The Apocalyptic Visions of J.G. Ballard: Surrealism, World War II, and Modern Technology

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how, throughout the four major phases of his literary career, J.G. Ballard's engagement with, and synthesis of, various twentieth century artistic and intellectual movements assisted Ballard in deciphering the twentieth century, while also enabling him to prophetically speculate on the future of the human condition. Ballard incorporated major symbols of the twentieth century into his work—television, cars, nuclear weapons, gated communities—as a means of decoding them, and he thus worked to uncover the latent patterns and effects of the modern technological landscape, envisioning various extreme end points for humanity. Throughout his body of work, Ballard warns the reader about the oncoming "death of affect" and about the various psychopathologies that may arise as a result of our interactions with modern technology and architecture.

After a brief opening chapter provides important context on Ballard's childhood and internment during the Second World War, the second chapter explores the intersection of Surrealism and psychoanalysis in Ballard's first tetralogy—*The Wind from Nowhere* (1962), *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1965), and *The Crystal World* (1966)—and will explain how these movements informed Ballard's reimagining of the science fiction genre. Though Surrealism and "inner space" remained strong components of Ballard's work, when Ballard shifted to deciphering the symbols and patterns of the modern world in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), *Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974), and *High-Rise* (1975), I argue that he began a literary conversation with Marshall McLuhan, who, like Ballard, warned about technology's ability to inflict pain and anxiety. Ballard's final tetralogy—*Cocaine Nights* (1996), *Super-Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003), and *Kingdom Come* (2006)—also appears largely indebted to McLuhan, investigating how technological environments can unknowingly shape

behaviour and render the individual somnambulistic and docile. It is also in his exploration of the nefarious uses of technology that Ballard predicted the rise in far-right politics that has gripped the first quarter of the twenty-first century. The final chapter, on Ballard's semi-autobiographical novels—*Empire of the Sun* (1984) and *The Kindness of Women* (1991)—will return to exploring Ballard's Surrealist impulse, while also elucidating how most, if not all, of the major themes and ideas in Ballard's novels are rooted in his childhood experiences during the Second World War.

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Abbreviations

J.G. Ballard:

*AE*       *The Atrocity Exhibition*

*C*       *Crash*

*CI*       *Concrete Island*

*CN*       *Cocaine Nights*

*CS*       *The Complete Stories of J.G. Ballard*

*CW*       *The Crystal World*

*D*       *The Drought*

*DC*       *The Day of Creation*

*DW*       *The Drowned World*

*EM*       *Extreme Metaphors: Collected Interviews*

*ES*       *Empire of the Sun*

*HA*       *Hello America*

*HR*       *High-Rise*

*KC*       *Kingdom Come*

*KW*       *The Kindness of Women*

*ML*       *Miracles of Life: Shanghai to Shepperton*

*MP*       *Millennium People*

*RP*       *Rushing to Paradise*

*RW*       *Running Wild*

*SC*       *Super-Cannes*

*UDC*       *The Unlimited Dream Company*

*UGM*     *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews*

*WFN*     *The Wind from Nowhere*


Marshall McLuhan:

*GG*      *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*

*MB*      *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*

*MM*      *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*

*TVP*     *Through the Vanishing Point: Space in Poetry and Painting*

*UN*      *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*

*WP*      *War and Peace in the Global Village*

Introduction

In this dissertation, I identify four major phases of J.G. Ballard's literary career—apocalyptic novels, modern disaster novels, closed-community novels, and semi-autobiographical novels—and investigate each of these phases by analyzing Ballard's literary conversations with various artists and writers such as Max Ernst, C.G. Jung, R.D. Laing, and Marshall McLuhan. I posit that Ballard's engagement with, and synthesis of, various twentieth century artistic, psychological, and theoretical movements—particularly Surrealism, psychoanalysis, and New Media studies—enabled him to prophetically speculate on the future of the human condition, warning the reader about the oncoming "death of affect" and about the various psychopathologies that may arise as a result of our interactions with modern technology and architecture. In addition, this dissertation will elucidate how Ballard incorporated what he saw as being major images of the twentieth century into his work—such as television, cars, planes, nuclear weapons, and gated communities—in an attempt at composing an unwritten history of the twentieth century, one focused on uncovering the latent patterns and effects of the modern technological landscape.

Ballard was a writer who constantly reinvented himself and experimented with different narrative styles, topics, and influences. Yet, despite his experimentation, Ballard viewed his work as being one large novel, with many threads weaving in and out of his entire oeuvre: "Presumably, all along one is writing the same book," Ballard said when explaining his writing process and how, for him, "[r]ecurrent ideas assemble themselves, obsessions solidify themselves, [and in turn] one generates a set of working mythologies" (*EM* 185). He later echoed this sentiment in an interview with Iain Sinclair. When Sinclair told Ballard that "I'm convinced all your work is one book," Ballard responded by saying: "Yes, of course it is" (369). For these

reasons, it is imperative to analyze Ballard's novels collectively and panoramically, encompassing each of his four major phases and showing how they are all interrelated, despite there also being significant differences between them. As such, for each phase of Ballard's literary career, I will introduce a set of influences—such as Surrealism and Jungian psychoanalysis in the second chapter, and Marshall McLuhan and R.D. Laing in the third chapter—and show how, in each of Ballard's phases, he blends the theories and percepts of such influences into his novels. In this regard, though each phase will be primarily analyzed through its own unique set of theoretical/ artistic lenses, I will also show how the other influences are still present, albeit more peripherally. Doing this will allow the reader to see how there is a gradation to Ballard's novels: various topics and influences weave in and out of each phase of his literary career, peaking at times and receding at others. For example, though Ballard's apocalyptic novels are the ones most intimately tied to Surrealism, Ballard's Surrealist influence is also present in later novels, such as *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Empire of the Sun*, though not as overtly.

