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PORTRAYAL OF URBAN VIOLENCE IN JG BALLARD'S NOVELS

This paper deals with the social and humanistic aspects of life within communities affected by violence, focusing on the concrete manifestations of violence in JG. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), his urban disaster novel *High Rise* (1975), and his urban violence novel *Cocaine Nights* (1996), to explore the evolving typologies of violence within urban settings. Each novel offers a unique exploration of violence within the urban landscape, ranging from psychological and societal violence to the fetishisation of automotive accidents and the darker undercurrents of suburban tranquillity. The paper offers insights into Ballard's recurring motifs and stylistic approaches to depicting urban violence. The hypothesis posits that Ballard's depiction of urban violence serves as a reflection of contemporary societal anxieties and the impact of modernity on human behaviour. We suggest that the violence in urban communities portrayed in these novels stems directly from society's obsession with media sensationalism and technological progress. Additionally, there is a reciprocal relationship between the urban environment and the human psyche, where the protagonists' internal states are projected outward. By dealing with the specific forms of violence depicted in selected novels, the paper seeks to elucidate the thematic nuances of societal breakdown, the alienation of individuals and its impact on their well-being within the context of contemporary urban life.

Key words: urban landscape; urban violence; media; technology; urban disaster, mental health, individual's well-being

1. URBAN VIOLENCE IN THE WORKS OF J.G. BALLARD: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In contemporary society, the pervasive presence of violence poses significant challenges to the safety and stability of communities worldwide. From street crime to domestic abuse, acts of violence infiltrate the fabric of urban life, leaving indelible marks on individuals and societies alike. As scholars and practitioners seek to understand and address this complex phenomenon, literature emerges as a valuable lens to explore the nuanced intricacies of violence and its repercussions on human existence. Among the notable literary voices that confront the theme of violence occurring in urban settings, JG Ballard is a seminal figure whose works provide significant insights into the dystopian landscape of modernity.

Ballard's oeuvre is characterised by a stark portrayal of urban decay, societal disintegration, and the breakdown of norms, presenting readers with dystopian visions that serve as cautionary tales of the consequences of unchecked violence. Through his works, from the 1970s to 2000s, he depicts different forms of violence, such as physical, psychological, social, symbolic, technological, and eroticised, manifesting within the urban settings, and they often intersect and overlap, creating a complex and disturbing portrayal of urban violence and psychological ramifications.

Ballard's persistent fascination with the darker aspects of seemingly rational and productive communities offers insight into the connections between violence, power, and group psychology. Graham Matthews (2013: 136) argues that Ballard traces a transition from traditional civic values to communities deeply rooted in violence, consumerism, and deviant sexual impulses. These elements are identified as central sources of ennui, alienation, and distorted moral values. For example, in *Kingdom Come*, consumerism dominates, while in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, communities are ensnared in vice and apathy. Matthews (2013: 136) posits that these societies, suspended in irrationality, inevitably lead to boredom, fascism, and ultimately violence. Social interaction in these communities often devolves into forms of psychopathy, as depicted across various levels in Ballard's novels. The gated communities depicted in Ballard's urban violence novels, or the concrete asylum of the novel *High-Rise*, warn of the paradigm shift where traditional bonds of community – religion, monarchy, and democracy – are no longer applicable (Ibid.). This situation necessitates a new radical democracy to forge a renewed national identity. The omnipresent motif of violence across various levels, the erosion of individuality, environmental degradation from technological exploitation, and the dis-

placement of human roles by technology define dystopian microcosms within these communities.

Carter J. Wood (2012: 203) examines how Ballard's futuristic enclaves reflect a "world in a world" where the physical environment distorts human nature into an "asocial habitus". He notes that modern societies, devoid of traditional community values, identities, and activities, become simulacra of reality, influenced by media. Wood highlights the emergence of violence into the public sphere as a means to dismantle civilising mechanisms, inciting a resurgence of barbarism. He also discusses the occurrence of a de-civilizing spiral, notably depicted in *High-Rise*, where violence re-emerges in formerly pacified public spheres (Ibid. 207). Wood suggests that tightly controlled societies may inadvertently give rise to new forms of psychopathology as they suppress spontaneous and primal impulses, leading to a dulling of basic excitement.

To confront and combat ontological and material crises, Ballard challenges his citizenry by placing them in meaningless universes fraught with social and spiritual disaster, entropy, and the pervasive power of technology. These environments, dominated by high-tech and media, aim to achieve ultimate utopias within dystopian landscapes. However, they ultimately reveal themselves as dystopias of the near future, characterised by illusions of material and aesthetic paradise within gated communities. His characters pursue psychological utopias amidst dystopian landscapes, wherein the "atrophy of affect" catalyzes the creation of an illusory Eden of violence (Wilson 2017: 148). Furthermore, this atrophy of affect is established by genetic predetermination, social conditioning, and drug use. For Ballard, it portrays an entropy of affect generated by a super-rich blip and leisure culture, a fourth world dominated by meaningless violence omnipresent in the urban violence quadrilogy. Apart from that, there is a marked shift in the new world order that has become obsessed and predominated by consumerism (shopping malls), CCTV, and violence. This creates a vicious cycle of crime, deviant pleasures and behaviours, impervious citizenry, and alienation, mostly led by modern "messiahs" with their deviant logics. As the introductory line of the novel *Kingdom Comes* suggests: "The suburbs dream of violence. Asleep in their drowsy villas, sheltered by benevolent shopping malls, they wait patiently for the nightmares that will wake them into a more passionate world" (*KC* 2006: 3). These illusory Edens are marked by sheer absurdity, wherein, among other things, worshipping giant bears in a shopping mall becomes a new religious undertaking.

Ballard's critique of modern society explores various forms of violence, challenging readers to confront its presence in everyday life. His central exploration of urban violence integrates power dynamics, alienation, and the erosion of empathy within communities under duress. His characters navigate landscapes fraught with tension, where the quest for survival often trumps moral considerations, leading to acts of brutality and depravity. Through their experiences, Ballard illuminates how violence becomes both a symptom and a catalyst of societal breakdown, engendering cycles of conflict and despair that reverberate throughout the urban landscape. Violence within urban settings encompasses a spectrum of manifestations, each shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics of societal disintegration and human behaviour.

