

Sin Versus Innocence in William Golding's The Inheritors

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William Golding is undoubtedly a writer who concerns himself primarily with what is called "modern man" in general and "man" in particular. *The Inheritors* (1955) is his second main novel in which he tries to develop more intensely the philosophical view that man is basically not innocent; rather he is primitive. In this novel, man, though is shown as new which means modern, has innate violent tendencies. This paper sheds light on the idea of man's sin. I shall use the word sin contrasted with man's original innocence, purity, and goodness. The paper will show that the Neanderthals are superior to the new people in many different aspects. Both of them are contrasted and compared to reveal the sense of sin versus peacefulness, goodness, and innocence. In other words, both sides shed light on a warring conflict between two different groups of people in *the Inheritors*, namely "the Neanderthals" on one hand, and the "new people" on the other. Thus, the opposition between these two different groups of people shows obviously one of the main and essential thematic stripes Golding presents in his work in general and *The Inheritors* in particular.

The Inheritors is a portrayal of two heterogeneous groups of people, namely the Neanderthals and the group of modern people. Golding here tries to make a comparison between the two groups to spell out his theme of sin versus innocence. Moreover, he does not only aim at showing two confronting fronts, but he depicts man in the absence of "understanding and comprehension" on the part of the Neanderthals as a whole. Man, especially the Neanderthals, does not revert to any

kind of savagery even at the most critical moments in his life. Golding shows that they are good ,innocent ,and naïve. They do not kill ,use violence ,destroy nature ,and are incapable of doing any harm to other human beings even when faced with dangerous killing people as the new people .They are satisfied with their way of life, their habitation, and even their fate that they do not seek to change their style of living .In spite of being akin to animals in their own manners, shapes ,and in their dependence on the physical phenomena ,they display love, affection, and warmth in their integrated communal and familial life relationships. In addition ,they stick to observation as one of the most essential daily activities they perform throughout their life near the sea and also beside the waterfall. Through observing the group of new people ,the Neanderthals try to see and understand what is going on in the island and the forest . Yet there are no open confrontations between the two groups at least at the beginning of the novel because the new people are terrified of the group of the Neanderthals ,and the latter are simply curious of them and unable to conceive and realize the danger of contact with them(Arnold Johnston 1980, p.87).

From the inception of the novel till the penultimate chapter, the actions of the novel are seen through the eyes of the Neanderthal Lok. Lok's point of view is the angle of vision that Golding projects to reveal both the Neanderthals and the new people. Virginia Tiger sheds light on this point of view and says:

The first part makes up most of the novel's actions while the slighter final coda section is ,in part ,a meditation on the preceding drama. In the first part events are viewed from the limited perspective of the Neanderthal man ,a mind that cannot reason beyond sense data. We participate as readers in a world in which ideas and communication are a series of a images ,not a function of speech and causality (Tiger,1974,73).

It means that the characters are seen from the outside .For ten and a half of the twelve chapters of the novel ,the figures are only seen from the point of view of the Neanderthals. The actions of the novel begin as the Neanderthals ,the people as Golding calls them, migrate

to their spring home in the mountains after a particularly hard winter spent in a cave near the sea. Golding exposes minute details about them in the first four chapters ,for instance ,their code of ethics ,their solicitous society ,their common feelings, their unfathomable respect for life(Carolyn 1973, p.43) .Describing their microcosmic society, James Gindin says:

For all their perceptual and intellectual limitations the “people have a code of ethics...a deep and humble sense of their own limitations, and a faith in the divine power and goodness of the earth .In addition, the “people enjoy a family life free from fighting ,guilt ,and emotional squabbling. Each has his function, carefully defined and limited, each has his respect for the other members of the family(Gindin,1990:198).

