CHAPTER FOUR

GOLDING'S SOCIAL NOVEL: MORAL PHASE

4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

The 'Golding Novel' had been described by sympathetic critics as fiction with a multi-modal visage, generally belonging to the broad confines of the novel. Now its being ushered into the tradition of the English Novel poses a problem since the post-War
English Novel is itself a much-forked road. It has hardly retained a cognizably homogeneous tradition. Diverted as it has been from the mainstream of the European novel, it has often been accused by critics such as Gilbert Phelps, of degenerating into "parochialism and defeatism", rarely attaining a unified vision or the sustained solidity of achievement that rises from it.

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

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

Probably as a result of this reclaimed view-point, the novelist's approach during the Social Stage of the 'Golding Novel' manifests a distinct thematic thrust in individual novels, despite a
common socio-realistic mode. For instance, the focus of the earlier themes of the Social Stage is on the socio-moral basis of human life; the two following novels -- not chronologically sequential -- show a clear concern with themes of 'metaphysical' nature; while the last published trilogy -- though its constituent novels were published over a decade -- displays a clearly amalgamatory streak.

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

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

4.1.2 GOLDING'S MORAL POSITION

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

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

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

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

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

This hesitant admission of belief is an index of Golding's changed attitude to human morality: a departure from the total loss of faith in Man during the early fifties to a reluctant assent of resurging hope in 'human perfectibility' and towards the need for social 're-organization' in the early sixties. As recently as 1976, Golding conceded in his 'Address to Les Anglicistes' that those years of bleak pessimism were:
years of wordless brooding that brought me not so much to an opinion as to a stance. (A Moving Target, p. 163).

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

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

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

In his own words:

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

Somewhere between the above two concessions of varying degree made by Golding, in a more hopeful and less recalcitrant attitude than before to human society, lies Golding's stance towards his own social fiction. It is of no little significance to a serious student of the 'Golding Novel' that his most widely accepted work of realistic social fiction, The Pyramid, was published in 1967 -- during the period between Golding's tentative acknowledgement of the need for proper social order and his forceful plea for a need for
mankind to evolve to a higher status as moral beings. Obviously, the moral basis for a genuinely 'social' life was dominant in his mind at this stage. His essays titled 'A Moving Target', and 'Utopias and Antiutopias' in A Moving Target (1962) make this socio-moral equation vis-a-vis the novelist's 'approach to a novel' quite clear. Manifestly depicting the stagnation of Stilbourne Society, The Pyramid is acutely concerned with the moral degeneration of contemporary society in the absence of any revitalizing values. Although the novel exploits the individual experiences and memories of its protagonist, they are incidental to the revelation of the moral paucity of society at large.

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

It is, therefore, useful to see these two works in their unified thrust, as constituents of what may be termed for convenience as the moral phase of the 'Golding Novel'. Hence, in this chapter we will undertake a detailed analysis of the thematic potential of these two works. Such an analysis will reveal the
distinct affinity of theme and vision that these two works of fiction display despite structural, contextual and narrative diversity. This will also facilitate the evaluation of the 'changed face' of the 'Golding Novel' during the Social Stage with its three distinct phases. Similarly, in keeping with the strategy adopted at the end of Chapter Three -- a chapter that rounds up the discussion of the Initial Stage -- an in-depth analysis of Characterization, Narrative and Point of View will be attempted in Chapter Six.

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

4.1.3 THE PYRAMID: A SHIFT IN GOLING'S APPROACH

As this discussion is aimed at an analysis of the moral phase of the 'Golding Novel', there is an evident need to understand the clear shift in the novelist's approach in The Pyramid. In fact, only after inquiring into the need for such a shift, its nature and its significance, a meaningful understanding of the thematic potential of the novel will be possible.
When one thinks of the singular path that Golding has trodden for over a decade, a host of questions spring at once to mind: Was Golding finding his own brand of writing monotonous? Did he find 'his' type of novel unyielding in terms of literary success or creative fulfilment? Was it no longer an adequate vehicle for his vision in life? Or was Golding unable to suppress the much-spoken of streak of humour and wit in himself? Did he perhaps feel that humour would meet the demands of his present theme more squarely than a serious attitude? Or was there some other reason altogether for this change?

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

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

It is fairly clear that Golding's changed approach in The Pyramid is not an accident nor is it a deliberate attempt. It is an imaginative coincidence where the theme and the plot meet in an
author, on the lookout for an adequate vehicle to put across his vision of the world around him. Thus it is the fusion of theme and vision that decide what the novelist's approach to the plot should be. Here again, we have Golding's own view of this process:

The writer does not choose his theme at all. The themes choose the writer. (A Moving Target p. 1681)

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

It is also quite likely that Golding visualises the contemporary society as poised for imminent change: either ideologically moving towards such a change or pathologically needing it. This might have to a great extent influenced the choice of social themes for 'Golding Novel' at this stage -- themes centering on the issue of social stagnation, the need for change and the quality of change suitable to revitalize a moribund society.

Perhaps The Pyramid and The Scorpion God are Golding's attempts to awaken the contemporary sensibility to an immediate issue that has been clinched thus by Trilling:

It is probable that at this time we are about to make great changes in our social system. The world is ripe for such changes, and if they are not made in the direction of greater social liberality, the direction forward, they will almost of
A careful analysis of The Pyramid will reveal just such a social system adhering to obsolete social norms unable to substitute them with positive social values, thereby degenerating into a moribund community justified by its appellation 'Stilbourne'.

In order to expose the sham values practised under a sly cover of social propriety, Golding reverts to humour, often coarse and raw, to penetrate the invisible, almost invulnerable, sheath of hypocrisy and snobbery thrown over all social interaction in Stilbourne. This had been long overdue in the 'Golding Novel' considering Golding's concern 'to mirror the world' around him. Despite his gradual incorporation of social context into his previous novels:

what had never really come into focus was the social determinism of the English class system, about which ... Golding felt strongly.

As a natural consequence of this new focus on social incongruency, a distinct feature now makes its appearance in Golding's fiction -- his comic treatment of the theme in The Pyramid. His novels had so far given the impression of a grim and determined sensibility bent on uncovering the dark, unfathomable dimension of human existence. But in The Pyramid, Golding appears to have relented from his severe and no-nonsense attitude.

However, concessions have to be made to Golding's occasional handling of the comic situation or character even as early as Lord of the Flies. The character of Piggy in that novel is a
living testimony to Golding's skill in handling comedy, particularly the presence in the novelist of the humorous and observant vein so necessary to comedy. Moreover, Piggy's portrayal in *Lord of the Flies* generates in the reader the subtle recognition of the English social hierarchy as well as of the novelist's acute awareness of its ills. In fact Golding's caustic comment regarding the rigidity of the English society reveals the extent of his resentment of it. He has said without mincing words:

I think an Englishman who is not aware of the classic disease of society in this country, that is to say, the rigidity of its class-structure -- he's not really aware of anything, not in social terms.

Given Golding's awareness of this social ailment, Piggy as the natural victim of the whole group, appears to have been picked up by the novelist not so much by accident as by design. Golding may have chosen him perhaps by an unconscious desire to underscore his own deep-rooted resentment of the hypocrisy and social discrimination that lie immediately below:

the dreadful English scheme of things... which so accepted social snobbery as to elevate it to an instinct. [The Hot Gates, p. 168].

In fine, in this spontaneous revelation of the social reality in *Lord of the Flies* are concealed the seeds of Golding's otherwise dormant comic sense and his sharp atunement to the English social structure with those 'unbelievable gradations' [The Hot Gates, p. 168].
In fact, the attitude of the rest of the boys to Piggy's, name, his 'as-mar', his ungainly obesity, his myopia and his precocious commonsense expressed through his inimitable country accent -- are all a pointer to Golding's shrewdly perceptive eye, his facility in capturing the precise mood in words and above all, his stunning ability to draw with the minimum of strokes a vivid picture of an ungainly boy in his lower-middle-class milieu.

This delicate social equation seems to be often lurking behind Golding's thematic pre-occupation, unexpectedly surfacing through a casual phrase or two; it is there to be instinctively recognized by the reader than to be grossly exhibited by the novelist. In Pincher Martin, for example, the protagonist's sneering and vicious attitude to Mary Lovell and his 'need to assert and break' her goes a shade beyond his all-engulfing ego and his fear of the 'summer lightening' that subconsciously terrifies him. It is related in some strange way to that 'accent immediately elevated to the top drawer' that he succeeds in reducing to:

Nothing out of the top drawer now. Vowels with the burr of the country on them [Pincher Martin pp. 149-52].

This off-handed affinity with the mode of the social novel is discernible also in Free Fall, but to a larger extent. In this novel Golding's portrayal of Sammy's preoccupation with his own fall runs parallel to his often humorous but at times touching reference to Sammy's social background. For that matter, Sammy is the first Golding protagonist that the reader is able to
satisfactorily 'place' in social reality. The casual comedy that recreates the quarrel between Sammy's Ma and her neighbours at the bog, the few seemingly indifferent strokes that describe the drink-sodden old soldier -- the watchman of Sammy's school -- are in themselves examples of Golding's formidable talent in handling social fiction with unmatched facility.

In The Spire, the requirements of the story preclude the possibility of humour or light banter from coming into the narrative. Yet, the minute observation of human temperament and passions combine with an amazing imaginative skill to create a social milieu at once contemporary and convincing. Such an ability to blend these twin aspects of humour and social reality in his novels go a long way to support Golding's sway over realistic social fiction displayed in The Pyramid, albeit with a spirit of 'innovation'. As Skilton's perceptive assessment notes:

In being a funny book with serious things to say, The Pyramid belongs to an important tradition of comic social fiction... But far from sharing in the sentiment and nostalgia... Golding's comic masterpiece is filled with laughter caused by discomforting awareness of the limitations and absurdities of life. The writing is witty, as the tradition demands, but the author risks destroying the delicate web of English Social comedy... in order to brace it once more with a satisfying rigor of thought.

However, there is a reason for the so-called 'risks' that the novelist takes in The Pyramid. In fact, this novel is a challenge
to Golding's creative genius. Having boldly made new in-roads into the mode of English Social comedy the novelist is not content to toe the line of mild provocation of thought through indulgent humour and restrained sarcasm fringed with perhaps a tinge of nostalgia.

Golding aims at more than an indulgent provocation of the reader's intellectual response to a tolerated social impropriety. His is a strong albeit subtle indictment of the reader's whole complacent smugness towards that gross social evil -- class complex born of moral paucity -- with its deep-rooted social prejudices leading to inhuman social discrimination.

As such, the comic episodes centring on Oliver strive to reveal more than the protagonist's development from self-deception to self-perception. By extension, Oliver can be viewed as an index of the reader's recognition of his own moral culpability -- his instinctive complicity in the violation of all human values under the gloss of social propriety. It is this serious moral concern that gives the delicate fabric of comedy in The Pyramid its 'rigour of thought'.

4.2.1 THE SOURCE AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE PYRAMID

Interestingly, the source material that embodies the skeleton of the plot in The Pyramid is quite recognizably drawn from Golding's own childhood environment in Marlborough. Significantly, even the landscape that entombs the stifling social structure in the novel is fairly akin to Golding's childhood -- Marlborough --
suitably concealed behind the new identity of 'Stilbourne' -- with
the unmistakable spire in the background and the vicinity to
Barchester. What is more, the tongue-in-cheek attitude, which
describes this nuclear society is, in all probability, a.
retracement of Golding's vivid childhood imagination:

saturated with what was to become an important part of his fiction,

and his ill-concealed scorn for a snobbish social structure
that stifles individuals and warps individuality.

Paradoxically, however, despite the presence of this persistent
echo of the novelist's autobiographical details in *The Pyramid*, its
three component novellas in no way reflect the personality of the
novelist nor his professed views or otherwise. In the opinion of
John Bayley

Their secret is in their lack of build-up of a world with a complete inner coherence

of its own based on the world-view, and thus on the personality of the author.

Such an 'impersonality' is particularly commendable in a theme
that inevitably pulls the novelist into its vortex, being set in a
socio-psychological terrain identical to that of the novelist's own.
Golding's success in this impersonal approach to an issue with
unavoidable personal ethos lies in the organic structure of his
unconventional narrative:

Form in his work itself eliminates not only the artist who fashions it but the self

which the novelist normally gives to things, and with which he becomes inescapably

identified.

A brief analysis of the three-tier pyramidal configuration of
the novellas in *The Pyramid* will demonstrate the efficacy of form as
it is used by Golding. The structure of the novel has an innovative three-story segmentation, each of which is basically independent of the other two. Incidentally, two of these parts had been published as short stories -- the first in Kenyon Review under the title 'On the Escarpment' (pp. 311 - 400) and the third in Esquire as 'Inside a Pyramid' (pp. 165 - 269). But this does not imply that the three sections are merely superimposed on the general outline of the plot to 'manufacture' a novel. In fact the narrative structure of The Pyramid is symbolic of the pyramidal gradation of a rigid social structure.

