Stefan Alidini[*]
Faculty of Philology
University of Belgrade
Serbia

THE MASCULINE CODE: STRUCTURES OF MASCULINITY
IN WILLIAM GOLDING'S *LORD OF THE FLIES*

Abstract

The paper presents a reading of William Golding's *Lord of The Flies* from the perspective of masculinity. The introduction provides a brief overview of the history of men's studies and its various fractions in relation to literature and similar theoretical approaches (feminism, gender studies, etc.). The analysis centres on examining behavioural patterns, cultural practices and the deeper psychological matrix embedded in the novel. Tracing the cultural and anthropological patterns of masculinity – through characterisation, motivation, dialogue and style – also represents an attempt to expound on the dominant literary quality of the novel, rather than a denunciation of any supposed cultural prejudice. From this vantage point, Golding's novel emerges as a nuanced and masterful analysis of the problems central to contemporary masculinity.

Key words: men's studies, masculinities, masculine mode, feminism, British novel

1. Approaching masculinity

Masculinities are a broad field, with a complex background dating back to the late seventies, and still struggling to break out as a fully independent discipline. Theories of collectivity, gender studies, social and developmental psychology, psychoanalysis, feminism, numerous social hierarchical aspects of gender relations, and much more are included among the branches of study. To complicate things further, one scholarly survey listed no fewer than eight different "perspectives" of masculinity studies, ranging from pro-socialist, African-American to contemporary evangelist viewpoints (Horlacher 2011: 10–11)[2]. Roughly speaking, the field, as it stands today, can be grouped into four camps. One group, comprised mainly of radical feminists, seeks solutions to "the man problem" – to invoke the title of just one invective (Honeywill 2016) – and wants to debunk the myriad ways in which cultural artefacts integrate mechanisms of masculine repression. The goal – to make transparent the impulse for

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[*] PhD candidate, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Studentski trg 3, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia; e-mail: stefan.alidini@gmail.com

[1] Given that this is a rapidly developing field, this article will only expound on those aspects of masculinities that broach literary studies, and thus have some bearing on Golding's novel.

hegemony one is told is inherent in masculinity (Leverenz 2014; Brod 2011: 22–24) and thus contribute to the alteration of the structure of modern consciousness. The second group, called "mythopoetic", seeks to undermine such goals by reverting, or helping men rediscover their true masculine potential, inherent in archetypal categories since time immemorial. Barring feminist and anti-feminist radicals, one is left with a medley of wildly different approaches employing the social sciences in an attempt to sketch a broader context in which psychological, social, and philosophical notions are naturalised, and then transposed into culture, and hence, literature. They are, in truth, no more than synchronous and asynchronous approaches to the same issue, where one is more beneficial to criticism, and the other to history. What the radical currents have in common, however, is their negative dialectic and a need to uncover mechanisms of social power, with an unyielding belief that their discoveries will explain away the literary text. The impulse towards explanation through extrinsic data, even if coifed in description rather than proscription, invokes nineteenth-century positivist poetics.

When applied to the field of literature, even middle-ground theories of the masculine involve deeply conflicted positions, insofar as they involve diverse aspects of what is, and is not considered artistic, and the part fiction plays in constructing or determining social relations. Political projects aimed at deconstructing models of masculinity most often view fiction as a substrate of some broader issue, or a reflection of poor social relations. In such approaches, literature is valued only through its political dimension[2], and the principal value then becomes its emancipatory potential, though rooted firmly in the perspective of the one performing said evaluation (Horlacher 2011: 4).

The extrinsic approach to the study of the masculine is based mainly on a notion of the social impact of literature, with various hegemonic, ideological, and other totalising[3] theoretical models accounting for much of the difference. The consensus of such positions seems to be that masculinity is simply one in a range of adoptable formative practices (Horlacher 2011: 3). The thesis of "hegemonic masculinity" is

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[2] Consider the following: "In the twenty-first century there is a place for ideology, for religion, for history, for global, modernist corporations. But only men and women who understand there is life after modernity [and postmodernity] will lead those legacy models to success. They will be the ones who understand that the world has changed irrevocably, who grasp the need to either embrace the new pluralism or be locked forever in the sanitised straightjacket of structural purism" (Honeywill 2016: 126).