In novels like *High-Rise, Crash* (1973) and *Kingdom Come* (2006), physical violence reflects societal dehumanisation, while psychological violence is depicted in *Super-Cannes* (2000), where the protagonist undergoes profound psychological turmoil and manipulation within the confines of the gated community of Eden-Olympia. Each gated community represents a realm of 'exhausted futures,' compelling its residents to resort to violence and illicit behaviour in a bid to infuse vitality into the lifeless husks of their ennui-laden domains (Wilson 2017). *Concrete Island* (1974) and *Millennium People* (2003) explore psychological distress amidst urban isolation. Social violence erupts in *Cocaine Night*s, where societal breakdowns lead to riots and anarchic behaviour within an expatriate community, while symbolic violence in High-Rise critiques societal norms. Technological violence exacerbates societal decay through surveillance systems in *Cocaine Night*s, fetishisation of car crashes in *Crash*, and mind-altering drugs in *Super-Cannes*. Lastly, eroticised violence blurs boundaries between sexuality and aggression, evident in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, where sexual fantasies involve violence and celebrities, such as Marilyn Monroe and Ronald Reagan, or in Crash, where characters derive sexual pleasure and arousal from collisions and injuries.

This paper focuses on examining concrete forms of violence in urban settings through the lens of three of Ballard's novels: *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *High-Rise*, and *Cocaine Nights.* We propose that the violence in urban communities depicted in these novels directly results from the society's fixation on media sensationalism and technological advancement. Furthermore, the relationship between the urban landscape and the human psyche is reciprocal, with the protagonists' inner psychology being externalised. This highlights how modern societal obsessions manifest in violent ways within urban settings. The paper argues that Ballard's narratives profoundly comment on the contemporary condition. Each novel offers a deep understanding of urban vi-

olence, from surreal commentary on media saturation to visceral portrayals of social collapse and hidden violence within seemingly idyllic settings. Ballard's works, therefore, not only reflect societal anxieties but also critique the modern obsessions that exacerbate violence and alienation within urban landscapes.

The Atrocity Exhibition, known for its experimental narrative and surreal imagery, offers a unique insight into the intersection of violence, media, and modernity. Ballard explores the dehumanizing effects of media saturation and the erosion of traditional values through fragmented vignettes, presenting a chilling commentary on the potential consequences of technological advancement and societal fragmentation. *High-Rise*, on the other hand, provides a visceral portrayal of physical violence erupting within the confines of a luxury high-rise building. This novel, part of Ballard's urban disaster trilogy, examines the breakdown of social order and the descent into barbarism among the building's affluent residents, offering a stark commentary on class conflict, alienation, and the fragility of civilization in the face of urban isolation. *Cocaine Nights*, part of Ballard's urban violence quadrilogy, examines the darker underbelly of expatriate communities in resort towns. Set in an idyllic Spanish resort, the novel explores the simmering tensions and hidden violence lurking beneath the surface of seemingly perfect surroundings, shedding light on the complexities of human behaviour and the allure of hedonism in urban settings. Yet, irrespective of the type of violence illustrated in each of the novels, the narrator's statement captures the essence of succumbing to the very act: "People like violence. It stirs the blood, speeds the pulse. Violence is the best way of controlling them, making sure that things don't get really out of hand" (*KC* 2006: 179).

2. MEDIA VIOLENCE IN URBAN SETTINGS IN THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION

The Atrocity Exhibition, Ballard's most experimental, "most demanding and most unsettling" (Gasiorek 2005: 58) work featuring a fragmented and non-linear storyline, "problematizes the monolithic divide between Modernism and Postmodernism" (Luckhurst 1997: xvii). It represents "the fragmented condition of a media-statured Western culture" of the 1960s (Tereszewski 2020: 75). The novel presents violence as a conceptual, psychological force, often associated with the media's graphic portrayal of war, accidents, assassinations, and other violent events that the protagonist T- obsessively reconstructs. The protagonist's fluid identity is reflected in various forms of his proper name such as Traven, Talbot, Tallis, Travert, Travis, Talbert, and

Travers and different social roles he takes ranging from being a scientist, a lecturer suffering extreme stress and anxiety, a patient at a psychiatric facility, an instructor in an institute, someone connected with space flights, to a former H-bomb pilot.

Throughout the novel, the protagonist, T-, becomes increasingly disconnected from reality, experiencing hallucinations and delusions. This internal violence mirrors the external chaos of the urban environment, blurring the lines between inner and outer turmoil. The violence here is more abstract and tied to the media landscape and its psychological impact on individuals. Ballard critiques the media's obsession with tragedy and spectacle, depicting scenes of car crashes and terrorist attacks as forms of entertainment. He was particularly concerned about the intermediary role of the telecommunications industry in the 1960s, which, in his opinion, obscured the true meaning of significant events of that time while colonizing all channels through which information about the world spread (Gasiorek 2005: 61). Referring to the protagonist T- and his fragmented mind and personality, Ballard places him within the matrix of blip culture, where the "human organism is an atrocity exhibition at which he is an unwilling spectator" (*AE* 1990: 9) This highlights the idea that the television audience - exposed to sensationalized clips from the Vietnam war and the Kennedy assassination alongside cereal commercials and film previews – has become desensitized to death and violence which it has become accustomed to as a media event (Wilson 2017: 76).

At one point in the novel, the protagonist Talbot observes that "automobile crashes play very different roles from the ones we assign them," such as being our most potent consumer durable, and that "the car crash may be perceived unconsciously as a fertilising rather than a destructive event – a liberation of sexual energy – mediating the sexuality of those who have died with an intensity impossible in any other form: James Dean and Miss Mansfield, Camus and the late President" (*AE* 1990: 29). Talbot's observation suggests a provocative reevaluation of the societal perception of automobile crashes. Rather than viewing them solely as destructive events, he proposes that they hold a deeper significance, particularly in the realm of human sexuality. By suggesting that car crashes serve as a conduit for the liberation of sexual energy, Talbot implies that these tragic incidents have a profound impact on the collective psyche, transcending mere physical destruction. The mention of cultural icons like James Dean, Jayne Mansfield, Albert Camus, and the 'late' President further underscores Talbot's assertion, as these figures, associated with either a tragic or sensationalised demise, become intertwined with the imagery of car crashes, suggesting a fusion of sexuality, celebrity, and mortality. Talbot's observation implies that society

unconsciously assigns a symbolic meaning to car crashes, elevating them to a status beyond mere accidents. Furthermore, Talbot's reference to the car crash as a "fertilising event" implies a transformative aspect to these incidents. Rather than being solely destructive, they serve as catalysts for change, perhaps even a form of rebirth or renewal. This interpretation aligns with Ballard's broader critique of the media's portrayal of violence and tragedy as a form of entertainment, suggesting that society's fascination with such events goes beyond mere morbid curiosity and may tap into deeper psychological and cultural currents.

