Contents

JOHN DOUTHWAITE
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................................................................................................... p. 9

LITERARY STUDIES

Introduction ...................................................................................................................................................................................................................... 13

JULIA BRIGGS
The Writer and the City: Mrs Woolf in Bond Street ................................................................................................................................... 17

MARISTELLA TRULLI
A passeggio per le strade di Londra: John Gay e le insidie della città .......................................................... 27

LAURA GIOVANNELLI
A Moulding Cradle or a Stifling Garret? Bristol and London in Thomas Chatterton’s Imagination ................................. 39

PIETRO GARZILLO
Exclusion and unreality: fantastic London by j. M. Barrie ...................................................................................................................... 49

PAOLA D’ERCOLE
The ‘East end’ in late 19th Century slum novels: an island of self-destruction ............................................................................. 55

MICHELA FRASCHI
“He was drowning in physical detail”: memorialising the cityscape between socio-political critique and the emergence of occult patterns in iain sinclair’s downriver ................................................................. 65

C. BRUNA MANCINI
Terror in London: from Ballard to Al-Qaeda .................................................................................................................................................. 73

ADRIANO ELIA
“So who’s the fanatic now?”: Hanif Kureishi and the Multicultural City ....................................................................................... 85

SARA ANELLI
From London to Berlin / from Berlin to London: visions of totalitarian cities in George Orwell’s nineteen eighty-four and in Robert Harris’s fatherland ........................................................................................................... 93

CHIARA BATTISTI
Huxley’s cityscape: island of eco-utopia ........................................................................................................................................................ 103

CARLA DENTE
Prova generale del dibattito sulle Regole nel teatro della Restaurazione: critici di città contro critici di campagna .................. 113

MARIA GRAZIA DONGU
Thomas Gray fra centro e periferia .................................................................................................................................................................... 129

LAURA PALPACELLI
Internal urban and colonised external spaces in Beatrix Potter’s animal tales ........................................................... 139

VALENTINA CASTAGNA
Poisoned/Poisonous Cityscapes and the Search for the Self in Michèle Roberts’s The Book of Mrs Noah .......... 145

ALICE BENDINELLI
Abandoned-places.com: hyper- and inter-textual cities in Nicholas Royle’s antwerp (2004) ..................................................... 155
ANNALISA DI LIDDO
Urban Text(ure)s: The City in Angela Carter’s Narrative ...................................................................................................................... 167

DANIELA CASELLI
Looking for the true bohemia: the city in the work of Djuna Barnes .............................................................................................................. 175

VALENTINA PONTOLILLO D’ELIA
“I have seen eyes in the streets…”: il paesaggio urbano secondo il giovane T. S. Eliot ........................................................................................ 185

LUIGI CAZZATO
From physical to mental spaces: palimpsest-cities in the 19th and 20th centuries ........................................................................ 195

LAURA SANTINI
Lo scrivere breve di Samuel Beckett: imagination morte imaginez .................................................................................................. 205

ANDREW BRAYLEY
Mary Shelley and Rome .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 221

CULTURAL STUDIES

Introduction .............................................................................................................................................................................................................. 231

FEDERICA TROISI
Londra e le sue contraddizioni: annotazioni di viaggiatori pugliesi dell’Ottocento .......................................................................................... 239

IOLANDA PLESCIA
“This Cave of Mud and Dung”: the City at War in Virginia Woolf’s The Years .......................................................................................... 245

BARBARA ANTONUCCI
The Domestic Front: Women in the City During the First World War .......................................................................................... 255

FRANCESCA CUOJATI
Turbulence in Space and Time: John Soane’s Crude Hints Towards an History of my House and the Narrativity of the London Text ....................................................................................................... 263

ORIANA PALUSCI
7/7 Londonbombs ....................................................................................................................................................................................................... 273

LUCIA ESPOSITO
Isole single nell’arcipelago metropolitano: dal peterpanismo di About a Boy alla filosofia kidult della chick-lit .................................................................................................................. 287

SABRINA FRANCESCONI
Promotional Discourse and the Cultural Negotiation of Urban Spaces .......................................................................................... 297

