

The Poetics of the Constructed Environment in J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise*

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses major constituents of the poetics of the constructed environment in James Graham Ballard's novel High-Rise (1975). The novel's high-rise is contextualised within the framework of contemporary architectural development as well as Ballard's overall work, with its particular emphasis on novels dealing with prototypically modern urban constructions. The interpretation of Ballard's narrative seeks to examine the chief aspects of the space of the tower block as well as the tenants' response to it. The paper endeavours to highlight the author's tendency to examine the interconnected relationships between humans and contemporary architectural structures in his fiction.

KEYWORDS

J.G. Ballard, poetics of space, architecture in literature, high-rise, alienation

The role of contemporary architecture within Ballard's spatial poetics

High-Rise (1975) is the final part of J.G. Ballard's trilogy, a set of works concerned with the alienating and potentially dehumanising aspects of the most prolific contemporary manmade landscapes and architectural superstructures such as complicated tangles of motorways, enormous isolated tower blocks and gargantuan shopping malls. The first part of the trilogy, *Crash* (1973), follows the protagonists within the sterile environment of motorways, their junctions and interchanges, satiating the characters' fetishes of witnessing and even participating in severe or fatal road accidents. *Concrete Island* (1974) is situated entirely in the space of an island within a motorway interchange where a castaway is somehow stranded and forced to survive only on what drivers toss out of their vehicles along with what is left in the wreck of his Jaguar. The perspective framed by a windscreen of a car presented in *Crash* as well as the physical obstruction of the high concrete barriers of *Concrete Island* are replaced by the distance and height of the thousands of apartments of a forty-floor high-rise which is at the centre of *High-Rise*, a setting which forms yet another impersonal, inorganic, hostile environment.

Ballard's narratives present aspects of an anxiety-filled, even tortured contemporary existence which is triggered by the relationships between the human subjects and the environment they have constructed. While his contemporaries frequently depict technology as the main concern of their dystopian visions, Ballard emphasises the role of architecture and its conspiratorial relationship with technology overall. Oscillating skilfully between the real and surreal, Ballard chronicles the inner world and the functioning of the psyche within an unspecified time frame, which might be the near future or a reflection of the present. In his *Architecture and Modern Literature* (2012), David Spurr labels Ballard's production as "truly contemporary in the sense defined by Giorgio Agamben as that is contemporaneous with but 'out of phase' with the present, which does not have the same aspirations as the world of the present, and which is therefore capable of holding that

world at a critical distance"¹. This stance is achieved by departing from the familiar as well as by slowly but zealously pushing the narrative to various extremes.

In *Crash*, Ballard develops a premise which is exploited ceaselessly through car advertising: that of the automobile as an extension or a projection of sexuality. Ballard pushes this trope to a logical, if extreme, conclusion: the car accident and its victims are gradually exposed as "the final expression of the sexualized violence"². This form of sexual fetishism is conditioned by a technological stimulus. As Dominic Head points out, the narrator "James Ballard" becomes the initiator into the world of fantasies pushed to their logical limits. He becomes so excessively absorbed in the world of unfettered fulfilment of outrageous sexual perversities deprived of any emotional content that he identifies himself with the role of the machine-part. By the end of the novel, the narrator "seems to fantasize as a kind of automaton"³. If *Crash*'s "Ballard" turns into an automatized machine which mechanically responds to stimuli, Dr Robert Laing, the central character of *High-Rise*, surrenders to the internal logic of the building. He connects strongly with his fellow inhabitants, who do not attempt any kind of active or passive resistance to the regressive social re-organisation of the tower. Quite the opposite, they seem to welcome and promptly embrace the peculiar type of change which is taking place. At the end, many of the residents have fallen prey to the hunger of their fellow tenants, have died of malnutrition themselves, or have been killed in skirmishes during the hunt for food, property or power. Those who have not succumbed have become self-inflicted prisoners of the new social order, a situation which they regard with an odd mixture of acceptance, dedication, even normality.

