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Yakup YILMAZ

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16. Wreckage and Rule: Necropolitical and Biopolitical Configurations of Urban Space in J.G. Ballard's *Concrete Island*

Enkaz ve İktidar: J. G. Ballard'ın *Beton Ada* Adlı Eserinde Kentsel Mekânın Nekropolitik ve Biyopolitik Biçimlenişleri

Kaya ÖZÇELİK[1]

Introduction: J.G. Ballard's life and literary stance

> Huge institutions surround us we can never penetrate: the City, the banking system, political and advertising conglomerates, vast entertainment empires. They've made themselves more user-friendly, but they define the tastes to which we conform. They're rather subtle, subservient tyrannies, but no less sinister for that. (Ballard, 1997, p. 146)

Engaged primarily with the detrimental effects of modernism and late capitalism, which have a destructive impact on humanity, Ballard registers these impacts in all his works from various perspectives. Bearing this approach in mind, Ballard's writing shifts its focus from external realities to internal experiences, aiming to explore how technology shapes one's perception, memory, and desires. Grounded in the formative experience of turmoil and confinement, this preoccupation of Ballard forms the basis for all his works, establishing his reputation in post-war English literature. Celebrated for his challenging style and satirical tone in his depiction of bleak, dystopian, and post-apocalyptic scenarios, James Graham Ballard (1930–2009) holds a significant role in the world of English fiction through his novels, short stories, and essays. Born in Shanghai and interned in a Japanese civilian camp during World War II, Ballard's earlier experiences of imprisonment and societal collapse contributed significantly to his literary imagination, as later fictionalised in his *Empire of the Sun* (1984). In his literary quest, Ballard was always drawn to inner worlds and psychogeography, attempting to depict the

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connection between modern technology and human consciousness. In one of his comments, Ballard highlights the necessity for the 20th-century writers to deal with the transformative effects of science and technology, focusing more on the inner space, not the 'outer space', to address the 'greatest moral urgency', as he asserts:

> I believe that science fiction is the authentic literature of the 20th century, the only fiction to respond imaginatively to the transforming nature of science and technology. I believe that the true domain of science fiction is that zone I have termed inner space, rather than outer space, and that the present, rather than the future, is now the period of greatest moral urgency for the writer. In my own fiction I have tried to achieve these aims. (Ballard, (n.d.) as cited in Kirkpatrick, 1986, p.62)

Keeping his literary stance firm, Ballard held the idea that there should not be a classification within mainstream literary conventions, suggesting that traditional realism fell short in grasping the structures between psychological and post-industrial era, as he highlights in his utterance: "The only truly alien planet is Earth" (Ballard, 2017, p. 103). Here, Ballard emphasises the fact that the estrangement of modern life itself reveals more uncanny and surreal discourses than any science fiction can. Beyond this criticism, Ballard also draws attention to the need for a change of subject matter and style of sci-fi writers, as Aldis clarifies:

> Making the most worthwhile contribution to the series of Guest Editorials in *New Worlds*, Ballard said that he believed sf should jettison such ideas as interstellar travel, aliens, and other staple ideas of the genre, turning more toward the biological sciences than the overworked physical one. … Not only should subject matter change; style should alter (Aldiss, 1971, pp. 120-121)

This necessity is also encapsulated by Ballard himself in his essay "Which way to inner space?" with a specific stress on the (postmodern) need for both sci-fi writers and the editors to create meanings on such a biased ground that the meaning revealed in a sci-fi text should be up to the readers to interpret and understand the text, as he delineates:

> Science fiction must jettison its narrative forms and plots. Most of these are far too explicit to express my any subtle interplay of character and theme. …I think science fiction must jettison its present narrative forms and plots. Most of these are far too explicit to express any subtle interplay of character and theme. … The onus is on them to accept a more oblique narrative style, understand themes, private symbols and vocabularies. (Ballard, 2017, p.103)

Aesthetic Lineage and Literary Production

J. G. Ballard's works are most often associated with the 1960s and 1970s New Wave of science fiction, a movement that aimed to enhance the genre beyond its pulp magazine roots to more experimental techniques and philosophical depth, as McGuirk (1992) notes:

> In the 1960s, modernism-influenced new wave writers declared war on science fiction's lingering vulgarity of style. They strove to replace pulp "cliches" with more venturesome and original—in effect, more specifically "literary"—writing. They were second-generation "soft" practitioners who moved on to the issue of writerly style after the first generation largely won the battle for consensus over "more sophisticated" characterization. The result was a third SF consensus shift toward self-consciously experimental writing. (p. 121)

Characterised by an intense interest in entropy, abandonment and psychological fragmentation, Ballard's oeuvre exists at the very intersection of speculative dystopian fiction and postapocalyptic fiction in an allegorical form to depict the realities of (post)modern world in a surrealist vein in close parallel to what De Cristofaro remarks that "[t]he contemporary post-apocalyptic novel is distinctive in that it engages with the concerns that give origins to today's dystopian apocalyptic visions in such a way that the roots of these concerns in traditional apocalyptic logic are exposed" (2020, p.5). Contrary to Cristofaro, Ballard does not merely categorise himself as the writer of postapocalyptic fiction, but the writer who pens "stories of psychic fulfilment", as he asserts:

> I don't see my fiction as disaster-oriented. ... they're ... stories of psychic fulfillment. The geophysical changes which take place in *The Drought*, *The Drowned World*, and *The Crystal World* are all positive and good changes ... [that] lead us to our real psychological goals ... . Really, I'm trying to show a new kind of logic emerging, and this is to be embraced, or at least held in regard. (Pringle et al.,1976, p. 40)

Yet, his emphasis on his assertion that he is not a writer of post-apocalyptic fiction serves for a different purpose at this point, although Ballard is acclaimed as one of the most influential writers of post-apocalyptic fiction. In other words, what he wants to convey seems to be stressing that his novels are more than what postapocalyptic fiction is to reveal. With his different style and "new kind of logic" in drawing a postapocalyptic scenario through geographical transformations,

Ballard aims to illustrate the real psychological realities of the (post)modern world, as which he clarifies in his definition of "Inner Space": "I define Inner Space as an imaginary realm in which on the one hand the outer world of reality, and on the other the inner world of the mind meet and merge" (Ballard, 2012, p.12). In his postapocalyptic fiction, Ballard focuses on the discourse of the catastrophe to depict the extent to which the breakdown of the external world and reality triggers the interior world and the realities of an individual, as he further explains:

> Without in any way suggesting that the act of writing is a form of creative self- analysis, I feel that the writer of fantasy has a marked tendency to select images and ideas which directly reflect the internal landscapes of his mind, and the reader of fantasy must interpret them on this level, distinguishing between the manifest content, which may seem obscure, meaningless or nightmarish, and the latent content, the private vocabulary of symbols drawn from the writer's mind. The dream worlds invented by the writer of fantasy are the external equivalents of the inner world of the psyche, and because they take their impetus from the most formative and confused periods of our lives they are often time-sculptures of terrifying ambiguity. (Ballard, 1997, p. 200)

With his literary oeuvre, Ballard holds an exceptional place in postapocalyptic fiction due to his concept of 'inner space,' in which he finds the appropriate ground for exploring catastrophe and its aftermath, drawing attention to its psychological, spatial, scientific, and technological dimensions concerning modern life. Except for his concern for the 'inner space' wherein he finds a room for illustrating existential symptoms of late modernity, Ballard's "the death of affect" notion contributes significantly to his postapocalyptic scenarios, through which characters become desensitised to their surroundings and thus to each other, in close parallel to how Ballard defines and explains the terms "the death of affect":

> Voyeurism, self-disgust, the infantile basis of our dreams and longings – these diseases of the psyche have now culminated in the most terrifying casualty of the [20th] century: the death of affect. This demise of feeling and emotion has paved the way for all our most real and tender pleasures – in the excitements of pain and mutilation; in sex as the perfect arena, like a culture bed of sterile pus, for all the veronicas of our own perversions; in our moral freedom to pursue our own psychopathology as a game; and in our apparently limitless powers for conceptualization – what our children have to fear is not the cars on the highways of

> tomorrow but our own pleasure in calculating the most elegant parameters of their deaths. (Ballard, as cited in Nicol, p. 186)

Apart from other postapocalyptic writers, what makes Ballard distinctive is hidden in his discourse on post-apocalypticism through speculative landscapes and symbols that reveal and stress the essence of a civilisation that is progressively declining from the inside rather than the underlying causes of cataclysms, such as urban ruins, motorways, and drowned cities. That's, Ballard is not directly concerned with a global catastrophe, but primarily the aftermath of a calamity to highlight "causation of the psychopathology of everyday life in decaying capitalism" with the incessant breakdown of meaning within the hyper-technologised and estranged environments of late capitalism, as he delineates:

> The alienation of people within such a society and their increasing obsession with catastrophic death is a subject for deep exploration, and this is the primary subject of Ballard's subsequent fiction. The greatest strength of this late fiction is that it penetrates profoundly into the morbid psychology that comes from living in such a society; its most critical weakness is that in pursuing this exploration, Ballard loses sight of the underlying causation of the psychopathology of everyday life in decaying capitalism. (Franklin, 1979, p.100)

Attempting to bring a new dimension to reality, focusing more on the violent surrealism hidden in everyday modern life rather than the fantastic, Ballard contributed much to speculative realism through his approach, as he succinctly states: "We live inside an enormous novel. For the writer, in particular, it is less and less for him to invent the fictional content of his novel. The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality" (Black, 2002, p.87).

Blending his subject matter with his 'inner space' understanding of a postapocalyptic discourse in a postmodern vein, Ballard constantly questions the boundaries between inside and out, self and society, as well as sanity and collapse within a society, referring to global discourse. Dejected once for his shocking novel *Crash* (1973) by a reviewer for a prominent British publishing house with an exclamatory statement: "This author is beyond psychiatric help. DO NOT PUBLISH" (Dawson, 2013, p.22), Ballard holds his significance in the world of literature as a prolific writer today. Known mainly for his catastrophic novels, such as *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1965) and

The Crystal World (1966), Ballard's fame also lies in novels including *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), *Concrete Island* (1974), High-Rise (1975), *Empire of the Sun* (1984), *The Kindness of Women* (1991), *Miracles of Life* (2008) among others beyond his short stories and essays (Bould et al., 2009, p.12-13).

Published in 1974, *Concrete Island* reflects the pivotal phase of late modern British fiction, set amidst a post-industrial landscape dominated by increasing concrete infrastructure, waning welfare politics, and the alienating effects of late capitalism, with all its attendant discourse. Today, the novel is acclaimed by scholars as the second in place in Ballard's "urban disaster trilogy", which portrays the transformation of urban modernity itself as both the setting and the antagonist, as Kozlu remarks: Set in connection with Westway, a highway built in London between 1964 and 1970, the novel is second in a series consisting of 'Crash' and 'High-Rise', which can also be described as an 'urban disaster trilogy'" (Kozlu, 2023, p.42).

Set in a derelict triangular patch of land trapped between the lanes of a West London motorway interchange, the narrative offers a concentrated meditation on isolation, spatial exclusion, and the bodily consequences of infrastructural violence. Having written *Concrete Island* amidst the increasing disenchantment with modern urban planning (Gasiorek, 2005, p.110), Ballard explores the extent to which the deception of unprecedented advancement reaches in his novel *Concrete Island*. Beyond this was the economic crisis permeating throughout Britain between the 1960s and 1980s when the novel was penned, as Porter reveals the post-imperial context concerning the aftereffects of the financial crisis felt specifically in London during which *Concrete Island* was in its writing process:

> After centuries of being at right place at the right time, the metropolis had the cards stacked against it. London's proud role as world commercial capital had stemmed from Britain's ruling the waves. With the postwar sterling crises and with imperial decline accelerating after Indian independence in 1947, and wars following in Malaysia, Kenya, Cyprus, Aden, and so forth, London could no longer count on jobs, and riches galore simply through being the Empire's port. (Porter, 1994, p.345)

The upshot of this context is, no doubt, a sense of neglect and abandonment that is sedimented within the operations of modern

urban cities. Ballard's *Concrete Island* allegorises this fact by staging a motorway island, invisible to passing motorists, as a reflection of the future-as-present through his fictional microcosm. Ballard's construction of the island as a liminal and necropolitical space renders the protagonist, Robert Maitland, invisible and a social outcast, which, in this respect, proves the significant fact that hi-tech advancements in a society carry the potential risks of transforming humankind into nothing other than those trapped in the grips of modernity, serving for the modern powers.