PIERPAOLO MARTINO
La Londra postcoloniale di Hanif Kureishi .................................................................................................................................................... 305

VITO CAVONE
Bombay Bombay: cronotopo coloniale e postcoloniale .......................................................................................... 313

PAOLA BOI
Inner Visions in the New City. From Mother Island, to Ex-Isle(and): the Poetics of Dissemblance in Migrant Women Writers from the Caribbean .................................................................................................. 319

LUISA PÈRCOPO
Antipodean Cityscapes: Mapping the Self in a House/Shop Full of Dreams .......................................................................................... 329

IVONNE DEFANT
Taking Charlotte Brontë to London: Clare Boylan’s Emma Brown .......................................................................................... 337
ALESSANDRA SQUEO
From the ‘Margin’ of the City: Rewriting Cultural Identity in *Jack Maggs* ................................................................. 345

MARIE-HELENE LAFOREST
Derek Walcott’s post-colonial journeys ......................................................................................................................................... 355

MAURO PALA
City, Country and Ideology .................................................................................................................................................................... 365

NICOLETTA VALLORANI
The Memory of a Ghost: Metropolitan Spaces and the Topography of Absence ........................................................ 373

ALESSIA OPPIZZI
“They are like sheep’s shop in Alice”: Naomi Mitchison’s Representations of Leningrad and Moscow .......................... 385

ERICA BASSI
Fictional Control on a Real City: An Analysis of the TV Series *The Prisoner* .............................................................. 391

MIRKO CASAGRANDA
4 ½ Day Dream: The *Titanic* as a Floating City ........................................................................................................................... 399

ILARIA M. ORSINI
10 Downing Street: a City in Miniature.
Representational Strategies and Cultural Identity in Institutional Media Discourse ......................................................... 407
1. London under attack

In the dark of the night a group of people wearing ski masks steal into the National Film Theatre of London and stun some security guards. The silent corridors are filled with a pale blue light and smoke spreading below the ceiling lights. A window lies open onto the night and the air carries the street smells of diesel fuel, rain and cooking fat from the all-night cafés near Waterloo Station. Suddenly, a cloud of chemical vapour, an acrid fog rolls across the corridors, like a wraith freed from a monster movie, and flows in looping swirls into the black sky. In a couple of minutes a column of smoke rises from the roof of the NFT. A fire engine turns into Belvedere Road, bell clanging. A police car stops outside the Festival Hall, and its spotlights play on the Hayward Gallery. Firemen and police enter the NFT. A huge fire lights the night air and seems to burn on the dark water of the Thames. An endless caldera opens beside Waterloo Bridge, devouring the South Bank Centre. Billows of smoke lean across the river and the flames are reflected in the distant casements of the Houses of the Parliament, as if the entire Palace of Westminster were about to ignite from within (Ballard 2004: 116-124).

This is not the picturesque report of one of the latest terroristic attacks carried out by al-Qaeda, the international ‘Network’ of Terror(ism), which has lately chosen London as the unfortunate protagonist of its slaughters. It is, rather, the description of the attack on the 20th Century’s ‘Depot of Dreams’ – as the National Film Theater is called in the novel – realized by a surreal group of middle class terrorists in *Millennium People* by J. G. Ballard, the last novel of his recent trilogy dedicated to urban terrorism and to the revolution of the middle class, together with *Cocaine Nights* (1996) and *Super Cannes* (2000). In it London appears as an apocalyptic city, an urban texture on the warpath, under siege from a deceitful, shy, invisible enemy who sows seeds of death, violence and terror, evoking the most appalling nightmares of the common people, the repressed fears and desires of the (moving) image era. After the attack on the NFT, for example, at the beginning of chapter 18, the city completely covers with the images of the fire. One of the terrorists, the protagonist of the novel, roams about the streets quietly sitting in a taxi:

> It was noon when I reached St John’s Wood, and the late editions of the Sunday newspapers carried vivid colour photographs of the fire at the National Film Theater. The same inferno glowed from the news-stands in Hammersmith and Knightsbridge. At the traffic lights I stared down from the taxi at the fierce orange flames, barely grasping that I had been partly responsible for them. At the same time I felt an odd pride in what I had done. […] Central London was dressed for an apocalyptic day. Arson in a film library clearly touched deep layers of unease, as the unconscious fears projected by a thousand Hollywood films at last emerged into reality. (*Ibid.*: 141)

But the attack on the NFT is not the only catastrophe described in the novel. In *Millennium People* the urban texture of London is literally torn by bombs and incendiary
devices hitting, apparently with no reason at all, almost everywhere: the British Library bookshop, the Albert Hall, the Tate Gallery, McDonalds, Waterstone’s, travel agencies, hypermarkets and suburban cinemas, shopping malls, cineplexes, DIY centre, and all that C20 trash. The targets of these terroristic attacks – not at all accidental – are the typical “non-places” (Augé 1995) of the consumer society: zones of collective obsession and fantasy contributing to the anaesthesia and corruption of the educated and wage-earning middle class, society’s keel and anchor. As the author comments: “For reasons no one understood, the inhabitants of Chelsea Marina had set about dismantling their middle-class world. They lit bonfires of books and paintings, educational toys and videos. The television news showed families arm in arm, surrounded by overturned cars, their faces proudly lit by the flames” (Ballard 2004: 6).

2. Sur-real terrorism

In the second chapter of *Millennium People*, while they are leaving for Heathrow Airport and a three-day conference of industrial psychologists in Florida, David Markham and his second wife Sally hear that the whole airport is down, nothing is taking off, and there are tailbacks as far as Kew. And here the authorial voice, through his characters’ mouths, affirms that people who walk up to the check-ins try to realize an illusion, a collective flight from reality; at the same time, it is also a kind of assurance, for once in their lives they know where they are going: it’s printed on their tickets. After all, tourism is the great soporific, the modern world in a nutshell, a huge confidence trick which gives people the dangerous idea that there’s something interesting in their lives. Anyway, all at once, the same old routine can suddenly stop short, the dream can get shattered and the nightmare can worm its way into lives where everything seems to be organized. Only in that moment, maybe, existence can assume a meaning, in the senseless reality which surrounds us.

While they are waiting for the situation to get back to normal, David and Sally sit in front of the television set, their eyes glued to the news bulletin. The reporter’s commentary is drowned by the wailing of police sirens. He steps back from the camera as an ambulance team pushes a trolley through the mêlée of passengers and airline personnel. A woman lays on the trolley, tattered clothing across her chest, blood speckling her arms. Behind it is the main arrivals gate of Terminal 2, guarded by police armed with sub-machine guns. There was a bomb on the baggage carousel. “Three dead, twenty-six injured…”, the caption runs on the screen. Police, first-aid crews and duty-free staff help injured passengers to the waiting ambulances. Then the picture changes. It’s an amateur video taken by a passenger who entered the baggage-reclaim area soon after the explosion. The film-maker stood with his back to the customs checkpoints,

1 “[…] Today’s tourist goes nowhere. […] All the upgrades in existence lead to the same airports and resort hotels, the same pina colada bullshit. The tourists smile at their tans and their shiny teeth and think they’re happy. But the suntans hide who they really are – salary slaves, with heads full of America rubbish. Travel is the last fantasy the 20th Century left us, the delusion that going somewhere helps you reinvent yourself” (Ibid.: 54-55).
evidently too shocked by the violence that had torn through the crowded hall to put
down his camera and offer help to the victims:

Dust seethed below the ceiling, swirling around the torn sections of strip lighting that hung
from the roof. Overturned trollies lay on the floor, buckled by the blast. Stunned passengers sat
beside their suitcases, clothes stripped from their backs, covered with blood and fragments of
leather and glass. The video camera lingered on the stationary carousel, its panels splayed like
rubber fans. The baggage chute was still discharging suitcases, and a set of golf clubs and a
child’s pushchair tumbled together among the heaped luggage. […] The other passenger gazing
at the baggage chute was a woman in her late thirties, with a sharp forehead and a bony but
attractive face, dark hair knotted behind her. She wore a tailored black suit pitted with glass,
like the sequinned tuxedo of a nightclub hostess. A piece of flying debris had drawn blood from
her lower lip, but she seemed almost untouched by the explosion. She brushed the dust from
her sleeve and stared sombrely at the confusion around her, a busy professional late for next
appointment. (Ibid.: 18)

