novel' in the *moral phase*. Similarly, *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* will reveal its fictional development during the *metaphysical phase* and finally, *A Sea Trilogy* will help determine the degree and the relevance of this

development to the overall position of the 'Golding Novel'. The ensuing discussion of the fictional features of the 'Golding Novel' during the entire Social Stage will include Character, Narrative Technique and Point of View followed by an analysis of Golding's style and vision as a novelist. As character is the most vital organ of fiction which makes the plot viable and the narrative authentic, it will begin with Characterization.

6.3.2 CHARACTERIZATION IN THE NOVELS OF THE SOCIAL STAGE

A noteworthy feature of the Characterization during the Social Stage is Golding's shift in emphasis from his earlier preference for the embodiment of probable human beings to his present inclination for creating complex individuals -- individuals with every possible shade of human personality in all its unpredictable depth. This is a particularly felicitous accomplishment for the novelist in view of the intellectual and emotional instability of contemporary life in which he operates. In fact, the opinion of another contemporary novelist, Iris Murdoch about the practice of fiction reveals the significance of Golding's attempted delineation of human personality only too well. Commenting on the particular dilemma of a contemporary fiction-writer, she confesses unhesitatingly

We live in a scientific and anti-metaphysical age in which the dogmas, images and percepts of religion have lost much of their power. We have not recovered from the two Wars and the experience of Hitler. We are also the heirs of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and the Liberal tradition. These are the elements of our dilemma : whose

chief feature in my view, is that we have been left with far too shallow and flimsy an idea of human personality¹².

On the backdrop of this objective analysis of the novelist's calling, Golding's attempt to uncover the complexity of human personality assumes a special significance and demands a distinct, revised approach in assessment.

NEED FOR A REVISED INDEX OF CHARACTER

Ironically, the earlier matrix of categorizing his characters as 'extraordinary' and 'ordinary' no longer holds good. The need for discarding this critical approach is, therefore, quite exigent : the characters in Golding's novels have now matured into the complexities of human life itself. As such, their new fictional existence indicates their changed status as social beings in a continual state of emotional, moral -- perhaps even spiritual - kinesis. It is thus only natural to view them as growth-prone characters in an authentic, social environment. At the most, an exception can be made to some extent in the assessment of Matty in *Darkness Visible* and Barklay in *The Paper Men*. But, by far, Golding's characters are now authentic individuals in society and the reason is indeed quite simple.

SOCIAL INTERACTION AS A MAJOR DEVICE OF CHARACTERIZATION

The *Pyramid* (1967) marks a distinct development of the 'Golding Novel' which brings it recognizably close to the fictional mode

conveniently described as 'the social novel'. Golding's fiction now assigns a greater scope to social environment and social interaction replaces the heavy stress on the individual experience of characters. This is effected in two ways: the intense, highly individual confrontation scenes of the Initial Stage are now replaced by character-interaction through conversation, and the delineation of character occurs through internalized conflict in addition to the earlier strategy of character-response-to-situation.

Whether Oliver or Henry Williams in *The Pyramid*, Sophy, Tony and Gerry in *Darkness Visible* or Rick Tucker or Halliday in *The Paper Men* they are all interested in a naked exploitation of their social environment with self-interest as the focal point of their existence. All those who have higher pursuits in life other than material success become some sort of misfits in their social milieu. Either they are looked upon as socially incompatible elements like Bounce - the love-starved spinster in *The Pyramid* - or the odd 'visionary' in *Darkness Visible*, Matty, whom society neither accepts nor understands; or they grow psycho-sexually incongruent with the accepted norms as the trans-vestite De Tracy in *The Pyramid* or the Wilf Barklay in *The Paper Men*. They are, thus, compelled to seek asylum in insanity, absurdity, perversity or even plain escapism as Barklay does until the moment when self-acceptance dawns on him.

Touching all these socially incongruous individuals tangentially Golding's A Sea Trilogy reveals a dynamic approach to

character.

It can, thus, be maintained that social interaction now becomes a prominent device of characterization only minimally assisted by

(a) the use of description,

(b) the observations made by the narrator about any of the characters and

(c) the attitudes of characters to stock situations or to character-types.

COMMON APPROACH TO CHARACTERIZATION

In Golding's fiction of the Social Stage, such an approach to characterization is discernible to a larger extent in *The Pyramid* and *A Sea Trilogy* than in *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*. The obvious reason for this is that, in *The Pyramid* as well as in *A Sea Trilogy* the 'author participant' is the narrator all through the novel supported by other narrative ploys. Hence, his comments, descriptions, observations are likely to be more subjective and less authentic, coloured by his preferences and prejudices. This is particularly true of both these protagonists who are themselves in a process of self-discovery. So it is but natural that characterization in these two novels should depend almost entirely on social interaction and conversation -- intentional or casual. It also attempts to a limited degree, the revelation of an individual character through other characters and through an unwitting

disclosure of self that occurs in the narration of Oliver in *The Pyramid* and in the accounts of Talbot and Colley in *A Sea Trilogy*.

Hence, the probable reason for the similarity of Golding's approach to characterization in *The Pyramid* and *A Sea Trilogy* is that both these novels have the following features in common : -

- i. The protagonists of these works go on revealing themselves to the end of the novel.
- ii. The protagonists are imperceptive and gradually attain self-perception as well as the understanding of their respective social environment.
- iii. Their social environment is class-conscious, restrictive and authoritarian.
- iv. The protagonists have a highly ambitious nature and a socially biased attitude to others. As such, both can be described as basically good, socially prejudiced but morally imperceptive.

CHARACTERS IN *THE PYRAMID*

In *The Pyramid*, Oliver is paradoxically the instrument as well as the agent of social snobbery; he is the victim as well as the perpetrator of social prejudice and condemnation. The ignorance of his own preferences and weaknesses makes him a source of moral deterioration for self and others. Other major characters are also the products of a morally stifling and socially regressive set-up. Their warped, misshapen personalities come alive through their

responses to situations and individuals.

Thus is developed the vivacious, promiscuous '*local phenomenon*' Evie Babbacombe. She is an extraordinarily realistic character in Golding. The victim of social exploitation, this simple, fun-loving girl stripped of her emotional sensitivity and self-respect, becomes a shrewd, aggressive but yet a vulnerable young woman. So also are Bounce's thwarted femininity and Henry Williams' polished materialism artfully revealed by the novelist through their interaction with one another as well as with the narrator. In this he is supported by Oliver's occasional comments or responses to them.

Oliver's mother also acts as a constant commentator on Bounce and Henry Williams, thereby revealing herself in revealing them. Oliver's father is an extremely well-developed character despite the minimal exposure he has in the novel. Revealed through his '*response*' to his wife and his reaction to Oliver's misadventure on the escarpment Oliver's father is a more convincing version of Nick Shales in *Free Fall*¹³. He seems to be even more closely based on Golding's own father than was the latter. The character of De Tracy in the *The Pyramid* can be described as a double device. Through his responses to the members of the Stilbourne Operative Society he reveals their character as well as his own. His public attitude to them and his private opinion of them provide the necessary clues for the reader to read in between the lines, the characters De Tracy and Oliver together.

CHARACTERS IN A SEA TRILOGY

In *A Sea Trilogy*, Edmund Talbot the 'author participant' is the reflector for most of the characters, through his often biased and premature comments about them. However, he is only a partially reliable source of information for obvious reasons. Very often other characters such as Charles Summers, Miss Granham, Wheeler or Mr. Brocklebank are also commissioned as sources of information. But none of them remains constantly reliable, bound as they are by a constantly changing pattern of intricate social interaction. Sometimes, individual bias for or against something or someone becomes an important instrument of character development in the novel. So, the egotistic, authoritarian captain Anderson becomes more understandable when seen in relation to the Navy or the Clergy. In a similar manner, Miss Granham's defensive attitude to her erstwhile profession, Mr. Prettiman's rationalistic bias, Summers' restricting common-sense, Deverel's cowardly browado, Miss Chumley's down-to-earth vivacity and above all Talbot's 'partial' understanding -- all become vital clues to character revelation.

Due to the large scale on which characterization is undertaken in this trilogy, it would be possible only to comment on a few major characters that evolve during the course of this voyage and to briefly mention a few others who remain more or less static. The characters that constantly evolve to a more humane level are Talbot himself, Wheeler, Summers, Miss Granham and Mr. Prettiman. Those

characters who remain more or less static are Mr. Brocklebank, his family, Captain Anderson, Benét, to mention a few. It does not mean that these characters do not undergo any change in circumstances but that there is no perceptible transformation, either for good or bad in their personality. It is for this reason that Don Crompton calls them two-dimensional characters¹⁴.

FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALITY

The two novels which belong to the period between *The Pyramid* and *A Sea Trilogy* are *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*. Since these two novels are noticeably more 'metaphysical' than social in terms of theme, the major characters are in a way more 'extraordinary' than ordinary. As such, the device used for these characters namely Matty and Wilf Barklay, aims more towards the revelation of the abstract and the individual side of their personality than their social dimension. This is, particularly, true of Matty in *Darkness Visible*. To use Tom Pauline's words, he 'is active goodness, the spirit of love and redemption which, Golding suggests, must overthrow evil'¹⁵. There is, therefore, every reason to view such a character as 'extraordinary'. What applies to Matty also holds to a lesser degree in Barklay's case.

