

“A Fulfilled Woman, a Wife and Mother” ? : William Golding の The Pyramid における女性

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“A Fulfilled Woman, a Wife and Mother”?:

Female Characters in William Golding's *The Pyramid*

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In *The Pyramid*, there is a distinct difference between the important female characters, Evie and Bounce, who are exploited by selfish male characters, and the other, minor female characters. The features which characterize the two groups of women are: the two central female characters, suffering and frustrated, are unmarried, childless, and working, while the others, rather one-dimensional, are simply housewives.

A key to the above distinction is the following determination of Oliver, the protagonist and narrator, when he is confronted with the wasted life of Bounce: “she [his daughter] should never know such lost solemnity but be *a fulfilled woman, a wife and mother.*” This conventional view of Oliver that fulfillment for women is just to be married and have children seems to be shared by the novelist. Each female character in *The Pyramid* is categorized according to whether she is (or can be) “a fulfilled woman” or not. Golding chooses those female characters who are not “fulfilled” as his suffering characters, while keeping the “fulfilled women” free from such distress. He seems to load heavy burdens only on those who are not “fulfilled,” almost as if he wanted to portray their “unfulfillment” as the result or even the embodiment of their suffering: being unmarried and childless seems to be a symbol, the cause, and also the tragic result of their suffering. The novelist seems to believe that for women being not “fulfilled” is both the cause and the result of their suffering, and has created his suffering female characters accordingly.

In *The Pyramid*, as in other Golding novels, the female characters are depicted only in relation to the male protagonist and other male characters. The function of female characters in his novels is not

very different from that in old folk tales, where a female character is classified as either a virgin or a witch. Even in many modern novels by male novelists, female characters are introduced only to show the function of women in men's lives: a female character is either a prize of the male protagonist's quest (i.e. a virgin) or an obstacle to his progress (i.e. a witch). This convention also seems to have an influence on the way Golding categorizes his female characters as either “fulfilled” or not “fulfilled,” although his interest and sympathy as a novelist focus not on the former but on the latter.