



## **The Double Tongue**

*William Golding*

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*The Double Tongue* is William Golding's last and perhaps most superbly imaginative novel. It is a fictional memoir of an aged prophetess at Delphi, the most sacred oracle of ancient Greece, just prior to Greece's domination by the Roman Empire. As a young girl, Arieka is ugly, unconventional, a source of great shame to her uppity parents, who fear they'll never marry her off. But she is saved by Ionides, the High Priest of the Delphic temple, who detects something of a seer (and a friend) in her and whiskers her off to the shrine to become the Pythia - the earthly voice of the god Apollo. Arieka has now spent a lifetime at the mercy of a god, a priest, and her devotees, and has witnessed firsthand the decay of Delphi's fortunes and its influence in the world. Her reflections on the mysteries of the oracle, which her own weird gifts embody, are matched by her feminine insight into the human frailties of the High Priest himself, a true Athenian with a wicked sense of humor, whose intriguing against the Romans brings about humiliation and disaster. This extraordinary short novel, left in draft at the author's death in 1993, is a psychological and historical triumph. Golding has created a vivid and comic picture of ancient Greek society as well as an absolutely convincing portrait of a woman's experience, something rare in the Golding oeuvre. Arieka the Pythia is one of his finest creations. Left in draft at the author's death in 1993, this extraordinary short novel is a psychological and historical triumph. An aged prophetess at Delphi, the most sacred oracle in ancient Greece, looks back over her strange life as the Pythia, the voice of the god Apollo. Golding was the author of *Lord of the Flies*, and a Nobel Laureate.

## The Double Tongue Details

Date : Published October 1st 1999 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (first published 1995)

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Author : William Golding

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## From Reader Review The Double Tongue for online ebook

### Queirosiana says

"Arieka, a Pítia, é um retrato convincente da experiência de uma mulher, coisa rara na obra de Golding, constituindo uma das suas melhores criações."

Trouxe este livro da biblioteca por acaso ... e simplesmente porque na capa dizia "Prémio Nobel" ... estava desesperada e nenhum livro me chamava à atenção e pensei ... se o autor ganhou um Nobel é porque tem de ser Muito Bom, agarrei no livro e requisitei-o. Bendita a hora em que o fiz!

Adorei o livro do princípio ao fim.

Mas tenho de admitir que algumas partes me passaram ao lado, não que não me tenha esforçado por entender, simplesmente não comprehendia ... preciso de mais 'background' literário!

Penso que percebi a história ... uma rapariga dos tempos em que a Grécia era a Grande Civilização, torna-se no Oráculo de Delfos.

É muito interessante, porque ela (Araeka) vai mostrando um pouco da discriminação das mulheres na altura e da Magnificiênciade toda a Civilização Grega.

Torna-se numa Pítia, uma mulher que é Oráculo, que é uma espécie de intermédio dos Deuses para falar com os Mortais, embora na história percebemos que isso não passa de uma falsidade. Iódines, Sacerdote de Apolo, acompanha Araeka e ensina-lhe tudo acerca do Oráculo, e como a Pítia não fala directamente com as pessoas, ele, Iónides, transmite o que a Pítia houve dos Deuses, no fundo, inventa o que convém ...

Ou seja, acabei o livro e achei que tudo aquilo era falso, uma junção de interesses, que não existiam deuses a quem recorrer, Araeka sente isso, diz que há um 'vazio' que os deuses lhe viraram as costas e no fim, já ela se conformou, já não lhe importa que Iónides invente as profecias ... Iónides acaba por morrer demente.

No fim, Araeka, pede para que quando ela morra não lhe façam nenhuma estátua (como era costume fazerem às Pítias) que lhe façam simplesmente uma lápide e escrevam "ao Deus Desconhecido".

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### Bogdan says

It was a nice idea to make a novel about how ancient priests and priestess were feeling and thinking. Too bad that the novel is not finished, because I am sure it had addition charm. This way the novel is interesting, but nothing more.

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### Callista Hunter says

I was going to give this book 4 stars, as it has clearly been published as a first draft and could have achieved

greater things if Golding had gotten the chance to revise and develop it.

