

Power Over Authority: A Comparative Analysis of the Breakdown of Social Structures in *Lord of the Flies* and *High-Rise*

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

This thesis explores the dynamics of power and authority and its part in the transformation of society's subordination, incorporating J.G. Ballard's novel *High-Rise* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* as contextual primary source texts. Both works illustrate the chaos which prevails if power triumphs over legitimate authority and provide a philosophical analysis of human nature and society. Through qualitative text analysis study, this paper examines leadership conflict and struggle, social class division, and the effects of eroticized power. This paper, engaging with a textual approach consistent with critical narrative methodology, examines the thematic concerns of leadership crisis, class antagonism, and the forces of degeneration of power. In *Lord of the Flies* the scenes of democratic authority shifting to violent autocratic supremacy represents savagery of the human souls. Likewise, *High Rise* describes how division of class and competition for resources leads to destruction of contemporary social order. It is thus the purpose of this thesis to analyze these fictional contexts side by side, so as to show the general impact of power unchecked by official authority. It captures how fragile society's structures are and how seemingly leaderless societies result in the autocratic reign. In detail this study shows that these literary works are relevant in current society to analyze and comment on the modern governance and human actions in response to power.

Key words: Power, Authority, Class Division, Leadership Conflict, Human nature.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

While the term power and authority are sometimes used synonymously, there is a difference between their function within the social frameworks. Power is the capacity to direct people to do what others want them to do in a given society through force, domination and persuasion. Which means it is the ability to exercise one's will over others. It is more or less volatile once it tends to be transferred from person to person based on situation or in accordance with people. Authority, on the other hand, is a more formal kind of control which is usually achieved or received within a definite framework of social agreements. It is a right given by society and that right is meant to provide discipline and equality, while power does not formally require authorization.

Power and authority are the key factors in the stories of both J.G Ballard's *High Rise* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* to understand the exploration of social breakdown. *High Rise*, which takes place in a completely enclosed, self-contained high rise building and *Lord of the Flies*, in a desolate island, both develop situations in which the role of society collapses and removes conventional structures of society. When the power shifts over authority, the inhabitants of these novels revert to anarchy, and the social structures these people wished to build crumble.

In the novel *High Rise*, the occupants, living in the high rise building initially tied by laws, regulations which symbolize authority but when class war erupts inside the building, power becomes centralized and the residents begin to kill each other to gather all the resources needed to survive. The building which was associated earlier with the progress and decency of living is transformed into the place where power reigns and people are controlled and dominated by elites and rebels towards authority. The premises of authority in the form of management, law enforcement and the social order gradually begin to dissolve as power is transformed into the hands of few people who use it for their selfish gain. Thus, an organized society turns into a barbarous as well as more primitive model of society, where force and power reigns, instead of authority.

Similarly, in *Lord of the Flies*, boys marooned on the island attempt at first to form some sort of civilization with Ralph as their chief. They use the conch to organize the group and establish order. However, the lust for power in Jack steadily diminished Ralph's authority. Jack's leadership along with the appeal of fear, manipulation and force pull the boys away from the organizational structure and democratic governing of Ralph. Whereas the initial attempts are made to preserve social structure, slowly degenerates into brutality where Jack increasingly resorts to violence to overthrow Ralph. Here again power replaces authority and society descends into anarchy completely.

This paper is a balance of both works to show how in the absence of power, it is very easy to overthrow authority. *High rise* and *Lord of the Flies* show that power is very different from authority and it is a lot more violent. Thus, in both novels, the conditions for the breakdown of social structures are not brought by an outside force but internal forces of power fighting to replace the structures that once held society together. In *High Rise*, the inhabitant's rebellion translates to physical aggression towards authority and in the *Lord of the Flies*, the boy's desire for power overrides the obvious pursuit of civilized standards. In both novels, the authority becomes weakened as power goes over authority and uses it in a disastrous manner most of the time.

Thus, the analysis of power over authority presented in these two novels unveils the instability of societal order as well as the destructive effect that power has when it replaces legitimate authority. Ballard and Golding both portray a situation where the unchecked power reduces the delicate balance of authority and creates violence, mayhem and ultimate social anarchy. In this manner, the authors of these two novels give us a number of thoughts on the nature of human instinct and the dangerous impacts of the loss of authority and rise of power. This kind of dynamics is not only characteristic of fiction but also evidenced in historical and current contexts, which makes this topic universal.

1.1 Thesis Aim

The focus of this thesis is to analyze the interaction of the power and authority in conditions of the societies destruction that is presented in Ballard's *High Rise* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. In both books, the study attempts to understand how transition from order and established authority to the uncertainty of power leads to anarchy, terror and the absence of order. Through an analysis of such dynamics based on fiction, this paper will argue that the scenarios described by the author are not the products of imagination alone, the claimed eventual social and political decline has parallels in real life situations too. In particular, this paper proposes to explore the impact of exercising power over authority by arguing that when power is unchecked, it will always neutralize legitimate authority and create a power vacuum that is filled with anarchy and authoritarianism. This will be accomplished through a comparison of the two novels, emphasizing the ways that internal forces bring the breakdown of social structure more than any other outer factor. It will also explain the author's commentary on human instinct, the weakness of societies or the fine line that needs to be followed in any society to prevent anarchy. With this regard, this thesis intends to make a contribution to discourses on power and its vices and the contextual importance of legitimate authority to maintain society's sustained and harmonious order.

1.2 Research Methodology

This thesis paper follows qualitative research methodology to ensure more detail regarding the research topic and relies on the use of words, narratives and texts. Due to the nature of the research where the focus is made towards texts and aimed at discovering patterns, themes and interpretations of texts themselves, this paper uses qualitative textual analysis as the major research method.

