

The Gaze and Counter-Gaze Inside a Pyramidal Structure in William Golding's *The Pyramid*

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In *The Pyramid*, Oliver's various experiences in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are autobiographically narrated. His hometown, Stilbourne, provides the backdrop for the novel's events. Stilbourne is dominated by a patriarchal and pyramid-shaped caste-system. Of central importance in the novel is the annual performance of the Stilbourne Operatic Society, which displays the pyramidal caste-structure of the town in miniature, and which is described in detail. The crude patriarchal beliefs tied up with this caste-structure are reflected in the novel's depiction of the unreasonable treatment of Evie Babbacombe by Robert, Oliver, Captain Wilmot, and even by her father Sergeant Babbacombe. Looked upon coldly by almost all the inhabitants of Stilbourne and hounded out of the town, Evie degrades herself in London. The male-dominated society of Stilbourne causes irretrievable damage to Miss Dawlish. Mr. Dawlish's ruthless programme of education for his daughter deprives her of musical sense and suppresses her humanity. On top of that, Henry Williams, a motor-mechanic, who undertakes to expand his business, exploits Miss Dawlish's affection and expropriates her father's estate. Miss Dawlish, demented and isolated in her later years, dies in utter despair, whereas Oliver, who was regularly given music lessons by Miss Dawlish in his childhood, embarks on his career as a technocrat, having mixed feelings about her death.

Most readers' initial evaluation of *The Pyramid* is far from favourable. At first sight, this work is lacking in depth of thought and characterized by comical wit and the depiction of carnality. On closer scrutiny, however, the novel is both 'one of the most pessimistic of all Golding's works,'¹ and laden with ingenious literary devices. The

critic Avril Henry, who has noted these devices, makes several important observations, and attention should be drawn to two of them in particular. Henry's first key observation is about a fragment of Ptah-Hotep's instructions cited on the first page: "If thou be among people make for thyself love, the beginning and end of the heart".² Ptah-Hotep, the guardian God of Memphis, may seem to be preaching importance of love and humanity, but actually the instruction is based on sheer self-interest: it advises us to make use of love for the purpose of obtaining wealth. According to Avril Henry, this quotation has been detached from the sentence that comes just before it: "He that ordereth himself duly becometh the owner of wealth; I shall copy this conduct".³ The second discovery concerns 'the crystal pyramid' (178) which has supposedly been installed in the senses of the citizens of Stilbourne. This 'crystal pyramid,' Henry notes, derives from a piezo-electric crystal, which is closely related to Mr. Dawlish's metronome in terms of their shape (quadrangular pyramid) and their supremely accurate oscillation (Henry 26-29).

I should like to add to Avril Henry's observations my own claim: that in this novel the paternal law, which is central to the townspeople's way of life, is so exclusive and discriminatory as to make itself illegal, and that the patriarchy aided by technology pervades the community as a power of surveillance. The space of surveillance is expanded throughout the community, with its monitoring eyes turned upon whoever threatens the community's stability. This stability is founded on the discriminatory structure of patriarchy and technocracy. However, this one-way observation is necessarily confronted with other eyes gazing back.

In the following discussion, it is argued that Stilbourne's social structure with its ubiquitous monitoring eyes is undermined by this counter-gaze.

I

The first part of this story mainly focuses on the representation of patriarchal power. Evie suffers incestuous abuse from Sergeant Babbacombe, as well as taking part in sadomasochistic relations with Captain Wilmot, a wounded veteran, in the name of discipline. Through binoculars, Oliver's father closely watches his son's love-making with Evie. Oliver's father, a dispenser, suspects that Evie will infect his son with venereal disease. Dr. Ewan's son Robert and even

Oliver treat Evie as nothing more than a means of indulging their sexual desire, regarding her as a threat to their social status. Since Oliver has all of his lovemaking watched and the danger of infection with disease hinted at by his father, he no longer lives according to his own desires but rather according to his father's wishes.

