Gary Watt*

The Law of Dress in *Lord of the Flies*

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Abstract: Instead of reading William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* in standard terms of the boys' descent from clothing to nakedness, or in terms of truth disguised in false appearance, this paper reads the novel in terms of the constancy of dress. The form of the dress may change from clothes to painted masks, but the fundamental fact of dress remains. The boys' relationship to rules can be read in a similar way. Instead of reading their story in terms of descent from law and order to lawlessness and disorder, it is read in terms of the on-going presence of rules of some sort. The form of the rules changes, but the essential fact of government by rules remains. It is argued that dress and law are constant in the novel and that Golding is warning us, through the parallel performance of law and dress, that we should suspect that external indicators of civilization are hollow; that we should be cynical about all systems of norms established by society and look, instead, to be saved by individual insight and self-sacrifice.

Keywords: William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, dress, law, naked, truth, descent, disguise, masks, rules, civilization, individual, self-sacrifice

> Perhaps all of us have, at one time or another, written a paper on Lord of the Flies. In fact, at this very moment, some high school student somewhere is very probably typing in the last period in a paper entitled "The Meaning of the Conch," say, or "Why Piggy Wears Specs." And this, frankly, is as it should be.[1]

I have come rather belatedly to my turn to write on William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*,[2] certainly it is a long time since I left high school, but I come in the hope that I have something new to say about "The Meaning of the Conch" and even on "Why Piggy Wears Specs." Leah Hadomi has perhaps come closest to what I

1 Brian Murray, review article of *William Golding Revisited: A Collection of Original Essays*, *Modern Fiction Studies* 37.4 (1981): 790–791.

2 William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* [1954] (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), further references in the text. An earlier version of the present paper appears in *Law and Humanities* 8.2 (2014): 174–191.

***Corresponding author: Gary Watt,** The University of Warwick, UK, E-mail: gary.watt@warwick.ac.uk

want to say.[3] She identifies the "clothing-nakedness cluster" as the first of three "familiar figurative clusters" that recur throughout William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.[4] She conjectures that the "clothing-nakedness cluster carries the truth-appearance theme" and that nakedness "implies man unprotected against cosmic and human enemies, but revealed in his inner truth."[5] Having posited this conjecture on the novel, Hadomi challenges it:

> The relation of the clothing-nakedness cluster to the overall structure of the novel does not present a clear dichotomy between naked truth and false appearances; ironically, it points at the moral paradox whereby naked truth asks for covering by cultural robes because human existence is impossible in a state of total exposure. The boys stranded on the island adapt themselves to the physical conditions of the island and start shedding their clothes. They become more and more naked – stripped not only of clothes but of names, duties, rights and even memories of the adult world. By stripping down to essentials, their inner "truth" is supposed to be revealed, yet they immediately start anew the process of self covering. Here unstable irony eventuates as naked truth retreats again into false appearance.[6]

In this paper I will read the novel in terms, not of clothing and nudity *per se*, but of dress, and specifically with regard to the natures of dress and law as near neighbours (perhaps even structurally identical partners) in the scheme of social norms. Hadomi comes near to this when she observes that in the novel "clothing is only one form of disguise, others being masks, names and attitudes towards norms and institutions."[7] Instead of regarding clothes as a form of disguise, as Hadomi does, I consider them to be a form of dress; and instead of reading the boys' story in terms of descent from clothing to nakedness, or in terms of truth disguised in false appearance, I will read it in terms of the constancy of dress. The form of the dress may change from clothes to painted masks, but the fundamental fact of dress remains. The boys' relationship to rules can be read

3 Leah Hadomi, "Imagery as a Source of Irony in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*," *The Hebrew University Studies in Literature* 9.1 (1981): 126–138. Reprinted in *Children's Literature Review*, ed. Allison Marion Vol. 94 (Detroit: Gale, 2004), 83–89. Page references in this paper are to the reprint of Hadomi's article.

4 The others being the "cluster centered around firesight and the dominant man-animal cluster" (Marion, *Children's Literature Review*, 84).

5 Hadomi, "Imagery as a Source of Irony in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*," 85. See, also, who writes that: "Golding's *Lord of the Flies* [...] makes much symbolic use of clothing and nakedness to indicate the separation between culture and nature or civilized and primitive" in Rob Cover, "The Naked Subject: Nudity, Context and Sexualization in Contemporary Culture," *Body & Society* 9 (2003): 53–72, 66.

6 Hadomi, "Imagery as a Source of Irony in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*," 85.

7 Hadomi, "Imagery as a Source of Irony in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*," 85.

in a similar way. Instead of reading their story in terms of descent from law and order to lawlessness and disorder, I will read it in terms of the on-going presence of rules of some sort. The form of the rules changes, but the essential fact of government by rules remains.[8] I will argue that dress and law are constant in the novel and that Golding is warning us, through the parallel performance of law and dress, that we should suspect that external indicators of civilization are hollow; that we should be cynical about all systems of norms established by society and look, instead, to be saved by individual insight and self-sacrifice. In short, whether the imposition of social norms takes the form of law or takes the parallel from of dress, the challenge and the opportunity for every individual subject to systems of dress and law is to know how far to struggle to fit in and how much to struggle to resist. The challenge is the same whether or not the norms of dress are cloth-based and the challenge is the same whether or not the norms of law are purportedly rights-based. Such apparently civilised trappings as clothing and "human rights" or "equality" discourse should not be allowed to obscure the personal challenge presented to the individual subject, which is nothing less than the challenge to act justly.

Before returning to Golding's *Lord of the Flies* a preliminary note is required to explain my large claim that norms in the form of law are equivalent to norms in the form of dress. Indeed, I would go further and say that in functional and symbolic terms it may be said that dress is law and that law is dress.[9] There is a long-standing and deep association between social order constituted by law and social order constituted by dress. The very word "dress" shares its etymological root with the legal word set that includes "Recht," "Rex" and "direct." To dress is to rule or order. The dressed state is the opposite of the unruly. The cooperative potential in the close connection between dress and law has been deployed by legal authorities through the use of regulatory uniforms and lawyers' dress, and such measures as sumptuary laws and the prohibition of extreme public nudity and extreme public concealment can be seen as a combined effort of dress and law to suppress individual self-fashioning.[10] The etymological origin

8 Compare Eric Wilson, "Warring Sovereigns and Mimetic Rivals: On Scapegoats and Political Crisis in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*," *Law and Humanities* 8.2 (2014): 147–173, who argues that the novel does not depict a descent from constitutional government to anarchy, but depicts democracy and dictatorship as competing forms of constitution.

