CHAPTER II

INHERITING THE EARTH

*The Inheritors* portrays the extermination of the Neanderthals by the Homo Sapiens. The sensuous innocence of the sub-humans is contrasted with the intellectual guilt of the humans. Civilized man is intellectually superior to his predecessors but is cruel, selfish, savage and greedy. In Golding’s view, man’s biological and evolutionary superiority in consciousness is an incalculable asset gained at an enormous price. The wholeness and spontaneity of the Neanderthals is set against the craftiness and sharp intellect of the new men.

Golding’s mythopoeic power is in abundance in *The Inheritors*. Golding is fascinated by the evidence that human consciousness is a biological asset purchased at a price -- the knowledge of evil. This evil emanates from the human mind, a product of its action upon the environment. In *The Inheritors*, Golding explores the possible origins of man’s guilt and violence in the evolutionary appearance of the Homo Sapiens. However, the fable, mythic in impulse, consciously tries to construct a mythopoeia relevant to contemporary man by using anthropological conventions in the same way as *Lord of the Flies* used the literary convention of the desert island narrative.

The description of the Neanderthal man, our immediate predecessor, as gross brutal creature by H.G. Wells in *The Outline of History*, is considered absurd by Golding. He views it as “externalising our own inside”. He remarked that with the coming of the Homo Sapiens, comparative innocence has declined. He further remarks that on the basis of recent evidence, the Neanderthal man might well have been a gentle creature and that petrified flowers were discovered in Iraq beside skeletal fragments in a newly excavated Neanderthal grave. Skulls placed in a cuplike position seemed to indicate a libation ritual and a concern for the individual and his life after death.
As in his first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, Golding in *The Inheritors* explodes the myth of civilized humankind. Paul Crawford argues that *The Inheritors*, like *Lord of the Flies*, evokes a carnivalesque world with the violent actions of the Cro-Magnon people, the supposed progenitors of the Home Sapiens. Golding subverts H. G. Wells’s view of the Neanderthal Man as an inferior wild beast and the Cro-Magnon Man as superior, intelligent, and civilizing. Golding portrays the Neanderthals as sensitive and gentle and bound to their kin by a collective consciousness. Paul Crawford has quoted James Shreeve, who is his book, *The Neandertal Enigma*, argues that “It is not the triumph of a superior race that drives the plots” of *The Inheritors* and Jean Auel’s later work *The Clan of the Cave Bear* (1980), but “the loss of an alternative one”. Crawford argues that “*The Inheritors* responds more generally to World War II atrocities by attacking notions of Western rather than purely English “civilization.” (PHWG, 69)

In *The Inheritors*, Golding has used contemporary anthropological conceptions as the necessary ballast for his backward projection into a mythic prehistory. The myth is the fall into moral knowledge. *The Inheritors* has a peculiar narrative method and moral complexity is quite obvious in it as has been pointed out by Gregor and Kinkead Weekes when they say, “... we have continually to guard against moral certainties. Indeed, the value of some understanding of his chosen form, and some grasp of his exploration of the people is that it enables us to see with what care and artistry he sets out to frustrate any simple contrast”.

In the confrontation between the ‘prelapsarian’ People and the ‘post adamite’ New People, it is the reader who sees the inadequacies of both species of consciousness. *The Inheritors* has the ability to counterpoint opposites such as fire and water, light and dark, forest and plain. This ability to focus on opposites is discovered by the reader as he takes hold of the complexity of the total experience and understands that the downward path of the innocent and the upward path of the guilty are essentially related.
In a consideration of Yeats in *Holiday Magazine* (1963), Golding stated: “The Satan of our cosmology is the second Law of Thermodynamics which implies that everything is running down and will finally stop like an unwound clock. Life is in some sense, a local contradiction of this Law... we should be cheered when life refuses to submit to a general levelling down of energy and simply winds itself up again”.4 In *The Inheritors*, Golding’s imaginative recasting of the scientific Law is gradually fused with another element – Heraclitus’ philosophical dictum. It is that multiplicity and unity—the existence of opposites in eternal flux -- lead to ‘the way downward’, while harmony and peace lead back to unity by ‘the way upwards’. Golding explained that it became imaginatively clear that the downward path of innocence was essentially related to the ascending path of guilt for nature is constantly dividing and uniting herself. An ultimate and constant dynamic exists between phenomena and epochs so that death is not a final defeat. The rise from the pre-rational world of the Neanderthals to the rational world of the Homo-Sapiens, is actually a fall. In the world of the Neanderthals there is harmony. A total dismemberment of the world of innocence of the Neanderthals is brought about not only by the new people but also by the fateful curiosity of the Neanderthals themselves.

V.V. Subbharao remarks that, “Neanderthals have a certain inner susceptibility to temptation – a temptation that brings them into contact with the corrupt consciousness and infected will of the other”5. Lok crosses to the island with Fa in order not only to see the abducted children, but also to have the satisfaction of being near the new men. Unlike in the *Lord of the Flies*, in the *The Inheritors*, understanding expands rather than shrinks. Along with Lok, we are made aware of other people occupying the Neanderthals’ territory. This gradual intrusion creates narrative interest. We gradually recognise ourselves in white-boned figures with tufted heads.

In *The Inheritors*, Golding seems to demolish the view that civilized man is a distinctly superior being. According to the rationalistic concept of the Fall, Adam’s apparent act of disobedience is the first significant progressive step. Darwin’s theory of evolution placed man at the apex of creation. It equated
evolution with progress. The works and findings of these thinkers provoked a strong reaction in writers who are at odds with the whole enterprise of civilization.

Foucault in his book, *Madness and Civilization*, observes that “Civilization, in a general way, constitutes a milieu favourable to the development of madness”. The progress of knowledge increases a taste and even a mania for study along with the positive effect of dissipating error. There is a greater risk of madness due to abstract or complex knowledge that is poor in sensuous relations or removed too far from the immediate. He sums up. “Knowledge multiplies, no doubt, but its cost increases, too. Is it certain that there are more wise men today? One thing, at least, is certain: there are more people who have the infirmities of wisdom. The milieu of knowledge grows faster than knowledge itself” (FMC, 207). The sensibility, which is determined and controlled by habits and demands of social life, also detaches man from feeling. Disregard of the movements of nature is damaging. Golding’s Neanderthals are incapable of abstraction, and are almost without formulated speech and thought. Golding said that he had read everything there was to read on Neanderthal man, and any contradictions which have now emerged, may be the result of new evidence.

Golding in his younger days was very fond of digging up relics of ancient people. Once he came upon the remains of a “family from the days of innocence”. But those remains were again buried by the bulldozer to make a runway. Golding thought of this as civilization’s arbitrary encroachment upon the primeval regions. He says that “it may very well have been a prehistoric murder” (DP, 70). In *The Inheritors*, “prehistoric murder” forms the theme as Lok’s sub-sapiens folk are exterminated by the Homo Sapiens, the bulldozer.

Whereas in *Lord of the Flies*, the attack was on the moral smugness of the Victorian society, in the *The Inheritors*, the smug superior progressivism of evolutionary science is criticised. H.G. Wells in *Outline of History* and *The Grisly Folk* describes the Neanderthal Man as an inferior creature and all his
sympathies are with the Homo Sapiens. He values their humanity, achievement, discovery and progress. The Neanderthals are described as huge, half-witted and cruel monsters. One of them steals a human child, and H.G. Wells exults in their hunting down and ultimate destruction. Golding reverses this concept of Wells. With Golding, the Neanderthals are creatures of primal innocence. The new men introduce guilt, crime, suffering and conscious ambition into the world. To H.G. Wells in Outline of History, the success of the high-foreheaded, weapon-bearing-carnivorous Homo Sapiens was progress, but to Golding, it was the defeat of innocence, in terms of a new kind of history.