The methodology for this project is multi-faceted. For two chapters, I will be primarily applying New Media and communications studies to Ballard's work, reading his novels in tandem with McLuhan's books. By doing close readings of both authors' texts, I will show how Ballard's novels are in conversation with key aspects of McLuhanian thought—the "massage" of technological effects, the resulting "discarnate man," the impact of invisible environments on human identity and cognition—and will explain how Ballard takes these ideas and often envisions their extreme end points. It is also through close readings of Ballard's apocalyptic novels that I will explain how he conceivably inserts his characters into various Surrealist paintings. In these novels, Ballard invokes specific artists and painters by name, and by extrapolating key phrases from these novels and comparing them to paintings such as Yves

Tanguy's *Jours de lenteur* (1937) and Max Ernst's *The Eye of Silence* (1943-44), I will

demonstrate the various ways in which Ballard linguistically recreates these paintings and uses

them as a way of externalizing the "inner space" of the characters.

Importantly, I will also be taking a phenomenological approach to help explain how most,

if not all, of the major themes and ideas in Ballard's novels are rooted in his childhood

experiences during the Second World War, when he and his family were placed in the Lunghua

Internment Camp in Shanghai. It is here that he saw the fragility of civilization and the "death of

affect" firsthand, explaining that

> The whole landscape out there had a tremendously powerful influence on me, as did the
>
> whole war experience. All the abandoned cities and towns and beach resorts that I keep
>
> returning to in my fiction were there in that huge landscape, the area just around our
>
> camp […] All of the images I keep using […] must have touched something in my mind.
>
> It was a very interesting zone psychologically, and it obviously had a big influence. (*EM*
>
> 82)

Due to the fact that Ballard, throughout his entire life, placed great emphasis on the way in which

his formative years in Shanghai influenced his interest in Surrealism, his decision to study

medicine, and his fiction writing, incorporating excerpts from Ballard's interviews and

autobiographical material will help to illuminate the historical and psychological background of

much of his oeuvre.

**The Critical Heritage**

To date, much of the critical scholarship on Ballard's work appeared well before his death

in 2009, experiencing a peak in the 1990s with the publication of Gregory Stephenson's *Out of*

*the Night and Into the Dream* (1991), Roger Luckhurst's *"The Angle Between Two Walls": The Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (1997), and Michel Delville's *J.G. Ballard* (1998). Due to the publication dates alone, however, these books are incomplete studies of Ballard's work, as they do not at all engage with his final tetralogy of novels. Academic interest in Ballard's work experienced another peak around the time of his death, with two collections of essays and two critical studies being published within a five year period, between 2008-2012. While the two critical studies, Jeannette Baxter's *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship* (2009) and Samuel Francis's *The Psychological Fictions of J.G. Ballard* (2011), are more complete in that they engage with most of Ballard's novels, they also take a more unidimensional approach in doing so, which is to say that these books are primarily focused on only one set of Ballard's influences, Surrealism and psychology, respectively. But, as explained above, since there are many themes, ideas, and patterns, that emerge and re-emerge throughout the entirety of Ballard's oeuvre, I maintain that his body of work should be considered in its totality, and should engage with the various artistic, psychological, and theoretical frameworks that he converses with throughout, in order to paint a more complete picture of his overall project: uncovering the latent effects of the technological landscape of the twentieth century.

Since Ballard often discussed the importance of Surrealism to his life and work, viewing Surrealist art as being akin to the images of war he had seen in Shanghai, much has already been said about how there is Surrealist streak to his fiction. For instance, though largely refraining from any specific discussion of Surrealism, even the earliest book-length studies of Ballard's work, David Pringle's *Earth is the Alien Planet: J.G. Ballard's Four-Dimensional Nightmare* (1979) and Peter Brigg's *J.G. Ballard* (1985), briefly mention how the setting of *The Drowned World* undoubtedly resembles the Surrealist art that Ballard admired (Pringle 9; Brigg 48).

Likewise, though Surrealism doesn't play a part in the main body of Stephenson's *Out of the Night and Into the Dream*, the conclusion of this book does begin to outline what I regard as being the most significant aspects of Ballard's application of Surrealism, explaining that his early novels are themselves a form of "pictorial surrealism" that represent "externalizations of inner, psychic states" (Stephenson 164).

To date, the most comprehensive analysis of Ballard's ties to Surrealism came in 2009 with the publication of Jeannette Baxter's *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination*. This book focuses on how Ballard uses Surrealism to "penetrate the sub-texts of the consumer landscape and to expose the network of unconscious energies and insidious psychologies at work within it" (Baxter 4), and how, in novels such as *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World*, Surrealism is used as a way of exploring the historical unconscious, thus "reassessing and rupturing the flat, homogenous and ideologically contrived surface of official narratives of post-war history and culture" (7). However, when discussing Ballard's first teratology, though Baxter notes the resemblance between the paintings that Ballard invokes and the landscapes that surround the characters, the landscapes themselves are not conceived of as being ekphrastic representations of the paintings, which is what the second chapter of this dissertation will aim to prove. I argue that, in his apocalyptic novels, Ballard places his characters into various Surrealist paintings by Max Ernst, Paul Delvaux, Yves Tanguy, and Arnold Böcklin. It is by navigating these surreal spaces, which are indicative of a blurring of inner and outer worlds, the characters undergo psychic journeys, culminating in Jungian individuation. Furthermore, since Baxter's book does not at all discuss *The Drought*, and omits mention of Ernst's *The Eye of Silence* (even though this painting was used as the cover for the first edition of *The Crystal World*), this dissertation will investigate such oversights and thus serve to fill in these gaps in the existing criticism.

In addition to Surrealism, Marshall McLuhan's ideas on the impact that modern media and technology can have on human identity and cognition play a major role in this dissertation, with two chapters focused on illuminating the connections between McLuhan's thought and Ballard's novels. Interestingly, though Ballard and McLuhan were contemporaries, and though Ballard mentions McLuhan in the foreword to the Danish edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, in the introduction to the French edition of *Crash*, and in multiple interviews, no scholarly work has thoroughly investigated this relationship. The most that the two are discussed in tandem comes in D. Harlan Wilson's *J.G. Ballard* (2017), in which Wilson discusses McLuhan's notion of new technologies being extensions of humans, externalizations of the human sensorium that, when interacted with, begin to reshape us (Wilson 9, 122). It is along these lines that Wilson claims that "reading Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* can be uncannily like reading an interpretation (or 'extension') of *Atrocity*—and vice versa" (72). He also uses the term "McLuhanesque" to describe the story "Zodiac 2000" and the character David Cruise in *Kingdom Come* (42, 156).