There are subtle linkages in the theme skillfully woven into the story as vital clues through what Avril Henry describes as "a careful time-structure". These help to underline the central statement of the novel. In The Pyramid time-shifts are exploited with great success as in the case of the 'pictures' in Pincher Martin. Throughout this brief series of narratives the protagonist Oliver's youthful self-absorption and his painfully slow growing up is utilized as the interlocking pattern of the trilogy. This gives the novel a compact structure and a thematic coherence.

This novel is however, pointedly different from its predecessor in its approach to the theme. The setting is contemporary although the title is reminiscent of an ancient architectural marvel like that of The Spire -- and the tone and the concern of the
The novelist is now different. From the vision of misplaced faith of the cleric in the middle ages in *The Spire*, the novelist reverts to the moral blindness of the protagonist in *The Pyramid* who fails to understand all those who come closest to him. In fact, he is entombed in the 'pyramid' of his own social restrictions and inhibitions. Thereby the protagonist becomes an epitome of the social pyramid which the novelist erects through his trilogy.

Oliver's is the typical case wherein the human capacity for understanding is benumbed by social prejudice and pressure. It decays into a desire for exploitation, ridicule and lack of sympathy, thus failing to achieve that vitalizing human emotion: Love. By extension this applies to the whole decadent society corroded by an acute class-complex. It hinders any humane response towards the stray individuals who deviate from the social norms rooted in hypocrisy and pretence; they thus become victims of a subtle ostracism and a supercilious contempt from the same snobbish society.

The narrowed scope of this novel is reminiscent of Jane Austen's novels in that the focus is on the bourgeois life in an English provincial town. Hence, while the morals of the society occupy the novelist's attention, its manners hold the centre of his canvas. Thus the tone of the novel is also suitably controlled by the demands of the theme. There are captivating hilarious outbursts but instead of the Austenian humour of
indulgence and acceptance there is now the prickling note of mockery and scathing sarcasm seeping into the narrative. The underlying edge of irony cutting into the reality behind the polished façade of projected decency and superficial sense of propriety is apparent. The picture of an outdated snobbish society decaying, yet desperately clinging to an illusion of survival emerges through:

the attempt in The Pyramid at least to overlook, in fractured twentieth century terms

the territory of Jane Austen 15.

The innocuous tone of the narration adds considerably to the richness of the social reality that Golding peels off layer after thin layer. This is the more commendable considering that Oliver is himself the narrator throughout the three segments of The Pyramid. While tracing his own growth from adolescence to middle-age he develops from ignorance and hypocrisy to humility and understanding. In this process of attaining maturity, he acts as a reflector of his socio-ethical environment, most of the time, inadvertently.

4.2.2 THE PLOT

The first novella deals with the young Oliver in his eighteenth year, on the threshold of higher education, in the early 30's in Stilbourne near Barchester. He, like his creator, is at the crossroads of an academic career with his spirit longing for music and the down-to-earth prospects of a career in chemistry
inevitably pushing him towards Oxford. There is another more private issue tossing him apart: his purely ideal but totally one-sided passion for the soon-to-be-married Imogen Grantley and his urgent desire for the 'accessible' Evie Babbacombe 'the local phenomenon'. Ironically, he pursues the latter as a remedy for his hopeless infatuation for the former as if he 'was forced into some competition with her' [The Pyramid p. 42].

After a brief but 'suggestive' rivalry over Evie between Oliver and Bobby -- the son of Dr. Ewans, his father's employer -- Olly, 'devious and calculating', succeeds in seducing Evie. Unfortunately, she is just 'this hot bit of stuff' [The Pyramid p. 75] in Oliver's view but he would like to exploit her 'availability'. The chance discovery of the marks of flagellation on her posterior provides him an opportunity to do this. In sheer mortification she confesses, an early association -- probably with captain Wilmot, a wheel-chair ridden war-victim -- because she 'was sorry for 'im' [The Pyramid p. 90]. Oliver's reaction to this is two-fold 'a laugh of sheer incredulity' and 'a heavy leap' of his heart that he was assured the use of this 'life's necessary unspeakable objet' [The Pyramid p. 90-91].

But Evie sees through his intentions and outplays him. As a result, Oliver, discovered by his father's binoculars, is left to wilt in guilt and humiliation. Meanwhile, Evie leaves Stilbourne for London, the immediate cause being not Oliver but Dr. Jones
who assists Dr. Ewans. Two years later Oliver, home from Oxford, meets Evie at the country fair. Oliver's seemingly innocent toast 'Bottoms up!' brings Evie's pent up hatred for Stilbourne's smugness to surface. Emboldened by drink, she accuses Oliver of having raped her at fifteen, thereby assuring that he is properly 'done in'. Yet in spite of his 'shame and confusion' Oliver sees:

a different picture of Evie in her life-long struggle to be clean and sweet. It was as if this object of frustration and desire had suddenly acquired the attributes of a person rather than a thing (The Pyramid p. 90-91).

He realises that he has lost an opportunity for a fruitful relationship. He is thus left to brood on 'this undiscovered person'.

The second segment of The Pyramid finds Oliver home for Christmas at the end of his first Oxford term and in time for the performance of King of Hearts to be staged by the just revived Stilbourne Operatic Society (S.O.S). This farcical staging of the opera provides an occasion for Oliver to get acquainted with the producer Evelyn De Tracy and for the reader to fathom the subterranean currents of Stilbourne's social climate. Through Evelyn De Tracy's candid assessment Oliver is able to see Imogen as "a stupid, insensitive, vain woman" who, has "a neat face and just enough sense to keep smiling" (The Pyramid p. 145-6). He is thus cured of his calf-love for her.

But when Evelyn De Tracy, encouraged by Oliver's easy rapport
and his urge to know the 'truth of things', attempts to reveal the truth about himself to Oliver, he comes to a dead wall. Having seen the snapshots of the transvestite Evelyn dressed as a ballerina in the company of a 'thick young man', Oliver is neither perceptive enough to see the truth of life nor mature enough to accept it. He laughs 'Until it hurt'. Evelyn is naturally affronted and distanced. Oliver has once again lost an opportunity of understanding and accepting another human being. In his blind smugness he has forgone another chance to escape from the mausoleum of the Stilbourne - pyramid into the freedom of reassuring humane love.

It is, however, in the final part of The Pyramid that Oliver comes to terms with himself and with Stilbourne. The third novella is thus the necessary super-structure that closes in the social pyramid in Stilbourne and illustrates the atmosphere of claustrophobia and decay that operates there. The middle-aged Oliver is reluctantly on his way back to Stilbourne "detached, defended by steel, rubber, leather, glass" with his decade-long determination never to return replaced by "no more than mild curiosity" [The Pyramid p. 158]. On the way, he learns of the death of his music teacher 'Bounce' Dowlish. He has always considered this ungainly, masculine, severe specimen of humanity with apprehension and distaste. These feelings have been doubly reinforced into a sullen resentment for her as a result of his
mother's persistent protestation of his 'devotion' to Bounce during his childhood and of his own indifferent opinion of her life during his grown-up years.

At her elegant memorial thoughtfully engraved with the words 'Heaven is music', the feelings he experiences are inappropriately of gladness and of a relief from her. Yet some strange sentiment takes him to a heap of half-burnt relics behind her house. 'Bounce's 'true' reaction to her supposed devotion to music and the irony of the phrase 'Heaven is music' hits him in the eye in the form of an extraordinary, ill-consumed bonfire. Traces of music worth a fortune are hideously strewn about, along with a smashed bust of Beethoven, a half-burnt photograph of her father and his near-destroyed metronome -- all unmistakably evidences of a life-long saga of agony and endurance. In that split-second, Oliver re-lives the trauma of Bounce's life from the cradle to the tomb, unrelieved except for a brief phase of soothing insanity.

He perceives with his new-found insight the harsh treatment of Bounce by her eccentric father, himself a failed musician: preoccupied with some absolute before which people were shreds and tatters [The Pyramid p. 163];

the glib manipulative Henry Williams with his sweet talk and his materialistic attitude of 'Using a sprat to catch a mackerel' [The Pyramid p. 180]; and above all the silent contempt of the neighbourhood until:
She had become one of those cases on which Stilbourne turned its corporate back (The Pyramid, p. 207-8).

The unfairness of it all becomes apparent to him. The biting irony of a life 'sacrificed' to music also becomes clear to Oliver, as he recognizes in Henry Williams' countenance his 'own face'. Finally, the understanding that had eluded him at all crucial moments of his life dawns on him in Henry Williams' words 'Quick to feel, slow to learn. That's me' (The Pyramid, p. 216). In his worship of 'the god without mercy' (The Pyramid, p. 159) he 'would never pay more than a reasonable price' (The Pyramid, p. 217), that is why he had never loved and lost. Rather he had never lost but had never loved either! Thus the touching moment of the novel is the final moment of Oliver's self perception and his acceptance of his own sense of guilt. It is this resignation to his own weakness which engenders human sympathy in him, may be a trifle too late in his life but certainly at a very late stage in the novel ...

4.2.3. INVERTED SYMBOLISM IN THE PYRAMID

The above discussion reveals the semantic and symbolic richness of the novel, The Pyramid. But here the symbols are not explicitly emblematic as they were in The Spire. They are loaded with suggestive meaning which has to be indirectly worked back after pulling aside the blinds of irony to uncover their implicit symbolic potential. Throughout the novel, this strategy can be
used to look beyond the superficial meaning of things; to read the quivering pathos of life under the straight-faced humour and to grasp the significance of the tragic reality of life conveyed by the novelist through his mild comedy. In this, Golding shares the perception of those great novelists, who Trilling believes, know "that manners indicate the largest intentions of men's souls as well as the smallest and they are perpetually concerned to catch the meaning of every dim implicit hint." 16.

In fact, every segment of The Pyramid can be suitably analysed to demonstrate how an inherent symbolic clue is operating in it under an apparently innocent phrase and below the cover of irony or pun.

In the first novella, Evie Babbacombe's lost locket with the inscription 'Amor vincit omnia' is a potent illustration of this backward play of implicit symbolism. The inscription means 'Love conquers everything' but Oliver understands it as 'Love beats everything'. In fact through this literal understanding Oliver, demonstrates his own attitude to life and love in general. To him both these are contests whereby one has to 'beat' the adversary and win at all costs. Applied to Evie's particular case it has horrifying undertones. Evie is the simple, beautiful and innocent young girl degraded by the snobbish Stilbourne society. She is almost 'beaten' out of all her innocent dreams and aspirations for future. In fact her whole personality is shaped by
being "beaten" to order. Her father with his leather belt with its brass studs; Captain Wilmost with his wheel-chair and his "braided whip" [The Pyramid p. 101], and finally Olly who uses his peculiarly "octave technique, fortissimo, sforzando in the pit of the stomach" [The Pyramid p. 31] to "beat" Bobby out of his mutual infatuation for Evis are all a party to her inhuman exploitation. She turns to each of them for love but they invariably beat a hasty retreat leaving her to face the music.

In fact "beating" every other exploitative gesture is the horrifying hinted-at-incestuous relationship to which Evie alludes in her drunken outburst at the Crown while daring Olly into "telling an' laughing" about "Me 'n' Dad" [The Pyramid p. 110].

But in spite of all this, she remains "unbeaten" to the end. She does not become a warped person seeking release in insanity the way 'Bounce' Dowlish does. Even in her hatred for Stilbourne she is only fair. She does not practice devious strokes as Olly does with Bobby during their boxing match just to "beat" him at his own game. She has courage to stand in the face of social snobbery, and shows tremendous maturity at her young age of eighteen when Olly first seduces her. What is more, she has a touching vulnerability in spite of her tough exterior which Olly spots but does not sensitively tap, preoccupied as he is with social propriety.

Ironically, Oliver suppresses his "sudden realization of what a dreadful thing it was to be a girl" [The Pyramid p. 61] in order to
manoeuvre Evie for further gratification of his passion until she is forced to 'beat' him at his cleverness by her own bold craftiness. Whereas Oliver suppresses his natural artistic sensibility "with that capacity for long and deep calculation" ([The Pyramid p. 26] merely because of his desire for social acceptance, Evie who has nothing to gain from society and everything to lose retains her love for music. Due to Oliver's insensitivity their chords do not vibe. There is only discord though they could "have made something, music, perhaps, to take the place of the necessary, the inevitable battle" ([The Pyramid p. 111] with some understanding on Oily's part. Thus he is left with the remorse of what-could-have-been! But Evie is the same unpredictable girl in spite of her recent London-acquired sophistication. Thus in one sense Evie with her social degeneration scores a moral victory over Oliver's social prosperity and moral bankruptcy, when she is instrumental in giving him the qualms of conscience. In a way Oily's remorse shows that 'Amor vincit omnia' - Love conquers everything. It certainly 'beats' Oily, at any rate.

In the second segment of The Pyramid, Golding's device is the use of bubbling comedy to uncover the hidden nuances of social disparity. But he aims at something altogether different while he seems to be concerned with the exposure of the delicate hem of the social fabric. Through the disastrous performance of the
sentimental operatta *King of Hearts* by the Stilbourne Operatic Society -- under the direction of the effeminate and grotesque Evelyn De Tracy -- Golding draws us to an emotional paucity among the Stilbourne residents symbolized by the initials of their Operatic Society -- S.O.S. In particular, Golding appears to be holding up Oliver as a moral pauper, although he could have aspired to be a *King of Hearts* with just a little willingness to accept others rather than always to be acceptable to others.

