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Pupil passive, learner active in schooling and the work of fiction: William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

MARTIN BLASZK

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Abstract

In connection with a traditional model of schooling, John Dewey describes the pupil as a "theoretical spectator", someone who absorbs knowledge rather than being involved in experience. The consequence of this, meanwhile, is that the child is often unable to make sense of what she/he is given let alone apply it in the world outside of school. As an alternative to this Dewey puts forward a vision of schooling in which the learner (rather than pupil) is actively engaged in experimentation in the classroom, constantly prompted to understand and give meaning to what she/he is doing. In terms of contemporary schooling these ideas can be related to developmental and social constructivist models which, similarly, place the learner as an active constructor of knowledge, either with or without the help of an adult (teacher).

In the article a brief outline of traditional schooling in contrast to contemporary practices is given. Following on from this, the question as to what extent works of fiction show these models of education in the attitudes and actions of their protagonists is posed. In doing so, a number of events from William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* are considered.

Key words

passive pupil, active learner, traditional schooling, contemporary schooling, fiction, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

Uczeń bierny, uczeń aktywny w edukacji a dzieła literackie: *Władca much* Williama Goldinga

W związku z tradycyjnym modelem nauczania, John Dewey opisuje ucznia jako „teoretycznego widza", kogoś, kto absorbuje wiedzę, a nie angażuje się w doświadczenie. Konsekwencją tego jest to, że dziecko często nie jest w stanie zrozumieć, co otrzymuje, ani zastosować tego w świecie poza szkołą. Jako alternatywę Dewey przedstawia wizję nauki, w której uczeń aktywnie angażuje się w eksperymenty w klasie, nieustannie zachęcany do zrozumienia i nadania znaczenia temu, co robi. Pod względem współczesnej edukacji koncepcje te mogą być związane z modelami konstruktywistycznymi: rozwojowymi i społecznymi, które podobnie przedstawiają ucznia jako aktywnego konstruktora wiedzy, z pomocą lub bez pomocy osoby dorosłej (nauczyciela).

W artykule podano krótki zarys tradycyjnego szkolnictwa w porównaniu z współczesnymi praktykami. Potem pojawia się pytanie, w jakim stopniu dzieła fikcyjne ukazują te modele edukacji w postawach i działaniach bohaterów. Jako przykład posłużyła powieść *Władca much* Williama Goldinga.

Słowa kluczowe

uczeń pasywny, uczeń aktywny, tradycyjna edukacja, współczesna edukacja, fikcja, Władza much Williama Goldinga

1. Introduction

In connection with a traditional model of schooling, John Dewey describes the pupil as a "theoretical spectator", someone

who absorbs knowledge rather than being involved in experience. The consequence of this is that the child is often unable to make sense of what they are given, let alone apply their knowledge in the world outside of school. As an alternative to this, Dewey puts forward a vision of schooling in which the learner (as distinct from pupil) is actively engaged in experimentation in the classroom, constantly prompted to understand and give meaning to what they are doing. In terms of contemporary schooling, these ideas can be related to developmental and social constructivist models which, similarly, place the learner as an active constructor of knowledge, either with or without the help of an adult (teacher).

In the present article, Dewey's description of the pupil is followed by a brief outline of traditional schooling in contrast to contemporary practices. Then a number of events from William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* are considered in a discussion of how the attitudes and actions of the protagonists shed light upon the type of education they received placed in relation to Dewey's conceptions and the application of contemporary practices. In doing so, Golding's own schooling and his role as a teacher are also described.

2. The passive pupil and traditional schooling

In his book *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey, the American philosopher and educationalist, describes how the pupil is involved in the traditional school:

> In school, those under instruction are too customarily looked upon as acquiring knowledge as *theoretical spectators*, minds which appropriate knowledge by direct energy of intellect. The very word pupil has almost come to mean one who is engaged not in having fruitful experiences but in absorbing knowledge directly. Something which is called *mind or consciousness is severed from the physical organs of activity*. The former is then thought to be purely intellectual and cognitive; the latter to be an irrelevant and intrud-

> ing physical factor. The *intimate union of activity and undergoing its consequences which leads to recognition of meaning is broken*. (Dewey 1966: 140)

This also translates into descriptions of traditional schooling (Klus-Stańska 2002: 79-83, Gołębniak 2007: 109) where:

- knowledge comes second-hand, presented as a subject for study divorced and isolated from a real world context (in which case it will most likely be distant and alien to pupils);
- knowledge comes from a source that cannot be questioned, either given by a teacher or presented in a textbook;
- knowledge is (usually) passed on through the spoken or written word;
- pupils accumulate ready-made knowledge, which they then give back (usually through testing) without necessarily having ever experienced it;
- pupils do not have the opportunity to voice, let alone share, their own ideas;
- pupils sit (still) at their desks, face forwards towards the teacher, and (are supposed to) concentrate on the subject at hand;
- there is an emphasis on the cognitive to the negation of the bodily and physical;
- pupils are not challenged to deal with the unexpected, rather there are attempts to eradicate it completely through the stringent adoption of a plan that guides both what the teacher and pupils will do from the first to the last minute of each lesson.

Thus, in Dewey's description of the pupil as well as in that of traditional schooling, the child is a passive subject who does not act but is acted upon and who does not have the chance to actively (physically) engage with and experience knowledge: that is, to deploy it to construct meaning for themselves. Therefore, a cycle of action and reflection that would allow the child to consider the consequences of their involvement and move forward in light of informed decisions is not possible.

3. The active learner and contemporary schooling

In contrast to the above, in Dewey's (1966: 152-163) proposition for education:

- learners are involved in ideas and themes through real-life activities;
- learners construct knowledge through active involvement in activities and events to which they react, leading to further inquiry;
- learners are involved both physically and mentally;
- learners and teachers work in partnership;
- learners put forward and experiment with their own propositions and judgements, forming their own opinions.

In contemporary schooling, meanwhile, Dewey's proposition finds its equivalent in a constructivist paradigm which has two strands: the *developmental constructivist model* and the *social constructivist model*. The former is the more challenging, where, as Klus-Stańska (2009: 61) describes it, "Learning is presented as active and exploratory, as well as independent in terms of the conceptual and decisive construction and reconstruction of the mind's model of reality." It is also a continuous process where both the learner and the teacher are involved, in equal measure, in creating meaning (Klus-Stańska 2009: 61). The other form of constructivism that might be adopted is less demanding on the learner at an individual level and also privileges the teacher as someone who is more knowledgeable, and therefore can help the learner towards understanding. In the social constructivist model

> the child is treated as less independent and self-sufficient than in the developmental-constructivist discourse. His general knowledge, gained without the involvement of adults, through spontaneously initiated and realised experimental procedures, is not enough […] to build accurate or [even] adequate knowledge. From this it follows that a fundamental condition for successful

> learning is with the teacher's support (although not through transmission and instruction). (Klus-Stańska 2009: 66, translation mine)

In the most modern form of social constructivism, meanwhile, the relationship in the creation of meaning (learners-learners; learners-teacher) is one of equals, where a procedure of joint negotiation is emphasised (67-68).

4. Schooling in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

The novel concerns a number of schoolboys who are on a desert island after a nuclear event. The boys are by themselves with no adult guidance or contact with the outside world. The book describes their initial decision to work together as a group to find food and build shelter as well maintain a signal fire with the hope of being rescued. It also describes the island and the boys' interaction with it. At first, the island is seen as a paradise, but this changes as the younger boys and then the older ones grow fearful of an unidentifiable danger which they feel to be a threat to their safety. Gradually, this threat takes on a tangible form as the boys turn on one another. What begins as a series of minor disputes escalates into physical attacks and the violent deaths of two of the boys and the vicious hunt for a third, with the aim of killing him. This descent into barbarity and chaos is only checked by the intervention of adult authority from the outside world.

As can be seen from this brief synopsis, *Lord of the Flies* does not show its protagonists in school, rather, in the first part of the novel[1] references to school are contained in physi-

[1] In their introduction to the Educational Edition of *Lord of the Flies*, Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weekes suggest a three-part structure to the novel. The first part deals with the boys' arrival on the island and decisions about what should be done, so that "Everything contained within this part of the book is contained within law and rule" (Golding 1996: iv). The second part of the book describes the breakdown of this attempt at order, where the fears of the boys start to undermine the system of values they have tried to

cal descriptions of the boys and the ways in which they act. The type of schooling they received is shown through their actions or, in a number of cases, their inaction or unsuccessful action.