However, even though it hasn't reached its full potential, to me it is a five-star book. It is still going to be one of the best books I will read in 2015.

I was deeply impressed with the sensitivity and empathy Golding showed when writing in the voice of a young girl. This book is really about womanhood, and its contradictions, challenges and heartbreaks. There are some beautiful ideas in it that are unforgettable. Most predominant is the theme that women are "prized, but not rewarded" for their qualities, such as their beauty or virginity.

I'm still turning the book over in my mind and expect it will reveal some new insights to me as I continue to think about it. I highly, highly recommend it.

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### **Stasha says**

On one hand it's almost hard to believe this book is just a first draft, on the other I'm sure it would have felt more complete had Mr Golding revised it, but I'm still not too convinced I would have enjoyed it more than I did. It was nice to learn about the oracle and history and mythology surrounding it, but I didn't like either of the two main characters Arieka and Ionides, and Golding's inner monologue as Arieka just wasn't my cup of tea (especially in the beginning).

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### **Col says**

As Golding's last book, it's interesting that he tried something he'd never done before with a female protagonist. Supposedly Golding's later drafts were typically quite close to the final product, but this book feels quite thin, like there's a lot of depth that's there if only it were explored a bit. I got a good sense of Arieka's personality, but only a little bit of Ionides. Given the autobiography format, I guess that's asking a bit too much. This is one of those circumstances where you can't help but wonder how things would have turned out if Golding had a little more time. Overall, not my favourite, but well worth my time as a little melancholy sketch of an unusual woman in ancient Greece.

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### **Tar?k ?ah?m says**

Oldukça etkileyici bir Antik roman haline gitirilmiş, son derece güzel kurgulanmış???. Ba?ar?l? bir eser oldu?unu dü?ünüyorum. Tavsiye ederim.

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### **The Idle Woman says**

Charming and light, with a very engaging narrative voice - but this novel was left unfinished at Golding's death and it shows it. Disjointed and brief, it feels like a sequence of vignettes and an experimentation in character rather than a full-fledged novel. Having said that, there's still a lot to enjoy here.

For a full review please head over to my blog:  
<https://theidlewoman.net/2016/06/10/t...>

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### **Christopher Law says**

I heartily recommend this. It is an early draft - Golding died - but it hangs together brilliantly.

Some rudimentary knowledge of the Classical world helps, because Golding was a show-off.

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### **Yavuz says**

Bilinmeyen Tanrı?ya....

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### **Cans?n says**

Kitab?n mizahi ve ironik dilini çok be?endim. Fakat tamamlanmam?? olmas? nedeniyle baz? yerler çok üstünkörü anlat?lm?? gibi geldi. Yine de zevkli bir okuma oldu benim için. Özellikle eski Yunan arkaplan?nda bir kad?n karakterin de konumunun tüm ç?plakl???yla anlat?lmas? çok ilgi çekiciydi.

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### **Giada says**

It took me a while to write this review down, as I have mixed feelings about this novel.

I found "The Double Tongue" at a second-hand bookshop in Glasgow and, since I loved Golding's "Lord of the Flies" to the point that I literally devoured it in a couple of days, I just decided to buy it and give it a go. I didn't read any reviews nor opinions, I just blindly followed my heart.

The plot is pretty simple: Arieka, a bright young Greek lady, is recruited by the Delphi temple to become the new Pythia, the most famous oracle in the ancient Greece.

What I found in the "Lord of the Flies", its simple yet stunning narration and depth, can't be found in The Double Tongue: the narration is a mixture between an autobiography and a stream of consciousness, the vocabulary is difficult and intricated and sometimes it's hard to follow the flow of thoughts the author expresses via Arieka's narration. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as I think it is important for the reader to challenge his/her reading skills, however in this case I arrived to the last page of the novel with a sense of disorientation: I couldn't quite grasp what the story was about and what was its point.

I took some months to re-elaborate the book and I came to this conclusion, which is genuinely mine and not supported by any academical research nor web article or review (which I didn't read anyway). This book is about two main topics: the identity of women, and in particular the lack of autodetermination possibilities for this side of the gender battle, and the complete absence of the divine, in a climax of pure disenchanted materialism.

