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'.

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 ship full 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 gun deck, 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. Broacklebank'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


   Journal of Shivaji University, Kolhapur.


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)
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 Benet 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
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 ...'. 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 refocusses 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 Deverel'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'. 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 revaluation 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 Chumly 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 godfather, 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 Johnston 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'. 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 unrequisitioned 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 psychoanalytical 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 shipmates 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. 28]. Accused of being 'loveless' by the rash Lt. Benêt, 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 202-3].

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 Godfather'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 kapis ...' [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 be.

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. 3]. 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. 6]. 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 ...'. 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 'Golding 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 Neanderthalers
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 re-
-lives 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'.

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'.

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'. 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 personality.

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-vestiie 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
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. He seems to be even more closely based on Golding's own father than was the latter. The character of De Tracy in 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.
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 characters 14.

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 dachicks, 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" Dowlishs 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 loathsome 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 condensed 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 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. 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, Künstleroman. 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?'. 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'. 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
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 GOLDSING'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'. 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 ways'.

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 'obscenity' 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 truth 22.

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'.

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 finesses show a prominent presence of previously used devices. These have been discussed below.
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 experimental 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 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 onlookers (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 'baptismal' 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 amalgamation 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 FICTIONAL 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 Sua 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 ...'.

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.

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.


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.'

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
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 dare-devil 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 focusing 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 facilitate 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).
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 overpowering 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 semididactic 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*

(1966), 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


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 Gindin, Frank Kermode, Barbara Everett, Samuel Hynes, Delbère-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.

Kinkead-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 Jooelin'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

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 novel's 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 intuation 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'.

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 œuvre 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- aired 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:

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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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4. See The Dark Fields of Discovery and Of earth and Darkness for the discussion of thematic recurrence in Golding's novels.


11. Ibid. p. 223.

12. Iris Murdoch, 'Against Dryness: A Polemical Sketch', The


17. Graham Hough in a review of Free Fall made this suggestion. See Listener, 5 November, 1959.


21. Ibid. pp. 186-95