The study utilizes primary and secondary data collection techniques in order to cover all the areas of research. The novels, *Lord of the Flies* and *High Rise* are used as the primary sources as they are the central to the study. These texts are used as the foundation for the analysis of power, authority and social

breakdown from these novels. Furthermore, different articles, online resources, books and other materials are used as secondary sources to make theoretical frameworks. These texts provide critical interpretations of the novel's theme to support research analysis.

Therefore, the study employs an objective method in the analysis of the primary source. This approach concerns solely the text under consideration and the ways that it is put together and written without taking into account actual intentions of the authors or period in which they wrote the works.

Moreover, all the information used in this research is based on secondary research only and all references are cited properly. The analysis tries to present fair and comprehensive interpretation while respecting the authors' property rights.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how *High Rise* by J.G. Ballard and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding have addressed issues of power, authority and the breakdown of societal structures in twentieth-century England. Both novels deal with what happens when things start to fall apart and the rules go out the window. However, they do this in amazingly different ways. In *Lord of the Flies*, a pack of boys gets marooned on an uninhabited island and begins to go into barbarism. On the other hand, *High-Rise* explores the struggle to maintain civility when people live in a modernist building.

This chapter explores shifting power and authority in these stories. It is an exercise in the construction of certain understanding based on great sociologist's ideas like Max Weber, Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt. Power is viewed as dynamic and very capable of harming. On the one hand, authority is a key to stability, but always temporary.

For *Lord of the Flies*, much of the research highlights how easily violence can emerge when rules are gone. It also focuses on the negative aspects of human character. On *High-Rise*, the concern is not the same. The authors focus on how the matters of modern life and societal breakdown have driven people to a state of chaos.

There is a plenty of research on both novels individually. However, few studies compare them, especially in terms of power and authority. This chapter addresses that gap. It pulls together ideas from different studies to build a clear foundation. That way, it creates the groundwork for a comparison of the themes and practices that are aligned to the two influential pieces of work.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Power and Authority

This paper aims to indicate that power and authority play a central role in the interpretation of societal breakdown in both *High Rise* and *Lord of the Flies*. For this analysis, the concepts from Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and Hannah Arendt are being used.

There are three kinds of legitimate authority according to Max Weber, a famous sociologist. Which are traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational. Traditional authority comes from customs and traditions. Charismatic authority depends on a leader's personal qualities. Legal-rational authority is based on laws and rules. These categories help one to understand how people are able to keep or lose control in different situations.

In *Lord of the Flies*, the boys start with legal-rational authority when they choose Ralph as their leader. But eventually, the leadership quality of Ralph is challenged by Jack. This shifting causes the group to become disordered to the point that it attains a state of chaos. Similarly, in *High-Rise*, the residents ignore societal norms and abandon legal-rational authority. Therefore, it gets messy and there emerges new power structures within the compound.

Michel Foucault's ideas on power also help us understand these stories. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault describes how contemporary societies work through discipline and power-

check mechanisms known as surveillance. Otherwise, breakdowns can happen, and so, organizations need to have such systems in place. The absence of authority illustrated in *Lord of the Flies*, makes the boys regress to the worse side of their character. In *High-Rise*, the residents are cut off from society, and lose the effects of disciplinary power. This isolation leads to anarchy and violent behavior.

"On Violence" is a 1970 essay by political theorist Hannah Arendt, published by Harcourt, Brace & World. In this book Hannah Arendt provides another useful perspective. She separates power and authority. Power is the ability of a group to act together. Authority is the right to lead and be obeyed. The author of the book "On Violence" believes that every time a regime is overthrown, violence follows. In *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph loses his power, and Jack has to resort to physical power to take control. This can be explained by Arendt's view on the relation between the lack of power of rulers and the manifestation of violence. In *High Rise*, due to the lack of proper leadership, there are forming groups. These groups fight violently to control the building, further proving Arendt's theories.

Using these ideas, we can see how power and authority form, hold societies together, and fall apart. Both of these stories illustrate just how easily social hierarchies can be upset and if authority doesn't work, how the absence of authority can be filled with chaos instantly.

2.3 Literature on *Lord of the Flies*

This novel has become very popular not only for analyzing the act of savagery but also for analyzing how barbarism emerges in human beings when they overcome their social structures. Most critics see the novel as a sort of sociological fiction, which reflects the worst human instincts. William Golding's story can be viewed as a moral fable, as John Peter does in his essay "The Fables of William Golding" (The Kenyon Review, 2024). He stated that what the boys are currently experiencing is the same with the societies at large scale. It transports the reader to the startling future where all that is dear to a civilized society disintegrates for lack of a compass or anchor.

Claire Rosenfield, in her article “Men of a Smaller Growth: A Psychological Analysis of William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*” published in Brooklyn College the author takes a psychological point of view to analyze the novel. She gives an account of the loss of the boys’ civilization and their descent into the wild side with a touch of Carl Jung’s views on it. Rosenfield analyses their behavior in terms of conflict between the ‘ego’, the sphere of reason and consciousness, and the ‘shadow,’ original sin and primal instincts. Her perspective examines the psychological factors that lead the boys to draw out violence and disorder when the old values collapse.

Christopher Hitchens points out in his 2005 introduction to *Lord of the Flies*, it is an important novel as ever for those who are interested in the principles or anti-principles of social order and the morality and immorality in all of us (SvabOnline - *Lord of the Flies*, n.d.). He states that the story can be understood as not only a condemnation of the boys’ decisions individually. For illustration, he just points out how the characterization of the boys in Golding does not allow the author’s readers to wonder whether civilization really civilizes the savage instincts in man or simply hides them until circumstances compel the person to throw up the veneer and revert to his/her primal self.

