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## POST-APOCALYPTIC CHRONOTOPE IN J. G. BALLARD'S *THE DROUGHT*

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### Abstract

James Graham Ballard (1930-2009), who is well-known for his post-/apocalyptic fiction, represented chaotic conditions of human beings in the face of environmental disasters and their endeavour to survive in the nonhuman environment through and after the apocalypse. In his post-apocalyptic novel *The Drought* (1965) Ballard depicts a world turning into a global desert due to the toxic waste release into seas and oceans all around the world. This article aims to examine *The Drought* within the framework of post-apocalyptic chronotope with respect to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope. In doing so, this article proposes that there is an intrinsic relationship between the human psyche and nonhuman agency within the temporal and spatial frame.

**Keywords:** J. G. Ballard, *The Drought*, Bakhtin, Chronotope, Post-apocalypse.

### 1. Introduction

The Russian literary critic and scholar Mikhail Bakhtin's life and philosophy have attracted a great number of literary critics and scholars of social sciences since his introduction into English studies. His concepts of dialogism, chronotope, carnivalesque, grotesque, polyphony and heteroglossia have been exhaustively studied since then. This article dwells on Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope within post-apocalyptic conception in J. G. Ballard's novel *The Drought* (1965). Before going on to suggest this chronotopic conception, it is important to say a few initial words about the term chronotope itself. In the comprehensive essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in his book *Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Mikhail Bakhtin defined the concept of 'chronotope', which basically refers to time and space, as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). He borrowed this concept from mathematics and Einstein's Theory of Relativity in particular as a metaphor to express "the inseparability of space and time" (1981: 84). Bakhtin stated that spatial and temporal markers are interrelated and thus constitute a concrete whole together in the literary artistic chronotope: "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (1981: 84). What Bakhtin also pointed out in his essay is that "[a] literary work's artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope" (1981: 243). Parenthetically, the chronotope functions to represent the world in the novel. "There are different chronotopes for different views of the world and different social situations" (Steinby, 2013: 107) such as the chronotope of encounter, the chronotope of the road, the chronotope of threshold, the family-idyllic chronotope and the chronotope of the labour idyll etc. as Bakhtin listed. Each chronotope can contain several minor chronotopes within it, and that is why "[c]hronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships" (Bakhtin, 1981: 252). Rather than summarizing the sorts of chronotope Bakhtin developed, this article suggests that *The Drought* offers another model of chronotopic relations Bakhtin did not touch on. Although Bakhtin's list is comprehensive, it does not include the temporal and spatial relations of all novelistic genres. With this aim uppermost in mind, this article endeavours to introduce the chronotope of the post-apocalypse into Bakhtin's varieties of chronotope since climate change-induced post-apocalyptic reflections occur throughout Ballard's science fiction novel. Drawing on Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, this article is an attempt to develop the chronotope of the post-apocalypse in Ballard's novel of cataclysmic climate change by modifying and fusing to some degree Bakhtin's chronotope of the road, the ancient novel of travel, and the adventure chronotope in the Greek romance.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Bakhtin's Theory of the Chronotope in Human-Nature Relationship

Bakhtin provided in his essay of great length that the chronotope "defines genre and generic distinctions" (1981: 85). Besides its generic characteristic, chronotope also "determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature", which "is always intrinsically chronotopic" (1981: 85). So it must be here stressed that the concept of the chronotope should not be interpreted only as the connection of time and

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space in a literary text, yet it should also be understood “as a perception of the world in general – the relation of people to the world that surrounds them” (Brasaité and Braun, 2013: 76) because humankind “emerges *along with the world*” in the form of “a new man” (Bakhtin, 2007: 23; emphasis in the original).