One doubts whether he has ever followed his own desires. His liaison with Evie starts abruptly, when he is requested to help pull a two-seater car out of a pond. In doing so, he discovers evidence of lovemaking between Evie and Robert Ewan. As Bernard F. Dick observes, Oliver's sexual desire is 'aggravated when he finds Ewan's mud-caked trousers, which his imagination transforms into a love trophy.'⁴ Oliver lives Robert's desire for Evie rather than his own desire for her. Oliver desires the object of the other's desire. For that matter, Oliver's first and unrequited love for Imogen Grantley is probably caused by the medium of her lover and now her husband, Mr. Claymore. Moreover, Oliver is in stiff competition with Robert and Claymore. He scuffles intensely with Robert, while forced into a kind of musical contest with the Claymores.

René Girard observes that we desire something we lack and which some other person possesses. According to Girard, desire is essentially mimetic, directed toward 'some object already desired by the model,' and it brings rivalry.⁵ However, Oliver's case is much more complicated. When the law of the father ceases to be a law or makes itself hollow and meaningless, it is unqualified to act as a third term that irrupts against the dual relation between self and its other at 'the mirror stage' and introduces the subject to the symbolic order.⁶ As is typically noticed in human relationships in *Stilbourne*, a closed dual relation between the two terms at the mirror stage produces not only love but also hatred, aggressiveness and violence toward each other. The self excludes its other as an evil object or a scapegoat.⁷ It has a competitive relation with its other and entertains a strong desire for the object of the other's desire.⁸ The lawlessness of patriarchy is found almost everywhere in *Stilbourne*. Hence spreads the phenomenon of dual mirroring without a third term.

For Oliver, the paternal law is represented by his father's 'watch-tower', equipped with optical instruments that reinforce the power of eyes: pebble glasses, binoculars, and a microscope. The frequency of references to the eye is a remarkable characteristic of this novel. It is depicted in every detail. Oliver refers to the retina that accurately records the scene of his early childhood: '[A] child's retina is

such a perfect recording machine that given the impulse of interest or excitement it takes an indelible snapshot' (165). The eyes of Henry Williams, a motor-mechanic, supervise the negligent lads behind him: 'As if he had four eyes instead of two, Henry wheeled on them' (38). This one-way observation, however, inevitably meets with another gaze from a dark spot as if the voyeurs were watching each other. Oliver, who has his lovemaking observed by his father, accidentally witnesses from a blind corner the evidence of his father's voyeurism: 'My father was standing by the long bench under the window. The top half of the window was open to the clump. He had not yet bothered to replace his binoculars in the leather case that hung behind the door.[...] My father was turning his head from side to side as if it had been tied with elastic ropes and he an animal, not knowing how he had been caught' (99-100). His father does not act as a third term or a law that intervenes between Oliver and Evie but finds himself entangled in the dual relation with his son.

Similar acts of counter-gaze from the dark spot are implied in various places. Oliver's surreptitious scrutiny of Miss Dawlish's dark brown hall is met by 'two disparate eyes of faint light; one, a dull red spot low down, the other a blue bud, high up' (166): by the furious eyes of a bust of Beethoven, or by the red eye of the fire.

II

In Stilbourne, gazes come from above, from below, and from all sides. Oliver, a dispenser's son, continually peeps with his 'X-ray eyes' (85) into the premises of Dr. Ewan who ranks above his father in Stilbourne's social hierarchy. Evie, ranked among the lower classes, commands the whole town from a vantage point. The Ewans, although ranked socially above Oliver's family, give him a present at Christmas, since the eyes of Oliver's mother send out 'a kind of radar emission' (177) from the 'crystal pyramid' (178).

She is a genius at peeping. The site from which she peeps at things takes the shape of a little triangle formed by a lifted corner of the curtain. The triangle is the shape of each side of the 'crystal pyramid,' a metaphor which is discussed later in this essay. This 'radar' is installed especially in the senses of the inquisitive people of Stilbourne. They assume that they can pry into others' affairs without being themselves seen, but are in fact being seen in turn through the curtains by others. Indeed, the 'radar emission' of their eyes is able to pierce even curtains:

They, the women, were not satisfied with the railed-off enclosure before each house, nor with the spring-locked doors. They curtained the windows impenetrably. Standing back about a yard inside these curtains, they sent out what I should now call a kind of radar emission which was reflected from each other's business. A curious element appears in this; that to a certain extent the emission was capable of piercing a curtain, so that to a woman, each family was dimly visible, while each thought itself protected.