Golding sees that guilt is the result of technological and linguistic power. In The Inheritors, the moral values of The Outline are reversed. It is like a recasting of the Homeric adventure with the Cyclops, by deepening the pathos of the one-eyed giant and coarsening Odysseus' craftiness by Virgil in The Aeneid. H.G. Wells portrays the Neanderthals as monsters easily conquered by a clever species. Golding’s people are a gentle and harmonious tribe, unable to conceive of the New People’s violence, rapaciousness, and corruption.

Golding’s account of the Neanderthals may not have been anthropologically accurate. It differs in some significant points from the accounts given by anthropologists. Louis J, Halle writes:

... he [Neanderthal Man] represents the beginning of civilized man in the sense that he went in for religious observances, which suggests an intellectual capacity for abstract concepts. It also suggests that he must have had the kind of spoken language we have, if less refined and subtle.

Kenneth Rexroth says: “Of course, there’s nothing wrong with invention, extrapolation, or anachronism in a novel about Neanderthals, if it can be made convincing.”
The plot, a dramatic account of the extermination of one species by another, is extremely simple. The band of eight is the only Neanderthal group to have survived a Great Fire. Only Lok and Fa remain, frantically trying to rescue the children whose kidnapping they simply cannot understand. Fa is chased to a log. The log spills over the cascading waters of the fall and she is carried as the other People were to her death-by-water. At just this point, the objective transition is placed: we watch Lok’s dumb pain as he scurries back and forth looking for Liku; finally he unearths her Oa-doll and with this folds himself into a foetal position at the ancient grave in the overhang. At the fable’s close one solitary canoe is seen carrying the tormented New People upward towards some new camp. As Tuami studies the tribe before him, their history is swiftly reviewed. They too have been overcome by water; Tuami thinks: “I am like a pool... some tide has filled me, the sand is swirlin’, the waters are obscured and strange...” (IN, 227). *The Inheritors* ends with Tuami staring out at a “line of darkness” (IN, 233) apparently without end.

There is a wholeness in the People’s life. Such promise of wholeness is held out to the New People, too. As they move to the ‘new level’ of ‘experience and emotion’, Tuami and the tribe laugh with a kind of fear as the new one extracts itself from Vivani’s hood (surely this recalls Ha’s fur where the new one had earlier hidden) “arse upwards his little rump pushing against the nape of her neck.”10

In *The Inheritors*, the People become bewildered and anxious when one of the members disappears. They think that Ha has been befriended by the humans. The people considered this and shook their heads in agreement. This is ironic like the title and the epigraph of the novel. The title reminds us that it was the meek who were to inherit the earth. The epigraph (a passage from Wells’ *Outline of History*) suggests that the ogre of folk-lore may derive from ‘the dim racial remembrance’ of ‘gorilla-like monsters’, with cunning brains, shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and possibly cannibalistic tendencies. But the succeeding events reinterpret and tell us about the real monsters--the New Men.
Subsequently, it becomes clear that if the People are not totally civilized, then the Humans are not surely devoid of savagery. The irony is employed to play off against our smug prejudices. Irony functions in the book to make matters very clear regarding civilization and savagery. Actions are presented through the eyes of Lok and his companions. Thus, a gap persists between appearances and realities; what Lok and his companions thought and what transpired.

Lok looks through the leaves and can see the river and the other banks. Fa is on his left. Lok is confused on seeing the New People. Here actual events are framed by leaves so as to make it a picture. Lok and Fa have began to think from this point. Detached learning is experienced by Lok and Fa. Reverse alienation effect, as observed by Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, can be seen here. The actions of the new people, presented as enigmatic to Lok and Fa, are recognisable to us because of a human complicity with them. Looking through the interpretative consciousness created by Golding’s narrative medium, we see not so much a clear image as a ghostly and suggestive reflection of our own selves.

The atrocious acts of the New Men against the Neanderthals are unhindered and unopposed. They experience total liberty as far as physical opposition from the Neanderthals is concerned. While describing the relation between too much liberty and madness, Foucault has disfavoured too much liberty which does not permit a person to master time. Uncertainty creeps in and the “State abandons all to their fluctuations” (FMC, 203). He further contends that the speculations in commercial areas agitate the mind with fear and hope and instill a sense of egotism in a person. This type of liberty is neither true nor natural as “it is constrained and harried by demands opposed to the most legitimate desires of individuals: this is the liberty of interests, of coalitions, of financial combinations; not of man, not of minds and hearts.” In mercantile liberty, the laws of interest dispossess a person of his desires and “time escapes the mastery and certainty of the season” (FMC, 203).
Sharing pictures and feelings make the people one mind or no mind. As they are comfortably installed in the overhang around the fire,

one of the deep silences fell on them, that seemed much more natural than speech, a timeless silence in which there were at first many minds in the overhang; and then perhaps no mind at all (IN, 34).

Human consciousness has individual separateness and loneliness. The consciousness of the People does not have this kind of individual separateness and loneliness. In the lives of the People, there is a togetherness which is more than our language can cope with.

The strings that bind Lok to Fa, Mal, Liku and the rest of the People “were not the ornament of life but its substance. If they broke, a man would die” (IN, 78). With the snapping of the communal bond, Lok is left in tragic isolation.

The old man and the old woman have pivotal roles to play in the Peoples’ lives. The old woman is the priestess of their matriarchal religion. Woman as mother, is the vessel of the life force: “As long as there was a woman, there was life” (WG, 76). The old Man’s orders are obeyed. The others immediately realise that Mal in his weakness has made a mistake when he orders the young girl—the nursing mother with her baby—to join in the hunt for food and firewood. The tension disappears in obedience. Nobody questions Mal’s decision to bring them into the mountains, though he has clearly brought them too early. The old man is also the guardian of tradition.

The people’s arrival at the overhang too early is neither an accident nor does it occur due to Mal’s weakness. The ice-cap is shifting and the seasons change with it. People also change even before the revolution. Ha places the log firmly in position in the water through a logical process. We are present at the moment when a human creature invents the idea of cultivation. She is developing the power to connect one picture with another allowing action to be predicted, which could bring about a totally new situation.
The world of the Neanderthals is devoid of property, rights and exclusive dwellings. Only the fire goes with them from place to place. The idea of life is connected with feminine creation: “There was the great Oa. She brought forth the earth from her belly. She gave suck. The earth brought forth woman and the woman brought the first man out of her belly” (IN, 35). There is the memory of a paradisal state “when it was summer all year round and the flowers and fruit hung on the same branch”; (IN, 35) though this has vanished, it was not through human sin, and there was and is no devil – serpent in the people’s garden. Mal remembers the terrible fire but it was a natural disaster and not like Noah’s flood, a punishment for wickedness. All nature’s manifestations are treated with reverence.

Lok, because his nature is innocent and loving, cannot obey Fa and ignore Liku. Even when Fa has worked out a plan of strategy, Lok has to ask Tanakil where Liku is. The New People have ochre and hunting spears and a potent honey drink. Their weapons can be used for killing and their drink can intoxicate. Their complex power, like the rationality of Pincher on his island, is both creative as well as destructive.

The solution that fear-haunted Tuami wants to find, at the close, is in a sense manifested already in the reader’s own experience throughout the story. For, if the structure is ideographic, so too is the point of view. Judgement is kept at bay so that the reader can grasp with his whole imaginative self an unanalytical mystery—the drone of the Fall, the stink of honey, the ultimate cannibalism. This reconciliation of opposites is often difficult to grasp, but clearly the difficulty is deliberate and instructive. Golding told Kermode, “We are like them [the Neanderthals] and as I am a propagandist for Neanderthal man it is – it can only work so far as Homo Sapiens has a certain amount in common with Neanderthal Man”11.

We share Lok’s disconnected ‘pictures’ for most of the time and then see him from the outside as a grotesque red creature. The focus shifts to the newer tribe and the final objectification of Lok is meant to distance him from us at the
same time as it wins enormous sympathy for his death. Later, our sense of Tuami is similarly modified. Virginia Tiger says, “The effect is to deliberately complicate the possibility of us choosing between the two communities; the sensuous innocence of the subhuman and the intellectual guilt of the human one so that the reader experiences the sense of loss and sense of gain-both.”