9 As I have argued elsewhere: Gary Watt, *Dress, Law and Naked Truth: A Cultural Study of Fashion and Form* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). See also Gary Watt, "Law Suits: Clothing as the Image of Law," in *Visualizing Law and Authority. Essays on Legal Aesthetics*, ed. Leif Dahlberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

10 A striking example is the UK case of Stephen Gough, the so-called "Naked Rambler," who, since 2006, has spent the vast majority of his time imprisoned for refusing to obey various court

of "fashion" in the Latin verb *facere* ("to make" or "to do") informs us that the fashioned human figure, like human law, is a made thing – an artifice.[11] When we fashion ourselves we sometimes fit with the norms of law and dress, and sometimes our mode of dress and self-regulation confronts the norms of law and dress. The close connection between dress and law is fundamentally deep, but its very depth has tended to conceal it. It nevertheless emerges very clearly in narratives that set out to unearth the cultural foundations of human civil society. Examples include the Epic of Gilgamesh and the story of the Garden of Eden. The close connection between dress and law also emerges clearly in cultural accounts of primal stress in human social relations, especially where that stress is between the individual and the group. For example, Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* describes the eponymous protagonist's struggle to fit into society in terms of his ability to judge where his "own shoe pinches."[12]

In this paper I will demonstrate that William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is another compelling case in support of the thesis that dress is law and law is dress. Through the device of a deserted island, Golding posits a primal state in which he tests the foundational impulses of civil society. The island thus serves as a sort of substitute Garden of Eden.[13] With its castaway community, the island also provides a context in which individuals are forced into primal confrontation with life and death and forced into a choice between respect for received tradition and conformity to new communal norms. Such circumstances provide conditions in which characters will feel keenly the constraint of norms expressed

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orders requiring him to dress in public. Early in October 2014, he was imprisoned for two and a half years for walking out of prison wearing nothing but socks and boots, and on 28 October 2014 the European Court of Human Rights rejected his application for review of that decision (*Gough* v. *The United Kingdom* 49327/11 – Chamber Judgment [2014] ECHR 1156).

11 "Face" appears to have the same etymological origin as "fashion." As we will consider later, ordering or dressing of the face through war paint is significant in Golding's novel. The presence of adult law on the boys' island is questioned by the absence of the normal routines by which faces are dressed or ordered in the adult world through practices of shaving and make-up. (One may add that when Golding's boys apply paint to their beardless faces, they implicitly irritate the gender divisions that permeate dress norms in the adult word – for in the adult world the general rule is that artificial additions to faces are made by women using make-up, whereas men artificially remove beards from their faces using razors).

12 Anthony Trollope, *The Warden* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855). See my article "Where the Shoe Pinches: True Equity in Trollope's *The Warden,*" forthcoming in this journal.

13 Not an exact substitute, it should be stressed. A feature of Golding's novel that ensures its perennial attractiveness to schoolteachers and academic commentators alike is that none of its analogies is definitive, conclusive or unproblematic. On the relevance of law and dress to The Garden of Eden, see, further: Watt, *Dress, Law and Naked Truth*, 22–25.

in dress and laws. Dress and law suffer parallel fates on the island: old laws are lost and new rules called for; old dress is removed and new dress adopted. The novel makes a major contribution to our understanding of the natures of law and dress because it demonstrates that both are structurally inseparable from each other and that both are inseparable from social order, and also that, despite their secure structural connection to each other, the specific shapes of dress and law are highly mutable. Rather than read the novel in traditional terms of tension between civil and animal natures, the more haunting possibility is that some form of law is always and inevitably present in every human society that displays any degree of order. What makes this feature a haunting one is that the ubiquity of law within human social order does not differ from the ubiquity of dress and that law is as susceptible as dress is to the forces of prevailing fashions and fads.

The fact that convinces me more than any other that dress and law are intended to be read as an inseparable and central pair in the novel, is that Golding combines them in his treatment of the novel's two great totems: the conch and the pig's skull that supplies the novel's title. The former is a symbol of the old society of school and English civilization and the latter is a symbol of the new society of the island, but Golding describes the totems in terms of their constant capacity to bring rule through dress – decorum through decoration – even as each undergoes transformation and even as one is ultimately substituted for the other. The twin totems therefore convey Golding's central warning: do not trust the outer shell of social conventions, whether in the form of dress or rules. The novel is not, as several high school essays would suggest, an allegory for the loss of civilized order; it is rather an argument for the inherent and systemic ethical failure of civilized order in all its changeable forms. Neither dress nor rules, nor any system instituted by school and the world of grown-ups, has any heart except that which we as individuals have the heart and hope to give it.

The tension between dress and order is introduced in the opening lines of *Lord of the Flies*. Chapter One, "The Sound of the Shell," opens with a description of Ralph, the castaway schoolboy who becomes the novel's heroic protagonist and the island's chief defender of the traditional social order. Right from the outset his physical appearance is employed to symbolize orthodox, civilized norms. The opening words of the novel describe him as "[t]he boy with *fair* hair" (7) (emphasis added). We are then informed that "his hair was plastered to his forehead." He cannot shake off his fairness. In the same way, in the same line, we learn that "[t]hough he had taken off his school sweater and trailed it now from one hand, his grey shirt stuck to him" (7). Thus, within the first paragraph, dress and other aspects of physical appearance take centre stage

as symbols of adherence to the old social order. Dress, especially that which clings to the body, emphasizes the tension between inner and outer – a tension paralleled in the distinction between private and public, between individual and collective. The clinging cloth, and the fact that Ralph's sweater is being held on to even though it has been removed, speaks eloquently of the precariousness of the divide between social order and disorder, while at the same time emphasizing how hard it is to live as a social being without a mask (some mask, *any* mask).