(177)

The metaphor of the 'crystal pyramid,' Avril Henry observes, derives from a piezoelectric crystal. As for the pyramidal shape, the natural form of the mother-crystal is a cuboid with each end tapering to a four-sided pyramid. Some piezoelectric crystals were used in underwater sound transducers and radars during the Second World War (Henry 26-27). As is commonly known, if an electric field is externally applied to a piezoelectric crystal, its strain changes, thus producing anew an electric oscillation with an extremely constant frequency. This electric oscillation is converted into a supersonic wave, or 'radar emission,' with which are analogized the inquisitive eyes that menace each family in Stilbourne. Oliver's mother's peep reasserts itself when she looks up at the cast on stage rehearsing for the Stilbourne Operatic Society from her position below them in the darkness. One of the most ingenious methods of peeping she adopts is to use Oliver as 'a kind of interplanetary probe' (177) by extracting every piece of information he can gather when he takes bottles of medicine or packets of pills to the neighbours. Oliver is not less ingenious than his mother in his methods of observing hidden information. Besides spying into Miss Dawlish's house, he applies his eyes to a convenient hole and sees 'how the cast, stage hands, musicians and friends [stand] about, drinking coffee' (156) after the performance.

The performance itself includes eyes looking both from the top and from the base of the social pyramid. The cast of the operetta titled 'King of Hearts,' in which Claymore plays the hero and Imogen the heroine, is pervaded by a pyramidal social hierarchy. An unusual adherence to the hierarchy is found in the quarrel between Claymore and Oliver's mother over the role her son is to play on stage. Moreover, as a cyclorama suggests, the spot where the hero and the heroine fall in love with each other, sweetly whispering amorous words, is located on the top of the pyramid, which commands a panoramic view of the kingdom and its subjects. However, the audience

below in darkness can also gaze back at the royalty on stage.

As Michel Foucault notes, since the middle of the eighteenth century, a clinical gaze has surveyed the truth of the object to the utmost limit, and the gaze penetrating the truth has turned into that which dominates things. This one-way gaze has sovereign power.⁹ Julia Kristeva observes that 'the bourgeois technocratic era' imagines itself carrying out the reunion between the signifier and the signified.¹⁰ On the other hand, Laplanche and Leclaire, along with Lacan, point out that the signifier and the signified are in a floating rapport and never coincide with each other except at certain anchoring points. Lacan argues that the anchoring points or what he terms the *points de capiton* are 'mythical' and that 'they do not finally pin down anything.'¹¹ The final signified is what Lacan terms 'the real' or 'the Real', which is 'inassimilable to symbolization.'¹² The real is that which 'resists symbolisation absolutely.'¹³ The voyeurs, who fail to see 'a shadow behind the curtain,' feel themselves 'under surveillance.'¹⁴ The shadow is that which cannot be seen nor symbolized. This 'physical disruption of their [the viewers'] visual field' is regarded as pertaining to the real (Krips 179). As a result, the subject's gaze necessarily meets with a dark spot which rejects symbolization by adversely gazing back at the subject.

Evelyn De Tracy, who is invited from London to act as stage director for the Stilbourne Operatic Society, constantly shakes his body and legs mechanically. His very existence seems to vibrate in time to the mechanical vibration of the 'crystal pyramid' of Stilbourne as it sends out 'radar emissions.' The evidence suggests he is a homosexual and a transvestite: he abruptly massages Oliver's shoulder, shows him some photographs in which he wears a ballerina's costume, and meaningfully alludes to the 'back passage' (152). The monitoring eyes of Stilbourne regard him as a threat to the social order, and he suffers from the town's hostility to those who practise homosexuality and transvestism. This is why De Tracy disappears even before the close of the performance. His eyeballs, in stark contrast to those of Henry Williams, hardly move, and his pupils appear quite narrow because the irises round them merge into the yellow of his eyeballs. It seems as if his eyes were concealed by a host of other monitoring eyes. The yellow of his eyeballs is so depicted as to suggest weird reptiles, his horn-like tuft of hair resembles a 'minor devil' (Crompton 59-60). His existence is deemed horrifically defiling. Like Oliver, he is a victim of the monitoring eyes, which is why he feels sympathetic toward Oliver,

whose lovemaking with Evie has been supervised by his father with binoculars.