Ballard's systematic exploitation of the poetics of contemporary constructed environments generates a unique blend of reality and a myth. Phillip Tew confirms this tendency by claiming that Ballard's narrative seems to inhabit the realm between practical and theoretical activity, between *What?* and *What if*, thus "seeking to redeem and deepen the strengths of traditional narrative forms without destroying narrative coherence"^{4,5}. The setting is more or less anchored in the familiar; the events, however, seem to unravel in an alternate reality⁶. The development project in *High-Rise* is two miles away from the City and yet the office buildings of central London belong "to a different world, in time as well as space"⁷. The degree of thematic extremity of *High-Rise* is apparent from the narration, which begins *in medias res*: "Later, as he sat on the balcony eating the dog, Dr Robert Laing reflected on the unusual events that had taken place within this huge apartment building

1 David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (University of Michigan, 2012), 225.

2 Dominic Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950–2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 234.

3 Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950–2000*, 235.

4 Phillip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel*, 128.

5 Accordingly, despite the apparent complexity, the relative eclecticism in the choice of subject-matter and its treatment, Ballard's idiosyncratic works have become subjects of several film adaptations such as Steven Spielberg's *Empire of the Sun* (1987), David Cronenberg's 1996 *Crash*, and, most recently, Ben Wheatley's *High-Rise* (2015), all of which rely heavily both on narrative coherence and, to a lesser degree, narrative conventionality.

6 For a probe into the development of English urban novels and the difference between the optimism of the 1990s contrasted with the bleak, dystopian vision of previous decades, see Petr Chalupský's article "Voyeurs and Walkers in the Simultaneous City – Penelope Lively's *City of the Mind*".

7 James Graham Ballard, *High-Rise* (London: Fourth Estate, 2016), 3.

during the previous three months”⁸. The discrepancy entails the eating of a pet. The animal is a familiar one, a fact which is highlighted by the choice of the definite article *Laing* is a well-to do professional whose full name and, more importantly, title, the author involved purposefully. The action takes place in an elevated position (“on the balcony”), signalling the character’s aesthetic preoccupation with the view as well as the leisurely consumption of the meal *al fresco*. The unlikely choice of the opening word “later” indicates the earlier unspecified, retrospective character of the narration, which is partially delimited by the mention of “previous three months”.

Ballard employs starkly modern milieus as settings of social experiments, his narratives inhabiting the space between practical and theoretical activity. *High-Rise* replicates and emphasises the role of architecture within Ballard’s oeuvre, with the constructed nature of the environment acting both as a defining element as well as an ideal backdrop for the realisation of dystopian, uncanny visions rooted deeply within the landscape of the familiar.

***High-Rise* within the context of contemporary architecture**

Published in 1975 and commonly read as a commentary on contemporary urban routines, Ballard’s *High-Rise* provides a complex and somewhat hyperbolic answer to the question *What if* two thousand well-to-do professionals in a building administered themselves and plunged first into a violent struggle over power and later fight for survival. Despite the hyperbolic nature of the narrative, its roots are firmly planted in the soil of the real contemporary cityscape.

The housing crisis in post-war London replicated the urgent shortage of living spaces during the interwar period, with an unprecedented number of houses destroyed and whole districts in desperate need of modernising. High-rise tower blocks provided a logical solution. The new blocks of flats were cheap and quick to build thanks to the limited amount of space their vertical arrangement required and also to the new method of building called “system building”, which consisted of excessive prefabrication of the components such as walls, floors, windows, plumbing and even furnishings. These modules formed moderately-sized, hygienic apartments with vast open spaces around them. Hundreds of apartment complexes were built in London alone, with thousands of people re-housed within them. Despite the apparent practicality of the idea, the rushed pace of the construction and inherent structural design flaws manifested themselves in various failings and unfortunately lead even to a number of catastrophes, such as the 1968 Ronan Point disaster.⁹ The general public had never been inclined to embrace this patently modern way of building and living, which seemed to be abandoning more traditional ways, so naturally their confidence in these complexes decreased.

The general disillusionment, nevertheless, also stemmed from the criminality and social problems which the high-rises became noted for. The North Kensington Trelick Tower, completed

⁸ Ballard, *High-Rise*, 1.