To illustrate this, in chapter 1, when the boys gather for their first meeting together, a number of them are described as "more-or-less dressed, in school uniforms; grey, blue, fawn, jacketed or jerseyed. There were badges, mottoes even, stripes of colour in stockings and pullovers" (Golding 1996: 25). Additionally, when the choir and its leader, Jack Merridew are introduced, they are "dressed in strangely eccentric clothing. Shorts, shirts, and different garments they carried in their hands: but each boy wore a square black cap with a silver badge on it. Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks which bore a long silver cross on the left breast and each neck was finished off with a hambone thrill" (1996: 26). The choirboys' entry to the place where the meeting is staged also displays allegiance to the actions and gestures of a strict school regime, as they march in step in two parallel lines and continue to wear their school cloaks even though the heat is overwhelming (1996: 26).

Furthermore, at the second meeting, rules begin to be established for how the meetings should be run, with one of the foremost decisions being that "We can't have everyone talking at once. We'll have to have 'Hands up' like at school" (43). It is also interesting in the pages that follow that the word *assembly* is first used and then predominates over the use of meeting to describe these sanctioned gatherings of the boys; thereby making further reference to a practice in which matters that are of concern to the whole of a school are presented.

The official face of school is not the only one represented in the novel, as there are also hints of the ways in which boys at

implement and follow. In the third part of the novel, "moral anarchy is unleashed" (vi) by the murder of one of the protagonists followed in quick succession by the death of another and the hunt for a third.

school interact amongst themselves. This is strongly evidenced in the initial meeting between Ralph and Piggy, two of the main protagonists, when Ralph first finds out the other boy's nickname:

> "I don't care what they call me," he said confidentially, "so long as they don't call me what they used to call me at school."
>
> Ralph was faintly interested.
>
> "What was that?"
>
> The fat boy glanced over his shoulder, then he leaned towards Ralph.
>
> He whispered.
>
> "They used to call me 'Piggy."
>
> Ralph shrieked with laughter. He jumped up.
>
> "Piggy! Piggy!"
>
> "Ralph – please!"
>
> Piggy clasped his hands in apprehension.
>
> "I said I didn't want – "
>
> "Piggy! Piggy!"
>
> Ralph danced out into the hot air of the beach and then returned as a fighter-plane, with wings swept back, and machine-gunned Piggy.
>
> "Sche-aa-ow!"
>
> He dived in the sand at Piggy's feet and lay there laughing.
>
> "Piggy!" (Golding 1996: 16-17)

In addition to this personal contact, which shows an initial fixing of power relations between Ralph and Piggy, a hierarchy establishes itself through the ways in which the younger boys – "the littluns" – are treated, as well as those who are felt to be different or inferior to the rest of the group: namely Piggy and Simon, who towards the end of the novel both end up dead.[2]

[2] It can be surmised that their deaths are in some way linked to their difference but especially weakness in relation to the rest of the group. Piggy is continuously ridiculed because of his size, but also has problems with asthma which at times leaves him weak or immobilised. Simon is the choirboy who fainted and is noticeably smaller than the main protagonists. Indeed, when he is described, he is said to smile "pallidly" at Ralph (Golding 1996:

Deference to a power structure also shows itself in the boys' constant references to and approbation of the adult world, as a "place" that would supply an authority to confirm or otherwise their decisions and actions. As a result, there is a need for a chief (Golding 1996: 29) and a need for rules (1996: 44), where Ralph with the conch is "a link with the adult world of authority" (1996: 75) to whom the boys as a whole give "simple obedience" (1996: 25). Meanwhile, when things go wrong or start to fall apart at the start of the boys' decline into barbarity, authorities in the shape of adults (teachers) are called upon or fearfully missed as a force that would have the appropriate knowledge and "know the right thing to do". This shows itself a number of times. Here, at the end of the first part of the novel, Ralph, Piggy and Simon are talking:

> "We're all drifting and things are going rotten. At home there was always a grown-up. Please, sir; please, miss; and then you got an answer. How I wish!"
>
> "I wish my auntie was here."
>
> "I wish my father… O, what's the use?" […].
>
> "Grown-ups know things," said Piggy. "They ain't afraid of the dark. They'd meet and have tea and discuss. Then things 'ud be all right ———"
>
> "They wouldn't set fire to the island. Or lose ———"
>
> "They'd build a ship ———"
>
> The three boys stood in the darkness, striving unsuccessfully to convey the majesty of adult life.
>
> "They wouldn't quarrel ———"
>
> "Or break my specs ———"
>
> "Or talk about a beast ———"
>
> "If only they could get a message to us," cried Ralph desperately. "If only they could send us something grown-up…a sign or something." (Golding 1996: 116-117)

29), being "a skinny, vivid little boy, with a glance coming up from under a hut of straight hair that hung down, black and coarse" (1996: 32).