In addition to the distinction between inner and outer, Golding employs the distinction between upper and lower to communicate the difference between higher and baser forms of social order. Still on the first page of the novel, Golding scatters his descriptions (and the dialogue between Ralph and his ally Piggy) with references along the vertical axis: "undergrowth"; "raindrops fell"; "I got caught up"; "these creeper things"; "He bent down"; "then looked up." Clear instances of tension between higher and lower order can be found on most pages of the first chapter. To list just a few: "No grown-ups!" (8); "down with a crash" (9); "upheavals of fallen trees" (10); "not enough soil for them to grow" (12); "specious appearance of depth" (13). The link between elevation and social rule is made express later in the chapter, when Ralph and Jack, by now officially appointed as leaders, are said to have "savoured the right of domination" the moment "[t]hey were lifted up" (32). The impending inversion of social order on the island is also alluded to through descriptions of the vertical axis. For example: "[a]ll the shadows on Ralph's face were reversed; green above, bright below from the lagoon" (16).

All this tension between higher and lower order and the threat of inversion is directly and subtly tied to the tension between dress and non-dress. On the first page of the book, we are told that: "The fair boy stopped and jerked his stocking with an automatic gesture that made the jungle seem for a moment like the Home Counties" (7). The command to "pull your socks up" is traditionally synonymous with a call for self-discipline. Ralph pulls his socks up instinctively at first, but what follows soon after upsets our confidence in order fashioned along simple hierarchical lines. One page later, Ralph delights in the indulgence of an ambition: "[i]n the middle of the scar he stood on his head and grinned at the reversed fat boy" (8). It is at this point, upside down, that he exclaims "No grown-ups!" He is purporting to break the rules and to revel in newfound freedom, but the irony is that he cannot escape his accustomed regime. His effort to subvert the received social order must actually result, by the law of gravity, in his stockings falling down into the "pull your socks up" position. Golding also makes clear (at 29) that Ralph's self-inversion had been a spontaneous and exuberant expression of emotion, and this reassures us that it was

not intended to presage revolution. By the time Ralph utterly divests himself of his clothes, his identity with the old order is already established:

> He jumped down from the terrace. The sand was thick over his black shoes and the heat hit him. He became conscious of the weight of clothes, kicked his shoes off fiercely and ripped off each stocking with its elastic garter in a single movement. Then he leapt back on the terrace, pulled off his shirt, and stood there among the skull-like coco-nuts with green shadows from the palms and the forest sliding over his skin. He undid the snake-clasp of his belt, lugged off his shorts and pants, and stood there naked. (10)

The reference to the "snake-clasp" is especially revealing. The snake allusion, and numerous others that appear in Chapters Two and Three, allude to the Garden of Eden, but the reference to the belt is equally intriguing. To "gird one's loins" is a dress-based mode of self-regulation equivalent to the action of pulling one's socks up. A girt or bounded domain indicates a regulated zone (a "zone" being, quite literally, a "belt"). It is not accidental that the words we use to describe the regulated zone of "garden" and "court" are both derived from precisely the same origin as the word for "girt."[14] The description of the "snake-clasp of his belt" is therefore a highly efficient evocation of the legally-regulated domain of the Garden of Eden and a most effective way of aligning legally-regulated order with the order of dress. Having loaded the belt with such weighty symbolic significations, it cannot be accidental that Jack, even at the height of his "descent" (or the depths of his ascendancy, if we prefer) Ralph's rival, Jack, still wears a belt. In Chapter Eight, he is described as "stark naked save for paint and a belt" (155).

When Ralph undoes his snake-clasp and casts off his clothes, dishevelling his dead skin as a snake does, we are invited to contemplate that this might indicate a resolution to divest himself of his received tradition of rules. However, it is not long before we are reassured that Ralph will continue to cling to the old order. A few pages after stripping off, Ralph re-dons the discipline of dress. Ralph directs Piggy (who had followed suit in stripping off) to gather up his (Ralph's) scattered clothes, and we are told that for Ralph "[t]o put on a grey shirt once more was strangely pleasing" (15).

It is significant that, just one page later, it is the newly-dressed Ralph who spots the conch shell that will become the totem of his island reign. The conch shell is a perfect symbol for a dress-based domain, for the conch is a decorous outer covering. "The Sound of the Shell," which supplies the title to Chapter

14 Gary Watt, "Rule of the Root: Proto-Indo-European Domination of Legal Language," in *Law and Language*, *Current Legal Issues*, Vol. 15, eds. Michael Freeman and Fiona Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 571–589, 581.

One, should be heard as an echo or memory of the old world in which order was associated with "private parts" girt in clothes and private gardens bordered by walls. Golding invites this interpretation when he has Piggy recall the previous occasion of an encounter with a conch:

> It's a shell. I seen one like that before. On someone's back wall. A conch he called it. He used to blow it and then his mum would come. It's ever so valuable. (16)
> [...] he had it on his garden wall [...] (17)

This memory of Piggy's old life is a memory of the power to summon the assistance of grown-ups. "Where's the man with the megaphone?" (7) Piggy had asked at the start of his island adventure. The answer comes when Ralph adopts the conch as a means of calling the community to order. Golding makes the connection expressly (19). Ralph becomes the surrogate grown-up. The conch is the dead and decorous outer surface of a living creature turned into an instrument of order and regulation and thus evokes significant features of both dress and law. It is fitting, therefore, that Piggy should recall its location on a garden wall. Just as dress establishes an ordered border between the inner and outer, the private and the public, so does the garden wall; especially when we recall the archetype of the Edenic garden. The shell, the wall, dress, and law are identified with each other structurally and functionally; they are all of one semiotic species.

The first stray child to respond to the sound of the shell – the call of the conch – is a youngster named Johnny. The child is liminal, not just because his first appearance is on the beach at the fringe of the palm trees, although the liminal quality of the beach should not be underestimated,[15] but because he arrives in a state of half-dress. He epitomizes the internal struggle that will be played out in every one of the boys in due course: the struggle between the old order and the new, between the received rules of peacetime playgrounds and the new rules of the game of hunting and war. He is as at the threshold and has the potential to go either way:

> A child had appeared among the palms, about a hundred yards along the beach. He was a boy of perhaps six years, sturdy and fair, his clothes torn, his face covered with a sticky mess of fruit. His trousers had been lowered for an obvious purpose and had only been pulled back half-way. He jumped off the palm terrace into the sand and his trousers fell about his ankles; he stepped out of them and trotted to the platform. Piggy helped him up.