The novel lacks a coherent structure but is rich with seemingly disconnected images which make up the media-scape of the 1960s hinting at "the emotional and spiritual sterility of contemporary Western culture, its loss of vitality and direction" (Stephenson 1991: 64). These images can be categorised as following: pop iconography (with the references to Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor), politics (JFK, Ralph Nader), and violence (assassinations, the Vietnam War). This voyeuristic gaze amplifies the sense of alienation and desensitisation of an individual within barren, man-made urban settings saturated with violent atrocities. The landscapes shored against these images point to the characters' psychological state and offer a commentary on the current state of culture. Intriguingly, rather than portraying the environment through the individual's subjective lens, Ballard depicts the protagonist's psychological state through the imagery and events unfolding within the urban setting, as noted by Tereszewski (2020: 79). A notable instance of this can be found in the protagonist's preoccupation with car crashes, which he obsessively reconstructs and reimagines within the urban landscape, using them as a metaphor for his fractured psyche and inner turmoil: "After the police had left they walked for an hour among the cars, staring through the steam at the bodies propped against the fractured windshields. Here he would find his alternate death, the mimetised disasters of Vietnam and the Congo recapitulated in the contours of these broken fenders and radiator assemblies" (*AE* 1990: 21-22). This fixation reflects the protagonist's fascination with violence and death, as well as his longing to experience an 'alternate death' by witnessing the aftermath of these collisions. The reference to 'mimetised disasters of Vietnam and the Congo' suggests that the protagonist sees parallels between these car crashes and larger-scale tragedies, viewing the wreckage as a microcosm of the violence and chaos present in those conflict zones. Through this, Ballard externalises the protagonist's inner psychology, projecting it onto the environment and making the landscape a register of human psychic activity.

The media are crucial in bridging the gap between personal fantasies and public events, essentially merging inner thoughts with external realities. Rather than transforming private fantasies, the media validate them. Ballard argues against the conventional notion that subjectivism is inherently negative, asserting that it is based on a limited understanding of objectivity. In essence, his viewpoint implies that the media serve to affirm individual experiences and perceptions, challenging traditional ideas about objective reality (Perry & Wilkie 1975). In urban settings, particularly in the context of violence, this suggests that media representations can shape and validate people's perceptions of violent events, influencing how they understand and respond to such occurrences.

Namely, the 1960s saw a significant shift from traditional print media to electronic forms, coinciding with tumultuous events in American and Western history. Live coverage of the Vietnam War, the Kennedy assassination, and the live broadcast of Lee Harvey Oswald's killing brought violence directly to people's homes. Amidst a backdrop of countercultural upheaval, space exploration, geopolitical tension, and consumerism, society underwent profound changes. Thus, the novel reflects this cultural metamorphosis through a fragmented collage of images, akin to flickering scenes on a television screen, blending elements of seriousness and sensationalism, tragedy and triviality, violence and sensuality, and mixing the glamour of Hollywood with the grotesque realities of politics. It engages with iconic moments like Marilyn Monroe's demise and the emergence of Ronald Reagan as a political figure, symbolising the fusion of fantasy and reality in the media landscape. Through this kaleidoscope of imagery, Ballard captures the surreal essence of a world increasingly shaped by the pervasive influence of electronic media.

Thematic parallels between Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* and Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) have been remarked by scholars regarding their exploration of the spectacle and its influence on 1960s culture (Gasiorek 2005; Paddy 2015; Tereszewski 2020). While Debord's critique focuses on the dominance of capitalist-driven phenomena like television and advertising, Ballard's fiction vividly portrays a world saturated by media imagery, surveillance, and urban signage (Ferris 2019). Although Debord's concept of the spectacle remains complex and multifaceted, it critiques modern society's alienation and commodification of reality. In Debord's view (1970), the spectacle diminishes meaningful action and connection, instead offering passive consumption of corporate narratives. Ballard's work echoes these themes, portraying a landscape where reality is fragmented and devoid of inherent meaning, leaving individuals entranced by banal fantasies perpetuated by mass media.

In the context of media violence in urban settings, Ballard's annotation to chapter 10 titled "Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy," highlights the power of media to shape perceptions and emotions, blurring distinctions between real-life events and fictional narratives. Ballard explores the impact of media violence, where disturbing images such as a blood-spattered widow or a car crash merge with glamorous portrayals of political figures or celebrities, creating a secondary narrative with contrasting meanings. The chapter opens with the protagonist's obsession with Jacqueline Kennedy, whom he views as a symbol of glamour and sophistication. However, his admiration, fueled by images of her in magazines and newspapers, which he collects and obsessively pores over, quickly turns dark as he becomes fixated on the idea of her assassination. He begins to fantasise about various scenarios in which Jacqueline is killed, each more elaborate and violent than the last. Travis's psyche is thus presented, revealing deep-seated misogyny, violence lurking beneath his veneer of civility. The fact that Travis' violent obsession is mediated by television is exemplified through detailed descriptions of his dreams and assassination fantasies involving pornographic films featuring celebrity women and photographs, where portions of their bodies are removed. For instance, in one film, segments of faces belonging to Madame Chiang, Elizabeth Taylor, and Jacqueline Kennedy are montaged, accompanied by "the use of a concealed stroboscopic device", resulting in "psychomotor disturbances and aggressive attacks [of the audience] directed at still photographs of the subjects" (*AE* 1990: 90). Another film, based on a cinematic version of Ralph Nader's book titled *Unsafe at Any Speed*,[1] features "slow-motion sequences" with "a sedative effect" on viewers (Ibid.). The photographs where mouth-parts of these three women were removed "provided a particular focus for aggression, sexual fantasies and retributive fears" (Ibid.). Travis's fantasies, described in graphic detail, depict scenes of sexualized violence and degradation. These fantasies serve as a reflection of the protagonist's inner turmoil and his desire to assert control over the object of his obsession.

In Chapter 14, "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan," Ballard examines the unsettling intersection of sexuality, pop-culture, and political power. The chapter explores a disturbing examination of Ronald Reagan's persona and the fascination with auto disasters and sexual fantasies surrounding him. Through detailed descriptions of simulated auto crashes, such as "multiple pile-ups, head-on collisions, motorcade attacks" and "powerful erotic fantasies of an anal-sadistic character" involving Rea-

1 *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* (1965) was a best seller in non-fiction written by Ralph Nader questioning the safety of cars produced by car manufacturers.

gan (Ibid.), Ballard reflects on society's fixation with sensationalised violence and sexualised imagery perpetuated by the media. He underscores the media's manipulation of reality by providing the array of sexual fantasies experienced by the protagonist. In one of them, a replica of Reagan's head was placed on unaltered crash victims' photographs, highlighting the quest for "maximum audience excitation" (Ibid. 106). Another instance involves photographs showing couples engaged in sexual activity, but with Ronald Reagan's face placed over theirs. Also, the protagonist mentions cine-films with multiple tracks showing Reagan involved in sexual intercourse, interspersed with footage of "(a) campaign speeches, (b) rear-end auto collisions with one- and three-year-old model changes, (c) alongside rear exhaust assemblies, and (d) amidst Vietnamese child-atrocity victims", or "dolls consisting of plastic models of Reagan's alternate genitalia" (Ibid. 106).