Wordsworth says, man would “murder to dissect”. The analytic intellect is gained at the expense of primitive spontaneity and wholeness. The Neanderthals look at all the existing objects with equal respect unlike the ritualistic religion of the New Men. The New Men’s superstition enslaves them to Marlan, the witch doctor of the totemic cult of the stag. Drobzhansky states, “Man knows that he is accountable for his acts; he has acquired the knowledge of good and evil. This is a dreadfully heavy load to carry. No other animal has to withstand anything like it. There is a tragic discord in the soul of man. Among the flaws in human nature, this one is far more serious than the pain of childbirth.”

The People’s existence is essentially static. There is little pattern or excitement and the narrative interest comes with the intrusion of the New Men: the removal of the bridge-log which indirectly hastens Mal’s death, the smoke which causes Lok to fall on the cliff edge, the disappearance of Ha. Lok experiences a fear of alienation when he sees and tracks the New People.

The New People view their victims as devils or ogres. Paul Crawford links this point to the past as well as to the future. He quotes Bernard Bergononzi who calls this “the original act of colonialist exploitation” by the West and an extermination or genocide that suggests the Jewish Holocaust. Fantastic hesitation creates uncertainty as to the nature of forces behind the insidious extermination of Lok’s Neanderthal tribe.

S.J. Boyd links the New People’s actions to Nazi genocide: “In this context we should remember how in our own century an attempt was made to exterminate the Jewish race, a race identified by Hitler, as so often before, as a threat to the progress of civilization and the all-round bogey men of history, the sort of role Wells gives to the Neanderthal men in the epigraph to the novel.”
Boyd finds Lok’s tribe “reminiscent of the Jews” and locates Jewishness in Mal’s account of their genealogy and Fa’s mournful words that owe much to be Psalms or the Lamentations of Jeremiah: “‘They have gone over us like a hollow log. They are like a winter’” (IN, 198). Boyd says that *The Inheritors*, like *Lord of the Flies*, evokes the Holocaust (SJB, 41-42). Jack’s gang destroys its island by fire. The New People resemble “‘a fire in the forest’” (IN, 197). The child Liku is roasted and eaten by the New People. She becomes a trace presence in the smoky air. Paul Crawford argues that here Golding appears to gesture toward those furnaces of the Holocaust that consumed children (PHWG, 70). Lok has a limited and an equivocal point of view. He has an unformed consciousness. The equivocating process ensures the hesitation.

In the book, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what Lok and the others see and experience. Ha disappears mysteriously and Lok’s people refer to the “other men”. We don’t know these other men. Gradually we focalise through Lok’s limited consciousness and recognise that the mysterious “other” is early humankind. We suffer the uncanny realisation that the strange disappearance of Ha and death of Mal are due to these “other men”. Our shift from a supernatural explanation to events that are uncanny, is gradual.

Lok pursues the kidnapped Liku and the New One across the river by climbing into the trees and is literally turned upside down when the branches give way: “‘They swayed outwards and down so that his head was lower than his feet’” (IN, 107). In a fantastic “dreamlike slowness”, he spies the horrific remains of the murdered old woman floating up to the surface and disappearing (IN, 109).

Paul Crawford argues that like Lok our view of events is turned upside down. We shift from a fantastic world, a world of Lok’s limited consciousness to an increasingly clear resolution about the identity of “others” as Cro-Magnon Men, our own progenitors and original colonists (PHWG, 73). This shift produces unease and shock. It is amplified with the carnivalesque elements. The progress of human civilization appears to be destructive and intellectual evolution ironic.
Paul Crawford argues: “The novel, then, presents a topsy-turvy account of human nature and registers a symbolic subversion of dominant cultural assumptions of humankind as superior, as morally progressive, beneficent, cultured coloniser. The disturbing nature of this discovery is further amplified by a description of Lok as a beastlike creature from a perspective similar to that of Wells in “The Grisly Folk” or The Outline of History. It is a perspective we cannot but reject as limited and prejudiced” (PHWG, 73). Golding rejects the superiority of Cro-Magnon race. The title becomes ironic and the so-called biological evolution becomes a moral devolution. Superiority of one race to another is decrowned and the notion of inheritance made topsy-turvy.

Lok and Fa study the behaviour of the Cro-Magnon people from the summit of a dead tree. From this vantage point, they witness a “violent celebration of the body, dirt, eating, drinking and sexuality”\textsuperscript{16}. The New People gather around their face, are caught up in stag mimicking and hunting, and are surrounded by darkness: “Their Promethean fire itself metamorphoses darkness, makes the island so impenetrably dark that the night sight of Lok and Fa is temporarily lost” (VT, 85). In the carnivalesque firelight, the New People are transformed: “They were shouting, laughing, singing, babbling in their bird speech, and the flames of their fire were leaping madly with them” (IN, 170). Furthermore, the New People “were like the fire, made of yellow and white, for they had thrown off their furs and wore nothing but the binding of skin round their waists and loins” (IN, 171). The camp is full of filth and sweat. Orifices are open. Tuami seems to be eating Liku’s flesh.

From the same vantage point of the dead tree, Lok looks at the fat woman’s mouth. She was staggering. He could see her teeth. She was holding on to Tuami. Her teeth made Lok remember a wolf. The New People’s sexual orgy is drunken, violent and wild: “Tuami was not only lying with the fat woman but eating her as well for there was black blood running from the lobe of her ear” (IN, 175). They have consumed each other rather than lain together. There was blood on woman’s face and man’s shoulder.
Lok comes across the stag’s head hanging from the top of the stake at the deserted camp. It is reminiscent of the pig’s head in *Lord of the Flies*. Lok and Fa inherit the honey drink from the New People and suffer a similar sexual and aggressive incontinence. The Neanderthals inherit savagery from the New People. It is subversive. As in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding’s carnival is a “carnival of hate”\(^{17}\). About *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors*, Paul Crawford remarks: “Combined carnivalesque and fantastic elements amplify a shock recognition of humankind’s transgressive nature. These elements are integral, pivotal structures through which these novels interrogate contemporary “reality”, its ideologies and cultural assumptions. They supply the impact of reversal, of turning established ideologies and viewpoints on their heads” (PHWG, 76). Crawford sees a clear parallel between the Cro-Magnon Men’s atrocities and those carried out by the Nazis. But he also points out that Golding attacks the whole mask of Western “civilization” that has a long history of racial violence.

Paul Crawford has, thus, tried to bring a new, radical understanding of Golding’s fiction. This historicised and politicised reading of Golding’s “literature of atrocity” has countered the timelessness of his work. Old formalist exclusion of history from literature no longer exists. There is a warning to “civilized” English and Western people to reform themselves. For Crawford, the novels like *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* make an oblique reference to Holocaust. But in *Pincher Martin* and *Free Fall*, Golding strengthens his reference to broad or popular conceptions of fascism and the totalitarian personalities (PHWG, 79).

Reason, logic and deduction are unknown to the Neanderthals. The Ice women are still left in the gully indicating that the winter is not completely gone. Yet it never occurs to them that they have returned rather too early. Their mental exertion is seen only when they have “pictures”, but they cannot piece them together. Pictures are, of course, visualisations, not conceptualisations. Mime becomes far more than an attempt to compensate for linguistic insufficiency; it becomes a method of imaginative sympathy and a mark of natural, instinctive love. The pictures are the memories of the past or sometimes a vague idea of
what they propose to do in the present to meet an eventuality. Ha says, “I have a picture of this stone. Mal used it to cut a branch” (IN, 31). Fa says to Lok, “I have a picture of us crossing to the island on the log” (IN, 120). Occasionally the people are capable of seeing pictures which are more significant. Mal sees an apocalyptic picture of the forest burning. Fa, brooding over the disappearance of Ha, exclaims, “Here is a picture. Someone is – other. Not one of the people” (IN, 71). Pictures or dreams suggest that Neanderthals have an intuitive grasp of reality. The “pictures” attributed to Lok and his people are ambivalent to some extent but this ambivalence has not been totally depicted by the narrative. As Michael Bell observes “Golding uses the “pictures” for the rudimentary mental processes of his Neanderthals whose ‘cleverness’ resides by contrast in their bodies and their senses”

People themselves use pictures as a means of thought. In this way, the real sophistication of the human capacity to consciously “picture” is recognised. Under the pressure of his experience “Lok discovered Like” (IN, 194) and, as the narrative goes on, this was possible because “He had used likeness all his life without being aware of it”. This foreshortening of mental evolution leads to a few slippages as when Fa attributes the concept of “thinking” to herself, but on the whole it works effectively within the dual convention of the narrative medium. Hence, even from within the logic of the narrative convention, the notion of the “picture” transcends its initial, supposedly naive, implication.