15 Robert Preston-Whyte, "The Beach as a Liminal Space," in *A Companion to Tourism*, eds. Alan A. Lew, C. Michael Hall and Allan M. Williams (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 349–359; Kylie Crane, *Myths of Wilderness in Contemporary Narratives: Environmental Postcolonialism in Australia and Canada* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 178.

> Meanwhile Ralph continued to blow till voices shouted in the forest. The small boy squatted in front of Ralph, looking up brightly and vertically. (18)

Other youngsters arrive in obedience to the call of the conch. Golding's first, and most detailed, point of description is their dress:

> Some were naked and carrying their clothes: others half-naked, or more or less dressed, in school uniforms; grey, blue, fawn, jacketed or jerseyed. There were badges, mottoes even, stripes of color in stockings and pullovers. (19)

Their arrival is a prelude to the arrival of the choir. At first, the identity of the choir is un-deciphered. From a distance it is discerned to be merely "something dark [...] fumbling along" the beach (20). As the dark group comes closer, the group waiting with the conch – Ralph, Piggy and assorted youngsters known as "littluns" – see that "the darkness was not all shadow but mostly clothing" (20).

The description of the choir which then follows cannot fail to evoke a uniformed Nazi gang, and it is trite to state that this was a significant part of Golding's inspiration when he wrote the novel less than a decade after the end of The Second World War.[16] The regimented corps of the choir might as well have been a band of Hitler Youth. Most of their clothing was held in hand, but they still presented an exterior that was uniform and displayed military-like insignia of rank. The insignia marked out their leader, Jack (the name suggests the Nazi jackboot), from the rest:

> The creature was a party of boys, marching approximately in step in two parallel lines and 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 frill. The heat of the tropics, the descent, the search for food, and now this sweaty march along the blazing beach had given them the complexions of newly washed plums. The boy who controlled them was dressed in the same way though his cap badge was golden. When his party was about ten yards from the platform he shouted an order and they halted, gasping, sweating, swaying in the fierce light. The boy himself came forward, vaulted on to the platform with his cloak flying, and peered into what to him was almost complete darkness. (20–21)

The first event in the subsequent power-struggle between Ralph and Jack is a division of their domain. Ralph becomes chief of the whole group by virtue of his size and attractiveness, but mostly because of the power of the conch (24),

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16 William Golding, *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965). See also Kenneth Woodroofe, "Lord of the Flies: Trust the Tale," in *William Golding Revisited*, ed. B. L. Chakoo (New Delhi: *Arnold*, *1989*), 40–54, 40.

whereas Jack is allotted command of the choir. When Ralph concedes that command, Jack's first thought is to turn the choir into an army. It is Ralph who suggests the alternative possibility of turning them into hunters, perhaps thinking that this would be less threatening than an army. (Ralph exercises similar, ostensibly prudential – but in fact shortsighted – pragmatism when he publicly names his friend "Piggy" to save him from the supposedly worse fate of being called "fatty"). We are told that "Jack stood up" to deliver his first command to the choir (thereby asserting his hierarchical status) and that his first command was: "All right choir. Take off your togs" (25). "Togs" is precisely the right choice of word. Not only because it was schoolboy slang for clothes, and therefore represents the casting off of school rules and the traditional civil order of grown-ups' laws, but also because "togs" implies togas. The regulation form of the Roman toga was the great symbol of the success of Roman civilized order and continues to be associated, through judicial dress, with the tradition of Roman law.[17] And yet, even though Jack calls the choir his "hunters" and strips them of their civil dress, they retain their black caps and in Chapter Two these are likened to berets (43), so that in symbolic and semiotic terms the choir retains a military menace and a vestige of the forces and norms that formed the old civil order. Combine this with the fact that Jack retains his knife belt and we clearly see that there is no descent here from civil to animal but merely a change of dress from the peacetime dress of togas to the wartime dress of uniform and paint. That point is made most evident in the use of face paint by Jack and his gang. One automatically thinks of face paint as tribal and primitive, and so it may be, but only if modern military camouflage is also tribal and primitive. Jack's choice to use paint is not inspired by the dress of un-colonized, native tribes, but by its modern military usage in the camouflage of battleships. His desire is for paint "[f]or hunting. Like in the war. You know – dazzle paint. Like things trying to look like something else –" (68). Thus Jack's "face-painting starts off as a reversion to civilization, not to savagery."[18]

Piggy, whose spectacles intimate his insight, has the prescience to be "intimidated" by the "uniformed superiority" of the choir (22). This is a case of dress respecting dress. Amongst the many symbolic and semiotic significations of Piggy's spectacles, an important one which has largely been overlooked

17 Jonathan Edmondson, "Public Dress and Social Control in Late Republican and Early Imperial Rome," in *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, eds. Jonathan Edmondson and Alison Keith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). See, further, Watt, *Dress, Law and Naked Truth*, 33–36.

18 Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, eds. *William Golding a Critical Study* [1967] (London: Faber, 1984), 33.

is the one that regards spectacles as an item of dress. As an item of dress, spectacles convey in clear terms the message that insight begins when we see through the covering of dress. Precisely this point was made by Professor Teufelsdröckh, the protagonist of Thomas Carlyle's great fictionalized philosophy of dress *Sartor Resartus*, when he opined that "[t]he beginning of all Wisdom is to look fixedly on Clothes, or even with armed eyesight, till they become transparent."[19] Piggy, even more than Ralph, is the paradigmatic representative of the old order of school rules and the decorum of cloth dress. After all, it was Piggy who turned Ralph's discovery of the conch into an opportunity to recall the old order of grown ups and garden walls. And when, in Chapter Two, Ralph clambers after Jack's group and appears to be at risk of joining them, it is Piggy who is left to sustain and supply the symbols of the old order. He is the one left holding the conch and it is he who performs a ritual equivalent to "pulling one's socks up" or "girding one's loin." We are told that he "sighed, bent, and laced up his shoes" (42). Piggy's spectacles suggest at once his power to see the importance of dress and to see through dress, but they also alert us to the fact that our very capacity for critical attention to the external world of norms can cause us to overlook the fact that we are seeing from the perspective of those same norms and seeing through the agency of those norms. Spectacles help us to see dress, even as they hide their own status as dress from our eyes.