The Neanderthals are devoid of any sense of understanding ,but they are perceptive of the physical phenomena around them .In other words, they live through their senses. They can infer to a limited scale from their own experiences, but they are incapable of going beyond inference since they cannot deduce or reason .They have a means of communication through using what they call pictures.This means they communicate by imagining images of events and ,in return ,there will be a revelation of their way of life their past ,present ,and their future .The Neanderthals “pictures”, say Gregor and Kinkead Weeks, “ are visualizations ,not conceptualizations .If they are part of the people’s subnormally rich life of sense and instinct, they are also part of their incapacity for abstract thought “(1967:73).So, they depend on their own senses to comprehend what they observe in physical nature .In this context, Golding shows the readers the simplicity of the Neanderthals contact with the other creatures and the world .What is of prime importance in the presentation of the characters is the exploration of the confrontation between the two groups .The encounter is gradually demonstrated by Golding .In an attempt to cross the water ,on their way to their spring home the people observe the disappearance of a log bridge that they have used for many years:

The log has gone away .He shut his eyes and frowned at the picture of the log .It had lain in the water from this side to that ,grey and rotting ...So sure was he of this log the people always used that he opened his eyes again, beginning to smile as if he were waking out of a dream; but the log was gone(p.12).

The new people's sudden intrusion upon the life of the Neanderthals is revealed from the first pages of the novel .It must be noted that the log bridge episode introduces several influential thematic and symbolic elements into the novel(Charles 1971,23) .The log can be considered as a feature of the people's old life that disappoints them due to the advent and appearance of the new people .Faced with finding out a new way across the water, Mal directs the family in placing a recently fallen tree where the old bridge had lain .While crossing ,Mal falls down into the water .It should be noted that the new people's arrival on the scene is responsible for the death of old Mal and also for the coming danger that pervades the people's present life(Frederick 1972 , p.54) .Moreover, the people's sense of communal unity is clearly depicted in the scene after Mal's falling into the water where they gather round him in order to warm him ,”the people gather 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”(p.21).Their collective feeling of unity sheds light on their strong social integration (Carely 1986 , p.78).Their collective action lessens the feeling of chillness from which Mal suffers .In addition ,Mal's difficult situation reveals the people's fear for his life .Golding tries to show that Mal's falling into the water is their own falling and his trembling is theirs .The people's coming round him is a symbol of their own tenderness ,affection ,and warmth that strongly binds them together .This means that love and goodness predominate even when danger prevails .There is another example of the people's innocent and good nature .Lok and Fa go to bring food for the people ;Lok imagines himself as if he carried a deer which is 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”(p.37).The quotation sheds light on the idea that the people have no animalistic tendencies to kill other animals and eat them

.They are not to blame for the death of the deer since the cat has killed it and they are not the doers .This means they don't use violence as a means to satiate their own hunger .They are too peaceful to kill and even if they are faced with urgent hunger .Their goodness is superior to their savagery if they feel any .Moreover, shedding blood merely for the sake of keeping oneself alive is not used as an excuse by the people ,but it is used by the new people at the end of the novel when they want to satisfy their hunger .This elucidates the obvious distinction between the Neanderthals and the new people.

Mal orders Nil and Ha to bring wood for the people .Nil comes back swiftly to tell them that Ha is missed ,but she is unable to comprehend the reasons for his sudden absence .She tells them that there is another smell pervading the place where they gather wood:

There is a smell on the cliff .Two .Ha and another not Fa .Not Liku .Not Mal .Not her .Not Nil .There is a another smell of a nobody .Going up the cliff and coming back .But the smell of Ha stops .There is Ha going up the cliff over the weed-tails when the sun has gone down ;and then nothing(p.66).