Reagan is depicted as a media entity assuming various socially-constructed identities, stripped of individuality and reduced to a manufactured image: "Fragments of Reagan's cinetized postures were used in the construction of model psychodramas in which the Reagan-figure played the role of husband, doctor, insurance salesman, marriage counsellor, etc." (Ibid.). However, these roles fail to convey any genuine meaning, revealing the superficiality of Reagan's constructed image. Therefore, Reagan's success "indicates society's periodic need to re-conceptualise its political leaders." In other words, his success lies not in the content of his policies but in the way he presents himself, capitalising on the power of spectacle to shape public perception: "Reagan thus appears as a series of posture concepts, basic equations which re-formulate the roles of aggression and anality" (Ibid.). This portrayal underscores the influence of media imagery on public perception and highlights the constructed nature of political authority in contemporary society. This blurring of reality and fiction stresses the dangers of dehumanising individuals and reducing life to superficial spectacles, echoing critiques of modern society. Moreover, the chapter suggests that the urban environment exacerbates these obsessions and fantasies by constantly bombarding media stimuli.

In Chapter 15, "Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race," Ballard embarks on a surreal and provocative exploration of Kennedy's assassination, infusing it with the spectacle and adrenaline rush of a high-speed race. The chapter unfolds with the motor race serving as a metaphor for the tragic events of November 22, 1963. Kennedy's motorcade's trajectory is likened to a racing car hurtling down a track, each turn and manoeuvre mirroring the twists and turns of the assassination plot.

The assassination is depicted as a carefully choreographed spectacle, with Kennedy's motorcade engulfed by "the hostile local crowd", who was "eager to see a win by the home driver Johnson." As a result, it "deliberately set out to stop [Kennedy] completing the race" (Ibid. 109). This portrayal suggests the complicity of the media in perpetuating and sensationalising conspiracy theories, contributing to the confusion and chaos surrounding the event. The chapter begins with the suggestion that a less conventional view of the events may provide a more satisfactory explanation, referencing Alfred Jarry's absurd play, "The Crucifixion Considered as an Uphill Bicycle Race."[2] This immediately sets the tone for a narrative that challenges traditional interpretations and invites readers to consider alternative perspectives. The use of terminology associated with motor racing, such as "the race," "starting gun," and "finishing line," serves as a metaphor for the competitive and sensational nature of media coverage surrounding tragic events: "Oswald was the starter. From his window above the track, he opened the race by firing the starting gun" (Ibid. 108). Furthermore, the portrayal of Kennedy's assassination as a race adds a layer of dark humour to the narrative, highlighting the absurdity of attempting to rationalise such a senseless act through the lens of a sporting event: "Kennedy got off to a bad start... Johnson now continued the race in the lead, which he maintained to the finish" (Ibid. 108-109). Toward the end of the chapter, Ballard leaves readers with a lingering question about who loaded the starting gun, suggesting that the media's role in shaping public perception and understanding of historical events remains a mystery: "Without doubt, Oswald badly misfired. But one question still remains unanswered: who loaded the starting gun?"

3. PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN *HIGH-RISE*

Ballard's novels of the 1970s depict violence not merely as an act of physical aggression but also as an outcome of psychological distress, societal breakdown, and a perverse fascination with disaster and death. The violence in his urban disaster trilogy consisting of *Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974), and *High-Rise* (1975), is closely

2 Alfred Jarry, a French writer, is often recognized as a precursor to the surrealist theater of the 1920s and 1930s. His works are pioneering examples of absurdist literature. The final chapter of *The Atrocity Exhibition* can be seen as one of many surreal attempts to comprehend the absurdity of Kennedy's assassination. In this context, the chapter aims "to kill Kennedy again but in a way that makes sense" (*AE*, 50), by combining two seemingly unrelated and absurd elements – the fast-paced, often chaotic world of car racing and the intense, sensationalized media coverage of the presidential race.

tied to the urban setting, often exacerbated by the alienation and dehumanisation that these environments can provoke. Physical entities as essential components of urban landscape – cars, motorways, skyscrapers, business parks, resorts – stand for social and mental estrangement of human beings and are set in closed-gated communities that reflect an imagined perfection but breed social and psychological entropy (Škobo & Đukić 2022).

The shift from cataclysms of exterior space reaching global proportions in Ballard's novels from the first half of the 1960s, to the more internalised, personalised catastrophes, especially evident in his urban disaster trilogy, provides fertile ground for science fiction, as the scope of cataclysm is now limited to an individual level, with the rest of the world acting indifferently. This evolution is attributed to the development of science and technology, which has confirmed Ballard's premonition that the technological and media landscape around us reflects and fulfils our darkest impulses, as noted by David Pringle (Petrović 2005).

Dark impulses fueled by technology and media are reflected in various forms of violence within Ballard's urban disaster novels. In *High-Rise*, Ballard explores the intricate dynamics of violence within the confines of a luxury high-rise building. Here, violence manifests as a palpable and physical force, stemming from the profound alienation and simmering class conflict among the building's residents. As the high-rise's systems begin to fail and tensions escalate, the inhabitants regress into tribalism, leading to violent confrontations, acts of vandalism, and a complete breakdown of societal order within the building. Unlike in *Crash*, where violence is highly sexualized and intimately tied to car-crash fetishism, the violence in *High-Rise* emerges from a broader spectrum of societal unrest and psychological disintegration. The novel follows Dr. Robert Laing as he moves into a luxurious high-rise building on the outskirts of London. After divorcing his wife, he decides to buy an apartment in this apartment block. This decision comes upon his sister's persuasion, who senses that this self-contained residential complex will satisfy his need for isolation and anonymity. Initially, life seems idyllic, with the building providing all the amenities its affluent tenants could desire. However, as minor power failures and petty grievances escalate, the building descends into chaos.