It is to be noted, however, that De Tracy's eyes are also described as a pair of billiard balls with minute dark spots [pupils] (121). This means that his eyes also refuse the one-way gaze of surveillance. In the photographs he casually shows Oliver, he and his partner genially gaze at each other: 'The ballerina's costume with its frilly white skirt fitted him closely and his lean legs led down, knees supporting each other, to pumps on his enormous feet. [...] In some of the photographs he was supported by a thick, young man; and in each of these, they gazed deep into each other's eyes' (149).

Both Oliver and De Tracy are equally exposed to a mechanical one-way observation: the former to his father's binoculars, the latter to someone's camera. However, these mechanical eyes are qualitatively different. In Oliver's case, his counter-gaze baffles his father's monitoring activity and deprives the binoculars of their symbolizing function. The monitoring binoculars are thus unqualified for a third term that irrupts against the dual relation between Oliver and Evie. On the other hand, De Tracy does not turn any counter-gaze on the camera, since it is not used for surveillance. This camera, which as a third term intervenes between De Tracy and his partner, introduces him to the symbolic world, part of which is the photograph he treasures. When De Tracy advises Oliver to be 'perceptive' (148-49), he suggests the existence of a perceptive eye, which is the very opposite of a monitoring one.

Unfortunately, Oliver is not perceptive enough to understand De Tracy's meaning. Laughed away by his assumed true friend, De Tracy makes up his mind to leave Stilbourne without delay. He lies in the seat of the Barchester bus, curled close as if to protect himself from the attack of the eyes outside and, like Evie, is driven out of Stilbourne. His body shuddering to the movement of the engine is no different from his body and legs shaking in time to the mechanical vibration of the 'crystal pyramid.' In short, he is extremely nervous of the monitoring eyes of this town.

III

In the social pyramid of Stilbourne, which depends for its stability on the discriminatory practices of patriarchy and technocracy, those regarded as a menace to the established structure are unreasonably

oppressed. The lesbianism of the two ladies who seclude themselves in their mansion, as well as De Tracy's homosexuality, is first and foremost abhorred by society because they are seen as a threat to the social order. Similar victims, who are deemed eccentrics and regarded as a menace to Stilbourne's stability, include a deformed psychotic in a wheelchair and 'a strange lady wearing many skirts and a vast hat full of dead leaves' (163). The two women, Evie and Miss Dawlish, are typical victims. As discussed before, Evie is ejected as a defiled object, as an absolute menace to the society of Stilbourne. Oliver, all too obedient to his father, avoids Evie as though she were 'one of the diseases' his father mentions (101). Her world is for Oliver 'a heap of dung' (100), 'an earth that smelt of decay, with picked bones' and 'life's lavatory' (91). Even her musical ability is dismissed as defiling by the Stilbourne Operatic Society. Femininity and musicality are both presumed to be a danger to Stilbourne's social pyramid. Oliver himself feels the '*obscenity*' of music (193), although he was taught music by Miss Dawlish in his childhood.

Patriarchy in Stilbourne tries to vitiate both female sexuality and musical talent in the name of discipline. Mr. Dawlish's patriarchal power over his daughter is a case in point. His original intention to make her a leading pianist by training her hard results in depriving her of musical passion. His eyes, like those of the Beethoven bust on the mantelpiece over the fire, keep supervising her and imposing an outrageous discipline. Her father hits her across the knuckles with a ruler whenever she makes a mistake in the fugues. Meanwhile, she is past marriageable age, and music is only a means of sustenance for her. She lives out an apathetic life as a spinster. Mr. Dawlish suppresses his daughter's femininity as well as musicality. The same pattern of suppression is repeated by the motor-mechanic Henry Williams. He exploits her affection, and then her father's legacy, with which he expands his business, finally expropriating her premises by moving into her house with his wife and children. Her musical instruction to young Oliver is often interrupted by mechanical noises made by Henry working late. Henry's rationalism and obsession with technology, linked with Mr. Dawlish's patriarchy, alienate Miss Dawlish's femininity, musicality, and even her life. Like Evie, she is positioned as 'life's lavatory,' which is suggested by the details of the closet of brown earthenware in her house that young Oliver sees by candlelight.