Drawing a connection between Defoe's Robinson *Crusoe* (1717) and Ballard's *Concrete Island* contributes much to the discussion of necropolitical discourse. While Defoe, as a character stranded on the island, is concerned much with the 'homoeconomics' to get by, who later evolves into a representative of the coloniser to claim control power on the island and his loyal serf Friday until he achieves to get rid of this situation, Robert Maitland, again as a marooned character on the modern island, depicts the contemporary anxiety revolving around the feeling of neglect and abandonment resulted directly from hypermodern scientific and technological advancements that do never offers a glimpse of hope for a refresh beginning, as Kemp clarifies further:

> J.G. Ballard, whose *Concrete Island* (1974) stranded a motor accident victim on derelict land cut off by surrounding motorways, declared in its preface: 'The Pacific atoll may not be available, but there are other islands far nearer to home, some of them only a few steps from the pavements we tread every day. They are surrounded, not by sea, but by concrete, ringed by chain-mail fences and walled off by bomb-proof glass.' Reversing Defoe's scenario, Ballard's castaway is what his author calls an 'anti-Crusoe' who 'felt no real need to leave the island, and this alone confirmed that he had established dominion over it.' Far from feeling a need to escape, in fact, he welcomes being marooned as in itself an escape from irksome responsibilities. (Kemp, 2023, p. 295)

In the same manner, Ballard's concrete wasteland provides no redemption through labour and mastery as opposed to Defoe's colonial island, but entropy, humiliation and, more crucially, the bare life, where the character/individual is stripped of what makes him an individual under the influence of high tech that renders humanity "invisible: **"**Real change is largely invisible, as befits this age of invisible technology—and

people have embraced VCRs, fax machines, word processors without a thought, along with the new social habits that have sprung up around them" (Ballard, 1990, p. 128). The changes that render humankind unimportant or petty are created within the understanding of late modernism, promising humanity more hopeful and comfortable zones. Such zones, the city exposes in Concrete Island, are not aberrations but rather a structural necessity for modern individuals. From this vantage, Ballard anticipates and suggests a critique of the biopolitical logics of spatial segregation, while offering the deadly costs exacted by neoliberal urban design under post-industrial modernity.

Within the logic of late capitalism, urban spaces have progressively become wastelands where management of life overlaps with the mechanisms shaped and controlled through the abandonment and exclusion politics. It is precisely this conception of politics that preoccupies Ballard and that he dramatises in Concrete Island (1974), focusing on the motorway interchange to illustrate a hyper-modern infrastructural wasteland in which human remnants are isolated, rendered invisible, and deemed dispensable. It is also possible to suggest that this politics serves only to perpetuate the technologies of power embedded in the capitalist apparatus, which determines who is to be rescued, who will receive attention, and who will be allowed to deteriorate unnoticed.

Ballard's *Concrete Island* does not merely stage a speculative scenario of isolation; it constructs an *aesthetic of infrastructural necropolitics* through a deliberate literary minimalism that mirrors the sterility and violence of the late capitalist urban order as a nearly fitting answer to what Ballard asserts in his *High-Rise* (2016) on the modern environment that is "built, not for man, but for man's absence" (p.28). The narrative is sparse, claustrophobic, and meticulously restrained, echoing the affectless continuity of the motorway system itself. Ballard forgoes elaborate backstory or emotional interiority, allowing the materiality of space and the deterioration of the body to speak for themselves, which aligns with his technique he follows in his other novels concerning his focus on "the texture of modernity" and its dehumanising effects, as Groes (2012) highlights:

> These novels capture the texture of modernity – the distinct changes to the structure of feeling and aesthetic whereby language as a tool for meaningful communication becomes

> exhausted, and in which the dominating technology of concrete reshapes social structures and relationships in monstrous, dehumanized and Americanized ways (p.124).

As he notes in an oft-cited interview, "I was trying to write about the inner space of the twentieth century. The external landscape was already mapped; I was interested in the terrain of the psyche" (Ballard, 1994, p. 19). In *Concrete Island*, however, the inner and outer spaces collapse into one: the psychic unravelling of Maitland is inscribed directly onto the landscape of the city's waste. Ballard creates a speculative scenario of isolation by drawing an aesthetic of infrastructural necropolitics through a deliberate literary minimalism that reflects the harsh brutality of the hypermodern and late capitalist urban environment. By conjoining the inner and outer realities into a singular entity, Ballard delves deep into the modern anxiety of individuals, deploys a political allegory of infrastructural necropolitics in his *Concrete Island*. Within the context of late capitalism, he reflects on and prophesies how the logic of protection, mobility, and acceleration is inherent in and inescapable from late capitalist urbanism. All inevitably pose threats of exclusion, neglect, and a death-in-life reality, thus strengthening his allegorical message. In the end, it becomes evident that Ballard's approach in his novel enables him not to moralise directly but to show the real threats waiting for humanity in store, thus rendering his novel not just a fiction of abandonment, neglect or state of exclusion but a prophetic novel with a stark warning – not to let wild late capitalism to have its plan on humanity through a biopolitical violence engrained in the daily life of the urban environment.

Theoretical Discourse of Necropolitics

In close parallel with Ballard's critique of the abandonment and neglect of the individual, stemming directly from hyper-modernity and late capitalism, necropolitics, as articulated by the postcolonial theorist Joseph-Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian philosopher, presents a critical framework for engaging with the thematic concerns of *Concrete Island* (1974). In his seminal essay "Necropolitics", Mbembe introduces his reader to necropolitics as the politics of death and how power is exercised through controlling and regulating mortality, as he delineates:

> [T]he ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. Hence, to kill or to allow to live constitutes the limits of sovereignty, its fundamental attributes. To exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power. (152)

Through this approach, Mbembe provides a critical lens for examining how state power and sovereignty intersect with the regulation of life and death in the context of violence, exclusion, and oppression. Tracing the historical footsteps of his theoretical approach throughout the human history and analysing the theoretical backgrounds and the contexts of biopolitics by Michel Foucault and sovereignty by Carl Schmitt, bare life by Giorgio Agamben and thanatopolitics by Roberto Esposito, Mbembe comes up with his own theory to analyse the modern power dynamics and offer new ways to tackle the systemic inequities that sustain violence and disparity within a society, as he clarifies his intention:

> I have put forward the notion of necropolitics and necropower to account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*. (2008, pp. 176-177)