Chapter Two, "Fire on the Mountain," advances the close association between dress and law. In the opening paragraph, we discover that the "choir, noticeably less of a group, had discarded their cloaks" whereas most of the other children "feeling too late the smart of sunburn, had put their clothes on" (35). It is within this dishevelled scene of a society half-stripped of order that the cry goes up for "rules" (36). Disconcertingly, it is Jack who leads the clamour: "We'll have rules!" he cried excitedly. "Lots of rules! Then when anyone breaks em –" (36). We are disconcerted not only by the fact that Jack stood up to speak without the conch (this immediately after Ralph had laid down the rule that nobody should speak without having first been handed the totemic shell); but, more particularly, by the fact that Jack is calling for rules devoid of any concern for "law," "order" or "justice." Indeed, Jack seems to see rules as nothing more than a means of control and a basis to punish. Thus, seven years before H. L. A. Hart published his positivist concept of law,[20] Golding provides his own pithy paraphrase of the lesson in law that the twentieth-century taught us in the most terrible terms: that formal law, still less the rhetoric of rules, is no guarantee of a

19 Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book I, Chapter 10. See Watt, *Dress, Law and Naked Truth*, 67.
20 Herbert L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

just social order and no reliable defence against despotism. Later in the chapter, Ralph adopts Jack's mistaken assumption that the quality of a society's law will somehow flow from the quantity of its rules: "We ought to have more rules" (47). In response to that, Jack signals his assent by taking the conch before he talks: "I agree with Ralph. We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English; and the English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right things" (47). One of the "right things" that Jack resolves to do, is to keep the fire going that the boys hope will alert passing ships and planes to their presence on the island, but for all his formal respect for rules he fails in his responsibility to keep the rescue fire ablaze.

As a group they also fail in their collective duty to protect the weakest amongst them. At the beginning of Chapter Two we are introduced to "a shrimp of a boy, about six years old" with "one side of his face [...] blotted out by a mulberry-coloured birthmark" (38). Even in his native state this boy appears half-painted, as if half-dressed by nature. He embodies the liminal state between naked and dressed, between animal order and civil order, and he therefore embodies an Edenic innocence that has the potential to rise one way or fall the other. It is this Edenic boy who nervously addresses the assembly on the subject of a "snake-thing" (39) that he claims to have seen. The leaders Jack and Ralph pour scorn on the suggestion that there might be any such beast on the island (40). By the end of the chapter, this boy with the mulberry birthmark is the first in their group to be declared missing. Golding is not subtle when he invites us to presume that the boy is dead. In response to Piggy's question, "Where is he now?" we are told that "[t]he crowd was as silent as death" (51). It is later confirmed that he was never seen again (94, 189). Cain was tainted with a divine mark for committing the first murder. The tainted face, death and the serpent combine in the boy's fate to symbolize humanity's imminent failure and fall. It is not until Chapter Five that Simon, the seer of the group, makes express the thesis that Golding certainly intended to thread through the novel: that the human might indeed be a savage beast in its natural state. Simon puts it this way: "maybe there is a beast"; "What I mean is ... maybe it's only us" (97). We are told that this revelation caused Piggy to be "shocked out of decorum" (97). We are therefore invited to presume that Simon has probed through appearances (rules and dress included) to the point of the inner heart of the matter.

The title of Chapter Three, "Huts on the Beach," suggests a civilization which, like the proverbial house on the sand, is teetering on the edge of destruction. Fittingly, all that remains of the decorum of Jack's dress by this point is a "pair of tattered shorts held up by his knife belt" (52). The only vestige of order, the last sustaining stitch in a society that is rotting away and coming apart at the seams, is a belt carrying the threat of violence. This is civil order

founded on force. Simon, who comes to epitomize the soul of truly conscientious, ethical civilization is in an even worse state. He is fading fast, and is down to the "remains of shorts" (60). The conditions are set for Jack to instigate the creation of a new order to replace the old. The new order will be based on hunting, flesh and blood, but surely Golding's point in juxtaposing Jack's new order with the old is to demonstrate that, though the mode of decoration differs, the underlying forces and desires do not. The juxtaposition is immediate when Jack searches the horizon and shouts "Got it!" (58) Ralph wrongly supposes that he has seen a ship that would (at the end of the novel a ship *will*) signal a return to the traditional order. In fact, Jack has merely worked out where he will find pigs to kill. "We could steal up on one – paint our faces so they wouldn't see" (59). The symbol of the old order slips instantly into the symbol of the new. The painted disguise of the new order is substituted casually and insidiously for the uniform ship-shape dress of the old.[21] In this way, Golding introduces Chapter Four, "Painted Faces and Long Hair," and continues to develop the novel's major theme with which we are here concerned – namely the continuity of law and order based on form and force even as its particular appearance changes from society to society and from time to time.

Early in Chapter Four, Golding reprises the symbolism of the huts on the beach. We learn that the littluns have "built castles in the sand" and that these castles "were about one foot high and were decorated with shells, withered flowers, and interesting stones" (64). A few lines earlier we were informed that the littluns "obeyed the summons of the conch, partly because Ralph blew it, and he was big enough to be a link with the adult world of authority" (64). The conch, its glorious outside garnishing a hollow interior, is expressly identified with the authority of the old order. Civil decorum and external decoration are one and the same. The fragility of this form of social foundation is emphasized by the fact that the littluns use shells to decorate their castles. We are led to expect that the castles will be washed away and that the fragile fascia of civil order will inevitably fall. In the event, the castles do not survive even long enough to suffer the tide. A more sudden danger comes from within the island, from under cover of the canopy of trees:

> Roger and Maurice came out of the forest. They were relieved from duty at the fire and had come down for a swim. Roger led the way straight through the castles, kicking them over, burying the flowers, scattering the chosen stones. (65)

21 Compare the following line in Chapter Six, "Beast from Water": "The world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away. Once there was this and that; and now – and the ship had gone." (99)

When Roger takes up a handful of stones to throw at Henry, the *de facto* leader of that group of littluns, we are told that the shell of civilization still offered Henry some protection:

> 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. (67)