However, as is the case in Wilson's book, whenever McLuhan's name is mentioned alongside Ballard's work, it is only ever briefly, and there is not any sort of sustained analysis of the interconnectedness of their thought. For instance, Luckhurst briefly mentions McLuhan on two occasions in *"The Angle Between Two Walls"* when analyzing *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*, noting that McLuhan believed that experimental art could help predict, and help one to prepare for, the oncoming psychic changes in the technological age (Luckhurst 97, 124). Samuel Francis discusses McLuhan for a single paragraph in *The Psychological Fictions of J.G. Ballard*, explaining that McLuhan viewed the electronic world as being an extension of the human nervous system—in the modern world, the two have become connected to such an extent that

one can do nothing but actively participate in it. Francis then uses this idea to explain why Traven in *The Atrocity Exhibition* may be experiencing such severe anxiety, frantically conducting experiments and trying to understand the world around him (Francis 97).

Any other mention of McLuhan in relation to Ballard's work is by and large even more minimal than this, mainly passing comments that refrain from sustained analysis,[1] and which always revolve around *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*, but not novels such as *Cocaine Nights* (1996) and *Super-Cannes* (2000), despite McLuhan's perceptions being just as relevant to those novels. As such, though the connection between the two has been acknowledged, nobody has thoroughly investigated how Ballard's novels can be understood as reimagining McLuhan's work. As will be discussed in more detail shortly, both writers shared many hesitancies about the future of technology, the numbing of the human sensorium in the modern age, the way in which media and architecture can shape behaviour, and how violence may be the expected response when one feels threatened by such overwhelming change. Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation will detail Ballard and McLuhan's take on such topics, explaining how Ballard extends McLuhanian thought so as to further alert the reader to the various psychological and behavioural changes that may result from our interaction with modern media, technology, and architecture.

To supplement my readings of Ballard's novels, I will also be incorporating material gathered from the Ballard archives at the British Library. Most significantly, I will draw upon Robert O. Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2004), a book that Ballard had been reading and

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[1] For instance, in *J.G. Ballard's Politics*, Florian Cord briefly notes, in a single sentence, how some phrases in Ballard's *Crash* recall McLuhan's "famous notion of technologies as 'extensions of man'" (Cord 57). Likewise, in *Mythic Thinking in Twentieth-Century Britain* (2013), which includes a chapter on Ballard and the New Wave science fiction movement, Matthew Sterenberg notes how Ballard references McLuhan in the introduction to the French edition of *Crash* (Sterenberg 113). This line of inquiry, however, ends at this point, with Sterenberg seeing Freud as being more applicable to Ballard's work than McLuhan.

making notes on when working on his final novel, *Kingdom Come* (2006). Though the notes that

Ballard made on Paxton's book can be found in his archives alongside related draft material for

*Kingdom Come*, mention of Paxton and *The Anatomy of Fascism* is extremely scarce in the

existing criticism on Ballard, with even Florian Cord's *J.G. Ballard's Politics: Late Capitalism,*

*Power, and the Pataphysics of Resistance* (2017), a book that is primarily focused on the political

aspects of Ballard's work, neglecting to mention this connection. David Ian Paddy's *The Empires*

*of J.G. Ballard: An Imagined Geography* (2015) is the only book that discusses Ballard's interest

in *The Anatomy of Fascism*, explaining that Ballard drew upon ideas from Paxton's book when

formulating the premise for *Kingdom Come* (Paddy 328-329). However, Paddy only quotes from

Paxton's book and not from Ballard's notes on it. The section on *Kingdom Come* in this

dissertation will thus work to provide new insight into Ballard's writing process, showing how he

specifically reworked many of Paxton's ideas on fascism in order to hypothesize about the future

of consumer culture and elucidate the inherent connections he saw between consumerism and

fascism.


**Ballard and Surrealism: A Blurring of Inner and Outer Space**

The Surrealist movement began in the early 1920s as an extension of Dada, and some of

the writers and artists associated with both movements had served in various capacities during

the First World War. As such, Dada—which was established in Zurich by preeminent figures

Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara, and soon after in New York by Francis Picabia and Marcel

Duchamp—"partially saw itself as re-enacting the psychic upheaval caused by the First World

War" (Hopkins 1). When Picabia and Duchamp returned to Paris in 1919, which was the same

year that Tzara first visited, they collectively brought Dada with them and in turn "quickly

elicited the admiration of a group of young Parisian poets grouped around the journal

*Littérature*" (14). Like the Dadaists, this group—which consisted of André Breton, Paul Éluard,

Louis Aragon, Phillippe Soupault, and Benjamin Péret—had also been profoundly impacted by

their experiences during the First World War. As explained by Maurice Nadeau in *The History of*

*Surrealism*:

> They had fought in it by obligation and under constraint. They emerged from it disgusted;
>
> henceforth they wanted nothing in common with a civilization that had lost its
>
> justification, and their radical nihilism extended not only to art but to all its
>
> manifestations. For the society which had sent them so gaily to death was waiting for
>
> them on their return, if they managed to escape, with its laws, its morality, its religions.
>
> (Nadeau 45)

Though initially infatuated with Dada, Breton believed that the movement needed to be less

concerned with outcry and more concerned with action, and as a result he decided to start a new

movement, thus becoming the de facto leader of the Surrealists.

Surrealism, as conceived of by Breton, was revolutionary in intent, and its members

believed that if one could cleanse the doors of perception, then the mind could be liberated, and

if society as a whole adopted a similar shift in perception and ideas, then it, too, could be

transformed. As outlined by Breton in his first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), this shift in

perception is based upon the convergence of juxtaposed states, images, and/or realities: "I

believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so

contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*, if one may so speak" (Breton 14). As

Mary Ann Caws further explains, "[t]o shake off the fetters of the rational in the thinking

individual – permitting the imagination to take its free course – was to undercut the terms of the conventional, to find what lay beneath the veneer of an over-sophisticated society" (Caws 21).