The “picture” renders, as no other device could, the life of the senses and instincts. The impression the reader receives of the outside world is of a series of still images. Thus, we are confused and frightened in a way which we cannot quite grasp. For example, fearsome suspense and tension are built into the New People’s last activity on the terrace as they try to escape, precisely because, even though the action is intense and concentrated, it is pictured by Lok in a series of stills, each devoid of motion like moments caught in past-time. They appear to be random events without the causality of one action leading to another. Lok cannot imagine how to connect the actions together or stop them.

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According to the theory of Signs, the signs used by the Neanderthals can be termed as natural. It is different from the conventional or man made signs of the New Men. The artificial signs owed their power only to the fidelity to natural signs. In the seventeenth century, this way of assigning meaning to signs was inverted. A natural sign was the sign constituted by our knowledge. “It is therefore strictly limited, rigid, inconvenient, and impossible for the mind to master.” On the other hand, a choice of a conventional sign could provide simplicity, easy remembrance and opportunity to combine with other signs. This man-made sign separates a person from animal, transforms imagination into voluntary memory, and instinct into rational knowledge. Foucault writes: “Natural signs are merely rudimentary sketches for these conventional signs, the vague and distant design that can be realised only by the establishment of arbitrariness.”

In classical thought, the sign system “introduced into knowledge probability, analysis, and combination, and the justified arbitrariness of the system.” The sign system linked all knowledge to a language and sought to replace all languages with a system of artificial symbols and operations (FOT, 69).

Foucault, in his book *The Order of Things*, observes that from the seventeenth century the arrangement of signs became binary. At the Renaissance the organisation remained ternary, “but since resemblance is the form of the signs as well as their content, the three distinct elements of this articulation are resolved into a single form” (FOT, 70). With the end of the Renaissance, the three levels of language--raw and primitive being or the signs or the marks visible to all, the commentary and the text whose primacy is presupposed by commentary -- also came to an end.

From the seventeenth century, the binary organisation or level of language posed a different problem. In the sixteenth century we could ask how the sign designated what it signified. In the seventeenth century we began to ask how a sign could be linked to what it signified. The classical period explained it
through the analysis of representation whereas modern thought did so through
the analysis of meaning and signification. The primacy of the written word and
interweaving of the visible and expressible vanished. Foucault writes about this
change from the seventeenth century:

Things and words were to be separated from one another.
The eye was thenceforth destined to see and only to see, the ear to
hear and only to hear. Discourse was still to have the task of
speaking that which is, but it was no longer to be anything more
than what it said (FOT, 48).

Unlike Lok, other protagonists in Golding’s other fables ‘understand’ as it
were but do not ‘perceive’. But in The Inheritors, as Mark Kinkead Weekes and
Ian Gregor remark, there is an interesting variation for “Perception is itself, no
more; not what we normally expect it to be, a stepping stone to an idea rapidly
transferred from the eye to the mind” (WG, 67). The arrow that has sunk in the
tree beside Lok’s face, about which he is wholly unconscious, is rendered
through the physical sensations. Lok’s senses merely report a series of
fragmentary events and a dislocation of self. It tears him from the People. It also
fragments him between an inside – Lok with a “tidal feeling”, and an outside –
Lok that grows tight fear like another skin. Finally, the new People look
gruesome to Lok. They have bone faces, are log bodied and use bird fluttering
language. They are strangers to the Neanderthals’ land and “walked upright... as
though something that Lok could not see were supporting them, holding up their
heads, thrusting them slowly and irresistibly forward” (IN, 144).

The evolutionary advance attributed to Lok in his discovery of Like shows
a general process of human thought which specifically invokes metaphorical, or
symbolic, modes of art and religion. Liku’s doll is a “little Oa”. Michael Bell
aptly remarks

In The Inheritors the traditional belief that the thinking of
primitive man was an artistic thinking is given a specific kind of
expression. The “primitive” here is created by a backward
projection, not from a modern, but from an artistic consciousness (MB, 87).

The Neanderthals live through their senses. They can infer to a limited extent from their own experience but they cannot deduce or reason. As Mark Kinkead Weekes and Ian Gregor remark, “Golding seeks an imaginative response from us in an effort to look through eyes empty of thought, innocent of judgement and free of hatred, suspicion and fear” (WG, 67). To live through sense and instinct is to break the barrier of ‘modern’ consciousness. Analysis and judgement are not the sole objects of reading here. Understanding and complex contrast between the Men and the People come slowly and mysteriously from a distillation of experience.

The People’s existence is communal. They not only protect and warm Mal with their bodies but also involve themselves through mime and picture, in sharing his sickness and awareness of death physically as well as imaginatively. Are Neanderthals civilized in matters of sex? The sexuality among the people is certainly promiscuous in our terminology. It is ‘animal’, yet as Fa pats her hair when Lok touches her, it is recognisably human, too. If we call it promiscuous we simply reveal our different assumptions about relationships. Again, the depth of Lok’s feeling for Ha is manifested in a sense of his ‘Ha-ness’ no less physical than his feelings for Fa and we can make no useful distinction between the mourning of Fa and Nil for him, and the mourning that breaks from Lok’s mouth. So, when Lok the tracker, feels that “the other had tugged at the strings that bound him to Fa and Mal and liku and the rest of the people, the strings were not the ornament of life but their substance. If they broke, a man would die....” (WG, 76). We see that though Fa comes first on the list, it is the ‘strings’ as a whole that are the vital substance of living. The baby is not ‘Nil’s baby’ but the New One for them all.

The New Man’s face looks totally unlike his own to Lok: “white bone things above his eyes and under his mouth so that his face was longer than a face should be” (WG, 88). But soon a poisoned arrow comes towards Lok which he
cannot understand: “A stick rose upright and there was a lump of bone in the middle..... Suddenly Lok understood that the man was holding the stick out to him but neither he nor Lok could reach across the river” (WG, 88). Innocence cannot hope for continuity; it must change, or be destroyed.

The Neanderthals are not only without evil but also incapable of understanding it when it meets and destroys them. They are incapable of preserving themselves by destroying their oppressors, the “civilized ones”. The natural religion of the Neanderthals contains no idea of crime or punishment. It requires offering but not blood-sacrifice. The only idea of evil they have is the destruction of life by violence. This comes out very strongly in the episode of the doe. As Lok and Fa dismember the doe – “The air between the rocks was forbidding with violence and sweat, with the rich smell of meat and wickedness” (WG, 80).

To enter the world of cruel nature, even by proxy, is to be involved with an atmosphere and feelings unnatural to them. Their actions are described in a new and violent language. Fa tears fiercely, slashes with a splinter of bone, cries out in anger, splits the belly open. Lok pounds at the body “breaking out the joints”, his great “hands tore and twisted and snapped the sinews”. He “beat in the skull and levered open the mouth to wrench away the tongue”. The harmlessness of the Neanderthals is proved here and their values are most consciously recognised and asserted through conflict. We see Lok acknowledging the “darkness in the air under the watching birds” knowing that what they are doing is very bad even when “there is no blame.”