All this talk of huts on the beach, castles on the sand and civilization in ruins portends the eventual collapse of the island's delicate remnant of the old civil order. This decline is represented most clearly in the change in the nature of the boys' dress and, paralleling that, in the deterioration of the conch and its ultimate substitution by a new totem – the Lord of the Flies itself. The physical decline of the conch is gradual at first. It begins in Chapter Five when we learn that exposure to the air has "bleached the yellow and pink to near-white, and transparency" (85). It progresses in Chapter Eight, "Gift for the Darkness," by which time the conch is simply "white" (155). This decline is mirrored in Jack's dress, for just a few lines earlier we learn that by now he is "stark naked save for paint and a belt" (155). Already by this time, the boys are down to "rags" (127, 128, 134). Crucially, Chapter Eight is also the chapter in which the totemic Lord of the Flies is installed. The severed pig's head is staked on a spike where it is soon covered by a host of flies "black and iridescent green and without number" (152) that begin to remove the flesh and reveal the skull. By the start of Chapter Ten, "The Shell and the Glasses," the conch is "fragile white" (171) and in Chapter Eleven, "Castle Rock," the inevitable happens. Roger levers a boulder down Castle Rock. Piggy and the conch are struck. Immediately after the conch has "exploded into a thousand white fragments" (200), Piggy's skull cracks open to reveal its bloody interior. The exteriority of the old order, which had formerly shielded Henry from Roger's stones, has finally collapsed, and Jack knows it: "Suddenly Jack bounded out from the tribe and began screaming wildly. "See? See? That's what you'll get! I meant that! There isn't a tribe for you any more! The conch is gone"" (200).

Much earlier in the novel, in Chapter Four, "Painted Faces and Long Hair," Jack had "planned his new face" of paint (69). This occurs long before the Lord of the Flies was set up, but Golding's description suggests that the paint turned Jack's face into a prototype Lord of the Flies – a bloody skull erected on a spike and belted with black flies:

> He made one cheek and one eye-socket white, then rubbed red over the other half of his face and slashed a black bar of charcoal across from right ear to left jaw [...] his sinewy body held up a mask that drew eyes and appalled them [...] the mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness. (69)

The "face of red and white and black" (69) is planned and fabricated and constitutes a mode of dress every bit as artificial as fabric.[22] Jack's corps of hunters may be stripped, but they are also striped. Jack is striped with a black bar. One of his hunters is described as "a savage striped red and white" (215). Together they are called "striped and inimical creatures" (206). Michel Pastoureau has argued that striped cloth is a taboo associated with marginal and outcast figures in society – prisoners, soldiers, gangsters and such like.[23] The same might be said of striped skin.

When Golding writes that "[s]ome of the boys wore black caps but otherwise they were almost naked" (74), he is presumably using naked in the sense of unclothed. This reflects the bias of a cloth-based culture. Most of these so-called "naked" boys in fact mask themselves with dyes at some point or other and it is important to appreciate that this alone has the effect of rendering them dressed social beings without the assistance of caps or any cloth cladding. In Chapter Five, "Beast from Water," the problem of shifting forms troubles Ralph. "If faces were different when lit from above or below – what was a face? What was anything?" (85) We are invited to wonder if the fabricated dress of the traditional order is really any different to the painted dress of the new order, or do modes of dress and law merely *appear* to change according to the lights by which we view them. The traditional order of dress, which had once been a comfort, now begins to irritate Ralph:

> wind pressed his grey shirt against his chest so that he noticed – in this new mood of comprehension – how the folds were stiff like cardboard, and unpleasant; noticed too how the frayed edges of his shorts were making an uncomfortable, pink area on the front of his thighs. (83–84)

A few pages later, the word "stiff" is used again to describe Ralph's grey shirt (87). In between those two usages, Ralph raises the conch at a gathering of the groups and twice calls for an assembly "to put things straight" (86). Golding could hardly be clearer in his desire to associate the constraint of a straight form of rule with the constraint of a stiff form of dress. It is no doubt more accommodating and less chaffing to cast off all constraint of cloth in favour of dress in the form of caps and paint and belts (the "savages" are said to be "more

22 Red, white and black are the same three colours which Victor Turner identified to be of greatest significance in the ritual of the tribal society of the Ndembu people of Zambia: Victor W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 81.

23 Michel Pastoureau, *Etoffe du diable: Une Histoire Des Rayures et des Tissus Rayés* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), English trans. by Jody Gladding, *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes and Striped Fabric* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

comfortable" than Ralph (194)), but will schoolboys from an English cultural background realize that they may still be dressed even when they have no clothes and will they appreciate that a clothes-free state does not licence a state of lawlessness? Such an appreciation would likely be beyond them. Ralph's sense of irritation with his stiff clothes and his sense that an assembly is needed to put things straight can therefore indicate his subconscious awareness that a degree of personal irritation will necessarily accompany an individual's encounter with social norms. A society which painlessly accommodates us without us ever feeling the pinch must necessarily be a society which lacks any solid shape or one to which we have conformed ourselves by abandoning our own shape. Where we fit society without struggle, we have either gone soft on society or society has gone soft on us. These tensions preface the crucial point at the centre of the novel when Jack finally abandons any pretence of adhering to the old order of rules and in the same moment institutes a new code:

> "The rules!" shouted Ralph, "you're breaking the rules!"
>
> "Who cares?"
>
> Ralph summoned his wits.
>
> "Because the rules are the only thing we've got!"
>
> But Jack was shouting against him.
>
> "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 – !" (100)

Ralph, on the other hand, irritated as he may be by the received scheme of democratic law and order – complete with its polite assemblies and orderly proceedings – has no intention of abandoning it. The same is true of his attitude to the received order of dress, as reflected in his relationship to his clothes and to the dress of his hair. In Chapter Seven, "Shadows and Tall Trees," Ralph "pulled distastefully at his grey shirt," but instead of ripping it off and throwing it away, he wonders instead "whether he might undertake the adventure of washing it." (120) Instead of letting his hair grow unconstrained, he "would like to have a pair of scissors and cut his hair –" (120). Ralph looks over the hunters with "the memory of his sometime clean self as a standard," (121) and he sees a group with "clothes, worn away, stiff like his own with sweat, put on, not for decorum or comfort but out of custom" (121). This is a fascinating description, for it implies that the hunters are subject to the habitual impulse to dress quite independently of any drive to accommodate their bodies or their selves within their society. The fearful implication of this observation is that forms of law and order may be put on in an unthinking and habitual way that is devoid

of any personal commitment to improve society or ourselves. This calls to mind the worst historical abuses of legal formality, but it serves even more potently as a future warning – to lawyers not least – of the dangers that attend legality hollowed of ethical content.