Feeding on all former theories, necropolitics come to examine the links among death, power, sovereignty in the contexts of colonialism, racism and systemic violence, of which late capitalism is at the centre. When considered within the contemporary context, necropolitics is quite evident in many discourses stemming from global conflicts, humanitarian crises, and state violence that render human beings the Other being excluded, as Fernández (2023) briefly underlines:

> In Necropolitics, Mbembe conceptualizes the Other through different but synonymous terms resulting from colonial and late capitalist logic to refer to the same category of excluded being. He focuses on the histories of the so-called "disposable," "superfluous," "redundant," "useless," or "excessive" to dissect the system of subjugation that has been putting these labels on individuals and communities in contemporary times. (p.149)

With reference to Robert Maitland's state of being abandoned and excluded in the hyper-modern world in the grip of late capitalism and its dehumanising effects, Roberto Esposito's idea of immunitarian logic as a dispositif contributes significantly to the discourse of Ballard's

Concrete Island in the context of necropolitics. In his theory, Esposito argues that the protection of life is intertwined so intensely with the act of causing death that to separate life from the production of death is almost impossible, and that's why immunitarian logic inevitably turns its scope from biopolitics to thanatopolitical reverse action, as he clearly highlights by posing crucial questions to justify himself:

> When increased to the point that at which it turns into its opposite, the negative protection of life will end up destroying, along with the enemy outside, its own body. The violence of interiorization, which is to say the abolition of an outside, of the negative, could turn into an absolute exteriorization, a complete negativity. So what can we do? How can we snap this deathly logic? How can we recognize, as the ontology of actuality requires, the point at which the overturning of the present can move toward other alternatives? None of us has a perfect answer ready at hand. (Esposito, 2013, p. 64).

Concerning the effects that are reflected in *Concrete Island* is in close parallel with what Fredric Jameson conceptualises as 'spatial logic of late capitalism' in the context of postmodernism, as he illustrates:

> The last few years have been marked by an inverted millennarianism, in which premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that (the end of ideology, art, or social class; the 'crisis' of Leninism, social democracy, or the welfare state, etc., etc.): taken together, all of these perhaps constitute what is increasingly called postmodernism. (Jameson, 1991, p.1)

Feeding on the idea of 'Late capitalism', which was first used by Werner in the first volume of *Modernismus Kapitalismus* in 1925 (Somek, 2017, p.33), and bearing this crucial shift from millennial visions to a focus on the end of various constructs such as ideology, art, or social class in mind, Jameson offers a new dimension to postmodern critical theory with his concept 'spatial logic of late capitalism', which primarily deals with efficiency, speed, and circulation at the expense of human life. Beyond Werner, Jameson broadens the scope of this term with David Harvey's approach to capitalism through the concept of the "spatial fix," which he uses to describe capitalism's insatiable drive to resolve its inner crisis tendencies through geographical expansion and restructuring (Harvey, 2008, p. 23). In light of all these contextual background, the spatial logic of late capitalism discusses how urban, social, economic and geographic spaces are created, organised and regulated to resolve the overaccumulation within the framework of late-

stage capitalist economies in close relationship with the essence of capitalism that "annihilates space to ensure its own reproduction" neglecting the presence of humankind and its future (Anthony, 2017, p.116).

Taking all these into account, Ballard's *Concrete Island* will be examined to illustrate how unveils the contradictions at the very core of late capitalism by illustrating the physical and psychological breakdown of the so-called privileged who is trapped in the grips of infrastructural requirements, thus justifying to what extent the novel serves as a spatial allegory of infrastructural violence, in which the individual is not merely abandoned but actively undone in light of the capitalist logic of unpredictable progress. Revealing how the systems are devised to optimise life and the movements in capitalist necessities to create zones of abandonment and neglect of the individuals exposed to face death-in-life reality, *Concrete Island* offers a literary depiction of late capitalism ingrained in necropolitical discourse in the way what Mbembe calls the "death-worlds" of necropolitical modernity in which large populations are subjected to vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of the living dead" (Mbembe, 2008, pp. 176-177). Considering all these, this chapter claims and argues that *Concrete Island* today serves as a socio-cultural document that illustrates a necropolitical and biopolitical critique of urban modernity, referring to immunitary logic, through its protagonist, Robert Maitland, and the infrastructural island space in which he is trapped and desperately confined. Portraying Maitland as an isolated modern individual on a wasteland setting, functioning allegorically as a symbol of a zone of exclusion, abandonment, neglect, and immunisation, Ballard justifies his reader to what extent a modern understanding and management of space can be rendered a biopolitical and necropolitical space rather than a designing it geographically, thus transforming an individual as a creation of human waste with a message he offers – unsatiable yearning for (hyper)modernism and the late capitalist of the world order foreshadows nothing other than a systematic neglect, abandonment, exclusion that will eventually bring forth the disposal of humanity.

Necropolitical Infrastructures and the Violence of Late Capitalism

The Island as Necropolitical Threshold

The island in *Concrete Island* serves as a liminal space, existing simultaneously both within and outside the operational geography of the city. Stranded between converging motorway lanes in West London, the protagonist Robert Maitland is disconnected both physically and symbolically from the social and infrastructural networks of hyper-modern life, as is evident in the relentless traffic Maitland witnesses: "The lines of traffic swept by, swerving under the route indica-tors towards the junction ahead. Brake lights pumped, and the sunlight flared off the windshields in electric lances" (Ballard, 1974, p. 12). The island Maitland in trapped is more than a neglected area but a necropolitical zone where the rights to visibility, protection and recognition are suspended in the very same vein as Agamben encapsulates as a "state of exception" – a spatial and legal space in which "the law is in force in the form of its suspension" (Agamben, 2005, p. 105). This very same scenario is evident in the scene where Maitland is totally in the grips of the island that offers no hope for any help:

> The rush hour was in full swing. As Maitland stood weakly by the roadside, waving with a feeble hand, it seemed to him that every vehicle in London had passed and re-passed him a dozen times, the drivers and passengers 'deliberately ignoring him in a vast spontaneous conspiracy. He was well aware that no one would stop for him, at least until the rush hour was over at eight o'clock. Then, with luck, he might be able to attract the attention of a solitary driver. (Ballard, 1974, p. 13).