Thus the cue to the understanding of this section of *The Pyramid* lies in the phrase *'King of Hearts'* . The entire hilarious mis-performance of the opera is the key to the real significance of its title. The irony of "this outrageous exercise in bucolic ineptitude" [*The Pyramid* p. 146] is that the lead roles are entrusted to the insolent and totally unmusical owner and editor of the *'Stilbourne Advertiser'* Norman Claymore with his gnat-like voice and his wife Imogen Grantley who is vain and insensitive. Yet De Tracy manages to put up with them and with a hundred other little oddities that spring up from their vanity in the cause of *'ten guineas'* [*The Pyramid* p. 146].

Unlikely though it may seem, it is Evelyn De Tracy who appears gallant enough to be the *'King of Hearts'* despite his ludicrous dress and his ridiculous tick of shaking uncontrollably at his knees. Oliver finds his influence strong enough to prompt an
alteration of the layout at the imposing 'Crown'. This coming from
the acutely society-conscious Oliver is no mean testimony.
Notwithstanding his grotesque appearance, De Tracy has the insight
into 'the characters' of Stilbourne with whom he has to deal. He
has not only the skill to put up with them but also the tact to keep
the bubbles of their vanity intact. Even when he admits that he has
been 'excruciated' by the experience he has the sense to realise
that it is not even in the cause of art. He alone has the clarity
of vision to see Oliver as the 'first' human being involved in
the whole pathetic exercise of the staging of the operetta. Oliver
finds him 'very clear and lovable' in the middle of a 'slight
mist' [The Pyramid p. 148]. It is he who 'frees' Oliver from
his undeserved infatuation for Imogen Grantley by curing him of
his 'hangdog adoration' [The Pyramid p. 144].

Yet, Evelyn fails the reader's estimate of his gallantry and
warmth somewhere, when he decides to 'escape' having failed to
inspire in Oliver any 'perception' of the reality of life. Thus, he
forfeits his claim to the Kingship of hearts while qualifying for
the emotional maturity required for it. At best, he remains a comic
but a lovable character who deserves sympathy and affection but who
does not command it. However, he deserves recognition for being
the first impartial critic who shows Oliver's development from the
crude unfeeling, exploiter in his pre-Oxford days to being the
earnest seeker after 'the truth of things' [The Pyramid p. 148].

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after his term-long stay at Oxford. Thus one is tempted to assess Oliver against this emotional development in the context of the whole novel to see whether he deserves being considered the 'King of Hearts'. At least from his immature reaction to De Tracy's attempt at self-revelation he comes through as an insensitive and as yet emotionally underdeveloped individual, who presently falls short of this epithet.

One turns to the final novella of this trilogy in the hope of deciphering the subsequent emotional growth of Oliver in order to estimate his moral status as the likely 'King of Hearts'. This top-most structure of The Pyramid is a highly significant tragicomic segment. As in the other two parts of the novel, even here an epigram, 'Heaven is music', works its way to being an euphemism. Miss 'Bounce' Dowlish with 'that pathetic, horrible, unused body' (The Pyramid p. 213); with even young Oliver having recognized 'the limitations of her musical world' hardly deserve such an epithet. In her manly, earnest but pathetic pleading of Henry — 'All I want is for you to need me, need me!' — she becomes an object of pity. In fact, her whole traumatic, pathetic life is a pointer to this.

Despite her life-long devotion to music, whether voluntary or not, she finds peace only when she lapses into insanity. After being 'put away' she comes back cured to return to her original status of being an eccentric. Stilbourne, with its usual
coldness, turns its corporate back on her. Henry Williams, whom she has given social status through her whole-hearted financial support, is willing to pay only a 'reasonable price' of a lukewarm sop to her overwhelmingly pathetic emotional craving. But promptly on her death he builds the marble monument with engraved 'immortells' and the ironical inscription 'Heaven is music'. During her whole life-time Music has been her bane, her torment, her illusion, her mill-stone.

Instead of being fortunate enough to lose herself in the soothing realm of music, she is placed at the tormenting periphery of reality and make-belief desperately compelling a livelihood out of the music for which she has no real aptitude. Being a warped initiate into the world of music, thanks to her father who was a 'failed musician', she unwittingly extends similar torture on her pupils in her attempts to 'teach' them. The growing emotional void of her life teaches her some uncanny sense, even as she descends deeper into insanity. Finally on her return home from the asylum she confesses to Oliver that she would rather save 'a budgie' than a child from a fire.

Music thus takes the total emotional toll of her life. We are given to understand that before her death she destroyed every manifest sign of music around her. Thus, 'heaven is music' becomes a mockery of its own significance when used in the context of 'Bounce'. Further, the refrain becomes an ironical comment on
'what is' and what 'could have been' Bounce's life, but, for music. Music has made her life an unendurable tragedy. However, for Stilbourne's smug world this music is the pretext of sending 'radar emissions' into her shut-off existence to uncover unpalatable facts about her pitiable life in order to afford hollow sympathy, indifferent censure and suppressed ridicule.

It is music really that has killed her, even while she was alive. If 'Heaven' be used in the narrowest context of being synonymous with death then alone she lives up to the inscription 'Heaven is Music'. Thus having such an inscription on the monument of her death speaks volumes of the shoddiness, crassness and unfeeling nature of the mind that devised such an idea. Given our knowledge of Henry Williams while it is very difficult to envisage this to be a purposeful act, it is not impossible to view it as a psychological 'faux pas'.

4.2.4 THE PYRAMID AS A NOVEL OF THE MORAL PHASE

In conclusion, it may be said that the title of the novel takes on a new shade of meaning, thereby offering a new angle to the understanding of the novel. Using Oliver as the metronome, the reader can vibe in tune with 'the crystal pyramid' of Stilbourne that reveals itself gradually through the novel. The vital perception of Stilbourne that comes through towards the end of the novel is what Oliver describes as 'Stilbourne was like anywhere else'.
after all' (The Pyramid p. 157). If we have seen Stilbourne, as a derelict monument to the decomposing social corpse at a given time and place, then we realise with Oliver's worldly wisdom that it could be 'at sometime anywhere'. An intimately close-knit society without snobbery and hypocrisy is not possible. In essence what decays is not the social structure but the morality of the people: they cling to obsolete values when the social fabric on the verge of disintegration, is crying out for a revitalization structurally as well as organically.

Even in The Pyramid, it is not the class-structure that gives rise to the smothering atmosphere of apathy and resentment in the social pyramid of Stilbourne. It is the class-complex of those in the higher echelons of society clinging desperately to a bourgeois structure that has already cast away its erstwhile vivifying determinants of social respectability. Presently, this society has adopted as its desirable goals the pursuit of economic prosperity and social propriety through a calculating and cowardly materialism. In such a scheme of life, the finer sentiments and the better judgment of an individual do not matter. The Pyramid reflects this precarious social condition more than the ugly social structure. 'The pyramid' that Golding visualizes is a monument to humankind whose morals have decayed, and manners have become stultified and rigid. The lifeless inmate of this intimidating structure is the human heart that has lost its
vitalizing spirit of love.

The epigraph of the novel ironically underscores this unpalatable fact: 'If thou be among people make for thyself love the beginning and the end of thy life'.

As the epigraph chosen from the inscriptions of the Egyptian monarch Ptah-Hotep shows, humanity has come to ignore, what it had valued since its infancy, in its present rat-race for 'success' dominated by the 'scientific' spirit. Oliver's prosperity bought 'cheaply' by foregoing a career in music in exchange for one in chemistry; Henry Williams' imposing monument to Bounce that 'spared no expense'; Evie's underlying defiance that asserts itself with a determination after she "had hitched herself up a couple of degrees on our dreadful ladder" [The Pyramid p. 103]; De Tracy's putting up with the individuals he totally sees through for the sake of ten guineas and a third class return ticket - are all tell-tale signs of the worship of materialism. The epilogue to the novel should properly read 'If thou be among people make for thyself lucre the beginning and the end of thy life!' Though in a different form from his earlier novels, Golding's undeniable 'reversal' is there in The Pyramid too! As usual it comes suddenly and shockingly as a sting in the tail.

For the ancient Egyptians, the pyramid symbolised the faith of a whole race, of an entry into a definite future life more than being a monument to the dead or to the dying. The Pyramid of
Stilbourne is a bonsai of contemporary humankind that professes love and life but practises a way of stagnant living that ensures the petrification of their very spirit. The pyramid as monument to death had implied a faith in life and in the living but the pyramid in the novel is emblematic of the existence of a humanity that has died in spirit. This paradox becomes apparent on placing *The Scorpion God* alongside *The Pyramid*.

4.3.1 THE SECOND TRILOGY OF THE MORAL PHASE: THE SCORPION GOD

Coming to *The Scorpion God*, the second trilogy of the moral phase it may be inferred with some justification that the only steady feature of Golding's fiction is its unpredictability. For despite ingenious thematic linkages, no two Golding novels have anything similar to offer in terms of plot, technique or presentation. Even so, the leap from the contemporary canvas of the social fiction in *The Pyramid* to the exotic backdrop of *The Scorpion God* (1971) is a far cry for the 'Golding Novel'.

Considering the course that the 'Golding Novel' has pursued so far, one is surprised by the 'kind' of change that *The Scorpion God* offers. The very basis for the novelist's much-spoken of 'concern for mankind' seems to be jeopardized by the three novellas constituting *The Scorpion God*. In terms of theme, plot, vision, as well as technique, this work is baffling even by 'Goldingian' standards, given their 'rough-edged' qualities that administer a
Despite the impression created by a superficial reading of _The Scorpion God_, Golding's concern with mankind has nowhere diminished in its seriousness, although its urgency has somewhat blunted with the passage of time. After the long-enduring stage of relentless probing into the nature of human predicament, he has presumably become mellowed in his attitude. Thus, after his persistent diagnosis of human ills in his earlier stage of novel-writing he has had a glimpse of hope for individual Man in _The Spire_, however remote. Hence Golding has now come to a stage of analysing the human ailment in its social context but with a more congenial point of view.

However, the result of his 'findings' regarding the human condition should not be confused with the blandness of his manner in pronouncing it. It is to be accepted that his long association with the universally rampant 'disease' of mankind has to a certain extent enured him, thereby making his tone milder and therefore more accessible. This is hardly an indication that Golding's seriousness or his pre-occupation with Man has yielded place to frivolity and obtuseness. It has, in all appearances altered its manifest image by deviating into a seemingly light-hearted portrayal of ancient social groups. The novelist has thereby fulfilled a long-due need for change in the 'look' of the 'Golding Novel'. Thus what might be hastily brushed aside as a
loss of face for the novelist might be viewed as an enriching and essential 'face-lift' for the 'Golding Novel'.

Significantly enough, this changed approach of the novelist to mankind and its ills synchronises with his changed attitude to fiction in general and to his theme in particular. This was apparent in The Pyramid (1967) which marks the beginning of the Social Stage of his fiction. During its Initial Stage the 'Golding Novel' had trodden a different path right from the beginning. It is a well-known fact that Golding's maiden novel Lord of the Flies had sprung into existence from his conviction 'that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creature ... and that the only enemy of man is inside him' [The Hot Gates pp.87-9]. It conveyed in Golding's own words:

'a trite lesson ... but one which I believed needed urgently to be driven home. Thus the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' is marked by a persistent inquiry into the life of human beings to pinpoint how it would be conditioned 'by their diseased, their fallen nature'. Thus the novels Pincher Martin, Free Fall, The Spire are all studies of an individual but 'fallen' Man. Even The Inheritors, while making use of two social groups, is more concerned with the evil that enters human evolutionary cycle through the Homo Sapiens' 'lapse'.

However, when Golding ventured on his second stage of novel-writing with The Pyramid (1967) he had in all probability come to terms with the mystery of existence. The ambiguity that is often
noticed in his Free Fall (1954) and The Spire (1964) but not in The
Pyramid (1967), nor in The Scorpion God (1971), is a pointer to
this. It is the complex nature of this mystery in the earlier
novels that defies explanation and thereby gives rise to an
obscurity resulting in ambiguity of interpretation. What is more
interesting is that Golding's insistence 'upon mystery of the
neglected or perhaps forgotten religious dimension of human
experience' had been by his own confession:

a deliberate course ... a sort of counteraction, or corrective to our diminished sense of
the numinous.

Having thus geared himself with an understanding of the mystery
underlying human experience, Golding was at a proper stage to
analyse the social structure that governs human experience. Such an
analysis of the social groups becomes necessary because it is the
human society that has inherited the moral bankruptcy of the post-
lapsarian homo-sapiens. It is therefore natural that a scrutiny
into the historical past of human social groups should fascinate a
novelist with Golding's curiosity and keen insight. It is this
fascination with human society in its hazy infancy that probably
lies behind the genesis of the novellas in The Scorpion God (1971):

whose very assurance related them more to The Inheritors than to any new departure in
terms of art.