Chapter Eight contains a warning of another sort. It warns of impending death. Simon stays after the pig's skull has been placed on the stake. As he contemplates the totem it seems to resonate with his own skull and his own blood and thereby to serve as a reminder of his mortality. It becomes, for the reader, a portend of Simon's impending death: "At last Simon gave up and looked back; saw the white teeth and dim eyes, the blood – and his gaze was held by that ancient, inescapable recognition. In Simon's right temple, a pulse began to beat on the brain." (152)

Another scene, occurring a few pages later, reads like a rehearsal for a funeral procession. Piggy places the conch in Ralph's hands, then:

> He turned toward the platform, feeling the need for ritual. First went Ralph, the white conch cradled, then Piggy very grave, then the twins, then the littluns and the others.
>
> "Sit down all of you. They raided us for fire. They're having fun. But the –"
>
> Ralph was puzzled by the shutter that flickered in his brain. There was something he wanted to say; then the shutter had come down.
>
> "But the –"
>
> They were regarding him gravely [...] (156)

The reference to the "strange shutter" in Ralph's brain is an uncanny turn to interiority. When Simon gazed upon the totemic exterior of the Lord of the Flies, the reader was directed to contemplate Simon's interior workings; and here, even as Ralph is rapt in the rituals of the conch and exteriority, his gaze turns inward to a barrier that has come down in his mind. This "strange shutter" in Ralph's brain is introduced earlier in the novel (near the conclusion of Chapter Six we read that "[a] strange thing happened in his head. Something flittered there in front of his mind like a bat's wing, obscuring his idea" (118)), but here the shutter has a clearer association with death. Not only does the reference remind us of Simon's recent encounter with the *memento mori* of his own skull, but the "shutter" is sandwiched between two oblique references to the "grave" and is set in a scene which, as has already been said, resembles a funeral procession. The reference to the "shutter" is also reprised later in the book, this time as a curtain (180, 188, 217, 218). Curtain is, of course, a trite metaphor for the opaque barrier of death. Golding employs a version of that metaphor in Chapter Eleven, just a few pages before Piggy's demise. As Ralph and Piggy and the little Sam and Eric ("Samneric") approach Castle Rock, we are told that

"Piggy peered anxiously into the luminous veil that hung between him and the world." (193) The material reference is probably to a "screen of grass" that Ralph, leading the group, has just stepped through, but much clearer is the symbolic reference to the veil or curtain of Piggy's imminent death.

On the narrow neck of rock between the veil of grass and the hunters' headquarters on Castle Rock, Ralph blows the conch. This is the last time the shell is sounded. The hunters appear in response to the call, but no longer in obedience to it. They are described as "[s]avages [...] painted out of recognition" (193). Ralph had anticipated this confrontation – literally one type of social front coming up against another. A few pages earlier, he prepares his small band:

> He paused lamely as the curtain flickered in his brain. Piggy held out his hands for the conch.
>
> "What you goin' to do, Ralph? This is jus' talk without deciding. I want my glasses."
>
> "I'm trying to think. Supposing we go, looking like we used to, washed and hair brushed – after all we aren't savages really and being rescued isn't a game –"
>
> He opened the flap of his cheek and looked at the twins.
>
> "We could smarten up a bit and then go –" (188–9)

Ralph suggests that they should reinstate the old order of dress. We are told that the curtain flickered in his brain and that he was "trying to think." That barrier within his mind is symbolic of the walls that separate us from one another in society and the wall of death which ultimately separates us from life *in toto*. These thresholds in human social and religious life have always been associated with special forms of dress.

We are told that when his band ate fruit before they reached Castle Rock, Ralph had looked ahead to the impending confrontation with the hunters:

> [...] While they ate, Ralph thought of the afternoon.
>
> "We'll be like we were. We'll wash –"
>
> Sam gulped down a mouthful and protested.
>
> "But we bathe every day!"
>
> Ralph looked at the filthy objects before him and sighed.
>
> "We ought to comb our hair. Only it's too long."
>
> "I've got both socks left in the shelter," said Eric, "so we could pull them over our heads like caps, sort of."
>
> "We could find some stuff," said Piggy, "and tie your hair back." (190–191)

In the end, Ralph resolves that they should go as they are, confident that the hunters "won't be any better;" indeed, they know that "they'll be painted" (191). The best that Ralph can achieve is to insist that his group will not approach Castle Rock with paint on, "because we aren't savages" (191). He senses that the difference between his society and the society of the hunters is a difference codified in dress. The reader senses that all this talk of washing and combing hair is in the nature of funerary preparation. The external veil of dress has become the internal curtain of death in Ralph's mind. The meal of fruit evokes the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, which fruit is death.

The reader has been specifically prepared to expect this move from dress as social threshold to dress as religious or ritual threshold between life and death. The veil that hangs between Piggy and the world is, we are told, a "luminous" veil (193). This recalls the only other funerary rites in the novel: the ritual washing and (expressly) "dressing" of Simon's corpse by the sea and its luminous host of angel-like creatures. Simon is covered in a sort of coat, but he is also dressed in other ways than clothes:[24]

> Along the shoreward edge of the shallows the advancing clearness was full of strange, moonbeam-bodied creatures with fiery eyes. Here and there a larger pebble clung to its own air and was covered with a coat of pearls. The tide swelled in over the rain-pitted sand and smoothed everything with a layer of silver. Now it touched the first of the stains that seeped from the broken body and the creatures made a moving patch of light as they gathered at the edge. The water rose farther and dressed Simon's coarse hair with brightness. (169–170)

Sure enough, following Piggy's death, Ralph sees "slow spilt milk, luminous round the rock forty feet below, where Piggy had fallen" (210). Piggy's last act of defiance had been to raise the conch and present the hunters with a supposedly stark choice between being "painted" or being "sensible," "to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill" (199). Ralph immediately echoed him: "Which is better, law and rescue, or hunting and breaking things up?" Neither Piggy nor Ralph could see that the choice is not, in fact, a choice between civil and animal, between social and savage, but a choice between peace and war. Both states are social; both states are natural humanly speaking; both states are civil states. Roger answers for the "savages" by dislodging the boulder that tumbles down castle Rock and sends Piggy to his death, and the conch to dust. Only later,