David thinks he knows that woman. It’s Laura, his first wife. Later she dies at the
hospital. Thus, the whole novel transforms itself into a surreal detective story in which
Markham, protagonist and narrator, decides to assume – improperly – the role of
infiltrated detective and police spy in order to discover whoever hides behind those
terroristic attacks. Anyway, following traces, clues and suspects through the streets of an
endless, dangerous, violent, unheimlich London – an infinite space, a terrain beyond all
maps – he is able to carry out also his personal quest, by the end discovering his real
‘self’ as well as a more lively and significant existence.

3. Terror and violence, from fiction to reality and backwards

Obviously, today more than ever, after the sad events of July 2005, we perfectly
recognize the terror and the destruction so well described in the pages of Ballard’s
novel; even better, we can completely identify with the characters of David and Sally
watching the tv news and shuddering, worrying about their acquaintances, their lives,
their own future. It’s the same sensation we also felt on September 11th 2001, the day al-
Qaeda launched its bloody attack on the World Trade Center of New York, and on
March 11th 2004, with the bombs of Madrid.

Especially from this particular point of view, Millennium People seems to possess an
incredible prophetic potential, like all the other catastrophic novels and short-stories
written by Ballard, which always seem to sound out the most inner dynamics of our
existence and of our deeper self^2. After all, ensnared as we are, like flies, in the network
of the International (Islamic^3) Terrorism, London was almost a predestined target. As
Magdi Allam affirmed in an interview published in the Italian version of Vanity Fair,

---


^3 If we carefully consider the meaning of “terror” or “strike terror”, maybe we should admit that we are not
only ‘terrified’ by an Islamic kind of terrorism; also the messages transmitted by the westerners, on TV and in
the newspapers, are terrifying, and not only for the Islamic terrorists. Every day we have to remember that we
are targets, that we are on danger, so that we should justify every (war?) action against the Iraqis.
July 21st 2005, the London outrage was surely predictable. Indeed, the true miracle was that it didn’t happen earlier.

But what’s the reason that drives Ballard’s upholstered terrorists to realize their surreal revolts? Why do middle managers, accountants, civil servants, women in weekend wear with their children, unshaven lawyers, doctors, university teachers, grandmothers, girls clutching their teddy bears, housewives and so on block the streets staging little revolutions and absurd acts of sabotage, with an escalation of violence and madness which slowly takes things to extremes, such as bombings, kamikaze attacks, murders? The revolution described by Ballard is really a “strange” one, so modest and well behaved that at the beginning no one had noticed. These likeable and over-educated revolutionaries – “a new tribe of university-trained gypsies who knew their law and would raise hell with local councils” (Ballard 2004: 7) – rebel against themselves, or rather, against a fake, dubious world seeking the construction of a fictious, alienating reality, made of pure appearance.

Victim of a centuries-old conspiracy, at last the middle class throw off their chains of duty and civic responsibility, moving from charity work and civic responsibility to fantasies of cataclysmic change, in pursuit of a New Millennium: “That’s the world we’re living in – Sally affirms, while talking with her husband of the attack on Heathrow – people set off bombs for the sake of free parking. Or for no reason at all. We’re all bored, David, desperately bored. We’re like children left for too long in a playroom. After a while we have to start breaking up toys, even the ones we like” (Ibid.: 115). And again, at the end of chapter 17, Richard Gould, the elusive author of this rebellion, says to Markham:

People don’t like themselves today. We’re a rentier class left over from the last century. We tolerate everything, but we know that liberal values are designed to make us passive. […] We’re living in a soft-regime prison built by earlier generations of inmates. Somehow we have to break free. The attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 was a brave attempt to free America from the 20th Century. The deaths were tragic, but otherwise it was a meaningless act. And that was its point. Like the attack on the NFT (Ibid.: 139-140).