As Paul Crawford points out,¹⁵ both Evie and Miss Dawlish are associated with scatological images. Evie farts at the beginning of

the story (14). Her father, whose jobs include collecting the pennies from the locks in public lavatories, pronounces the Latin words ‘Amor vincit omnia’ inscribed on her necklace as ‘Hamor vinshit Homniar’ (25), and the place where Evie makes love with Oliver is described as ‘brown earth’ among ‘dry pellets of rabbit dung’ (96). Oliver’s father prescribes ‘opening medicine’ to cure his son of his obsession with Evie, and Oliver fancies his father will prescribe the same for Evie as well (94). Oliver, like his father, identifies Evie with ‘filth,’ or rather treats her body as if it were filled with ‘filth.’ The same image is used to depict Miss Dawlish’s surroundings. Everything in her house is a ‘fetid brown’ colour, and her deserted windsor chair in particular is fouled by birds. Henry Williams’ ‘glycerine eyes’ are ‘sharp’ at purging ‘filth,’ since glycerine has the effect of an ‘opening’ medicine.¹⁶ After having appropriated Miss Dawlish’s estate, he undertakes to purge her of the ‘filth’ that he believes poses a challenge to his attempts to ascend the patriarchal and technocratic pyramid: the ‘filth’ of female sexuality and musicality.

Kristeva argues that the music is constructed mainly on the basis of ‘the semiotic’¹⁷ because of its irregular vibration. She likens the semiotic to the irregularly shaking receptacle or womb that nurtures the constituents of the universe.¹⁸ From the point of view of human development, the semiotic has its origin in the pre-Oedipal phase where the child is not yet separated from the mother. The symbolic based upon patriarchy and/or technocratic ideologies often represses the semiotic as ‘defilement.’ Kristeva attributes any image of ‘defilement’ to the maternal.¹⁹ This is why musical passion and female sexuality are consistently repressed in this novel by patriarchal fathers and future technocrats.

However, these elements excluded as ‘filth’ are to revolt before long. As René Girard notes, a cathartic has the effect of purging the body of toxins, but ‘a too powerful *pharmakon*’ can increase the defilement it is supposed to prevent. (*Violence and the Sacred* 290). Oliver’s father and Henry Williams attempt to eliminate-‘filth,’ but in effect they make it more harmful or even lethal. Jean Baudrillard refers to these phenomena and explains: ‘Any structure that hunts down, expels or exorcizes its negative elements risks a catastrophe caused by a thoroughgoing backlash. [...] Anything that purges the accursed share in itself signs its own death warrant. This is the theorem of the accursed share.’²⁰ It is such inhabitants as Oliver’s father and Henry Williams that have made Stilbourne ‘stillborn.’

Henry Williams rises from mechanic to manager at the cost of sacrificing Miss Dawlish's affection, property, femininity, and musicality. His shrewd eyes pierce everything and his social antennae vibrate so that he may take whatever opportunity is available to build his career. Of course, he is also peeped at by Oliver's mother through the curtains. Certainly, she expresses bitter disdain for his using 'a sprat to catch a mackerel' (179). But her contemptuous eyes are directed not so much toward him as toward Evie and Miss Dawlish.

Thus Stilbourne always produces those who are the most susceptible to the violence of the eyes. The gaze/counter-gaze of this transparent pyramid, in which innumerable gazes come from every direction, is doomed to self-destruction, as will be discussed later, but for the present it is an extremely oppressive structure fraught with the danger of producing victims who suffer the violence of other members' eyes. As if by an illegal monitoring system based on modern information technology, these victims' privacy is wholly exposed to the public even though they are confined to their own houses.²¹

IV

Miss Dawlish becomes more and more eccentric. She pretends to have a car accident, deliberately leaving the front wheels of her two seater dropped in a ditch to wait for Henry's rescue. As a result she is charged for dangerous driving and her license suspended for five years. On top of that, her sexuality, which has been repressed under her father's discipline and afterwards under Henry's rationalism, ultimately asserts itself: 'Bounce pacing along the pavement with her massive bosom, thick stomach and rolling, ungainly haunches; Bounce wearing her calm smile, her hat and gloves and flat shoes—and wearing nothing else whatsoever' (207). Her nude striding along the pavement of Stilbourne temporarily subverts the dominance of men over women and revolts against the counterfeit decency of the town. Evie does something similar in her open lovemaking with Oliver.²² These women discover the hypocrisy of patriarchy and prove its law utterly ineffective. Oliver is, however, insensitive to these implications.