It becomes evident from the very beginning of the novel that this enclave, equipped with infrastructure capable of meeting all of the conceivable needs of its residents, is not the residential-consumer paradise initially envisioned by its creators. It turns out that this 'concrete landscape' appears to be an "environment built, not for man, but for man's absence" (*HR* 1975: 25). The apartment block is likened to both a zoo and a prison, housing privileged inmates while also serving as a concrete den

that incites every anti-social impulse in its inhabitants (Pringle 1980). As the violence escalates and bodies pile up, no one considers leaving or seeking help. The troubles seem to originate from the malfunctioning of certain elements of infrastructure, such as electrical installations, elevators, and waste disposal systems (Petrović 2005). Isolated forms of antisocial behaviour emerge as a result of these malfunctions, but they quickly escalate into more widespread issues. The disintegration of the social system within the building begins with wild, alcohol-soaked parties, during which serious conflicts arise among seemingly highly qualified professionals. Residents divide into opposing clans and soon adopt a tribal mentality. Polarization occurs within the building, with people abandoning work to protect their territory and engage in battles against rival clans. Some residents regress to primitive lifestyles resembling Neanderthals, while others hunt deserted hallways filled with traps. Meanwhile, some form tribes with the intention of killing intruders who encroach upon their territory. This marks the degeneration of social contact, as it distorts into unrestrained aggression and barbarism (Ibid.).

In his oeuvre encompassing urban disaster and urban violence novels, Ballard recurrently emphasizes the correlation between the physical landscape and the inner one, as seen in *High-Rise* where 'trapped protagonists' exhibit anomalous and barbaric conduct within their 'claustrophobic atmospheres' (Gasiorek 2005: 109). This implies that the physical environment serves as the catalyst for violent behaviour, with the high-rise representing the antithesis of urban life by isolating its inhabitants and promoting violent conflicts without the possibility of sustaining viable communal life (Ibid. 110). In this light, the breakdown of social order within the high-rise can be understood in light of the environment it fosters. As Ballard describes, "the more arid and affectless life became in the high-rise, the greater the possibilities it offered" (*HR* 1975: 15). The malfunctioning infrastructure and isolation from external society create an atmosphere where residents are liberated from societal norms and free to explore their darkest impulses. The high-rise becomes a model of technological advancement enabling the expression of a truly free psychopathology. Thus, the physical environment of the high-rise, coupled with societal disintegration and technological advancement, fosters an atmosphere where deviant behaviour flourishes, leading to a descent into chaos and barbarism. Also, the urban environment, with its towering skyscrapers and closed-off communities, exacerbates feelings ofisolation and dehumanization, ultimately fueling the descent into barbarity among its residents.

Violence here is not limited to a particular obsession or fetish but instead reflects the breakdown of societal norms and the escalating conflict between different social

classes. Ballard vividly portrays fights, assaults, and even murders occurring within the high-rise environment, as characters abandon civility and succumb to primal instincts in a struggle for power and control. His portrayal of women in this novel, as in some of his earlier ones, denotes a threat to the hero in various ways and also expresses forms of violence. At one point in the novel, Dr. Laing warns himself: "Careful, Laing, or some stockbroker's wife will unman you as expertly as she destones a pair of avocados" (Ibid. 31). Moreover, instances of violent assaults towards other women provoke disruptive incidents, disrupting the dormant atmosphere with 'a fresh series of provocations': "During the electricity blackout, the eighteen-year-old wife of a fashion photographer on the 38th floor was assaulted in the hairdressing salon by an unknown woman. Presumably in retaliation, three air-hostesses from the 2nd floor were aggressively jostled by a party of marauding top-floor matrons led by the strong-shouldered wife of the jeweler" (Ibid. 11).

These representations of female violence and violence against women serve several critical functions in the novel. First, they underscore the universality of the breakdown in societal norms, demonstrating that the descent into chaos affects all residents, regardless of gender. The involvement of women in both the perpetration and receipt of violence indicates that no one is immune to the building's degenerative influence, highlighting the collapse of traditional gender roles and the pervasive reach of the high-rise's dehumanising environment. The specific depiction of women as both aggressors and victims complicates the narrative, suggesting that the violence in the high-rise is not merely a symptom of male aggression or a patriarchal society in crisis but a more comprehensive societal collapse where traditional power dynamics are upended. Dr. Laing's self-warning about the stockbroker's wife indicates a fear of emasculation and a reversal of gender power, reflecting anxieties about women's agency and the shifting balance of power. Furthermore, the assault on the young wife and the retaliatory attack by the top-floor matrons emphasize the cycle of violence and retribution that permeates the building. This cyclical violence perpetuates the breakdown of community and solidarity, fostering an environment where mistrust and aggression become the norm. The high-rise becomes a microcosm of societal decay, where the residents' abandonment of civility is mirrored in their increasingly violent interactions, blurring the lines between victim and aggressor.

The representation of female violence also speaks to the broader themes of alienation and isolation in the novel. The high-rise, initially a symbol of modern living and convenience, transforms into a prison where the lack of external societal structures exacerbates the residents' descent into savagery. Women's participation in vio-

lence reflects their entrapment within this system, illustrating how the high-rise erodes the fundamental aspects of human interaction and identity.

In relation to the characters, *High-Rise* appears exceptional among Ballard's other novels as it features three central characters: Dr. Laing, the detached observer; Richard Wilder, the aggressive TV producer; and Anthony Royal, the eccentric architect (Pringle 1980). What is also specific about these characters and the symbolism of violence inherent in every corner of this high-rise is the manner in which they meet their end. As the novel progresses, Dr. Laing's pathological impulses become increasingly prominent, as he becomes more androcentric towards women (Wilson 2017). Driven by a desire for seclusion offered by the 'self-contained' block, he isolates himself with his sister Alice and TV critic Eleanor Powell. They become objects of his affection, and he feels the need to be alone with them, to be aggressive, and to succumb to the impulses and perversities that the high-rise offers, involving himself with Eleanor and his sister. Near the end of the novel, his pathological impulses escalate to such an extent that he fervently anticipates addicting them to morphine and binding them to this polygamous, incestuous family unit. This transformation is encapsulated in the quote: "It no longer mattered how he behaved, what wayward impulses he gave way to, or which perverse pathways he chose to follow" (*HR* 1975: 172).

Richard Wilder drowns a dog in the tenth-floor pool during the electricity blackout, igniting the chaos of the forthcoming breakdown (Wilson 2017). He seeks to "dominate" the high-rise in order to "meet the physical challenge it presented to him" (*HR* 1975: 48). Wilder ascends to the roof, equipped with a cine-camera in one hand and a gun in the other, to shoot a documentary of the violent affairs. In the process, he becomes more animalistic. However, other residents, including a stockbroker, two paediatricians, and three senior academics, catch him in his doings, beat him up, and send him to the first-floor lobby. Eventually, Wilder reaches the roof and puts a bullet in Royal (Wilson 2017). Wilder, smeared with blood and lipstick, becomes the sacrificial victim of a horrid matriarchy, while Royal, with a bullet in his chest, presides over a swimming pool full of corpses (Pringle 1980).