In its early stages, Surrealism was a literary movement largely focused on automatic writing as a way of tapping into (and freeing) the unconscious and discovering the "marvellous," but "[as] the 1920s progressed, visual artists, particularly painters, increasingly came into its orbit" (Hopkins 18). Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, André Masson, Joan Miró, and Salvador Dalí were some of the early painters associated with the Surrealist movement, and by the late 1920s and early 1930s, a collaboration between Dalí and Luis Buñuel resulted in the production of two highly influential Surrealist films: *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or* (18). When Surrealism eventually reached the United Kingdom, it was mostly limited to visual art—and to a lesser extent poetry—such as that by Unit One artists Paul Nash and John Melville in the early 1930s. Still, although "a number of [British] artists were turning towards the Parisian scene" dominated by the Surrealists (Remy 81), it wasn't until after the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition in London that a more noticeable Surrealist movement formed in the UK.

At this exhibition, Breton and Éluard were in attendance and, while Sheila Legge walked around the crowd dressed as a "surrealist phantom," Breton used his opening remarks to declare "that a revolution in the relationships between perception and representation was taking place 'around the visitors'" (Remy 76). Surrealist objects and paintings were displayed, *Un Chien Andalou* was screened, and Dalí delivered an infamous lecture while wearing a diving suit, a moment that Ballard references in his "Which Way to Inner Space?" essay. There was also a poetry reading in which Éluard read an assortment of poems by himself and his contemporaries, as well as by Surrealist forerunners such as Lautréamont, Alfred Jarry, Charles Baudelaire, and Arthur Rimbaud. The British poets David Gascoyne, Humphrey Jennings, and George Reavey

then read poems of their own, as well as translations of the French Surrealists' work (Remy 77-78). Largely due this exhibition, Surrealist visual art went on to become fairly well-established in the United Kingdom, with artists such as Paul Nash, Merlyn Evans, Cecil Collins, John Selby Bigge, Edward Burra, Grace Pailthorpe, and Reuben Mednikoff at the forefront of this loosely connected British Surrealist movement. Interestingly, however, Surrealist writing did not experience the same sort of attention or success.

Though there were, of course, many twentieth century British writers who incorporated elements of Surrealism into their work—such as Anna Kavan, Ann Quin, and Alan Burns—and though Lewis Carroll was a major influence of the Surrealists, it is difficult to pin down any British prose writers that were as influenced by Surrealism as Ballard (albeit he was influenced by its visual art, not its writing). Like the Dadaists and Surrealists before him, Ballard had experienced a "psychic upheaval" as a result of his experiences during the Second World War, and it is perhaps because of this that he found refuge in Surrealist art:

> I felt an instant recognition— Dali in particular, Max Ernst: oh, this was *home*. I understood all these landscapes completely. I never had any doubt that this was my imagination; these paintings were like newsreels of the inside of my head. I thought that these were the *real* landscapes of the 20th century; and of course they were rather similar in some respects to the landscapes I'd known in the Far East during the war.
>
> (*Conversations* 165)

Ballard later echoed this notion during a 1988 Q&A, explaining that he "set about as a Science-Fiction writer using the techniques of Surrealism to remake contemporary Western Europe (and the United States, by proxy) into something consonant with the landscapes of wartime Shanghai" (279).

It is evident through statements such as these that Ballard saw science fiction and Surrealism as being akin to each other,[2] and his fiction very much works to fuse the two together, imbuing SF tropes with a Surrealist streak as a way of reimagining the genre, while also allowing him to confront "the war experiences that [he] went through, but in disguised form" (*EM* 226). Ballard explicitly draws attention to his Surrealist influence in many of his stories and novels by naming characters after Surrealist writers and artists—such as Louise Peret and Aragon in *The Crystal World*, and Leonora Chanel in "The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral D"[3]—and he had even experimented with making Surrealist collages, known as *Project For a New Novel*, which will be returned to in the third chapter when discussing *The Atrocity Exhibition*. As Ballard explained in his autobiography, *Miracles of Life: Shanghai to Shepperton* (2008): "The surrealist painters were deeply inspiring, but there was no easy way to translate the visually surreal into prose, or prose that was readable […] This created problems that would take me a good many years to solve" (*ML* 150). Ballard did, however, eventually solve these problems, and in *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*, he superimposes various Surrealist paintings onto the apocalyptic landscapes in which the characters find themselves, blurring together inner and outer space so as to create a new type of space entirely, a surreality into which the characters enter and undergo psychic journeys. And in novels such as *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*, Ballard translates the visually surreal into prose by connecting Surrealism to the modern technological landscape, which he sees as being a Surrealist space itself, full of shocking

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[2] Indeed, Ballard claimed that "there are two movements which have really dominated the imagination of the 20th century. One is Science Fiction. The other is Surrealism. Curiously, both have been produced by a fairly small number of practitioners. Very few in the case of Surrealism, but not many more in the case of Science Fiction" (*Quotes* 116).

[3] Referring to Benjamin Péret, Louis Aragon, and Leonora Carrington, respectively.

juxtapositions, continuously blurring the lines between reality and fantasy, violence and entertainment, flesh and metal.

**Ballard and McLuhan: Reading the Technological World**

Born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in 1911, Marshall McLuhan was nearly twenty years older than Ballard, and was a figure largely misunderstood during his lifetime. One of the most common misconceptions of McLuhan—one that Ballard himself seemed to believe, as evident by his mention of McLuhan in the foreword to the Danish edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition*—is that he was in great favour of the changes being brought about by the technological age. This belief may have arisen because of the way in which McLuhan presented himself and his observations, refusing to "ascribe any moral or value dimensions to [them] at all—he simply kept on pointing out the effects of new media on the individual" (Coupland 142). This is the practice and technique of suspended judgement. However, contrary to his enthusiastic "pop philosopher" public persona, McLuhan had many hesitations regarding the modern technological world, and he often warned that the new environments created by media and technology carry with them the potential to inflict pain and anxiety. Therefore, though playful in delivery with his use of probes and puns, McLuhan's intent was serious: his books are largely attempts at provoking the reader into becoming aware of the effects produced by the "highly interactive" new media, that which differs dramatically from the more passively experienced "old media" (Logan 6). As with Ballard, who in an interview with Travis Elborough referred to himself as "[a]n investigator and a sort of early warning system" ("An Investigative Spirit" 252), McLuhan's work can also be considered as cautionary, and he even created the *DEW-Line*

(Distant Early Warning Line) newsletter in 1968 to alert "subscribers to the cultural impact of the electronic age" (Gordon 232).