Epitomizing an extreme form of anarchic-situationism, Gould and his disciples believe that in order to create unease and free themselves from the 20th Century, people need to pick targets that don’t make sense; as André Breton once affirmed, that is the only way to challenge the universe at its own game. Calmly carried out, without emotion, pure violence is an empty space larger than the universe around it, which can be endlessly filled with meanings thanks to its cruel authenticity. It is a kind of refreshing act which forces a violent rift through time and space, rupturing the logic that holds the world together and overruling Newton’s laws of motion: thus rivers reverse, clocks stop and skyscrapers topple, stirring fears long dormant in our unconscious and in our conscious minds. It’s like a stranger stepping out of a crowd and punching one’s face. Sitting on the ground with a bloodied mouth, one realizes that the world is more

---

4 “The revolutionaries, as ever considerate of their neighbours, had ordered a dozen of these huge containers in the week before the uprising. A burnt-out Volvo sat beside the road, but the proprieties still ruled, and it had been pushed into a parking bay. The rebels had tidied up after their revolution. Almost all overturned cars had been righted, keys left in their ignitions, ready for the repossession men”. (Ibid.: 8).

dangerous but also more meaningful: “If you kill someone at random […] – Dr. Gould says – the universe stands back and hold its breath. Better still, kill fifteen people at random” (Ibid.: 176). In a period of total war, where everyone is and feels in the front line – like the one we are living, after the attack on the World Trade Centre of New York – Ballard seems to show us that, maybe, only violence and terror can ‘awake’ us from the collective dream of global wealth and democracy, pushing us to watch whatever and wherever we would have never watched.

In the same issue of Vanity Fair previously referred to, Manuela Dviri gives a detailed and personal account of the terrorist attack on London which seems to recall perfectly the mechanism so well described by Ballard: the outrage happening all at once, a day which seemed peaceful, quiet, normal; the news communicated by radio or television; the interruption of all programmes; the search for one’s children, husband, wife, parents and relatives who could have been in the place of the explosion, or of the cataclysmic event; the breakdown of all the communication lines and the inability to contact loved ones; the anguished listening to the news in order to understand, to rebuild, to exclude; and then, when the names of the injured and the dead are finally communicated, you can draw a long sigh of relief. In the meanwhile, somewhere else telecameras and reporters are arriving for the first interviews and reports. You know that, so you feel a little ashamed; but life goes on. That evening all the political leaders reaffirm their indignation at the vile, cowardly, unjust terroristic outrage, while you are returning to your normal life; at least until the next attack. Moreover, you try not to think of those places on earth where there are so many outrages every day that no one seems even to notice.

Some pages later, in the same magazine, an article written by Gad Lerner evokes the anxiety of the westerners in the face of a mysterious and dangerous Enemy who pitilessly strikes the people of London, the fear of losing everything, the terror of a ‘blind war’. After the (too late) discovery of a mortal enemy grown-up in that Islamic world of which the West had subsidized the worst reactionary components, Lerner affirms that the Westerners have shown their muscles but, in the end, they have been at a loss. After the London outrage, it is clear for everyone that it is not possible to respond to the asymmetrical war of terrorism with the weapons of conventional warfare; it has been not only inadequate, but also self-defeating. If we want to put an end to the ethical relativism, we should remember that every day in Iraq more than thirty and forty innocent people die. Thus, the terroristic outrage of London should show us the senselessness of the world – a paradise for some, a hell for too many others – and the weakness of concepts such as ‘war’ and ‘peace’, ‘life’ and ‘death’, ‘justice’ and ‘redemption’, so frequently invoked by both sides.

4. Reading the city of London

In chapter 22, David Markham observes London and literally ‘reads’ the landscape, noticing the refreshing strength of violence:

The dealing rooms were a con, and only the river was real. The money was all on tick, a stream of coded voltages sluicing through concealed conduits under the foreign exchange floors. Facing them across the river were two more fakes, the replica of Shakespeare’s Globe, and an
old power station made over into a middle-class disco, Tate Modern. Walking past the entrance to the Globe, I listened for an echo of the bomb that had killed Joan Chang, the only meaningful event in the entire landscape (Ibid.: 180).