Like most of the Neanderthals ,Nil is unable to reason beyond sense data .She is capable of perception ,but she does not understand .Her senses report a series of events and specifically here the absence of Ha .She ensures that there is another smell ,and by so doing ,she communicates the idea that there are other beings in addition to the Neanderthals .The other new identities existence is proved to be devastating since it brings the absence (or death) of Ha(Baker 1965 , p. 45) .The sudden appearance of the new people accelerates the extermination of the people .As a result ,Nil tells the others that "there is no Ha .The Ha scent has ended"(p.67),and this is so because "there is the scent of others"(p.68).The existence of the people is threatened, yet they are unable to understand the reasons of such a threat .Consequently, violence and savagery predominate the place where the people live .Mal's death is followed by Ha's .Sudden and successive deaths prevail in the Neanderthals place where peace and goodness were prominent features .Nil is not the only Neanderthal

who notices the existence of the new smell which is indicative of the new people's existence ,but even Lok ,who begins the task of searching for the missed Ha ,becomes aware of such a smell:

Then the smell of other came to him from the damp earth and he followed it away from the river towards the slope up to the mountain .He followed it ,bent , flickering under the moon .The smell curved away from the river under the trees and came to the tumbled rocks and bushes .Here was possible danger ,cats or wolves or even the great foxes ,red as Lok himself f,that the spring hunger made savage .But the tail of the other was simple and even crossed by an animal's scent .It kept away from the path up to the overhang ,preferring for choice the beds of guilts rather than the steeper rocks at the side. The other had paused here and there ,had paused unaccountably long his feet turned back(p.76).

The above quotation exposes Lok's inability to understand the real danger the new people pose .He senses that the real tangible danger is demonstrated and seen in the existence of cats ,wolves ,and foxes .Animals are more dangerous than the new people .Lok becomes involved with the idea of the existence of the new people to the extent that he dreams of the new scent or smell following him :”Lok was running .The scent of the other was pursuing him and he could not get away .It was night and the scent had paws and a cat's teeth.”(p.93).This reveals that the Neanderthals are threatened by the ferocity of the new people's encroachment .Being fully conscious of the presence of the “other” ,namely the new people, Lok cannot help conveying such a conscious awareness to his unconscious dreams.In his awaking, he says:” I dreamed .The other was chasing me”(p.94).The process of chasing is in Lok's dreams ,but actually the new people come to intrude upon the quiet life of the Neanderthals .This means that the new people's coming to the island is exposed as an incubus in Lok's sleep. Metaphorically speaking ,the new people chase Lok ,and in fact ,they chase the neanderthals as a whole ,in order to take their own lives and dominate the place(Louis 1995 , p.81).

Moreover, the new people's encroachment on the Neanderthals' island is certified more and more when Lok and Fa go searching for the lost

Ha and notice the smoke rising from the middle of the island .The Neanderthals become sure that the smoke belongs to the new people .Fa returns back to the overhang and Lok proceeds to see them .Observing them

Lok begins crying "new people! new people!(p.102).Later on ,he hears the screaming of Liku who is together with the new one ,namely Nil's infant ,are kidnapped by the new people :."Then among the laugh –sound on this side of the river Liku began to scream.She was not screaming in anger or in fear or in panic pain ,but screaming with that mindless and dreadful panic she might have shown at the slow advance of a snake"(p.105).Golding's refernce to the snake is deliberate .Symbolically speaking ,the snake is a symbol of evil and here it is a representative of the new people who ,step by step ,get rid of and decimate the Neanderthals(Gabriel 1979 , p.53) .It means that the new people try to dismiss the people from the island which is the latter's paradise. The weak are disposed of by the strong .The new people's snaky nature exceeds the people's meek ones.

In chapter six,Fa unites Lok in searching for Ha, Liku,and the new one .They are aware that the missed and lost Neanderthals are abducted by the new people.

They followed the scent from the blood to the edge of the river. There was blood on the rock by the water too and a little milk. Fa pressed her hands on her head and gave her picture words "They killed Nil and threw her into the water. And the old woman". "They have taken Liku and the new one"(114).