The portrayal of Wilder's transformation and eventual downfall at the hands of the residents, particularly under the control of women, deepens the exploration of female violence and its impact within the novel. Wilder being covered with blood and lipstick symbolizes his reduction to a sacrificial victim in a ritualistic display of violence and power, highlighting the inversion of traditional gender roles and the emergence of a dominant female force within the high-rise. Women who were initially subjected to violence transform into aggressors, embodying the brutality that has en-

gulfed their environment. This challenges the reader to consider the cyclical nature of violence and the potential for roles to reverse in extreme conditions.

4. MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN URBAN ENCLAVES OF *COCAINE NIGHTS*

Ballard's urban violence novels, including *Cocaine Nights* (1996), *Super-Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003) and *Kingdom Come* (2006), depict gated communities that project an almost utopian façade, offering residents a false sense of tranquillity and indulgence in hedonistic pursuits. These enclaves, emerging as manifestations of humanity's disconnection from nature and obsession with technology, range from dystopian resort communities, such as Estrella de Mar and the Costa-sol Complex depicted in *Cocaine Nights*, to high-tech business parks like those in *Super-Cannes*, and from new proletariat urban neighbourhoods in *Millennium People* to neo-fascist suburbs as seen in *Kingdom Come* (Škobo & Đukić 2022). Within these meticulously controlled communities, time appears to stagnate as residents seek early retirement only to find themselves ensnared behind gates, under constant surveillance through CCTV cameras, or through the voyeuristic lens of pornography.

Ballard's exploration of the interplay between technology, violence, and environment reveals a disturbing anticipation of apocalyptic social structures rooted in the mental well-being of individuals in modern urban settings, where urban violence flourishes. Škobo and Đukić (2022: 101) argue that "the protagonists' subjection to urban modernity in Ballard's gated communities goes beyond the idea that the roots of the Late Modernity crisis predominantly lie in man's alienation from nature" and stress the characters' dependence on their living environment. These social structures, ranging from retirement communities to gated neighbourhoods, emerge amidst diverse urban landscapes, including sprawling road networks, sterile business parks, towering high-rises, bustling airport terminals, and artificial resorts (Ibid.). They stem from humanity's estrangement from nature, obsession with technology, and the unsettling realisation that the urban environment moulds and distorts the human psyche.

The violence evident in these communities reflects the consequences of human and media manipulation of urban spaces, leading to "a dystopian future where the boundaries between natural and artificial are blurred" (Knowles 2018: 351). In this context, the urban environment is seen as "a living organism with its own needs and actions rather than merely as a resource for human use" (Škobo & Đukić 2023: 3). Urban settings, conceived as living organisms, bear a resemblance to a state of 'living

death,' where the community is reanimated by the trance induced by antidepressants and constant surveillance through CCTV. The process of 'flourishing' is manifested through various acts of violence, including murders, rapes, drug abuse, and even setting fellow citizens' yachts on fire for sheer pleasure.

Urban environments, characterized by consumerist paradises and technologically-driven societies, often lead to the erosion of humanity's innate connection with nature, replacing it with artificial responses and aberrant behaviours. These communities, epitomized by pristine residential enclaves like Estrella de Mar from *Cocaine Nights,* promote a consumerist ethos that prioritizes materialism over intrinsic values. This shift away from natural harmony towards a consumer-driven existence represents a departure from humanity's traditional role as defined by God and nature. Here, contemporary expressions of religiosity have evolved into consumerism and mass tourism, alongside phenomena like crime and psychopathology. Traditional religions, which once provided symbolic frameworks for understanding the world, have lost their influence, becoming "as dead as a line of totem poles" (*CN* 1996: 189). The residents of these ultra-modern enclaves experience psychological, emotional and spiritual crises due to the fact that "the ethical messages and religious values are no longer sustainable forms of regulation of spiritual and practical attitudes of their members" (Škobo & Đukić 2022a: 98). This transformation of urban spaces reflects a broader trend of violence, both physical and psychological, as individuals grapple with the dissonance between their constructed reality and the natural world.

In *Cocaine Nights*, protagonist Charles Prentice arrives in the Spanish resort town of Estrella de Mar to investigate his brother's involvement in a series of crimes. As he delves deeper into the community, he uncovers a complex web of secrets, desires, and hidden violence lurking beneath the urban community's idyllic surface. His investigation into the Hollinger fire, in which five people died, further reassures him that beneath the facade of serenity are transgressive activities fulfilling the residents' spiritual needs. Prentice becomes entangled in the lives of the affluent expatriates inhabiting Estrella de Mar, ultimately confronting the dark underbelly of hedonism, manipulation, and societal decay. Ballard offers a chilling commentary on the consequences of unchecked desire and the allure of escapism in urban settings.

Through his vivid portrayal of Estrella de Mar, the author exposes the underlying violence and moral decay lurking beneath the surface of seemingly perfect urban surroundings. This dystopian resort community on Spain's Costa del Sol represents a retirement haven where environmental imbalance primarily stems from the technological manipulation of urban landscapes. The community symbolises a societal re-

treat into a technologically driven order, resulting in significant harm. It highlights the interconnectedness between environmental and human health, showing how changes in physical spaces impact people. In this retirement paradise, "architecture [is] dedicated to the abolition of time" (*CN* 1996: 45), particularly suiting its ageing inhabitants and those seeking an escape from work constraints. The community, often likened to a 'private kingdom' (*CN* 1996: 384) of the future, is meticulously designed to evoke a timeless ambience. With the majority of its population being early retirees, there is a prevalent desire to break free from the grind of capitalist labour and embrace a life of leisure and passivity.

In *Cocaine Nights*, the expansion of urban spaces has erased natural landmarks, leaving only remnants amidst the artificiality of modernity. Amidst comfortable villas, the dominant features are concrete structures like the Club Nautico, symbolising the intrusion of technology into once-natural environments (Ibid. 14). This juxtaposition of concrete and nature creates a sense of discontinuity, dampening emotional connections and fostering social fatigue. Ballard's depiction of Estrella de Mar cultivates a leisure society where boredom and drug use breed indifference among residents. This indifference manifests as "social Parkinsonism," where ceaseless activity fails to provide meaningful engagement (Ibid. 138).

Alongside the idyllic community of Estrella de Mar, described as "the affectless realm" (Ibid. 32) within which, paradoxically, "nothing [like crime] binds community together" (Ibid. 217), there is also the Costasol Complex, a carefully planned residential enclave designed for people who want to retire too soon. However, the whole complex seems abandoned as its residents are "watching TV with the sound turned down" while being "isolated in their capsules" (Ibid. 213). The complex satisfies all their needs, thus leading to isolation and brain paralysis. The spatial transformation inflicts radical and innovative changes in the patterns of thinking and grasping, socialising, and living in general.

