

William Golding's Iconoclastic Views about the Neanderthal Man in *The Inheritors*

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Abstract

William Golding has been identified as a nonconformist whose opinions always go contrary to what is customarily accepted or established. This is shown in all his novels, more specifically *The Inheritors*, in which he defies long-established opinions held by anthropologists, historians, archaeologists as well as many others about the Neanderthals and their immediate successors the Homo sapiens. Though my PhD was about some of Golding's novels, no single word is mentioned in my PhD dissertation about his challenging novel *The Inheritors*, which is still regarded by both critics and readership as most complicated. Golding's intention in this novel is not merely to rebut the clichés and stereotypes of the Neanderthals, but also to describe them as enjoying uniquely far sublime qualities that make them outdo their rivals, the Homo sapiens. Therefore, he portrays them very sympathetically, and their plight tragically, thereby demonstrating his scepticism about the moral superiority of the Homo sapiens, the real 'inheritors' of the earth. The aim of this article is to discuss Golding's repudiation of such convictions by examining in some detail the novel's thematic structures, characterisation and settings. Likewise, the present article will focus on the clarity of the novel's narrative style that shows the simplicity, if not naivety, of the Neanderthal man's life juxtaposed to the complexity and maturity of his rivals' language and life style.

Keywords: Clichés, Homo sapiens, iconoclast, the Neanderthal man, nonconformist, stereotypes

1. Introduction

The moment the name of the British novelist and Nobel Laureate for Literature Sir William Golding (1911-1993) is mentioned in a literary circle, the thing that most immediately strikes one is his maverick opinions which he obviously states throughout his oeuvre. As early as his maiden, and still most famous, novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) was accepted for publication by Faber and Faber of London, Golding is peculiarly identified as a nonconformist or the author who always goes against what is already held or established. One way or another, this has something to do with life and experiences, more specifically his war service in the Second World War in which he came to see at close quarters the unbelievable atrocities and violations committed against humanity.

Golding's vision of the future of the Homo sapiens, who inherited the earth after the extinction of their predecessors the Neanderthals, is sombre and goes in sharp contrast to the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus is quoted as saying, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (St. Matthew 5.5). Ironically enough, the inheritors of Jesus' sermon are much different from Golding's 'inheritors' who are depicted as far distant from meekness. In so doing, *The Inheritors* offers a stark dissimilar, not to say alternative, view: this time of the Neanderthals who are portrayed as the real and only 'meek' people who, in obvious contrast to Jesus' inheritors, will *never* inherit the earth. The good-heartedness and innocence of Golding's 'meek' race could not stand long against the cruelty and malevolence of their successors, the Homo sapiens. In Golding's book, it is not the meek who inherit the earth; rather, the ones who do exterminate the meek and conquer their land are the real inheritors of the earth.

2. Discussion

For any polished analyst of *The Inheritors*, the overall vision is strongly dismal and cynical, where the world of the innocent and unselfish is harshly devoured by the underworld of the ruthless and selfish, a rather apocalyptic vision that shows that the Devil and his supporters are the ones who will inevitably hold possession of the world and its fortunes. Thus, one may not be mistaken if one claims that Golding's present book brings forth two contradicting viewpoints represented by two traditional enemies: the Devil, which seems "less inspiring but [still] more probable" (Boyd, 1990, p. 24), the other is represented through religion, which still pins hope on such ideals as tolerance, love and innocence.

The very opening lines of *The Inheritors* cast light on the setting in which Neanderthal man lives. The setting is described as simple and virgin exactly as those who live there: everything there is pure and in its pristine condition—something that gives the impression that it is Paradise-like or simply a haven of serenity and tranquility beyond exaggeration. Before the arrival of the Homo sapiens, whom Golding (1955) calls the "new people" (p. 99), the life of

the Neanderthals, who are called "the people" (Golding, 1955, p. 15), is described as blissful—something so reminiscent of the virgin and uncontaminated Earth before the Fall of Adam and Eve.

The reader is introduced to a group of simple-minded and innocently naïve hominids, who "cannot deduce or reason" (Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, 2002, p. 48). Everything for them is so simple—simply, black or white. Unlike the ape-like creatures of the anthropology and history books, Golding's 'people' are unfamiliar with evil. As a member of the clan, Lok does not enjoy the privilege of understanding the true meaning of things. It is no wonder he could not perceive that the newcomers have just come in order to remorselessly exterminate the remnants of his race and 'inherit' their land.