Though often labelled a theorist, McLuhan himself resisted such a phrase, and he even once regarded his texts as being Surrealist rather than theoretical. As stated in a letter to Willian Kuhns: "I have no *theories* whatever about anything. I make observations by way of discovering contours, lines of force, and pressures […] My canvasses are surrealist, and to call them 'theories' is to miss my satirical intent altogether" (*Letters* 448). McLuhan upheld percept over concept, observation over theory, and, in line with this, the insights he made on media and technology are rooted in art, literature, and rhetoric. McLuhan completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge by writing a dissertation on Thomas Nashe and the English Renaissance, in which he "offer[s] a deep analysis of the liberal arts of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectics)" (Lamberti 11), and he often cited various artists and writers in his books, such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Edgar Allan Poe, Wyndham Lewis, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot. McLuhan relied on his background in the arts to help him read and decipher the new "book" of the electronic age, that which has enveloped the old "Book of Nature" (Powe 7), and he encouraged his readers to "adopt the attitude of the artist" in order to prevent them from becoming "passive victims" on the new technological frontier (Kroker 58). As W. Terrence Gordon notes, to McLuhan, "[u]nderstanding technology was indispensable to the training of artistic sensibilities" and "the perceptions of artists were equally indispensable in understanding technology" (Gordon 152). For this reason, it is no surprise that McLuhan often invoked writers and painters in his work, and lifted ideas from literature to help explain his observations.

In his reading of the modern technological world, one writer that McLuhan paid homage to was Stéphane Mallarmé, whose importance McLuhan explained in a letter to Harold Innis:

> Mallarmé saw the modern press as a magical institution born of technology. The discontinuous juxtaposition of unrelated items made necessary by the influx of news stories from every quarter of the world, created, he saw, a symbolic landscape of great power and importance. (*Letters* 221)

As Elena Lamberti explains, "[a] book is a system of signs and symbols carefully arranged" (Lamberti 11), and McLuhan took it upon himself to read and decipher the latent signs and symbols of the modern "symbolic landscape" that Mallarmé had identified, a task that Ballard later took up in books such as *The Atrocity Exhibition*. To help him accomplish this, McLuhan turned to the works and literary techniques of other artists, such as those listed above, and placed particular emphasis on the importance of early Modernist and avant-garde figures, believing that it was the "task of the avant-garde to rouse the sleeping patient and make him or her aware of the table upon which he or she sleeps" (Betts 25).[4] One of the most significant influences on McLuhan was the work of Wyndham Lewis, who left England during the Second World War— when his reputation and finances were in decline due to his initial support of Nazism—and relocated to Windsor, Ontario. It was in Windsor that McLuhan sought out Lewis, attending a series of lectures that Lewis gave at Assumption College in 1943 "on the importance of North American cultural energy," lectures that Lewis later turned into the book *America and Cosmic Man* (Betts et al. xv). McLuhan and Lewis struck up a friendship: Lewis briefly relocated to St. Louis, where McLuhan was teaching at the time, and McLuhan later wrote *Counterblast* (1969), a book that replicated the typographical layout of Lewis's influential Vorticist magazine, *Blast*.

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[4] As mentioned, one of these figures was James Joyce, whose *Finnegans Wake* McLuhan saw as representing "the twentieth-century fall of man from grace into a world in which a heathy mental ecosystem is utterly changed in a harmful way by the advent of electronic media and a disruption of the balance of senses used in daily life" (Coupland 130). Consistent with this, various quotations and the "thunders" from *Finnegans Wake* run through McLuhan's *War and Peace in the Global Village*, with McLuhan arguing that the various thunder sounds in Joyce's novel represent how the various phases of humankind coincide with new technological developments, from speech and clothing, to the printing press, movies, cars, and television.

As Douglas Coupland explains, it was Lewis's artistic influence that gave McLuhan "the notion of being master of the vortex of change—the maelstrom of modernization—rather than being sucked in by it" (Coupland 115). Shortly after they met, McLuhan wrote an unpublished book called *The New American Vortex*, circa 1946, in which he outlined, and aligned himself with, "the possibility of a new North American avant-garde movement that would build from the pioneering efforts of England's rather truncated and tempestuous vorticists," of which Lewis was the leader (Betts 21). McLuhan often used the image of the sleepwalker, or somnambulant, to describe the condition of modern people, hypnotized and numbed by the effects of the technological landscape to the point that they are unaware of it and its influence on them. McLuhan did, however, also importantly believe that the latent effects of modern media and technology could be made visible through experimental art, stating:

> I have found that to consider art as an anti-environment or as a means of perceiving the hidden dimension of the environment, is exceedingly useful. Instead of explaining to people that art is something to be taken seriously because of some inherent superior quality, it makes more sense to point out that art has an indispensable function in cognition, and that men without art strongly tend to be automata, or somnambulists, imprisoned in a dream. (*Letters* 333)

As such, McLuhan references Lewis's image of the vortex at the beginning of his first published book, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (1951), using it as an image that represents humanity's place in the modern technological world, a place which one can either escape from or drown in.

Ballard was familiar with McLuhan, mentioning him in both introductions and interviews, but, as mentioned above, it is also true that Ballard's perception of McLuhan was a

bit misguided, as he seemed to believe, like many of McLuhan's critics, that McLuhan was largely in favour of the proliferation of media and technology, and the changes that such advancements bring about. However, in analyzing their work, it is clear that the two shared much in common, and that their ideas about the modern technological world are much more akin to each other than Ballard had thought. For instance, in *The Mechanical Bride*, McLuhan uses Edgar Allen Poe's story "A Descent into the Maelstrom" in order to depict life in the electronic age: a vortex of effects that the individual is unknowingly trapped in, and thus unable escape from. Ballard adopts a similar image in *The Atrocity Exhibition* to convey this same idea, constructing his novel as an "image maze," one that represents the bombardment of stimuli forced upon the individual in the modern world, and which the protagonist, Traven, is lost in but trying to understand through a series of experiments. In this regard, both McLuhan's and Ballard's work can be understood as creating anti-environments, a term used by McLuhan to describe different ways that one can train their perception so as to become aware of the environment they are in, attuned to its unconscious effects and the threats it poses.