A recent paper “Symbolic Representation of Desire for Power in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*” (2022) investigates the role and meaning of the symbols uses in the novel to show the destructive effects of power(Rakhi et al., 2022). Such things as the conch shell and the pig’s head represent the change of goal in leadership and power among the boys. The study claims that symbols represent the global human desire to possess power interfering with peace. It ties such actions with real-life elaborate power struggles and demonstrates how an urge to assert power can cause havoc within a community.

Altogether these analyses result a rich understanding of *Lord of the Flies*. It reveals how suffering is depicted by Golding utilizing the savageness of boys are timeless for discussion. The main subjects the novel is concerned with are the relation between civilization and savagery, the fragility of the leadership, and the nature of the primal instinct in man. Still, people analyze it as one of the most multifaceted works devoted to human activity, so its relevance is the same as if it had not been written today.

2.4 Literature on *High-Rise*

High Rise by J.G. Ballard is a novel destined to attract a lot of attention because of its well criticism of modern civilization and social classes. Roger Luckhurst, in *The Angle Between Two Walls: The Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (1997), discusses various themes that Ballard employs repeatedly – such as alienation and societal disintegration. He argues that the high-rise reflects how collective identity crumbles when people focus too much on individualism and materialism (“Review: [Untitled],” 1999).

Jeannette Baxter, in *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination* (2008), connects the novel to surrealism. She sees the high-rise as a metaphor for human loneliness. Baxter also highlights how Ballard uses the building’s structure to show the harsh impact of urban life on human connections.

In *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* (1987) M. Keith Booker analyses the tendency of the novel to satire the capitalist society and technology. He also explains how Ballard shows the breakdown of the social order at the same time as and in response to modernity.

2.5 Comparative Analyses

Comparative literature analyses entail useful approaches to understanding features and motifs in one or several texts. Susan Bassnett’s book *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* is a book published in 1993 that lays down the basis of identification of the thematic and the structural homology analysis. She also highlights the need that as a student one has to investigate how various works in question theorize common human questions while at the same time arguing within that particular subject matter location (Ribeiro, n.d.). With such approaches, it will be possible to contrast themes such as loneliness, power relations, and the collapse of society in *Lord of the Flies* and *High Rise*. Each of the two novels fundamentally questions the modern and from different paradigms of how the individual or group carries on in a state of societal collapse.

School boys marooned on an island; in the novel *Lord of the Flies*, the story shows the dark side where lack of authority, law and order makes the boys shift to wild animals. The struggle of boys in the attempt

to lay down the leader's hip and order ends with the triumph of savage impulses over civilized control. Likewise in *High Rise*, its characters are relieved of societal roles as the architecture and community of the structure degrades. By adopting such approaches, it will be possible to compare themes such as isolation, dominance and submission and the complete breakdown of civilization in the novels; *Lord of the Flies* and *High Rise*.

The article “Dystopian and Utopian Omission of Discourse in Three Modern Robinsonades: *Lord of the Flies*, *Concrete Island*, *The Red Turtle*” (2019) explores how narrative techniques and themes of isolation and survival intersect in these works (Gill, n.d.). This paper aims to discuss how both *Lord of the Flies* and *High-Rise* depict dystopian nature as the process of degeneration of moral values and the emergence of a power struggle as well as the works’ utopian aspects like the desire to regain and repopling of territories. Also, the article shows how these texts employed their specific locales—a desert island and a contemporary high-rise building—to consider more universal issues of humanities, culture, and the outcome of isolation.

By comparing these works, we can see how both authors critique human tendencies to dominate and destroy in the absence of strong, stabilizing systems. They provide powerful commentaries on the fragility of civilization and the ease with which it can crumble under pressure. Through this analysis, we gain a deeper understanding of how literature can reflect and critique societal issues across different times and contexts.

2.6 Gaps in the Literature

There is a lot of research on *Lord of the Flies* and *High-Rise* as individual works. Scholars have studied the themes of power, authority, and social collapse in each novel. However, very few studies compare these two texts directly. The way both stories explore the breakdown of social order and the power struggle is striking, yet the connection between them remains largely unexplored.

Most research on *Lord of the Flies* focuses on its portrayal of human nature and the descent into savagery. Scholars examine the boys' loss of innocence and the impact of leadership struggles on their society. Similarly, studies on *High-Rise* often analyze its critique of modern life and how isolation and class divisions create chaos. These analyses are rich and valuable, but they mostly treat the novels as separate, unrelated works.

There is a gap in how these novels are studied together. It reveals the theme of how weak social hierarchy is and how easily it collapses when those in charge lose their power. It also shows the consequences of unchecked power and how individuals act when they are on their own. This study addresses that gap. The comparison of the societal collapses depicted in *Lord of the Flies* and *High-Rise* will help to pay attention to their similar motifs and throws new perspective on the study of power, authority and acting of people.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review discusses the primary theories and critical readings explaining power and authority in *High-Rise* and *Lord of the Flies*. Therefore, by synthesizing existing literature, this chapter provides a foundation for the subsequent comparative analysis.