[3] In this case, "totalising" refers to the potential or pretension of many contemporary theories towards creating a universal system capable of explaining relations in practically every sphere of human action. In that sense, Marx's class theory, and Althusser's hypothesis on the effects of ideology or Foucault's reification of history from the standpoint of social power comprise a philosophical platform that fuels much of contemporary scholarship. Each in its way, these theories wish to define human existence ranging from the intimate feelings of individuals, their distinct cultural creations, all the way to large-scale geopolitical shifts.

among the best-accepted concepts within masculinity studies (Horlacher 2011: 7). It is based on the ideas of Raewyn Connell on the social and psychological production of masculinity, similar to gender adoption: one is attuned to the masculine through culturally affirmed social practices. Hence, one can have working-class masculinity, businessman masculinity, sports' masculinity. Race, class, education, and the environment all play essential parts in the process, but not biology. The "hegemonic" part of the concept refers to using such practices as value judgement criteria (Connell 2005: 34–36).

While such distinctions are undoubtedly useful in a theoretical framework, the contentious nature of theorising hegemony necessitates bringing up the issue of intent, though the matter is rarely discussed, and scrutinised only with great reluctance. Even if one were to acknowledge the existence of hegemonic structures within western culture, that would still say nothing of the possibility of there being any structure without the dangers of some hegemony. Then one would be forced to acknowledge that all hegemonies are evil and that no hegemonic practice is worse than any other. If this is true, then any project of social engineering that employs hegemonic mechanisms is as bad, if not worse, than "authentic" masculine hegemony. There is nothing positive about naturalised prejudices of the inherent, inescapable yet contradictory racism of white men (Roediger 1999: 241), just as there is no stock to the myths of the natural emotionality of women. When bandied about, they are both equally dangerous and damaging to the intellectual credibility of those holding such views. The study of masculinities thus holds some responsibility for constituting a new hegemonic cultural pattern that has proven much more pernicious than a simple deconstruction of "male privilege"[4].

The literature speaking of a need to "reconstruct masculinity" walks a thin line between essentialism clothed in lofty idealism, and real insights into the masculine consciousness that opposes essentialising men's identities (Pease 2014: 18). That cross-section of scholarship respects the diversity of homogenous groups and attempts to reconstruct the mechanisms of masculine consciousness. In other words, such an approach has a different theoretical standpoint, cognisant of the unique qualities of diverse cultural situations, and instead strives to understand the phenomena outlined by feminist theory that feminism has not been overly concerned with. Both groups, among other outliers, are considered legitimate practitioners of Men's Studies from their inception. However, beginning with the 21st century, America has seen a response

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[5] It is worth noting that there is great similarity between radical masculinity critics (Honeywill 2016), and the radical mythopoetic proponents of new masculinity (Moore and Gillette 1990). They both employ old archetypes, opaque psychoanalysis and psychology, and ultimately (mis)use literature. Their isolated, essentialist terminology is conspicuous, and their uncritical use of prejudices and dogmatic axiology fall apart under any form of serious scrutiny.

to the more radical feminist approaches, bringing forth questions on the relationship between masculinity and feminist theory. The proponents of Male Studies, the fourth of the aforementioned groups, believe that biological distinctions cannot be ignored, and ultimately believe in the separation of male and female experience. They also believe that the legacy of feminist theory in existing masculinities studies has engendered a systemic suppression of the problems men face as men. The questions raised are those of institutional inequality of young men in higher education, length of life, disease, disability, and suicide rates, as well as male reproductive rights and involvement in war. Modern culture has allowed a kind of misandry that contemporary masculinities wilfully ignore, and Male Studies are there to give an adequate academic response. The American feminist and ethics scholar Cristina Hoff-Summers and her book *The War Against Boys* is one of the better-known examples of this approach (Hoff-Sommers 2000: 13–17).