⁹ The high-rise in question, situated in East London, collapsed only two months after its completion, killing four inhabitants and injuring seventeen. A gas leak on the eighteenth floor caused the whole side of the tower block to collapse. An explosion within one flat destroyed the structural integrity of the whole building, since the system had been based mainly on gravity and relied completely on the support of the individual units which produced a devastating domino-effect.

in 1972, was designed by Ernő Goldfinger, an architect proud to follow in the footsteps of Le Corbusier. Upon seeing the collapse of the building's social mechanisms and its vandalised inner spaces, walls covered with graffiti, bulbs stolen, lifts left unrepaired, women assaulted in the dark hallways and heroin addicts leaving their used needles lying around, which has, unfortunately, become a widespread pattern of functioning of these buildings, Goldfinger claimed: "I built skyscrapers for people to live in there and now they messed them up – disgusting"¹⁰. The architect blamed the inhabitants for the failure of the building, not the structure itself. Certainly the tenants could not be held single-handedly responsible for the corruption of the building. The councils, meant to supervise over the swift pace of building the flats to meet their housing quotas, completely neglected proper maintenance and the installation of security systems inside of the giant blocks of flats. With the accumulation of enormous numbers of inhabitants, the disrepair and abandonment generated unforeseen consequences.

Currently, the Trellick Tower has become "a much sought-after residential block, with trendy architects and others buying freeholds and living alongside tenants. The difference is that it is now properly protected, almost a gated community, with a twenty-four-hour concierge service to make sure that the residents are not harassed or threatened on their way to their flats and that strangers are kept out"¹¹. The contemporary state of the high-rise buildings is either that of alarming neglect, gradual destruction, or a fortress-like effect mediated by gates, high fences and concierges sitting in the foyers.

Core elements of the spatial poetics of *High-Rise*

Reflecting the concerns of contemporary fiction as well as issues of social and architectural development, Ballard's *High-Rise* delineates patterns of spatial behaviour of the individual characters, as well as generalised tendencies of the inhabitants of the high-rise. The narrative deals with a prototypical, fundamentally modern type of building – a forty-storey high structure accommodating 2,000 inhabitants. In spite of plethora of responses to the architecture and space the construction triggers, its spatial semantics seems to be dominated by its verticality and impression of its isolation.

The tower blocks and the private worlds depicted in *High-Rise* herald a tendency towards a "ludic and yet an extrinsic sense of multiple, intersubjective realities" (Tew, 55). What is more, the multiple perspectives of the individual protagonists generate an exquisitely varied tapestry of diverse treatments of space they embody. The various reactions of three protagonists to the fundamental qualities of the tower block generate the core of the narrative: Dr Robert Laing, the resident of a studio on the 25th floor; the architect Anthony Royal, who presides over the penthouse at the top of the building; and Richard Wilder, a television producer and a former rugby-league player in a flat on the 2nd floor. The social standing, aspirations and roles of the individual protagonists within the plot is reflected in and determined by the position and the size of their flats. The tower's exaggerated verticality physically reaffirms the traditional social hierarchy. The

10 David Dimbleby, *How We Built Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 259.

11 Dimbleby, *How We Built Britain*, 259.

notions of strong class division and the clearly defined oppressive structure permeate the novel. Each floor marks the rise of the level of prestige and the sense of entitlement of the residents. Any attempts at a metaphorical or literal trespassing of the ossifying separation are punished, initially with hostility, malevolency and indirect verbal attacks (the absence of communication is nurtured by the treasured sense of isolation of the individual inhabitants) which swiftly evolve into minor and later lethal physical attacks. The socially-upward movement of the lower-floor residents, itself quite natural, is represented by the thickset character of Richard Wilder presiding over their feeble efforts. Wilder's monumentally intrepid final ascent is met with vigorous resistance from those at the top of the physical hierarchy of the building. He rejects the system and revolts against it, his mind and body succumbing to the general disintegration. He is covered in blood, both his own and his opponents', by the time he reaches the top and shoots the architect. Similarly, the metaphorical struggle of the superior parts of the building to retain exclusivity of their position is translated into the physical effort to maintain and dominate the uppermost parts of the building. Upward physical movement is never performed with poise or ease. It involves a great deal of toiling and obstructions, such as failing elevators, blocked staircases and hallways, failures of electricity as well as impediments from the self-proclaimed guardians of these spaces. In terms of Deleuze and Guattari's conception of space, the deceptively smooth, but in fact highly striated space of the high-rise undergoes violent, shockingly primeval re-structuring, which turns the tenants into nomads marauding individually or in small groups, retreating into apartments which are not theirs and pillaging the rest of the flats, raiding their fellow residents' homes over the leftover food, or hunting them or their former pets as prey.