Chapter 3: Analysis Power over Authority and the Breakdown of Civilization in *Lord of the Flies*

3.1 Power as a human instinct in *Lord of the Flies*

This chapter aims to present an analysis of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* focusing on the instinct of power and its destructive nature in cases when it goes over authority. The novel demonstrates when power goes unchecked and unregulated it turns into destructive force and pushes people to barbarity. This idea is well illustrated by comparing the two characters, Jack and Ralph. Both characters come with different approaches to power as time progresses in the novel. (Digambar & Bhise, 2016)

Jack: The Descent into Savagery through Power

Jack's character symbolizes the more aggressive desire for power. Initially he was assisted as a hunter by Ralph to obtain food but gradually hunting transformed into a symbol of growing desire for gaining power and having control over the other boys. Jack's slaughter of a mother pig and his cheerful shouting, "kill the pig. Cut his throat, bash him in." (Golding, 1954, p.76) reflects not only a degeneration into savages but the lure of obtaining power that pushes him into brutal behavior. Jack becomes a leader who uses fear and manipulation to make a bunch of boys into obedient but cruel hunters. His capacity of telling the boys what they wish to hear, like assuring them safety from the so-called beast to produce meat to eat, allowed him to establish his dominance. Therefore, gaining power over authority turns to an obsession working for Jack who sees violence as a means of maintaining his power. Thus, the killing of Simon and piggy shows the uncontrolled power of Jack, which leads to the systematic elimination of dissent. (Digambar & Bhise,2016)

Ralph: The Struggle for Order and Leadership

Ralph, on the other hand, reflects the principles of civilization and democratic character of a leader. He tries to employ power as a means of establishing a democratic social order and guaranteeing the boy's existence. Ralph demonstrates order in leadership through the use of conch and calling meetings to take any decisions. However, Ralph fails to apply power in his leadership in a manner that will effectively satisfy the boy's desire, ultimately making him powerless against Jack. Furthermore, as Jack focuses more on hunting, Ralph loses his grip on the basic civilized approach. Thus, Golding in his novel shows that the dynamics of societal structure can easily break by those who seek total power control over authority. Although Ralph uses rational mind to create a democratic society, he becomes helpless before Jack's lust for gaining power and this portrays how man tends to dominate rather than thinking about general good during hardships. (Digambar & Bhise,2016)

3.2 Power struggles: The nature of Authority and the Corrupting influence of Power

One of the main important themes in *Lord of the Flies* is the corrupting nature of power and the consequences of the struggle for power over authority. Ralph, who's ideals are developed on mutual working for survival and everyone's participation in decision making, always has to struggle against Jack's growing tendencies to leadership of dominating others. At the beginning of the novel, Jack is shown as a responsible head of the choirboys' but in the course of the events he tends to regard power as an ability to dominate rather than assist. This change in Jack's mindset is brought out early in the novel when he says, "I ought to be chief, because I'm chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C-sharp." (Golding, 1954, p.23). At this stage in the novel, Jack represents himself as a traditional leader because he believes that because of his previous class standing, he is entitled to be the ruler. However, his obsession over hunting and the lust for dominating others turned him into a figure who wants to command people by taking advantage of their vices and not for the sake of serving the people's interests.

Throughout the novel, hunting becomes a significant part of Jack's character, and his desire for gaining power over authority. His leadership is no more nurturing for the general welfare of the boys but what he wants is to satisfy his eagerness of gaining power over them. This shift is possibly brought to bear whenever he declares, "We don't need the conch anymore. We know who ought to say things." (Golding, 1954, p. 115). Here Jack categorically dismisses the very democratic processes that Ralph embraces as representing, which means he has no tolerance for anything that will cut across his desire for exercising power over authority in any way. Jack does not discuss with the boys or even take a vote when he wants something done within a group. Instead, he relies on their fear and the possibility of brutal force to bring them in line.

When Jack takes over the leadership, the boys stop listening to Ralph's democracy system and start to follow Jack. Jack earns it by taking them hunting and giving them the feeling of inclusion. The division between the two parties is therefore inevitable, leaders battle for control and the boys are split between reasonable authority and dictatorship. Furthermore, Jack's exclusion and the formation of his own group is the complete rejection of democratic principles established by Ralph. In his new tribe, Jack becomes

sure of his influence and forms a violent society. The tribal authority in the hands of Jack increases alongside fear and oppression of any uprising.

Jack's character corresponds to the authority issue and represents the negative effect of the unrestricted power. As he rises to power, he loses the democratic standard and adopts autocratic measures. He uses force, anger and violence. All these elements signify that his aim is no longer the good for the boy's group but the necessity to rule it. For instance, when Ralph confronts Jack about his leadership methods, Jack responds, "you are a good man, Ralph, but you are a bad chief. You are not to be the chief, you know. But I am the one who makes the decisions." (Golding, 1954, p.145). Moreover, in the brutal killings of Simon and Piggy, one realizes that the incident was prompted by Jack's eagerness to use force to maintain power. Simon's murder serves as a best example on how society can be reduced to a state of barbarism owing to authoritarian forms of procedural supremacy. Earlier, boys are innocent rational beings, whereas later they participate in a violent act, which proves how dehumanizing the influence of Jack is.

Jack gives a representation of abuse of power in situations where political stability is rendered and subsequently destroys the democracy on which society used to rely on. He kept the boys in check through force and threats, just as political dictators silence anyone who does not agree with them, remove other's opinions and make everyone live in fear. Thereby, at the end of the novel, when the boys are degenerating under the leadership of Jack, the themes prove how a complete practice of showing power over authority undermines any notion of democracy and leads to social distraction.

3.3 Authoritarianism and Violence: The descent into savagery

In the course of the novel, fear and violence are the main concerns that characterize the aspect of savagery among boys. At first, violence is a measure of the ability to overthrow and take power over rivals but then it becomes the way to survive within a group with Jack. His rule is not based on consensus but on threats, blackmail and the continuous application of force. This is evident in the killing of sow which turns out to be a rite where the primary aim of Jack is to assert his dominance. Describing the act, Golding writes,

“The sow collapsed under them and they were heavy and flushed with blood.” (Golding, 1954, p.155).

This act of violence represents Jack's desire for gaining power and the exclusion of the democratic Ralph.