Matty and Sophy in *Darkness Visible* and Wilf Barklay in *The Paper Men* are best revealed through their own actions, words or experiences. In addition to this, Matty and Sophy are described by

the author-omniscient, so as to etch out their mental processes and attitudes. Matty's journal and his experience in the Church, in Goodchild's book store and in Australia expose the more paranormal aspect of his personality. Just so, Sophy's experiences with dab-chicks, her approach to her planned sexual exploits and the psychograph of her reactions -- while the kidnap operation is on -- reveal her demoniac will and outrageous intentions only too well. Together, these two characters cancel out each other through contrariness inherent in each and complement the reader's understanding of them.

The other characters such as Pedigree, Sim Goodchild, Edwin Bell in *Darkness Visible* and Elizabeth, Rick Tucker, Mary Lou, in *The Paper Men* live the thin razor-edge existence between self-exposure and exposure of one another through speech, action and reaction. This is especially true of the characters in *The Paper Men*. In *Darkness Visible* Golding has used mannerisms, physical attributes and even ticks as a tool of character delineation. But in *The Paper Men* Golding has been more than usually economical in character development. Except in the case of Rick Tucker, almost no description or individual appearance is made use of in order to further characterization. But the emotionally or psychologically warped natures of the characters are brought into play. Thus, there is the moral uprightness of Liz in *The Paper Men* along with her psychological inability to forgive and forget right unto the end.

Mary Lou, in the same novel with her innocent, simple beauty is not 'physical' yet she is plain enough to be roped into a seduction manoeuvre by Rick and finally to be compromised by him to Halliday in his eagerness for professional 'plums'. Emily in *The Paper Men* is a passingly-mentioned character. Nonetheless, she leaves a mark on the reader's sensibility as a particularly plain, heavy, unattractive, strong-willed and forceful woman who knows her own mind. She is a later-day refined version of the Rowena Pringles or 'Bounce' Dowlis in Golding's earlier fiction.

In *The Paper Men*, the character of Wilf Barklay is developed with the help of the two foils: Rick Tucker -- a cruder make of Wilf Barklay -- doing unabashedly what Barklay had done on the sly: and Barklay's wife -- morally superior of the two -- who fails to recognize genuine repentance in Barklay when it comes and remains unreconciled to the end. Barklay is morally corrupt but he has the delicacy to be ashamed of himself; to be frightened of Halliday's attempts to unearth his past; to run from himself and above all to feel remorse and repentance. This adds a shade of sympathy to our otherwise obtuse assessment of him as a drink-sodden, womanizing, unprincipled, cowardly, unappealing, pot-bellied author of bestsellers. Just so, his final attempt at unravelling his own complicated life earns him our respect.

By far, Barklay is a subduedly created character, vaguely unappealing in appearance, behaviour and attitude to life. But he

• is invested with an instinct for the veneration of the adorable. Confronted by and irresistibly drawn to the uncorrupted beauty in Mary Lou, he has the decency to avoid exploiting it through his escapism rather than complying with the tacit design of seduction masterminded by Rick Tucker. In terms of being a creative artist, he is a far superior character to Sammy in *Free Fall*; in fact he comes through as a morally elevated version of Sammy.

Of all characters in Golding, Rick Tucker appears to be the crudest and the most facetious. He is also the one character in *The Paper Men* 'physically' present. In all references to him a loathesome individual comes through. In creating Rick Tucker, Golding has made excellent use of visual, audio and olfactory sensations to reveal an image of distasteful hugeness and coarseness. He is an ace exploiter of others but turns out in the end to be the one most exploited. In seeking to uncover Barklay's life, he exposes not only Barklay, but himself. Barklay's humiliation is redeemed by his acknowledgement of his own depravity, as his grotesqueness is condoned by his continual ability to be made into a laughing stock. In Rick Tucker's case such redeeming factors do not operate.

Even when Barklay has reduced the last vestiges of his ego to pinch-beck dust, the reader pities him but is unable to grieve for him. He obsessively pursues a path of self-promotion that finally plunges him into self-destruction. In his ruthless perseverance of

• hollow academic glory, he resembles an awesome tusker charging on. In fact his name has some indistinct syllabic association with a 'tusker'. His pursuit of academic vain-glory is the ruin of him, as also of Barklay. But ironically perhaps it is the saving grace of Barklay. Their interaction is thus a succinct interplay of illusion and reality in human life.

In summing up, it has to be conceded that characterization in Golding has gone from strength to strength. At every stage of his novelistic development he has been able to cut the corners and prune the drawbacks in his characterization. Beginning with concrete, physical cutouts of appealing, realistic but allegorical sketches in *Lord of the Flies*, he achieved the masterful portraits of Jocelin, Goody Pangall, and Roger Mason in *The Spire* with a finesse that is rare if not unique. Yet, the social context was confined to being a super-imposed dimension to these characters. However, the use of psycho-analytical approach was an additional, if desirable, feature of Golding's characterization at this stage. His characters were becoming more and more human. It was now possible to identify with them -- not merely to sympathise with them as with Ralph or Lok or Tuami for various reasons.

If Sammy in *Free Fall* and Jocelin in *The Spire* between them help the 'Golding Novel' to cross over from the isolated social context into a warm and roaring social milieu, Oliver in *The Pyramid* helps to vivify this milieu. With *The Pyramid* the socio-

moral issues get indelibly linked and characterization in the 'Golding Novel' attains a more durable if less obvious dimension -- the moral.

In the two succeeding novels of the *metaphysical phase*, *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*, this moral dimension of characters is prominently used as the basis for their metaphysical experience. Both Matty and Barklay, in their respective ways, are driven to the wall simply because they are unable to avoid the moral issue -- living with guilt.

In all these later novels, the question of social ethics is also subtly posed. The characters, either by conforming to ethics -- personal, professional or other -- or not, point a finger to contemporary life and indirectly underscore its existentialist trauma as well as its moral thereby through the acquiescence of the spiritual reality. Thus, characterization unfolds the paradox of human existence during the first two phases of the Social Stages of the 'Golding Novel', namely the 'moral' and the 'metaphysical' phases.

A SEA TRILOGY ; A TESTIMONY TO GOLDING'S CHARACTERIZATION

This paradox draws attention, once again, to the characterization in *A Sea Trilogy* a work that belongs to the *final phase* of the 'Golding Novel'. Here Golding is at the height of his creative acumen. The characterization in *A Sea Trilogy* attains to a

level hitherto not surpassed by Golding's fiction in terms of sheer range and diversity. In that sense, the trilogy is an ambitious but a balanced project. The success of characterization in this vast project is a testimony to Golding's ever-evolving artistry. Interestingly, character runs parallel to the plot in this trilogy but often the two progress through diametrically opposite directions.

The main thrust of characterization in *A Sea Trilogy* is on presenting a kaleidoscopic view of one character through a host of others, overtly and covertly. The amalgam of dialogue, interaction and a complex kinesis offers so many varied combinations of comments, responses and interpretations that finally it is impossible to feel that one has fully '*discovered*' any character at all.

In this unique sense, the characterization in *A Sea Trilogy* is extremely true to life and multi-dimensional. To the very end the reader is constantly filling in or deleting one shade or another from any one given character. Thus, the characterization achieves, the admirable quality of coming through as a '*living*' phenomenon at every stage in the trilogy. This aspect of characterization is further accentuated by the natural elements of unpredictability and change which are the hall-marks of human action, emotion and response. In fine, capturing the very essence of the complex human nature, the characterization in *A Sea Trilogy* establishes Golding's

almost unparalleled sway over delineation of character in contemporary fiction.

To conclude, Golding's created world of Character whether a part of the ship-board life or of a mid-ocean island, always 'suggests', to use Bayley's words, '*actualities which art can make nothing of The lives lived in his art ... are not extended enough, or complete enough, to become a personal matter*'¹⁶. In this '*impersonal actuality*' lies the essence of their genesis and their inimitable tangibility. This unique feature of Golding's Characterization, in turn, gives a viability to his plots, a substantial basis to his narratives and a complex meaningfulness to his points of view. The following analysis of narrative technique and points of view will in fact give ample evidence of this observation.

6.3.3 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AND POINT OF VIEW

Through this analysis of plot, narrative technique and point of view during the Social Stage of the '*Golding Novel*' some common denominations of the novelist's approach to his fiction will become discernible.

The stress in the narrative is gradually on a delicate balance of points of view generally achieved in the novels of this stage through an '*imperceptive*' first person narrative combined with spontaneous if facetious conversation. This narrative feature is a

marked development over Golding's preferred use of third person narratives during the Initial Stage -- except in *Free Fall* -- assisted by crisp, common place but oblique dialogue. In fact, the earlier use of 'measured' speech with carefully embedded structural or narrative clues now yields place to a casual but succinct conversation. All the novels of this stage show flashes of humorous talk in a natural and contemporaneous language.

The linguistic usage in these novels, as in their predecessors of the Initial Stage, continues to be convincingly congruent to the situation, the context and the period invoked in the novel in question. Whether in the allusions to contemporary events or to cultural milestones -- with a historicity and a structural potential of their own -- the novelist's linguistic creativity is at its imaginative height.

Here, a particular mention of Golding's continued fondness for the device of intertextuality has to be made. In the novels of the Initial Stage this element of intertextuality has weathered through distinct stages of fictional usage, almost parallel to the development of the 'Golding Novel'. Beginning as obvious and intended devices of irony, various literary foils have been identified behind the genesis of Golding's early novels. But from *The Spire* onwards a definite ingenuity comes into play in the exploitation of literary or legendary intertexts. It is difficult to view them exclusively as independent structural components or

narrative devices. In all the later novels the same complex and compact use of other literary works is continued. Whether as allusions to texts, authors, myths, legends or literary personae, a resourceful artistic usage reveals a mature creative genius at work. This subtle intertextuality gives *The Pyramid* its affinity to various fictional modes such as autobiographical novel, Bildungsroman, Künstlerroman. It also explains other literary undertones such as the Austenian humour or the Trollopean Setting that has been detected by critics.