This observation of Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor can be accepted mainly
with regard to the remote context and the exotic setting of the
novellas of The Scorpion God. But thematically speaking, they
display a greater affinity to The Pyramid.

4.3.2 THEMATIC LINKAGES: THE SCORPION GOD AND THE PYRAMID

As a trilogy comprised of three distinct novellas, The Scorpion God derives its name from the novella that centres around pre-dynastic Egypt. *The Scorpion God* is probably an allusion to the first monarch who unified the upper and the lower Kingdoms of the Nile valley and established the pharaonic dynasty. Thus, the story of the first novella is woven around the unquestioning belief of the ancient Egyptians in their myth of creation and existence associated with the annual flooding of the Nile. Given Golding's life-long fascination with Egypt in her marvellous combination of sacred awe and miraculous pragmatism, the choice of his plot seems no accident. [*The Hot Gates* p. 71 - 82].

But one tends to agree with Medcalf that for all his fascination with the magic of Egyptians, with their spiritual pragmatism .... he is fascinated too by the Greeks who worked their way to doing without magic. Hence curiously enough, the third novella in *The Scorpion God*, *Envoy Extraordinary* concerns a Greek philosopher-scientist who brings to Imperial Rome three unlikely gifts born of his scientific discovery that threaten the very existence of the civilization.

Nestling between these two novellas is *Clank Clank* a story set in pre-historic Africa dealing with the members of a primitive tribe only a little advanced over Golding's innocent Neanderthals in *The Inheritors*. Golding has suggested that he included *Clank*
Clonk as the middle piece in The Scorpion God to 'keep the other two ... apart'. This off-handed remark serves as a veritable instance of the intended or inadvertent design that goes into a 'Golding' work. As Stephen Medcalf has rightly pointed out:

It is impossible to forecast what he deliberately designed and what he did not or what indeed he actually designed to come up, like a spring whose course has been so deeply buried it has not been felt...22

Added to this is Golding's deep-rooted inclination for what is primitive, uncorrupted and natural in human society.

Between this design and this spontaneity of Golding, oscillates the thematic significance of The Scorpion God. It appears as a refreshing portrayal of the exotic 'nowhere land of phantasy'. Nonetheless, it carries the potential of being an organic sequel to The Pyramid re-enforcing its thematic nuances through its own semantic intricacy. Philip Redpath opines that:

change is the predominant theme of both texts: evolutionary change from the pre-historic Africa of Clonk Clonk, through pre-dynastic Egypt in 'The Scorpion God', the Roman Empire in 'Envoy Extraordinary', to a twentieth century English community in The Pyramid.23

Redpath's comment establishes 'change' as the common thematic motif that operates in The Pyramid and the three novellas of The Scorpion God. A brief reference to theme in each of these novellas will divulge their semantic potential and show their relevance as works of the moral phase of the 'Golding Novel'.

The story of 'The Scorpion God', as those of the other...
novellas, is in no-way related to *The Pyramid*, which is about the stultified life in a contemporary English township. On the other hand *The Scorpion God* is based on the legend of the ancient Egyptian belief in the continuity of the transient life in the *Moving Now* into the eternal state of the *Motionless Now*. Thus the Egyptians in the novella embrace the death of the body as an essential corollary that will ensure the changeless state of the spiritual life believed to be an uninterrupted continuation of the worldly existence.

But *The Scorpion God* conceals a profounder thematic pattern that can be better organized in association with that of *The Pyramid*. It can be noticed that both, the inhabitants of Stilbourne in *The Pyramid* and the ancient Egyptians in *The Scorpion God*, are governed by a common notion --- resistance to change. However, their respective objectives behind the reluctance to change are poles apart; in *The Pyramid* material prosperity and social respectability are the desired goals; while for the ancient Egyptians realization of a grand spiritual vision is the desired goal. In both the societies, outsiders act as the agents of change --- in Stilbourne it is Henry Williams, whereas in ancient Egypt it is the Liar. Despite this commonness there is a difference in the attitude of the two social groups to change. In fact, their degree of reluctance and the intention behind such a reluctance further amplifies this difference.

In *The Pyramid* it is an essentially material and secular concern that curtails any free movement of ideas or of individuals on the social ladder. It is the predominant social bias of the Stilbourne residents that controls any social intercourse. Thereby it stagnates their morally degenerate existence into what may be described as a parody of the Egyptians' *state of
Motionless Now. The only permissible token of social change in Stilbourne is material prosperity. It is thus that an unknown stranger like Henry Williams can gradually attain for himself a higher social identity; Evie is able to gain a couple of inches on the social ladder; Olly can bring himself to re-visit Stilbourne only after having secured a formidable protective gear of material prosperity.

In brief, 'the key' to possible change in the stagnating tomb of the Stilbourne pyramid is 'lucre'. But this key to social change is hardly a rejuvenating element for the Stilbourne society which is fatally characterized by decay of morals and has died in spirit. So the material prosperity that gives a semblance of mobility to the rigid social structure is in reality just a superficial existence devoid of any vitalizing spirit.

On the other hand, for the ancient Egyptians their spiritual rigidity entails a physical threat of stagnation and probably of social extinction. All the mores that govern their life appear to be directed towards achieving a total elimination of life. Their unswerving, blind faith in the supernatural powers of Great House -- his ability to hold the sky up, to raise the level of the Nile waters, to ensure the common weal in death as in life -- condemns them to cling to the hope of 'life' while enduring an existence completely at the mercy of natural elements. Their concept of an eternal life with its calm acceptance of death is admirably pragmatic in spiritual terms. But it has blunted or perhaps even erased their natural impulses including their survival instinct. Although claimed by the Head Man to be based on reason and ascertained by known facts from time to time, the faith of the ancient Egyptians makes a secure 'normal' worldly life impossible. For while it concedes the presence of 'deep, unspoken' human
desires, it rules that -- 'by the laws of nature -- they cannot be externalized' [The Scorpion God p. 55].

In *Envoy Extraordinary* the Alexandrain librarian-turned-scientist is the successor of the Liar and the fore-runner of Henry Williams as the agent of change that comes to an unsuspecting society. He represents the threat posed by change-obsessed individuals to societies in the infancy of human civilization. In him, Golding presents the stark and insatiate curiosity of a myopic votary of scientific progress.

In other words *Envoy Extraordinary* is Golding's shrewd but comic portrayal of a discomfiting probability in remote past when human history was not even recorded. The Emperor and Phonocles symbolize the fundamental conflict between the continuity of tradition and the need for change which forms the basis of human civilization. In *Envoy Extraordinary* this conflict assumes the form of an interplay between the preference for an unchanging order based on the simple faith of a superstitious but sympathetic people and the revolutionary zeal for drastic change that the egotistic mind of a rational thinker insists on.

Thus *Envoy Extraordinary* can be seen as an intelligent and witty comment of its author on the relation of change to human life. It foregrounds once again, though with a more humorous and forthright manner this time, what *The Pyramid* has already hinted at in a subtler way: change that comes externally through egotistic individuals is nearly always superficial and materialistic. The society onto which such change is craftily grafted is denuded of the basic human values of love and empathy.

Consequently, such a society promotes a pursuit of shallow materialism totally oblivious to the moral or spiritual well-being of individuals and society. Naturally, such a situation comes to
pass because the change thus brought about is a super-imposed condition that smothers the natural buoyancy of life. It does not extend to the concerned society the option to become acquainted with the real motives behind the expected change nor with its consequences that may contain the seeds of catastrophe, likely to manifest themselves often in a drastic manner.

However, this is not to deny the importance of change in life. In *Clonk Clonk* Golding shows the significance of the inevitability of Change in life. Life that stubbornly refuses to change is fore-doomed to stagnation and decay. The organic nature of life pre-supposes the development and the need for change. But such a need for change is, more often than not, an internal symptom of social condition with which it has to grapple and come to terms. No doubt, it is hard to foresee that need for change and it is even harder to accept it. This is particularly so in the case of a normal, coherent and contained social group as that of the Leopard-men and Bee-women in *Clonk Clonk*. Yet, the precondition of normalcy, in accordance with the accepted norms of a society as the basis of social intercourse, envisages the possibility of an abnormal situation. Such a situation may need a special approach and may thus entail change in the accepted routine or norms of the concerned society. If such a social group is fortunate enough to be endowed with resourceful and intelligent individuals like Palm, the required change can be uneventfully incorporated without disturbing the harmony of group-existence or even without creating any fissures in the organic homogeneity of the social structure.

In fine, change is the common thematic link that *The Pyramid* and the novellas of *The Scorpion God* have as the main plank of their narrative structure. A novella-wise discussion of the structural features of *The Scorpion God* will further reveal their thematic
potential. A separate discussion of each of the three novellas of The Scorpion God will also divulge thematic linkages among these works. However, to reveal their thematic continuity they will be discussed not sequentially but in the order of their thematic affinity.

4.3.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE SCORPION GOD

In all the three novellas of The Scorpion God, crisis threatening the stability and the integrity of a social structure is envisaged as the central motif of the story. In 'The Scorpion God' and Envoy Extraordinary, this crisis manifests itself through a conflict centering on two individuals with the destiny of a whole society hanging in balance; in Clank Clonk, the crisis is within an individual threatening him with social rejection and loss of social status.

The conflict in 'The Scorpion God' and Envoy Extraordinary is in essence between the revolutionary upholders of material advancement and the traditional custodians of the spiritual and the irrational. In the first novella the former triumph, while in the other the latter are given a new lease of life. This structural plan assumes great significance since 'The Scorpion God' was written 'to go with' Envoy Extraordinary.

In view of this authorial intention, the structure of Clonk Clonk needs to be analysed. Here also two individuals stand out not as adversaries, but as complements to each other -- 'their particular proclivities conferring on them a degree of separateness and consequently some self-awareness' 24. One of them, The Chimp is physically weak but of sharp intuitive perception; the other, Palm, despite her mental 'peculiarity', is endowed with exceptional intelligence and a sensitivity to her
environment. Together they represent the delicate balance between change and stability; this transitory balance rooted in integrated human personality confers a wholesome stable life on Man. In the words of Philip Redpath:

"Man's imagination, his sympathy for people and objects around him, and his capacity to believe in what cannot be empirically verified, are all necessary if he is to remain a creature capable of living in and with the universe."

Golding's protagonists in *Clank Clank* are the living illustrations of this requisite.

In the three novellas, an impersonal omniscient narrator operates. As against the first-person narration of the three interconnected but distinct stories in *The Pyramid*, there is third-person narration in the apparently unconnected novellas of *The Scorpion God*. The highlight of this narration is its buoyant humour and mild sarcasm. This is particularly so in *The Scorpion God* and *Envoy Extraordinary*. Despite this sarcastic, often ironical, attitude of the novelist, a balance of the narrative is nowhere permitted to tilt in these stories.

In *The Scorpion God* while the pinprick of sarcasm is directed against the rebellious iconoclasm of the egotistic Liar, it is equally picquant towards the reductive pseudo-rationalism of the orthodox Head Man. Similarly in *Envoy Extraordinary* though the novelist's sympathy appears to be with the down-to-earth Emperor, the myopic rationalism of Phanocles -- the hubristic votary of progress -- is nowhere projected to disadvantage in this gentle equipoise between the polarities of dramatic
conflict lies the narrative excellence of the otherwise ordinary novellas. Golding's effusive comedy helps to maintain this feather-touch equipoise.

A reference to two critical assessments of the situation in The Scorpion God will illustrate Golding's rare narrative talent in -- 'revealing enough' to provoke thinking without 'exposing excessively' to colour that thinking. This approach encourages diverse and convincing interpretations of the same situation. For example, Virginia Tiger opines that "it is the freethinker -- the man who explodes religious orthodoxy -- who emerges as the spokesman for the imagination" in The Scorpion God. This would imply that the Liar, who breaks the religious orthodoxy in the system represented by the Head Man, is such a spokesman. For it is the Liar who challenges and defeats the spiritual outlook of the Egyptians. But according to Redpath:

The Liar, an outsider, who challenges this outlook seems to be the spokesman for life and change. Because the Egyptians believe that to die is to enter eternal life, the Liar has to argue in paradoxes ... But Golding also uses paradoxes, for his sympathies lie with the Egyptians rather than the Liar. Golding sympathises with the Egyptians for one reason: their imaginative beliefs.

It can be easily noticed that the above two critical positions together constitute a paradox of interpretation. Such a paradox testifies to Golding's technique of maintaining the ambivalence of his thematic proposition and so making it consistent with the nature of actuality. Perhaps this paradoxical approach owns its
origin to Golding's own youthful dilemma: his beliefs, and preferences fluctuating between the irrational and the logical, the spiritual and the scientific. In his travelogue, *An Egyptian Journal*, Golding has candidly aired this fluctuation:

"...I could more readily believe in Ra, Iris and Osiris than in the Trinity. To me the contradictions of Egyptian beliefs were not implausible.... Yet all the time... my preoccupations were with the rationally explored and logically treated discoveries of scientific archaeology!" [An Egyptian Journal p. 10].