As evident from this brief summation, the discipline has always been divided, with a dependence on "borrowed concepts", among other things, hindering its development. All groups, among other outliers, are considered legitimate practitioners of either Masculinities, Men's Studies or Male Studies, as even the names themselves reflect the identity crisis of the nascent discipline. By far the smallest cross-section of scholarship respects the diversity of homogenous groups without denying biological constraints and attempts to reconstruct the mechanisms of masculine consciousness on a more transparent level. In other words, such an approach strives to understand many of the phenomena which feminist theory brought to the fore, though no longer necessarily following its conclusions or developing purely feminist frameworks. Literature has been crucial for the understanding of masculinity since the eighties, as epitomised by Peter Schwenger's *masculine mode*. Most interpreters, to be sure, still view literature as a repository of politics, power struggles, or archetypes of masculinity, but some understand that literature can (and does) reshape these concepts according to literary conventions and artistic demands. Many gender constructivist scholars do believe that understanding these literary mechanisms, not condemning them, is the best way towards reshaping gender and other relations. Hence, the main difference between competing ideas of masculinity lies not in truly opposing principles, but in the methods used to accomplish their goals, and the consequences those methodologies have on literary texts. What follows is a mere outline of some of these interpretive possibilities, geared towards comprehending the complexity of the task still before us.

2. Decoding masculine practices

In approaching *The Lord of the Flies* from a theoretical perspective, it is paramount to stress beforehand certain peculiarities of the narrative that might limit

the scope of any coherent interpretation. Golding's novel stems from a rich tapestry of British literature, primarily the adventure novel, as inaugurated by Defoe, and the so-called "school stories" recounting events from the lives of boarding school adolescents, as well as various fairy or fantastic stories. That is why the issue of allegory has been at the centre of debates regarding the value of the novel (Tiger 2008: 137). Regardless of how one chooses to treat the novel's relation to its precursors, it is clear that the subject of allegory remains central for understanding masculinity because it still serves as a link between aesthetic goals and the relationship between the fictional world and society. If this novel can offer any insights into the deeper structures of masculinity, it can do so only with respect to its historical context and tradition, and only subsequently through any overriding theoretical understanding of identity, personality formation, etc. With that in mind, it is worth noting that the situation in the decades preceding and following World War II represents the culmination and demise of an intellectual complex that could not help but leave its mark on the novel, on its plot, themes, and structure. Golding's novel is also significant as a point of style, as the narrative focalisation and rhetoric used throughout elicit the novel's understanding of itself, and such literary devices are seldom used in a neutral or unsymbolic manner. The novel's narrative structure and intrinsic style can serve as a commentary on the historical context. Ultimately, the implications of such a clash between text and context may point towards the potential of this book to transcend the issue of allegory or symbolism, towards a reflection on humanity, and a critique of some patterns of masculinity.

That being said, the novel begins with an almost complete absence of context, which can be inferred, and at best only faintly reconstructed. What is certain – bolstered by a few facts from the plot – is this: a group of boys is stranded on a desert island after their evacuation plane crashes. The plot shows the boys trying to explain the world to themselves as well as the readers. That is how the reader knows that the novel is set in the near future (from the publication date), and infers that the evacuation was initiated because of some nuclear crisis. This is important for at least two reasons. The choice of nuclear war is crucial to understanding the importance of choosing boys as the protagonists and the political implications of the novel. Also, the broader historical context is vital for understanding the full implications of the local context, which envelops a timeframe ranging from imperialism to Cold War policies.

The image of the "imperial man" was constituted in Britain during the second half of the 18th century, and was based on notions of racial superiority, defined through physical, sexual and moral purity, as various gymnastic, scouting and eugenic organisations founded at the time can attest. This image of the masculine was made possible through mechanisms of *externalisation* and *internalisation*: identity was

formed through the exclusion of negative patterns and the adoption of desirable behaviour. The concept of a gentleman was a repository of such ideals and represented its instrument within an imperialist political framework. The gentleman was, in essence, a transitional category that assigned desirable traits (strength, moral fibre, devotion to family, loyalty to King and country, etc.) to a burgeoning middle class. In other words, it was a form of near racial ennoblement of the non-gentry (Beynon 2002: 26–30). That is how a phenomenon that precedes imperialism, like that of the gentleman (Solinger 2012: 17), was co-opted by a different political vision. The gentleman was also partial to the idea of a particular kind of "Englishness" or the constancy of life of the British landowner. This tradition was maintained through a complex mechanism of educational, instructional, social and other practices that institutionalised desire toward the ideal (Solinger 2012: 20–23), and thus, perhaps, rather than enabling an empire, created the kind of masculinity capable of producing it.