By far the most complex illustration of deft artistic use of intertextuality is in *Darkness Visible*. Its Miltonic or even Virgilian undertones have been already revealed in the discussion of this novel in Chapter Five. The Biblical allusions in *Darkness Visible* are vitally significant to the elucidation of its mystic potential. The affinity of this novel to many other texts such as popular best-sellers as also to those dwelling on the mysterious cannot be ruled out. In fact, Golding's confessed 'inability' to talk about this novel and his admittedly spiritual dilemma lends substance to this conjecture.

The Paper Men also has ample scope for a subtle and complicated manifestation of this novelistic device. But more than its intertextuality, this novel is significant for its skillful utilization of the historicity of contemporaneous academics in all its literary vain-glory and human degradation.

In *A Sea Trilogy* too an extremely enriching and innovative use of intertextuality is attempted by Golding. This vast fictional work set in the early 19th century is an excellent example of pastiche. There is a beautiful blend of contemporary diary-writing, epistolary fiction, romance about sea life, novel of manners and autobiography in the narrative mode of this trilogy. It alludes to a large variety of contemporary literary and historical figures such as Coleridge, Jane Austen, Racine, Napoleon Bonaparte and indirectly suggests the presence of other historical and literary figures lurking behind its characters. Over and above these affinities, *A Sea Trilogy* makes a brilliant if somewhat slanted comment on its own mode of narration and style by alluding to those of Fielding, Richardson, Racine and Austen.

Golding's narrative technique also shows greater experimentation with the use of such devices as ambiguity, coincidence, use of character-foils. Consequently, it displays a greater freedom from the contrived devices of the Initial Stage such as the trite symbols in *Lord of the Flies* and obscure structural ploys à la Pincher Martin's sea-boots. Imagery, already powerfully enriching and configurative in *The Spire*, now sustains a steady artistic accomplishment while it somewhat modifies its earlier compactness and intensity. Perhaps the requirements of the more socially-prone themes of the novels of the Social Stage demand such a dilution of imagery. The more elaborate and intense use of

imagery in the intimate individual experiences in *Darkness Visible*, supports this observation about Golding's changed approach to imagery.

The structural development of the 'Golding Novel' during the Social Stage is significant in being more organic but innovative, despite the seeming slackness of surface structure. A craftfully worked-out criss-cross of time-shifts and points of view make this structural achievement in the novels of this stage possible. In *The Pyramid* for instance, Olly's adolescent point of view is reflected in a uncomplicated linear narrative. But his subsequent terms at Oxford are masterfully manoeuvred through ingenious and devious telescoping of narrative time to attain a cohesive narrative structure.

Darkness Visible and *The Paper Men* continue this device of temporal shifts to alter or consolidate previously offered points of view. But the major structural binds in these two works develop, not entirely as a result of time-shifts, but mainly through narrative ploys already discussed earlier. In *A Sea Trilogy*, once again, through resourceful narrative devices a shrewd shift in narrative time is manoeuvred by Golding to create structural cohesion with the help of temporal linkages and multiple points of view.

AFFINITY OF TECHNIQUE IN THE THREE EARLIER NOVELS

In this discussion, three novels namely, *The Pyramid*, *Darkness Visible*, and *The Paper Men* become significant. They all share a contemporaneous social context and are naturally related by the post-World-War ethos that has worked its way into their structure. In each of these novels World-War II is utilized as a point of reference at some stage or the other; in *The Pyramid* it accentuates the development of the protagonist from a musical aspirant to a successful scientist; in *Darkness Visible* it becomes the point of departure for the narrative in that Matty is a by-product of the War-bombardment. While in *The Paper Men* the protagonist discovers himself as a creative artist only after the war when his novel '*Cold harbour*' '*writes itself*'.

There are other points of affinity too among these works

- (i) In all these three novels, the narrative makes use of autobiographical discourse. In *Darkness Visible* this is done partly through Matty's journal, while in the other two novels the narrator is entirely the author participant
- (ii) Moreover, these novels offer an inevitably subjective point of view -- that of the protagonist -- and then balance it by more objective point of view through various narrative devices
- (iii) Interestingly, in each of these novels the protagonist tries to escape from a guilt that he carries. In *The Pyramid* the guilt concerns Oliver's sexual exploits with Evie on the

escarpment and its detection through his father's binoculars; in *Darkness Visible* Matty bears the moral guilt for Henderson's death, and in *The Paper Men* Wilf Barklay perennially runs from the snowballing guilt of his criminal past and psychological trauma. It would be, thus, interesting to discuss these novels together in a chronological sequence.

THE NARRATIVE IN *THE PYRAMID*

The plot of *The Pyramid* reveals that it broke the allegorical or mytho-fabular circuit to which the 'Golding Novel' had been assigned by sympathetic critics. They believed 'that Mr. Golding is at his best as a writer of fable, near-allegory', and that he had best restrict himself to the kind of novel 'that depends on force and vividness on the application of truths that we all know.'¹⁷ The *Pyramid* effectively set all such expectations and apprehensions at rest. Despite a plot having the semblance of 'a low-keyed realistic novel' about Oliver's growing up in the petty township of Stilbourne, the novel enthralls 'by what it is not'¹⁸. The enigmatic points of view that reveal new angles of theme at unexpected stages in the novel make this possible.

Narrated by Oliver, the author participant, *The Pyramid* assumes the status of being more than an autobiographical novel as the focus of the narrative gradually alters in the succeeding segments of the trilogy. Initially presented from the point of view of Oliver, the

novel exudes the spirit of a budding romance between a heart-broken Oliver and Evie Babbacombe. But as the first segment ends, the reader is able to appreciate the action vis-a-vis the confrontation scene between Oliver and Evie. Evie's sensitive, yet defiant attitude offers a second point of view.

In the second segment, although Oliver is still the narrator, he is more of an *'author observant'*. The focus of the narrative is now on the just-revived Stilbourne Operatic Society. The narrative alternates between two points of view -- Oliver's and Evelyn De Tracy's. The reader is thereby given a double view into the narrow, self-complacent, snobbish attitude of the Stilbourne middle-class of which Oliver is an unmistakable specimen.

In fact, this segment sharpens the reader's vision to probe into the sadistic manifestation of such heartless attitude in the pathetic episode of Bounce Dowlish in the final segment of the trilogy. Here, once again the narrative is controlled by more than one point of view. At the outset, it is the smug, middle-aged Oliver re-visiting Stilbourne after years, followed by a sudden shift in the narrative time. This shift entails the sudden surfacing of the emotional alienation that the young Olly had always nursed against Bounce, encapsulated in his *'conditioned'* respect for her. The sudden unknown-to-himself atavistic revulsion that overwhelms him at her monument discloses *'a kind of psychic ear-test before which nothing survived but revulsion and horror, childishness*

and atavism ...' [The Pyramid, p. 213]. But the walk to the back of Bounce's house ensures yet another shift in narrative time and a different point of view.

This shift in narrative reveals to Oliver Bounce's tragedy and also his own, in being weighed down by a mismatched scientific career at the cost of a stifled natural talent for music. The shame from which he has fled all these years is back on him again. He discovers himself in Henry William's materialistic attitude '*typical of the deep thing living in him ... inevitable, the god without mercy*' [The Pyramid, p. 159].

THE NARRATIVE IN *DARKNESS VISIBLE*

In its linear progression, the plot of *Darkness Visible* reads like an account of Matty's guilt, his moral trauma and metaphysical evolution with the kidnap operation thrown in for good measure.

The novel is an intricately organized structure in which a synthesis of multiple narrative devices is commissioned to offer multiple points of view of the same '*reality*'. The novel is narrated in part by an impersonal narrator and partly through a journal maintained by Matty.

A shift at a crucial juncture from the impersonal narrator to Matty's journal, assists the novelist to communicate the protagonist's obscure experience in all its complexity without exposing the narrative to the fault of over-statement of a

mysterious experience. Moreover, this narrative device also shields the experience involved in this record from a more objective, rational or sceptical scrutiny.

The sustained point of view in this novel is never the impersonal narrator's, nor Matty's; it is a harmonious synchronization of many points of view; these elicit more authenticity to an otherwise seemingly unreliable narrative. Crucial pointers to the sublimity of Matty's metaphysical experience are innocuously incorporated into the narrative at various stages through different characters. Balancing these are the seemingly eccentric actions and beliefs of Matty that evoke moral concerns and spiritual aspirations pivotal to his experience.

Through these harmonized but kaleidoscopic points of view the theme attains to many levels of interpretation: metaphysically, it foregrounds the transient probability of Matty's subtle and sublime experience; socially, it reflects a degenerate post-World War society perpetrated by evil and vice; morally, it uncovers the hard-core depravity in conflict with essential goodness.

The structural devices that heighten the density of the narrative by offering a spiritual point of view are Matty's experiences -- in the church and with the scrying ball in Goodchild's bookshop -- and Pedigree's dying vision of him. Supporting the paranormalcy of this view is the contrary nature of Sophy's experience with dab-chicks, her avowal of feeling 'weird',

her determined exercise of her will over others and her unconditional surrender to 'entropy'. Interestingly by cancelling out each other, these two points of view offer a new perspective of the complex reality in *Darkness Visible*. In fact, the desired point of view that emerges is the ambivalent one.

