The Inheritors
The Inheritors, William Golding's second novel, has enjoyed nothing like the success of Lord of the Flies. Although it appeared in England originally in 1955, one year after Golding's first book, The Inheritors had to wait seven years for publication in America—until its author had gained a reputation through Lord of the Flies, I should guess, and perhaps a certain notoriety through debates about the ending of Pincher Martin, the story that followed The Inheritors, yet came out in America five years before the second novel.1 This delay in its republication and the book's relative lack of success are nevertheless somewhat surprising. For The Inheritors has all the narrative drive of Lord of the Flies, and its verbal texture—though to some degree complicated by the fact that we view events for the most part over the shoulder or through the mind of a Neanderthal man named Lok—makes much lighter demands on the reader than does the texture of Pincher Martin. Moreover, The Inheritors seems to me far and away the warmest, the most immediately moving, of Golding's novels, a point I want to stress throughout the discussion that follows. No doubt Golding engages our emotions chiefly through associating us, via the story's point of view, with a group of fundamentally innocent and good-hearted Neanderthal people—more winning from the start than the children in Lord of the Flies—whose fate it is to be destroyed (or captured), one after another, by a tribe of new men, by Homo sapiens. But I think that Golding also accomplishes an extraordinary feat in compelling us at last to sympathize with the new men themselves, despite the cruelty they have shown, when he shifts us in his final chapter to the mind of one of them, who is reflecting on what has happened. The effect of this ending and its significance for the meaning of The Inheritors I shall examine towards the close of my own chapter. But first I turn once again to
Golding's narrative art: to sketch the basic structure of *The Inheritors*; to dwell on the sorts of narrative surprise and the pathos that Golding achieves here through the very limitations of his chosen point of view; and to consider briefly his final representation of Lok, that wonderful passage in the next-to-last chapter of the novel where Golding frees us for the first time from Lok's perspective and prepares the way for the ultimate shift to the perspective of the new men.

In one narrative respect, *The Inheritors* duplicates *Lord of the Flies*, for the Neanderthal people are exterminated by Homo sapiens as gradually and remorselessly as Ralph's society is destroyed by Jack's. Early in the story the new men indirectly cause the death of Mal, the chief of the people, by removing a log from the trail, with the result that Mal falls in the water; soon they kill Ha, whom they come across as he hunts wood; then they raid the people's cave, murdering Nil and the old woman as well as capturing the young girl named Liku and the baby; next they eat Liku; after that the woman called Fa dies, swept over a waterfall when the new men prevent her from recapturing the baby; finally Lok, the sole survivor of the people, is left to die alone, with nothing to live for after the murderous visitation of the new men. This inexorable narrative sequence in *The Inheritors* is matched by another—the series of rituals and sacrifices performed by the new men—which piles horror on horror. When we first see the new men for any sustained period on their island, they are bowing down to their chief, who is miming "a rutting stag" (p. 128); at their second ritual, intended to promote the success of the hunters in killing a stag for food, they cut off a finger from one of their tribe; when the hunt fails, they devour Liku; and they try at last to propitiate the Neanderthal people, whom they fear, by
sketching a figure of the people and staking to the sketch a young girl of their own as a living human sacrifice.

But the fundamental informing structure of *The Inheritors* is the series of contrasts that Golding develops between the Neanderthal people and the new men: contrasts which in the main ally Neanderthal man with what we ordinarily think of as distinctively human qualities and virtues, ironically enough, and which ally Homo sapiens with inhuman savagery. The Neanderthal people are making their annual trek to their summer home when they meet up with the new men; the latter are fleeing from the rest of their tribe because Marlan, their chief, has stolen Vivani, the wife of another. The people are everywhere full of sympathy, as is revealed, for example, by the way in which they huddle about the sick Mal in order to warm and comfort him; the behavior of the new men is shot through with animosity, the most dramatic instance being the enmity towards Marlan of Tuami, who periodically sharpens a piece of ivory with the intent of killing his chief. The people are radically unself-conscious; Vivani is shown dressing her hair and self-consciously adjusting her fur to cover her when approached by Tuami. The people are loyal to their chief, even to the point of carrying out an order of questionable wisdom; the new men are near open rebellion against their chief, who cannot always keep them under control even by the bribes he gives them of intoxicating drink and of Liku's flesh. The people eat what nature provides—fungi, grubs, honey—allowing themselves meat only when it has been killed by some other agent and its blood drained; the new men hunt to kill their food and engage in cannibalism. The people worship Oa, a creative female divinity whom they speak of as having produced the earth and themselves; they have an almost Biblical tradition, including a story about an Edenic past and a
catalogue of the names of former chiefs; and the scene in which Fa makes an offering to Oa on behalf of the dying Mal is fraught with an awful grandeur. The religion of the new men, however, is associated with ceremonies honoring the fraudulent imitation of a stag, with magic, with hunting and bloody sacrifice. The people seek each other in love; the new men devour each other in lust, biting and tearing each other as they satisfy themselves or teasing themselves quite consciously in subtle sexual games. The people are at a constitutional disadvantage through being trapped within their instincts, winning as those instincts are; the new men are ingenious in their rationality, capable of fashioning murderous weapons or of achieving a portage through rolling their dugouts uphill on logs. Above all, the people are essentially friendly, ready to greet the new men and convinced that “People understand each other” (p. 72); in spite of all that they suffer at the hands of the new men, they remain strongly attracted to them. The new men appear essentially antagonistic—our first close-up of Homo sapiens is of a man shooting at Lok (p. 106)—and they are animated throughout the story by a desperate fear of the people.