As the process of identification with the building proceeds, the characters in *High-Rise* are less and less willing to communicate their intentions or trains of thought, replacing them with a flattened, indifferent account of events. Thus the perspective of the protagonists' is reduced to the camera-eye observations. The course of narration thus mimics Wilder's effort to make a television documentary, "a really hard look at the physical and psychological pressures of living in a huge condominium"¹². This dehumanising perspective, which may be marked as steely and alienating, allows the author the relative freedom to wonder throughout the uncharted spaces between the familiar and the apart-from-the-real world. The narration emphasises the literal and metaphorical isolation of the characters and their detachment from the outside world.

In spite of its traditional social stratification, the tower block embodies the futuristic aspirations of contemporary architecture. High-tech and brutalist architecture are both viewed as direct descendants of modernism. The more radically the application of the theoretical postulates of these modernist movements advanced in the 1960s and 1970s, the more distorted the realisation of its quasi-utopian architectural plans became. From this point of view, *High-Rise* examines one of the key aspirations of modernist architects: the impression of limitless and unperturbed space. Originally, this had been achieved by means of the introduction of new technologies and procedures into construction, such as glass walls with thin frames and iron frameworks supporting the structures. The application of these elements allowed both for the seamless merging of the inside and the outside as well as the urbanized colonisation of the vertical spheres, with this use

12 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 14.

of area implying liberation from the crooked, claustrophobic spaces of medieval architecture. The resulting urban sites were to be purified of all possible psychological disruptions, wiping out phobias, psychoses and neuroses by the power of open space. The liberation of the mind was conditioned by the liberation of the body. The open space was to transform humans into athletes, pouring their newly acquired muscular energy into it¹³.

The effect of the open space generated by panoramic views from vast glass surfaces and the distance of the upper-level apartments both from the ground and the neighbouring towers on the characters of *High-Rise* is rather overwhelming. The dubious nature of their emancipation from the constraints of traditional housing provokes the abandonment of norms and civility along with alienation from reality. As opposed to dominating the space, however, the tenants become absorbed by it and subjected to it. The open space around the high-rise acts as a barrier, heightening the feeling of isolation of the inhabitants.

It was the prospect of ineffable space which had lured the alienated and uprooted Dr Robert Laing to buy his share in the apartment building. Recently divorced and professionally irresolute, he revels in the relative anonymity of his living arrangement, never feeling utterly isolated, being surrounded by two thousand similarly minded inhabitants. Despite his numerous assertions of the utter enjoyment of his self-imposed exile, he never feels completely alone. There are always eyes, which watch him, and sounds which assure him of the presence of other people in the building. Ballard thus expresses a typically modern type of anonymity which does not involve utter physical isolation and abandonment, or the physical discomfort triggered by the lack of civil services. Logically, a building housing two thousand inhabitants cannot invoke utter isolation, but only a tolerable, if not pleasurable type of aloneness, suggesting a collective body, while still successfully blocking hints of a communal spirit. The twisted impression of liberty permeated with a sense of belonging result in the reluctance of the inhabitants to leave.

The position of Laing's apartment on the 25th floor enables an activity typically associated with modern architecture – observation. Laing is the epitome of an observer. He is predominantly depicted as leaning against the parapet of the balcony of his expensive flat and peering over the ledge into the cement landscape. This act of observation seems to be natural to him given both his professional preference for teaching and his avid interest in the view from his balcony. Also, an elevated position such as that of his apartment and the balcony invites him to practice a peculiar kind of interpretation of the outside world, its complexity slightly reduced by the distance. Suspended in the space and light, protected by the comfort of his apartment, enclosed in the cliff face of the enormous building, Laing compares “the ragged skyline of the city”¹⁴ to the “disturbed encephalograph of an unresolved mental crisis”¹⁵ from which he voluntarily distances himself.