In brief, the novel succeeds in beautifully capturing the spirit of contradiction and discord that governs contemporary life, particularly in the occidental societies. Through the enactment of an intimate and intense drama that borders on eccentricity and at times even on insanity, it reveals, to use Virginia Tiger's words :

'that only maladjusted psychotic personalities can faithfully interpret the deranged personality of the age in which we live, as though the truth about ourselves and about the *Zeitgeist* is no longer available to those who clutch at traditional outmoded notions of order and normality'.¹⁹

THE NARRATIVE IN *THE PAPER MEN*

But it cannot be imagined that contemporary life is typified unredeemably by eccentricity or depravity. The novel *The Paper Men* is a point in case. The plot is unalluringly plain with its conflict centered on a temptation-prone, suggestible individual and the torment he suffers as a result of this weakness. But it is aggravated by the unscrupulously compromising literary critic and his own guilt-ridden psyche. However, the essentially articulate shifts in the narrative, the juxtaposing of alternating points of view and the brilliantly construed dialogue marvelously transform a limp plot into a complex fictional work.

In *The Paper Men* after a brief linear movement of the narrative, there is a constant reversion to the past -- mostly presented through the protagonist's drink-induced reverie. This chequered progress of the narrative facilitates two nearly simultaneous points of view to operate in this autobiographical narrative : one of these is of the protagonist as the creative artist on the run, pestered by his badger-like prying critic; the other is of an international celebrity constantly threatened by the phobia of disclosure of his criminal past.

Converging into this linear autobiographical narrative and breaking through the interspersed patterning of Barklay's reverie -- leading to shifts in narrative time -- is his interaction with many characters, imaginary and real. The novelist has ingeniously manoeuvred it to authenticate the discourse of the narrator about self by reducing its subjectivity and delusion. This is done through chance-meetings or planned rendez-vous with Barklay's friends in the profession, his would-be-biographer and above all his wife Elizabeth. This device also fills in the information-gaps for the reader who is perennially caught in the maze of Barklay's real and illusory account of his social and '*metaphysical*' encounters.

NARRATIVE IN A SEA TRILOGY

In *A Sea Trilogy* Golding returns once again to the three-tiered plot concerning the voyage of a shipload of assorted passengers to

the antipodes -- after the manner of *The Pyramid and Darkness Visible*. Like the former, each novel of this trilogy has a separate identity as an independent work of fiction. The narrative in each of the three novels has the common strand of the author participant's journal as the sustaining life-line. However, in addition to this, each novel follows its own complex technique of bolstering this common narrative device, operating in all the three novels of *A Sea Trilogy*. This entails, therefore, a separate analysis of each of the three novel, in a chronological sequence.

rites of passage

In *Rites of Passage* the general nature of the narrative recalls the keeping of a haphazard journal of sorts. This steadily progressing linear narrative is assisted by the ensuing socializing and casual conversation. This latter device works as a catalysing counter-influence on the cock-sure point of view of Edmund Talbot's journal. Acting as a source of information, gossip and enlightenment it reveals a distinct point of view that does not toe the line of Talbot's opinionated record of persons and events.

Another major device -- regarding certain pivotal incidents on board -- that suddenly inverts the earlier points of view, including Talbot's, is Parson Colley's letter incorporated in the journal. This letter functions like a double-edged structural device; it engineers a vital shift in the narrative and offers a second point

of view to many crucial events that have happened; secondly, this letter bursts the cocoon of self-complacent superiority around Talbot's prejudicial nature.

Two points of view -- Summer's during and after Colley's ordeal and Deverel's involving a shift in the narrative time -- help the objective analysis of the '*sacrifice*' of a '*Parson*' as an '*equilateral fool*' with the tacit approval of the Captain. Likewise, Wheeler's disappearance indicates lack of caution and understanding on the part of Talbot, while the incident of the tobacco '*chewing*', credits him with shrewd commonsense.

Thus, it has to be acknowledged that Talbot's journal, Colley's letter and some social-interaction among the passengers themselves draw a boundary of probability around the events that occur on board. Talbot's seemingly rational but biased point of view, is met half-way by the understanding and humble point of view of Colley. Further, Talbot's interaction with Summers, Miss Granham, Wheeler, Captain Anderson and Deverel also offers different points of view that help a consolidated estimate of Talbot.

CLOSE QUARTERS

In *Close Quarters* the narrative continues to be Talbot's journal but its point of view becomes more open and less biased in that it now ceases to be an orchestrated attempt to humour a patronizing god-father. Being rather, a willing exercise of the

author participant, it now lacks constraints and picks up some vitality as a result of a spurt in Talbot's perception. The depiction of events is assisted by crisp and lively conversation that the narrator uses to highlight the course of the voyage in a narrative that continues to remain linear. '*The unexpected*' -- in event and in spectacle -- also strengthens the otherwise modest encounter of the narrator with himself vis-a-vis past actions, beliefs and relationships. The taking aback of the ship; Talbot's concussion; threat of war; sighting of '*Alcyone*'; the return of Wheeler and above all, the germination of love in Talbot are all unexpected events. They offer new points of view to the reader of the shipload of passengers and their lot even while making the narrative lively and interesting.

Talbot's changed perception of some of his erstwhile cronies is to a large extent shared by the reader. But Charles Summers is often used as the sounding board to testify the accuracy of Talbot's reasoning. Thus, Summer's point of view becomes an important aspect of the narrative. However, the main thrust of the narrative is on the social interaction as the narrator is himself the nucleus of action. His social intercourse reveals his jovial albeit condescending nature, his self-absorption, his indifference to others, his developing wisdom as well as his faulty understanding of persons and situation. Thus, his simple nature, his self-bias, his patronizing attitude to others and above all, his delirious

condition make his point of view only marginally reliable.

This justifies the novelist's tactful tapping of other narrative resources to supplement it with more objective and diverse points of view. The vast congregation of passengers on board facilitates this attempt of the novelist to offer multiple points of view of events and individuals in the novel.

When viewed from the angle of a linear plot, the narrative seems to have exploited enough in terms of event and interaction to justify being entitled '*Close Quarters*'.

FIRE DOWN BELOW

Fire Down Below uses, like its other two counterparts, Talbot's journal as the steady source of narration. But now social interaction, intended or accidental, is the major device of effecting a shift in the narrative. Through a display of character-development, new points of view are brought to bear upon Talbot's view. As the voyage draws to a close new perils mount, fresh conflicts emerge, tempers flay and temperaments display new shades, hitherto unnoticed, thereby revising the reader's earlier estimates of character. As a natural fallout of this change in character, points of view accorded to these characters also alter infusing more complexity into the narrative.

Certain important events act as significant narrative devices among which the altercation between Lieutenants Summers and Benét';

- between Benét and Talbot in Prettiman's room; the sighting of ice; the burning of the ship with Lieutenant Summers; the unexpected arrival of 'Alcyone' at Sydney Cove are important. These offer new insights into characters such as Summers, the Prettimans and Talbot, who have been already estimated and accepted.

In brief *Fire Down Below* places a finger on the raw spot of human mind and its reliability which is contextual and relative. Nothing or no one can be perennially accurate, authentic or static whether in position or opinion, respectively. The great voyage of life is a constant kinesis of change and renewal. Through its consistently changing equation of belief and point of view *Fire Down Below* steadily underscores this dynamism of human existence.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GOLDING'S NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

The success of Golding's narrative technique and the essence of its 'switching viewpoints' implies 'that nothing exist except as a sum of ways of seeing it'²⁰: This draws attention to a possible friction in Golding's authorial viewpoint. As Carey argues that Golding's multiple viewpoints suggest a moral 'absolutism' which indicates that while all views are true in part, only one view is true of all --- 'an overview that saw all the other way's.'²⁰

This calls to mind Golding's confessed apprehension and his 'inevitable' admission, that it makes a novelist

sound as though he's playing at God. But ... that is true -- ...in the novel the author is bound to play at God. Because all the time he says this way, not that. And he is dealing with life, and dealing with the universe ...²¹

If one does not take Golding's comment either literally or out of context, it is possible to see it operating in his fiction to the extent humanly possible. In fact, the so-called 'obscurity' or 'incomprehension' is an evidence of Golding's narrative technique ---- an attempt to offer as many shades of reality as is feasible in a given situation. By implication, it is the novelist's capacity to offer a perspective of reality without impinging on his reader's subjective choice -- his freedom to see what he wishes to see. Conversely, :

The reader's subjectivity does not close the novels to other interpretations for their obscurity ensures that the interpretative quest opens up, takes on new twists and turns in the labyrinth that is truth²².

By extending the metaphor of authorial divinity a little further, it is possible to ascertain Golding's stature among his contemporaries some of whom believe with Fawles :

The novelist is still a god, since he creates... what has changed is that we are no longer the gods, of the Victorian image, omniscient and decreeing but in the new theological image with freedom our first principle, not authority.²³

Golding's fiction is the finest testimony to this view.