Although I would not wish to press the point, it appears to me that this contrast between the two groups is at least faintly articulated in Golding’s naming of some of his characters. “Liku” (as in “I like you”) seems appropriate to the cheerful girl who, even when captured by the new men, becomes friendly with their young girl; and perhaps “Mal” betokens the illness and unluckiness of the people’s chief, though the name’s suggestion of evil would be out of place for this dignified leader unless loosely applied to the bad judgments that he sometimes makes. “Marlan,” the name of the new men’s chief, sounds like a combination of “Mal” with Merlin, and this leader proves in fact to be an evil
magician. Vivani is as full of life as her name implies. “Tuami” (which combines “you” and “friend”) appears to be mainly ironic, given this new man’s antagonism towards the people, his lust for Vivani, and his enmity towards his own chief—and ironic on another level when he indeed becomes our friend, both our point of view and a man like ourselves, in the novel’s final chapter. The names that Lok confers on some of the other new men—“Pine-tree,” “Chestnut-head,” “Bush”—also work to some degree iraconically to dehumanize these people. But “Tanakil,” I should confess, seems too ominous a name for the one of the new people who becomes friendliest with Liku, though its shading is not too ominous for the activities of the new men in general.

Even if the names lack the coloring that I sense in them, clearly the contrast itself between the two groups is so sustained as to become the dominant shaping force of Golding’s novel, governing our response to its events, characters, and meaning. But I had better add immediately, before going on to explore other aspects of Golding’s narrative art, that the contrast as I have spelled it out contains the fundamental truth about Neanderthal man and Homo sapiens in The Inheritors, but not the whole truth. For the people are not quite so innocent, nor the new men so unrelievedly vicious, as I have painted them. For the sake of plausibility, it may be, Golding ascribes faintly evil thoughts and rather unsavory practices to the people from time to time, as in the “mixture of darkness and joy” that Lok experiences at the prospect of eating meat (p. 56), or in the people’s habit of eating from the head and bones of a dead chief to gain wisdom and strength (pp. 87, 89). For the sake of the novel’s meaning—to mark the evil ascendancy of the new men—Golding also allows Lok and Fa to reenact the Fall of Man in one passage; but the contentiousness and lust that they
exhibit after drinking the new men's liquor do not stay with them, and the passage finally affects us, I think, as differentiating a temporary lapse on the part of the people from the permanent condition of the new men. But most important is Golding's qualification of our attitude towards Homo sapiens: in the interests of ultimately thrusting his story and meaning home to the hearts of his readers—who are men themselves, after all—he must make it possible for us to ally ourselves emotionally to some degree with the new men. Thus he gradually reveals how much they have in common with the Neanderthal people, despite the dissimilarity between the groups. The new men, we come to discover, are more frightened of the people than the people are of them. The new men suffer from famine, while the people are beset by hunger. For all their superiority and knowledge, the new men appear weak, naïve, and defenseless at many moments: consider the deflating details at the end of that first ceremony which has so impressed Lok and Fa—"The stag began to turn and they saw that his tail was dead and flapped against the pale, hairless legs. He had hands" (p. 128)—or the confidence of the new men when they set up a camp to wall out the people, utterly unaware that Lok and Fa are sitting in a tree right above them (p. 143). Like the people, the new men can experience joy in working together (p. 144). Although they feel a certain aversion to the baby they have stolen from the people, they are even more strongly attracted by it. Indeed, Vivani herself has wanted the baby to make up for a child she had lost, a fact that parallels her roughly with Fa, who has in the past lost a child of her own; and when Marlan tries to take the baby for the tribe to eat, Vivani "snapped at his hand with her mouth as any woman would" (p. 168). Similarly, the mother of Tanakil—the
young girl who becomes friendly with the captured Liku, though also beating her in a passage that parallels Tanakil with the other new men (p. 162)—struggles as frantically to save her daughter when the girl is offered as a sacrifice to the people as Lok and Fa struggle to save Liku and the baby from the new men. Through these details and others like them, the new men make their muted claims upon our sympathy and thus lay the groundwork for the effect of the final chapter in *The Inheritors*, an effect that we will be in a better position to appreciate after we look more closely at Golding's narrative mode in the major part of the novel.