The Neanderthals here use their smell sense to follow the scent of the other people .They notice the existence of blood and milk on the rock near the river.Blood and milk are mingled together.Blood is red and a symbol of violence and here it certifies the notion of sin ,that is , the new people are sinners in the sense that they kill to survive .This

indicates that the new people dominate and occupy the Neanderthals place by using ferocious violence .Violence leads to murder and killing and is reminiscent of the subvention and devastation from which most of the countries of the world suffer in the second world war in which William Golding was in the Royal

Navy(Agnes and Helga 1990 , p.101).Moreover ,the milk is a symbol of life ,childhood ,and innocence that is liable here to the demolishing committed by the new people .So , neither the adult Neanderthal nor the immature one can evade the process of evil and violent decimation brought by the new people(Adriaens 1970 ,p.14) .This certified the idea that innocent and peaceful people as the Neanderthals have no place in this world (the world of the island or their world)which is a big zoo where the strong kill the weak .In addition ,the old woman is also killed by the new people.She is loved and revered by all the Neanderthals .Golding reveals her character in chapter five:

Lok had always been awed by the old woman though she was his mother.She lived too near the great Oa in heart and head for a man to look upon her without dread.She knew so much,she had lived so long,she felt things they could only guess at,she was the woman. though she wrapped them all in her understanding and compassion there was sometimes a remote stillness in what she did that left them humble and abashed.Therefore they loved her and dreaded her without fear, and they dropped their eyes before her(109).

A symbol of knowledge,understanding, compassion,humility, wisdom and veneration is the old woman .Most of the good qualities are accumulated in her character .When killing her ,the new people obliterate these qualities that the Neanderthals stick to in their life.The Neanderthals are being killed one by one by the new people,as one of the critics says : ”The novel is the process of conquering the people,capturing or killing them one by one” (Gindin1963,p.199).The Neanderthals are exterminated since they are unable to face evil with evil ,though they ,and specially Fa and Lok,start sensing the danger and evil surrounding them .Fa and Lok

observe the new people carry sticks in their hands as weapons against the Neanderthals. Though Golding calls them “new people”, they are depicted as primitive in their behaviours, style of life, their violence, their rituals and incantations, and their tools. In addition, the sticks are tools of killing and violence. Thus, their existence, stay and survival on the island are conditioned by destroying the Neanderthals of whom the new people feel afraid.

Moreover, Golding reveals the new people’s natures through their names: the old man, Marlan; Pine-tree; Chestnut-head; Tuft; Bush; Vivani; Tanakil; and Tuami. These names’ meanings may refer to one idea which is the idea of “naturalness”. Man can be seen from the view that he is created by God from the clay of nature. Golding invents names which are distinctive and they encapsulate some semantic aspects of the characters. The names may evoke associations and meanings that expose the characters’ natures (Fowler 1977, p.36). The other names have certain connotations as exemplified in following diagram:

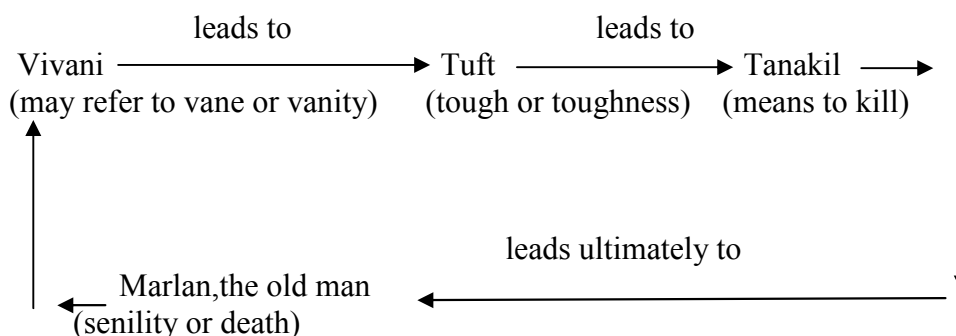


Diagram (1)

Golding does not use their names haphazardly; rather the names of the new people are indicative of their inner ferocious natures. Some of their names refer to natural physical objects as “pine-tree; Chestnut; Bush” and the others are connotations of pejorative meanings as “Marlan; Tuft; Vivani”. Thus the names of the new people show them nearer to nature, but they destroy the island and its poor and innocent inhabitants the Neanderthals. So they are more of a rash creatures who dominate by means of violence and sin; rather than by their own

“newness” or “modernity.” They are truly new in the sense that they reflect the new modern twentieth century man who destroys his brother man in the two world wars .Moreover ,Golding here tries to show that there are still nonviolent ,good ,and innocent people living in this world which is pregnant with bestiality.The Neanderthals are true representatives of those humans who want to live their life peacefully and harmoniously .Their names emphasize the simplicity of the society in which they live. While the new people are the perspicuous examples for those people who try to intrude upon other places and occupy them by force and oppression as demonstrated and seen in the two world wars.