### [Women identity and autodetermination]

In the character of Arieka, we see a young and pure woman struggling with her identity: as a child, she didn't quite grasp why she was treated differently from the opposite sex, as she couldn't even understand the differentiation between genders in the first place; growing up, she somehow accostums her behaviour towards a pre-determined scheme her parents want her to fit into.

She understands she needs to be silent and obedient but, above all, she learns the hardest way she is not the master of her own fate: her attempt to escape from the marriage her father decided for her ends in failure, and she is brought back home where, according to the ancient Greek's costumes, she is refused for being a rebel and lascivious woman.

It's Ionides Peisistratides, a deeply eclectic character, who saves Arieka from her family's and society's neglect: being the high priest of Apollo at the temple of Delphi, and being also Arieka's father friend, he adopts her and bring her to Delphi with the promise of making her the new Pythia, priestess of Delphi and oracle. Arieka can't discuss this decision and she can only obediently agree with what the men of her life decide for her.

Becoming the new Pythia, Arieka feels like she can finally express herself as an oracle: she actively looks for the Gods' presence and tries really hard to deliver their message to those who are looking for answers, but even in this circumstances she can't achieve her goals, as the Gods won't speak to her and Ionides would provide her with the right words to use when oracling.

### [Absence of the divine]

Arieka is a genuine person, she is both curious and pious, however her life is riddled with experiences that bring her to a complete disenchantment: all her attempts to look for the Gods and to hear their voices fail miserably.

The lack of a spiritual response to the protagonists' daily struggles as both a woman and an independent thinker have a big impact on her soul and body: where, being a woman in ancient Greece, Arieka can't express her thoughts and pursue her desires, where she is looking for answers or to give answers to others, the divine stays silent, shutting at least any kind of hope or belief in both spiritualism and human society.

The final picture the reader gets from these elements and from the feminine voice so well expressed by Golding's narration is a crude one: there's no hope for women, in such a society, to find their dimension following their vocations in the case those fall outside of the role society has depicted for them.

A quite difficult novel to get through, above all if you are not a native English speaker, but which never fails to give loads of food for the mind to linger on.

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### **Naia Pard says**

Cartea asta nu ar fi trebuit să vadă lumina tiparului. Nu pentru că nu ar fi *bun*?, ci pentru că nu a apucat să fie „binecuvântat?” de către autorul ei. Nu e terminată. E că o casă cu fundația abia uscată, cu acoperișul încă urcat pe schele. Te-ai muta într-o astfel de casă în mijlocul lui ianuarie? Eu nu.

William Golding a murit înainte să aplice să-ri aducă carte la nivelul de „prezătit pentru editură”. Mi se pare aproape că îl cărează să sanctifice că dintr-un autor care lucrarea să publicarea să fie ca William să poată ajunge să-ri să fie bun de la ea. Că mai rău este că motivele sunt prea puține pentru a fi credibile.

William Golding devenise încă din timpul vieții cunoscut, datorită romanului *Împăratul Muntelor*, iar această publicare post-mortem sugerează, printre altele, disperarea unei recunoașteri, ce nu aparținea

autorului ci a celor persoane ce aveau de căzut ceva de pe urma lui și care clar au pus mai presus folosurile decât respectul memoriei sale.

## Con?inut

*Dublu limbaj* e neterminat?. E o c?rticic? chiar bun? de parcurs dac? cineva e interesat s? urm?reasc? cum se dezvolt? un manuscris, o prim? încercare în scriere a ceva, în care autorul î?i întinde ideile în cuvinte ca ceea ce îi e în cap s? poat? apar?ine mediului palpabil, în cerneal? ?i hârtie ( în cazul lui; a scris ?i a tr?it pe la mijlocul secolului al XX lea) capabil apoi s? fie trecut prin filtrul edit?rii ?i a altor modific?ri de genul.

Cartea este o relatire la persoana întâi a preotesei lui Apollo pe nume Arieka ( care în greacă se spune că înseamnă mică sau lăbatică?). Aceasta iubea undeva prin anii de graie a imperiului roman când Iulius Caesar deja începea să întrучipeze o legendă vie, iar Grecia împlinea câteva decenii de când îngenunchiașe în fața romanilor. Arieka își povestea viața, de mică fată în casa patrinilor ei, până la drumul parcurs spre a deveni preoteasă în templul lui Apolo și mai mult de atât, devenind Prima Doamnă a oracolului din Delphi (prin ea ajungeau să vorbească zeii).