What is more relevant, Golding has confessed that this led to a 'tension', though it 'died a natural death as I grew older and was more caught up in life and love around me than in an imaginative dialogue with death and magic' [An Egyptian Journal p. 10].

It may be argued that while Golding's personal tension died a natural death, his basic pull between the twin-aspects of experience -- scientific and spiritual, rational and imaginative -- persisted. Perhaps this magnetic pull has become absorbed in his personality and so peeps over the seams of his plots or over the shoulders of his character. It certainly does so, in the case of *Envoy Extraordinary* in the persona of Golding's natural philosopher, Phanocles, as in the case of the earthy, logical 'Liar' in *The Scorpion God*.

Despite Golding's disenchantment with superficial progress and reductive rationalism, neither of these characters are given a raw deal. As the Liar in *The Scorpion God* is firmly rooted in reason, conviction and self-assurance, so is Phanocles formidably placed in
his universe of empiricism and logic. While the Liar's conflict was with a whole system, it was mainly directed to a clash with the Head Man in his orthodoxy. Phanocles in Envoy Extraordinary is pitted against the complacent acceptance of a benevolent order represented by the Emperor. Both these characters become the focal points of the two novellas, otherwise so distinct, in being undesirable harbingers of external change. In this, they reveal the common concern of the two works, notwithstanding their unrelated plots.

As Julia Briggs points out:

Both are concerned with the limitations, risks and actual dangers of a world view narrowly based on logic, rationalism and faith in scientific progress, but otherwise they have little in common.

Although Liar, the votary of progress, wins at the cost of spiritual pragmatism of the ancient Egyptians, the Greek scientist meets his match in the prudent Emperor. The latter ironically 'rewards' him with an ambassadorship tantamounting to expulsion, for the progress that he does not want. Thus despite the preoccupation with progress, the novelist's sympathetic chord with the simplistic, the natural and the imaginative is fairly discernible.

Clonk Clonk deserves special mention in that its narrative is nowhere marred by undue sarcasm. The delicate empathy of the narrative persona is always with the dramatic personae -- Palm and the Chimp -- probably because both are 'suffering minority': Palm is the victim of her mental disturbances, and the Chimp of his...
physical debility. This is the likely reason behind the sympathetic narration supported by minute observation and an imaginative resolution of the conflict in the two characters. The manner of the resolution of the crisis by the mutual complementing of needs and liabilities in *Clonk Clonk* indicates the use of 'the semi-didactic mode' as in the other two novels.

While the Liar and Phanocles were the instruments of external change, Palm in *Clonk Clonk* is the source of intrinsic change brought about naturally and imaginatively. Apparently *Clonk Clonk* with its two companion pieces is intended as an insightful literary creation 'to proffer a viewpoint'. After all, as Redpath opines:

> To discover a perspective which reconciles change and stability with man's intellect and imaginative vitality is in part to discover what it means to be human. 29

Golding offers such an ingenious and resourceful reconciliation through Palm's assured and prudent stance in her august position as she-who-names-the-women. Through her astute decision to install The Chimp as her Leopard-man, she rehabilitates him and regenerates her own waning vitality. But, for this she has to go beyond the intellectual limits set by her society. It is not possible to surpass old ideas and adopt new ones without facing rejection. Yet Palm dares this risk "in order to find meaning in life". 30

While Golding's thematic focus is clear enough in *The Scorpion God*, its thrust becomes even more pronounced because of the balanced use of point of view in these novellas. In the *The Scorpion God*
the Liar's point of view is mainly projected, although the novelist hardly sees eye to eye with him. In a subtle reversal at a later stage, we are also given the Ancient Egyptians' point of view. But that is essentially lop-sided since the spokesman for this view is the Headman -- the prisoner of his own fallacious and reductive approach to knowledge. But it is, once again, the point of view of the Liar favouring 'survival' and professing common sense over blind spiritualism. Through the human, fragile Pretty Flower, the novelist voices the unavoidable pitting of normal impulses and urges against unassailable ideals in an unduly repressive system. The overall perspective one has is of a plea made for free exchange of ideas and an open attitude to human liberty in relation to the rigid social structure. But this can be better appreciated in collation with the other two novellas.

Envoy Extraordinary fluctuates between a few overlapping points of view -- the point of view of a persecuted experimentalist represented by Phanocles; that of the bored pseudo-intellectuals, looking askance at new developments in their need for sheer diversion, represented by Mamillius; that of the ordinary man preoccupied with his petty interest as represented by the Captain or Posthumus; and that of the insightful visionary, concerned with the destiny of mankind in relation to the universe, represented by the Emperor. In the final analysis, the points of view of Phanocles and The Emperor become
juxtaposed as being authentic. But The Emperor's preferment of the pressure cooker over the warship, explosive or printing press indicates that he is not averse to material progress or experiment -- provided it assimilates into the existing harmonious way of life without drastically overturning it.

In *Clonk Clonk*, the end demonstrates the harmonious meeting of these two points of view. But the story of this novella is narrated from the points of view of the resourceful, intelligent authority vested in Palm and the vulnerable, defenseless social reject, The Chimp. In their instinctive, perhaps impulsive, association lies the solution to issues in all the novellas of *The Scorpion God* and *The Pyramid*. Palm is the agent of the essential social therapy -- the source of authority with marked limits; the fountainhead of self-awareness; the well-spring of human sympathy and the bed-rock of calm assurance. She instills in her rigid social group a reassurance of stability but she also incorporates the subtle change necessary to strengthen this stability without destroying its integrity as a group. Though simplistic in nature, a solution is significant because it protects the individual against the society without placing one against the other.

The merit of *Clonk Clonk* lies in this optimistic opening that Golding makes for mankind. Not only through its mild humour and sympathetic treatment but also through its tonal variation, this
work justifies the creation of *The Scorpion God* which had been written off as 'little more than a holding action'. Through its effusive language and sparse but prominent lively characterization *The Scorpion God* gives ample evidence of an earnest attempt, however lighthearted, of Golding's new willingness to treat the human dilemma 'movingly, gently, even genially'. A separate discussion of each of its constituent novellas will illustrate this attempt further.

### 4.4.1 THE PLOT

*The Scorpion God* opens on a ritualistic public performance of Great House -- his seven-yearly marathon to ensure the rise in river waters. He is being prodded into completing his ritual run by his favourite companion, Liar, an outsider acquainted with men in alien lands living with 'strange notions' of life. When he is about to complete his ritual run, the exhausted Great House is virtually tripped by the Blind Man. He wants to inform the God of the imminent calamity threatening the spiritual and therefore the material well-being of the people -- the effeminate son of Great House is prematurely going blind at ten.

The collapse of Great House and his failure to complete the ritual signals the onset of 'the beginning'. It is thus necessary to reassure the people of his divine capacity during a royal banquet. At the Liar's insistence, Pretty Flower desperately
attempts a provocative dance to seduce her father into an incestuous
copulation necessary to testify the invulnerability of his divine
powers. But to no avail. His second failure of the day underscores
'the beginning' of his post-mortem existence. After due
preparations he is to be interned into his eternal dwelling along
with his stone dummy and all his household attendants but the Liar.
The Liar refuses eternal life heretically "Because this one is good
enough" [The Scorpion God p. 40]. Considered 'unclean' he is
disposed off to 'the pit' among "the refuse, the bones, the
decaying meat, the slimy vegetables and stained stones" [The
Scorpion God p. 45].

As expected by everyone, and in accordance with Great House's
promise before his 'beginning', the river waters rise but soon move
towards the precarious notch of calamity. Head Man in his
simplistic vanity believes "that all knowledge is my province.
What a man can know, I know" [The Scorpion God p. 51].
Accordingly, when he attempts to discover the reasons behind such
heavenly wrath, he stumbles upon the illicit sexual relationship
between the Liar and Pretty Flower. He is convinced that such
sexual aberration "across the natural borders of consanguinity" is
responsible for the calamity. [The Scorpion God p. 55]

To appease the God's anger the Liar is to be forcibly sent
to 'life' but he refuses to co-operate. When cornered into self-
preservation he escapes after killing a few and 'stinging' the Head
Man mortally. The novella ends on an optimistic note, with Pretty Flower approaching the Liar with "the beginning of a smile ... henna'd palms outward, gesture reserved for revelation" ([The Scorpion God p. 62] Thus his elevation to the position of 'The Scorpion God' appears to be imminent ... ')

But obviously the significance of the story is far from one's grasp if this is the point of culmination that one is content to attain. The farthest one can go from such a critical position is to draw the general line of demarcation between the realms of faith and reason; the Egyptians representing the one, the Liar the other. The natural conclusion to follow such a premise would be to underscore the disintegration of an ancient culture based on unprogressive faith and the revival of a moribund cultural group by the pragmatic approach of the Liar -- an individual possessing vitalizing reason. But there is more to the novella than what meets the eye.

4.4.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCORPION GOD

To understand the implicit significance of this novella, it is essential to see through the inherent contradiction in the ancient Egyptian way of life. For the ancient Egyptians their king, Great House, is their God, who invests life with the capacity for survival and sustenance. It is believed that through his mystic powers the Nile waters rise to different levels vital to the
existence of life in the kingdom: the Notch of Sorrow, the Notch of Excellent Eating and the Notch of Great Calamity. These indices of heavenly Grace or Wrath are related to the preferences or the periodic public performances of Great House implying that the God has to periodically put his divine strength to test.

The ancient Egyptians, with their profound faith in the changelessness of life, desire to preserve the essence of life even after death. The myth that governs their faith is of life's rejuvenation into an eternal stasis through dying. So it is death which appears to them the desirable goal of existence and not life. Life becomes merely a transitory phase equivalent to death which copies the timeless existence that is to follow it. Hence even the day-to-day life of the ancient Egyptians sustains under the contradiction that it is "death."

Interestingly, it is the Liar who sees the dichotomy in the Egyptian concept of life. With his reason, he is able to see through the contradictions of their spiritual notions that do not take cognizance of the physical reality of "the Moving Now". Thus he is able to use his own commonsense to make a new "beginning" -- not in the Egyptian sense -- by laying the foundations of an empire and a new social order. He ushers in a new order of things in a society poised for development and security, but in achieving this goal, his myopic view of life has sacrificed the mystery of a vision -- both noble and complex. In this sense it is a survival
dearly purchased.

As an outsider who sees the need for change, the Liar compares well with Evelyn De Tracy in *The Pyramid*. Evelyn also recognizes the Stilbourne residents for what they are -- materialistic, devoid of understanding and generally stagnant, being ignorant of the truth of things. But he is not instrumental in bringing any alteration to the Stilbourne-way of living. He fails even in the case of Oliver -- who has some potential for understanding -- to arouse sympathy and courage necessary to face the truth of life. He can only escape from the oppressive climate of Stilbourne and he escapes in two ways -- first by heavy drinking and later by an omnibus into which he curls up significantly in a foetal position, after being pushed onto the bus by Oliver. This attains special significance considering his peculiar sexual status: he is thus, in relation to Stilbourne, a forcibly ejected foetus who may hopefully survive in an alien atmosphere somewhere else. In another sense, he may be seen as a stranger twice over who comes to a dying society, diagnoses its ailment but is a failure in treating it and goes away leaving it static and decadent.

As against this, the Liar is equally a stranger to the Egyptian way of life. But he is capable not only of surviving in it but of becoming an asset to the Great House in Life as also in death. With his shrewdness and reason he succeeds in overcoming a whole system inclined to compromise him or failing which to forcibly send him to
his 'life'. In a rarely contrived moment, we see the Liar before the Head Man also in a foetal position like Evelyn in the omnibus in The Pyramid. But while Evelyn seemed like a drowsy, helpless, snake, the Liar gets himself "into a parody of the foetal position, but no foetus was ever so tense, so quivering. No foetus ever stared so, up, sideways and round" [The Scorpion God p. 57]. By extension we see him as empowered with the energy to intrinsically vitalize his very environment by instilling something of his own quivering mobility into the rigidity and stagnation around him. This vitalizing impact can be seen personified in the transformation of Pretty Flower. "She was changing too ... As if some perfume concealed in her body was taking aromatic and excited charge ..." [The Scorpion God p. 62].

However, the persistent issue to be analysed is Golding's moral view of the relative changes that occur in 'The Scorpion God' and in The Pyramid due to the association of these societies with strangers or outsiders. We are never shown what the new order is like in The Scorpion God. However, we are free to infer its nature from the character of its inaugurator, the Liar. In the case of The Pyramid, we see that the sign board 'Stilbourne' has not only grown in clarity but also in dimension, when Oliver returns to it after decades, thanks to the influence of the 'outsider' Henry Williams. Superficially, the place has changed its look but its decadence is underlined as being intensified and universalised.
when Oliver finds that Stilbourne could be like anywhere else. Stilbourne is a paradigm of twentieth century morals -- shallow, materialistic and hence moribund. Such a condition reflects the lack of love and sympathy caused by spiritual impoverishment that the contemporary man has inherited from the societies governed by ruthless reason and mean materialism ever since human history began. But the beginnings of these morally decaying civilizations can be traced effortlessly to the corrupting inroads made into them by commonsense and materially-bound-progress institutionalised in the character of the Liar. Another similar votary of progress in *The Scorpion God* is Phanocles in *Envoy Extraordinary*.