Every reader of *The Inheritors* will remember such features as the impact of the scene in which Lok is suddenly confronted with the mutilated body of the old woman rising toward him through the water, or the excruciating suspense that Golding maintains through long segments of the story: in the gradual manifestation of the new men through ambiguous details in the first pages of the book, in the continuing threat to Lok and Fa as they occupy a tree within the new men's camp, in the running question through the last part of the novel—for the person first reading the story, anyway—of what has happened to Liku. In large measure, these effects depend upon Golding's manipulation of the story's point of view. He confines us pretty exclusively to the perspective of the Neanderthal man Lok, a being who lives in his acute senses and often generous feelings, but one who can hardly be said to think, and who is therefore almost devoid of self-consciousness. The vividness of Lok's sensuous experience is brilliantly rendered in the prose of the novel—even in the relatively omniscient commentaries, Golding usually sustains a primitivistic aura through the details that he cites
and the phrases that he chooses to describe them—and Lok's intellectual limitations make possible a host of narrative surprises.

To illustrate the normal mode of the novel and the sort of surprise that it can produce, I choose a couple of paragraphs near the beginning of The Inheritors (pp. 24–26). The people are climbing toward their summer home, a cave next to a waterfall, with an island in the river below. The old woman is carrying in her arms a “burden,” which, we learn only later, contains fire. The narrative wallop of the episode, as we come to understand more fully further on in the story, derives from the fact that Lok falls as inexplicably as he does because he has actually smelled a fire on the island, the fire of man, a creature of whom Lok is unaware and whose presence is here hinted at for the second time in the novel. But the first paragraph I quote is the omniscient author's, which helps to set the stage for Lok's fall:

The trail gained height at each step, a dizzy way of slant and overhang, of gap and buttress where roughness to the foot was the only safety and the rock dived back under, leaving a void of air between them and the smoke [i.e., the "spray" of the falls] and the island. Here the ravens floated below them like black scraps from a fire, the weed-tails wavered with only a faint glister over them to show where the water was: and the island, reared against the fall, interrupting the sill of dropping water, was separate as the moon. The cliff leaned out as if looking for its own feet in the water. The weed-tails were very long, longer than many men, and they moved backwards and forwards beneath the climbing people as regularly as the beat of a heart or the breaking of the sea.
There is no need for me to labor the unpretentious vividness of this description—where some details are realized visually, others put in motion for us, and still others related to our sensory experience of dizziness or “roughness”—although I may add that this passage is surpassed by many parts of the book in which Golding achieves rich synaesthetic effects. But this description is typical of *The Inheritors* in its frequent animation of nature (the sort of nature Lok would see): “the rock dived back under”; “the island, reared against the fall”; “the cliff leaned out.” And Golding’s figurative language is kept appropriate to the perceptions of a primitive: “like black scraps from a fire”; “as if looking for its own feet”; “as regularly as the beat of a heart or the breaking of the sea.” The description also conveys, we should notice finally, subdued hints about the cause of the accident soon to befall Lok: in associating “smoke,” though it is the smoke of mist, with “the island,” and in referring to “fire,” though in a simile.

The people reach a platform of rock overlooking the river, and the old woman briefly rests her burden. Lok first turns out to view the island, then turns back to Fa, eager to share his joy with her at being so near home and promising to “find food.” This is what happens to him:

Mentioning food made his hunger as real as the smells. He turned again outwards to where he smelt the old woman’s burden. Then there was nothing but emptiness and the smoke of the fall coming towards him from the island. He was down, spread-eagled on the rock, toes and hands gripping the roughness like limpets. He could see the weed-tails, not moving but frozen in an instant of extreme perception, beneath his armpit. Liku was squawking on
the platform and Fa was flat by the edge, holding him by the wrist, while the new one struggled and whimpered in her hair. The other people were coming back. Ha was visible from the loins up, careful but swift and now leaning down to his other wrist. He felt the sweat of terror in their palms.

The first sentence is not a casual expression but literally true, reminding us that, for the primitive Lok, words are much nearer to being things than the abstractions they are for us. So Lok turns instinctively to where he smells fire—the old woman's, he supposes, but actually man's—and he falls. The very process of his fall is recorded in the sentence about "nothing but emptiness," even this void gaining circumstance through being connected with "the smoke of the fall," a smoke which is itself put in motion, which is "coming towards him." Once "down," he holds tight to mere "roughness," the undifferentiated term suggesting how little Lok has to hold on to. And his situation is dramatized through a variety of sense impressions: the sight of the "weed-tails," the sound of Liku, the motions of the other people, the feel of "sweat." Clearly the passage forces us to share Lok's perspective as he grips the side of the cliff, but it also renders for us the quality of his mind—rather, of his mindlessness. For in inhabiting Lok here, we are in a sense inhabiting a vacuum. Everything is referred by Lok to the outer world, since he remains quite unselfconscious about his experience: the "smoke" is "coming towards him"; the "weed-tails," though really in perpetual movement, are suddenly "frozen"; "Fa was . . . holding him"; "the other people were coming back"; "the sweat of terror" is not in Lok's but in "their palms."

