The Kids Are Still Not Alright: Rediscovering *Lord Of The Flies*

Florian Andrei Vlad
"Ovidius" University Constanta

Abstract

When Lord of the Flies was published in 1954, its frank depiction of wholesome British schoolboys descending into barbarism and brutality was shocking and disturbing to many.Since then, its shock value has decreased significantly. After all, we live in an age where casual youth violence, more extreme than anything done by Golding's murderous choirboys, is a staple of relatively uncontroversial film and fiction directed at young adults, such as the Hunger Games franchise, films such as Hanna or TV series such as The 100. Furthermore, Golding's book may seem quaint, toothless and rigidly moralistic compared to the much edgier "youth apocalypse" films of Larry Clark or (early career) Harmony Korine. Even more poignantly, the worst excesses of Golding's characters are, so to speak, child's play compared to the spree killings or terrorist executions committed by young males, lavishly covered in contemporary media. However, I argue that even with a drastically decreased shock factor, Lord of the Flies maintains contemporary relevance, owing to a number of themes which continue to inform representations of youth in popular culture: the pathologization of deviant youthful masculinity, the issue of "evil" as an immanent and ahistorical threat to peaceful social coexistence, and the fragility of (Western) civilization in the face of ecstatic violence driven by "will to power."