To conclude, Golding's narrative technique is a potent plank of his fiction. Through an ingenious use of cohesive structures, resourceful temporal shifts and subtle narration, he succeeds in achieving the feel of the actuality in his imaginative reconstruct

of experience. This in turn gives an element of viability to his fiction and of coherence to his novels. Further, the thematic affinity of his novels supports their narrative felicity in giving a unified structure to the 'Golding Novel' despite its complex generic identity with multiple narrative modes operating in it. This enhances the value of the 'Golding Novel' in view of the contemporary concern '*with analysis of narrative discourse... in order to explain the many forms and structures of story telling in world literature and their implications*'.²⁴

6.3.4 A SEA TRILOGY AS A PARADIGM OF THE 'GOLDING NOVEL'

Having discussed the concept and the course of the 'Golding Novel' through its various earlier phases of development, this concluding chapter has dealt with its *final phase*. It has focused on Golding's magnum opus, *A Sea Trilogy* to re-view the process of maturation inherent in the 'Golding Novel', which can be revealed by elucidating the various stages of its growth, its fictional features, technical felicity, stylistic appeal, visionary acumen and above all, the relevance of the Golding criticism to the Golding Corpus.

As a culminating work of the novelist, *A Sea Trilogy* illustrates all these aspects of the 'Golding Novel'. It has been, therefore, discussed as a point of convergence for the two major stages of the 'Golding Novel', namely, the Initial and the Social

Stage. Moreover, this trilogy can also be considered as a paradigm of the 'Golding Novel': in mapping out the literary status of the 'Golding Novel' as well as in commenting on Golding's position as a contemporary novelist, *A Sea Trilogy* can be viewed as the representative text of the Golding canon.

RELEVANCE OF THE TRILOGY AS A PARADIGMATIC WORK

It is expedient at this stage, to establish the relevance of *A Sea Trilogy* to the overall assessment of the 'Golding Novel'. Being the last published fictional work of Golding, *A Sea Trilogy* rightfully becomes the final work of the 'Golding Novel'. In terms of theme and technique, this work can be viewed as the epitome of the 'Golding Corpus'.

An interesting feature of this work is that it reverts to the early nineteenth century context and draws richly from Golding's extensive novelistic experience to re-create a sea-voyage at once contemporary but convincingly real to the modern reader. It can be noticed that various thematic motifs and structural patterns that have been hitherto used by the novelist with great success, have been re-invested in this work. Similarly, its narrative technique and stylistic finesse show a prominent presence of previously used devices. These have been discussed below.

STRATEGIC USE OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

Golding's use of intense individual experiences is a vital feature of his novelistic technique. With its fictional focus on a complex social structure, the plot of *A Sea Trilogy* rests on the bed-rock basis of individual experiences. Interestingly, these individual experiences are lived through amidst a complicated, dense but authentic social milieu and are witnessed by the reader among others. The emphasis on individual experience had been Golding's favourite technique even during the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' -- particularly in its *experiential phase*. But such individual experiences, then, had been isolated and exceptional -- hidden from all but the reader and the individual undergoing that experience.

Such was Simon's encounter with the '*Lord of the Flies*'; the tragic realization of Lok in *The Inheritors*; Pincher Martin's self-damning exercise of defiance on '*Rockall*' or even Sammy's chastening experience in the broom-closet in *Free Fall*. The reader witnessed these experiences exclusively for himself thanks to the omniscient narrator -- even in an autobiographical narrative like Sammy's communiqué in *Free Fall*.

Only in *The Spire*, the last novel of the Initial Stage, this strategy of the novelist altered noticeably. Although Dean Jocelin's experience is vital to the plot, it is never insulated totally from its social context. No doubt, the implications of his

vital experiences come back to him in a private moment through other personal experiences, but they often occur with and among people. Some examples of such experiences are Jocelin's awesome ignorance of Pangall's ritual murder, his discovery of the furtive relationship between Goody and Roger, his testimony during the inquiry and above all his admission to Roger MASON and to Father Adam of his immense moral lapse.

This technique of positing vital individual experiences crucial to the plot-development within the range of on-lookers (besides the reader) continues during the 'moral' and 'metaphysical' phases of the Social Stage. In *The Pyramid* Olly's crude sexual congress with Evie is well within the range of his father's binoculars; Olly's incredulous laughter at De Tracy's private experiences, revealed through photographs, rings through the premises of *'the Crown'*. Bounce's venturing out into town with nothing but hat and shoes on is right under the nose of a peeping neighbourhood.

In *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* the novelist's strategy shifts back partly to closeted individual experiences. This is obviously necessary to safeguard their 'mystique' potential. Such is Matty's 'baptisma' experience under foetid water in Australia; his vision of the spirits at night; or Sophy's experience with the dab-chicks in *Darkness Visible* and Barklay's experience in the Sicilian cathedral in *The Paper Men*. But many of their pivotal

individual experiences occur in public. Matty's emergence and consumption in fire, or Barklay's string of experiences can be sighted as examples, where Golding has manoeuvred to reveal individual experiences to the scrutiny of witnesses other than the reader. Commendably, he has done it without distorting the experiences or without undermining their mysterious dimension.

In *A Sea Trilogy* there is a discernible amalgamations of such private and public experiences of an individual. All the three novels of this work have extremely significant and exceptionally rare individual experiences that occur under the roving eye of the passengers on board. The most significant of these are Parson Colley's *'willing himself to death'*; the sexual debauchery through which the Parson is put; Wheeler's shooting his own head off with a blunderbuss; Talbot's display of love-sick hysteria and Lieutenant Charles Summer's horrible end in a conflagration on board a moored ship.

Of these, particularly Wheeler's suicide and the Parson's death are experiences that are unlikely to occur in the presence of others. But they do occur thus in *A Sea Trilogy* and moreover do so in a most natural and authentic manner. This draws attention to the vivified reality of Golding's plots.

VIVIFICATION OF FICTIVE REALITY

This rare talent is perhaps what makes Golding stand alone

among his contemporaries with regard to viable plots built out of tangible experiences. Notably this feature of Golding's fiction is common to all his novels from *Lord of the Flies* onwards. It shows the novelist's admirable skill in the portrayal of events and circumstances.

In this context, Golding's comment about the Parson, in *A Sea Trilogy* '*dying of shame*' is significant. Claiming that his death was based on a '*historical fact*' Golding admits that '*It cannot be explained unless you can explain Man, and Man cannot be explained. So, all I could do was try to build up circumstances in which ... that kind of a thing could happen ...*'.²⁵

In this marvellous building up of circumstances Golding's unmatched mastery of fictional technique ensures the vivified reality of his fictive world and the emotional palpability of its moral realm.

Perhaps the fictive world he creates in his novels is a testimony to his belief in life and its values. Here, one tends to accept Cox's perceptive analysis of Golding's position among his contemporaries because of its implied conviction of the novelist's faith in life. Cox maintains that :

Typical of the writers of the 50's is an uncertainty about human values, a fundamental doubt about whether life has any importance whatsoever. In contrast, Golding can describe friendship, guilt, pain and horror with a full sense of how deeply meaningful these can be for the individual.²⁶

This comment is all the more significant because it is made in the context of *Lord of the Flies* and came in the wake of critical

allegations of the novelist's pessimistic vision and the novelist's 'initial' acquiescence of this charge. It is pertinent to note here that Golding's subsequent writing and interviews have all borne out the wisdom and the veracity of Cox's analysis. Moreover, the plot of *A Sea Trilogy* through its vivid portrayal of individual experiences with deep moral and metaphysical implications confirms it twice over.

CONFLUX OF THEMES IN THE TRILOGY

As in the case of its plot, *A Sea Trilogy* can be also viewed as paradigmatic of the varied fictional strands of the 'Golding Novel'.

In its thematic thrust on the development of the protagonist from ignorance to understanding the trilogy has vital thematic linkages with other Golding protagonists -- the earlier ones such as Sammy in *Free Fall* and Dean Jocelin in *The Spire* and Oliver in *The Pyramid*.

On the other hand, the protagonist's self-absorption relates it to Pincher Martin's self-centered defiance, Henry Williams' self-seeking materialism in *The Pyramid*, Sophy's awful self-assertion in *Darkness Visible* and Wilf Barklay's self-deceptive escapism in *The Paper Men*.

So also the protagonist's self-interest relate him to the self-centered pursuits of the likes of Henry Williams, the Liar and Phanocles in *The Scorpion God* -- individuals who do not 'belong' to the social group which they exploit for self-interest.

In fine, the various thematic motifs such as survival, self-perception, social identity or spiritual quest are all infused in **A Sea Trilogy**. Thereby, they extend a unique status to this magnum opus of Golding's fictional career as the epitome of the novelist's quest into '*human condition*'. This feature of the trilogy brings to the fore its inherent amalgamatory nature as the final constituent of the '**Golding Novel**'.

THE TRILOGY AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN EARLY AND LATER NOVELS

It can be seen in retrospect that the three novels of the trilogy, achieve among themselves the unexpected distinction of bridging the gap between Golding's earlier novels revolving around '*exiled sensibilities*' and his later novels having a wider social context, a well developed plot and prominent characterization. These three novels together manage this feat by incorporating within their framework the distinct features of Golding's work in its Initial Stage that ends with the **The Spire (1964)** and a few features of the Social Stage that begins with **The Pyramid (1967)**.

Although this ambitious work is an impressive document of the early nineteenth century mores and morals, manners and superstitions, the main plot of **A Sea Trilogy** is simple, being concerned with the protagonists' voyage from England to Australia. And in its isolated social canvas on board a war-hulk exiled over the high seas the trilogy is reminiscent of Golding's earlier

fiction with its simpler plots and insular settings whether in *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* or *Pincher Martin*.