This is also evidenced by the limited environment Maitland is provided on the island – a space depicted as a triangular wasteland surrounded by motorways, serving as nothing other than a backdrop for a parabolic deconstruction of middle-class modernity. As an architect with a family, Maitland is left all alone through the systematic deprivation of his social life, including his prestige, hygiene, language, and even his identity. He meets no one but Protector and Miss Jane, who are also marginalised figures in the full grip of abandonment and trauma, representing the allegorical function of the island as a zone of exclusion where there is no hope of life with rights and recognition, as Agamben suggests (Mbembe 2008, p.153). The depiction of the marginal zone, where Maitland is abandoned, justifies Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, which concerns the power that has the potential to create worlds of

death (Mbembe, 2003, p. 176). In essence, Maitland is not neutralised by the system but exposed to suffer a gradual process of biological decay, as is evident in the scene where Maitland notices his transformation:

> The bruises on his temple and upper jaw, like the injuries to his legs and abdomen, were denned and localized, leaving his mind free. Already he knew that his right leg was severely damaged. A massive contusion was spreading from the hip down the outer surface of the thigh. Through the torn fabric of his trousers he touched the tender skin, raised by a leaking weal that wet his hand. The hip joint appeared to have been driven into the basin of his pelvis, and the displaced nerves and blood-vessels throbbed through the torn musculature as they tried to reassemble themselves. (Ballard, 1974, p. 18).

Beyond biological pain, Maitland also faces his grim state of necropolitical social erasure, reflecting the abandonment and invisibility imposed on the island itself. In other words, the portrayal of Maitland's body is quite indistinguishable from the debris-strewn landscape of the island; both are abandoned with the invisibility beyond contemporary standards, as Ballard emphasises:

> Identifying the island with himself, he gazed at the cars in the breakers yard, at the wire mesh fence, and the concrete caisson behind him. These places of pain and ordeal were now confused with pieces of his body. He gestured towards them, trying to make a circuit of the island so that he could leave these sections of himself where they belonged. He would leave his right leg at the point of the crash, his bruised hands impaled upon the steel fence. He would place his chest where he had sat against the concrete wall. At each point a small ritual would signify the transfer of obligation from himself to the island. (Ballard, 1974, p. 18).

Encircled by hyper-functional infrastructure, Maitland inhabits a necropolitical space that offers no hope of escape; instead, it operates as a zone of abandonment that refuses access, as the following description highlights:

> Behind Maitland was the northern wall of the island, the thirty-feet-high embankment of the westbound motorway from which he had crashed. Facing him, and forming the southern boundary, was the steep embankment of the three-lane feeder road which looped in a north-westerly circuit below the overpass and joined the motorway at the apex of the island. Although no more than a hundred yards away, this freshly grassed slope seemed hidden behind the overheated light of the island by the wild grass, abandoned cars and builder's equipment. (Ballard, 1974, p. 6)

In this way, the island becomes a necropolitical enclave within the urban fabric, demonstrating the extent to which one's right to be recognised, assisted, and even his/her awareness is inherently suspended in the late capitalist world order. This very technological efficiency imprisons Maitland and nullifies his visibility despite his persistent but desperate attempts to be saved, as is exemplified in the scene where he tries hard to attract the attention of the drivers speeding fast the island:

> He reached the foot of the embankment, and waved with one arm, shouting at the few cars moving along the westbound carriageway. None of the drivers could see him, let alone hear his dry-throated croak, and Maitland stopped, conserving his strength. lie tried to climb the embankment, but within a few steps collapsed in a heap on the muddy slope. (Ballard, 1974, p. 25)

As it reads, the necropolitical space on the island never allows any possible means of escape for the victim, Maitland. As such, the hyper-modern infrastructure surrounding the island both neglects Maitland and renders him unimaginable, plunging him into inescapable and restless death-worlds beyond neglect and exclusion (Mbembe, 2008, pp. 176-177). While the motorway infrastructure encircling Maitland appears to be a testament to urban efficiency, it paradoxically serves as the very mechanism of his exclusion and abandonment. This is not a malfunction of the system, but rather a deliberate aspect of its biopolitical design, as is hinted by the helplessness of Maitland once again: "This patch of abandoned ground left over at the junction of three motorway routes was literally a deserted island. Angry with himself, Maitland lifted the crutch to strike this meaningless soil" (Ballard, 1974, p. 25). Throughout the novel, the vivid depiction of architectural density and motorway infrastructure serves only to emphasise the function of hyper-modernism in confining and marginalising the individual in the grip of late capitalism. Here, it is also possible to suggest that biopolitics controls an individual in the modern world through a dominant infrastructural network that shapes the body of a subject, spatial positioning, and visibility. Beyond this, the illustration of the island positioned "some two hundred yards long and triangular in shape" functions as a wasteland on "the waste ground between three converging motorway routes", symbolising the extent to which hyper-modern infrastructures reach in the name of development in full

accordance with the requirements late capitalism demands (Ballard, 1974, p. 5). With its specific emphasis on sweeping cars through an active traffic system, a clear biopolitical discourse is revealed through the necropolitical enclave in *Concrete Island*. To be more precise, the crash of Maitland also reveals the technocratic logic of motorway design with the vast web of concrete causeways and the massive columns supporting the flyovers, thus transforming a potentially rescuable individual into an invisible and excluded subject by stripping him of any right to claim help, recognition, and ultimately of life itself, which dovetails with Stephen Graham's discussion of the modern cities or "the localised geographies of cities" turn out to be "the prosaic and everyday sites, circulations and spaces of the city are becoming the main 'battlespace' both at home and abroad, … state power centres increasingly expend resources trying to separate bodies deemed malign and threatening from those deemed valuable and threatened" (Graham, 2010, p. xv). This is reinforced by the specific emphasis on the modernity of the motorway that facilitates a high-speed mobility for the drivers, as is explicitly highlighted: "Six hundred yards from the junction with the newly built spur of the M4 motorway, when the Jaguar had already passed the 70 m.p.h. speed limit, a blow-out collapsed the front nearside tyre" (Ballard, 1974, p. 1).

In the context of necropolitics, Keller Easterling's (2014) views concerning the function of infrastructural space that shapes the modern world and its inhabitants by replacing juridical mechanisms with spatial arrangements that enforce full compliance and exclusion, as he asserts:

> Contemporary infrastructure space is the secret weapon of the most powerful people in the world precisely because it orchestrates activities that can remain unstated but are nevertheless consequential. Some of the most radical changes to the globalizing world are being written, not in the language of law and diplomacy, but in these spatial, infrastructural technologies—often because market promotions or prevailing political ideologies lubricate their movement through the world. These stories foreground content to disguise or distract from what the organization is actually doing. (Easterling, 2014, p. 15).