In chapter eight ,Golding displays the new people’s animalistic sexual tendency through revealing Tuami and Vivani having a sexual intercourse .

Their sexual meeting discloses their inner evil and animalism .There is blood on her face and on his shoulder:

There was blood on the woman’s face and the man’s shoulder ,the fighting done and peace restored between them ,or whatever state it was restored ,they played together...They hunted down pleasure as the wolves will follow and run down horse....(p.177).

The description shows that it is not pleasure or satisfaction that they get nor it is a leisure time they have ;rather it is a real battle in which violence used to compensate for intimacy .The sexual scene elucidates that the winning side is violence not lust ;animalism not spirituality ;evil not good ;debauchery not chastity .Sin becomes unseparable part of the new people’s new existence on the island .Sin pervades through debauchery.Thus sin is exposed as external and internal.It is internally exposed when the new people meet in sexuality.And it is externally shown when the new people kill the Neanderthals one after the other. The scene is also reflective of their true human relationships in which blood wins at the end .In addition ,the simile that Golding uses in the foregoing quotation uncovers the similarity between the new people and the wolves in terms of their mutual animalism and chase for their victims .The wolves ‘pleasure of following their victims is similar to the new

people's pleasure of having violent ,irrational ,and bloody sexual intercourse .So, the new people are victims of their own violent animal tendencies that control and use them as tools .Their manners are identical to those of animals in both killing the old woman and Nil and also in seeking to satisfy their lust.

Lok and Fa try to save Liku and the new one ,but they are discovered by the new people who injure Fa .Lok ,later on ,is left in a state of depression :”The sound of mourning burst out of his mouth ,prolonged ,harsh pain-sound ,man-sound “(p.190).The new people left Lok alone without his intimate companions .The new people cause devastation to the Neanderthals and also to their environment :”There were noises coming from the remainder of the people in the clearing ;noises of logs moving over each other ,and of trees being out”(p.190).

The Neanderthals live in a harmonious ,peaceful ,and secure state before the advent of the new people to the island ,but after the new people's coming specifically in chapter ten ,the Neanderthals become totally conscious of the disorder the new people bring with them .Lok tries to approximate the new people ,but he feels that it is dangerous to go nearer to them: ”only when they were so close to him that he could see how the grass flattened in front of the roller did he remember that the people were dangerous and flit away into the forest”(p.193).The new people's danger, disharmony ,and disorder are noticed by Lok who observes the state of change in the island and the forest.” certain things were gone and done with like a wave of the sea .It knew that the misery must be embraced painfully as a man might hug thorns to him and it sought to comprehend the new people from whom all changes came”(p.194).Due to the new people's malice ,evil ,violence ,and ferocity,the Neanderthals habitation is being destroyed ,and their number is reduced step by step .In addition ,the state of change the new people bring to the island and the Neanderthals make Lok form new “pictures” about the people .He sees them from new several angles. He considers them as “a famished wolf in the hollow of a tree” and “like honey in the round stones, the new honey that smells of dead things and fire”and “they are like the river and the fall, they are a people of the fall; nothing stands against them”(p.195).The new people are like the wolf which is ravenous and violent animal .The Neanderthals are like the