The notion that one can be hypnotized and rendered somnambulistic by the effects of the modern technological world is not only applicable to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, but also to *Crash*, *Concrete Island*, and Ballard's final tetralogy: *Cocaine Nights*, *Super-Cannes*, *Millennium People*, and *Kingdom Come*. In all of these novels, the characters have, in one way or another, been numbed by the world around them, and they thus find themselves in need of an awakening, by any means possible. McLuhan believed that when "one has been hurt by new technology," one may lash back in a violent manner, "in a fury of self-defense" aimed at preserving their identity, their old self (*WP* 97). However, if one is unconscious of the true source of their pain, then their violent responses may be directed at a different source, i.e. other humans. In Ballard's

modern disaster and closed-community novels, it is often through violent means that the characters achieve a sense of awakening, or stimulate their dulled sensorium. Both Ballard and McLuhan understood that modern media, technology, and architecture have the potential to shape one's behaviour and inflict pain: McLuhan believed that we are on a new frontier and that adaptation to this new world will inevitably occur, whether we are conscious of it or not, and Ballard believed that this sort of unconscious adaptation was a primary cause of the "death of affect." As he explained: "There is a sort of built-in deadening of human feeling that is inseparable from the sort of lives we've opted for in the late twentieth century" (*EM* 251). Though both gave stern warnings, they also both believed that a breakdown—whether of self or external world—could lead to a breakthrough in consciousness, and that if this happens we could begin to truly see and understand the invisible environment in which we live.

Importantly, both Ballard and McLuhan believed that experimental art could be used as a vehicle to spur on such an awakening, and their literary conversations can even be traced back to the "This is Tomorrow" art exhibition held in London in 1956, which is considered by many as representing the birth of Pop Art. The art displayed at "This is Tomorrow" was predominantly done by a collective called the Independent Group (IG), "whose one unifying conviction was that all visual communication demanded the same degree of scrutiny as that awarded to 'high' art," a notion that was "partly inherited from Marshall McLuhan's *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (1951), a subject of discussion at early IG meetings" (Ferris 126). Ballard had actually attended this exhibition and was amazed to see his own "experience of the real world being commented upon, played back to [him] with all kinds of ironic gestures" (*EM* 43). Interestingly, the way in which the Independent Group's art forced its viewers to confront popular images of the time—advertisements, billboards, films, cars, and other consumer goods—

is also a feature of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, which itself depicts various art exhibitions and film festivals, and which Ballard saturates with similar images of the present as a way of representing the media landscape (or mediascape) in literary form.[5]

Furthermore, the Independent Group, Ballard, and McLuhan not only believed in the importance of experimental art, but also of science fiction. Regarding the latter, the Independent Group lauded science fiction as being one of the only genres that was investigating modern technology, and for Ballard SF became "a response to science and technology as perceived by the inhabitants of the consumer goods society," which consequently made it the genre best suited to analyze the contemporary world (Ballard quoted in Bukatman 42). As for McLuhan, he agreed that "[s]cience-fiction writing today presents situations that enable us to perceive the potential of new technologies" (*MM* 124), and he even referred to his first book, *The Mechanical Bride*, as being a new kind of science fiction, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.[6] Interestingly, McLuhan's work, like that of the Independent Group and Ballard, can also be conceived of as operating within the traditions of the avant-garde, as he was influenced by many avant-garde writers and artists, and even had one of his essays published in a book called *Astronauts of Inner Space: An International Collection of Avant-Garde Activity*.

## An Overview of Ballard's Four Major Phases

The first chapter of this dissertation will situate Ballard's work within three key contexts, one historical and two intellectual: the Second World War, New Wave science fiction, and

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[5] Ballard also referred to some of his stories, his plastic surgery pieces—"Princess Margaret's Face Lift" and "Mae West's Reduction Mammoplasty"—as being similar to Pop Art, adding that he would have liked "to write a novel the way Warhol does a pop painting" ("The JG Ballard *Repsychling* Interview" 33).

[6] McLuhan also said that "We live science fiction. The bomb is our environment" ("Notes on Burroughs" 90), which is similar to Ballard's claim that "we're living inside a science fiction novel" (*EM* 234).

Surrealism. As I noted earlier, Ballard was a post-war writer, one who experienced the trauma of the Second World War first-hand, and he often credited his childhood experiences as having had a profound impact on his life and writing. Even prior to the Second World War, Japan had invaded China during the Second Sino-Japanese War, and thus violence and destruction already surrounded the International Settlement in Shanghai in which Ballard and his family lived. As the Second World War then drew closer and as the violence increased, Ballard also witnessed the different ways in which new media and technology were being harnessed for the purposes of warfare and propaganda, listening to radio broadcasts of the war with his father, and watching newsreels that were projected onto the sides of buildings, all while the German and Italian communities in Shanghai listened to Nazi radio broadcasts (*ML* 37-38).

When Ballard and his family were later placed in the Lunghua Internment Camp, Ballard experienced the hardships of war and the fragility of civilization in a much more intimate manner, as food shortages and disease were common, and, in the later stages of the war, rumours swirled that the internees were set to be executed. Ballard's experience in Lunghua thus completed his early exposure to the marriage between media, technology, violence, and destruction in the modern world, and in many ways he devoted his entire literary career to exploring this relationship and its consequences. As one critic notes, it was during Ballard's early years in Shanghai that he "came face to face with the apocalyptic nature of the twentieth century," and this notion is reflected in nearly all of his novels (Sterenberg 109-110).

Prior to his success as a novelist, Ballard gained recognition as a short story writer associated with the British New Wave science fiction movement in the 1960s, a movement that aimed to experimentally reimagine the SF genre. This New Wave writing that Ballard helped to pioneer purposefully turned away from the conventions of the Golden Age science fiction that

was popular at the time, and instead focused on imbuing the genre with "a highbrow, avant-garde sensibility" (Sterenberg 99). As Ballard explained in his essay, "Which Way to Inner Space?" (1962):

> Too often recently, when I've wanted to stimulate my imagination, I've found myself turning to music or painting rather than to science fiction, and surely this is the chief thing wrong with it at present. To attract a critical readership science fiction needs to alter completely its present content and approach. (*UGM* 196)

In this essay, Ballard proposed that to remedy the outdated plots and themes of SF, writers would need to turn away from stories of interstellar travel and outer space, and instead interiorize the genre, thus focusing on what he termed "inner space." Ballard believed that SF would have to emphasize "the biological sciences" over "the physical sciences" if it wanted to remain "the literature of tomorrow" (197-198).