This insensitiveness lasts until after he has become middle-aged. He follows in Henry Williams' footsteps, aiming for the summit of the social pyramid. After the fashion of his parents' voyeurism, he starts surveying the late Miss Dawlish's dilapidated premises. He is curious to see the bottom of her garden. Against the long wall is a surround

of brick, where there are traces of an extraordinary bonfire. Despite the rain of two or more winters, the covers of various pieces of sheet-music can still be deciphered. Among the debris are the wreckage of old Mr. Dawlish's metronome, plaster fragments of a smashed Beethoven bust, and a splinter of a frame that held a photograph of Mr. Dawlish. All Miss Dawlish could do to escape the eyes that had been constantly supervising her life is smash both the Beethoven bust and the photograph of her father. This is why she was impatient even with blazing 'ferocious eyes' of her cat (211). The act of shattering and burning her father's metronome is of special significance: 'I saw a glint of metal, picked out a steel strip and my guess became certainty. The lead bob had melted away, but the knife-edge and the sliding weight that adjusted the ticking of the metronome to an unbearable accuracy were identifiable' (215). As Avril Henry observes, the pyramidal metronome that keeps time with extreme accuracy has much in common with the crystal pyramid (a piezoelectric crystal) that vibrates with precise regularity (Henry 27). Moreover, this metronome is cased with crystal. Further features in common are that both of them act as a most suitable metaphor for the combination of patriarchy and technocracy, since they both use precision technology and their forms are reminiscent of an Egyptian pyramid, which can be seen as a symbol of patriarchy.

Thus Miss Dawlish's destruction of her father's metronome suggests her passionate revolt (a) against her father's patriarchy, (b) against Henry's technocracy, which oppresses and drives out her music in order to expand his business, (c) against the 'crystal pyramid' with which her privacy is probed, and (d) against the strict rules of a frequency of oscillation that harms the musical vibration. Her smashing and burning of the metronome further suggests the possibility of breaking a linear mode of time and inventing quite a new one. There are common causes behind both Miss Dawlish's smashing of the metronome and Oliver's self-hatred. Oliver's self-hatred has its roots in his suppression of the music that he could have created with Evie but for his father's watching, as well as in self-contempt at his own attempts to ascend the social pyramid as a technocrat after the fashion of Henry Williams. In fact, Oliver the narrator adopts a new mode of time distinct from clock time in Section Three, the final part of the novel, where time becomes retrograde, repeats itself, or moves in a cycle. Oliver, as well as Miss Dawlish, seeks to be liberated from the linear progress of time that represses musicality. Actually, even in Sections One and Two, time does not necessarily progress along

the lines of clock time. As Bernard F. Dick notes, 'the second episode takes place before the first has ended. Oliver sees Evie for the last time shortly before he begins his third year at Oxford; the operetta is staged at the end of his first term.' According to Dick, these two modes of time 'intertwine, run parallel to each other, and even intersect' (Dick 86) in *The Pyramid*.

However, Oliver cannot or will not recognize his similarity to Miss Dawlish. In front of her grave, he neither feels sympathy nor expresses his condolences but confesses his long-standing hatred for her. But the metaphorical significance of a marble rhomboid carved into a harp that might be 'vibrating in sympathy with the organ' (162) is not to be overlooked. According to Avril Henry, 'the usual explanation of the Rhomboidal Pyramid's shape is that shortage of materials necessitated change of design,' thus providing a visual image of incompleteness (Henry 25). Given the smashed pyramid of the metronome, the marble rhomboid could be construed as the warped pyramid of the tomb. It is of great significance that the marble strings of the harp appear to vibrate. Their vibration is a musical one rather than that of a machine. It is as if the vibration of Miss Dawlish's musical passion, even after her death, warped the pyramid of her marble tomb. As previously mentioned, Miss Dawlish smashes the pyramid of the metronome, thus revolting against the pyramid of piezoelectric crystal that plays almost the same role in the novel as the metronome. The mechanical vibration is a means by which so called technocrats seek to reach the top of the social pyramid, as Oliver and Henry Williams vibrate their social antennae (159). One of the clues to the elucidation of this novel is to distinguish between the two qualitatively-different vibrations mingling with each other in the text.