It is interesting too that the character of Piggy, who might be seen as the voice of reason within the discussion decision-making elements of the novel, only rises in Ralph's estimation as Ralph has doubts about the decisions he is making and with this, about his own authority (1996: 95-97). It is as if this element of reflection, of thinking upon the consequences of one's words and actions is something new to Ralph, being "that strange mood of speculation that was foreign to him" (1996: 97). In contrast, Piggy, when he is "active" in the novel is constantly in this mode; he is the voice of reason, or at least common-sense, someone who can "go step by step" (1996: 97) and think through a problem. Ralph, but more especially Jack and the boys he employs to his causes, are not involved in such reflection; even when it comes it is pushed away or denied as something embarrassing or belittling of their own authority. In the discussion of whether or not there is a beast on the island, Jack interrupts the assembly and then denies Ralph his authority, thereby undermining the assembly's power and the possibility of finding a reasonable explanation:

> "And you shut up! Who are you, anyway? Sitting there – telling people what to do. You can't hunt, you can't sing – "
>
> "I'm chief. I was chosen."
>
> "Why should choosing make any difference? Just giving orders that don't make any sense – " […].
>
> "Bollocks to the rules! We're strong – we hunt!" If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat – ." (Golding 1996: 113-114)

The narrator describes the break-up of the assembly:

> He [Jack] gave a wild whoop and leapt down to the pale sand. At once the platform was full of noise and excitement, scrambling, screams and laughter. The assembly shredded away and became a discursive and random scatter from the palms to the water and away along the beach, beyond night-sight. Ralph found his cheek touching the conch and took it from Piggy. (Golding 1996: 114)

This scene would imply that action and reflection is not a model which the majority of the boys, and especially the main protagonists, apart from Piggy, have experienced to any great extent, and certainly not in school. Indeed, Piggy's ability to reflect and suggest action (although significantly, not necessarily to act) seems to be connected with personal situation: he has had an unspecified tragedy in his close family (Golding 1996: 19) and he suffers from debilitating asthma which means: "I been in bed so much I done some thinking" (1996: 116). His ability, therefore, does not result from anything formal education might have given him.

Piggy is also the only protagonist in the novel who is able to mediate a number of different voices. It is he, at the beginning of the novel, who suggests the conch as a way of signalling assembly (1996: 22) and he also creates a space for the "littluns" to give voice to their fears (1996: 46, 105). This is in stark contrast to Jack, who is "the boy who controlled" (1996: 26) his choir and later his hunters, and someone who intimidates Piggy because of his "uniformed superiority and offhand authority in […] [his] voice" (Golding 1996: 28).

In connection with the actions of the boys, there are also two significant and recurring motifs – the need to build shelter and the need to keep a signal fire burning – that show the boys' inability to act, reflect upon what they have done and then act upon the knowledge they have gained, as well as include everyone in a practice of informed action. This lack of success appears to stem from the boys' inability to see actions through to a proper and successful end, as if the influence of the adult world of regulation and order which they try to establish is continuously in conflict with and undermined by the boys' inherent childishness. As a result, whatever the boys do, they end up acting "Like a crowd of kids –" carrying out actions with the "senseless ebullience of children" (1996: 50). This in turn leads to shelters that are shaky or in ruins (1996: 64) and a signal fire that goes out of control and almost en-

gulfs the whole island (1996: 57-60), but then later is allowed to go out at the moment it would have provided a signal of rescue to a passing ship (1996: 82-85).

In light of these failures, it can be speculated that in their schooling there was little opportunity for a type of teaching-learning that allowed the boys to experiment, try out ideas and deal with the consequences of their actions, as in the developmental-constructivist model, or to mediate their ideas with others to reach shared decisions which would then translate into joint and responsible action, as in the social-constructivist model.