This also justifies the fact that motorway does not simply overlooks Maitland but it enforces his disappearance through its spatial design as a means of "systematic logics" that plunges one to exclusion: "In

addition to ever-increasing concentration of wealth enabled by predatory formations (elites, and systematic logics including technical apparatuses), at the other end of the social pyramid an 'emergence of new logics of expulsions' can be recognized" (Sassen, 2014, as cited in Thomas, 2024, p.50).

In his decrepit condition and total desperation, Maitland's unviability stems from infrastructural indifference rather than the sovereign force. This can best be clarified through the underlying meanings hidden in the layers of symbolic discourse of the island, as can be deduced from the tragic state of Maitland stranded on the island: "He walked through the grass to a patch of clear ground between the Jaguar and the embankment. Surprisingly, no one had yet stopped to help him. As the drivers emerged from the darkness below the overpass into the fast right-hand bend lit by the afternoon" (Ballard, 1974, p. 4). The space Maitland finds himself in after the crash is characterised by violence and mercilessness, along with its threatening environment, creating a zone that is fully controlled by necropolitical infrastructures.

Moreover, the island remains ungoverned both legally and in meaning in its necropolitical context. The island is drawn as an unofficial space that is not recognised even on a piece of map; there is no authority claiming and checking it, and no one ever has any interest in it, as is clear in the fact that there appears no one to help Maitland in such a desperate case: "Maitland leaned weakly on the crutch. He waved at the passing cars, but no one had stopped or even noticed this brief episode" (Ballard, 1974, p. 93). The indeterminacy embedded in the island, rendering it a space of non-recognition, is, in fact, integral to its necropolitical role in the discourse of late capitalist hypermodern life that Ballard manifests throughout the novel. This is specifically justified in the novel by the fact that those moving through the motorway system cannot acknowledge the island's presence, precisely because its validity lies outside the symbolic and logistical sphere of that system, which reminds one of Marc Augé's concept of a non-place as a product of supermodernity, designating "a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (Augé, 1995, pp. 77–78). It is this very approach that one can also link the non-place condition of the island to a thanatoplace, where an individual falls prey to a state of deprivation, solitude and eventually gradual death.

All in all, intertwined with a space of non-recognition and of a non-place, *Concrete Island* questions the coherence of subjectivity in the absence of societal recognition concerning the spatial and ontological threshold, as is clarified throughout the novel, first by Robert Maitland's physical wound, then followed by his disintegration of the self, as it reads below:

> Maitland slid the injured leg on to the floor and listened to the traffic sounds from the motorway. ... He had now been marooned on this triangle of waste ground for almost four days. He knew that he had begun to forget his wife and son, Helen Fairfax and his partners - together they had moved back into the dimmer light at the rear of his mind, their places taken by the urgencies of food, shelter, his injured leg and, above all, the need to dominate the patch of ground immediately around him. His effective horizon had shrunk to little more than ten feet away. (Ballard, 1974, p. 78).

The island thus exemplifies the material manifestation of necropolitical logic through its representation as the pure product of the infrastructure of death-in-life, offered not by sovereign authority but by the neglect stemming from late capitalist and modern urban planning. In this light, Ballard's *Concrete Island* serves best as an inscription of the late modernist and capitalist world order, rather than an allegory of a distant dystopia located somewhere in the hyper-modern world, embedded within the high-tech infrastructural and spatial realities of the contemporary city. By portraying Maitland as the one entrapped in the grip of hyper-modernity, Ballard reveals the potential risk, or more accurately, the reality of an anomaly that renders humankind excluded within the hyper-modern structural system, thus drawing attention to the worst possible condition awaiting humanity.

Robert Maitland's Corporeal Disintegration

Focusing on the bodily and mental deterioration of the protagonist, Maitland, a new discourse of necropolitics emerges in the context of a hyper-modernist and late capitalist world order. Thus, this deterioration can be regarded as a powerful symbol of late capitalism and modernism, making some lives disposable within the system of necropolitical regimes of exclusion and abandonment. In essence, the gradual disintegration of Maitland is not merely the result of the injury incurred by the accident, but a symptom of a more profound structural issue, justified by his dehumanised and disposable condition at the

hands of infrastructural capitalism and necropolitical neglect and abandonment. Ballard illustrates this gradual decline of Maitland in a clinical precision, as follows: "His right thigh and hip had swollen into a massive contusion, and the head of his thighbone now seemed to be fused into the damaged pelvic socket. Maitland leaned over the front seat. Bruises and tender pressure points covered his body like the percussion stops of an overstressed musical instrument" (Ballard, 1974, p. 23). This shows the extent to which Maitland's body becomes a kind of bio-territory, which Ballard uses as an appropriate means of recording the violence of neglect and abandonment, thus reflecting how indifferent the system is. Beyond the biological aspect, the decay of Maitland is also ontological in view of his identity in his former life. Introduced as a 35-year-old architect involved in urban development, he is suddenly stripped of his defining roles by an accident and left on an island, unseen and unaided. This condition is closely aligned with what Mbembe conceptualises as "the status of the living dead" (Mbembe, 2008, pp. 176-177), rendering Maitland a potent embodiment of Mbembe's theoretical framework based on biopolitical and necropolitical context. This is also associated with the 'bare life' discussion of Agamben in his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* concerning "life exposed to death" (Agamben, 1998, p. 88). Agamben suggests that the condition in which an individual is deprived of all his political status, legal status and protection, and civil recognition, existing solely in the form of biological life under the absolute authority and power of the sovereign to determine life over death, thereby making them susceptible to being killed without the act of being considered murder, as Mills () elucidates further:

> Agamben postulates that the original task of the sovereign was the production of the biopolitical body. The central task of *Homo Sacer*, then, is to elaborate on the logic of the production of the biopolitical body, one key aspect of which is the doctrine of the sacredness of life. Without going into detail, the upshot of Agamben's discussion of sovereignty and sacrality is that life exposed to death is the originary political element and the figure of *homo sacer* expresses the originary political relation, that is, the relation of abandonment. The idea is that in being abandoned by (and to) the law, homo sacer is exposed absolutely to violence; homo sacer is simultaneously "free, open to all" and the object without protection of violence. (2016, p.84)