As Gasiorek (2005) contends, the pervasive influence of capitalism has permeated every aspect of daily existence, with heightened emphasis on the rapid transformations facilitated by an increasingly globalised economy and advanced telecommunication networks. A consequential outcome of these shifts is the subjugation of the individual to the very system in which they are enmeshed, resulting in the marginalisation of human agency (Ibid. 177). This phenomenon manifests in the erosion or outright loss of communal bonds and ethical standards, the destabilisation of individual well-being and mental health, the breakdown of familial structures, and a marked escalation in crime rates. As outlined by Škobo and Đukić (2023), this shift

in societal dynamics reflects a broader transformation in the global economy and lifestyle, where technology assumes precedence over human labour and leisure activities become paramount. Ultimately, this transition paves the way for the emergence of surveillance capitalism, heralding a digital age fraught with potential threats to humanity and individual freedoms. In both resorts, belying the simmering tensions and pathological motives that lurk beneath the surface, violence takes on various forms, ranging from physical acts of criminality to psychological manipulation and societal breakdown.

Physical violence is evident in Estrella de Mar through criminal activities such as arson and drug trafficking, orchestrated by characters like Bobby Crawford, a tennis professional at the club Nautico, who masquerades as a saint while providing residents with pure cocaine and heroin. The protagonist Charles, initially enticed by the pleasures of the resort, soon realises the sinister motives behind its facade of perfection, uncovering a web of illicit activities that thrive amidst the affluent residents' pursuit of hedonism and escapism (*CN* 1996: 164). It seems that the dystopian lethargy and idleness of quotidian life in the dozy pueblo on the Spanish coast are broken at nighttime to 'unwind' by throwing lush parties, performing amateur dramatics, playing tennis, and indulging in various criminal activities that are viewed as the basis for binding the community together. Regarding the creative pursuits that citizens of Estrella de Mar engage in on a daily basis and those criminal activities that "enrich civilisation," 'the psychopath as the saint,' Bobby Crawford, suggests that "crime and creativity go together and always have done. The greater the sense of crime, the greater the civic awareness and richer the civilisation. Nothing else binds a community together. It's a strange paradox" (*CN* 1996: 127).

The ultra-modern communities depicted in *Cocaine Nights* propel the Anthropocene era forward, aiming to fulfil intimate and deviant needs. The community in this complex surrenders to various forms of physical and psychological violence in a bid to awaken dormant aspects of the human brain, as conventional means fail to achieve such awakening. Only something revolutionary and perverse enough can stimulate these dormant synapses. These 'undertakings' include a perverse web of amateur pornography, where many girls, previously exposed to narcotics and opioids, are coerced into such activities, resulting in rape. Women like Bobby Jansen, niece of the Hollingers, have been discovered overdosed and raped, viewed as a form of salvation. A wide array of activities necessitating ventures into the outer 'hostile' world, departing from comfort zones monitored by CCTV, includes 'rape sessions' among other illicit acts, occurring in the parking lot in front of the Nautico club: "Sev-

eral of the front seats were occupied by the drivers and their passengers, all in evening dress, faces concealed by the lowered sun visors. They had watched the rape attempt without intervening, like a gallery audience at an exclusive private view" (Ibid. 25). This passage provides compelling evidence of the normalisation of bizarre and deranged affairs within the residence. The lack of emotional response and acceptance of such events as conventional and ordinary underscore the deeply unsettling nature of the environment depicted in the narrative.

Within the community of Estrella de Mar, Charles Prentice encounters the backdrop of amateur pornography. Through his contemplation of Anne Hollinger's involvement in this seedy realm, the narrative illuminates the stark contrast between the allure of Estrella de Mar's facade and the harsh reality of exploitation and violence within the dystopian enclave. The protagonist had a chance to get"a glimpse into another Estrella de Mar, a world of imported bed-boys and other genial pleasures":

> "Sitting by the television set, I rewound the cassette of the porno-film, then played through the violent scenes again, trying to identify the other participants. How had this maverick and high-spirited young woman found herself in such a crudely exploitative movie? I froze her [Anne Hollinger's] brave smile to camera as she sat in the tattered wedding dress, and imagined her playing the tape as she injected herself in the bathroom, trying to blot out all memory of the pale-skinned young man who had been determined to humiliate her." (*CN* 1996: 61)

Psychological violence is also pervasive within this resort, as residents become increasingly isolated and alienated from both nature and each other. The residents' reliance on antidepressants while "lying on their sun-loungers" and "waiting for Paula Hamilton to arrive with a new prescription" (Ibid. 212) and their obsession with surveillance cameras reflect a society reliant on technology to numb their existential detachment from reality. Social interactions are fraught with unease and discomfort: "Friends can be a problem – gates and front doors need to be unlocked, alarm systems disconnected, and someone else is breathing your air" (Ibid. 211), as residents fear the intrusion of outsiders and the "uneasy memories of the outside world" (Ibid. 32).

Futuristic communities like Estrella de Mar and Costasol are designed to abolish the perception of time, fostering a pervasive atmosphere saturated with alcohol and illicit deeds. Residents are sedated with tranquillisers during the day, leading to psychological and social violence manifesting on various levels. This violence is fueled by the consumption of antidepressants, drug abuse, and alcohol, contributing to spiritual and moral decay. As a result, residents become emotionless zombies, experiencing social fatigue and detachment from both others and themselves, as noted by

Gasiorek (2005). It is distressing to acknowledge that the deadened synapses of Estrella de Mar's citizens can only be awakened by psychological manipulation, with only similarly intense stimuli having the power to evoke any residual strong emotions. Dr. Sanger elaborates on this, explaining to Charles that "crime and transgressive behaviour – by which I mean all activities that aren't necessarily illegal, but provoke us and tap our need for strong emotion, quicken the nervous system and jump the synapses deadened by leisure and inaction" (*CN* 1996: 81).

Socialisation and spiritual contentment in these dystopian enclaves are built upon bizarre and distorted notions, with criminal and violent acts staged to satisfy the almost deranged citizenry. As Crawford eloquently states, "there's nothing more satisfying than confessing to a crime you haven't committed" (Ibid. 31). Another character, Dr. Roger Sanger, embodies this dystopian vision with his "therapeutic" approach. He relishes exerting dominance over young girls and engages in inappropriate relationships with them under the guise of therapy. As described, he is "the sort of psychiatrist who sleeps with his patients and thinks he's doing them a therapeutic favour. He specialises in drugged-out little things who are searching for a friendly shoulder" (Ibid. 59). However, far from providing proper treatment, Sanger's actions leave these young girls even more vulnerable and traumatised than before.