One of the primary ways that Ballard achieved this interiorization of the genre was by connecting his concept of "inner space" to Surrealism, and this, in some ways, makes him a torchbearer for Surrealist literature in the United Kingdom (especially considering the fact that he had a much greater cultural impact than any of the other British writers that incorporated Surrealism into their work). As such, the second chapter of this dissertation will focus on Ballard's first tetralogy of novels—*The Wind from Nowhere* (1962), *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1965), and *The Crystal World* (1966)—all of which are set in apocalyptic landscapes and which incorporate Surrealist elements in order to linguistically represent the blurring of inner and outer space. Most significant to this chapter are the landscapes described in the latter three of these novels, all of which deeply resemble various Surrealist paintings, such as Max Ernst's *Forest and Sun* (1927) and *The Eye of Silence* (1943-44), Paul Delvaux's *The*

*Worried City* (1941), and Arnold Böcklin's Symbolist painting *Island of the Dead* (1880, first version). In these novels, Ballard references all of the aforementioned artists, and he uses moments of ekphrasis in order to transform the apocalyptic landscapes into Surrealist spaces, spaces that blur inner and outer worlds, and which in turn lead the protagonists on journeys towards psychic fulfillment.

In these novels, internal and external worlds are not separate; they are intimately connected, and thus the breakdown in the protagonists' geophysical surroundings coincides with a mental apocalypse in which they begin to see anew. Therefore, despite the dire external conditions that threaten their physical lives, Ballard's characters learn to embrace their respective apocalyptic worlds, as doing so allows them to explore some inner logics and impulses that had previously been ignored. In this sense, my analysis will also be informed by Jungian psychoanalysis, particularly Jung's concept of the "shadow," the dark side of the psyche that Ballard's protagonists must confront and incorporate in order to complete their psychic journeys. Importantly, since inner and outer worlds have overlapped, the shadow is manifested in the external world, usually in the form of another character who in some way threatens to impede the protagonist's journey. It is only by confronting and resisting the logic of their shadow selves that the protagonists complete the process of Jungian individuation and reach a point of illumination, regardless of the fact that this process may culminate in their physical deaths.

Along with the turn to inner space outlined above, in the mid-1960s Ballard also started to experiment with science fiction by inserting dominant signs, symbols, and images of the present into his stories—advertisements, billboards, cars, Ronald Reagan, Elizabeth Taylor— which was an attempt to represent the saturation of images in the modern world that bombards and overloads the human sensorium. Importantly, it was specifically following the sudden death

of his wife in 1964 that his writing became more radical and experimental, as he began trying to decipher the modern world as a way of finding potential answers:

> I was trying to construct an imaginative logic that made sense of Mary's death and would prove that the assassination of President Kennedy and the countless deaths of the Second World War had been worthwhile or even meaningful in some as yet undiscovered way. Then, perhaps, the ghosts inside my head […] the strangled Chinese at the railway station, Kennedy and my young wife, could be laid to rest. (*ML* 207)

From these ghosts came the second phase of Ballard's literary career: his modern disaster novels. Ballard was conscious of the exponential growth of technology, and he understood that all technological and scientific "advancements" carry with them the potential for ever-increasing acts of destruction (the Second World War proved this to him). Consequently, Ballard believed that modern media operates to recreate these acts of violence and destruction on repeat, as was done with the constant replaying of the Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination, "an event that was sensationalized by the new medium of television" (*ML* 207). Ballard believed that this cycle was like a feedback loop: acts of violence occur, they are repeated by new media, and this repetition stimulates violent impulses within the human psyche, in turn making us more violent.

As such, the third chapter of this dissertation will primarily trace the literary connections between Ballard's modern disaster tetralogy—*The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), *Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974), and *High-Rise* (1975)—and the percepts of Marshall McLuhan, conceptualizing Ballard's modern disaster novels as reflecting some of McLuhan's most prophetic observations regarding the impact of media and technology on human identity and cognition, much of which was explained in the previous section. In his modern disaster novels, Ballard shifts his attention from the apocalyptic future to the present, envisioning the ways in

which modern technology and architecture may be "massaging" humans into new forms of being. Hazed by the effects of the maelstrom of modernization, the characters are rendered somnambulistic, unaware of the effects of the world in which they live, just as McLuhan had warned about. As such, the various psychopathologies that Ballard explores in these novels can be considered ways of producing some sort of *feeling* in an otherwise affectless world, where all interpersonal relationships have, in one way or another, become mediated by technology.

Though these novels mark a dramatic shift away from his first tetralogy, I posit that Ballard still retains a Surrealist impulse in them by blurring together various contraries. By merging together inner and outer worlds, the natural and the artificial, eroticism and violence, Ballard alludes to the fact that as technology continues to develop, the world around us becomes increasingly surreal (as it becomes ever more difficult to distinguish between said contraries). This is why, for instance, when the characters in *Crash* touch the scars on their bodies, they no longer feel flesh but instead the parts of the automobile that caused the wounds, thus depicting what McLuhan referred to in *The Mechanical Bride* as an "interfusion of sex and technology" (*MB* 84). The analysis in this chapter will also be informed by the theories of Sigmund Freud, R.D. Laing, Michel Foucault, and Erich Fromm, all of whom—like Ballard and McLuhan— wrote about the various tensions that exist between the individual and their surrounding environment, and who believed that investigating the outer world is necessary in order to find answers regarding one's (often conditioned) behaviour.