The book pays undivided attention to the minute differences between the two groups so as to show their different worlds and, consequently, perception of what is going on around them. In the case of the 'people', the reader encounters too different a world from the one we already inhabit or know: it is a quixotic world with the thorough sense of the word, where simple creatures of troglodytic nature are seen peacefully living in communion with nature. This gives the immediate impression that one is simply reading about aliens or extraterrestrial beings living on a different planet rather than the earth. As Boyd (1990) puts it:

The novel begins in innocence, in the innocence of the world that is peculiar to 'the people', the Neanderthal tribe. The opening paragraph is all laughter and joyous play...figures emerge from a forest and these figures are again child-like, though their play does not have...sinister undertones...The people are in a number of ways like children. (p. 26)

As for the 'new people', they are portrayed as ordinary human beings with terrestrial traits: everything about them is common and familiar. Even the language used to describe them is unambiguous:

It is the style of a people who can think and reason, with infinitely greater clarity than can the superseded people. It has also a certain cold detachment about it and, though the new people are inclined to frenzied emotion at times, as such it aptly expresses the detachment and the distance of the new people from 'the life of things.' (Boyd, 1990, p. 33)

Of course, the contrasts between the two races "ally the Neanderthal man with what we ordinarily think of as distinctively human qualities and virtues" (Babb, 1970, p. 39), and make of Golding a most maverick author, who goes against what is already held or well established. The moment such terms as 'Neanderthals', 'cavemen', 'troglodytes' or 'hominids' are mentioned, the first thing that occurs to us is the image of obnoxious creatures with stereotypically ogre-like physiques, ape-like physiognomies and brutal nature. This is simply the reason why such terms as these are looked upon as insulting and are, for the most part, used synonymously to denote savagery, beastliness, ugliness and such like. Furthermore, such stereotypes and archetypes are still maintained by a great number of anthropologists, archeologists and historians who wrote much on this early species of humans, who are taxonomically known as 'Neanderthals'. Chief of such is H. G. Wells (1866-1946), whose well-known historical book *The Outline of History* (1920) had a tremendous impact on Golding himself before writing *The Inheritors*. It gave him a prior notice about hominids. As early as the very epigraph to *The Inheritors*, Golding (1955) quotes Wells' words on the Neanderthals:

We know very little of the appearance of the Neanderthal man, but this ... seems to suggest an extreme hairiness, an ugliness, or a repulsive strangeness in his appearance over and above his low forehead, his beetle brows, his ape neck, and his inferior stature... Says Sir Harry Johnston, in a survey of the rise of modern man in his *Views and Reviews*: 'The dim racial remembrance of such gorilla-like monsters, with cunning brains, shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and possibly cannibalistic tendencies, maybe the germ of the ogre in folklore. (qtd. in Golding, *Foreword*)

However, the case right here is obviously so different: Golding's Neanderthals are no longer ape-like savages. Rather, they are a group of innocents who are unfairly wronged and eliminated by the Homo sapiens. Golding, the maverick and most controversial author, goes beyond all expectations and rebuffs, not to say refutes, the already long-held beliefs about prehistory people. It is no wonder that he strongly refuses to accept Wells' description. For him, descendants of the Homo sapiens or Cro-Magnons tend to externalise the evil in them by ascribing it to others. Furthermore, such views seem to celebrate dehumanisation of a portion of the human race who inherited the earth before us. In an interview with Frank Kermode, he states:

Wells' *The Outline of History* is the rationalist gospel in excelsis...It seems to me to be too neat and too slick. And when I re-read it as an adult I came across his picture of Neanderthal man, our immediate predecessors, as being those gross brutal creatures who were possibly the basis of the mythological bad man, whatever he maybe, the ogre. I thought to myself that this is just absurd. What we're doing is externalising our own inside. (qtd. in Tiger, 1974, p. 71)

Then, he goes on to refute the already-established opinion that the evolution of the Homo sapiens was physical as well as ethical:

Obviously, Golding rejects Wells' 'furtive optimism' that the 'fact' of evolution presumed a similar ethical evolution in man; he suggests instead that the coming of Homo sapiens represented a falling away from a state of comparative innocence. (Tiger, 1974, p. 71)

Burkhardt (1995) argues that Golding here is simply a "contemporary Englishman who eschewed many elements of modern thought...[and] aimed his sights against H. G. Wells' optimism, replacing that optimism with a portrait of

humans who regress as much as they progress in their development" (p. 1). To some extent, this claim is rather true since Golding strongly defends what he considers the innocence of the troglodytes versus the brutality of the Cro-Magnons, something that drives readers into identifying themselves with them, i.e., the troglodytes. In an interview with Jack I. Biles (1974), Golding is quoted as saying:

I pictured the Neanderthals as a primitive but good race that existed before the Fall wiped out by Homo sapiens simply because it wasn't evil enough to survive...It's an odd thing – as far back as we can go in history we find that the two signs of Man are a capacity to kill and a belief in God. (p. 106)

Thus, the group of 'people' portrayed in the novel has been described as the epitome of innocence: they do not kill for food unless the animal is killed by another animal and its blood is drained. Furthermore, they could bear hunger, but they do not kill to satisfy this hunger: "They could eat, where there was food; but without it they could go for today easily and for tomorrow if they had to" (Golding, 1955, p.136). When Mal, the male chief, is seriously ill, Lok has a picture of himself getting a doe killed by a cat, "Now I have a picture in my head. Lok is coming back to the fall. He runs along the side of the mountain. He carries a deer. A cat has killed the deer and sucked its blood, so there is no blame" (Golding, 1955, p. 37). Later in the novel, both Lok and Fa find some hyenas surrounding a doe killed by a cat, and Fa shouts, "A cat has sucked all her blood. There is no blame" (Golding, 1955, p. 53). So, they start to tear it. Nevertheless, Lok feels guilty and cries loudly, "This is very bad. Oa brought the doe out of her belly" (Golding, 1955, p. 54). Although Lok has nothing at all to do with the death of the deer, this act still pricks his conscience. Hynes (1964) contends that this episode is important, simply because it shatters any doubts regarding the cannibalistic nature of the 'people' and stresses their respect for life: "Far from being the cannibals that Wells describes, these creatures have a reverence for life that forbids killing or eating blood" (p. 19).