4.5.1 THE PLOT OF *ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY*

The simple plot of this novella revolves around a revolutionary Greek scientist. In his zeal to change the face of this universe Phanocles suddenly descends upon the undisturbed life in imperial Rome with his trio of inventions: a pressure cooker, an explosive and the printing press. However as Julia Briggs opines, "The variousness of these makes them a little unlikely as the brainchildren of one man, but this is, after all, a jeu de'esprit". He seeks the assistance of the Old Emperor in this 'Promethean' task. Initially, Phanocles interests the Emperor for diverting his favourite, albeit illegitimate, grandson Mamilius,
through his mysteriously veiled sister, Euphrasyne. He permits Phanocles to improvise a warship from a corn-barge merely to humour the latter. But his operation proves perilous. On being informed of it, Posthumus, the Heir Designate returns hastily from his expedition to stamp out any threat of insurgence and to install a regency.

Due to the unpredictable behaviour of the warship 'Amphitrite', many of Posthumus' ships sink along with her. Fortunately, the Emperor and Mamilius are saved from a bloody end at the hands of the enraged Posthumus by Euphrasyne -- the hare-lipped sister of Phanocles. She operates the propeller of the explosive set for demonstration at the harbour destroying Posthumus along with his army.

Saved from imminent death, the Emperor is faced with the pathetic prospect of having Mamilius as his successor while he would rather have had the ruthless Posthumus, "who would have murdered half a dozen people and given justice to a hundred million" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 176]. Although thankful that Phanocles' invention has saved him, the Emperor is also aware that "the world has lost a bargain" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 176] in the death of Posthumus. He is in no way inclined to have another warship built or an explosive invented. He admits:

that the experimentalist in me was interested in her atrocious activities, but once is enough. [Envoy Extraordinary p. 176].

He is convinced that the best course of action would be to
"restore Jove’s own bolt to his random and ineluctable hand" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 176].

The Emperor knows well enough that science can interfere with the progress of normal life but cannot improve it without distorting or hampering its natural flow. Thus, despite being kindly disposed towards the pressure cooker, he will have none of Phanocles’ more ambitious projects, particularly his printing press. In fact, the shrewd Emperor realises that the only way to rid his empire of the unrelenting, ‘Hubristic’ obsession of Phanocles with science and reason is ‘to reward’ him with an ambassadorship of remote China. Thus Phanocles is made Envoy Extraordinary to China. Interestingly, the last piece falls in place since it was in China that gun powder and printing made their first appearance.

4.5.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NOVELLA

Although the conflict depicted in the novella is between the tradition-loving Emperor and the change-obsessed Phanocles, it has deeper thematic undertones. In essence, it symbolizes the eternal clash between the perpetuation of an existing order and the initiation of unexpected change. Envoy Extraordinary is the novelist’s attempt to analyse, all over again, the rationale behind change for its own sake brought to any unsuspecting society — one that is self-contented and complacent left to itself. This
complacent attitude of the ancient Roman society is reflected in the unshakable premise of Mamilius "Everything has been invented, everything has been written. Time has had a stop" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 120]. Phanocles brusquely brushes aside this complacency with his perpetual wonderment at the "ocean at our feet of eternal relationships to examine or confirm" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 128]. But despite his claim of having passed his life "in a condition of ravished astonishment" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 129], his is apparently a short-sighted astonishment. He considers the universe to be governed by scrupulous, unchanging laws, making no allowances for the undeniable reality of 'poetry, magic, religion' of which his contemporary society is fully convinced. If this society needs any change it is merely of a diversion from boredom as Mamilius explains, "Time stands still. There is eternity between a sleep and a sleep. I cannot endure the length of living" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 118]. But Phanocles with his highly reductive approach to knowledge lives in a narrow universe closely guarded by science and natural law where questions such as, "of what importance is the bedding of individuals" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 128] are totally irrelevant. Hence diversion to him appears to be an undesirable distraction.

His concept of the universe rests squarely on reason and empiricism alone, with imagination and mystery being ticked off as dispensable commodities. It does not embrace the "all in all and
all in all - the totality God and man and everything else that is in
every state and level of being" but rather relies on "the universe
we know through our eyes at the telescope and microscope or open for
daily use" [A Moving Target p. 201].

Thus Phanocles' rational approach is highly unsuited to the
simplistic faith of a society considering beauty to be 'a living
proof and epitomes of magic'. In his stunted universe human beings
are an unwelcome intrusion and human relationships are dispensable
complications. His preoccupation is to discover relation of matter
to matter, not of man to man; to observe how "each substance has
affinities of an eternal and immutable nature with every other
substance" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 128].

In his strange insistence on rigidity of universal phenomena,
Phanocles has a curious resemblance to the Head Man in The Scorpion
God although in terms of their general attitude to the Universe
they are diametrically opposite. While Phanocles considers that the
'universe is a machine' regulated by natural laws and poised for
change, the Head Man looks upon the universe as a static eternity to
be understood by knowledge that is irrevocably rigid.
Interestingly, both of them follow a highly reductive approach
to knowledge although they begin from opposite directions.

The Head Man begins with questions which according to him have
unchanging facts for answers, such as, "who kept the sky up?" or
"who ... made the river rise?" [The Scorpion God p. 50]. Little
does he realise that his very approach is rooted in fallacious presumptions. Although Phanocles declares that:

I can move in the world of substance and force... so I can have my way with the universe [Envoy Extraordinary p. 128]

he fails to acknowledge the presence of some energy in the Universe imperceptible through empirical reasoning. The Head Man who swears by "his capacity to look at facts" and rests his reasoning "against the granite durability of rational demonstration" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 50] lacks empiricism and reason. Thus he stumbles against his own superstitious premises. Phanocles, while he has these abilities in excess fails to invoke the power of imagination in his approach to the Universe. He thereby fails to witness the miraculous power in operation there. In his ignorance of the larger reality, he acts as an agent of change in a society content with its immediate material environment and convinced of this larger reality through imagination and belief.

Fortunately for Imperial Rome, the Emperor is able to avert the imminent disruption of its material as well as moral life. He can see through the obsessive empiricism of Phanocles which prompts him to be 'hubristic' and alone in his "Universe with natural law and (where) people are an interruption, an intrusion" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 173]. He acknowledges to being "selfish too and alone - but with the shape of people acknowledged to have a certain right to independent existence" [Envoy Extraordinary p. 260]
1731. He, therefore, firmly restores to 'Dove's ineluctable hands' the power that the self-centered ambition of the natural philosopher had attempted to invoke. But the Emperor has been able to win only a temporary respite for mankind, as the development of human history to date well illustrates.

In fact, in the Emperor's caustic words to Phanocles lies a warning for future:

Your single-minded and devoted selfishness, your royal preoccupation with the only thing that can interest you, could go near to wiping life off the earth as I wipe the bloom from this grape (Envoy Extraordinary p. 173).

A blind obsession with the stupendous power of science is bound to release destruction and de-humanization in the garb of progress and freedom. The freedom that Phanocles proffers was from work and thus the progress he avows of is material advancement.

Fortunately, humanity at that innocently simple stage of development preferred to be left to its own lot, professing different values of life and believing in an unalterable, unquestionable fate. Phanocles, with his revolutionary views and absurd inventions is, therefore, seen as an intruder, an undesirable element. The Negro slave who attempts to kill Phanocles, far from appreciating the release from hours of rowing that Phanocles' improvised ship can give him, resents the loss of most natural and Fate-ordained work for himself.

Similarly, the Captain does not find the prospects of battles easily won with the help of explosives -- glorious. Instead, he
grudges the loss of opportunity for valour and lack of scope for other incentives of battle including booty. Moreover, he acknowledges that it 'Makes a change' [Envoy Extraordinary p. 167].

It is thus easy to recognize that Phanocles belongs with the Liar in The Scorpion God to the category of 'outsiders' who are harbingers of revolutionary but 'undesired' change to a contented and un-self-conscious society. He shares with the Liar his unyielding insistence on his own pragmatism. He also has in common with the Liar his stubborn resistance to the plain tradition - bound existence of the society to which he has come with his unrelentingly rational point of view. Further, like the Liar, he has a harsh intolerance towards existing mores and values of life and above all a total un concern for the unpredictable future, he is intent on shaping for the ancient Romans. However, Phanocles is not permitted to have his way, as Liar has had his own.

Though thwarted in his designs, Phanocles becomes an epitome of the unknown and unrecorded attempts both before and after him of innumerable natural philosophers: those that must have invaded and brought under their rational sway so many unresisting and unsuspecting societies at various stages of human civilization. The Emperor had the prudence, and the authority to resist the onslaught of Phanocles' inventions with their royal unconcern for outrageous consequences. But present human condition amply demonstrates that
the Emperor had few allies or successors during the subsequent
course of history.

His immediate relinquishing of the throne in favour of the
ridiculously 'weepy' Mamilius is symbolic of the probability that
might have set in motion the cycle of 'progress' for humankind. The
emperor knows that Mamilius "will be a terrific Emperor. Better
than Caligula but less talented than Nero" [Envoy Extraordinary p.
172]. There is thus scope to conjecture that his empire will be
thrust into anarchy and unrest due to his insane decision-making.
The consequent disenchantment could offset the need to seek
redressal in the form of change at some indefinite future stage.
Thereby, an environment conducive to the rampant rationalism of the
likes of Phanocles could develop eventually culminating in the
'omnivorous' materialism in the character of Henry Williams in The
Pyramid.

By extension, it is possible to view Mamilius as the
precursor of the weak-willed individuals who become unwitting
instruments of reckless change even when they are incapable
of arresting its undesirable development or of directing it
within a secure limit. His 'weepy', feminine nature places
him mid-way between the 'effeminate' Evelyn de Tracy' and Bounce
in The Pyramid. Evelyn is wise to see what is amiss in Stilbourne
but too weak to resist it; while the 'manly' Bounce impulsively
initiates and establishes Henry Williams in Stilbourne, but is too
weak to bear the consequences of her action with 'sanity'. By extending one's brief a little further, one may even suggest that at the head of this line of tools of change stands the charming Pretty Flower. She fails to resist the reasoning of the Liar even when she is convinced of the enormity of their spiritual lapse and so becomes his ally in bringing change to her unwilling society.

But these are mere conjectures. The reader has no clue as to Mamilius' course of action on becoming emperor. He has just the earlier exposure to the immature and impractical Mamilius. But he serves as an imaginary parallel to nameless potentates and heads of various social groups who might have guided the destiny of their respective societies in a manner that leaves much to be desired, viewed from the hindsight that the contemporary life affords.

4.6.1 CHANGE AS THE CENTRAL MOTIF IN CLONK CLONK

Change is once again the central motif in Clonk Clonk, the second novella of The Scorpion God. But this time, it is not externally thrust upon an unwilling society. In fact, it is generated rather spontaneously due to the prevailing circumstances, through the resourcesfulness and ingenuity of an individual within the group. Golding, beautifully, illustrates this gentle surfacing of change among the inmates of a close-knit society set in the idyllic surroundings of pre-historic Africa in his novella Clonk Clonk.
This little group lives in unbelievable bliss, secured by the warmth of inter-dependence and regulated by simple but firm guidelines evolved naturally over the ages. They are only a little advanced over the simplistic and innocent Neanderthals in The Inheritors. Hence, theirs are the genuine joys of an uncorrupted life. But their innocence is qualified by their basic awareness of the demand of survival: the need to frame simple rules of living and to adhere to them, unwaveringly.

As a result of this, the women have a community of their own headed by Palm, the namer of women, who is accepted as the natural leader of the whole society. This is consistent with the role of women as being more hard-working, mature and more closely acquainted with the mystery of procreation -- which they are believed to miraculously manage with the undoubted blessings of the Sky Woman. On the other hand, the men appear to be a pampered and a tolerated species, little advanced over children in their ignorance as well as in their modes of enjoyment.

Each group operates strictly in accordance with its own priorities, with broadly tolerant opportunities for social interaction that ensures harmonious co-existence. The men prefer hunting, playing the flute or the three-stringed bow and in general they enjoy themselves through singing and other amusements. Women gather honey, eggs and fish and keep a steady source of food available for the whole community even while entirely taking over
the responsibility of the children and the aged. They have a more mature approach to life than their male counterparts and have a more 'adult' and elaborate manner of amusement.

The conflict in this ideally smooth life arises in relation to two individuals, Palm and a young male named Charging Elephant, who is later called mockingly as Charging Elephant Fell On His face Before An Antelope. Palm is given to vague mental brooding and has strange perceptions whereby she suddenly feels benumbed in mind by their sheer novelty and apparently unrealistic nature. She feels that she goes 'clonk!' in mind. In a similar way, Charging Elephant who has a weak ankle goes 'clonk!', when his ankle gives way at the most crucial stage of action such as hunting.