Considering her miserable life, the inscription 'Heaven is Music' is bitterly ironic, although it is Mr. Dawlish's motto and Henry Williams dedicates it to her on behalf of her bereaved family. Oliver irreverently looks down on the inscription between his feet and laughs at the thought of her repressed sexuality. He feels her psyche—possibly her repressed sexuality and musicality—rising from the place, and shudders as if they were 'filthy.' Driven by revulsion and horror, he cries aloud: '“I never liked you! Never!”' (213) His exorcistic attitude is no different from that which her father and Henry Williams assumed toward her musical passion and female sexuality.

Oliver is even more merciless than Henry Williams in the sense in which he dares to ignore the marble strings of the harp-carving that do

appear to him to be vibrating or when he laughs at the repressed sexuality that seems to him to be rising from her grave. He feels 'the peace of exorcism' (185) when Henry's family moves into her house.

Having wrapped up his endowment of absolute pitch in the 'cocoon of imperceptiveness'²³ of his car and suppressing his feeling that if he might only lend her his own 'power of choosing the future,' he would 'pay anything' (217), he smartly and pitilessly charges towards the summit of the technocratic pyramid without running the risk of ruining himself: 'I could roll through it, detached, defended by steel, rubber, leather, glass' (158). Here is the fundamental problem of the persecution of musical passion and female sexuality by the eyes of technocratic surveillance.

Although there is a necessary dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic; between 'the two modalities of the signifying process, which is constitutive of the subject' (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 24), the semiotic disturbs 'the symbolic order and the technocratic ideologies that [have] been built over this [semiotic] violence to ignore or repress it' (ibid. 83). Since the semiotic resists symbolization, it assumes the character of Lacan's 'the real.'²⁴ Thus the dialectic not only ascends toward symbolic sublimation but abruptly turns into degeneration.²⁵ In fact, patriarchal fathers like Sergeant Babbacomb, Captain Wilmot, and Mr. Dawlish, who have mentally and physically outraged Evie or Miss Dawlish, are now dead or have virtually perished. The future technocrats like Oliver and Henry Williams, so long as they regard these women as 'filth,' might be affected by the semiotic in some form or other. Furthermore, the semiotic might disturb the pyramid of Stilbourne that drove out or killed these women, and further disturb the pyramid of the Stilbourne Operatic Society (SOS) nested inside the greater one of Stilbourne and sending an SOS. Such disturbances range from Miss Dawlish's nudity and her bonfire to Evie's open lovemaking with Oliver, from De Tracy's ballerina's costume to the frenzy and turbulence that accompany the performance by the SOS.

Oliver's musical talent revolts in spite of himself against the reign of petty technology and mean money when he unwittingly forgets to wedge a penny as a mute between the bridge and the tail of his violin. The result is that he is a great success on stage, which destabilizes the SOS pyramid. For when Imogen and Claymore sing the Great Duet immediately after Oliver's performance, her song is so out of tune that the ridge line of the pyramid, on top of which they play, might be worn down (154). Moreover, this pyramid of the SOS always suffers

from inner strife, caused by the 'jealousies and hatreds, meannesses and indignations we [are] forced to conceal in ordinary life' (114), which may ruin the pyramid of Stilbourne as well as of the SOS at any moment.

Oliver, who is now a promising technocrat and a father of two children, may seem to regenerate himself by shaking off the ghosts of Evie and Miss Dawlish, but this is not necessarily the case. His soul still fluctuates between regeneration and degradation. This symptom first appears when he and his children visit Miss Dawlish, who now lives a secluded life. His child's casual behaviour reminds him of repressed sexuality: 'Mark—for God's sake, child! Not in public! Here—you'd better run along home' (210), since this scene suggests not so much 'an attempt to urinate' as 'childish masturbation' (Henry 14). For that matter, when Sophy, his daughter, 'nuzzle[s] into [his] trouser leg,' he is oversensitive to her gesture and becomes fiercely determined that she will be 'a fulfilled woman, a wife and mother' (212).