The savage murder of Simon and the later killing of Piggy by the followers of Jack are the main two examples of boy's cruelty at the island. Simon's death, in specific, is an important moment, signifying the complete sense of any sort of remaining morality. Golding describes the scene, “The water rises further and dresses Simon's coarse hair with brightness. The water continued to rise and the clouds opened and let the rain through.” (Golding, 1954, p.174). His description of using nature as a tool makes the scene mirror the violence that the boys are showing. Again, the killing of Piggy with the help of rolling the Boulder shows that it was not a matter of defenselessness but a power showoff. Golding writes, “The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee. The sea breathed again in a long sigh, the water was as blue as sky, and clouds were like white flowers.” (Golding, 1954, p. 209).

These violent acts are more than mere survival. They have become a sign that Jack owns the group. The craving from being a tactic of food security and protection turns into a mechanism to perpetuate power over authority. The boys are not individuals defending themselves but are actively participating in violence that Jack brings out. They do it out of fear and what they do is prove that violence can easily be brought into anywhere there is authoritarianism. The way Golding has shown people go violent in the novel *Lord of the Flies*, has actually a fearful message about how practicing power over authority threatens the society. The change of the boys from good kids to vicious ones demonstrates what the author is trying to portray: that power in the hands of a few ruins everything.

3.4 The Breakdown of civilization: The Collapse of Social Order

At the very beginning of the novel, Ralph wins the election and becomes the leader of the group that has a rooting for democracy where every member has a chance to take on decision making by blowing the conch shell. But gradually, Jack's desire of gaining power shows how easily civilized society can collapse. As Golding writes, “The conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist.”

(Golding, 1954,p.209) reveals how easily and quickly their efforts in developing civilization and order crumble. The Conch, which at the beginning was marked as flawless and democratic impulses, represents not only a tool for calling meetings but also equality, shared responsibility and everyone's participation in decision making.

At first, the boy's struggle to ensure the absolute necessities including the construction of shelters and tending of a fire, signifies the possibility of their rescue. Ralph exclaimed, "we'll have to have hands up like at school. Then I'll give you the conch." (Golding, 1954, p.37). But as the boys start developing survival instincts and the stress is laid on their isolated situation, any attempts at constructing real democracy are cast aside. Ralph's rational approach is failing most of the time as Jack opposes his attempt continuously to represent a different type of leadership. Hope of being free of rules makes him a leader since he does not want to be restricted in any way. Jack's words, "I'm not going to play any longer. Not with you. I'm going off by myself. I won't be a part of Ralph's lot" (Golding, 1954,p.146) reflects his desire to leave the societal restrictions behind. It is rebellion against the statuses of the society since he moves to form his own group in the desire of gaining power through control, aggression and the purchase of freedom.

This conflict between two characters, Jack's lust for control against Ralph's obsession with reason and authority forms the preconditions for the breakdown of social structure and the leadership they established. Besides, when Jack starts getting people in his team particularly those who are dissatisfied with Ralph, the conch loses its power. As Ralph says, "The conch doesn't count at this end of the island" (Golding, 1954,p.172) reflects the decline of democracy and collective responsibility symbolized the increasing power of Jack's tribe. The conch, which represents the civilized society and is blown to assemble people, becomes valueless when Jack's group turns more and more savage.

Such actions of the boys show how society can collapse overnight when self-interest is pursued over the collective interests such as cooperation, democratic participation and respect for authority. Jack's group becomes more violent and disorderly as the novel progresses and the boys that Ralph finds himself are no

longer civilized people. He says, “the world, that under stable and lawful world, was slipping away.” (Golding, 1954, p.102).

3.5 The Erosion of Social Order and a Warning against Authoritarianism

Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* should be considered as an effective analysis of the instability of civilizing effects and the possibility of destructive dynamics of power. The breakdown of the island’s social structure with the implementation of exercising power over authority leads to violence and expresses how unsafe society can be at times. In the beginning, Ralph attempts to use the conch, symbolizing the democratic principles, to keep things in order but this system fails rapidly as soon as Jack becomes dictatorial. Jack’s rejection of democratic form of leadership represents how a lack of organization results in a state of anarchy.

The end of order in the novel demonstrates how quickly society can collapse when the principles upon which it is built are replaced by selfish ambitions. The escalating factor of violence and brutality evident among the boys is another sign that authoritarian rule harms a society. In the novel, when Jack takes control over his gang, he does it through violence and fear asserting his dominance with the ritual of slaughtering the sow. The act of murder is no more a function of survival; instead, it has become a function of domination and as stated earlier, the domination can quickly degenerate into violence once authority transforms from the pursuit of cooperation.

3.6 Conclusion

Therefore, the topics worked through in the novel are not limited to the island; they illuminate the trends disturbing actual societies in politically unstable countries. In societies where political crises, power conflicts and authoritarianism have disrupted social stability, it is possible to recognize the relevance of the lessons, which are told in Golding’s novel. It is therefore clear that Golding’s work is not only a cautionary tale but at the same time a power-driven warning. It depicts the bitterness of the end that befalls those that do not use their power for the benefit of all but to manipulate people. The novel is still a

wakeup call to society on how fragile our civilization is. In his novel, *Lord of the Flies*, Golding made a statement specifically pointing to the fact that when power is being wielded selfishly, society is certain to be heading towards violence and anarchy and resulting in a fall of social structure.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Power, Class Division, and Social Breakdown in *High Rise*

In *High Rise* J.G. Ballard uses a large high-rise block of luxury apartments as a symbol of the collapse of civilization for the study of the power struggle between the classes. In other words, it represents the elevation of social orders, where the higher floors are meant for the rich and the lower floors for the working class. After a while the feeling of discomfort amongst the residents turns into highly escalated violence because of latent factors of power and class differences. Thus, in this novel, the author takes a negative view of social constructivism and the anarchy that follows the failure of the social framework.