World War II was a period of colossal technological progress and unfathomable social turmoil in Western history. Soon after World War I, it became clear that the remnants of imperialism must perish, which was particularly upsetting for the British. The Empire was one of the first in history forced to examine and reshape the basis of its identity. The long-lasting processes that created the imperial man were now being systemically undermined. Golding's novel reflects both these paradigms while maintaining its artistic vision. Hence, one could portray the book as a simultaneous deconstruction and reestablishment of some patterns of male imperialist identity. Golding portrays the ideal of English life by combining it with a Defovian rationalist determinism in the character of Ralph, who becomes the most suitable leader from the cultural and civilisational matrix. The boys, as members of one community, share the same social, educational, and psychological patterns. Because they have become sequestered from the world, they find it natural to create their own, without the capacity to examine principles imparted to them. Consider the sequence of motifs, beginning with Ralph's physical appearance, the manner in which the boys debate early on, and the symbolism of the seashell as a way of giving legitimacy to the speaker – all these elements point to a structured notion in the boys' consciousness, of manhood that they have yet to be initiated into. "You could see now that he might make a boxer, as far as width and heaviness of shoulders went, but there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil" (Golding 2001: 4). This and similar examples represent what some scholars (Solinger 2012: 22–26) describe as the result of long-lasting practices. It takes centuries of literary and social instruction in order for such a sentence to be accepted without recognising its implications. This viewpoint stresses that literature, while gaining a foothold for itself, from Swift and Pope to various forms of etiquette, helped create the foundation that made imperialism sustainable.

However, the plot of this novel deconstructs the potentials of masculine identities. The mere fact that civilisational symbols – fire and shelter – are neglected at the outset, speaks volumes of the incompleteness and alterability of their manhood. Even if civilisation is an obvious consequence of what was later dubbed "hegemonic masculinity", projecting rationalism, harmonious hierarchy, moral and physical purity as the expected and implied behavioural patterns, the plot is structured as a dynamic power struggle followed by transgressions the boys commit in an attempt to "play out" the roles they believe they ought to. The text is filled with markers delineating something that was clearly *taught* and *learnt*:

> Jack broke out of his gyration and stood facing Ralph. His words came in a shout. "All right, all right!" He looked at Piggy, at the hunters, at Ralph. "I'm sorry. About the fire, I mean. There. I—" He drew himself up. "—I apologize". The buzz from the hunters was one of admiration at this *handsome behaviour*. Clearly, they were of the opinion that Jack had *done the decent thing*, had put himself in the right by his generous apology and Ralph, obscurely, in the wrong. They waited for an appropriately decent answer.[5] (Golding 2001: 61)

In that sense, there is particular stress on the exclusory principle of masculine identity, and the need to prove one's worth. Jack chooses to turn the group of boys he controls into hunters. He embodies the masculine potential for violence[6] through his struggle against the Lord of the Flies. It is indicative that "the Beast", which will be identified as the Lord later on, is nothing more than a figment of one of the youngest boys – the first among many mutations of their identity formation processes. It has long since been established (Beynon 2002: 32–33) that the imperialist masculinity complex

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[5] Throughout the quotations in this paper, italics denote our own emphasis. No quotations used here employ italics as part of the original text.