Bakhtin also explained that “the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins” (1981: 250). As will become clearer in what follows, “chronotopes provide a ‘ground’ for *representation* out of which narrative events emerge, a series of temporal markers conjoined with spatial features which, together, define specific historical, biographical, and social relations” (Pier, 2005: 64; emphasized by Steinby), and now ecological relations in today’s world. Processes and changes in the natural world “plot the course of an individual life and the life of nature” (Bakhtin, 1981: 208). That is why “[t]ime in its course binds together the earth” and the humankind (Bakhtin, 1981: 208). Bakhtin emphasized that it is the human race that “create this course, perceive it, smell it, see it” (1981: 208). In this sense, “the life of nature and the life of a man are fused together” (1981: 210). Bakhtin stressed the importance of the integration of human beings into the natural environment in these words: “As long as the organism lives, it resists a fusion with environment, but if it is torn out of its environment, it dies” (1981: 254). Stated differently, “what affects time, affects space and vice-versa, and what affects the chronotope, affects those who live in it, creating a unique image of personhood in any given chronotope” (Skult, 2012: 1). From this vantage point, an apocalypse is conceived limitless in terms of space as it expands all over the world; the whole world is affected by it and all the people are influenced and changed by it in aspects of their attitudes, standpoints and lifestyles.

### **3. The Chronotope of the Post-Apocalypse**

For a proper understanding of the chronotope of the post-apocalypse, the definition of the term ‘post-apocalypse’ should be provided in the first place. James Berger defined post-apocalypse as “[an] ending [that], paradoxically, both does and does not take place”, which implies a kind of continuation of time and space (1999: xii). It is Bakhtin’s contention that a novel which represents the real world is comprised of space and time, which are the two most essential elements of the human existence. However, a novel which does not represent an objective reality, such as science fiction, is still composed of time and space. Michael Holquist in his book *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (2002) expressed that the chronotope not only determines genres but also genres determine it (142), which means in this case that the chronotopes of the apocalypse and post-apocalypse determine the genre of science fiction while science fiction novels offer apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic chronotopes. Time lays at the very heart of the literary artistic chronotope for Bakhtin. Not surprisingly, “[t]he ‘post’ in ‘post-apocalyptic’ denotes a time after an apocalypse, after the End of a/the world”, which thus means that “the post-apocalyptic novel is an inherently temporal genre” (Skult, 2012: 2). In other words, time is divided into ‘then’ and ‘now’ in the post-apocalyptic novel, ‘then’ referring to the pre-apocalypse while ‘now’ to the post-apocalypse. Also in Brasaité and Braun’s words, “‘Then’ is the past often recollected [. . .] Recollections are always followed by melancholy and sadness. The past embodies all good qualities of the world [. . .] whereas ‘now’ is empty and desolated. It is not known when the apocalypse, the breaking point of the world, came [. . .]” (2013: 83). This breaking point is sometimes immediate such as the fall of a nuclear bomb and sometimes takes a while such as a virus or a plague slowly infecting the whole world. However, there is always a definite moment, though time is not identified, when things are not the same any longer, and there is no turn back to the past. Although ten years-long drought that has drained the planet away is presented as a defining time in Ballard’s novel, it is purported that the apocalypse has taken a while to destroy the human and nonhuman communities.

### **4. Chronotopic Imagination of the Post-Apocalypse in *The Drought***

*The Drought*, as the title imports, depicts a world crushed by drastic climate changes engendered by heavy industrial activities. The chemicals and industrial wastes dumped into rivers, seas and into other body of water all over the world have led to the obstruction of evaporation and rainfall with a sort of plastic layer overlaying on the oceans. Constant insolation and no precipitation cycle have given rise to lack of rain, food and drinking water for both human and nonhuman beings. Humankind, in desperate straits, has resorted to violence in order to survive in a global desert. The novel represents how human cultures crumble in quest for even a drop of water, vividly picturing the devolution of scientifically and technologically advanced modern human societies to their primitive conditions. Surveying a post-apocalyptic worldwide drought, the novel is comprised of three parts. The first part describes Ballard’s solitary protagonist Dr. Charles Ransom’s personal history, his relationship with other survivors, and the townspeople’s abandoning the town Larchmont for the coast in search of water in the aftermath of climatic devastation. The second part recounts the period of ten years after the cataclysmic climate change, during the intervening decade of which the greater number of refugees have died off while the survivors have endeavoured to get drinking water from the leftover seawater by refining it in old and ramshackle machines. However, the process of water

refinement has resulted in formation of salt flats and dunes on the coastline owing to vast salt emission of the machines. The third part tells Ransom's and some other survivors' return to Larchmont, to their native town, in the hope of the remnants of water back in the town. The novel, thus, shows tempo-spatial relations in the midst of an onrushing catastrophe.