The paragraphs just cited will have conveyed, I trust,
something of the way in which Golding re-creates the texture of Lok's life and some sense of the narrative mystification and shock that the author secures through limiting us to Lok's perspective. But I am less sure that the two passages now to be mentioned will convey, in isolation from the story, the pathos that Golding can also command precisely through stressing the limitations to which Lok is subject. In the first passage, which occurs just after Nil has announced the disappearance of Ha (who has been killed by Homo sapiens), the people cannot comprehend the fact because so many mementos of Ha still surround them:

... they stood still and meditated formlessly the picture of no Ha. But Ha was with them. They knew his every inch and expression, his individual scent, his wise and silent face. His thorn bush lay against the rock, part of the shaft water-smooth from his hot grip. The accustomed rock waited for him, there before them was the worn mark of his body on the earth. All these things came together in Lok. They made his heart swell, gave him strength as if he might will Ha to them out of the air.

Suddenly Nil spoke.

"Ha is gone." (p. 68)

Trapped by the vividness of their sensuous awareness, the people here imagine Ha as lingering on, though the reader is well aware of the actual death.

Even more moving is the description of Lok's behavior shortly after he has heard the screams of the captured Liku and seen the dead body of the old woman in the river. At first he tries to pull himself together and behave purposefully; but soon the strained "grin" of his utter despair returns, and he is overwhelmed with sadness, reenacting a
scene earlier in the novel where he swung the laughing Liku on the branch of a tree:

Then he began to run down river, not fast, but keeping as near to the water as he could. He peered seriously into the bushes, walked, stopped. His eyes unfocused and the grin came back. He stood, his hand resting on the curved bough of a beech and looked at nothing. He examined the bough, holding it with both hands. He began to sway it, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, faster and faster. The great fan of branches on the end went swishing over the tops of the bushes, Lok hurled himself backwards and forwards, he was gasping and the sweat of his body was running down his legs with the water of the river. He let go, sobbing, and stood again, arms bent, head tilted, his teeth clenched as if every nerve in his body were burning. The wood pigeons went on talking and the spots of sunlight sifted over him. (p. 111)

Remarkable in these sentences is the degree to which Golding makes the action itself—the emotional outlet appropriate to a primitive being—expressive. The action becomes so expressive in part because Golding changes the pace here—a static pose gives way to frantic movement, which is in turn marked off by the final moment of arrest—and in part because he refuses to comment explicitly on the emotional values of the scene, except for the one word “sobbing” towards the close. The mere deed of Lok’s shaking the tree communicates all his yearning for the happy game he has previously shared with Liku and his despair at having lost her; yet Golding underplays even this parallelism by not permitting Liku to be named, as if Lok himself were not quite conscious of what he feels.
For the final narrative effects to which I want to draw attention, Golding capitalizes on the intense sympathy of the Neanderthal people, a quality which makes them everywhere more attractive than Homo sapiens but which ironically proves, in the second incident to which I shall refer, a limitation as well. The first episode works in a reasonably straightforward way. Lok goes out into the night in an attempt to discover what has happened to Ha, comes across the scent of something "other," and responds so acutely, as he follows the track, to every hint of the other's behavior that he is "turned . . . into the thing that had gone before him" (p. 77). The details of Lok's journey indicate to us something of the fear and surreptitiousness of the other being, but the episode is so handled that we are as surprised as Lok when he at last finds himself peering down at the Neanderthal people in their cave, spying on them as we now realize the new man has spied. Aside from the local drama of this conclusion, Golding uses Lok's temporary identification with the new men to underline their alienation from the people and, once again, the people's sympathy for each 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. . . . he felt his difference and invisibility as a cold wind that blew on his skin. 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 its substance. If they broke, a man would die" (p. 78).

The second passage reveals, ironically, a lack of utter sympathy between Lok and Fa. They are in the tree, above the new men's camp, and Lok has just awakened from a sleep during which—as we later learn for sure—Fa has watched Homo sapiens devour Liku. He asks:
"What is it?"

Fa did not move. A kind of half-knowledge, terrible in its very formlessness, filtered into Lok as though he were sharing a picture with her but had no eyes inside his head and could not see it. . . . It pushed into him, displacing the comfortable feeling of after sleep, the pictures and their spinning, breaking down the small thoughts and opinions, the feeling of hunger and the urgency of thirst. He was possessed by it and did not know what it was.

"Oa did not bring them out of her belly."

At first the words [of Fa] had no picture connected with them but they sank into the feeling and reinforced it. Then Lok peered through the leaves again for the meaning of the words and he was looking straight at the fat woman’s mouth. She was coming towards the tree, holding on to Tuami, and she staggered and screeched with laughter so that he could see her teeth. They were not broad and useful for eating and grinding; they were small and two were longer than the others. They were teeth that remembered wolf. (pp. 173–74)

Attuned to Fa though he is, Lok’s sympathetic intuition is not great enough to permit him to grasp the deed of cannibalism that she has witnessed—put in other terms, his humanity is too great to allow him to imagine such an act. When he searches in the last paragraph for the meaning of Fa’s words, what he sees are the “mouth” and “teeth” that convey to him only superficial physical differences between the new men and the people. But to the reader, this close-up of “mouth” and “teeth” conveys a portentous, though not yet unambiguous, indication of the fate of Liku, a fate that
The Inheritors dramatizes the anything but superficial difference between Neanderthal man and Homo sapiens.