The Neanderthals are inarticulate, innocent at heart and trusting. Lok mistakes the arrow shot at him by the New Men for a gift and does not suspect their intentions. When Lok attempts to take away Liku and the new one without their knowledge, “.... the knowledge that they were about to cheat these strange people” (IN, 179) fills him with dread. In fact, it is not cheating them but an attempt to rescue the abducted children. This is, indeed, a clear case of doomed innocence. Far from being cannibalistic, the Neanderthals instinctively shun
violence and cruelty. As Mark Kinkead Weekes and Ian Gregor remark, “In the life of Neanderthals, the religion of feminine creativity holds the terror of death in meaningful tension with the creative energy the people see pulsing through the living world” (WG, 78).

Lok’s sick fright and his dances of joy exist side by side. Mal’s death is mourned but it is accepted. As Lok digs the grave besides the dying man, the layers of hearth after hearth bear witness both to Time as the destroyer, and to the continuity of life. The old bones are treated just like the earth and the stones and Liku plays with them matter-of-factly before the dying man’s face. There is no sense of the gruesome. The people are obviously accustomed to open the skulls and eat the brains of their honoured dead so that qualities they honour will enter into them. Mal asks them not to as he feared it would transmit his weakness to them. Yet, there is nothing ghoulish in all this. In spite of the violence in the world of the Neanderthals, their existence is stable, reverent, harmless, and natural. The richness of the imaginative discovery makes us aware that the People’s life is poised more precariously than they know between the future and the past, in ways that are not confined to the advent of the New Men. Nature is not constant but changing.

The People are wholly non-violent. Their weapons are purely defensive. But the hyenas are regarded with instinctive hatred, the only living things in the first four chapters to call forth hostility, even aggression. However, their hatred clearly has a kind of moral basis: to the people’s ears the hyenas are ‘talking evilly.’ The reason is of course that the hyenas belong to another ‘nature’, the world of the sabre-toothed tiger and the cave bear. The People only eat meat when it has been killed by some other agency.

The New Men are enigmatically attractive to Lok. Lok and Fa find the New Man made up of good and evil and find themselves “enmeshed, exalted and tormented” (IN, 92). Lok feels alienated because he is obsessed with the other.

He was cut off and no longer one of the people; as though his communion with the other had changed him, he was different
from them and they could not see him.... The other had tugged at
the strings that bound him to Fa and Mal and Liku and the rest of
the people (IN, 78).

Lok and Fa are greatly affected by the attack of New Men. The island is as
remote as the moon for the people –

To reach the island the people would have to leap the gap
between the terrace and the rocks across water that was eager to
snatch them over the fall. Only some creature more agile and
frightened would dare the leap. So the island remained unvisited
(IN, 41).

“The indefinable attraction of the new people” (IN, 135) sends Lok again
to the bushes at the edge of the water. He runs towards the new way on the island
and crosses the Rubicon. Lok and Fa climb the dead tree, the tree of knowledge.
Unconsciously Lok parodies the other. He tells Fa, “with the scent of other I am
other” (IN, 97). Lok’s attempts to “comprehend the new people” produce in him
sudden flashes of awareness only to leave him in a mystifying darkness.

Fa’s intelligence begins to bridge the gap between inference from
experience and deduction. She sees the smoke of the New Man’s fire differently
from Lok. We see her struggling to separate a snapshot memory of Lok’s shaking
salt water from a shell and to extract from it the idea of holding water in a
container. We then watch her trying to connect this with the significance of Liku
carrying the little Oa through the forest. This time she manages to force the two
pictures in some sort of combined picture: a picture made, not simply
remembered, or seen. To Lok, it is a ‘meaningless jumble of shells and Liku and
water, and the overhang’. The old woman’s response is startling because she
understands:

...She swayed back, lifted both hands off the earth and
poised on her skinny hams. Slowly, deliberately, her face changed
to that face she would make suddenly if Liku strayed too near the
flaunting colours of the poison berry. Fa shrank before her and put
her hands up to her face. The old woman spoke, That is a new thing (IN, 51).

Lok dances in acrobaticfriendliness as he greets the New Men. But at the
sight of the huge fire logs of the New Men, Lok knows an unreasoning fear as
dep deep as Mal’s nightmare of a totally alien and destructive world. When Lok hears
the voices of the New Men they make “a picture in his head of interlacing
shapes, thin, and complex, voluble and silly, not like the long curve of a hawk’s
cry, but tangled like line – weed on the beach after a storm, muddled as water”
(WG, 87). They contain neither the simple assertion of destructive nature, nor the
practical, communal order of the people. Yet, we look less at what these things
tell us about the New Men than at what Lok’s incomprehension implies.

With our modern consciousness, we are on Fa’s side, on the side of
progress. But we are aware of the Old woman’s wisdom to pause. Are the
people’s happiness, security or innocence dependent on the limitations of their
consciousness? Lok’s sunniness is dependent on his living in the present.
Thought provides Fa with the power to impose her will on the world. The Old
woman may have a point, that the ability to choose to impose one’s will is the
beginning of evil or at least, the gateway; something attractively coloured but
possibly poisonous.

We have a fuller notion now of what the old woman’s body prefigured,
and Golding proceeds to explore the implications of both ‘upsidedownness’ and
deep water. Yet, the surest sign of a new dimension is that the sense of loss
implies no longing to conserve. We know in our bones that any way out of the
tragedy depends on Fa, and we become increasingly impatient with Lok as, even
now, he cannot understand and continues to behave and feel as the People have
always done. As he gallops to the overhang, or scratches himself
uncomprehendingly under the chin, we suddenly become aware of his closeness
to the ape as we have not been before.

Fa fiercely compels Lok to accept her leadership. We may have mixed
feelings about this since it destroys their tradition. But we are in sympathy with
Fa. We realise that revolutionary change is vital if the people are to survive. As they watch the boat nosing along the bank, it is her fear that offers the only way forward, and Lok’s innocent incomprehension that- ‘They have twigs’ can only be disastrous. It is not that Fa will learn to fight the New Men with her own weapons, indeed the outcome of her realisation that the arrow is a weapon is the insistence that Lok ‘give the twig back’. (It plunges into the water like a stooping hawk, but it is unnatural, and the People reject it). Yet this also involves the assertion of alienation from their side; if the action is ‘good’ because it rejects evil, it is ‘difficult’ because it involves a break with their nature and their natural vision. About the death of their patriarch Mal, Fa says “... the log that was not there” killed him. Mal, nearing his end, is filled with nostalgia for their Eden. His people fail to grasp his apocalyptic picture of the forest burning.

As the New Man appears, we see through the eyes of Lok but we are also aware of Fa, and of the chasm that has opened between their differing visions. Our own consciousness also begins to reach beyond them both, as they see things they cannot possibly understand, and which must remain radically obscure unless we use our own intelligence and power of deduction. We begin also to be able to see from the point of view of the New Man. But Golding prevents us from judging until the full experience of both kinds of men is complete.

After the encounter of Lok with the New People, there emerges a fragmentation of personality in Lok who vacillates between hope and fear, comprehension and confusion. There is a hope not only to see the New People but also to be one of them, and fear of the men and for his people. This division is more strongly felt from the dead tree.

Now, more clearly than ever before there were two Loks, outside and inside. The inner Lok could look for ever. But the outer that breathed and heard and smelt and was awake always was insistent and tightening on him like another skin. It forced the
knowledge of its fear, its sense of peril on him long before his brain could understand the picture (IN, 141).

There is an evidence of fragmentation in the society of the New People as well. The behaviour of the New People shows the loss of innocence, wholeness and spontaneity. The New People experience a terrible sense of responsibility and guilt and dispossess the Neanderthals of their habitat. They inherit the earth but find themselves a disinherited race.

Lok’s premonitory dream of the other chasing him shows that he may be in a condition of unconscious psychological fragmentation. And the arrival of the New Men precipitates the fall. The Neanderthals returning to the overhang too early may be attributed to Mal’s deteriorating powers. The usual log across the marsh water has gone and is a prelude to the ultimate disappearance of the Neanderthal species itself.