This isolation over high seas establishes the affinity of Talbot's experiences in *A Sea Trilogy* to those of the protagonists of the novels of the Initial Stage : Ralph closeted on the tropical island in *Lord of the Flies*; Lok with his overhang in the mountains and Tuami lonely in his dug-out; and even Pincher isolated on his imaginary 'Rockall'.

However Talbot's story is enacted on board a densely inhabited war-ship amidst constant flashes of humorous episodes tampered by tragic events germinating from clashes of ego and class-consciousness. The over-intimacy born of forced proximity breeds resentment among the shipmates. While this gives rise to an atmosphere of fear and peril among the passengers precariously poised between authority and superstition. Seen from such an angle this trilogy is a step ahead in the direction that the later novels of Golding had taken.

The social milieu in the trilogy is reminiscent of the skillful manoeuvring of the social context in *The Spire* and offers a point of attachment and viability to the self-deceiving actions of an egotistic individual. The class structure of *A Sea Trilogy* in its rigidity, taboos and stifling atmosphere hearkens back to societies in *The Pyramid* and *The Scorpion God*.

In *The Pyramid* the controlling factor for all 'normal'

individuals had been the subtle authority exercised by a shamelessly exploitative class-consciousness. In *Darkness Visible*, the determining factor was the ruthless pursuit of power in an unfeeling, degenerate society represented by Sophy in constant clash with the seemingly impotent forces of good represented by Matty. While in *The Paper Men* the crux of the conflict is self-interest based on a naked exploitation of others and the consequent degradation of self.

Both Barklay, the author and Rick Tucker, his self-appointed biographers, are equal partners in this ignoble exploitation. In fact, by extending Johnston's comment made in the context of *Darkness Visible* to all these novels, it can be maintained that Golding's concern is :

to explore the circumstances and motivations that bring about the convergence of these diverse characters in an event that seems increasingly symbolic of contemporary experience.²⁷

Just as circumstances and motivations throw up a social milieu contaminated by power-lust, humiliation and dehumanization in these novels, so also in *A Sea Trilogy* all these factors come together to portray a gloomy picture of a social group. It is at once fettered by and festered with class determination, authoritarian exercise of power and exploitation as unconcealed means of self-interest. The various events and episodes in the trilogy give ample evidence of a social structure -- oscillating between the helpless victims and the ruthless perpetrators of victimization -- contaminated by a free

play of vice and a niggardliness of spirit. This results in a social context enriched with event and character.

But despite this apparent density of a social context and the extensiveness of canvas, the narrow outline of plot revolving round individuals in isolation holds *A Sea Trilogy* together. Although the conflict in the trilogy rests on the clash of personality, class or interest, it is basically rooted in the moral paucity, perhaps spiritual blindness too, of those involved in it. The socio-intellectual periphery of this conflict is clearly demarcated by the two factors : the isolation over the high seas and the terror generated by the peril of the deep.

Together, this isolation and terror reduce the status of the complex plot of the trilogy to that of Golding's early fiction. One encounters again the isolated group -- so typical of his earlier novels -- exiled from the normal influences of and contact with ordinary life. Golding had once exploited such an insular milieu as a thematic pre-requisite and technical requirement. He returns to a similarly isolated social group in his final work.

In other words, the society one encounters in *A Sea Trilogy* is an insular social group remotely controlled by the willy-nilly influences that over-exposure to the sea can generate. As such it remains a society that normally functions in an abnormal manner being in a process of constant flux even while stoutly resisting change and professing rigidity. Due to frequent emergency this

social group is constantly dangling between a strict adherence to rules and a complete wash-out of any sensible pattern of living.

Hence the trilogy effects a compromise between the exceptional and isolated societies in Golding's earlier novels prone to destruction and those normal-seeming ones in his later novels that show sparks of vitality even while they are doomed to disaster. Despite Golding's delicate compromise or perhaps because of it, the society one encounters in *A Sea Trilogy* is at once realistically contemporary and symbolically universal. To use John Fowles words about the author's craft of fiction, Golding has tried to 'create world as real as, but other than the world that is. Or was.'²⁸ In view of its vivified reality 'at a remove' from the narrow constraints of actual space and time -- so detrimental to the universal appeal of a work of fiction -- Golding's ship-board company comes closest to the social milieu in the novels of the *transitional phase* particularly of *The Spire*.

CHARACTERIZATION OF A SEA TRILOGY

The reference to the societies in the two novels draws the issue of character also to the surface. This is inevitable because societies do not become convincingly real without characters who vivify them. Hence, it is pertinent to briefly refer to the characterization in *A Sea Trilogy* in relation to that in *The Spire*. This follows logically too in view of the fact that Jocelin in *The*

• **Spire** has been viewed in this study as the matrix of character during the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel', while character in the Social Stage has been discussed as culminating in *A Sea Trilogy*. As such by noting the resemblance of characterization in the two novels, it will be possible to uncover the process of amalgamation in *A Sea Trilogy* in terms of character.

At this juncture a reference to the definition of character is necessary. Fictionally speaking character is '*the representation of persons in narrative and dramatic works*'. Since in Golding's novels characters do not remain mere '*representation of persons*' but evolve to a higher level of coming through as individuals themselves, the definition of '*character*' of a person is also useful to this discussion. To quote Norman Holland, '*A psychoanalyst defines 'a character'' [the classic statement is Fenichel's] as 'the habitual mode of bringing into harmony the tasks presented by internal demands and by the external world'*'.²⁹

Keeping this perception of character in view it can be seen that characterization in *The Spire* as in the other novels of the Initial Stage, is revealed vividly but partially. Although life-like and diverse, Jocelin and the other characters in *The Spire* come through as human beings -- individuals, who are forceful or pliant -- but victims of circumstances and impulses. Being sparse and stark, characterization in that novel can show only a slice of contemporary society or of life. They are not intended to reveal

the character of the society or the age in its totality.

On the other hand, the trilogy begins with a ship-load of enthusiastic passengers, each in his own way bent on fashioning a new life in a new society along their cherished goals. However, gradually the voyage reduces them to a hulk, full of desperate, short-tempered, beaten people, put through all kinds of chastening experiences and forced compromises. Thus, the voyage prepares them for the worst, the least of which is an imminent death. In a way all the passengers share a common objective and the same circumstances. As such, at least during the course of the voyage they are able to show individual responses to the same external situation.

But in doing so, over a long period, this unique sea-experience generates in many of the passengers -- the abler ones at any rate -- a stamina and a vitality to face life with daring and optimism. No doubt, a few of the weaker characters are subdued by their individual characteristics when confront with experiences for which they are no match. Parson Colley dies of mortification; the daredevil Deverel is reduced to a drunken bundle of nerves finally ejected out of the ship into 'the Alcyone'; the all-knowing Wheeler is driven to a terrified suicide; Charles Summers, the husband of the ship, is consumed into the funeral pyre of his vessel in an unfortunate accident from which he 'opts' not to escape.

However, there are also a host of others who take the rain and

the shine of every ensuing experience to evolve into stronger and better individuals, one way or another. The strong-willed social philosopher Mr. Prettiman and the domineering governess Miss Granham slowly come together to become a largely understanding, pragmatic and affectionate, if somewhat eccentric, couple dedicated to social reform and democracy; particularly Mr. Prettiman despite his crippling debility is nonetheless indomitable in his will to spread education. Thereby, the couple dedicate themselves to the dissemination of the values of civilization to the natives through the use of a printing press -- stealthily but boldly carried by them in the face of Government charges of espionage against him.

Lt. Benét, supposedly love-torn and dejected, rises to a challenging situation in a near-sinking ship with enthusiasm and intelligence to outgrow his emotional estrangement by focussing his affection on the gloomy, foul-tempered, generally disliked Capt. Anderson; Edmund Talbot himself a victim of constant self-ignorance, self-imprecation, superiority-complex, injury, love-sickness, jealousy, gradually develops into an amicable young man - maturer, humbler, understanding and sympathetic.

PARADIGMATIC FEATURE OF A SEA TRILOGY

The central redeeming factor that identifies A Sea Trilogy distinctly from all Golding's earlier fiction is that all these characters -- good, bad and indifferent -- are delivered to their

geographical destination in an unexpectedly achieved safe landing. This is the first time when Golding's protagonist has achieved an emotional or spiritual redemption and survived it physically to relish evolution in a material sense.

Hitherto, the final resolution had been always qualified by the famous 'gimmick ending' as in the cases of *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors*, *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall* or mystified as in *The Spire*. Alternately, during the Social Stage the resolution had given rise to a kind of vague futility as in *The Pyramid* or at any rate to a sort of material loss balancing a hint of spiritual gain as in *Darkness Visible* or *The Paper Men*.

But *A Sea Trilogy* makes the emotional development and spiritual evolution run parallel to material expectations too. One is achieved without denying the other and therefore, the trilogy ends on a note of hard-earned happiness for all concerned. The '*sacrificial goats*' are here too, as in the other fiction of Golding. But they do not strike a sour note by darkening the moment of satisfaction of those who survive the peril and the rigour of a sea-adventure.

The traumatic experience at sea, no doubt makes the survivors more subdued individuals but yet they retain their joie-de-vivre, even in a foreign land which is expectedly mediocre and yet looked-forward-to. This trilogy seems to be Golding's own attempt -- after having gauged the mystery of life -- to surface from the depths of

uncertainty to the firmer grounds of accepting the ordinariness of existence as the fundamental basis for all elevated experience.