[6] Much has been written of the relation between masculinity and violence, most of it incorrect and unsubstantiated. For example, more recent studies on the interplay between gender and war have proven that the male biological framework holds no specific aptitude towards violence, and that expected emotional responses, such as fear and stress are rampant in war circumstances (Goldstein 2005: 253–57). This reconceptualises the issue of an innate preponderance towards violence allegedly exhibited by males, and presents the task of discovering the predominantly cultural reasons for male participation in aggressive situations throughout recorded history. In this instance, Golding is playing with a cultural concept of masculinity that engenders violent behaviour in spite of the fact that men are not inherently violent. Thus, the concept itself is brought before the reader as an extreme example – if men are not violent, children can only be less so, and any deviation must, then, be attributed to something else. Golding's novel succeeds in making its point through the *otherness* of that process and its incompatibility with the psyche of adolescent children.

functioned through a negative principle, where all the undesirable traits were placed in the "Other" (often identified with the female). The Other, which symbolises everything unknown and frightening about the island, was transformed into "the Beast" in the mind's eye of the young boy. However, the transformation from the unknown Beast to the Lord of the Flies follows the transformation of Jack's troupe and the remaining members of this society.

In portraying the Beast as a means for gaining power, Golding made transparent the devastating destructive potential of imperialist masculine practices – victory at all costs, to maintain honour and purity – and he did so through Jack and Roger. The fact that both perspectives exist, and exist in their genesis and mutual destruction, ensures that neither is understood as an essential category or a natural occurrence. This bolsters the hypothesis of Raewyn Connell, which views masculinity as a process of continuous transformation dependent upon specific cultural and historical circumstances (Flood 2007: 392). In this sense, masculinity in Golding's novel is transformed into a literal performative, with the island becoming a perverse oasis and alternate reality. The pilot's body, uncovered by the boys, represents a moment of crushing reality invading their fantasy, of nuclear disaster and an Armageddon that they cannot fully grasp.

All the boys revert to performing their masculine roles. That masculine hegemony is not uniform, and different proclivities bolster practices that establish different relations (of domination, subordination, alliances, etc.), which is most evident in schoolchildren (Connell 2005: 37–39). This provides insight into the relationships the characters establish. Ralph and Jack are affirmed as leaders, based on the values attributed to them, and the principles that they come to embody: reason and force. From the perspective of gender psychoanalysis, the "heroic model" is nothing more than an attempt to affirm dominant masculine representation in the absence of a nurturing masculine model. That deficiency is compensated by establishing "heroic roles" (Kaftal 2009: 105–106). This explains why the other boys gravitate towards Jack or Ralph, as the senior, most adult persons, as well as Ralph's collapse before the ship's captain at the end. Characters like Piggy, Simon, and Roger are not a part of the dominant masculine pattern and must, therefore, prove their worth and conquer space for a masculine identity of their own. Roger accomplishes this by enhancing his sociopathic tendencies and subordinating himself to Jack. The passive and unimposing Piggy remains shunned until it is discovered that his spectacles are an excellent tool for starting fires. Simon, who is utterly deficient in masculine identity traits, is insofar the ideal and necessary victim.

It is interesting to note that only Simon has the capacity to recognise the true nature of the Lord of the Flies. Piggy fails to do so, as he is far too rational, and represents the intellectual side of the gentleman complex: "Piggy saw the smile and

misinterpreted it as friendliness. There had grown up tacitly among the biguns the opinion that Piggy was an outsider, not only by accent, which did not matter, but by fat, and assmar, and specs, and a *certain disinclination for manual labour*" (Golding 2001: 53). Simon, on the other hand, is often described as "saintly" (Tiger 2008: 149), but still embodies many elements that do not fit the usual pattern, in particular, his understanding of nature. The boy not only sees the truth of the Beast but also comes to the realisation in an almost prophetic revelation. Simon rejects the new behavioural patterns – both rational and tribal – and constitutes himself alone. In a metaphorical sense, only by rejecting the hegemonic pattern does it become possible to communicate with the internal daemon. From the perspective of mythopoetic masculinity, Simon alone manages to cross over from boy to Man, because he manages to emerge as an individual amidst total chaos (Moore and Gillette 1990: 143–145). The prediction of his own murder in an epiphany represents the ultimate act of self-realisation, for it is at that point that it becomes possible to grasp – both narratively and epistemologically – the full scope and tragedy of the transgressions the inherited models were able to produce.