When we say that there were two Loks, outside and inside we know that what occurs is a disjunction between the perceptual world without and the spirit within. There are stages in the evolution of consciousness – The Neanderthals’ primordial state of being and gradual emergence of self-consciousness. Lok’s experience is, as it were, a primal breach in man’s original spirit. The Inheritors depicts the natural man in his Adamic innocence, the loss of this innocence and the tensions and anxieties associated with that loss.

There is more than mere confusion in Lok’s inability to grasp the relation between the world of his mind and the world out there. The world is bigger than Lok can realise, the shape of a human being more terrible, and also more extensive, than he can grasp. He curls up against a night that is, in some senses, inimical. His posture cannot help reminding us of a foetus. But the birth of a new life cannot be ensured.

We become more and more disturbed by the helpless inadequacy of Lok’s incomprehension. The voices herald deep waters of the mind; again cliché is becoming meaningful. There cuts across them the mindless screaming of Liku,
caught in a world of panic and violence, moving ‘away across the river’. The people cannot cross the sea but they must.

All this brooding settled down as Golding explained, into “the perfect image the Law: ‘a river with a fall’, a log going over the fall and men with huge ganglia and enlarged skulls travelling up the river over the fall, pushed by some new intensity, some vision. Thus, in *The Inheritors*, Lok, the prelapsarian, amazedly discovers that, ‘They did not look up at the earth but straight ahead’” (IN, 143) when he sees the post adamic New People swaying upright, “It was as though some thing that Lok could not see was supporting them, holding up their heads, thrusting them slowly and irresistibly forward” (IN, 144).

Fa drops over the fall, as indifferently as the logs. Golding takes this woman of the ‘hearth’ to the edge of the fall; she can never pass beyond it because her nature cannot comprehend those weapons of destruction and tools of survival that the Homo Sapiens possess. Thus, her innocence seen against the ritual killing, the religious sacrifice, destructive river, the murderous Fall-nature, is caught in a Dead Tree whose relentless power she cannot avoid; drowned, she is carried back below the fall. But the evolutionary life force drives the New People upwards—the word that always attends their description in the book—and forward, at a higher level of energy than that which the People possessed. As Virginia Tiger writes: “Something thrusts the New People up the river, some pained need to widen the world, as well as manipulate it” (VT, 94).

Our last view of Fa is of her rolling over and over in the river while the fall’s current thrusts her back and down to the sea. The whole ‘dreamlike’ motion and direction superbly repeats that of the old woman’s frightening log-like descent to the sea in the deep waters of the river. In contrast to both, the New People’s dugout canoes--the ‘logs’ which Lok first sees on the river, move ‘up towards the fall’--can remain stationary, fighting and victorious over the current that urges them downstream. And the navigators move steadily upwards, away from the sea, up beyond the fall, meeting as they ascend towards the plain,
thunder like an angry god, which heralds the end of the Ice Age. The fear-driven Tuami feels:

... as though the portage of the boats... from that forest to the top of the fall had taken them on to a new level not only of land but of experience and emotion. The world with the boat moving slowly at the centre was dark amid the light... (IN, 225).

The old woman’s body is found among the weeds of the river. Golding seems to write out of some deep psychological cavern here with a disturbing power that reverberates well beyond what can be made rationally explicit. But it is not difficult to come out with explanations. The old woman is the wisest of the people. She walks to meet evil and is destroyed by the Fall. Mark Kinkead Weekes and Ian Gregor write, “Her dead eyes ignore the mutilation of the human shape involved in this, as her living eyes had failed to conceive its possibility. Murder has entered the garden” (WG, 88).

The island imaginatively placed itself in the landscape, reared against the fall because, Golding explained, it was technically necessary for the New People to leave this “impenetrable dark” (IN, 127) shelter; they had to retreat up the slope “as though instead of falling the river itself were flowing uphill” (IN, 209) towards the plains and the mountains. Thus, at the beginning, the bulk of the island, which is shielded by loathsome falling water, seems to Lok as remote as the skies. The island becomes a macrocosmic image of man’s nature, divorced by his enlarged skull from brute nature. He is an isolated figure at the foot of the Fall which is divided by two falls from the mainland and forest, a ‘seated giant’ which ‘interrupts the sill of the waterfall’. It is a symbolic image of the ‘People of the Fall’ who will go against the Fall.

The Tree and the Fall and the Water operate symbolically within the context of the story. The Water-world is destructive and the Fall’s moaning insinuates this destruction. But we cannot grasp the actual force these have on the reader when we wrench them out of the continuum of the story. Symbol like
myth defies simple classification and analysis; both are in Golding’s words “directions and tendencies, not distinct places.”

Virginia Tiger says that in the novel, “Substantial phenomena during the course of the developing narrative begin to assume a symbolic import. The falling trees falling over the fall not only result in disaster but also New People are made to resemble, in the People’s view, their awful nature. Lok thinks that they are trees and calls one chestnut-head. Of course, people can in no way be identified with trees, but if they share in the food of the Dead Tree, if they send the old woman over the fall like a log, if they in turn utilise trees to get beyond what for them is the terror of the dark forest and the ringing fall, then they participate in the nature of the Fallen Tree” (VT, 80).

During the course of reading the book, we observe that various emblems emerge. The dead tree, from which Lok and Fa look down on the destruction of their Eden, is an emblem of knowledge. Similarly, the waterfall is an emblem of the end of innocence, beyond which the sinful have to travel towards a line of darkness. As Mark KinKead Weekes and Ian Gregor remark “The mode of The Inheritors is one of ‘discovery’ not an exercise in literary archaeology, science fiction or a fable about the fall” (WG, 69).

In The Inheritors ‘Lok felt himself secure in the darkness’, while the new creatures are terrified of it. Man abstracts from his own evil—something his nature possesses—and projects it as a fear of something other which will haunt or destroy him. The light/dark image conveys this and the mythopoeia is often developed imagistically. As Vivani stands fearfully stroking the New One, the others attempt to placate their own fear by stoking the new fire, whom they regard as a totemic figure, and they all look “outward at the darkness of the forest” (IN, 185). But their Promethean fire itself metamorphoses darkness and makes the island so impenetrably dark that the sight of Lok and Fa in the night is temporarily lost. In Lok’s mind the fire and the fall become associated so that the clearing below the tree is beaten with a ‘fountain of flame’, not warm but ‘fierce, white-red and blinding’. The fire-light, symbolising intelligence, intensifies the
darkness, and in fact makes it hideous. Similarly, at the close, the New People's canoes sail forward on shining water. The water is imagistically associated with light, yet it also seems hemmed in by darkness. In fact, it is projecting outward the moral darkness of the sailors. In the very last line, Tama is made to remark that 'there was such a flashing from the water' that he "cannot see if the line of darkness had an ending" (IN, 233).

Towards the conclusion of Chapter XI, a shift from the Neanderthal angle of vision to that of the Cro-Magnon occurs. The omniscient author seems to retreat away from Lok who becomes, in the distance, simply an impersonal creature:

The red creature stood on the edge of the terrace and did nothing.... Water was cascading down the rocks beyond the terrace from the melting ice in the mountains... It was 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 the arms (IN, 216).

It is the first time we have seen Lok as an animal; the description recalls Wells' epigraph. But as Virginia Tiger says,

divestng Lok of his humanness paradoxically deepens his pathos. He becomes a tiny bent creature overwhelmed by the immensity of his loss, and the immensity of gloom, cold moonlight, and the long curved fall of water heralds the Ice Age's end and the end of his species (VT, 74).

A linguistic interest in the People's speech is an interest in progress. The language of Ha, Mal, Fa and Lok transforms itself and tries to reach out to the incomprehensible and the incommunicable. This is evident when circumstances force Lok to develop into a leader. In the opening pages, Mal can only cope with the problem of the vanished log by calling on his experience and giving orders based on memory; but we watch the quickness of Ha to understand these orders. Again, we can see how from Mal's simple version of the myth of creation,
feelings and attitudes are distilled which require a moral or religious language. We watch the struggle of this more complex language to meet the challenges of necessity and change. Fa battles with language as she tries to invent a word for cultivation and irrigation. Lok struggles with words, trying to learn to reason. We are aware of this limitation. But there is also a linguistic experience of unique strangeness and excitement.