Sun? bine, nu? Plus, în carte se men?ionează? câteva gânduri despre menstrua?ie (atât de rar întâlnit subiect mai ales în c?r?ile scrise de autori b?rba?i pe la mijlocul secolului trecut) ?i ceea ce înseamn? s? fi o fat? în acele timpuri. Tocmai pentru c? aceast? carte promite atât de multe apare ?i frustrarea în leg?tur? cu publicarea ei. Lumea nu a pierdut atât prin faptul c? nu avea aceast? carte pe cât a pierdut din cauz? c? povestea Ariekei nu ?i-a putut atinge adev?ratul poten?ial. Simt regret pe vârful limbii, iar gingeile îmi apas? amarul între obrajii. Aici apar teme precum, dezr?d?cinarea, c?derea unei lumi, dezbinarea unei culturi, pierderea de idoli ?i multe altele ce ar fi putut cu siguran?? fi dezvoltate întru ?i spre adev?rata înflorire.

De ce m? plâng? Cât de r?u chiar poate fi?

Nu ?tiu pe c?at de cunoscut e termenul de *pimp* ?n rom?an?, dar sugereaz? un om (de obicei b?rbat) care e „managerul” unui grup de prostitute care trebuie sc?rit dea la sf?ritul zilei o cantitate din banii c?atig?i. Un proxenet, dac? se cuvine asocierea. Tipul ?sta pe nume Ionides face ce nu face ?i de fiecare dat? c?nd apare nu m? pot g?ndi c? nu ar fi unul.

## Concluzie

A? citi altceva în timpul în care ia s? fie parcurs? *Dublu limbaj.*

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### **Jordan Louks says**

This book has a really interesting premise. And there are moments in it where I could see the potential of something really poignant. But, unfortunately for me, this book was not spectacular. Some of the themes in the book are really good, such as looking at the patriarchal oppression of women, questioning the meaning of life and wondering whether or not there is God. But there are other books that look at these themes in better ways. Of course, they are not set in Greece, but this book just did not sit right with me. I know that it is posthumously published and it was not completely finished, but it was still hard to get into it. There were parts where I could get into it, and the writing was not as stiff as in other parts. The main character Arieka also seems to act very strangely at some points. I am not a woman, but I do not think women think like that normally. Also, the only character development of one of the other Pythias is that she is fat and old and disagreeable. So, I think Golding needed to do some work on writing female characters. There is also a rape in this, which was kind of, basically, unnecessary to have, because unless I missed something, it did not really matter for the plot or Arieka's character development. It just happens. And I know there are stories about Greek gods having relationships, consensual and otherwise, with human beings. But this subject was definitely not written well by Golding in this book, in my opinion. So... the rape scene was just there. Also, I do not really know what the point of this book was. If it was a look at patriarchal oppression of women, then it was okay. And I could see where the book might have gone if Golding had not died. But I just finished the book wondering what I was supposed to gain from it. And maybe I was not supposed to gain anything and that was the point. Arieka lived her life like this, and there is no point to anything. Just a reflection from Arieka about what it means to live a human life and how she was lucky to get out of living as a man's wife in ancient Greece. Writing this review, now I think that this book could have been good with some of the themes that it has. But it just was not, at least in my opinion.

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### **Rachel says**

Really interesting concept, although it was only a first draft

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### **Karen says**

This book did feel a bit incomplete and unfinished. Because it was incomplete and unfinished. Because the author died before he had a final manuscript. In spite of that, this book is brilliant.

First he gives an incredibly sympathetic portrait of a young girl. Then he perfectly portrays that young girl becoming the Pythia. And finally, through the narrative, of a believing woman who was used by the gods.

I have read this book at least four, probably five times, and every time I read it, I pick up on something new. The manuscript may just be a sketch, but it is a sketch by a master. And every time I read this book, I want to go back and re-read C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*.