For the other boys, the Beast is an invisible force, shadow, rumour or whisper, yet for Simon, it becomes embodied in a pig's head with flies buzzing around it. In his, and the reader's perception, this becomes a totem of Jack's troupe, before which Simon will be sacrificed. Simon's murder and the murders of Piggy and the sow are marked points of the boys' degenerative process. Everything between these points falls outside the discursive scope of the novel, like the reasons and steps that lead to such events. How is it possible that boys who did not share any particular bond found the strength to commit two murders? The answer might become apparent if one can grasp the nature of that almost non-existent bond. Many studies conducted during the 20th century concluded that there are consistent differences between male and female friendships that transcend age or other markers. What the majority of men appear to be looking for in friendships are adventure, competitiveness, and mutual regard (Sherrod 1987: 216–220). From the Renaissance onward, the structure of Western societies influenced the attitudes within male friendships in a similar way that it affected other behavioural models. Psychological, social, economic as well as sexual factors are always at work, always constructing variations of relationships. Despite not being close in the traditional sense, the practices that coalesce around the boys of Jack's troupe create a special bond, one that might be considered friendly. It is that bond which enables the inherent dynamic within their community, as opposed to those who do not belong to it. That dynamic is what enables the community to degenerate with increasing speed, leading to tribalism and ultimate violence. The society of "ordinary" boys is unable to achieve the same cohesion, being made out of children that are either too young or too individualistic.

Psychoanalysis of masculinity stresses the problem of attaining the masculine ideal (Kaftal 2009: 108–109). Based on this position, one is *initiated* into masculinity, and this status can also be revoked. It is crucial for the maturation stage and personality development to establish a continuity between masculine social impulses and actual relationships. For the vast majority, this involves a process of constant affirmation and continuing initiation. Precisely because the father figure is associated with non-emotional states, these ceremonies become the source of a deep sense of personal identity and a new form of emotional expression. The boys' tribalism represents the beginning steps in forming a distinct masculine pattern and appropriate initiation ceremonies. Those ceremonies quickly begin to impact their behaviour and personality by creating a unique form of "male closeness" (Kaftal 2009: 116). Jack manages to construct a separate masculine identity in opposition to Ralph. Symbolically, it can even signify the father-son relationship. By actively undermining Ralph, Jack is derailing the imperialist masculine identity, offering his pattern as a more acceptable option. However, the naturalised basis remains strong, and force is reason enough for Jack to prove his natural superiority, following imperialist identity politics.

The sow's murder stresses the dual nature of relations within the masculine identity that Jack's troupe is trying to form. In rejecting some aspects of imperialist masculinity, constraints imposed by that same complex were also rejected[7]. It is worth noting that the sow is the only female character in the novel, which makes its murder a symbolically important event. The boys' relation to the sow is neither openly nor subconsciously sexual, yet given the mimetic models that they have adopted, sexual energy must still be released in some way. Hence, the boys' behaviour resembles what René Girard described as a complex of violence and ritual sacrifice (Girard 2005: 4–10). When specific cultural prohibitions cause violence to be internalised over a long period, there is a threat that it will turn on the very society it was designed to protect. The sacrifice is then cathartic and exculpatory, as it preserves the existing hierarchy. The sacred dimension of sacrifice is doubly significant in the context of the novel: it permits the transgression, which is both public and private, a collective initiation that the participants themselves are unable to grasp. Also, it legitimises the feeling of desire. As Girard put it, "Nothing, perhaps, could be more banal than the role of violence in awakening desire" (Girard 2005: 153).