On different occasions, the innocence of 'the people' is juxtaposed with the evil of the 'new people'. When Mal, a Neanderthal man, shivers, the other members of the clan closely huddle about him to warm him up with their bodies:

Mal disengaged himself and began to crawl on all fours up the firmer ground. He got a beech tree between himself and the water and lay curled up and shuddering. The people gathered round in a tight little group. They crouched and rubbed their bodies against him, they wound their arms into a lattice of protection and comfort. The water streamed off him and left his hair in points. Liku wormed her way into the group and pressed her belly against his calves. Only the old woman still waited without moving. The group of people crouched round Mal and shared his shivers. (Golding, 1955, p. 21)

Although the 'people' depicted here are no less than a group of simple primitives, such warm feelings make them far more superior than their more developed and civilised rivals. Similarly, the members of the Neanderthal clan strictly respect one another: their eldest are treated with much reverence. Burkhardt (1995) writes:

The structure of their family elicits great respect from each member. The eldest are treated with deference and awe, while the youngest are humoured for their immaturity. At times, this hierarchal order confers on the matriarch and the patriarch a superiority which borders on transcendence. (pp. 4-5)

Another point to be stressed right here is that the Neanderthals belong to a matriarchal society in which the 'old woman' is superior. She is the one who rules and gives orders. Anything she utters is a command that is strictly respected and obeyed by the other members of the clan. No one seems to grumble about any of her orders. Furthermore, the members of the clan are seen so satisfied with the already established system they have.

Whereas the 'new people' are "mentally superior" (Peck, 1967, p. 11), the Neanderthals seem to think with other organs other than their mind, i.e., eyes, ears, noses, fingers and so forth. Ironically enough, the ones described as primates right here who use their eyes, fingerprints, noses and feet for thinking are seen in communion with nature, contrary to their 'civilised' rivals who wreak havoc on everything. So, Boyd (1990) may not be mistaken when he writes:

The people [i.e., the Neanderthals] maybe poor thinkers, but their senses are wonderfully acute and alive to their environment. They veritably think with their eyes and fingerprints, with their noses and myriad sensitive antennae of their hair. Their world consists of a dazzling input of sense impressions organised and sorted, if at all, not by reason but by the picture-making faculty of imagination. (p. 27)

The Neanderthals' innocence is also illustrated through the simplicity and clarity of the narrative style. However, as Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes (2002) put it, "the difficulty lies in the point of view" (p. 48), simply because everything is seen under the limited eyes of the Neanderthals who "live through their senses"(p. 48). Golding (1955) writes:

The onyx marsh water was spread before them, widening into the river. The trail along by the river began again on the other side on ground that rose until it was lost in the trees. Lok, grinning happily, took two paces towards the water and stopped. The grin faded and his mouth opened till the lower lip hung down. Liku slid to his knee and dropped to the ground. She put the little Oa's head to her mouth and looked over her. (p. 11)

The perspective of the 'people' here is so limited and simple: they cannot understand or reason what they see. The obvious limitations of their perception prevent them from understanding that the Homo sapiens have arrived in order to exterminate their species and conquer their land. They are not familiar with the animosity inherent in their rivals because they have never experienced it before. Unlike the 'new people', the 'people' have been in communion with nature, which they sanctify through their goddess Oa.

Unlike many other books, it is really difficult for many to follow up reading *The Inheritors*, especially for the first time, and readers find it more appropriate to read it at least twice for a better understanding. This is because we are either

frustrated by the goodness of the Neanderthals, who cannot understand evil, or we are unfamiliar with it. It is difficult for us to see things through eyes which are thoroughly different from ours. Furthermore, what adds to the difficulty of this book is that everything is "refracted through the uncomprehending perceptions of Lok" (McCarron, 1994, p. 9). Put it another way, everything is wholly seen under the naïve eyes of Lok, the one who is the least intelligent of the clan.

Although Lok is not the narrator, the whole story is woven around him. He is "our [only] source of information" (Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, 2002, p. 79). When he first confronts the 'new people' to bring back both Liku and the 'new one', many, not to say all, things are utterly incomprehensible to him. So, many a time he finds it difficult to convey such things to us. Chief of such things is the arrow scene in which he welcomes the arrow fired at him, which he mistakes it for "a present" (Golding, 1955, p. 111). For Boyd (1990), Lok here does not fear the arrow because he is not perceptive to realise the evil of the 'new people': "This is a touching innocence such as human childhood could scarcely match. Lok fails to recognise aggression because he has none in him and the lack of that quality makes him vulnerable, in fact makes him doomed" (pp. 26-27).