There are, however, clear indications within *Lord of the Flies* of the type of schooling which the boys received. It is one in which they had little experience of active inquiry and where reflection upon their actions was not encouraged. Rather, their education encouraged them to be obedient to absolute authority, where the strongest voice or actor is empowered over and above all others.

5. Dewey, the individual and society

The favouring of the (strong) individual over the group – and for group it is appropriate here to write society – is at odds with the more balanced approach that Dewey promoted through his educational theories. Significantly, Dewey's concern for the individual within society forms the basis for his educational-democratic project (Melosik 2007: 311-316). As a result, "the pragmatic philosophy of Dewey can be understood as an attempt at solving the tension between the 'mass integration and individual developmental educational impulses' found in liberal-capitalist societies" (2007: 316; my trans.). Democracy for Dewey is more about the way we live a communal life and less about a form of government, it is "a total way of social life" (Melosik 2007: 316) which also includes respect for the individual. Meanwhile, in terms of education, this holis-

tic viewpoint brings together the form and content of learning, as well as the type of participation expected. It also strongly connects school and society, so that the curriculum includes references to the community with the intention of improving the present existence of the individual and society (Dewey 1966: 191). In such a case, a reciprocal process is set up where "A curriculum which acknowledges the social responsibilities of education must present situations where problems are relevant to the problems of living together, and where observation and information are calculated to develop social insight and interest" (1966: 192).

In practice, this translates into classes where ideas and activities that relate to the outside world are allowed into the school, and where learners are actively engaged through experimentation that requires handling of materials and involvement with other people. Additionally, as Dewey stresses, this possibility for experimentation and contact is not only a means to motivate but also "more real" in relation to the needs of life outside of school. It opens up opportunities for learners to be involved in a form of imagination (and imagining) that is closer to "the medium in which the child lives" (Dewey 1956: 61), rather than the limited use of the imagination that comes when activities are thought up and directed by a teacher. In turn, this gives the child greater insights than mere facts and figures to learn or memorize. It also means that the children are always at the centre of the educational experience, creating meaning for themselves helped by the teacher who ensures that the situations the learners are involved in are meaningful and at an appropriate level.

One can only wonder whether or not the boys' lot on the island might have been different that if they had received an education where the teacher had helped them to formulate questions and then find solutions for themselves. It also begs the question of the type of education the boys actually did receive.

6. Golding the teacher

To gain an idea of the type of education the protagonists in *Lord of the Flie*s might have received, it is appropriate to look at Golding's own educational experience and, indeed, the type of teaching he himself dispensed when he worked as a teacher between 1945 and 1961.

Golding went to Marlborough Grammar School when he was ten years old. It was a segregated school in which Golding did well. Golding's father, Alec, was a teacher at the school, so in terms of the education Golding received, a description of his father's performance is insightful (Carey 2010: 31-32).[3] It shows a person who was dedicated to the practice of teaching, able to engage the boys with demonstrations, and use analogy to help them understand better the knowledge he was trying to impart:

> He talked and gestured so intensely that it was like watching an actor. To illustrate the relative nature of sense impressions, for example, he would "hang" three imaginary bowls of water in the air before the class and pretend to be dipping his hands in them. The bowls, he explained, contained hot, medium and cold water. He put his left hand in the hot and his right in the cold. It was spell-binding […] he repeated Galileo's experiments, rolling an iron ball down a sloping plank, and exhausting the air from a glass tube to show a feather and a penny dropped at the same speed. […] He drew human analogies, to make science more palatable. The so-called "noble gases", he explained, were the ones that would not have anything to do with the other elements, while the non-noble gases grabbed whatever was around. Coal gas, for example, would combine even with the haemoglobin in human blood, which was why people put their heads in gas ovens to commit suicide. (Carey 2010: 31-32)

[3] Carey (2010: 31) writes about his "father's genius as a teacher", and that he was "far and away the best teacher in the school" (2010: 32).

It is fair to say, however, that not all the teachers at the school were as genuinely interested in helping the learners or as gifted as Golding's father (2010: 32).