Although it is true that the characteristic narrative effects of *The Inheritors* which I have just been describing derive from the very limitations in awareness of Lok and the people, I should make it clear that Golding does in fact distinguish several different levels, as the novel advances, in what might be called the intellectual life of his Neanderthal men. They communicate either by speech—already something of an abstraction for them, “She asked a question of Ha and he answered her with his mouth” (p. 13)—or by presumably more primitive means, “Ha looked his question at the old man” (p. 17). Their mental activity consists largely of “pictures,” the term implying how closely they are bound to their sensuous experience, though these “pictures” may arise from emotions as well. While the mindlessness of the people marks a limitation, it can also indicate their instinctive oneness, their total community: “. . . there was silence again and one mind or no mind in the overhang”; then, “Quite without warning, all the people shared a picture [of Mal’s suffering] inside their heads” (p. 38). Fa is the most intellectually inventive of them, trying to imagine growing food for the people in one passage (p. 49) and to imagine irrigation—I owe the latter point to Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, *William Golding*, p. 82—in another (p. 62). After the death of Mal, Lok laments his inability to think consecutively: “He wished he could ask Mal what it was that joined a picture to a picture so that the last of many came out of the first” (p. 96). Further on, we see both Fa and Lok gripped by associative processes that do indeed connect disparate events, though neither one of them can really seize on the interrelationship. In seeking to define her sense that the
The arrow which the new men shot at Lok may be a sign of hostility rather than a gift, Fa can only mumble, "We throw stones at the yellow ones," and then repeat vaguely, "The twig" (p. 119). When Lok thrusts a stick into a bone for marrow, "He had a sudden picture of Lok thrusting a stick into a crack" to find honey for Liku, who is now a captive, and "A feeling rushed into him like a wave of the sea, swallowing his contentment in the food" (p. 119). Later on, Lok does in fact achieve his first relatively abstract thought via association, but, ironically enough, it proves wrong. He has earlier observed the new men draw up their dugouts from the river, the "picture" referred to in the first sentence, and now watches them as they work with the dugouts again:

All at once he had a picture of the hollow logs nosing up the bank and coming to rest in the clearing. . . . There were no more logs in the river, so no more would come out of it. He had another picture of the logs moving back into the river and this picture was so clearly connected in some way with the first one and the sounds from the clearing that he understood why one came out of the other. This was an upheaval in the brain and he felt proud and sad and like Mai. (p. 191)

Lok may accurately use the causal connective "so" in the second sentence, but his deduction about the dugouts being returned to the river is quite untrue, for the new men are embarking on a portage, something Lok cannot comprehend (p. 192). The highest level of thought which Lok attains is the self-conscious manipulation of analogy: "... in a convulsion of the understanding Lok found himself using likeness as a tool as surely as ever he had used a stone to hack at sticks or meat" (p. 194). But he can employ "likeness" only
to formulate, in terms of what he has already experienced, how different the new men are from his own kind: “They are like the river and the fall, they are a people of the fall; nothing stands against them” (p. 195). Indeed they are different. And Golding, by forcing us to participate for so much of the novel in the limited awareness of Lok and the Neanderthal people, not only intensifies our emotional allegiance to them but makes us recognize how inevitable is their ultimate destruction by the rational, self-conscious new men.

No one while first reading The Inheritors, I suspect, imagines being compelled to feel more acutely for Lok than he has through all those pages in which he has been associated with Lok’s perspective. Yet this is exactly what Golding accomplishes in the passage, at the close of the novel’s next-to-last chapter, that gives us our final sight of Lok, surely the most moving pages in Golding’s fiction (pp. 216–22). He charges the passage in various ways. For one thing, Lok is left utterly alone here at the end of a string of catastrophes that has deprived him, one after another, of all the Neanderthal people—and even of the new men, whose “hollow log,” as Golding notes at the beginning of the passage, “was a dark spot on the water towards the place where the sun had gone down.” Moreover, Golding increases our sense of Lok’s isolation by taking us away from him as well: by shifting the point of view so that, for the first time in the novel, we see Lok as the new men have seen him, as a “red creature.” This new perspective is sustained, not only through references to a “creature” which is now designated as “it,” but through phrasings that reflect the understanding of ordinary man rather than the perceptions of a primitive: the cave where the people have lived shows “evidence of occupation”; the
"logs" and "strips of thick and twisted hide" (p. 208) that Lok has watched the new men use now become "rollers" and "ropes"; a smashed trail is likened to "a cart-track." And the shift in perspective is heartbreaking, not simply because it separates us from Lok, but because in the whole passage Golding recapitulates so much that has happened in the story, adverting now in a drily factual manner to events and situations that have become saturated with emotion for us. Thus, the creature keeps looking out at a mere tree floating away in the river, but it is the tree that has carried Fa over the fall to her death. Or the creature "came to a clearing . . . beneath a dead tree," but for us it is the dead tree, fraught with the experiences of Lok and Fa as they watched the new men from it. Most poignantly of all, the creature searches out "a small, white bone" in the earth with its "right forepaw," a bone which finally reveals to Lok, we realize, that Liku has been eaten—and Golding proceeds straight on from the phrase about the bone to his most detailed factual description of Neanderthal man as he appears to Homo sapiens: "It was a strange creature, smallish, and bowed. . . ." Throughout these pages, then, the cultivated impersonality of Golding's account acts to intensify our response to the Lok we have known.* A final description of the creature weeping will show Golding's method in miniature:

There was light now in each cavern [where the eyes, which have been closed, are hidden in the creature], lights faint as the starlight reflected in the crystals of a granite cliff. The lights increased, acquired definition, brightened, lay each sparkling at the lower edge of a cavern. Suddenly, noiselessly, the lights became thin crescents, went 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 and gathered at the lowest tip. The streaks on the cheeks pulsed as the drops swam down them, a great drop swelled at the end of a hair of the beard, shivering and bright. It detached itself and fell in a silver flash, striking a withered leaf with a sharp pat. (p. 220)

In representing the tears as “lights,” Golding refuses to sentimentalize the creature’s grief, and perhaps transfigures it.

In the concluding chapter of *The Inheritors*, Golding shifts his point of view once more, making us now look over the shoulder and into the mind of Tuami, the second-in-command of the new men. The shift has been prepared for by our technical separation from Lok in the pages that I have just considered, and it is of crucial importance to the meaning of *The Inheritors*. For, by linking us in this way with the new men, Golding forces us to take to ourselves, indeed roots in us, the cruelty and evil that Homo sapiens has displayed in his dealings with the Neanderthal people—the same cruelty and evil which Golding has dramatized so powerfully, earlier in the novel, through contrasting the two groups and allying us with the innocent victims. But there is a further point: to secure our identification of ourselves with the new men, Golding must make them appealing in their own right, despite the terrible things they have done. And to me the most astonishing fact about the concluding chapter is Golding’s success in nourishing our sympathies for these beings. He does not gloss over the behavior they have exhibited previously: the boat contains the weapons and liquor that we have seen before; Vivani is still self-conscious and vain; Tuami again feels lust when he looks at her and still sharp-
ens a dagger for Marlan's heart; the killing of the Neanderthal people lives on in Tuami's mind, though he tries to justify the new men by saying, "If we had not we should have died" (p. 228); and the presence in the boat of Tanakil—who has been shocked by the eating of Liku, then lost her mind on being offered to propitiate Lok and Fa, and can now only utter, "Liku!"—is a continuing reminder to the new men and to us of their evil capacities.

But, without palliating these horrors, Golding tempers our response to the new men by showing us fully, for the first time, what it is like to be inside them and how they have been driven to act as they have. All the hints planted previously in the story—which I have listed earlier in my text—about their fears, sense of strain, weakness, confusion, and love for their own are realized now in the reflections of Tuami and the behavior of the others. (In the final representation of Lok, as we observed, Golding charged the recapitulated details by reporting them in a factual manner, from the perspective of a disengaged human being; in the closing chapter, the recapitulated details gain emotional power in a different way, through the alteration of vantage point that allows us to know more than we did, but here Golding does not employ a strategy of understatement.) Through a whole series of items, Golding encourages us to regard the new men as in many respects similar to the Neanderthal men with whom we have sympathized previously. The new men, too, have lost some members of their tribe in the engagements between the two groups. As the Neanderthal people have had their nightmares after the disappearance of Ha and the death of Mai, so the new men have had theirs as a result of meeting up with the people (pp. 183–84), a nightmare that continues to possess the dislocated mind of Tanakil whether she sleeps or wakes (p. 226). From
the vantage point of Tuami, of course, it is the new men who are continually referred to as “the people”—by this point in the story the term is too loaded with emotion to operate merely ironically—while the Neanderthal men have become “forest devils.” And, in the last chapter, the new men generally respond to the Neanderthal baby with the same mixture of attraction and repulsion that has defined the Neanderthal people’s reaction to the new men: when Vivani nurses it, “The people were grinning at her too as if they felt the strange, tugging mouth, as if in spite of them there was a well of feeling opened in love and fear. They made adoring and submissive sounds, reached out their hands, and at the same time they shuddered... at the too-nimble feet and the red, curly hair” (p. 231). More surprising is the kinship with Lok that Tuami reveals, both in his weakness and in his confusion. Though he hates Marlan, he needs to turn to his chief for comfort as well as for stability (pp. 227-29). And he repeatedly betrays his confusion, intellectual—“He tried to perform a calculation in his aching head, tried to balance the current, the wind, the dug-out but he could come to no conclusion” (p. 224)—and moral: “I am like a pool, he thought, some tide has filled me, the sand is swirling, the waters are obscured and strange things are creeping out of the cracks and crannies in my mind” (p. 227). Clearly his self-awareness does put him on a moral plane rather different than Lok’s; nevertheless, though Tuami constantly seeks to excuse the terrible deeds of the new men, he can acknowledge the evil of his world—and potentially, I think, of himself—in a way that ties him closely to us, however endearing we have found Lok’s innocence:

He had hoped for the light as for a return to sanity and the manhood that seemed to have left them; but here was
dawn—past dawn—and they were what they had been in the gap, haunted, bedeviled, full of strange irrational grief like himself, or emptied, collapsed, and helplessly asleep. It seemed as though the portage of the boats . . . 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, hopeless, dirty. (pp. 224–25)

But Golding’s most dramatic association of the new men with the Neanderthal people and of Tuami with Lok in the final chapter occurs in that brilliantly conceived and wonderfully ironic passage where Tuami—rebuked by the mother of Tanakil for his part in offering the girl to “devils” who “have given . . . back a changeling”—looks to Marian for support and sees a figure whose details duplicate the details of the Neanderthal-like figures that the new men themselves have drawn when making their offerings to the “forest devils” (pp. 199, 215):

The sand was swirling in Tuami’s brain. He thought in panic: they have given me back a changed Tuami; what shall I do? Only Marlan is the same—smaller, weaker but the same. He peered forward to find the changeless one as something he could hold on to. The sun was blazing on the red sail and Marlan was red. His arms and legs were contracted, his hair stood out and his beard, his teeth were wolf’s teeth and his eyes like blind stones. The mouth was opening and shutting.

“They cannot follow us, I tell you. They cannot pass over water.” (p. 229)

In his confusion and “panic,” Tuami again resembles Lok (for instance, the Lok who, feeling strangely changed and
cut off when he follows the track of the new men, needs to reestablish his identity through mingling with his own kind). He is like Lok, too, in apparently not grasping the significance of what he sees, just as Lok has "never seen any thing like" the figure he observes (p. 199)—although, ironically, Lok later thinks of the figure as "some kind of man" (p. 215). But for us, the significance and irony of the present passage are overwhelmingly plain: it makes of Marlan—and the statement is morally true of Homo sapiens—the monstrous and evil creature that the new men have imagined Neanderthal man to be. And there is a further irony in the very limitation of the new men here, though their ignorance itself may also draw us to them: Tuami yearns toward "the changeless one" but finds a Marlan temporarily transformed; Marlan declares that the forest devils "cannot follow us," yet he himself has just been represented as one, and of course the new men are bearing away with them the baby of the devils.

The significance of this passage and its ironies prepare us to understand at last the full sense of Golding's title. For it is only a part of the truth that the title supplies a simple ironic commentary on Homo sapiens, who has exhibited anything but the meekness requisite for inheriting the earth. The new men are indeed inheritors, inheritors of their terrifying experience with the Neanderthal people. The experience persists in the continuing fears of them all, in their ambiguous reactions to the baby they take with them, in the reality of the mad Tanakil's possession by the memory of Liku—even in that vision of Marlan, though Tuami does not comprehend the fact, which links the chief with Neanderthal man. And the fundamental irony is that the new men have generated this experience out of themselves, have been driven by their fears and cruelty to re-create the Neanderthal people in their own inhuman—or all-too-human—image. Surely
Tuami's repeated mention of the change which his people have passed through in their exposure to the Neanderthal tribe is Golding's way of suggesting that the new men have themselves undergone a Fall of sorts in the course of the novel:

Tuami, his head full of swirling sand, tried to think of the time when the devil [the baby] would be full grown. In this upland country, safe from pursuit . . . but shut off from men by the devil-haunted mountains, what sacrifice would they be forced to perform to a world of confusion? They were as different from the group of bold hunters and magicians who had sailed up the river . . . as a soaked feather is from a dry one. Restlessly he turned the ivory in his hands. What was the use of sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world? (p. 231)

But their fall, unlike the fall in which we have seen Lok and Fa involved, is engendered by themselves.

In what I have said about the guilt of the new men, I do not wish to minimize their human appeal in these final pages, an appeal I have been trying to stress. In fact, their guilt itself probably helps us to identify ourselves with them. But, as in the case of our last view of Lok, Golding refuses to sentimentalize the new men. To be sure, Tuami stops sharpening the ivory; the new men shriek with laughter at the antics of the Neanderthal baby; and Tuami can sense, in the juxtaposition of the baby's "rump" and Vivani's "head," that the two things somehow go together "and made a shape you could feel with your hands. They were waiting in the rough ivory of the knife-haft that was so much more important than the blade. They were an answer . . . ." (p. 233). But
this "answer" retains all the ambiguities of the new men: the "rump" strikes them as "ridiculous" yet "intimidating," and the "love of the woman" is both "frightened" and "angry." All through the chapter, any lingering manifestation of the Neanderthal people has called forth the terrors of the new men: even the sound of the falling ice that signals to us the entombing of Lok leaves Marlan "crouched, making stabbing motions at the mountains with his fingers, and his eyes were glaring like stones" (p. 232). For us, the last speech in the novel—Marlan's reassurance to his people that they are safe because the Neanderthal men "live in the darkness under the trees" (p. 233)—is shot through with irony, not only because they have the baby with them, but because we have already heard Tuami speculate that they may be compelled to offer some "sacrifice" in the future "to a world of confusion." And in the last words of the book, Tuami looks towards the shore to which the new men must sometime come, and "he could not see if the line of darkness had an ending" (p. 233). It is the triumph of The Inheritors that Golding, after so highlighting the qualities of Homo sapiens by exhibiting him to us via the perspective of Neanderthal man, yet compels us finally to take these new men to ourselves in all their unpleasantness and so to experience once more what we are as human beings.