As it reads, Maitland's condition clearly reflects what Agamben illustrates as the fundamental political relationship of homo sacer, regarding a life "exposed to death" is not only "excluded, banned" but also "open to all, free", yet deprived of any legal or social protection (Agamben, 1998, p. 110). After his accident, Maitland finds himself neither officially excluded from nor included in the civic order; rather, he exists in a state of abandonment and neglect in which the sovereignty's infrastructural apparatuses neglect to recognise his existence. Maitland's predicament here encapsulates the creation of a biopolitical body for an individual who was once an architect embedded in the networks of late-capitalist urban life, transformed into a being solely defined by its biological survival, detached from its political and social roles. In a similar way, the island is rendered as a spatial token of this *state of exception*, as "a paralegal universe that goes by the name of law" (Butler, 2020, p. 61). Considering Agamben's notion of the *state of exception* as a political point in which the regular law is suspended but sovereignty's own law begins, Maitland's attempts to survive gain clarity. In other words, this is justified by the island that serves as a spatial manifestation of this condition, where Maitland's survival depends not on the rights or protections of the state but on his capacity to endure exposure, scarcity, and the slow violence of neglect. From another angle, his reduction to mere biological existence is evident from the fact that Maitland is no longer active, productive, visible, or socially recognised, as the following passage emphasises:

> In this zone of indistinction, in being included *as* excluded, the person condemned to die by sovereign authority becomes the equivalent of *homo sacer,* the figure of "sacred man" who can be killed yet not sacrificed, murdered without the commission of homicide. Indeed, the bare life, the expendable life, of *homo sacer* is life exposed to death, life *available* to be killed. For Agamben, the figure of *homo sacer* is crucial to the advent of modernity and the juridical order of the West. It is in the zones of indistinction that bare life is both subject to and object of state political order. More specifically, it is upon the body of *homo sacer* and in the realm of bare life that state power is exercised and organized. (Molloy, 2004, pp.130)

In light of this and on the biopolitical context, it can be commented that the existence of Maitland after the existence places him in what Agamben describes as a "zone of indistinction", which is illustrated with

reference to the camp as "the hidden matrix and nomos of the political space in which we live" (Agamben, 1995, p.171), as he further explains:

> Insofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life, the camp was also the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation. Whoever entered the camp moved in a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer made any sense. (Agamben, 1995, p.171).

Then, the island, Robert Maitland is entrapped and imprisoned in, functions as a "zone of indistinction" where he is both included and excluded, exists within the spatial and biopolitical boundaries of the city but deprived of any protections and recognition of civic life. On this point, Maitland serves as a parallel entity to homo sacer "who may be killed and yet not sacrificed, and whose essential function in modern politics …" (Agamben, 1995, p.171). His existence in life is stripped down to the ultimate 'bare life' that is disposable, sustained solely by his capacity to adapt rather than by any legal or institutional protection. In such a case, Robert Maitland is reduced to a biopolitical body that is implicitly controlled and governed by the broader urban order that surrounds but ignores him as an individual. Thus, Maitland's plight becomes a biopolitical discourse in parallel with what Foucault explains as the transformation of politics into biopolitics through the mechanisms and systems of state power on the populations beyond Agamben's discussion of 'homo sacer' and 'bare life', as Foucault writes that "man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question" (Foucault, 1978, p.143). This case is well aligned with the scene where it is hinted that Maitland adopts the violent island as his home: "He surveyed the green triangle which had been his home for the past five days. Its dips and hollows, rises and hillocks he knew as intimately as his own body. Moving across it, he seemed to be following a contour line inside his head" (Ballard, 1974, p. 113). Once again, this condition of Maitland justifies the role of the island in late capitalist and hypermodern society as nothing other than a necropolitical space that claims the living-death state of its protagonist, who is totally stripped of any help, recognition and redemption.

From a biopolitical standpoint, Maitland's condition exemplifies what Foucault refers to as the reduction of life to its "biological existence" that serves as a site where power intervenes not to support but to classify and neglect (Foucault, 2003, p. 242, as he clarifies:

> For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body. (Foucault, 1978, p.142).

Maitland's predicament is also the reflection and result of what Foucault epitomises as "threshold of biological modernity" as a drive that renders the survival and health concerns of humanity a means of political assessment and strategy, as he elucidates further:

> Outside the Western world, famine exists, on a greater scale than ever; and the biological risks confronting the species are perhaps greater, and certainly more serious, than before the birth of microbiology. But what might be called a society's "threshold of modernity" has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. (Foucault, 2003, p. 143).

In his discussion of biopolitics, Foucault posits that human beings in modern life are not considered merely political subjects or biological organisms, but rather entities whose biological existence is intertwined with their political existence. This existence, thus, signifies that political power does not merely legislate or administer but engages with life itself, managing birth rates, diseases, health regulations, and various biological factors. Then, politics begins to function at the very biological level, and biology becomes a matter of political decision. For Foucault, this concept lies at the core of biopolitics – the management of populations not only through laws and institutions, but also by regulating and shaping life processes to mould the population. From a Foucauldian standpoint, the biopolitical body of Maitland becomes an administrative success that is worth systemic reintegration in the sense that an implicit sovereign hand emerges to dehumanise and kill Maitland in the grip of entrapment in Ballard's hypermodern wasteland. His being exposed to gradual death is maintained slowly by

indifference and the structural and infrastructural design of the city that flows seamlessly around him, as is clearly illustrated in the scene where Maitland looks for help desperately:

> No pedestrian or emergency verge had been provided along this fast bend, and the cars speeding past him at sixty miles an hour were no more than three or four feet away. Still carrying the raincoat and briefcase, he moved along the line of trestles, steering each one out of his way. He waved his hat in the exhaust-filled air, shouting over his shoulder into the engine noise. (Ballard, 1974, p. 11).

As it reads, this scene illustrates Maitland's absolute exclusion from the active circuits of the surrounding infrastructure, which operates with almost total efficiency to render him an unnoticed and desperate subject of biopolitics administered by sovereignty. In this way, it serves as a prime example of how biopolitics functions under a sovereign government, where a special layout and mobility systems control one's inclusion and exclusion with nearly imperceptible precision.