Here the only event which gives a meaning to the whole text(ure) of London is a cruel act of violence: the martyrdom of Joan Chang, the young terrorist as well as public relations officer for the Royal Academy, killed during the attack on the Tate Gallery.

This means that, perhaps, if we observe carefully the map of the London Underground with the markings of the attacks realized by al-Qaeda, also the July 7th bombs can be decoded, giving a sense to what seems to be a bloody and senseless act. Certainly we all remember the upset faces, the shocked expressions, the scenes of terror, the horror of that terrible day. We can reconsider the sadly known progression of the explosions: 8:51 a.m.: the first bomb explodes in a train near the crowded station of Liverpool Street; 8:56 a.m.: a bomb explodes in a train between the stations of Russel Square and King’s Cross; 9:17 a.m.: a bomb explodes at Edgeware Road; 9:47 a.m.: a bomb goes off on a red double-decker near Russel Square. On the map of London the explosions seem to describe an exact zone which goes from the eastern borders of the City to Marylebone and back, towards the City itself: the insane graph of an irregular cardiogram, or the encephalogram of a schizophrenic; an apocalypse right in the heart of London, the zone of commerce, of culture, of the embassies, the financial and economic centre of Great Britain, of Europe, or rather, of the Western World.

Apart from the madness, the presumptuousness, the ruthlessness of those who organized and realized them, those explosions also seem to tell us that the world we are living in is a fake, a simulacrum; that reality is artfully built; that only when death, destruction, and desperation block out television and the other media, they really hit people. But, above all, they show us that the way in which the news is described and commented upon is essential; because in our world being ‘visible’ means ‘being’, ‘existing’, and reality is whatever appears on the tv screen. That’s why, perhaps, terrorist attacks strike the most important, the most famous, the most populous icons trying to cause the greatest damage: in order ‘to appear’, ‘to be’, to block out the news and totally twist the normal television planning and the normality of our lives. Moreover, they can often cause emulation; surely panic, chaos, uncertainty, terror.

In short, only through the death of the innocent Western victims who live in the countries which fight for the ‘global peace and justice’, can our glances also turn to the thousands of dead in the ‘countries of the war’, about whom no one seems to care at all; because if after September 11th 2001 we were all American, after March 11th 2004 we were all Spanish, and after July 7th 2005 we are all English, no political leader has ever officially declared himself Iraqi, despite the continuous kamikaze attacks that every day stain that land with blood.

Thus those explosions on the map of London, right in the heart of our Europe, seem to reveal us that we are all vulnerable, that war and violence, sooner or later, can also reach our houses, our working environments, our lives. After all, as Ballard has written and affirmed several times, nowadays war can occur only through the media: a kind of media war that uses spectacular targets, steeped in violence and terror, making our world

---

6 See Ballard 1985 and 1996.
too rich in meanings to be able to catch them all. Without counting that when the code of the codifiers and the one used by those who decode it are different, comprehension can be difficult, almost impossible.

5. The future of London or the London of the Future

But how can we imagine the future of London, or rather, the London of the future? Surely, we hope that soon the nightmare of International Terrorism will stop and we might bring about a different world equilibrium. Were we to refer once more to Ballard, famous author of the British New Wave Science-Fiction, the near future of London would appear to us still characterized by apocalyptic, alienation, terror. In the Drowned World (1962), for example, London is a cataclysmic, forgotten city collapsed into a deserted marsh which seems painted by Dali, Delvaux or Ernst; a putrid (urban) text appearing as a huge skeleton, the broken windows of the buildings as empty submerged skulls and the flat shroud of the surface transformed into a jungle of cubist blocks.