The People see anthropomorphically since they invest their whole environment with humanity. The river sleeps or is awake; trees have ears; the island is a huge thigh, shin and foot; logs go away; everything is alive. The light dancing in the eyes is not like fire, it is fire. The People see the root as Oa in Little, the maternal fecundity incarnate in the wooden shape. There are ice-women, not simply ice-like women. The function of representation is missing in the Neanderthals' life. Each thing, whether animate or inanimate, has its own individual existence.

Words for People are only one stage beyond expressive noises. When Lok becomes excited, his ‘words’ become emotional noises with little or no meaning; he gibbers or “babbles happily in admiration, his head thrown back, words coming out at random” (WG, 72). People were in communion with the marks existing in nature.

Foucault in his book, The Order of Things, observes that in the sixteenth-century knowledge, primacy was given to the written word over the spoken one. And it was certainly true in nature and also perhaps in the knowledge of men. He writes: “For it was very possible that before Babel, before the Flood, there had already existed a form of writing composed of the marks of nature itself, with the result that its characters would have had the power to act upon things directly, to attract them or repel them, to represent their properties, their virtues, and their secrets” (FOT, 43).

This primacy to the written word explains the twin presence of two terms. The first is the non-distinction between what is seen and what is read in which observation and language “intersect to infinity”. The second is the immediate
dissociation of all “language, duplicated, without any assignable term, by the constant reiteration of commentary”. This commentary is called by Foucault as the secondary discourse and it occurs above the level of all marks. Knowledge consisted of this in the sixteenth century. But Foucault observes that all types of commentaries cannot claim to be expressing truth before they are interpreted i.e; they have a possibility of talking about them. Commentary explores a more fundamental discourse below the existing discourse. The sovereignty of an original text provides a foundation for commentary (FOT, 43-45).

Foucault in his book, *The Order of Things*, observes, “In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the peculiar existence and ancient solidity of language as a thing inscribed in the fabric of the world was dissolved in the functioning of representation; all language had value only as discourse” (FOT, 45). The art of language was to signify something, an art of naming, of designating it by other names that were the deferred presence of the first name.

Since the nineteenth century to our own day, literature has achieved autonomous existence and separated itself from all other language by forming a sort of ‘counter discourse’ and away from the representation or signifying function of language to this raw being of sixteenth century. Foucault writes about this change that took place in nineteenth century.

It is possible to believe that one has attained the very essence of literature when one is no longer interrogating it at the level of what it says but only in its significant form: in doing so, one is limiting one’s view of language to its classical status. In the modern age, literature is that which compensates for (and not that which confirms) the signifying function of language (FOT, 48).

In the present age, literature is not studied in accordance with a theory of signification. Literature analysed from the point of view of what is signified or of that which signifies is merely incidental. This is the situation of the seventeenth century when signification was reflected in the form of the representation. From the nineteenth century, literature began to bring language
back to light once more in its own being. But the situation akin to the end of the Renaissance has still not come when the primary word could not only give birth to the infinite movement of discourse but also limit it. "Language was to grow with no point of departure, no end, no promise. It is the traversal of this futile yet fundamental space that the text of literature traces from day to day" (FOT, 48-49).

Foucault in his book, *The Order of Things*, observes "that the experience of language belongs to the same archaeological network as the knowledge of things and nature." We could know things by a system of resemblances and totality of signs on their surface. With signs into operation there always remained incompleteness about knowing what was similar. Language also brought in a system of resemblances though in an opposite way. Primal discourse can be expressed by saying things similar to it. It brings into existence the "infinity of adjacent and similar fidelities of interpretation."

The commentary resembles the primal discourse but cannot express it fully. All signs are similitudes and resemblances can be known only through them. Knowledge of nature constantly finds new signs for resemblance. This infinite play of resemblances due to constantly emerging signs in nature "finds its link, its form, and its limitation in the relation of the microcosm to the macrocosm." Similarly an effectively written text provides strength to the infinite task of commentary (FOT, 46).

The sudden shift towards the end of the novel pulls us out of the consciousness of Lok and places us outside the narrative at a vantage-point from where we can have an objective view of the Neanderthal man and the Homo Sapiens and thus form our own conclusions. Towards the end, we are distanced and this distancing enables us to see Lok as the ape-man, as "the red creature" (IN, 217). The use of ‘it’ to refer to Lok apparently dehumanises him. But it has, in reality, the effect of intensifying our sympathy for Lok and emphasising the inhumanity of the "true" men. Lok’s cup of sorrow is full when he senses that Liku has been killed and eaten by the new men.
Hanging from what will be the tree of knowledge, having already learned a new knowledge from that tree, Lok leans out over the dreaded water, trying to reach out towards the island and the kidnapped Liku. He strains and balances, noticing that the water under him darkens as he stretches forward. Just as his ears hear the water-fall, the branches begin to bend under him. Gibbering in fright, he sinks and a ‘Lok-face’ comes up at him as the water appears to rise. It is the moment when the unknown, something dark and autonomous, confronts Lok’s mind. The entire episode is projected through a technique whereby we are locked in the primitive mind and hence without the interpretation that attends the similar scene in, for example, *Lord of the Flies* where Simon confronts the Head of the pig. ‘Pictures’ disappear, but he cannot connect the Lok-face with himself; it is simply some dark spectre released from his mind which is now compulsively, independently, capable of harming him. Lok sees something foreign which we know is also himself, but to him it is a threatening image of “teeth grinning in the water” (IN, 108).

Lok sees the old woman, like one of the logs that keeps falling off the fall, drifting towards him. The body is a nightmarish thing in the dark water and its knowing eyes are scraped and affronted by the weed-tails. The eyes sweep across his face, ‘looked through him without seeing him, rolled away and were gone’; the eyes that once saw into the mystery of things no longer have any power in the technological world that the Homo Sapiens have created. And innocence, which had been characterised by wholeness previously, becomes aware of the deepwater within itself. It is some part of the self which is inescapably fragmented from itself and uncontrollable. The episode here reverberates. Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes suggest that it is as though a

formless thing disengages itself from the depths of the mind, becomes a dark spectre, rises with dreadful slowness... reveals sudden intimations of terror; hides them, then slowly, relentlessly, it turns towards us the full horror of its face (VT, 88).
Certainly we respond primarily to the rhythm of nightmare and also recall that the same disturbing motion was used to describe the bowing corpse and the bouncing Head in *Lord of the Flies*. In *Pincher Martin* there is a toy doll, a 'Cartesian-Diver', whose motion is similar and in *The Spire*, Jocelin atop the spire, waves left and right with the same dreadful slowness.

The episode of Lok in the water seems a radically compressed account of the book since it connects the two psychic conditions of innocence and guilt, and shows how the latter emerges from the former, as indeed the Cro-Magnon man emerges from the Neanderthal man. Lok’s weight pulls the tree to the water but his experience is that the water comes to him- the fluttering weed tails that regularly ‘eclipse’, the stuff rising towards the surface, turning over and over, floating in circles as his own teeth grin in the water. Actual phenomenon with synaesthetic and symbolic value does not lack physical credibility.

Like the presentation of the Pharoah in *The Scorpion God*, the presentation of the New People is by indirection and the effect is dehumanising. We are ripped out of the Neanderthal perspective in the coda. Thus, we look at inexplicable events from the inside and from the outside. Lok’s inability to connect details into meaningful constructs necessitates our deductions. As Lok and Fa stare incredulously, we deduce the magic-religion of the New People, the totem religion of the stag. We look at the rituals of the totemic Stag cult of the New People from the vantage point of the innocence of Lok and Fa. At the same time we feel that we align ourselves with the New People and understand the corrupt practices of the New People. Using our corrupt consciousness, we even guess the most shocking event in the book: Lok smells Liku all around the campfire because she has been killed and eaten.