The desire of Jack's troupe is doubly mimetic, based on the legitimisation and directing of the violent masculine identity they are trying to form. The sow that they

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[7] One of the most common issues concerning the history of masculinity is precisely the notion of limitations. Put simply, it is not true that masculinity was universally hegemonic and domineering, as there are many examples where masculine practices did not benefit men themselves, which a proper history of masculinity must take into account. A frequent example is Victorian morality, where it was expected of men to remain married, regardless of how unhappy they were (Filene 1987).

come to sacrifice with chanting, cries, and gesticulations, points to the fact that the significance of the event is a mystery to them as well. Still unaware of the gravity and scope of their released impulses, they sacrifice the sow to the Lord of the Flies and release their latent desire and inner darkness. Nowhere is this initial darkness more apparent than in the thoughts of young Roger:

> Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was *the taboo of the old life*. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. *Roger's arm was conditioned* by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins. (Golding 2001: 52–3)

The ritual transforms the sow into a totem, before which they shall soon bring a human sacrifice. The sow becomes a symbol of everything the boys are not, as well as the object of their desire, substituted with its destruction. The pig, as the only representative of femininity on the island, is lumped together with Simon and Piggy, as the least masculine boys. In the new framework, they are all denounced as weak and worthless entities. The killings of Piggy and the sow are almost a by-product of the new impulses – it is the sacrifice of those that can be sacrificed, for the good of all. The release of impulses, forms of initiation and the production of cultural patterns are followed by the systemic destruction of everything that is weak, deemed impure, foreign, peculiar – from the perspective of identity formation, it is an act of sexual, ritual purification[8]. At the same time, one sees the increasing paranoia, confusion, and delusion: the more the hunters become attuned to their ideal order, the closer they get to their ideal behavioural patterns, the more they seem a grotesque corruption of order.

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[8] The anthropologist Mary Douglas, in her seminal work, *Purity and Danger*, analysed the Book of Leviticus and briefly touched on the pig, the problem of purity and its classifications in Hebrew writings: "We can conclude that holiness is exemplified by completeness. Holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused. Another set of precepts refines on this last point. Holiness means keeping distinct the categories of creation. It therefore involves correct definition, discrimination and order. Under this head all the rules of sexual morality exemplify the holy […] I suggest that originally the sole reason for its [the pig] being counted as unclean is its failure as a wild boar to get into the antelope class, and that in this it is on the same footing as the camel and the hyrax, exactly as is stated…" (Douglas 2001: 54–56). This only goes to show the archetypal status of purity and its ritualistic significance in almost all cultures, ancient and modern alike.

3. Towards a masculine style

The cultural, anthropological, archetypal and psychological backgrounds of the novel are not the only aspects from which one can study masculinity. Aside from these, stylistic patterns of the text and the conditions and assumptions of textual reception also play a key role in understanding masculinity in literature (Knights 1999: 11). While one might claim that these elements are always a part of a broader cultural tapestry, the artistic potential[9] of such texts still presumes using the advantages intrinsic to the form in question. In other words, Golding's novel manages to invoke the masculine using not only the contextual elements previously expounded, but also by using an effective and adequate narrative technique.

Golding employs a range of stylistic devices that are tied to various "masculine narratives" (Knights 1999: 110–125). These are a congregation of themes and preoccupations characteristic of writers such as Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, or Ernest Hemingway. For example, Golding uses the dynamic of observation, marginality, and shifting narrative focalisation in a similar manner to that of Kipling. He also exploits the epic pattern, spinning a yarn of a group of young men that fail spectacularly in their journey towards self-fashioning and constituting their identity amid great hardships (for example, one of the themes of *Moby Dick*). Golding even flirts with the idea of a nuclear disaster and Cold War in order to examine the potential of a renewed male initiation. Here, the masculine narrative is defined through a story of survival, of preserving an identity core under circumstances where men are not where they want to be and do not yet know what to do about it. This type of narrative begs the question – what constitutes a masculine subject, his ability for action and self-actualisation. The masculine narrative always allows a distance, offering the possibility to reach independence from submissiveness. The conclusion of such narratives is mostly the same – from Hamlet's problem, ending in the resolution to act, to Simon, the formation of an imaginative identity disables and passivises.