24 Enid Schildkrout has written that "[b]ody art protects a vulnerable person, whether an initiate, a bride, or a deceased person, in this transitional phase." Enid Schildkrout, "Body Art as Visual Language," in *Anthro Notes* (Winter 2001), 2, accessed February 10, 2015, http://anthropology.si.edu/outreach/anthnote/Winter01/anthnote.html.

when he is alone and hiding from the hunters, does Ralph fantasize that his might be just one side of the civilized game. The hunters are playing at war, he is playing at peace: "Might it not be possible to walk boldly into the fort, say – "I've got pax," laugh lightly and sleep among the others? Pretend they were still boys, schoolboys who had said, "Sir, yes, Sir" – and worn caps?" (205). And worn caps? Such small words, such a seemingly superficial addition to the text, and yet the law of dress is the start-all and end-all of the novel. There is no descent, there is no fall from civil to animal. There is merely an endless cycle of dress. A changing of the rules of the game and a change in the markings of the teams. The toga of peace is replaced by the uniform of war. And to cap it all, the "rescue" that Ralph so desired, comes in the form of uniform complete with stripes and cap and a weapon-belt. A uniform not unlike the uniform of the choir-hunters, and yet one that is luminous white like a toga. Ralph, who had been scrambling along the sand to escape his pursuers, looks up to see a cap of war resting on hair dressed and ordered for peace. The cap bears a gold emblem, as Jack's does:

> [...] a huge peaked cap. It was a white-topped cap, and above the green shade of the peak was a crown, an anchor, gold foliage. He saw white drill, epaulettes, a revolver, a row of gilt buttons down the front of a uniform. (221)

Here is law and order combined with war and death. As Hadomi writes:

> Even "rescue," in the final episode of the book, appears in the form of an overdressed and amply uniformed naval officer who represents simultaneously the accepted norms of cultural order and the insignia of the war that looms in the background.[25]

Reading the novel through the lens of dress reveals a more complex, more nuanced and more troubling set of tensions than those suggested by the simplistic binary of clothed or unclothed. For the fact – the troubling fact – is that the boys on the island never cease to be dressed, apart from brief liminal moments of swimming and transformation. Rather they shed one form of dress and adopt another. Clothes give way to masks and paint. Civil peace gives way to civil war. The painted, camouflaged, state is not a native state. It is an artificially constructed façade every bit as much as clothing is and it serves similar purposes. It is also insufficient to regard the stripping away of clothes as being equivalent to a descent from a civilized to a savage or animal state. The truth, rather, is that one order of civilization has given way to another. The old order, with its emphasis on collective respect for cloth, has given way to a new

25 Hadomi, "Imagery as a Source of Irony in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*," 86.

civil order that has respect for a different mode of dress. The totemic basis for civil order isn't obliterated, what occurs is a transformation in the totem from shell to skull. The order of dress isn't destroyed, what occurs is a change of dress from clothes to paint. The order of rules isn't overthrown, what occurs is change in the particular rules. The last of these facts is hardest to see, and many commentators wrongly assume that the novel describes a descent from the order of rules to a disorderly chaos, and some make the mistake of assuming that there would be no violence if only the rules were stronger and more strictly enforced.[26] This is quite wrong, for the true horror of the story is that rules and dress and totemic symbols may be constantly present even when civilization breaks down, and despite their presence they are impotent in their own capacities to prevent violence. Even war, after all, is a game that civilized nations play according to conventions and codes of conduct. Even the Nazis had strong rules and enforced them strictly. There is no debate about that; the only debate is whether Nazi rules were "just not law" or "not just law."

Formal rules, dress and symbols are universal features of human society and they are, in themselves, universally hollow. The pig's skull, like piggy's skull, might seem to have more inner substance than the shell, but the skull itself is shown to be a shell after all. Simon saw this. Hadomi is surely right when she suggests that "clothing imagery is a commentary on the validity of cultural coverage."[27] It certainly is that, and so is the wider imagery of dress: paint, shell, decorated castles, Piggy's spectacles and so on. The challenge is to test appearances for their underlying validity. Rules without justice are a hollow shell. So too is law without life in it.

This paper has been the latest in a long line of commentaries on Golding's novel, but it is appropriate that the final word should go to Golding himself, who was the first to commentate on his own work. In 1954, the year of the novel's publication, his publisher asked him to summarize the theme of the book for the purposes of advertisement. In his response, he described the novel as "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or Respectable." That summary contains a salutary warning which it has been my purpose to reiterate here. It is that the efforts of conservative forces to maintain civilization's respectable shapes in the face of the threat of decent into degeneracy may prove a dangerous distraction from the individual's

26 Kathleen Woodward, "The Case for Strict Law and Order," in *Readings on Lord of the Flies*, ed. Bruno Leone (San Diego, CA: Green Haven Press, 1997), 88–97.

27 Hadomi, "Imagery as a Source of Irony in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*," 84.

necessary struggle to resist conformity to the very shapes that civil society imposes through its norms.[28] There is always a shell and it always calls us to gather round it and to join in the collective clamour. The call might be to patriotism or to martyrdom or it might be a call to faith in a species of rule – to "equality" or "human rights," for example. Those last two are modern totems in the law, and since the horrors of The Holocaust our hope has been in the rule of "human rights" especially. Indeed we can say that "human rights" has become the supreme totem of the thing we call "civilization." How beautiful it looks, how much like a perfect conch plucked innocently from some unspoiled lagoon. It may be that its beauty has not faded yet, but we must remain vigilant and keep in mind the warning of Golding's *Lord of the Flies*: that a system of rules, however we dress it up, will be dangerously hollow unless it has the individual human at heart.

Gary Watt

Gary Watt is a professor of law at The University of Warwick, UK. He is a founding co-editor of the journal *Law and Humanities* and the author of a number of monographs in the field of law and humanities, including *Equity Stirring: The Story of Justice Beyond Law* (Hart, 2009); *Dress, Law and Naked Truth: A Cultural Study of Fashion and Form* (Bloomsbury, 2013) and *Shakespeare's Acts of Will: Law, Testament and Properties of Performance* (Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016). He is also the author of a number of legal texts, including *Trusts and Equity* 7th edn (OUP, 2016). In 2009 he was named UK "Law Teacher of the Year" and in 2010 was made a National Teaching Fellow.

28 Compare Daniela Carpi's conclusion that Golding is warning that we can never feel secure within the law ("William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*: the Failure of the Law", *Pólemos* 1 (2010): 194–206).

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