Regarding William Golding as a teacher, accounts of his teaching are mixed. As Carey (2010: 111) recounts, Golding "never knew what education was about" and was, as one colleague described him "neither a dedicated nor a gifted teacher" (2010: 115). Teaching was simply a way to make a living, it was a means to support his family (2010: 111). Golding was more interested in writing. As a result, in class, he would set tasks for the boys to do and then get on with his own work or read finished extracts of his novel (*The Lord of the Flies*) to them (2010: 150). Additionally, Golding neglected his duties. Piles of exercise books could often be found in his classroom with notes from his learners asking him to look through their assignments (2010: 115).

In contrast to this, some learners did find Golding's lessons inspiring as he "provoked them into thought instead of trying to cram them full of facts" (2010: 125). In this respect, another passage from Carey's biography is illuminating as it describes a particular activity that was a starting point for a discussion:

> In one RE lesson he came into the room, took a piece of chalk and, starting at the door frame, drew a line round the walls of the classroom at shoulder height. He put X about six feet from the door, and another X at the end of the line on the fourth wall. The line, he explained, represented their spiritual life. The first X was the moment of conversion when a person consciously acknowledged his faith in Jesus Christ. The second X marked the moment of illumination, the ultimate stage in spiritual development when a person achieved a knowledge of God's presence and eternal union with him. "Needless to say he offered us no certainty that many of us would reach this stage in our lifetimes". (Carey 2010: 125)

The use of such a technique shows that Golding was interested in developing the thinking of the boys, with such "Dramatic

and gripping [...] exhibitions" (Carey 2010: 125) being, perhaps, an extension of the purpose of his writing[4] into the arena of the classroom.

As a whole, the teaching of Golding, both father and son, would appear to fit with general accounts of teaching in England at that time, which in all sectors of schooling was considered to range from inspiring to satisfactory but where the percentage of poor teaching was high and where "there were vast tracts of rote learning" (Benn 2012: 45). And, even though Alec Golding's demonstrations and William's provocations to thought are far from the worst of what was occurring at the time, which in some sectors was described as "dull and arid" (2012: 45), the type of teaching they demonstrated still does not fit with the active participation that Dewey advocates or the active involvement of the learners that is proposed in the constructivist models outlined in section 2 of this article.

In Alec's lessons the teacher "performs" the experiments and the boys watch, while with William, the teacher provokes and leads an inquiry for which he then has the answer (however unsatisfactory it may seem). This, therefore, although entertaining and provocative, is still in line with traditional schooling where the teacher remains in control and the cognitive aspect is superior to the physical. This is a situation which is different to the "active learning" of constructivism, where learners are given the opportunity to physically engage with materials and objects, but more importantly, manipulate ideas through the use of language, and thereby "talk their way into understanding" (Barnes 2010: 9). This means they:

[4] In relation to *Lord of the Flies*, in their introduction to the novel, Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes remind us of Joseph Conrad's comment about the function of the novelist: "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*" (Golding 1996: vii). Apart from "the written word", this would also appear to fit with Golding's purpose as a teacher.

> ask questions, raise difficulties, look for examples that support or seem to contradict, put forward hypotheses, suggest explanations, offer evidence and so on. They try to link new knowledge with what they already know, finding relationships even with ideas that are not necessarily relevant to the subject in hand, but important to them as individuals. They notice good examples of the principles they are learning about, but at the same time notice situations where it would not apply, so that they contextualize their new knowledge and understand its limits. They are able to explain the meaning and significance of the new knowledge, and to identify those areas where they are not certain they understand. (Barnes 2010: 9)

This is a classroom, therefore, in which the learners rather than the teachers do most of the talking and within which "learners engage with the subject matter in a way that will shape how they retain and use what they have learnt" (Barnes 2010: 9). This implies a critical edge to the educational process as learners need to understand content (and form) in relation to their own level of experience. Learners are scrutinizing what they are presented with and probing it for "points of weakness" (2010: 9). Barnes believes that such a situation is not limited to school and the subjects encountered there, but instead applies to the "social, moral and physical reality" to which the learners belong (2010: 9). To reiterate what was postulated at the end of the previous section, if this form of probing and scrutiny had been part of the educational experience of the boys in *Lord of the Flies*, allowing them to "think for themselves, and make informed judgements" (Barnes 2010: 9), there might have been a different set of outcomes on the desert island.