The New People have moved to yet a new level, then. The water has now conquered and a new complexity, a new violence, and perhaps a more refined civility are set afloat. For the Neanderthals the Ice Age is the golden age and its end marks the end of their paradisiacal state. The cataclysmic changes in the macrocosm are thus reflected in the microcosm.
The Homo Sapiens also experience an upheaval. Some of them are carried to their deaths in the stream as they leave the island in panic. Tanakil loses her sanity while Tuami has a disquieting experience:

...they were what they had been in the gap, bedevilled, full of strange irrational grief... It seemed as though the portage of the boats... from that forest to the top of the fall had taken them on to a new level not only of land but of experience and emotion. The world with the boat moving so slowly at the centre was dark amid the light, was untidy, helpless, dirty (IN, 224-25).

The loss of their sense of unity with the universal order prompts the New Men to view the environment with suspicion and fear. The inner chaos is projected on to the environment. The New Men inherit not only the earth, but the ‘baby devil’ which becomes a symbol of their dark fears. They can neither do away with it, nor can they reconcile themselves to it. In the words of Gabriel Josipovici:

To be born as new man is to inherit a new consciousness, and that consciousness will always be aware dimly, of the darkness from which it springs, of the darkness beyond. But, being thus aware of it, man turns it into an enemy, into that which is evil... Once again Golding revealed not just the underside of civilization, but the negatives upon which civilization itself is built. Having experienced what Lok has experienced we can now see more clearly both the necessary triumph of the new men and its inevitable cost.²⁰

In man’s rational world there is an ironic affinity between consciousness and guilt. Josipovici observes that the world of the New Men is an illustration of the observations of thinkers like Freud and Nietzsche that greed, envy and lust are the inevitable concomitants of civilization. He quotes Freud as saying that negation, language, thought and civilization all go together.

Emotional understanding is coupled with quite extraordinary visual stillness and linguistic precision in the whole transition section in the novel. One
passage describes the physical business of weeping water, but not by denoting that the red creature is crying. The reader becomes simply the observer of a natural occurrence, until the point in the rhythmic repetition where the reader imparts meaning and thus pain to the action.

The lights increased, acquired definition, brightened, lay each sparkling at the lower edge of a cavern. Suddenly, noiselessly, the lights became thin crescents, worn out, and streaks glistened on each cheek. The lights appeared again, caught among the silvered curls of the beard. They hung, elongated, dropped from curl to curl... one drop detached itself and fell in a silver flash, striking a withered leaf with a sharp pat (IN, 220).

The passage is characteristic of the best of Golding’s style – one thinks of the poetic description of Simon in death here – where things are anthropomorphised, while those things to which we normally impart humanity are figured in non-human architectural/natural terms.

The New Men have succeeded but in the process they defeat innocence. The New People are wicked, superstitious, murderous and cannibalistic. They kill the young girl in propitiation for the death of Luke. The New People fail to grow beyond the vicious circle of ego-centricty even though they are intellectually superior to the Neanderthals. The Neanderthals are simple people and do not understand this selfish violence. The materialistic and extroverted attachments of a New Man are beyond their comprehension. Gradually, as Lok and Fa spy on these strange creatures, they too are corrupted. Experience breeds awareness. They drink the alcoholic mead and identify themselves with the new folk, only to wake and vomit afterwards. Tuami and the rest, who perform magic and placate their devils, are but Jack and Roger reincarnate. Golding ends his story by making the New men abduct a Neanderthal boy. Corruption is complete, evil and knowledge have triumphed.

About the actions in the novel, Virginia Tiger says “Of course, all the actions are related but they lack the rational perspective that makes a pattern of
random events they impress the reader as individual assaults” (VT, 84). The nature of innocence comes to the surface as we observe more and more the Neanderthals’ way of life. Golding sees the alogical, undifferentiated mentality as essentially innocent. We not only become aware that twentieth century man has lost a consciousness in which instinct, intuition, and pictorial predominate; we participate in its loss. Golding’s total effort is to implicate the reader in the experience of and responsibility for this loss of innocence. In this way the fable’s ideographic structure makes the reader aware that the innocence lost is our own innocence, just as in Pincher Martin, we become acquainted with the purgatorial state. We follow innocent perception until the penultimate chapter where after the objective anthropological transition, we enter into the consciousness of the New People. This brings pain. For the knot binding the people together by a thousand invisible strings has been supplanted by the ‘strips of skin’ tying the groaning men to their log/canoes and by the ‘long piece of skin’, which lashes Liku to Tanakil. And in the fragmentation between inside-Lok and outside-Lok, which so intensifies his alienation both from himself and Fa, we recognise the very image of our own dissociated and pluralized sensibilities. The change to the Cro-Magnon point of view, with its gain in intellectual grasp and apprehensive imagination, involves the painful loss of Neanderthal man’s intuitive thinking.

In his book, Madness and Civilization, Foucault gives credence to the view that madness which is more frequent in England than anywhere else, is the penalty for the liberty and wealth there. He writes: “Freedom of conscience entails more dangers than authority and despotism.” Unrestricted religious sentiments disturb the mind in search of truth. Indecision, vacillations and disputes of passions ensue. In freedom, each person forms his own opinion but he must be expected to face opposition (FMC, 203). The New Men, while destroying the Neanderthals, experience no constraints of conscience. This unrestricted freedom, resultant in destruction, proves to be disquieting and disturbing.

In the final chapter a coda brings about a dramatic reversal and suddenly we are placed in the pragmatic minds of the Cro-Magnons and the tone shifts
from emotive lyricism to natural gruffness: “A fair wind, steerageway, and plenty of water all round – what more could a man want.... Forrard there under the sail was what looked like lower land, plains perhaps where men could hunt in the open, not stumble among dark trees or on hard, haunted rocks” (IN, 224). Tuami mutters to himself as he broods on the ‘devils’ which have hindered the passage of his people from the lake’s upper regions. The subtle effect is to make us now revise our unsympathetic assumptions about the wholly evil nature of the New People, and by an act of imaginative extension, to understand their part in the week’s furor.

The sudden shift in point of view that occurs in most of Golding’s novels has been called a “gimmick” by James Gindin. But the shift in the point of view here at the end confirms our impressions about the Homo Sapiens which have hitherto been vague and shows that the world of Homo Sapiens is as convulsed as the world of Lok. This technique, consistently employed in Golding’s novels, seems to have been adopted by him out of the conviction that it is only through multiple points of view that it is possible to get at the totality of experience. The switch in point of view, lays bare the emotional complexities in the lives of the new people – their consciousness and guilt, their self-deceptions and an apprehension of the darkness apparently without end. Samuel Hynes succinctly sums it up: “we observe as Neanderthal man observes, but we interpret as rational, fallen man interprets.”

Both *The Inheritors* and *The Spire* are concerned with change. Loss of one way of life is there but along with it is gain, as one form of life takes over from another. This is not to say that Golding is restating the smug myth of progress; neither is he endorsing the rival myth of unregenerate evil. Somewhere, in the ideal world of the imagination--the golden land Golding calls ‘myth’--the whole truth of the two partial views is accessible and discoverable. What resides here is not in competition with historical or scientific truth; it derives from them and is supplementary to them. To this end, it seems unimportant whether the picture of the Neanderthal man is technically inaccurate or not; what is more important is that the fable gives a translucent image of that possible time.
The conclusion in *The Inheritors* has a commonality with *Lord of the Flies* but the effect here is poignant as well as interpretative. Lok sits weeping for Like, with her doll clasped in his hand, a more pathetic figure than any man could be because of his simplicity. The semi-mythical creatures in the book might seem sketchy or incredible, but the sensuous and persuasive effects render reality. The physical conditions of the People's existence are carefully recreated. The "civilized" beings are shown to be savage in the end. The effect on the reader's mind, however, is not simple and straightforward but highly complicated: it includes both the sense of loss and the sense of gain.
NOTES


15. S.J. Boyd, *The Novels of William Golding* (New York: Harvester, 1990), pp. 41-42. Subsequent references in the chapter will be cited as SJB.