It can be seen that the three novels that comprise *A Sea Trilogy* help to verify the specific features of the 'Golding Novel' with which this study had begun. They also bring into focus those features of the 'Golding Novel' that have been retained through its various phases and those that have undergone a transformation over the years. Further, they also indicate the extent to which such a transformation has been an effective novelistic device. This naturally facilitates an assessment of the development of the 'Golding Novel' and thereby of Golding's technique as a novelist from *Lord of the Flies* (1954) to *A Sea Trilogy* (1991).

6 (B) CONCLUSION

As this work steers to a close it must needs reflect the central focus of this study, the objectives behind it and the extent to which they have been realised. The motive behind this study of Golding's novels was to elucidate the concept, the nature and the growth of the 'Golding Novel'. Eventually, this led to the need to get to know the very sensibility behind the genesis of these novels.

A closer acquaintance with Golding, the man and the novelist, revealed an exceptionally gifted personality uniquely wrought, among other things, by the complex contemporary experiences including the World War II. Nurtured alike by Egyptology, the Greek language and tragedy, Shakespeare, archaeology, navigation and music, Golding's personality grew into an enriched amalgam of heterogeneous influences.

Naturally endowed with an equal pull towards the rational, the physical, the ordinary and the irrational, the metaphysical, the numinous dimensions of life, Golding's personality has shaped the ambience in his fiction.

This feature gives the 'Golding Novel' its exclusive ambience and its composite identity. This study of the distinct phases of the 'Golding Novel' reveals its strengths and attempts to pin-point

its weaknesses. The greatest asset of the 'Golding Novel' is being the established canon of a great contemporary novelist. This secures its position in the realm of fiction for a long time to come. Its distinctness endows an exclusive, if secluded, position on Golding as a novelist '*sui generis*'. While this is an heartening commendation for the mythopoeic, visionary themes in the 'Golding Novel', it is an uneasy shrugging off of their tremendous fictional potential and technical calibre. In other words, it testifies to the novelist's rare artistic acumen comparable to the great visionary masters of the genre such as Dostoyevsky, Joyce, Henry James, Tolstoy, Hardy, Sterne and Camus. But it overlooks the rightful place of the novelist also in the ranks of such master-craftsmen of fiction as Dickens, Jane Austen, Flaubert or Conrad, among others.

The Whole endeavour of this thesis has been to re-view such a critical assessment however imposing or over-powering in its pronouncement. The phase-wise analysis undertaken in the course of this study has therefore attempted to re-assert the thematic as well as the fictional calibre of Golding's novels and to elucidate their rightful place among the best of fictional canon whether in the present century or in the previous one.

It is necessary to emphasize at this point that, this is not an adulatory pronouncement but a discreet assessment made by a judicious reading of the Golding Corpus and a careful sifting of the

vast critical work that has grown up around it. A word about Golding Criticism would be in place here. The general critical consensus about the earlier novels of Golding has been that they are fabular or mythogenic in nature and different from his later social fiction. However, a systematic attempt to study the entire 'Golding Novel' as a unified corpus reveals that it is not a body of semi-didactic works alone. Although most of his novels have been studied and analysed singly or severally, there have not been many attempts to study all his works of fiction together as a cohesive structure and not many have attempted to identify the stages of the 'Golding Novel'. The phase-wise study of the 'Golding Novel' in this study attempts to focus on the significance of different stages of his development as a novelist.

A host of previously published critical works, both articles and books, have greatly helped this study of the 'Golding Novel'. Among those that have offered an insightful perspective into Golding's novels, a special mention has to be made of Philip Redpath's *William Golding, A Structural Reading of His Fiction* (1986), Don Crompton's *A View From The Spire* (1985) edited and completed by Julia Briggs, Arnold Johnston's *Of Earth and Darkness* (1980), Virginia Tiger's *The Dark Fields of Discovery* (1974) and of course, Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor's *William Golding, A Critical Study* published (1967) and revised (1984).

Of the critical material that has been of primary importance

in the understanding of Golding the man, a particular mention has to be made of Stephen Medcalf's **William Golding (1975)**, in the **Writers and Their Work Series** and the critical anthology edited by John Carey **William Golding : The Man and His Books, A Tribute on his 75th Birthday (1986)**. In addition to these, this thesis owes vital clues for the interpretation of Golding's mind and work to the numerous interviews, questionnaires and discussions in which Golding had participated. A special mention deserves to be made of his interviews given to Frank Kermode, published in part in **Books and Bookmen**; to James R. Baker in **Twentieth Century Literature**; to John Carey published in **William Golding : The Man and His Books** and the panel discussion compiled by Punitha Sushila in **Literature Alive** vol. 2, No. 1, June 1988. Finally, the perceptive articles judiciously compiled in **William Golding, Novels, 1954-67** edited by Norman Page need to be acknowledged for their diverse points of view.

The important critical canon that is related to this study of the '**Golding Novel**' can be usefully identified according to their critical approach with respect to Golding's novels. Critics such as Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, Virginia Tiger or John Peter are more concerned with the modal and structural analysis of Golding's work. Don Crompton and Arnold Johnston have a combined approach to form and content of his novels. Redpath's reading is mainly structural, while Stephen Medcalf, John Fowles, Peter Green dwell both on the

man and his work. Peter Moss and Anthony Barrett focus on his personality, while John Bayley and Charles Monteith purely reveal his '*impersonal authority*'. If Norman Page and Craig Raine discuss Golding's Sources; James Gordin, Frank Kermode, Barbara Everett, Samuel Hynes, Delbore-Garrant deal with other salient features of his work such as his '*gimmick*' endings, his '*intellectual economy*', his '*pity*', his '*moral models*' and his childhood memories and environment, respectively.

Kinhead-Weekes and Gregor are among the earliest Golding critics to discover '*family resemblance*' in Golding's novels; Virginia Tiger identifies their use of '*reversal*' as an '*ideographic coda*'; John Peter uncovers the proselytism in his work, whereas C. B. Cox commends its fictional perfection.

A particularly vituperative attack on Golding's work has been made by hasty reviewers. Some critics such as Rexroth find fault with Golding's novelistic potential for having used other works as launching pads for his early novels. A large number of other critics have either mis-judged or mis-read his novels in their haste. They have been affronted by authorly-snares such as sea-boots in Pincher Martin, or the structural compactness of *The Spire*, elusiveness of *Darkness Visible* or by factual errors such as Piggy's spectacles as source of fire when they have lenses that correct myopoeia.

But, by far, serious critics have seen the worth of Golding's fiction. If they have refrained from studying it from the angle of a

unified body of fictional works, the reason has often been a limited interest or the availability of the number of published works at a given time. Some of the most comprehensive studies of Golding's fiction in recent years have been those by Philip Redpath and S.J. Boyd. In the event of the novelist's passing away, there is some likelihood of more copious and insightful addition being made to Golding Criticism.

In conclusion, it can be maintained that this study has elaborately foregrounded the thematic, structural and stylistic growth of the 'Golding Novel' over nearly four decades beginning with Lord of the Flies (1954). With the help of the insight developed during the course of this work, it has been possible to identify the various thematic, technical and temporal shifts in the process of maturation evident in the 'Golding Novel'. These shifts in turn have facilitated the mapping of the five phases of the 'Golding Novel' during its two major stages of development.

The phase-wise development of the 'Golding Novel' has helped discern the following main features of its maturation :

- (i) a planned and organic structural basis that the novelist, invariably gives his novels,
- (ii) a gradually evolving fictional calibre of the 'Golding Novel',
- (iii) a thematic contiguity unbrokenly maintained despite totally heterogeneous plots,

(iv) a steady use of linguistic cogency and stylistic innovation, and

(v) a continual experimentation with well-tried techniques.

A brief review of the chapter-wise approach adopted in this study will help reveal the relevance of this observation.

In Chapter One, a short discussion of Golding's life and work is followed by the analysis of the 'Golding Novel' as a comprehensive term denoting entire Golding fiction. After elucidating, its salient features, this chapter notes greater 'family resemblance' in the five initial 'novels' of Golding and so moots the need for a study of the 'Golding Novel' in two stages, the Initial and the Social Stage.

Chapters Two and Three, accordingly, study the novels of the Initial Stage in two distinct phases respectively. They are the *experimental phase* and the *transitional phase*. In Chapter Two the generic position of the 'Golding Novel' as multi-modal fiction is established by referring to the first three Golding novels, namely *Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*. Chapter Three reveals the thematic affinity in the novels of the Initial Stage and illustrates the gradual transition evident in *Free Fall* and *The Spire*, the last two novels of this stage. An elaborate discussion of the narrative, structural and perspectival features of the novels of the Initial Stage is also undertaken in this chapter.

Chapters Four, Five and Six deal with the Social Stage of the

'Golding Novel' through its *moral*, *metaphysical* and *final* phases respectively. Chapter Four notes the change evident in the works of the *moral phase* -- *The Pyramid* and *The Scorpion God*. It reveals Golding's moral position as a point of attachment for these two works. Chapter Five uses *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* to uncover the metaphysical element embedded in Golding's themes, still sharp despite his powerful use of social fiction. The Sixth, the final Chapter, contains two parts : the initial part reviews *A sea Trilogy* as a paradigmatic work of the 'Golding Novel'; while the latter part is the conclusion for the entire thesis. It claims the status of multi-pronged fiction for the 'Golding Novel'. Further it asserts that it is a composite novelistic structure made up of distinct, independent fictional artifacts woven into a cohesive work vitalized by the spirit of an overlapping theme.