1. I shall give page references to The Inheritors, A Harvest Book (New York, 1962).

2. It is a critical commonplace that, in The Inheritors, Golding reverses the attitudes towards Neanderthal man and Homo sapiens expressed by H. G. Wells in The Outline of History, just as Lord of the Flies reverses the thesis of Ballantyne's The Coral Island. To my knowledge, Peter Green was the first to point out—in "The World of William Golding," reprinted in A Source Book, pp. 170–89—the rela-
3. While we know Lok more intimately than anyone else because we see so much of what happens along with him, Fa is the most rounded character among the rest of the Neanderthal people and displays an appealing sympathy herself. It is true that she dominates the less imaginative Lok after the death of Mal, superintending, among other things, their crossing of the river to reconnoiter the island: even in this incident, however, she is humanized by her terror of the water (she makes Lok go on the log first), though she later brags that she has not made the noise he did in his fear (p. 125). Golding emphasizes the intensity of her love for the baby by her reaction on discovering that Vivani has milk in her breasts to feed the captured new one, for Fa simultaneously laughs and weeps, overjoyed that the baby will not starve even while she grieves—"as though she were bearing the pain of a long thorn in her side" (p. 152)—for the loss of the child. The most dramatic instance of Fa's sympathy for Lok is her concealing of Liku's death, a decision that turns out, ironically, to be as big a blunder as anything Lok does in their inept efforts to rescue their own from the new men.

4. Although Frank Kermode is one of Golding's strongest supporters and most intelligent critics (see "The Novels of William Golding," reprinted in *A Source Book*, pp. 107-20) he seems to me off target, if I read him correctly, when he writes of *The Inheritors*, "And at the end we abruptly leave Lok; suddenly, with a loss of sympathy, observe him with our normal sight, joining the new men, our own sort" (p. 115). If he feels a "loss of sympathy" for Lok in the pages under discussion, as opposed to the final chapter of the novel, I think their actual effect quite the reverse, a heightening of sympathy.

5. James Gindin finds that in this last chapter the "theme does not change," that "the 'gimmick,' the switch in point of view, merely repeats what the rest of the novel has already demonstrated" and so "breaks the unity" of the book "without adding relevant perspective" (*A Source Book*, p. 135). I suppose one might argue that the closing chapter provides no new intellectual perspective on the book's theme, but certainly it engages us in a new emotional perspective and thus proves the theme, as it were, on our pulses. James Baker, in his discussion of *The Inheritors*, appears often to aim at qualifying the contrast between the Neanderthal people and the new men; but, when he sums up the effect of the whole book, he seems to me to overlook the
full working of the last chapter and to insist that the contrast between
the two groups is unqualified: "We find in The Inheritors the traits of
each species frozen in a radical contrast which sustains the allegory but
threatens the illusion of reality" (p. 29). Bernard Oldsey and Stanley
Weintraub—in The Art of William Golding (New York, 1965)—sense
what is going on in the final chapter, for they declare that "it accom­
plishes in respect to the life and problems of Tuami's tribe what the
first two hundred-odd pages do for Lok's tribe" and refer later to "a
dualistically sympathetic reading of the novel" (pp. 65, 69). But I
cannot discover in their summaries precisely how the last chapter
operates to affect the reader. And I find their suggestion that the story
is somehow about "the artist" and their talk about the "point" of the
novel very confusing (pp. 68-70)—as confusing as their suggestion of
Conrad and Hueffer's Inheritors as some kind of source for Golding's
book, or their statement that "The Inheritors is a subtle dramatization
of the very technique by which the novel is accomplished. Golding here
stands as something of an overseer, the reader as inter-seer, Tuami a
medial-seer, and Lok, the father of us all, a base-seer" (p. 70).

6. Peter Green has pointed out that the fall of Lok and Fa is a
"blazingly heretical version of the Paradisal legend," that "it is Man
himself whom Golding identifies with the Serpent, and who tempts Lok
to eat of the Tree of Knowledge" (A Source Book, p. 180). But he
does not add explicitly that, according to the indication of the novel,
Homo sapiens has also accomplished his own fall, though Green does
insist that in this book "it is humanity, and humanity alone, that
generates evil" (p. 178).