In another novel, the famous Crash (1973), upon which David Cronenberg based his homonymous film of 1996, the landscape is described as strange, enormous, delirious, erotic, completely dominated by advertising, by cars and by the neurotic, sexual fantasies/obsessions of its protagonists. The urban texture is peripheral and quintessential, a huge metallized, cemented world made of motorways, speed, violence, transgression, death and (self)destruction, towards a total and final ‘Cargeddon’. Observing the traffic from his balcony, James Ballard – protagonist, narrator, as well as amoral and bizarre double of the author – can catch in it the signs of the end of the world. In the distance, the frayed horizon of the City is like the outline of a deserted planet, an alien/alienated landscape made of mysterious ideograms and codes of incomprehensible nightmares, endless simulacra, replicas and quotations.

From these satellite, subliminal, boundary zones – as in other two novels by Ballard, such as Concrete Island (1974) and High-Rise (1974) – London is described as an infernal, neural text(ure), devastated as in consequence of a cataclysmatic event of planetary and psychic extent. For example, after a car accident, Robert Maitland, the surreal megalopolitan wrecked protagonist of Concrete Island, is marooned on a desert traffic island lying below three converging motorways, near the high-speed exit lane of the Westway interchange in central London, six hundred yards from the junction with the spur of the M4 motorway. He is injured and soon finds out that no-one in the rush-hour traffic will stop to help and reach him; so he is/feels trapped on the island, as once happened to Robinson Crusoe, maybe with the task of setting up a working replica of bourgeois society and its ample comforts; or rather, the island – “a model of behaviour and survival” (Ballard 1994: 58) – transforms itself into an extension of his mind/psyche, so that Maitland has to face the challenge of returning to his (our?) more primitive nature. In chapter 8, he becomes an animated scarecrow, almost forgetting who he was:

\footnote{Marchi 1995, Pringle 1994.}
‘Damned quiet…’ Maitland murmured aloud to himself. No cars or airline buses moved along the motorways. The aerial balconies of the apartment blocks were deserted in the sunlight. Where the evil was everyone? God …some kind of psychosis. Nervously, Maitland pivoted on the crutch. He hobbled across the charred earth, trying to find a single tenant of this abandoned landscape. Had a world war broken out overnight? Perhaps the source of a virulent plague had been identified somewhere in central London. During the night, as he lay asleep in the burnt-out car, an immense silent exodus had left him alone in the deserted city. (*Ibid.*: 59).

And again, in the short-story entitled “Chronopolis”, the “Time City” is described as a vast, abandoned space in the “dead centre” of the endless megalopolis in which everyone lives – London, of course; once again, it is a neural place made up of enormous and empty buildings, like gigantic pieces of dominoes. On every façade, at every corner, upon every bridge there are great clocks, all stopped at 12:01. Once all the inhabitants of that city were literally entrapped by time. No-one had a second to waste; every step and every activity were carefully examined and regulated. Thus, one second after the midnight of thirty-seven years before a revolt broke out and the inhabitants/prisoners left the “Time City”, transforming it into an empty and phantasmal urban text(ure).

Those clocks, not only recall the famous painting by Salvador Dali entitled *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), but also remind me of the melted clocks found in Hiroshima after the explosion of the atomic bomb, their hands got stuck at the exact moment of deflagration. Thus the London described by Ballard in his novels and his short-stories is the *locus* of horror, of terror, of monstrosity, of interdiction, of the uncanny/Unheimlich; it is an initiatory place where our fear of total destruction, of desolation, of impotence may be visualized. But only by measuring themselves against the urban space, by refusing to escape from the trials and the messages – however apparently incomprehensible – that it seems to spread, by trying desperately to understand (themselves as well as each other), the characters of Ballard’s narrative can finally become new human beings in a new world. This is the clue, the cipher key to face and to understand the code of terror, according to Ballard.

**Bibliography**


Figure 1. London, Thursday 7 July 2005: a famous image from (the) underground, a tunnel near King’s Cross, taken by a cell phone camera.
Figure 2. Maps of the explosions from the Mail & Guardian online

Figure 3. An image of the ‘crime scene’
Figure 4. The latest editions of the newspapers about the terroristic attacks of 7 July

Figure 5. An ambulance team pushes a trolley in a street of London