Oliver's fluctuation between progress and setback is attributable to the un-symbolizable gap that has opened under his feet. This spot is excluded from his symbolic system and thus regarded as the real, which is often invested with ghosts.²⁶ He taps with his toe the pavement, where he feels Miss Dawlish's invisible footsteps, to confine her psyche back to the earth and consolidate the foundation of the technocratic pyramid he is going to ascend in his technologically advanced car. In the last scene where he looks Henry Williams in the eye and sees his own face reflected in its pupil (217) like a reflection in a mirror, he is trapped again in the counter-gaze. The dark spot and the counter-gaze chase him wherever he may go and however much he tries to concentrate on his driving.

Notes

¹ Don Crompton, *A View from the Spire: William Golding's Later Novels* 70.

² William Golding, *The Pyramid* 9.

³ Avril Henry, 'William Golding: The Pyramid,' *Southern Review* 29.

⁴ Bernard F. Dick, *William Golding* 84.

⁵ René Girard, *Oedipus Unbound: Selected Writings on Rivalry and Desire* 96. See also Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* 146.

⁶ At the mirror stage, the subject lives the dual relation with 'every other, all the others of the primary narcissistic identification,' as well as with the mother.

See Louis Althusser, 'Freud and Lacan,' *Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* 54-55. Concerning the law of the father that introduces the subject to the symbolic order, Jacques Lacan argues: 'It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law.' See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* 74.

⁷ Philippe Julien, *Le retour à Freud de Jacques Lacan: L'application au miroir* 50-56.

⁸ As for the competitive dual relation between ego and its objects at the mirror stage, Lacan observes that 'this form will crystallize in the subject's internal conflictual tension, which determines the awakening of his desire for the object of the other's desire: here the primordial coming together (*concourse*) is precipitated into aggressive competitiveness (*concurrency*) [...]'. See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* 21.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* 39.

¹⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* 81.

¹¹ Martin Thom, 'The Unconscious Structured as a Language,' *Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* 62. See also Roland Barthes, *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* 122.

¹² Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 159.

¹³ Jacques Lacan, 'Discourse analysis and ego analysis,' *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I Freud's Papers on Technique* 1953-1954 66.

¹⁴ Henry Krips, 'Extract from *Fetish. An Erotics of Culture*,' *Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* 171.

¹⁵ Paul Crawford, *Politics and History in William Golding: The World Turned Upside Down* 141-42.

¹⁶ Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study of the Novels* 233.

¹⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* 24.

¹⁸ Whether Kristeva's association of the semiotic with Plato's *chora* is appropriate or not, the semiotic *chora*, or simply the semiotic, she argues, derives from the name *chora* which means in Plato's *Timaeus* the 'receptacle [...] nourishing and maternal, not yet unified in an ordered whole because deity is absent from it.' See *Revolution in Poetic Language* 26. '[T]he four basic constituents' [fire, water, earth, and air], Plato has *Timaeus* observe, 'were shaken by the receptacle [*chora*]' and 'came to occupy different regions of space' even before the deity arranged them into an ordered universe. See Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* 72-73.

¹⁹ Menstrual blood and excrement, Kristeva argues, 'stem from the *maternal* and/or the feminine, of which the maternal is the real support.' The latter defilement is under the mother's control when infants receive sphincter training. See *Powers of Horror* 71.

²⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* 106.

²¹ Golding himself refers to the terror of modern information technology and observes that our modern 'ant-like persistence in building a pyramid of information' discounts 'the possibility of the potentialities of the human spirit which may operate by other means in other modes to other ends.' See William Golding, *A*

Moving Target 54-55. See also Avril Henry 24.

²² Lawrence S. Friedman, *William Golding* 111.

²³ Kenneth C. Russell, 'The Vestibule of Hell: A Reflection on the "No-Risk" Morality of W. Golding's *Pyramid*,' *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 453.

²⁴ See John Lechte and Mary Zournazi, Eds., *The Kristeva Critical Reader* 217.

²⁵ Dialectics is, Theodor Adorno remarks, 'not only an advancing process but a retrograde one at the same time.' See Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 157.

²⁶ Miran Božovič, 'An Utterly Dark Spot,' *Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory* 269-70.

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