4.1 The Structural Foundation of Power

In J.G. Ballard's novel the high-rise stands as far more than just an architectural construction; it is a portrayal of the class and privilege system. This is made literal by the fact that the higher the floor, the richer and more powerful are the occupants of the individual apartments. This vertical segmentation does not only describe their entitlement to resources but also recreates in the minds of the people of the building as the higher floors show a sense of superiority over the lower one.

At the beginning of the novel, Ballard depicts social relations between the inhabitants as something uneasy. Despite the fact that they share the space of the house they live in they are worlds apart due to the invisible partition of class and privilege. The rich people occupying the upper stories regard height both

physically and socially as evidence of their status. For example, Richard Wilder, a resident from the lower floor remarks on the upper-floor inhabitants' disrespect that they looked down, both physically and metaphorically, upon those who lived beneath them, as if they carried an implicit belief in their own betterment (Ballard, 1975). Such perceiving in their eyes makes them think that they are superior to the other people.

To fully support the aforementioned divisions, Ballard pays much attention in detailing the structure of the building. The upper floors possess finer materials and facilities which indicate the possibilities of power of the inhabitants. For instance, the top floor, where the architect of the buildings lives is depicted as being equipped with gardens and special amenities. The lower floors, however, are less spacious and in very bad condition, as seen from the standard of living of the building's occupants. These differences in design and amenities work to stir definite resentment in the eyes of Wilder, lives in the lower floor of the building, and he says that the cramped apartments on the lower levels were little better than rabbit warrens, their inhabitants crowded together in an unspoken acknowledgment of their place in the pecking order (Ballard,1975).

These physical separations in the high rise translate to deeper social differentiation resulting in conflict which grows as the novel progresses. It's not a division of space and facilities, but it is also a division of people and authority. The building itself is manifested as a constant and oppressive signal of the status structure, where those at the top have more resources than the bottom group feels out of place and marginalized. Wilder says that the building reveals itself as a machine designed to separate its occupants, to pit them against one another in a war for survival.

4.2 Power Dynamics in *High Rise* and Their Consequences

The nature of power relationships within the structure of the building is another main aspect of the novel. The inhabitants occupying the upper floors of the building not only get material gains but also get

symbolic and authoritative control over people living in the lower floors. This hierarchy is supported also by the architectural structure of the building and in the distribution of the common areas such as, playgrounds, gym facilities, swimming pool and so on. Although these are relatively common spaces, they are largely under the upper-floor dwellers' claim. This represents the practice of showing power over authority. The access to the swimming pool is the first symbol of struggle for power in the novel. It is initially being controlled by the upper-floor residents who see it as their extension of the privilege. This is what Richard Wilder, a documentary filmmaker from the lower floors, is watching with increasing bitterness and states that, the pool which is a place for communal relaxation, now served as a stage where the upper floors paraded their entitlement and their laughter pointed to a reminder of exclusion (Ballard, 1975). The significance of the pool reflects the situation that control over shared spaces in the building is associated with power. However, instability of this power can be seen during the times when the building utilities such as the lifts, power, and water are no longer functional. The lack of these amenities erodes the building's system which was once unintermittible and the situation inside it becomes chaotic, as the residents at the top, those who were once in higher positions, enjoyed isolation and security now see their positions washed away with the infrastructure. Under this situation, residents no longer treat each other as neighbors, but as rivals who must fight to the death.

Thus, when the barriers which are the social norms diminish, the cruel nature of people who act selfishly and manifested. Such breakdown of order also supports Ballard's perspective at how easily power relations are overthrown if they are constructed on relations of superiority and marginalization. The upper floor residents who were once feeling the superiority of their position start using even more force as the desire to suppress is asserted. For instance, Anthony Royal, the architect of the building and the dwellers of the luxurious penthouse, turns into an authoritarian as anarchy rises. He also tries to rationalize his actions by saying that the building becomes a testing ground which is a necessary evolution of society (Ballard, 1975). Royal is so convinced of the superiority of the higher ranks that he does not notice the

emerging mutiny of the inhabitants of the lower floors. On the other hand, the lower strata of the people who always felt neglected turn their anger into protestations.

The novel also makes a point that power when vested in one hand is always dangerous. While the lower floors personnel are becoming more and more audacious, the upper floors are losing their protection.

Such a cycle of domination, subordination, and increasing brutality sums up the dynamic of structure that discriminators create; The more they strengthen the divisions, the more they degenerate into chaos and the high-rise becomes no longer a building but a battlefield. Therefore, *High Rise* serves to be a symbol of failure of the societal structure and the collapse of civilization. The novel shows how the structure of the high rise building crumbled including the power of dominance of the superior class and the strength of the opposition. In this perspective, Ballard is actually condemning most of the systems observable during his time and also many of the systems present up to the present age, relations of oppression, inequality and exploitation.

4.3 Class Conflict and the Erosion of Social Norms

As class differences worsens, inhabitants within different classes lead to unstructured rules. At the beginning of the novel, there are still agreements between individuals as well as neighbors and they try to be courteous to one another. Also, there are occasions where occupants of different floors interact with each other. For instance, the building's common areas such as the swimming pool and supermarket firstly represent equal and free presence of different classes although carefully distanced from each other.

However, when resources are getting scarce and competition is heating up, this mode of social contract falls apart. Loss of shared concepts of social behavior constitutes the key component which explains the breakdown of structure in the high rise. When the residents start leaving standards of behavior, the building itself depicts a society collapse in a general sense and for the Lack of external supervision or rules on how they should behave they become extremely reckless.