It is useful to see how a cogent thematic envelope exercises structural binds to give a cohesive identity to the 'Golding Novel'. Since voyage as a thematic motif has been common to almost all of Golding's fictional work, it is useful to extend it to this concluding statement on the 'Golding Novel'. In fact, the cycle of novels that follow one after another with a certain chronological gap reveals that the growth of the 'Golding Novel' from *Lord of the Flies* to *A Sea Trilogy* has been a veritable fictional voyage for the 'Golding Novel' through its various phases. As has been claimed often, this long drawn voyage had begun in *Lord of the Flies*

(1954) as a quest into the human condition qualified by the pessimistic discovery that mankind is universally evil.

Naturally, this discovery impelled a further quest into the ethical origin of this evil and hit on the rock-bottom of a probable moral lapse underlying the anthropological evolution of humankind in *The Inheritors* (1955). Such a moral lapse implied the commission of sin and the experience of attendant guilt. This, in turn, necessitated gauging the extent of depravity to which a willful sinner can go, as in *Pincher Martin* (1956), the last novel of the *experimental phase* of the Initial Stage.

The perception of '*self-willed*' depravity in Man encouraged the '*Golding Novel*' during the *transitional phase* to probe the relation between free will and fall in *Free Fall* (1959). The analysis of this conflict between will and fall resulted, in *The Spire* (1964), in an encounter with self and ended with Jocelin's self realisation at the end of the Initial Stage. This was the natural culmination of this voyage of the '*Golding Novel*', which had started as a quest into the evil that emanates from ignorance of self in his first novel, *Lord of the Flies*.

During the Social Stage of the '*Golding Novel*', through its '*moral*', '*metaphysical*' and '*final*' phases, his search for awareness of self as a necessary step towards self-realization seems to have pushed Golding towards the social novel. It can be seen that through the late 60's beginning with *The Pyramid* (1967) to the end

of the 80's culminating in the publication of *A Sea Trilogy* (1991), the 'Golding Novel' had been projecting the social milieu. But it was done without compromising its initial concern with human condition and the spiritual blindness of mankind as the source of that chronic condition.

In fact, through a broader social canvas, Golding has succeeded in giving an hitherto new dimension to the problem of inherent evil in mankind. By projecting it as being partly fostered by the decadent values of a materialistic social structure, Golding is able to focus on the spiritual void in contemporary society that helplessly clings to obsolete mores as expressed in the novel *The Pyramid* (1967) or pursues futile ambitions as in *Darkness Visible* (1979) and *The Paper Men* (1984). What is true of these materialistic and seemingly pragmatic contemporary societies becomes more sharply clear when placed against the simple pursuits and the spiritual or moral priorities of societies in the ancient times that one encounters in *The Scorpion God* (1971).

Once again, focusing attention on the age-old conflict between material pursuits and moral priorities of life, Golding rakes up the question of the desirability of moral objectives before individuals and society in *A Sea Trilogy* (1991).

In brief, Golding suitably distances his thematic enactment in time, place and context to offer a bird's eye view of the social and moral issues and individual preferences or prejudices. What is

noteworthy in Golding's choice of social context is that its remoteness guarantees at once the universality for the 'Golding Novel' and underlines the particular appeal of the individual novels as works with particularized plots. This indirectly underscores Golding's strategy as a maker of fiction as well as a maker of contemporary myths -- a mythologer who conjoins the worlds of matter and spirit. This in turn explains the extraordinary blend of the gross and the subtle in the 'Golding Novel'.

Interestingly, the two major planks of the 'Golding Novel', his novelistic technique and his thematic preoccupation elucidate the novelist's two-pronged approach : his primary fidelity to the ordinary human experiences and his uncompromising awareness of the extraordinariness of life. While Golding's novelistic technique bears testimony to his confessed belief in the rational world, the thematic thrust of his fiction is always with the world of spirit.

This observation is supported by Golding's oft-quoted claim that he is a '*universal pessimist*' but a '*cosmic optimist*'. In fact, his own interpretation of the two terms, the '*universe*' and the '*cosmos*', reveals the crux of his seemingly-at-odds stand between the ordinariness and the extraordinariness of life. The cross-influences on his mind and art mentioned earlier have strangely fed the apparent duality of his novelistic approach represented by his themes and technique. His faith in Christianity, his intimacy with the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians and his '*Aeschylean*'

preoccupation with Man,' drive Golding to examine 'man at an extremity', 'man tested like building material'. At the same time, the combined impact of the Shakespearean drama, the pictographic precision of Greek language and the down-to-earthness of archaeology, inspire him to give a realistic yet timeless contextual and stylistic dimension to that portrayal.

Thus, despite the novelist's continual concern with 'human condition', his distinct technique makes his novels independent works of fiction. They display every sign of being works with powerfully innovative narratives and compact structures, enlivened with a linguistic simplicity rarely matched in contemporary fiction. The variety and distinctness of plots and their vivid characterization enhances the appeal of their story. So also its imaginative reconstruct gives them a high fictional potential. This establishes Golding among some of the best story-tellers and fiction-writers of the world. Moreover it reveals his sharp intonation with the requirements of his reader. This shrewd judgement of the reader's pulse relates Golding's to none other than Shakespeare. In fact, what E. E. Stoll observes in the context of Shakespearean drama applies to the letter to Golding's fiction too.

'...he observes not so much the probabilities of the action, or the psychology of the character, as the psychology of the audience, for whom both action and character are framed'.³⁰

In the same way Golding's thematic thrust creates in his work that unmistakable, but subtle, bond of thematic affinity common to

all his novels. This element of thematic affinity so compellingly present in all his novels instills in the oeuvre of Golding a cohesiveness akin to that in the Shakespearean Drama. Thereby, it facilitates the view that Golding's work has a unified structure as the 'Golding Novel'. Moreover, it becomes the evidence of its uniqueness -- notably described as the work of a novelist '*sui generis*' by no less a fellow-novelist than John Fowles.

This thematic pre-occupation also testifies to their allegorical essence and mythogenic power. In fact, Golding's talent for works of fiction with a subtle allegorical potential and high degree of mythopoeia evidently traces its lineage to the greatest mythogenic or allegorical canon of world literature. It places the 'Golding Novel' in the hollowed precincts of literature that deserves to be called the cultural milestone and spiritual testament of humanity to posterity. Moreover, it ensures Golding's place in the pantheons of mythopoeic creative writers such as Aeschylus, Spenser, Milton, Shakespeare, Eliot, Tolstoy among others. However, the notable feature of his mythopoeia is that he does not endorse the existing myths; he subverts them, remakes them or questions them in order to highlight their relevance to the contemporary life and experience. This makes him an outstanding myth-maker who surmounts the contemporary unease about the '*explanatory*' nature of myths as instruments of justifying the existing order.

Concealed in this path-breaking mythopoeia are perhaps the

seeds of Golding's Weltanschauung. As such a word about his philosophy of life and world-view will not be out of place here. Product of a rational but pious household, Golding has always claimed the inward magnetism of the mysterious. His extreme sensitivity as a child, accentuated by his self-admitted 'Cornishness', was magnified by the horrors of the War. This led to his 'dark pessimism' duly gleaned into the novels of the *experimental phase*, mainly *Lord of the Flies*, as the forceful subversion of contemporary myths of progress, civilization and rationalism.

Golding's well-aided indictment of Marx, Darwin and Freud as 'the three most crashing bores of the Western world' and of the 'simplistic popularization of their ideas' as leading 'our world into a mental strait jacket' helps to understand his post-war disillusionment. The existentialistic apprehensions reflected through his artist-protagonists --- particularly Sammy in *Free Fall* --- reveals the efforts he seems to have made to grapple with the issue himself.

This relates him to his contemporary fellow-novelists on the Continent, who were also tossed apart by the issues pertaining to existence. But Golding's response to the existentialistic quandary reveals his distinct stand with regard to the issue and focuses on the unique blend of his spiritualism. His is neither the secure middle-class Anglican brand of Christian hope, nor the fatalistic

surrender to the forces of heaven in the mode of the Greek tragedy, nor again the confused or cynical contemporary oscillation between the extremes of nihilism and altruism.

Golding's spirituality follows an even but singular path. Beginning with hope in humanity, Golding finds his liberal humanism shattered by World War II. However, he gradually manages to pick up the broken thread of belief in Free Fall but it is, as yet, a split-belief. In *The Spire*, which is the last work of the Initial Stage, Golding finally pieces together his shattered beliefs. The acceptance of human depravity and the belief in the duality of life is the essence of his faith.

Armed with this acceptance, Golding probes the issue of social morality in the novels of the *moral phase*. Driven by the understanding of the need for '*homo moralis*', he sets a high store by self-perception as the basis for self-realization. The two novels of the *metaphysical phase* display the novelist's highest imaginative fictionalization of individuals in the process of such self-realization. The trilogy of the *final phase* foregrounds the spontaneous upsurge of Golding's optimism for Man as man. While it opens new vistas of speculation for the critics, it gives this study the feeling of having arrived at the end of its own quest into the 'Golding Novel'. It is now possible to assert with conviction Golding's masterful achievement as a novelist. In the words of Malcolm Bradbury :

Golding's work challenges many of the liberal and humanistic conventions of much British fiction, and there is a certain timelessness about the prose --- though not of the technique--- which makes it stand monumentally apart from much contemporary writing. But it is and will remain a central contribution to the modern British novel.³¹

There cannot be a more apt post-script for the 'Golding Novel' than this whole-hearted appraisal from a fellow novelist-critic.

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