This indifference, Ballard highlights in his novel, is typical of late capitalism, where human value is closely linked to nothing other than productivity, efficiency, and visibility. In his discussion of 'spatial fix', David Harvey (2002) suggests that the individual within the late capitalist context is becoming more and more subordinated to the mobility of capital and to the spatio-temporal logic of its flow, to highlight the dehumanising demands of both modernity and late capitalism, as he clarifies:

> [C]apitalism is under the impulsion to eliminate all spatial barriers, to 'annihilate space through time' as Marx puts it, but it can do so only through the production of a fixed space. Capitalism thereby produces a geographical landscape (of space relations, of territorial organization, and of systems of places linked in a 'global' division of labor and of functions) appropriate to its own dynamic of accumulation at a particular moment of its history, only to have to destroy and rebuild that geographical landscape to accommodate accumulation at a later date. (p.59)

Maitland, once a figure of middle-class mobility, becomes obsolete the moment he ceases to move. His injury is not merely an accident of fate but rather a clash with the underlying principles of the system he is confined to and stripped of circulation and existence. This is simply a reflection of what Harvey (2008) suggests as the concept of 'spatial fix', signalling the continuous and significant drive of capitalism to resolve

its internal crises through geographical expansion and reconfiguration of space (p. 23). The exclusion of Maitland from the stream of traffic infrastructure also depicts the opposite of this logic: he is totally immobilised and cast out of the systems through which capital sustains itself, but he is disabled, highlighting how the 'spatial fix' not only generates new spaces for accumulation but also creates spaces of abandonment for those deemed unproductive.

Ballard highlights this concept through the transformation of Maitland's body from a subject of hypermodernity into a piece of urban wasteland in a symbolic way by drawing island as a wasteland teeming with rusted iron, *broken fences and refuse, discarded around him, emblematise his waning vitality, as the following passage shows*:

> His jacket and trousers were smeared with oil and blood. Engine grease covered the weal on his right hand where it had been struck by a passing car. His right thigh and hip had swollen into a massive contusion, and the head of his thigh-bone now seemed to be fused into the damaged pelvic socket. (Ballard, 1974, p. 23).

Read alongside Ballard's illustration of impact and injury, Maitland's exclusion on the motorway island becomes a vivid example of Esposito's immunitarian logic as a dispositif. Simply put, the community in *Concrete Island* preserves its integrity by isolating a body perceived as a potential threat, thus transforming the expected care into confinement. Throughout the novel, the island functions as a city quarantine ward; all barriers and the apathy of passers-by operate as apparatuses of immunitary mechanisms that keep the flow of circulation, namely the lifeblood of the city, unbroken by excluding the one contaminated.

In this context, the community becomes a form of immunity, and protection evolves into a potential risk of exposure to harm: life is protected only through abandonment, a process that dovetails with necropolitical governance, where certain lives are rendered disposable. Thus, the warning of Esposito becomes clear in that when "negative protection" strengthens, it "turns into its opposite," threatening to demolish "its own body" through the destruction of the outside that echoes as "absolute exteriorization, a complete negativity" (Esposito, 2013, p. 64). Maitland's body, stained with oil and blood, represents the case of an immunitary subject "whose exclusion protects the larger body politic from contamination" (Esposito, 2011, p. 13). In the same way,

this also reveals the thanatopolitical inversion that allows the protection of the system to normalise zones of controlled indifference. Thus, Ballard's novel reveals another necropolitical discourse by implying that protection should not come at the cost of sacrificial exclusion, but rather through visions that transcend immunitarian isolation. In other words, focusing on the novel, the dehumanisation of Maitland through his exclusion, which reduces him to being an immunitary subject, should not be the way to protect society from contamination; instead, other humanitarian solutions should be devised.

All these factors justify the extent to which one can be rendered a biopolitical subject in the grip of necropolitical sovereignty within the context of hyper-modernity and late capitalism. The degradation process of Maitland is revealed not as a mere byproduct but as an essential function of necropolitics in such an effective way as to disregard those it cannot commodify or house. The suffering of Maitland, his lack of visibility and all his deprivations are not personal flaws but of the workings of necropolitics in the city, embedded in its immunitary structure.

Conclusion

Standing out as one of the most influential anatomists of modernity and late capitalism, shifting the focus of sci-fi form outer space to psychological and structural realities of urban life that he calls inner space, Ballard was a prominent figure of the British New Wave science fiction with his new techniques and style who reconceptualised the catastrophe as a crisis of systems and perceptions rather than what is seen or believed. Being one of his seminal works, *Concrete Island* serves as a distinct urban allegory, justifying all his techniques, style, motifs, and themes that deal with violence and the politics of neglect. Ballard draws his *Concrete Island* in such a rigorously crafted and allegorical way concerning the necropolitics of infrastructure and modernity to propose to his reader that the feeling of abandonment and neglect of one in the (hyper)modern and late capitalist world order is not a personal flaw or deficiency, but a non-negotiable prerequisite for the further development of the system. Viewed from a Foucauldian perspective, it has been argued that Ballard illustrates a Foucauldian security framework where the flow of movement is elevated as the

highest virtue of the city, while those who impede this flow are gradually reduced to annihilation. The transformation of Maitland from an ordinary middle-class citizen to an infrastructural leftover illustrates the reduction of one's life to a bare biological existence, in which power functions only to categorise, abandon and neglect rather than to provide support to live. As aligned with what Mbembe suggests by the transformation of space as death-worlds, *Concrete Island* reveals the extent to which a hypermodern space administered by late capitalism turns into a space of death, a zone where Maitland is entrapped and exposed to injury, abandonment, neglect and gradual deterioration, rendering him a social outcast unfit for the capitalist urban. Through a minimalist approach, focusing mainly on the relationship between the spatial design of the modern city and the precise clinical observation of his protagonist, Maitland, Ballard reflects the affectless practices of the system that enable the disposability of an individual. With no hints at any rescue or possible catharsis, the narrative in *Concrete Island* transforms the island into a kind of testing ground of abjection and limited agency that is blocked by the impossibility of a return, thus rendering Maitland a representative rather than an exceptional (hyper)modern individual in the grip of late capitalism. In this regard, it's been observed that Ballard's novel also serves as an index for any modern individual, illustrating how ultra-modern infrastructures categorise life into strata of advantage and disadvantage. Taken all together, what the novel reveals as its basic message is what the city conceals with its ultramodern infrastructure: biological bodies transformed into biopolitical bodies, spaces rendered silent, and a web of abandonment and neglect. At its core, the novel raises biopolitical and necropolitical questions, urgently asking: Who is protected and at what cost? Who is acknowledged, and who vanishes unnoticed?

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