tree .The hungry new people come the tree to cut it .Moreover , the new people are similar to honey in their nice physical external appearance ,but its smell is bad ,which means that they come and bring death and fire to the island and the Neanderthals .The fire ,in its general meaning ,devours everything and they want also to kill everybody on the island .In addition ,Lok resembles them to the river and fall which means water ,the source of life .So ,they may refer to life force which is very strong and ambiguous. We have three symbols of freshness and life:“honey ,river ,water” and one symbol of violence ,ferocity ,and cunning “wolf”.Whereas in the case of the Neanderthals ,there is a symbol of life “tree” and two symbols of pessimism and death:” dead things “ and “nothing” .Death leads to nothingness .When the new people kill the Neanderthals ,there will be nothing left in the island. So, though the new people symbolize honey ,river, water , they are more of a force of death and destruction .And this death is committed against the Neanderthals who are a force of life in the forest, namely” tree”.

Lok and Fa pursue the new people to retrieve the children, inadvertently scaring them .At the end of their attempt ,they fail to fulfill their aim .As a response ,the new people cross over from the island to the place inhabited by Fa and Lok .There , they perform a religious ceremony in order to cleanse the pathway .In his rituals ,Tuami draws a totem on the ground .One of the new people begins dancing and another is chosen by lot to be the scapegoat .The latter extends his hand on a log ,and Tuami chops off a finger .Blood is offered to the totem on the ground ,and soon they break forth into revels.The new people perform another ritual to their god for protection from the alleged danger posed by Fa and Lok .Both of them are considered demons by the new people .They discover later on that Liku is sacrificed to the new people’s god .During their attack on the new people ,Fa is wounded ,and later is dead and Lok is left alone .By morning, Lok is dead .Moreover, the new people ,as stated before ,are sinners and violent ,but anybody may expect the opposite since they are “new “ people and the others are “Neanderthals”.

To sum up ,this is what Golding tries to expose evidently. In other words ,the modern, civilized ,urban, new man is an accumulation of opposites and contradictions .He seems “new” ,but in reality he is a sinner and evil ;he appears good ,but internally he hides an evil

nature;he discloses a meek nature ,but he has violent tendencies .This is the modern new man in *the Inheritors*.He exterminates the meek ,mild ,and good Neanderthals as a result of fear.The cause of the crisis is man's inner essence which makes humans regress as much as they try to progress in their development.The new people think the Neanderthals are devils ,but the fact is vice versa in the sense that the actions of the new people prove them to be like the devil and the Neanderthals manners and conducts show them as angles .

Man who lives in civilization ,as depicted by Golding ,is reduced to a subhuman in the sense that he is exposed as violent ,unkind ,selfish ,and more importantly bloody .And this is obviously elucidated in *the Inheritors*' revelation of the new people who ,for the sake of staying alive ,get rid of all the Neanderthals .In *the Inheritors* there is a thirst for blood and there is also the scent of blood that pervades the environment of the neanderthals particularly after the arrival of the new people .Thus Golding ,in this novel specifically, is also slightly pessimistic as in *Lord of the Flies* ,but there is a glimpse of hope .By so doing ,he leaves Ralph alive in *Lord of the Flies* ,and leaves the new one also surviving in *the Inheritors* .To conclude ,he tries to show that sin ,evil and bloodshed prevail and innocence ,peace ,security ,and good recede day after day .The new people, who represent the civilized human society , behave in an evil way as if they were not civilized ,have no norms or rules of behaviours. They stick to one law :the law of being powerful and strong even if the application of this law will cost the lives of innocent human beings. The new people are not civilized internally , but they are shadows of the nonhuman civilization that predominate by force and use of violence, though Golding tells that they are "new" which means modern, resembling the boys in *Lord of the Flies*. Though Golding seems obsessed with fear ,evil , ,insecurity ,and most importantly with violence and sin in *the Inheritors* ,he believes that there would be a continuous life for the neanderthals in the far away future since he keeps the new one of the Neanderthals alive .The new people adopt the new one and would accommodate him as their own kid. This may mean that the unity and connection between the new people and the Neanderthal new one in the future may lead to disjunction because what is taken by violence is to be returned by violence also.

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