However, Lok's confrontation with the 'new people' does teach him much: he is now rather mature and is capable of understanding the evil inherent in the 'new people'. He is sure enough that Tuami, Marlan, Vivani and the rest of their clan are no more than murderers who will kill him if they catch him; he could perceive that they have wreaked havoc on the forest, disturbed the serenity of their life and brought forth nothing but destruction with them:

All at once it seemed to him that *his head was new*, as though a sheaf of pictures lay there to be sorted when he would. These pictures were of plain grey daylight. They showed the solitary string of life that bound him to Liku and the new one; they showed the new people towards whom both outside- and inside-Lok yearned with a terrified love, as creatures who would kill him if they could. (Golding, 1955, p. 191) (Italics added).

The 'now' Lok could understand that the shouting of the 'new people', though its meaning is still incomprehensible to him, does mean something dangerous and ominous. The moment he hears them shout loudly, he is seen on the alert for any unexpected action on their part. One may claim that if it was not for the appearance of the 'new people', Lok could have never learnt to make use of the faculty of thinking or deduction. He is now bitterly chastened by experience:

Shaped by grief and suffering, a new Lok stands before us; no longer a clown, but a rapidly mature thinker who has begun at last to understand. He is 'like Mal', but also greater than Mal, knowing more than Mal ever did because of what has happened to him. He has caught up with Fa; and we cannot but respond with admiration as well as pity. (Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, 2002, p. 84)

The chastening experience with the enemies has taught Lok to use his mind in ways that the 'new people' do. Both Lok and Fa are seen hiding behind the trees for more than a whole day, waiting for their rivals to sleep or go away so that they could bring back Liku and the 'new one'. In their hiding place, they are careful enough not to make the least sound that could attract the attention of their enemies. However, their use of the faculty of thinking reaches its peak when they decide to abduct the new people's young girl, Tanakil, to exchange her for their baby, the 'new one'. Fa shouts to Lok, "We will take Tanakil. Then they will give back the new one" (Golding, 1955, p. 213).

When we read books like Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, we may sympathise with the tragic end of their protagonists because we feel that he is simply 'one of us', and that we could have acted the same way if we were in their situation. But the case right here is actually so different: we may sympathise with the Neanderthals but still feel ourselves far distant from their goodness, because we are simply the descendants of the Homo sapiens. This is the reason why the book seems opaque to read or even to understand by many. First reading may inevitably be inadequate right here. Moreover, one has to be familiar with Lok and his people for better understanding. Likewise, the book might seem difficult to accept for anthropologists or readers of anthropology, who derisively regard Golding as no more than an unconventional novelist whose portrayal of primates does go contrary to the image recorded by scientists. Just accepting such a view as Golding's is obviously tantamount to turning long-held beliefs and concepts upside down and distorting already established disciplines, more specifically anthropology, archaeology and history. However, whether or not the book abides by the recorded history of humanity, it can be read as a piece of science fiction:

Yet the novel is also a fictional *tour de force*, taking us to an otherworld and othertime that we enjoy for their own sake, irrespective of historical considerations. Isn't this science fiction if it is science fiction at all: taking us backwards as space fiction takes us forwards, substituting Neanderthals for Martians, but giving us the same pleasure in the exotic, or the familiar seen through strange eyes? (Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, 2002, p. 50)

Golding reveals that in accepting the views of anthropologists or archeologists, people seem to externalise the evil in them. Put another way, in depicting the Neanderthals as boors or beasts, people try to ascribe evil to other creatures or species other than themselves, if it is in any way meaningful to regard the Neanderthals as other creatures or a different species. Golding contends that the ones who had triggered both WWI and WWII, in which millions were killed, injured, widowed, orphaned and displaced, are the very descendants of the 'new people' who eradicated the Neanderthals and evacuated them from their land.

The 'people's' inability to think the way we do and, in turn, their ability to perceive through their senses is seen throughout the book's chapters. As early as the very opening paragraph of the novel, Golding (1995) writes, "Lok's feet were clever. They saw. They threw him round the displayed roots of the beeches, leapt when a puddle of water lay across the trail" (p. 11). Lok's feet here, other than his mind, are leading him to wherever he wants to go. Unlike ours, they 'see' and, furthermore, are 'clever': they know the way. Later on, little Liku cries loudly and Lok, who is at a distance from her, realises through his senses that the little girl is in danger: "And his senses told him through the

screaming that Liku was doing what no man and no woman could do" (Golding, 1955, p. 105). Again, in his excursion into the forest to hunt for the missing Liku, Lok senses through his ears that both he and Fa are hungry: "Lok's ears told him they were hungry and his nose assured him that they were alone" (Golding, 1955, p. 119). This extraordinary faculty is peculiar only to Lok and his people as if, once again, we are talking about different creatures other than humans.

Similarly, the 'people' do not have a language for communication. To compensate for this linguistic deficiency, they exchange telepathic pictures, gestures and mime, another peculiar thing of their rich sensuous life. In the first chapter, Fa turns accusingly to Lok to ask him about the missing log. On his part, Lok stretches his arms to show that he is not responsible for this inconvenience: "He spreads his arms wide to indicate the completeness of that absence, saw that she understood, and dropped them again" (Golding, 1955, p. 12). Lok does not need words to tell his clan that he is surprised like them at the loss of the bridge-log, and the members of the clan do not find any difficulty understanding the message he wants to convey.