Due to this weakness, Charging Elephant becomes a target of group-ridicule as The Chimp. Affronted and aggrieved by the stigma of ridicule The Chimp leaves the group in defiance and comes impulsively back to the camp-site in distress, where only the women are celebrating a new childbirth by having an 'intoxicating' get-together. As he unexpectedly comes upon the women-folk during their nocturnal celebration, he is absorbed in their midst by their warmth and acceptance. His initial reluctance and fear is gently undone by the cunning and knowing approach of the group. Eventually, he is led away to Palm's dwelling in effusive spirits and in soothing intoxication.

The next day the Leopard-men return from hunting with another
leopard and no meat. Chimp who had slunk away from the Leopard-men in shame and anger is now formally re-instated by Palm as her Leopard-man in the presence of the whole tribe. With this significant change Chimp's nomination as an elevated member of the group is guaranteed through his new appellation as The Water Paw and Wounded Leopard. His physical debility is now marginalized and he is accepted honourably back into the group. Along with the solution of his problem, which is of a physical nature, Palm's mental disturbance is also automatically sorted out. In bestowing an reassuringly steady relationship on The Chimp, Palm is herself reassured of her youth and womanhood and is in turn relieved of her acute loneliness following the death of her Leopard-man.

4.6.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CLONK CLONK

In conclusion, clonk clonk seems to be an absurd yet natural solution that the novelist holds forth to the change-mongering contemporary world. Probably realising the unlikelihood of such an answer to the problems of modern life Golding posits it in the remote pre-historical times. But the point that the novella scores is doubtlessly clear. Every vital and growing society seeks and needs change either consciously or unconsciously. But such a change can be best availed of when it surfaces intrinsically or spontaneously as in the case of the Leopard men and Bee-women in Clonk Clonk.
Although presented as an unexpected return to the campsite, The Chimp's arrival is more of a 'home-coming' than a return home. It is primarily a psychological and instinctive reaction rather than a mere physical and impulsive act. The fury that Chimp experiences, his pathetic humiliation and his ultimate breaking down into heart-rending Ma! Ma! are all a pointer to his emotional insecurity and his urgent need for sympathy and reassurance. It is no coincidence that he comes to the women folk: they are strangely associated with The Skywoman, their mysterious Deity, and are therefore the likely possessors of a mystique which is theirs alone. So returning to the women does not imply just a retreat into the nearest stage to infancy. It signifies an attempt to recoil into the warm, secure and unsevered bond of prenatal existence, implying the spontaneity of love and the need for company. The Chimp is propelled by filial instincts to the company of the women, perhaps unknown to himself. In this act of seeking solace from a maternal source, The Chimp is highly reminiscent of Lok's desperate unfolding himself into the earth in a foetal position in an attempt to die in The Inheritors. In a reversal of this association one can see Lok as the symbol of a group that fails to regenerate the meaningful change necessary for survival and so perishes as a result of this failure.
4.7 CONCLUSION

As the first trilogy of the *moral phase* of the 'Golding Novel', *The Pyramid* is a significant work due to its strategic position in the development of Golding's career as a novelist. One of the early reviews of the novel clinches this matter in a nutshell:

To the reader familiar with Golding's other novels, *The Pyramid* will astonish by what it is not. It is not a fable. It does not contain evident allegory, it is not set in a simplified or remote world. It belongs to another, more commonplace tradition of English fiction.

Yet the novel does not toe this 'commonplace tradition' blindly. In structure, tone and theme it displays the novelist's revised attitude to human morality. Suitably sandwiched between the conclusion of the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' and the onset of new challenges to the 'Golding Novel' in its Social Stage, *The Pyramid* reveals interesting modulations in the approach of the novelist to his work. These modulations can be broadly identified in:

(i) the departure from his own established practices by Golding,
(ii) the re-investment of well-exploited devices by the novelist, and
(iii) the breaking of new grounds of stylistic and visionary potential.

A quick glimpse at the structure, the narrative and above all the thematic concern of *The Pyramid* will help to map out the changed countenance of the 'Golding Novel' at the beginning of its *moral*
Up to _The Pyramid_ (1967) the social scene never enjoys primacy over the theme in 'Golding Novel'. It is always secondary, contributing to the central theme in an unobtrusive way. Of course, in novel after novel, the social setting is definitely more skillfully utilized by the novelist but it is never permitted to overshadow the theme of the novel. Even as late as _The Spire_ (1964), the social canvas is not brought into focus at any stage in the novel to provide an insight into society. It always blends with the theme throwing into relief the psycho-sexual and moral aspects of the protagonist's individual 'vision' and its dire consequences.

It is in _The Pyramid_ that this convention breaks noticeably for the first time. For, in the words of Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor:

Golding's aim differs radically from the passive inclusiveness, the steady and continuing concentration of _The Spire_.

The social hierarchy in Stilbourne is of paramount importance to highlight the moral degeneration of its inhabitants. So Golding's comedy of manners now focuses on society at large, which is corrupt and materialistic, lacking in human understanding and capacity for love. Only De Tracy who belongs to Barchester and not to Stilbourne -- and significantly enough sexually indeterminate -- is endowed with understanding and insight. Another doubtful case who purports to rise above the petty dictate of Stilbourne-mentality is of 'Bounce' Dowlish -- but only when she becomes a 'mental' case.
herself. Even Evie and Oliver who break their 'umbilical chords' from being 'the Stilbourne foetuses' are not accorded the wholesome status of becoming individuals who develop into warm, unwarped and normal human beings. Their development is only marginal and leaves much to be desired.

Such an approach to his novel-writing cannot be accidental in a novelist of Golding's calibre who has admitted to having worked out all the details of his very first novel with minute care [The Hot Gates p. 90]. Evidently, with the tentative vision that the novelist had given his protagonist in The Spire, he had freed himself of an overpowering urge to explore further into human depravity. For over a decade he had been groping for the reason as well as the solution to such depravity, often using an individual's moral condition to map out the general landscape of the metaphysical realm beyond the sphere of the ordinary human experience. With The Spire he manages to make a breakthrough into the grey areas of human experiences; he is, thereby, in a position to break new ground in his subsequent fiction.

The Pyramid is a marked departure from the Initial Stage of the 'Golding Novel' that was so desperately preoccupied with the intransigent reality of experience so as to turn to the phenomenal world almost on second thought. In its felicitous depiction of contemporary social reality, moreover with its newfound solicitude
with social morality, The Pyramid infuses a hitherto untapped vitality into the 'Golding Novel' deserving elaborate discussion. To a large extent the vivified contemporary canvas is instrumental in instilling new vigour into the work.

But to an equally significant degree this is due to the nature of the story revolving around the most imposing decades of this century in an extremely effortless manner. Placed at first in the 1920's and extending through to the 1960's, the plot consists of a first person narration of three interconnected but distinct stories. Wide-ranging enough to span the broad social spectrum in those perturbed and volatile decades of contemporary life, The Pyramid offers not only a familiar context but an identifiable one.

As with the plot and the setting, so also with the structure, The Pyramid displays some innovation. Largely reminiscent of Pincher Martin's memory flashbacks and Sammy's autobiographical reshuffling in Free Fall, The Pyramid invites comparison with the structure and the narrative mode in these novels. However, it lacks the incoherence of the one and the ostensible motives of the other. In fact, Oliver's narrative is a long way from the erratic hallucinations in Pincher Martin as well as from the apparently discontinuous temporal rewinding in Free Fall. In its relaxed, rather simplistic-seeming, re-enactment of the past, The Pyramid supports the linear movement of the narrative by occasional but significant temporal shifts.
this the novel is a concrete illustration of Sammy's percept of
the two modes of time:

The one is an effortless perception native to us as water to the mackerel. The other
is a memory, a sense of shuffle, fold and coil, of that day nearer than that
because more important, of that event mirroring this or those three set apart,
exceptional and out of the straight line altogether (Free Fall p. 6).

A distinct structural innovation in The Pyramid is its three-
segment-constitution -- each related to one event in the
protagonist's life -- aiming at a fairly complex analysis of social
relationships. A comprehensive portrayal of social reality through
the depiction of individual predicament is the mainstay of the
narrative in this trilogy. Through its connected yet independent
trio of episodes this novel reveals the complicated social equations
in a small town. In its attempted coverage of the complex social
fabric of a typical English provincial town -- between the two
World Wars and a little after -- The Pyramid places a figure on
the sore spot of contemporary human existence -- not essentially
English but Global.

Significantly this is done without much effort through:

a series of brilliantly-placed puns or Freudian double-entendres - which are both
very funny, and open up sudden, unexpected and savage depths of meaning.

The Stilbourne-society in The Pyramid comes through as a bonsai
variety of the inhuman materialism rampant in the world on a
gigantic scale. Oliver's final recognition through Henry Williams is:

of the deep thing lying in him, the reason for it all ... the thrust not liked or
enjoyed but recognized as inevitable, the god without mercy (The Pyramid p. 157);

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it is the ultimate diagnosis of an universal ailment -- ruthless materialism without moral vision -- both tragic and fatal.

Moreover, Oliver's recognition is significant in the innocuous way in which it surfaces: almost drawn out by his now-mellowed perception with a humility magnetic in its implication and tragic in its delay. Since, the intrinsic quality of Oliver's perception is built on the substantial reality painstakingly created by Golding mainly drawing inspiration from his own life. The Pyramid has been considered by Johnston to be Golding's:

first real "autobiographical" novel ... sufficiently justified by thematic and technical necessity. In view of the intimacy of tone and the background -- to some extent the emotional temperament too -- of Oliver and his creator, the novel does, indeed, seem autobiographical. But this semblance need not be over-stressed. In this capacity the novel looks forward to a new mode of narrative and looks back to the novels of the Initial Stage in its utilization and modification of details from identifiable sources. In this apparently first-person narrative with obvious autobiographical undertones Golding's narrator seems:

to take us further away from Golding himself, while not achieving that other identity of novelist as character.

Such an impersonal narrative even in a seemingly autobiographical work is a marked achievement of the 'Golding Novel' in its moral phase.
The novel is full of corresponding details from its author's life, as revealed by Golding's autobiographical essays 'The Ladder and the Tree' [The Hot Gates p. 166-75] and 'Billy the Kid' [The Hot Gates p. 159-65]. Some of these are: the portrait of Oliver's father, the crisis in Oliver's scholastic career over the choice of science or arts, Oliver's social perception, the idea of an intricate social structure in The Pyramid and the concept of social respectability as related to social hierarchy. However most of these features are not adopted de facto from Golding's life but adapted often with his inimitable ironical note. Olly's scientific career over his natural preference for music is an instance of such irony. Such devices give a distinctness to Olly's experience without violating the individuality of the novelist's experience.

Some of these notions have their fictional root in earlier novels: Thus, Olly's sneering condescension to Evie is an inversion of Martin's social prejudice against Mary Lovell in Pincher Martin. Similarly, the portrait of Olly's father is a more lively development of Nick Shales in Free Fall, drawn probably from Golding's own father Alec Albert Golding. The thwarted spinster Rowena Pringle warped and cruel, in Free Fall becomes the pathetic, thwarted and later insane 'Bounce' Dowlish in The Pyramid. The stultified, rigid social norms and the inhuman indifference behind the facade of social propriety in The Pyramid
is evidently recreated by Golding from his own experiences as he indicated in ‘The Ladder and The Tree’:

In fact, like everybody except the very high and the very low in those days, we walked

a social tightrope ... (The Hot Gates p. 168).

Even the characterization in The Pyramid is certainly a fuller and more vivified depiction of some of Golding’s earlier characters. Often their individual traits or typical qualities are unmistakably underscored; Sometimes trace-elements in a temperament are developed into a rounded and life-like portrayal. The human dimension of characters is now happily highlighted in a noticeable improvement over the early characters. By far The Pyramid posits the ‘Golding Novel’ firmly in its social environment -- competing perhaps only with that of The Spire -- with its petty cares, minor scuffles and ordinary conflicts. But in so doing, it invests into the ‘Golding Novel’ a new insight into the substantial experience of life, ordinary yet significant.

Having assessed the contribution of The Pyramid, the first trilogy of the moral phase of the ‘Golding Novel’, it is useful to analyse the second trilogy of this phase, The Scorpion God to assess its contribution to the ‘Golding Novel’. It has to be noted here that The Scorpion God does not ‘chronologically’ belong to the moral phase because two of its constituents The Scorpion God and Envoy Extraordinary were published in a volume of fantastic short stories Sometimes Never in 1956. As such it would not be appropriate to
consider their contribution in terms of narrative, structural and perspectival techniques during its Social Stage to the moral phase of the 'Golding Novel'. But as a matter of critical interest some discussion of these features would be undertaken in the following analysis of The Scorpion God.

Again, since they were published in 1971 along with a companion piece Clonk Clonk as The Scorpion God their thematic contribution to the moral phase is significant. But some reference to the novelistic features and the critical reputation of these novellas is necessary to foreground their thematic significance. This will demonstrate the import of their theme and justify their inclusion in this study as the works of the moral phase of the 'Golding Novel' despite chronological disparity.