Symbolic violence manifests through the commodification of human relationships and the erosion of moral values within the community. Residents indulge in voyeuristic pleasures, watching pornography and surveilling their neighbours, further dehumanising themselves and others. Amidst extravagant gatherings and a bustling nightlife filled with illicit activities, nature is ironically evoked through amateur porn films titled "The Wildlife of Residencia Costasol" (Ibid. 110). In the "terminal new Eden" of Estrella de Mar and the Costasol Complex, to use Harlan Willson's (2017: 153) terminology, prostitution is seen as a means of giving new meaning to the passive lives of women; the rape scene on the parking lot or the recording of an amateur porn film is regarded as a private thing or done for private matters, and for purposes of personal revitalisation. The community's reliance on consumerist ideology and technological advancements perpetuates a cycle of moral decay, where human connection is replaced by superficiality and materialism.

The communities depicted manifest social and psychological entropy, as they promote "a technologically dominant order that causes harm to both individuals and the community as a whole" (Škobo & Đukić 2023: 4). Residents of these communities are in perpetual 'consumption' and are likewise 'consumed' by their urban environment, evident in their continual physical and mental engagement with the cityscape

(Ibid. 5). The idea that an external paradise fails to foster internal contentment is mirrored in the absence of moral, emotional, and spiritual guidance among residents, leading to inner turmoil. The artificial utopia born from altering the natural landscape lacks genuineness. People's estrangement from nature results in its degradation and the emergence of environmental ailments. Ultimately, this leads to the demise of the 'offspring' of their own making – the cities – as the eruption of urban violence takes a toll on the citizens' mental well-being.

5. CONCLUSION

In exploring JG Ballard's portrayal of urban violence across the selected novels, we have embarked on a journey through the dystopian landscapes of modernity, where societal decay and human depravity intersect with chilling precision. Through his stark depiction of physical, psychological, social, symbolic, technological, and eroticised violence in these novels, Ballard offers profound insights into the complexities of urban life and the darker impulses that lurk beneath its surface. Each of these novels offers a unique perspective on urban environments and their impact on human behaviour. *The Atrocity Exhibition* explores the psychological landscape of urban spaces, *High-Rise* examines the social dynamics within a luxury apartment building, and *Cocaine Nights* explores the violence lurking beneath the facade of a gated community.

In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, violence is portrayed as a conceptual and psychological force shaped by media imagery, reflecting the fragmented nature of 1960s Western culture. The protagonist's fluid identity mirrors this fragmentation, amidst societal upheaval and technological advancement, depicted through a collage of images akin to television flickers. In *High-Rise*, violence becomes intricately linked to the urban environment, exacerbated by the alienation and dehumanisation experienced within these settings. The physical elements of the landscape symbolise social and psychological estrangement, enclosed within gated communities promising perfection but breeding decay. This novel delves deeper into the dark underbelly of urban life and its impact on human behaviour. *Cocaine Nights* takes this exploration further, portraying gated communities as projecting an illusion of utopia while masking underlying tension and violence. These settings symbolise humanity's detachment from nature and obsession with technology, ranging from dystopian resorts to high-tech business parks and neo-fascist suburbs. Residents find themselves trapped behind gates, under constant surveillance, as Ballard's exploration anticipates apocalyptic

social structures rooted in modern urban settings. Together, these three novels provide a multifaceted portrayal of urban life and its associated violence.

Ballard's exploration of violence in gated communities serves as a powerful critique of modern society, revealing the dehumanising effects of consumerism, technological advancement, and societal fragmentation. Through his characters, who are alienated from society and disconnected from traditional social norms, Ballard illustrates how the quest for power and survival often eclipses moral considerations, leading to acts of brutality and depravity. This sense of alienation contributes to the prevalence of violence within the urban landscape as individuals deal with feelings of existential despair. Yet, amidst the chaos and despair, Ballard's works also illuminate the resilience of the human spirit as characters grapple with existential crises and strive to find meaning in a world plagued by violence.

As we reflect on Ballard's fiction, we are compelled to confront uncomfortable truths about the nature of violence and its pervasive presence in urban settings. His novels serve as cautionary tales, reminding us of the fragility of civilisation and the dangers of succumbing to the darker impulses within us. Ballard invites us to engage in a critical dialogue about the root causes of violence and the urgent need for empathy, understanding, and collective action to address its pervasive impact on individuals and societies.

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URBANO NASILJE U ROMANIMA DŽ. G. BALARDA

Sažetak:

Ovaj rad se bavi socijalnim i humanističkim aspektima života unutar zajednica u kojima tinjaju različiti oblici nasilja, sa posebnim osvrtom na konkretne primere nasilja u romanima Dž. G. Balarda *Izložba grozote* (1970), *Soliter* (1975), iz trilogije o urbanim katastrofama, i *Kokainske noći* (1996), iz tetralogije o urbanom nasilju, kako bi se istražila evoluirajuća tipologija nasilja unutar urbanih okruženja. Svaki roman nudi jedinstveno istraživanje nasilja unutar urbanog pejzaža, od psihološkog i društvenog nasilja do fetišizacije saobraćajnih nesreća i prikrivenih oblika nasilja prisutnih u predgrađima koja naizgled odišu spokojstvom. Rad pruža uvide u motive koji se ponavljaju i stilističke pristupe Balarda u predstavljanju urbanog nasilja. Analizom konkretnih oblika nasilja prikazanih u odabranim romanima rad teži da osvetli tematske nijanse društvenog propadanja, otuđenja pojedinaca i njihov uticaj na blagostanje protagonista u kontekstu savremenog urbanog života. Osnovna hipoteza ovog rada je da su različiti tipovi urbanog nasilja odraz savremenih društvenih anksioznosti i uticaja savremenog doba na ponašanje pojedinaca i njihovo psiho-fizičko i mentalno zdravlje. Nasilje u urbanim zajednicama prikazano u ovim romanima rezultat je opsesije društva medijskim senzacionalizmom i tehnološkim napretkom. Pored toga, odnos između urbanog pejzaža i ljudske psihe je recipročan, gde se unutrašnja psihologija protagonista eksternalizuje. Odabrani romani pružaju realan komentar o stanju savremenog društva — oni ne samo da odražavaju društvene anksioznosti već i kritikuju moderne opsesije koje podstiču nasilje i otuđenje unutar urbanih sredina.

Ključne reči: urbani pejzaž; urbano nasilje; mediji; tehnologija; urbana katastrofa; mentalno zdravlje; blagostanje pojedinca

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