*The Drought* begins with post-apocalyptic depictions on the very first pages with "the dead birds floating in the water below", with "the lake, *once* a clear stretch of open water thirty miles in length [. . .] subsid[ing] into a series of small pools and channels, separated by the banks of draining mud", with "a few fishing craft sailed forlornly among them, their crews standing silently in the bows" (Ballard, 1965: 5; emphasized). The more the river dries up, the more it destroys the communities of fishermen whose lives are maintained by its flow, and thus every human and nonhuman being falls apart from their societies and gets lost in time due to the climate change. Jim Clarke provided that "Ballard wrote in an era before global warming had been identified by climate scientists" (2013: 7).<sup>2</sup> Ballard represents the temporal-spatial world of his novel and its events *as if* he has seen and observed them himself, "*as if* he were an omnipresent witness to them" (Bakhtin, 1981: 256; emphasis in the original). The author frequently makes comparisons of 'then' and 'now' throughout the novel as follows: "*Normally*, at late summer, the river *would have been* almost three hundred feet wide, but it was *now* less than half this, an evil-smelling creek that wound its way along the flat gutter of the banks" (Ballard, 1965: 6; emphasized). Focusing on the essential relationship between the human and nonhuman environments, Ballard delineates how landscape changes over time and how these changes influence the human community:

Ransom was aware that the role of the river in time had changed. *Once* it had played the part of an immense fluid clock, the objects immersed in it taking up their positions like the stations of the sun and planets. The continued lateral movements of the river, to which Ransom had become more and more sensitive during his visits to the houseboat, its rise and fall and the varying pressures on the hull, were like the activity within some vast system of evolution, whose cumulative forward flow was as irrelevant and without meaning as the apparent linear motion of time itself. The real movements were those random and discontinuous relationships between the objects within it, those of himself and the other denizens of the river, Mrs. Quilter, her son, and the dead birds and fish. (1965: 8; emphasized)

In consistence with what Ballard stressed in his novel, Bakhtin also emphasized that "[i]t is necessary to find a new relationship to nature, not to the little nature of one's own corner of the world but to the big nature of the great world, to all the phenomena of the solar system, to the wealth excavated from the earth's core, to a variety of geographical locations and continents" (1981: 234). Ransom is aware that people are drifting away from each other and from the physical environment in the absence of the river:

With the death of the river so would vanish any contact between those stranded on the drained floor [. . .] Ransom was certain that the absence of *this great universal moderator, which cast its bridges between all animate and inanimate objects alike*, would prove of crucial importance. (Ballard, 1965: 8; emphasized)

Ballard tried to show that human beings are affected by the changing world so much as they transform the planet into a devastated land.

It may be conjectured that Ballard was inspired by the surrealist painting "Jours de Lenteur" by Yves Tanguy for his novel. The painting, which is a recurrent motif in the novel and is also the title of the last chapter, reflects the protagonist's mental condition. Hanged on the wall of Ransom's houseboat, this surrealist painting, which also mirrors Ransom's memories, signifies the catastrophic world and deconstruction of the past and future in present:

On the right, exorcising the terrors of this memory, was a reproduction of a small painting by Tanguy, 'Jours de Lenteur.' With its smooth pebble-like objects, drained of all associations, suspended on a washed tidal floor, this painting above all others had helped to isolate him from the tiresome repetitions of everyday life. (Ballard, 1965: 9)

The draining away of the river and water resources has caused draining of time and memory, which has resulted in depletion of meaning from objects and from existence amongst doomed repetitions. With the sun constantly beating down on the burning earth, the human race falls back to the status of memory, and its existence comes to be determined and shaped by the humanly-devastated environment. "Ransom feels that everything is down the drain; memories and sentiments are washed away" (Çiftcibaşı, 2016: 36).