This practice, as described by Michel de Certeau in his *Practice of Everyday Life* (1974), is typically triggered by superior positioning and vast transparent surfaces of the modern urban buildings. Laing's detached, elevated position turns the world into “a text that lies before one's eyes”¹⁶. This way of looking presupposes a certain degree of abstraction, making “the complexity

13 Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), 64.

14 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 5.

15 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 5.

16 Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.

of the city readable”, immobilizing its “opaque mobility in a transparent text”¹⁷. Laing embodies the observant eye, “looking down like a god”¹⁸. He becomes a voyeur possessed by the desire to look down on the whole, “reading” the urban text written by the blind bodies of those who walk down the streets unable to see the patterns of their own movements within the web of city streets. De Certeau interpreted this practice and the underlying desire for it in the chapters dedicated to the urban experience and existence in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). As an example, he employs the peculiarity of his own sensation while ascending to the top of the World Trade Center in New York, which he calls “a universe that is constantly exploding”¹⁹ and “the most immoderate of human texts”²⁰. The voluptuous pleasure he takes in becoming “a viewpoint and nothing more”²¹ is translated into universal human inclination towards such an activity perpetuated by the growing number of high-rise buildings with glass walls.

In this way Laing reads the space and his concrete surroundings, including their decay, along with the occasional dramatic scene taking place in the parking lot. The neighbouring buildings are too far to be properly observed and remain unknown presences, the lives within which stay unnoticed with the exception of the last page of Ballard’s novel, in which Laing notices a power failure affecting the whole floor of the neighbouring building. Laing reflects on how this blackout seems to be setting into motion the same kind of upheaval which has occurred in his own tower block.

Laing’s position of the totalising eye is at some points eclipsed by the character of the architect Anthony Royal, a former member of the architectural consortium which had designed the development project and who had been injured in the final stages of its completion. His character verges on the stereotypical incarnation of an architect living in a huge penthouse at the top of the building, whose minor and least successful parts he helped to design. His polished presence is further emphasised by his penchant for wearing all white, which complements his mane of white hair as he walks his white Alsatian. Ballard’s lexical choices cement the character’s ethereal, sacrosanct position, with Royal termed the architect of the “hanging paradise”²², hovering over it “like some kind of fallen angel”²³ or a “crippled old albatross”²⁴. As “the lord of the manor”²⁵, Royal understands the fall of the building as “a rebellion against himself”²⁶. Royal is said to be the first inhabitant to have moved into the complex and now, marked by a reluctance to leave the building despite its physical deterioration, he dies within one of the sections he in fact designed. Otherwise, despite his archetypal self-presentation as the architect of the building²⁷, his contribution to the

17 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 25.

18 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 92.

19 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 91.

20 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 92.

21 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 92.

22 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 13.

23 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 13.

24 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 109.

25 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 100.

26 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 95.

27 The Architect is typically presented as an outrageously self-confident and insufferably egoistic character conflating his creation with his virility, with the buildings being monuments of their heterosexual, often toxic masculinity. This often

overall design of the building has been minor. What is more, the only projects of his making – “the 10th-floor concourse, the junior school, the observation roof with its children’s sculpture-garden, and the furnishing and design of the elevator lobbies”²⁸ add to the inhabitants’ initial bursts of hostility and directly trigger the first cracks in the social order.

Royal’s fixation on the building is not necessarily a symptom of guilt over the gradual dissolution of the sense of order within the high-rise, but rather a mark of his complete identification with the gargantuan project. The self-contained building cuts off all ties with the outside world, precluding references to traditional temporal markers such as hours, seasons or years, or any outside events: “The internal time of the high-rise, like an artificial psychological climate, operated on its own rhythms, generated by a combination of alcohol and insomnia”²⁹. As he moves in, Laing believes he has travelled forward in time fifty years, “away from crowded streets, traffic hold-ups, rush-hour journeys on the Underground to student supervisions in a shared office in the old teaching hospital” (4). Six months into living in his studio apartment, Laing finds himself utterly exhausted, believing that he lives in the future, but one that has already taken place: “Even the run-down nature of the high-rise was a model of the world into which the future was carrying them, a landscape beyond technology where everything was either derelict or, more ambiguously, recombined in unexpected but more meaningful ways”³⁰. Both the building and its inhabitants are stranded in a liminal region between the future and the past, advancement and regression, technological perfection and primitiveness, civility and instinctive behaviour.