That is why the implicit subject of masculine texts can always be the formation of masculinity, bringing the matter closer to style. Here, too, Golding shows qualities that link him to masculine authors. By placing his reader among boys, his syntax can

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[9] What I have decided to term "artistic potential" is, in itself, a result of long-ranging processes and institutional and educational practices that determine what can and will later on be recognised as "artistic" or "beautiful". The attitude of such practices towards masculinity is an ambivalent one, in no small part because for decades, if not centuries, the teaching of literature within the humanities was effected before an overwhelmingly female auditorium. One might claim, therefore, that the dominant modes of interpreting the literary phenomenon are not without their gendered baggage. If the majority of interpreters, critics and schoolteachers were and still are – women, what does that say, if anything, of the Western interpretive organon? Is there, one might ask, even a remote possibility of an authentic "masculine interpretation"? (Knights 1999: 34-40)

become straightforward and minimalist, yet retain its textual motivation. The choice of style and phrasing resembles theatrical gestures, and a Brechtian gestus is a notable quality of masculine stylists (Strychacz 2008: 4–5). The gestus involves the observing reader with the boys' world, and the plasticity and suggestiveness of their speech patterns become more than mere characterisation – they become primary devices for critical valuation. One of the first signs that something is wrong with Jack is reflected in his use of language: "For hunting. Like in the war. You know — dazzle paint. Like things trying to look like something else —" He twisted in the urgency of telling. "—Like moths on a tree trunk" (Golding 2001: 52). With such simple dialogue and short sentences, the reader has little opportunity for doubt. A rare occurrence among literary masterpieces, the reader can easily resolve any uncertainties, because the literal meaning is usually the intended one. All the elements around language, however, the non-verbal cues that comprise the gestic, are a pathway to the semantic potential of the novel. In that world, like with Hemingway, the style is realised in its negation (Strychacz 2008: 85–87), entirely subsumed by other elements. That way, even if telling a simple, perhaps even banal and moralistic tale, Golding manages to reflect on tensions and uncertainties tied to the masculine narration of Hemingway.

As Schwenger stated, if at any point the study of the masculine mode is to transcend partisanship, it must contend "with the relation between perceptions (sexual, perhaps, in ways that may not be generally recognised) and *words*". (1989: 622) Although the masculine mode in his definition is not limited to men, he nevertheless interprets mainly male authors, including the oft-mentioned Hemingway. However, he also recognises a more subtle and subversive strain of masculine writing (that of Roth and Jarry), one that can outwardly employ even stylistically effeminate traits while preserving masculinity through some fundamental rejection of expected norms. This subversion does not constitute mere literary play, but is often rooted in one's masculine predicament. In this context, any literary style can be "masculinised" through a typical self-reflexive obsession, no matter how subtle, or how subconscious. At that point, masculine writing reverts into itself, becoming "reflexive, both perceiver and perceived" (Schwenger 1989: 631). Ultimately, there is something hypnotic in the persistence of obsessions in masculine authors, which frequently causes unintended bursts of self-consciousness within literary microcosms. It is possible, perhaps even probable, that Simon is the epitome of such self-consciousness within the novel, raising questions of masculine identity while not being able to transcend his own self-absorbedness. His very existence in the novel can also be a mark of a masculine mode, a testament of the book's external obsession manifested through internal structures. In that way also, Golding's creation can be doubly significant and understood as a (somewhat typically masculine) re-examination of masculinity, with a separate yet co-

dependant framework of meanings embedded in it. Golding seems to show us a path of masculine interplay, a negotiation between masculine self-interpretation as a means of existing in a literary world, the broader concerns at play in the island universe, and the largest possible world that we ourselves inhabit. At each juncture, he seems to offer more than a commentary, and somehow less than a definite statement, which, ultimately, might prove to be the most enduring trait of the masculine mode, as well as the best literary device that masculine writing has so far exhibited.

All of these elements represent a network of pathways that can shed light on aspects of masculine identity. Golding's novel reflects contemporary issues through motif and subject indices but manages to stay relevant both today, and as a meditation upon our past. The visceral quality of Golding's novel lies in his critical eye, rising to the level of an imposing anthropological commentary. That instance, superseding simplistic, narrow-minded and ideological biases, speaks to us still of problems of identity, and complex questions of man's nature. The historical, moral side of these issues is but one more indication of their complexity. The eminence of *The Lord of the Flies* as a literary masterpiece is a testament to our permanent wonderment, to a well-expressed doubt of the phenomena that make us human, which we are still trying to unravel.

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