The novel, in this respect, pictures how environmental disasters, as represented by drastic climate changes here, might transform humankind's fundamental view of reality. The road, thus, becomes a perfect

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<sup>2</sup> See Broecker (1975) for the scientific identification of the human-caused climate change and global warming.

motif for post-apocalyptic chronotope at this point in showing that transformation because “[t]ime [. . .] fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road)” (Bakhtin, 1981: 244). Many voices are heard on the chronotope of the road “as it provides space for encounters and adventures to take place” (Brasaité and Braun, 2013: 84). The motif of meeting is also significant in post-apocalyptic fiction in the way that “[o]nly through meetings with other people on the road the lamentable and impotent existence of survivors [is] revealed” (Brasaité and Braun, 2013: 81). The road is a place of meetings inviting probabilities and uncertainties of all kinds. Although Bakhtin expressed that “the road is always one that passes through *familiar territory*, and not through some exotic *alien world*” (1981: 245; emphasis in the original), it is worthwhile to point out that the post-apocalyptic road is different from Bakhtin’s road. Despite the fact that the road passes through familiar territory in the post-apocalyptic novel, this space has been irreversibly altered by the apocalypse. “[E]very step taken in the post-apocalyptic chronotope”, so Skult argued, “is through a landscape that is simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, seen always through the spatial lens of the pre-apocalypse” (2012: 1). It means that the familiar territory turns into an unfamiliar space because of the flowing time in the space of the past and of the present. Speaking more concretely, “the two spaces – the past and the present – are placed one on top of the other, creating a feeling of deep unease” (Skult, 2012: 4). In such a situation the old images and the current reality occupy the same space. It happens when Ransom is on his way back to his homeland after his search of water on the southern coast for nearly ten years:

Sheltered from the wind by the fractured panels of the glass cupola, Ransom for a moment enjoyed the play of sunlight on the sand dunes and on the eroded faces of the cliff. The coastal hills now marked the edges of the desert that stretched in a continuous table across the continent, a wasteland of dust and ruined cities, but there was always more color and variety here than in the drab world of the saltflats. In the morning the seams of quartz would melt with light, pouring like liquid streams down the faces of the cliffs, the sand in the ravines turning into frozen fountains. In the afternoon the colors would mellow again, the shadows searching out the hundreds of caves and aerial grottos, until the evening light, shining from beyond the cliffs to the west, illuminated the whole coastline like an enormous ruby lantern, glowing through the casements of the cave-mouths as if lit by some subterranean fire. (Ballard, 1965: 91)

Ransom and other survivors are on ‘the path of life’ both in their native territory which is unfamiliar land at the same time. The novel’s movement takes characters out of “the secure and stable world” of familiarity and acquaintants into “an alien world of random occurrence” (Bakhtin, 1981: 232).

It does not sound unnatural that the chronotope of the road contains the chronotope of the ancient novel of travel within it. Skult wrote that the post-apocalyptic novel can be regarded as “a sort of *temporal travelogue of a shattered future*”, in which “the travels are not only in space but also analeptically in time, and comparisons are constantly made between the present (destroyed) world and the past (pre-apocalyptic, non-destroyed) world” (2012: 7). Ballard’s characters live in the post-apocalyptic world travelling along the country so as to reach water. In one of the interviews, Ballard expounded that his novel *The Drought* represents a future dominated by sand, which becomes the end of the world (Sellars and O’Hara, 2012: 12). Ballard’s post-apocalyptic world is dull with very little water but all sand, burning sun, salt dunes everywhere and several survivors wandering through the country. The characters have lost their temporal and spatial perception during their travel:

Yet this stopping of the clock had gained them nothing. The beach was a zone without time, suspended in an endless interval as flaccid and enduring as the wet dunes themselves. Often Ransom remembered the painting by Tanguy that he had once treasured. Its drained beaches, eroded of all associations, of all sense of time, in some ways seemed a photographic portrait of the salt world of the shore. But the similarity was misleading. On the beach, time was not absent but immobilized, what was new in their lives and relationships they could form only from the residues of the past, from the failures and omissions that persisted into the present like the wreckage and scrap metal from which they built their cabins. (Ballard, 1965: 82)

The concept of time becomes meaningless on the coast because people are disconnected from their past with their movement towards a shattered future; their memories have faded away for the sake of survival; and the world is stripped away of meaning and value. These flashbacks and the movement towards the unknown create traumatic experiences for the survivors, which is generally the trauma of events that have not actually happened yet. For this reason, the survivor becomes “a traumatic witness of an unthinkable future” (Skult, 2012: 6). The trauma in the post-apocalypse also brings to the fore the fact that survivors cannot avoid the results of the apocalypse because it recurs in the chronotopic environment of the survivor, by means of which Ballard unearths some unrealized fears and traumas of the human race in a

planet of sand during the drought. The recurrent results of the apocalypse make the traumatic witnesses re-experience their life of the pre-apocalypse, preventing them from moving towards the future in a relevant way. That is why Ransom cannot notice the falling rain at the end of the novel. The absolute drought in his mind-world prevents him from feeling the drops. Here, the role of the witness is taken over by the author in that Ballard functions as a survivor witnessing and informing the rain. Survivors of the apocalypse could also stand for the transgression of the periods between the present and future both in temporal and ethical terms as in James Berger's words:

The survivor and his testimony are invested with several distinct but related forms of authority. It is first epistemological, for the survivor has seen, and knows, what no one else could see and know. This authority of knowledge, or "epistemic privilege", confers a kind of ethical authority, for the survivor's knowledge is often knowledge of a radical transgression of moral boundaries. (1999: 48)

Post-apocalyptic chronotope also draws on the adventure chronotope in the Greek romance, which is "characterized by a *technical, abstract connection between space and time*, by the *reversibility* of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their *interchangeability* in space" (Bakhtin, 1981: 100; emphasis in the original). In this adventure chronotope, interwoven with the chronotope of the ancient novel of travel in this article, "all initiative and power belongs to chance" (Bakhtin, 1981: 100). Ballard's characters in the novel are forced to travel so as to survive and to get water. When opposing groups in Larchmont set fire to the town, Ransom and a small group of other people feel obliged to leave for the coast. This movement in space provides the adventure-time chronotope in the novel. However, the adventure here is not the same as in the ancient novel of travel since adventure in this novel requires a life challenge in the face of drought. Ballard's survivors hope in the first place that life by the coast could be better than that in their hometown and then that there must still be much more water in their hometown than by the coast, both of which end up with disappointment. Just as "the world of the Greek romance" of the adventure chronotope is an alien world in which everything is "indefinite, unknown, foreign" (Bakhtin, 1981: 101), the destructed planet of the post-apocalyptic chronotope becomes also an alien world to its characters in that the familiar land seems unfamiliar to them. They have lost organic ties with the landscape they have known before the apocalypse. Needless to say, "[t]he laws governing the sociopolitical and everyday life of this world are foreign to" people of the post-apocalyptic setting (Bakhtin, 1981: 101). Ballard's characters in the novel "can experience only random contingency" in their homeland (Bakhtin, 1981: 101). While heroes or heroines of the Greek romance are tested on "their chastity and mutual fidelity" (Bakhtin, 1981: 106), those of the post-apocalyptic novels are tried on their spirituality, materiality and on their relation with the physical environment. In the "*abstract-alien world* of the Greek romance", a hero "can *only* function as an isolated and private individual, deprived of any organic connection with his country, his city, his own social group, his clan, even his own family", and, so Bakhtin added, "[h]e does not feel himself to be a part of the social whole. He is a solitary man, lost in an alien world. And he has no mission in this world" (Bakhtin, 1981: 108; emphasis in the original). To some extent, Ransom isolates himself from his wife and the rest of the community in the first place, having broken his connection with the physical environment and with other survivors around him. Despite his struggle for survival throughout the novel, he wanders desperately through his alien native country of complete soil with no hope for water in the end.