However, the interest here is not in the pictures the 'people' share so much as in the feelings of oneness and communal integration that unite them together through sharing such pictures in their congenial environment. It is through such telepathic pictures that they are seen feeling, not to say sharing, Mal's pain:

At last Mal finished his cough. He began to straighten himself by bearing down on the thorn bush and by making his hands walk over each other up the stick. He looked at the water then at each of the people in turn, and they waited. "I have a picture" [he said]...His eyes deep in their hollows turned to the people imploring them to share a picture with him. He coughed again, softly. (Golding, 1955, pp. 15-16)

Feelings of joy and pain are amazingly communal among the 'people', too. They are seen communicating pictures of funny things with one another to entertain themselves:

Ha said nothing with his mouth but continued to smile. Then as they watched him, he moved both ears round, slowly and solemnly aiming them at Lok so that they said as clearly as if he had spoken: I hear you! Lok opened his mouth and his hair rose. He began to gibber wordlessly at the cynical ears and the half-smile. (Golding, 1955, p. 38)

Likewise, Lok plays the clown to entertain the other members of the clan. After Ha is kidnapped by the 'new people', sadness looms on the whole clan. It is then that Lok, the only man left on the island after the death of Mal and abduction of Ha, clowns around to entertain them:

He spread his arms as wide as he could. He flapped them like a bird. Fa grinned and then laughed. Lok laughed too, more and more delightedly to be approved. He ran round on the terrace, quacking like a duck, and Fa laughed at him. He was about to run flapping back to the overhang to share this joke with the people when he remembered. He skidded and stopped. (Golding, 1955, pp. 97-98)

Unlike the 'people', the 'new people' are described as "people without pictures in their heads" (Golding, 1955, p. 103). It is no wonder that their intrusion into the life of the 'people' stunts the process of picture sharing because their abrupt arrival has entailed the ominous advent of things alien to the 'people' to understand. On their way to look for Liku and the 'new one', who are abducted by the 'new people', Lok and Fa have great difficulty sharing pictures. Lok tells Fa he has a picture of Liku screaming across the river, but Fa stresses: "I do not see this picture" (Golding, 1955, p. 113). Fear caused by the atrocities of the 'new people' has just prevented the stream of picture sharing. Afterwards, Lok tries once again to share another picture with Fa, but he himself fails to see his picture clearly, "Lok tried to make her see a picture with him but his head was too tired and he gave up" (Golding, 1955, p. 114). In time, Lok's fear turns into terror, something that entirely ends the flow of picture sharing. He scratches his head for any pictures to share with Fa, but he could not find any, "Lok continued to scratch and there was an aching emptiness in his head...Lok has no pictures in his head" (Golding, 1955, p. 117). It is then and only then that Lok feels himself helpless. As Golding puts it, "Lok felt himself diminish" (Golding, 1955, p. 117).

Similarly, Lok cannot perceive that the thing that has most immediately missed him is simply an arrow thrown at him to kill him: "The stick began to grow shorter at both ends. Then it shot out to full length again. The dead tree by Lok's ear acquired a voice. "Clap!" (Golding, 1955, p. 106). Likewise, both Fa and Lok cannot understand the smoke coming from the fire made by the 'new people': "Fa and Lok considered the smoke without finding any picture they could share. There was smoke on the island, there was another man on the island" (Golding, 1955, p. 99). Once again, the people's incomprehension of the inferno of the 'new people' is another token for their innocence: normally, they cannot comprehend it as evil, since the destruction caused by their rivals' fires is alien to them. However, they finally come to understand this fire as an act of evil the moment the smoke of the fire chokes them.

On the other hand, the 'new people' are depicted as different on all levels. Physically, the first moment Lok catches sight of them, he could *perceive* that they were "incomprehensibly strange" (Golding, 1955, p. 137). Unlike the already established idea about the Neanderthals as having thickly hairy bodies, the 'new people' are the ones portrayed as being hairier than the 'people': "There was hair growing thickly over their bodies about the waist, the belly and the upper part of the leg so that this part of them was thicker than the rest" (Golding, 1955, p. 138). Their physiognomy is noticeably different from that of the 'people', something that gives Lok the impression that they are "menacing and wasp-like" (Golding, 1955, p. 138). Lok could easily notice this difference: their faces are longer with "white bone things above [their] eyes and under the mouth" (Golding, 1955, p. 106), something that makes them weird to him.

In addition to the weirdness of their physiognomy, the smell of the 'new people' seems unacceptable, not to say unbearable, to both Lok and Fa. When Lok and Fa come close to one of the 'new people', one of the things that most immediately draws their attention is his smell, which seems obnoxiously unpleasant to them: "They could smell his individual scent, a sea-smell, meat-smell, fearsome and exciting" (Golding, 1955, p. 139).

Unlike the 'people', the 'new people' do not share messages. Rather, they have a rather developed language for communication: "They did not gesticulate much nor dance out their meanings as Lok and Fa might have done but their thin lips pattered and flapped" (Golding, 1955, pp. 144-145). They are indulged in frenzied revelry and shamanistic practices to propitiate their deity, which takes the shape of a stag. Their pagan ceremonies start when one of them, Tuami by name, draws a totem on the ground representing a stag, another one masquerades as a stag and the others start clapping, dancing and chanting rhythmic incantations. They bend down their heads and rub the stag drawn on the ground. Then, they choose one of them by lot and chop off his/her finger as a sacrifice to placate their god, something that startles both Lok and Fa who are not accustomed to seeing such blood sacrifices in their religion. Once blood is shed on the ground, the whole group starts to boisterously and frenziedly dance.