This breakdown is most apparent from the residents' behavior as they begin to turn to the worst in them. For many the violence and anarchy which escalate within the building are the opportunity in some way to liberate themselves from tight norms of the society. Thus, the residents of the high-rise are representing the primal instincts of people, which show how civilized the covering really is. Finally, *High Rise* depicts the collapse of structurally valid social codes not as a sign of different external pressure but also as the result of the signs of the innate fragility of human society in the absence of any pressure. It perfectly reflects the Instability of the society and it can be said that the residents of the high-rise had lost everything—identity, morality, and, finally, their humanity for pursuing freedom.

4.4 The Violence and Chaos as a Response to Class Inequality

Violence in *High Rise* escalates due to separation consequent of inequality between the higher and lower levels of the building. As the frustration of the residents increases and they are left with no better way plus no effective place to air their frustration other than through violence. In many ways this will turn into a way of regaining power and the long-lost status. The unprivileged people, those who stay in the technical and social lower story of the building, start to rise, and use the power physically and socially as their only right.

The case of violence in the novel is not incidental, but it is highly systemic, and relates to the conflict rooted in the class division of the building. The representatives of the lower floors, who were gradually deprived of power and staff privileges, wreak havoc against the upper floors, which they hate for years of negligence. Wilder reflects in the novel that the upper floors had taken everything—space, light, air—and left the lower floors to feed on their scraps (Ballard, 1975). At the same time the rich people who do not want to lose their status try to use violence in order to preserve the former status quo.

The conflict in the high-rise becomes a broken cycle of attempt to regain control that in turn shakes the little order that is left. The building spirals downwards into chaos, the sleek exterior becomes a combat zone where through force or powerlessness depends on.

In Ballard's novel *High Rise*, violence challenges the notion of how class divide produces the degeneration of the society. In a society where wealth and power are tilted as skewed as this one, when violence breaks out, the horrific destruction is not simply a possibility, but the result of years of oppression and marginalization. The residents of the society, living those confined roles all their lives, are unable to get rid of the situation without using force. Ballard concludes that what had begun as an expression of anger had turned into a way of life, each act of violence feeding the next, until nothing else remained.

4.5 Conclusion

Thus, *High Rise* creates a cautionary dystopian tale of power, class smear, isolation and erosion of the social contract. The high-rise building is intended to represent the themes of progress and sophistication but the space offered by this building is a cruel examination of these themes. Moreover, as the anger increases in the residents, their aggressiveness plays the demonstration of the interacting frailty of the social construction of power and dominance and the concerns of subjugation. This inherent power distribution of the elite, the marginalization of the lower classes, and the progressive dilution of societal standards all lead to the heightening of threat perception, and a descent into anarchy in *High*. Ballard demonstrates that social order is at risk once power has been concentrated and once the perceptions and needs of socially disenfranchised groups are disregarded. Ballard is able to demonstrate the fragility of societies in his novel *High Rise* through how the polite slippages occur. He also demonstrated that inequality and abuse of power are always followed by chaos.

Chapter 5: A Comparative Analysis of Power, Authority and Social Disintegration in *Lord of the Flies* and *High-Rise*.

5.1 Introduction

In the Chapter Three and Four, this paper explores how *Lord of the Flies* of Golding and *High-rise* of Ballard portray power, authority and social breakdown differently. Although each novel possesses a different setting and set of characters, they both give a clear insight about fragility of social order and destructive aftermath of power beyond control. In this chapter, two novels will be compared to show how they are similar and different in their discussion of the above themes. By analyzing the way, the two authors approached this topic we can therefore better understand the universal elements that are connected with societal collapse.

5.2 The Nature of Authority and its Subversion

Lord of the Flies and *High Rise* are similar in their use of the establishment and breakdown of authority, but differ in the way of accomplishing this. At the beginning of *Lord of the Flies*, the first attempt made at forming an authority is based on the model of a democracy. The boys, left on the island, appoint Ralph as their leader and the conch shell remains a symbol of order as well as a tool for structured discussion. This is the desire to create a society that resembles their old civilized societies. Nonetheless, Jack's hunger for power provides a challenge to this fragile authority and eventually subverts it. Jack's leadership is an appeal to primal instincts such as fear and the promise of an immediate reward that slowly degrades the rational authority of Ralph.

In *High Rise*, initial authority is based on the physical and social structure of the building. The building design reflects a hierarchical social structure based on status and access to resources dependent upon one's placement on the structure, and Royal, the architect, is a central figure of authority. However, this authority is no democratic or traditional in any sense, but is based on social or economic power. As the

infrastructure of the building begins to break apart, this authority is broken and brings to the surface unspoken tensions and power struggle amongst the residents.

5.3 Power Dynamics and Leadership

In both novels, social breakdown is portrayed in terms of the dynamics of power. The power in *Lord of the Flies* changes from a more democratic distribution to a centralized autocracy. Initially, Ralph tries to lead by reason and consensus but Jack's charismatic and slowly tyrannical leadership takes over. Jack's power is described by:

Manipulation of fear: He becomes a leader by using fear and manipulating the bunch of boys to make them obedient but cruel hunters. His capacity of assuring safety from so-called beasts to produce food, allowing him to establish his dominance on the boys. Therefore, Jack sees violence as a means of maintaining his power and gaining power over authority turns to an obsessional work for him.

The use of violence and intimidation: From the brutal killing of Simon and Piggy's murder, one can easily understand how Jack uses violence to maintain power. Earlier boys are innocent rational beings but later the participation of violent acts proves how dehumanizing Jack's influence was.

The exploitation of primal desires: Initially Jack was assisted as a hunter to collect food but gradually hunting transformed into a growing desire of gaining power and having control over other boys. His slaughter of mother pig and cheerful shouting reflects the lure of obtaining power that pushes him into brutal behavior.