7. Conclusion

There are many novels in which the action takes place in and around school. Two obvious examples from the canon of British literature are *Tom Brown's School Days* by Thomas Hughes

and *Nicholas Nickleby* by Charles Dickens. In *Tom Brown's School Days* the majority of the action of the novel is located within one school, whereas in *Nicholas Nickleby* the school shown and the action that unfolds there is one of a number of episodes that form part of the main character's life as recounted in the novel. Looking at these books, the type of schools they describe might be categorized in the first instance as a boarding school run by an enlightened headmaster and in the second instance as a monitorial school made possible by "the monstrous neglect of education in England, and the disregard of it by the State as a means of forming good or bad citizens, and miserable or happy men" (Dickens 2000: 3). Each of these schools, meanwhile, has a particular *modus operandi* relating to how the child is viewed, the form of teaching-learning that takes place and the set of outcomes that are desired.

In this article, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is analyzed from the perspective of education though the novel does not place its protagonists in school, but rather depicts them in an extreme situation and shows how they deal with it. The analysis relates the protagonists' actions to the type of education which they might have received. It is suggested that the boys' schooling did not prepare them adequately to cope with the circumstances in which they found themselves, because they have a need for constant approbation from the adult world (authority) which, because it is lacking, means they are unable to act. As a result, they fail to accomplish activities that are essential to their well-being and eventual rescue: the building of huts for shelter and the maintenance of a signal fire. Additionally, a reliance upon a strong and unquestionable authority means that with the appearance of a leader who is driven by animal instinct rather than rational thought, the boys descend into a chaos of fear and violence in which two of their number are viciously killed and a third is hunted down like a wild beast.

In effect, a different form of schooling to the one the boys received may have had a different outcome. If the boys had been given opportunities to propose, engage with and then accept or reject different ideas, that is, to put them into practice and experiment, a process for working with and reflecting upon different problems might have been developed that would have served them well on the island. Moreover, working in groups to achieve this in school would have meant that when they were on the island there would have been a mechanism ready at hand by which they could have worked together to achieve shared goals rather than have aims imposed upon them by a leader (even an elected one) which were then ignored or only half-heartedly embraced.

Of course, the aim here is not to apportion blame in hindsight to a particular education system – how it was run and how it might have been run differently. Rather the intention has been to show how *Lord of the Flies*, even though it does not show its protagonists in school, might still provide insights into the boys' educational experiences and thus suggest a possible explanation for a number of actions taken or not taken during their time on the island. Additionally, even though William Golding's original idea was to write "a book about children on an island, children who behave in the way children would behave [...]" (Carey 2010: 149) with the deeper purpose of showing up the true savagery of human nature,[5] this objective needs to be qualified, as the book shows how a group of boys on an island relate to a particular set of circumstances contingent upon the type of education they received.

Finally, if, as Jerome Bruner (1999: 149) insists, narrative construals are important to our negotiation of the world, and that they are what we impose upon the reality in which we ex-

[5] Carey (2010: 150) reports that in the covering letter that accompanied the manuscript of *Lord of the Flies* on its rounds of the publishers, Golding stated "Its plan was [...] original, showing how a group of boys try to make 'a reasonable society for themselves', and how, 'even if we start with a clean slate like these boys, our nature compels us to make a muck of it'".

ist, but can also come from the work of fiction to impact upon that reality (1999: 136), then the work of fiction has much to offer in terms of what exists. In such a case, works of fiction which portray education and/or its effects are worthwhile areas of study not only for literary studies researchers but also for educationalists who are interested in investigating educational realities. It seems fitting to end with an extensive quotation from Bruner, who believes pedagogical investigation needs to concern itself as much with narrative construals (and here works of fiction are included) as the more usual hard data of science:

> We devote an enormous amount of pedagogical effort on teaching the methods of science and rational thought: what is involved in verification, what constitutes contradiction, how to convert mere utterances into testable propositions, and on down the list. For these are the "methods" for creating a "reality according to science". Yet we live most of our lives in a world constructed according to rules and devices of narrative. Surely education could provide richer opportunities than it does for creating the metacognitive sensitivity needed for coping with the world of narrative reality and its competing claims. Is it so bizarre, given what we know about human thought, to propose that no history be taught without historiography, no literature without literary theory, no poetry without poetics? Or that we can turn our consciousness to what narrative construal imposes on the world of reality that it creates? (Bruner 1999: 149)

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Martin Blaszk
Instytut Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
brcmart@ug.edu.pl