Similarly, the 'new people' are seen as a group of marauders. As early as they set foot in the forest, they steal the bridge-logs across the marsh for their fires, thereby blocking the ways of the 'people'. Their fire is by no means like the fire of the 'people'; rather, it is a raging inferno that eats up everything on its way. They kill for the sake of killing and to assuage their pagan god. Lok may not be mistaken when he describes the 'new man' as a 'cat': "He is like a cat and he is not like a cat" (Golding, 1955, p. 95). They are like cats because they are carnivores that kill for meat. However, cats kill to eat; they do not shed blood to placate superstitious gods.

Many a time, the 'new people' are also described as a pack of wolves, this time as wild animals of the dog family which have other negative connotations when used to refer to people. The word *wolf* is noticeably repeated by far and away in the second part of the book, so turning into a motif when the 'new people' are mentioned or thought of. One of Lok's comments on them is that they are like "a famished wolf in the hollow of a tree" (Golding, 1955, p. 195). In his hiding place, Lok, who is hiding at a distance from them, could hear them perfectly well: "[H]e heard the new people also for they were noisy as a pack of wolves in cry. They were shouting, laughing, singing, babbling in their bird speech, and the flames of their fire were leaping madly with them" (Golding, 1955, p. 170). Marlan's bloody nature is shown through his teeth which look like "irregular wolf's teeth" (Golding, 1955, p. 183). Likewise, sex between them is orgiastic and 'wolflike'. This is seen through the violent behaviour of Tuami and Vivani during their sexual intercourse, which is described as a 'wolflike battle' that contains blood on face and shoulder: "Their fierce and wolflike battle was ended. They had fought it seemed against each other, consumed each other rather than lain together so that there was blood on the woman's face and the man's shoulder" (Golding, 1955, p. 176). The stark contrast between the two groups is articulated this time through the description of the sexual intercourse between Tuami and Vivani. As Babb (1970) stresses, "The people seek each other in love; the new people devour each other in lust, biting and tearing each other as they satisfy themselves or teasing themselves quite consciously in subtle sexual games" (p. 40).

Towards the end of the novel, it turns out that Vivani is not the wife of any of the 'new men'. Rather, she herself has been abducted from her husband by Marlan, the chieftain. Tuami lusts after her, too, and is seen sharpening an ivory knife to get rid of Marlan in order to have Vivani for himself. On her part, Vivani abducts the 'new one' from his mother and suckles it. She does so not out of mercy or love, but to ease the pain of her swollen breasts and to console herself for the loss of her own baby.

The innocence and helplessness of the 'people' are set against the evil, rationality and inventiveness of the 'new people', things obviously seen through the 'new people's' blazing infernos, pagan rituals, blood sacrifices, rapaciousness, lust as well as inventions. Their violent struggle with the 'people' is actually unjustified. As Burkhardt (1995) puts it, "It is violence that occurs at home, within one's own people or between two groups who have ample food and are therefore not violent merely to survive biologically" (p. 1). They slaughter little Liku in offering to their god to protect them from the alleged danger posed by the remnants of Lok's clan, whom they ironically regard as 'savages' or 'brutes', an act that once again illuminates their cannibalistic nature. Next, they drink to oblivion and act madly, something that frightens the birds and animals of the forest. As Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes (2002) put it:

The New Men go beyond human need to indulgence, and beyond indulgence to excess. The People's hunger, thirst and sexual desire are similar, and forgotten as soon as assuaged. Meat is shared and eaten to capacity, but there is nothing like Marlan's furtive wolfing while his people starve. The New Men have discovered wine and spirits; and drink has become a source stimulus, and reassurance, and finally oblivion. There is drunkenness and the noise of vomiting in the darkness. (p. 77)

At the end of the book, the 'new people', driven by their "sacred violence" (Burkhardt, 1995, p. 3) murder all the members of Lok's clan: they raid their cave, murder Nil and the old woman, abduct the 'new one', slay Liku and devour her flesh. Marlan viciously manages to convince his people that the 'people' are devils that deter their stag-magic and that they have to be exterminated for good. So, driven by this superstition, they turn the whole forest upside down to catch their rivals and kill them.

However, irrespective of their fatal mistakes, the 'new people' are more advanced and more rational than their rivals, something that admires and draws the attention of the 'people' themselves. As early as the very opening chapter, the 'people' are seen as a group of eight backwards who are left helpless at the mercy of an uncongenial environment. They are much troubled when a log used as a bridge across a marsh is missing because this meant "a day's journey round the

swamp and that meant danger or even more discomfort than usual" (Golding, 1955, p. 14). When they do not find the log in position, they feel they are cut off from the world around them. They do not know what to do or how to act to get out of this problem. This incident is really important as it obviously shows how limited their intellectual potential are compared to their enemies, the Homo sapiens. For Hynes (1964), the log episode is also important because it takes the reader to what he calls as "a tentative definition of the State of Innocence: man cannot sin until he can both remember and anticipate" (p. 19). It is the helplessness and innocence, not to say naivety, of the 'people' that make them an easy catch by their rivals, who are more intelligent and simply know how to control their environment to serve their needs.