It shows how easily power can corrupt and how people always want control over others and suppress them.

On the other hand, power in *High Rise* is represented with social class and economic status. The residents of the upper floors have a large degree of power over the residents of the lower floors and thus they form a system of inequality and resentment. With the social order falling apart, power becomes fluid with one faction trying to control the other. The struggle for power in *High rise* is described by:

Class conflict and resentment: The physical separation between the upper floor and the lower floor in the high-rise building shows deeper social differentiation which results in conflict as the novel progresses. This is not only a division of space and facilities but also a division of people and authority.

The breakdown of social norms: When the resources in the high-rise building are getting scarce and competition is heating up, this results in societal collapse. As the residents of the building started leaving the standard of behavior, the building itself depicts a breakdown of societal forms and for the lack of external supervision, they become extremely reckless.

The use of violence to assert dominance: As the frustration of the residents grows due to the physical separation between upper and lower floors, violence becomes more effective ways for them to air their frustrations. In some ways, this turns into a way of regaining power and the long-lost status of the lower floor, unprivileged people. Thus, they start to rise and use the power physically and socially as their only right. Furthermore, this is not incidental, rather it is highly systematical and relates to the conflict rooted in the class division.

So, it can be said that both novels culminate in violence, chaos and the disintegration of social structures because of the pursuit of power.

5.4 The Collapse of Social Order

In both cases, the collapse of social order is depicted as a central theme, but the situations and ways of the collapse are different. In *Lord of the Flies*, the boys attempt to create a civilized society and slowly give way to savagery instead. The loss of innocence, the fall from the superiority of reason, and the result of the primitive instincts eventually triumphing are all the reasons for this decline. As the boys fall into violence and anarchy, the conch shell, which was once a symbol of order and democracy, loses its meaning.

In *High Rise*, the breakdown of social order can be shown as a product of the collapse of the building's infrastructure accompanied by the escalation of the class conflict. During the failing of essential services and the scarcity of resources, the civilians start turning against each other, discovering the brittleness of social contract. Thus, initially a symbol of modernity and progress, the high rise turns into a place of chaos and violence in which the destructive results of social inequality and uncontrolled power are experienced.

5.5 The Role of Setting

The settings of *Lord of the Flies* and *High Rise* are central to the narratives, and they help determine the behavior of the characters tremendously. In *Lord of the Flies*, the boys have been isolated to an island, thereby removing them from the constraints of the civilization, thus a miniature or microcosm can be portrayed in which the dynamics of power and authority can be studied in the primal sense. Thus, the island allows human nature to unfold, without the structures and rules of the outside world.

In *High Rise*, the self-contained environment of the high-rise building offers different types of isolation. Here, residents are close physically but socially and psychologically separate and it heightens class tension and creates a pressure cooker situation in which social norms erode. The building itself becomes a character shaping on how the residents interact and contributing to the breakdown of the society.

5.6 Human Nature and Society

Both of these novels are pessimistic in their point of view toward human nature and society as a fragile world. Golding indicates the savage qualities within human nature itself, controlled by the civilization but always capable of reappearing, under the right circumstances. In the *Lord of the Flies*, the boys gradually spiral into violence and savagery, teaching us not how readily order can fall apart and primal instincts instill themselves.

In *High Rise*, Ballard criticizes the dehumanizing elements of modern society and the way technology and social arrangements might intensify human failings. At first, the high-rise residents, motivated by ambition and materialism, turn violent and chaotic and the degeneration of community norms and values causes social inequality and isolation to lead to the collapse of the human community.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, both of the novels portray powerful thoughts of the breakdown of society because of the result of unchecked power. Though, the difference between the novels lies in the settings, characters, and their particular social critique; but the similarity is that both novels deal with the fragility of order and the risk of humanity's sliding into chaos.

While Golding concentrates on the innate savagery that can subvert any attempts at civilization, Ballard criticizes modern society for dehumanizing everyone, and also the ways in which social structures can increase inequality and lead to violence.

Through comparison of these two novels, one will be able to learn more about the complexities with regards to the power, authority, humans, and fragility of social order. Each author in different ways cautions against the risks of unchecked power and the need for just and equitable social structure.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The concept of power and authority in *Lord of the Flies* and *High Rise* acts as a powerful way to focus on the fragility of social structure, the evil of uncontrolled power and the anarchy that arises when balance of power is broken. In both novels, the authors show how selfishness provoked by power separation based on class or primitive impulses creates savagery, anarchy and destruction of civilization. The novel *Lord of the Flies* shows the tragic result of power when it is transformed into a democratic principle on the one hand and authoritarianism's abuse on the other. In this novel, Ralph's first try at setting up democracy is slowly overtaken by Jack's savage desire for control, representing the destructive effects of exercising power over authority. Similarly in *High Rise*, J.G Ballard captures a vivid picture of how physical and social class intensify bitterness and aggression and how a civilized society turns into a war zone. In this novel, Ballard depicts how ill- functioning systems that favor power over justice and fairness are bound to fail when put under the pressure of their own reality.

In these novels, both the author's intention is neither limited to deliver criticism of the societies of their fictional places but also concerned with contemporary regimes of power and control. Thus, societal disorder in these novels mirrors the instability of society's structures and symbolically conveys a message that unchecked aspirations and systematic injustice lead towards the collapse.

Therefore, both *High Rise* and *Lord of the Flies* evoke themselves out of a literary work and show the destructive result of practicing power over authority and the instability of human society. Analyzing these novel's theme side by side it can be suggested that these stories are not only fictional but also reflect the real incidents. All of these together push us to stand face to face with the misuse of authority, dangers of inequality, authoritarianism or abuse of power and compel us towards the strive for construction of systems where justice and accountability among others prevail for the common good.

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