The country and their homeland become an alien world for the characters of the novel, "similar to the space presented in the Greek romances, where limitless space was provided for unexpectedness and completion of heroic deeds" (Brasaité and Braun, 2013: 79). Yet the hero of the romance still had his homeland, a place called home, where he would come back to after his adventures. Nevertheless, the characters of the post-apocalyptic fiction do not have any home or proper shelter. In the post-apocalyptic novel, the "'homeland' is in fact not situated anywhere else spatially, but rather temporally" (Skult, 2012: 3). Although the travel in the novel is considered spatial, it is temporal in the first place because "the post-apocalypse is time travel to a future which has become nigh unrecognisable" (Skult, 2012: 3), which thus makes this temporal-spatial homeland a chronotope. As Skult stated "[w]ithout [. . .] pre-apocalyptic homeland, the novel can hardly be termed post-apocalyptic at all, since we do not have any kind of frame of reference with which to compare" (Skult, 2012: 4). Believing that there must be some water back in Larchmont, Ransom goes back there since there is no hope in the salt dunes on the coast. Ransom, accompanied by some other survivors Catherine Austen, Mrs. Quilter and Philip Jordan, takes a lion, which they see on their route, as their guide. Upon seeing the lion, Ransom is convinced that there is another water source near the coast because the lion would not survive otherwise. As they approach Larchmont, so to speak, their homeland, Ransom feels that they are entering a graveyard:

The aridity of the central plain, with its desolation and endless deserts stretching across the continent, numbed him by its extent. The unvarying desert light, the absence of all color, and

the brilliant whiteness of the stony landscape made him feel that he was advancing across an immense graveyard. Above all, the lack of movement gave to even the slightest disturbance an almost hallucinatory intensity. (Ballard, 1965: 107)

There is another significant aspect of the adventure-time chronotope, which has not as yet been mentioned. A major irony stands out in the adventure chronotope in that it suggests inactivity and motionlessness. As Catherine Austen says to Ransom, “[i]t’s an interesting period [ . . . ] *Nothing moves, but so much is happening*” (Ballard, 1965: 11; emphasized). In this chronotope, the world and the individual appear to be finished and immobile items. This chronotope, in which “nothing [ . . . ] is remade, changed or created anew”, favours no evolution, growth or change (Bakhtin, 1981: 110). It reveals the similarity between “what had been at the beginning and what is at the end” (Bakhtin, 1981: 110). After their adventure of the quest of water on the southern coast, Ransom see on their way back to Larchmont that there is still dust, silence, death and immobility everywhere just as before they left:

[Ransom] looked at the craft beached around him. Shadowless in the vertical sunlight, their rounded forms seemed to have been eroded of all but a faint residue of their original identities, like ghosts in a distant universe where drained images lay in the shallows of some lost time. The unvarying light and absence of all movement made Ransom feel that he was advancing across an inner landscape where the elements of the future stood around him like the objects in a still life, formless and without association. (Ballard, 1965: 101)

Last but not least, Bakhtin’s ‘image of Man’, which signifies “how human beings are influenced by the vagaries of time and space in the literary artistic chronotope” (Skult, 2012: 2) also sheds light on the post-apocalyptic chronotope. The ‘image of Man’ is related to what happens to those who survive, which draws human nature and survivors’ humanity in the post-apocalypse. The image of the survivors, or their personhood, is used to great effect so as to convey some universal messages to the reader and all humanity though not all the survivors as a character need be very impressive. As Skult elaborated, “since the chronotope of the road requires travel, and travel in the post-apocalypse is often dangerous, the survivor is generally an active agent, and how they act and react to their new surroundings forms the central conceit of the novel” (2012: 5). In the novel, Ballard portrays the bleak view of humanity in the face of drought through the irrevocably changing and unknown living and social conditions. When Catherine exclaims that “people are filthy” (Ballard, 1965: 12), she actually and metaphorically means it since people endeavour to survive in the roasting land under nasty and desperate circumstances by killing and stealing.