To put it another way, the explicit innocence of the 'people' can, one way or another, be ascribed to the deficiency of their intellectual abilities. So, the more the 'people' come close to the 'new people', the more they learn about life and the more they become rational. It is this rationality that gradually usurps them of their innocence. It is simply a state of transformation, not to say fall, from innocence into experience. After Lok and Fa watch the 'new people' drink, they creep into the camp and get drunk, something that makes them go wild. Of course, Lok's contact with the 'new people' makes him more rational than before. Yet, it also triggers his fall from his world into the world of the 'new people'. Hynes (1964) may not be mistaken when he says that the innocence of the 'people' is "doomed to yearn toward and be destroyed by thinking, guilty experience" (p. 23).

The inventiveness of the 'new people' drives Lok into sanctifying them: "They are like Oa" (Golding, 1955, p. 195), since they have turned the logs into boats that travel on water and carry them onboard. Due to their boats, they left their land and came to this alien land. Unlike, the 'people', they are not confined to a certain place.

Compared to the religion of the 'new people', the religion of the 'people' is simpler and less violent. It is a matriarchal religion represented through the 'great Oa', the goddess of reproduction whom they believe has "brought forth the earth from her belly" (Golding, 1955, p. 35). For them, Oa is the one who has given birth to everything on earth; she is the root of everything. Oa is represented through "ice women" (Golding, 1955, p. 82) or balls of ice that they take for Oa. Their sanctuary is simply a cave or crevice filled with some shapes made of ice. Males are not permitted to go into their religious sanctuaries. However, sacrifices are offered to Oa in her shrine. But their rituals do not contain blood sacrifices, since the Earth Mother abhors bloodshed. On their search for the missing Ha, Lok and Fa come across the sanctuary, and Fa introduces a piece of meat she holds in her hand as a sacrifice. Therefore, Oa, the fecund deity of the 'people', is the opposite of the Stag God of the 'new people'. Whereas she is the epitome of fecundity and peace, he is havoc and instability incarnate.

The idea that the religion of the 'people' is matriarchal in which power is given to the woman, represented right here through the 'old woman' who is the ruler, has its own implications. Women for the group of hominids are highly respected, not to say sanctified. This is seen obviously in their reverence for the 'old woman':

The old woman was coming along the trail, they could her feet under and her breathing. She appeared round the last of the trunks, she was grey and tiny, she was bowed and remote in contemplation of the leaf-wrapped burden that she carried in two hands by her withered breasts. The people stood together and their silence greeted her. (Golding, 1955, p. 14)

The 'old woman' is the one who rules the clan. Nevertheless, she is seen trudging under the pile of sticks she carries. This shows that this society, if it is in any way meaningful to call it so, is based on cooperation between males and females, a society in which both the ruler and the ruled work, not to say toil, hand in hand for the welfare of its members.

However, women are clearly marginalised and wronged by the patriarchal society of the 'new people', in which only males are given the whip hand over females. Marlan, the 'old man', is the one who runs the group, assisted by Tuami. Vivani is exploited sexually by both the chieftains of the clan without having a say. Although she is Marlan's woman, she cannot reject the advances of Tuami. After their sexual intercourse comes to an end, they come back to the shelters where they live. Yet, each of them walks alone because Tuami considers himself superior to all. Tuami seems solemn now: "They were silent now except for little grunts and gasps and an occasional gurgle of secret laughter from the fat woman" (Golding, 1955, p. 177).

The moment Lok approaches the realm of the 'new people', their evil afflicts him and he is about to become one of them as if their world were a contagious curse contaminating those who come close to its horizon. Lok finds their wine and mistakes it for rotten or sour honey, so drinking himself to oblivion. Lok and Fa drink for the first and last time in their life. In their drunkenness, the earth does seem uncomprehendingly strange for them: it is now an unstable entity of formlessness in which everything moves up and down. Like their rivals, they now act violently: Lok's voice is "high and loud and savage" (Golding, 1955, p. 201). As for Fa, "She fell over, rolled and lay back kicking her legs in the air" (Golding, 1955, p. 202). Wine makes Lok lose his equilibrium and forget the noble mission that has brought him to this place. All that he could feel is that "The trees were moving faster...the ground was as perilous as a log" (Golding, 1955, p. 202). He bitterly realises now that by drinking from that 'bee-water' that he has been trapped unawares into the world of his enemies and that he is now "one of them" (Golding, 1955, p. 202). Fortunately, this is somewhat untrue simply because "the fallen behaviour is purely the result of drunkenness, and when the People's stomachs vomit the rotten honey out they become themselves again"(Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, 2002, p. 86). But Lok and Fa have learnt a lesson, a hard one, that the 'new people' are essentially different from them. As Fa once puts it, they are not Oa's children: "Oa did not bring them out of her belly" (Golding, 1955, p. 173), a statement which implies that no good is expected of them. The 'people' are now quite aware that their rivals are as unbearable as their "rotten honey" (Golding,

1955, p. 197). For Lok, "They are like a fire in the forest" (Golding, 1955, p. 197). Furthermore, they are like the great fire that Lok still remembers that had burnt down everything that was on its way.