It is useful to begin with the common critical notions regarding the three novellas: they have meagre plot structures; the narrative tone is so exceptionally light-hearted as to often seem banal; the novellas do not seem to have any sort of inter-locking structural device to show their thematic affinity. They use the usual 'reversal' technique so common to Golding's themes, and above all, the delineation of the story appears to have been tailor-made to achieve an expected resolution bordering on the common-place.

In short, The Scorpion God appears to have been intended as a long over-due diversion that comes like an unexpected windfall to the reader. Set in remote times and in exotic surroundings the
three novellas, no doubt, make interesting and for once, even entertaining reading. But, apparently, that is about all.

It is perhaps for these reasons that the critics have found little to commend in The Scorpion God. Probably the critics have been taken in by Golding's comment on his fictional treatment of historical material that:

to some extent, I'm sending up the idea of history, and have my tongue in my cheek much more often than people suspect.41

Hence they have spoken of The Scorpion God rather disparagingly. Julia Briggs is of the opinion that:

The book lacks a deliberate unity, other than its descent into the dark backward and abysm of time.42

Another eminent scholar of Golding's fiction Virginia Tiger has also conceded a subordinate status of being "minor-Golding" to The Scorpion God.43

But nothing short of indiscretion should encourage a serious reader of Golding's fiction to be carried away by such surface critical opinion. It is unlikely that Golding should fully yield himself at a single interpretation. Thus, it is necessary to carefully penetrate the novelist's jeu d'esprit in order to fathom the thematic complexity submerged under that mask. This naturally draws attention to the simple but compact structure and the breezy narrative in this work.

*Organized around a single episode each, the three novellas display an amazingly cohesive pattern. In 'The Scorpion God', it is
the calamity brought on by the death of Great House and resolved through the pragmatic rationalism of the Liar. The diverse inventions of Phanocles are the source of a likely calamity in Envoy Extraordinary which is diplomatically precluded by the shrewd Emperor. Finally, in Clonk Clonk, the calamity assumes the subtle form of psychological insecurity, it is surmounted through a mutual reassurance at the behest of the resourceful Palm.

An outstanding feature of these novellas is their mild and indulgent humour. Narrated in a lucid, simple language so characteristic of Golding, the novellas show a conspicuous absence of the element of obscurity and incomprehension common to other Golding novels. However, they share their subtle divulgence of thematic potential through a covert design.

Another notable feature in common with the rest of the Golding canon is that the three novellas display the spirit of the age in which they are set. However, this is not achieved through a blind adherence to chronological and spatial details but rather through an imaginative re-creation of the historicity of the age with the help of human interaction. Such an interaction bolsters the authenticity of the overall spatio-temporal context of the novellas and testifies to their excellent characterization, particularly that of Clonk Clonk.

Though the three stories of The Scorpion God treat apparently simple issues of life, they do so through interesting characters.
In these novellas Golding creates anti-heroic protagonists: The Liar, Phanocles, and The Chimp. All of them at one point or another become social victims and illustrate the various options open to an individual disclaimed by society. The Liar is intimidated into an offensive as a means to 'survival' and self-preservation; Phanocles, complaining of persecution, seeks patronage and avoids confrontation. The Chimp experiencing overwhelming insecurity on rejection displays vulnerability and a total lack of any self defense. Of the three protagonists The Liar is convincing but appears to have been drawn along the lines of Herodotus. Phanocles is a more realistic character in his one-track mind and short-sighted preoccupation. The Emperor is a warm, genial and down-to-earth character, somewhat like his creator -- given the curiosity, experimentation and humane sympathy but retaining the undefiled love for vision, poetry and the mystique of life.

However, the character of Palm in *Clank Clank* is the staying grace of *The Scorpion God* and a startlingly new achievement for Golding. She is one of his best delineated women characters. Surprisingly, she draws little from his earlier female characters like Mary Lovell in *Pincher Martin*, Beatrice Ifor in *Free Fall*, Goody Pangall in *The Spire* or even Evie Babbacombe in *The Pyramid*. She is closest to Fa and the Old Woman -- the Neanderthal women in *The Inheritors* -- but not merely in their pre-historic context: she shares with Fa her intelligence and her acute sensitivity to
nature; with the Old Woman she shares her quiet authority." But beyond these common traits there is an abundant vitality, astuteness, feminine grace and maternal warmth in her which is admirable. In the words of Julia Briggs:

She is the most attractive of Golding's women characters; the way instinct, impulse and feeling press upon her more ordered thoughts of duty and responsibility is imaginatively conveyed.44

Thereby she becomes the paradigm for the novelist's thematic concern in the moral phase -- the spokeswoman for affection and understanding as the basis for social change or stability.

The endeavour in this discussion has been to uncover the delicate pattern of thematic linkages deftly glossed over by the vivacity of the narrative or by the subtler nuances of the organic structure employed here. Perhaps Golding's light-hearted statement about his 'sending up the idea of history' might be only a ploy to send his would-be critics and source-hunters up the wall rather than to take his readers for a ride. His disenchantment with these two species of 'paper men' has been amply brought into focus through his comments in and out of his fiction. He has even confessed:

'it that for better or worse my work is now indissolubly wedded to the educational world.

I am the raw material of an academic light industry (A Moving Target p. 169).

In all probability, Golding might have adopted the attitude of the ancient Egyptians for whom he has legendary admiration. He has claimed on the basis of Herodotus' evidence:

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that the Egyptians do everything in public that other people do in private. So, this may be Golding's way of publicly confounding his hasty critics by ensuring that they desist from dissecting his novellas in a hasty discovery of the alleged 'Golding':

fixed in one not very decorative gesticulation, a po-faced image too earnest to live with

(A Moving Target p.169).

For, despite their façade of light-hearted story-telling, the novellas of The Scorpion God contain implicit thematic nuances that show a clear affinity with those of The Pyramid. Together the two works make a strong plea for moral values as desirable ingredients of social vitality.

Yet, despite their strong plea for moral values as social desirables, the strategy used in the two works is different. The Pyramid shows the dire need for love and sympathy by showing a society glaringly devoid of these values. In The Scorpion God each novella demonstrates this by focusing on imminent change in social structure and its resultant condition vis-a-vis that change. Thus the novella Clonk Clonk subtly accentuates the vivifying power that love and sympathy can instill into any social structure to save it from degeneration. These eternal moral values can rejuvenate any burdensome existence into one blossoming with vivacity and hope.

Apparently, Golding positioned this novella between 'The Scorpion God' and Envoy Extraordinary not merely 'to keep the two apart' in a literal way. Given Golding's penchant for subtlety of technique, his theme in the three novellas -- the reluctance to and the
In the words of Redpath:

Golding does not say that man's future is since that is a task for something more omniscient than a novelist, but he does say that a change must not deprive man of his humanity.

In 'The Scorpion God' he shows change that establishes a pragmatic social order founded on reason at the cost of imagination and faith; in Envoy Extraordinary he demonstrates the heartless egotism of pure reason bent on disrupting the self-complacent society with its simplistic beliefs in imagination, and finally in Clonk Clonk he reveals the latent capacity of imagination and sympathy to instill change without disrupting social harmony.

Despite their insistent reluctance to change, the ancient Egyptians in 'The Scorpion God' are shown to have finally precipitated into an unforeseen cycle of social change. They are pulled into the vortex of material advancement by the sheer survival instincts and the egotistic rationalism of the down-to-earth Liar. However, the persistent Phanocles in Envoy Extraordinary is authoritatively stalled in his wild designs of achieving material progress by the timely strategy of the old Emperor. So the ancient Egyptian civilization, given an impetus to change, symbolises a society pushed towards change from without.

While the society that the Emperor is successful in protecting from undesirable change represents the conscious resistance offered to the forces of degeneration by the intrinsic capacity
in a society aware of its strength, preferences and needs. Posed as it is between 'The Scorpion God' and Envoy Extraordinary, Clonk Clonk appears to be Golding's solution to arrest the deterioration of a morally-decadent society.

His plea is probably to preserve the intrinsic moral potential of such a society and prevent the invasion from the agents of superfluous change masked with elusive proposals of progress and freedom. Genuine freedom is the one enjoyed by the Leopard-men and the Bee-women in Clonk Clonk with their minimal demands on life and no aspirations for progress. Hence, they are able to cope with their peculiar problems, given the least resources to find a solution. Ironically, the problem of physical debility has grave implications to this hunting group and could have assumed serious dimensions if neglected. Similarly, an individual's need for emotional and physical companionship in a closely bound social group -- homosexual as well as heterosexual without the prick of psychosexual guilt -- would be a matter of great concern to the group.

But, by merely placing one problem along with the other, the liability of the one becomes the asset of the other. The maturity and the calm assurance that goes with the authority of Palm resolves the Chimp's problem of alienation and re-instates him within the group. Similarly, the youthfulness and vulnerability of The Chimp set the doubts of aging that haunt Palm at rest. Further her often-distracted-mind is now diverted into more youthful preoccupations of
love and childbirth. Just so, her maternal instinct is remotely satisfied in extending security and reassurance that re-habilitate a member of her own group. In fact, the onus for re-habilitating The Chimp, we see, is hers. For, he has survived in spite of his deformity due to the oversight of She Who Names The Women and overseers every new birth in the group -- that is Palm herself or someone who had preceded her in that august obligation. By extension, we can see Palm as a symbol of love and sympathy in the garb of intelligent authority -- an emblem, in brief, of social vitality without the loss of social harmony.

Palm is not intellectually so developed as to work out this formula of responsibility that underlies her action. But the perceptive reader finds it adequately satisfying. This simple solution of bringing together of two isolated members of a well-organized group into a mutually enriching relationship is a token of great hope for humanity in general and an indication of optimism in Golding in particular. It is an indication, above all, that not exclusion from the group but mutual inter-dependence is the basis of enlivening the process of existence. If the instinct to love and be loved is not subsumed in an individual, as it is today, humankind can rediscover the simple joy of living. But the complexity of contemporary life is so overpowering that perhaps it is an illusion to look forward to such hyperbolic optimism.

The lot of modern man lies with the likes of Phanocles, Liar
and Henry Williams in a naked pursuit of self-seeking materialism. However, when life comes to a breaking point with the strains of moral bankruptcy and spiritual loss the safety valve of contemporary life opens on the gray areas of experience — abnormality, perversity or insanity. Those areas which we share with the 'Bounces', Evelyns, Babcoombes, Wilmots and scores of other nameless social aberrants of our own day.

From the calm spiritual pragmatism of the early Egyptians in 'The Scorpion God' to the hostile, insecure and degrading 'advancement' of the Stilbourne residents in The Pyramid has been an unenviable voyage for humankind, whether devised by Fate or arranged by Reason. Stray attempts at halting this downhill movement must have been made, as indicated by the efforts of the Emperor in Envoy Extraordinary, during the course of history. But these have been pocket-resistances with short-lived impact. Perhaps a lasting remedy lies in reverting to a more natural way of life. The way out of the dilemma of choosing between the spiritual death of an unresisting society and the emasculated surrender of a vainly resisting one, points to the unadulterated life of Clank Clank. Failing to trudge along this strait path, the humanity is bound to snowball the degeneration of Stilbourne in the 40's to the demonical outrage of the crazy 60's that one encounters in Darkness Visible in 'an even more contemporary world'.
In fine, the following observations can be made regarding the 'Golding Novel' at this stage:

(a) Golding discards the intense concern with humankind that had conditioned his novelistic approach during its initial stage particularly in the experimental phase.

(b) Social interaction now becomes a predominant factor in Golding's analysis of human life. Individual experiences are utilized as a necessary corollary to the issue of social and thereby of human morality as in The Pyramid; while in the novellas of The Scorpion God, the individual is pitted against the social structure to focus on the equation of change and stability in social life.

(c) Human reluctance to social change and the relation of social rigidity to human morality is the central theme of the moral phase of the 'Golding Novel'.

But apparently, Golding felt that linking the issue of human morality to the social structure was not adequate to reveal the contemporary Man in all his complexity. Perhaps he believed conversely that an in-depth analysis of a significant specimen of contemporary society would yield an incisive insight into the contemporary human complexity. At least, the choice of his theme in his very next novel Darkness Visible makes such a reading of his intentions seem likely.
REFERENCES

1. Hillary Corke in a review article in Listner, 8 June 1969.


9. It is apparent in the novel that Ralph's father is a commander in the Royal Navy; that Piggy's guardian is his aunt who runs a sweet-meat shop, his father being dead and his mother being left shrouded in doubtful conjecture.


13. Ibid p. 128.

14. See Avril Henry, 'Time in The Pyramid', William Golding : Novels, 1954-67. In this perceptive article she argues that 'Mr. Golding's use of time, so stressed in The Pyramid, is likely to be very deliberate'.


28. Crompton, A View From The Spire, p. 74.

29. Redpath, William Golding: A Structural Reading of His Fiction, p. 121.


33. Don Crompton, A View From The Spire, p. 91.

34. A review in Times Literary Supplement, 1 June 1967.


44. Crompton, *A View From The Spire*, p. 86.