From the point of view of the novel’s links with contemporary architecture as a whole, *High-Rise* replicates common limitations, defects and technical failures of tower blocks. The non-functioning elevators provide the initial trigger for verbal insults and minor shuffles which gradually devolve into a universal conflict. No mentions are made to the concierge as a form of supervision, or to any attempts at professionally performed maintenance, apart from a few occasions when desperate tenants demand such services and receive a perfunctory answer forestalling their request almost indefinitely. Ballard addresses the prospect of “two thousand inhabitants boxed up into the sky”³¹ left alone and abandoned to their own devices. The novel provides an alarming, resolute answer to these challenges.

Nevertheless, a multitude of possible interpretations of what causes the residents’ degraded and depraved actions are possible. The tenants are repeatedly accused of not being capable of handling the level of ambiguity generated by a futuristic building which maintains a socially archaic structure. The hyperbolic height of the building alienates its inhabitants from reality, while the detached positioning of the apartments around the perimeter of the tower intensifies their uprootedness even further. The absolute lack of supervision cannot be offset by the character of the architect Anthony Royal, whose control over the building is reduced to his hovering presence

develops into a Babylonian theme, with the men building metaphorical and literal towers outgrowing their creators, such as in Henrik Ibsen’s *The Master Builder* (first performed in 1892), Dorothy L. Sayer’s 1937 drama *The Zeal of Thy House*, William Golding’s 1964 novel *The Spire*, Ayn Rand’s novel *The Fountainhead* (1943), Penelope Lively’s 1991 novel *City of the Mind*, and Simon Mawer’s *Glass Room* (2009).

28 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 95.

29 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 9.

30 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 208.

31 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 5.

by the glass wall of his penthouse. His own detachment from any social interaction, along with his apparent interest and then an active part in the fights consuming the building only re-affirm the irony of his role as self-imposed God in the elysian landscape of English middle classes. This is the point at which Ballard purposefully diverts from the path established by the real-life examples of the Trellick Tower or Keeling House, where originally the majority of the occupants held a lower social status. The author's insistence on the "well-to-do" nature of the tenants of the high-rise and their deliberate decisions to buy their shares in the apartment building emphasise the authenticity of his statement. *High-Rise* does not provide a commentary of a social experiment or a utopian vision; it rather thematises uncomfortably familiar topoi reflecting modern existence.

Conclusion

J.G. Ballard's fiction is distinguished by the considerable role he assigns to the physical surroundings of his characters. Amongst these physical surroundings, contemporary architecture holds an especially prominent position, since it provides a plethora of dysfunctional places. Ballard's poetics feeds on enormous tower blocks, gigantic shopping malls, inhuman motorways along with all sorts of failed attempts at smoothly functioning infrastructure.

Deeply rooted within the context of both contemporary fiction as well as architectural development, Ballard's *High-Rise* provides a rich portrayal both of the patterns of spatial behaviour of individual characters as well as the generalised tendencies of the inhabitants. Their growing antagonism, together with their subsequent tribalistic tendencies, adds to a typically "Ballardian" alienation from reality. Despite its high-tech, futuristic design, the superstructure is a symbol reinforcing the existing social hierarchy rather than acting as a mere neutral setting. Despite its position within the view of the City, the size and especially the radical verticality of the tower block provoke feelings of isolation and alienation from the reality of the outside world. The building thus becomes a battlefield and later a no-man's-land for hordes of former middle-class professionals, whose initial bickering grows into a marauding which signals the breakdown of social norms, rules and conventions.

The novel can be read as Ballard's probe into the effects of contemporary architectural development on people, or as a more complex, far-reaching commentary on the complex relationship of man and space in general. Thus, the "new world"³² into which Dr Laing eagerly welcomes the tenants of the neighbouring apartment tower can be seen as merely Ballard's highly reductive interpretation of the curious space his populace is confined to.

32 Ballard, *High-Rise*, 248.

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