What is actually amazing about the vomiting scene is that the bodies of the 'people' are immune enough to evil: after a short while, their stomachs vomit up the evil liquid. As Golding (1955) comments about Lok, "His stomach had a life of its own; it rose in a hard knot, would have nothing to do with this *evil*, honey-smelling stuff and rejected it" (p. 205) (*italics added*). In an earlier part, it has been shown that Lok's stomach is taken to hunger even if it lasts for days. Nevertheless, the very same stomach is not taken to 'evil', as if it had the prowess to distinguish between what is good and acceptable and what is bad and unacceptable.

Although we belong to the 'new people', Golding cleverly enough manages to make us sympathise with the 'people', who turn out toward the end of the story to be physically little different from us. Only in the penultimate chapter that the author gives the reader a physical description of Lok, the one who represents a whole race. Lok is described as:

[A] strange creature, smallish and bowed. The legs and thighs were bent and there was a whole thatch of curls on the outside of the legs and arms. The back was high, and covered over the shoulders with curly hair. Its feet and hands were broad, and flat, the great toe projecting inwards to grip. The square hands swung down to the knees. The head was set slightly forward on the strong neck that seemed to lead straight on to the row of curls under the lip. The mouth was wide and soft and above the curls of the upper lip the great nostrils were flared like wings. There was no bridge to the nose and the moon-shadow of the jutting brow lay just above the tip. The shadows lay most darkly in the caverns above its cheeks and the eyes were invisible in them. Above this again, the brow was a straight line fledged with hair; and above that there was nothing. (Golding, 1955, pp. 218-219)

It is at this point in the novel that the reader comes to realise for the first time that Lok and his clan are physically different, something that is stressed through the use of the pronoun 'it' instead of 'he'. However, as McCarron (1994) puts it, "the more Lok is referred to as 'it', the more we see him as 'he', and the more moving the scene becomes" (p. 13).

For a number of critics and analysts, Golding's adjournment of this description has its own implications that could not be ignored or left to pass unnoticed. It is intentionally delayed in order not to give the readership the impression that the 'people' are different from us, something that could have affected the way we see them throughout the book. Again McCarron (1994) states, "This description has clearly been delayed so that the reader is not prejudiced by Lok's appearance...Consequently, we have a sympathy for him that will not be destroyed by this description of his physical appearance" (p. 12). So, by the end of the story we cannot but "feel a greater kinship with the ape-man" (Peck, 1967, p. 11). This feeling of pity and sympathy has been strengthened through Lok's poignant and most touching death at the end.

However, the outlook of *The Inheritors* is not that dim. The survival of the 'new one' at the end tempers the sombreness of the book and does make it a little bit hopeful. It is a typical ending of some of Golding's books that, despite their plainly dark insight into human nature, still count on a gleam of hope in human consciousness. Although Lok's clan is now exterminated, the 'new one' is still an extension to them. One way or another, the innocence of the 'people' would know its way to it. Thus, its survival is a probable extension to Lok's reverence for the elders, congenial feelings of the tribal community and pleasant nature that could not be forgotten easily, simply because they run hereditarily deep into its dominant genes. Moreover, this newborn baby is luckier than the two races: it is one of the good and innocent 'people' who is brought up by a more advanced and creative race. Therefore, it would serve as a reconciliation or bond between the once clashing worlds.

3. Conclusion

To put it in a nutshell, Golding's *The Inheritors* is simply a stark reversal of lots of well-known books and studies written by a great number of anthropologists, archaeologists and historians, more specifically Wells' book *An Outline of History*. This way, it does rebut and shatter our lifelong convictions about long-held stereotypes and well-established generalizations regarding the Neanderthal man. The irony that runs throughout the novel is that the Neanderthals, the ones who are always stereotypically regarded as ogres and monsters, are themselves innocence incarnate; they are the pleasant ones who are far distant from the evil innately inherent within their rivals, the Homo sapiens. It is not surprising that they are always called the 'people' throughout the novel.

To one's amazement as well as dismay, the book gives a scathing denunciation of the Homo sapiens, who could not conform to the stereotypes already known about them as good folk who inherited the earth after the extinction of their adversaries, whom they always describe as the boorish and ape-like Cyclops. Yet, it turns out that the 'new people' are themselves the real brutes and cannibals who eat up little Liku, abduct the 'new one' and murder the rest of the 'people'. Finally, Lok, the only survivor who has nothing now to live for, dies alone out of his deep sadness for the loss of the clan. At the end of the narrative, it turns out that it is the moderate and harmless 'people' who are unjustifiably exterminated. Ironically enough, the 'meek' right here are not the ones who inherit the land; rather, they are the ones who are finally uprooted from the earth once and for all. Golding's philosophy is simply that in accepting such views as the ones given by Wells and others, man tends to externalise his inner evil or ascribe it to other factors or creatures rather than himself. Put another way, man tries as hard as he could to project his own inner evil onto the outside world or other creatures.

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