The novel manifests that the lack of water transforms humankind into something eviler in the post-apocalyptic chronotope. Ballard suggests that devastation of the nonhuman environment corrupts the human spirit more and more, which can be embodied by the fight between the fishermen and the churchmen when the fishermen burn churches and the churchmen set fire to some houses in the town. People who do not come to realize the connection between their self and the world burn the town that is already roasting. People resort to violent behaviour towards each other for more food and water. It shows that not only the world is alien to survivors but also people are hostile and alien to each other. In this sense, “[s]ympathy and regret are replaced by fear and self-protection” in the post-apocalyptic world (Brasaité and Braun, 2013: 84). As one of the characteristics of the post-apocalyptic genre, Ballard comments on the forces that have led to the apocalypse, which is human nature driven by greed in this case. The fights between the churchmen and the fishermen, the acts of stealing food and water, the killings, the adventures encountered on the path of life during the ten-year-long drought on the one hand and Ransom’s and some of the survivors’ good deeds on the other hand change nothing for a better world, conveying that “the post-apocalyptic world [is] grim and pointless, leaving no hope for both sinners and saints” (Brasaité and Braun, 2013: 82). In the post-apocalyptic chronotope, thus, the characters of the novel adapt to the destructed world, recognize and submit to the current laws of life. That is why chronotopes “present a concrete situation where certain kinds of action are possible; by the same token, however, they also restrict the possibilities of action” (Steinby, 2013: 120). The remnants of the human race in the novel, however paradoxical this may seem, have acknowledged the catastrophe and have redesigned themselves to the slow-motion apocalypse and to its disastrous circumstances.

The novel ends with Ransom’s never-ending hope for a flowing river in Larchmont. Weary of his search of water, Ransom fuses his outer adventure with his inner journey:

Although it was not yet noon, the sun seemed to be receding into the sky, and the air was gradually becoming colder. To his surprise he noticed that he no longer cast any shadow onto the sand, as if he had at last completed his journey across the margins of the inner landscape he had carried in his mind for so many years. As the light failed, the air grew darker. The dust was dull and opaque, the crystals in its surface dead and clouded. An

immense pall of darkness lay over the dunes, as if the whole of the exterior world were losing its existence.

It was some time later that he failed to notice it had started to rain. (Ballard, 1965: 130)

The final lines of the novel present that Ransom either gets lost in his unconsciousness unable to distinguish the reality from his imagination because of the trauma, or he literally loses his consciousness. To put in different words, the rising darkness over the dry and devastated landscape may point to the rain coming down the clouds, or it may be related to Ransom's blackout hinting at his coming death. It is ascertained that rain eventually falls, but Ransom cannot feel the rain. The reason why he cannot is not provided in the novel, yet it could be read that he dies, in that case, upon completing his inner journey. It is inferred in the novel that Ransom is the one who sees first the signs of the coming rain, and his not feeling the rain does not change the truth. However, it is possible to propose that Ransom cannot feel the rain because the drought is so absolute in the chronotopic environment of the post-apocalypse that it lasts "even when it rains" since "the drought is now absolute inside his head" (Sellars and O'Hara, 2012: 203).

## 5. Conclusion

This article has sought to explore the chronotope of the post-apocalypse in Ballard's novel within the framework of Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. In Ballard's post-apocalyptic chronotope, in general sense, time slows down losing its weight while space becomes abstract and alien since human beings are estranged from their own race, from the world they inhabit in, and from nonhuman beings inhabiting in the same world. Ballard suggests "a heightened or alternate reality beyond that familiar to [human] senses" in his novel (1996: 84). The author portrays a world doomed to fall, in which "people are out of contact with each other, egoistically sealed-off from each other, greedily practical" (Bakhtin, 1981: 234). The novel shows that human beings engage in liminal states on the path of life in physiological, ontological and psychological terms in the post-apocalyptic chronotope because of their estrangement from the nonhuman world and of their indifferent attitudes towards nonhuman beings in it, which results in apocalyptic scenarios.

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