Ballard returns to a similar line of inquiry in his final tetralogy but primarily focuses on modern architecture and the new forms of "human" that are being incubated within closed or isolated societies, such as upper-class gated communities, private resorts, and high-tech business parks. In the novels *Cocaine Nights* (1996), *Super-Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003),

and *Kingdom Come* (2006), Ballard attempts to uncover various physical and subliminal components of these new environments, exploring how a combination of architecture, technology, surveillance, and consumerism may induce a state of widespread "sensory deprivation" and somnambulism. As such, the fourth chapter of this dissertation will continue to investigate the many connections between Ballard and McLuhan, highlighting the ways in which Ballard depicts the impact of "invisible environments created by technological innovation" (*WP* 97), environments that both Ballard and McLuhan believed unconsciously alter human cognition, likely for the worse. McLuhan referred to the new technological landscape as being a new frontier, and he said that, in addition to the identity loss that results from adapting to it, this new frontier would come with new forms of "psychic diseases" (*Letters* 490). Likewise, in his closed community novels, Ballard once again explores the various psychopathologies that may arise as society becomes ever more panoptic and docile.

Similar to in his modern disaster novels, the characters in Ballard's final four novels are affectless and somnambulistic, and they in turn resort to psychopathological behaviour in order to be roused, awakened. These characters have fallen victim to spiritual malaise—or a "brain death," as it's called in *Cocaine Nights*—that is pervading their respective communities, and they thus turn to willed madness (or elective psychopathy) and meaningless acts of violence in order jolt their central nervous systems and experience some sort of feeling. In this sense, psychopathy is depicted as being a potential form of therapy—explicitly so in *Super-Cannes*, where the resident psychiatrist, Wilder Penrose, begins dosing his patients with acts of violence and dehumanization. However, as Ballard explores, the more panoptic a society becomes, and the more docile the public is rendered, the easier it is for them to be exploited, their behaviour conditioned and controlled. In these novels, then, the sense of freedom that the characters

experience when engaging in such psychopathological acts is illusory, as their behaviour has been induced by external forces. Ballard thus uses his novels as grounds for psychological experimentation, testing what really excites humans, what our latent desires are, and how easily we can be controlled. When analyzing *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come*, in particular, I will also highlight the pessimistic shift that occurred in Ballard's writing post-9/11. In these novels, Ballard combines his interest in closed society settings and politics in order to comment on the futility of revolution and, prophetically, on the rising wave of fascism.

The fifth and final chapter will primarily focus on Ballard's two semi-autobiographical novels, *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and *The Kindness of Women* (1991), both of which act as fictional renderings of Ballard's life, detailing the protagonist Jim Ballard's childhood in Shanghai, his experiences during the Second World War, and the trauma that follows him to England and into adulthood. At this point in his career, many critics viewed Ballard as having turned into a more "serious" writer due to his perceived shift away from the science fiction genre; however, as I explore in this chapter, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* have much in common with Ballard's earlier novels, and are in conversation with them in many ways. As Ballard himself said about *Empire of the Sun*: "I've always wanted to write a book about my China background, and there was only one way to write it: as a sort of fictionalized autobiography. It really isn't all that different from most of my other writing; it's just that my other fiction doesn't have *the reassurance of the familiar*" (*Conversations* 138). In these two novels, Ballard's Surrealist impulse is still evident, as he blurs together fiction and autobiography, inner and outer worlds, past and present, and prioritizes psychological truth over historical truth. In this phase, however, the purpose of doing so changes, allowing for Ballard to, in his mind, most accurately capture the emotional and psychological effects of war and trauma.

This chapter will end with a discussion of a novel that Ballard was planning towards the end of his life, referred to in his notes as "War V US." Doing this will help to show how war—whether physical or psychic—was a central topic of Ballard's entire literary career, and how even at the very end of his life, when he was becoming too ill to write, he was thinking about the consequences of war.

Ballard's stand-alone novels—*The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979), *Hello America* (1981), *The Day of Creation* (1987), and *Rushing to Paradise* (1994)—which are those that don't fit in cohesively with the four phases outlined above, will be analyzed individually in "interlude" chapters. These shorter chapters will be situated in between the main chapters and will aim to show how these novels both converge with, and diverge from, Ballard's major phases. For instance, the section on *Hello America* will explain how, though set in a post-apocalyptic landscape similar to those seen in Ballard's first tetralogy, Ballard uses the setting as a way of engaging with the contemporary issues of climate change and nuclear power, partially inspired by various articles he had been reading in *New Scientist*, which can be found in the Ballard archives at the British Library. Further, the section on *The Unlimited Dream Company* will propose that the novel should be read in relation to Laing's theories on schizophrenia. Rather than debating whether or not the protagonist, Blake, survives his plane crash, I will argue that he may in fact be experiencing a schizophrenic episode, characterized by messianic delusions and the perceived split between his mind and body, thus resembling what Laing describes in *The Divided Self*.

Though the focus of my dissertation is on Ballard's novels, I will also be reading them alongside his short stories, which is where he experimented with many ideas that would later be turned into novels. Even the setting of Ballard's first published science fiction story, "Prima

Belladonna" (1956), which is set in a fictional resort called Vermilion Sands, deeply resembles the locations depicted in some of his final novels, particularly *Cocaine Nights*, and the story is also indicative of how his interest in Surrealism was evident from the very beginning of his literary career. Selectively choosing short stories to analyze in conjunction with his novels will help to show how Ballard's writing developed as he experimented with both form and content, and will thus provide a glimpse into the mind of the author at work, testing settings, characters, themes, and narrative techniques. This dissertation will begin with a discussion of Ballard's early life to help elucidate the important role it played in shaping many of the recurring themes and ideas that his work revolves around.

Chapter One: Shanghai, World War II, and Ballard's Early Fiction

James Graham Ballard was born on November 15, 1930, in Shanghai, China during a particularly volatile period in human history. The first half of the twentieth century saw an explosion of technological inventions and innovations that changed the way people lived, communicated, and accessed information—such as automobiles, airplanes, and radio as a communications medium—but these technological advancements were also utilized in the two World Wars for destructive purposes. Ballard, having been born in between these wars, arrived in a world that had violence and atrocity in the recent past and near future. The Nazi propaganda machine was already churning,[7] and in Shanghai there were constant street fights between the Communists and the Kuomintang forces, along with "terrorist bombings" that were "barely audible […] against the background music of endless nightclubbing, daredevil air shows and ruthless money-making" (*ML* 5). In this opening chapter, I will be taking a phenomenological approach to trace the development of Ballard's thought leading up to his early short stories and first novel. Through the use of interviews and memoirs, I will explain how Ballard came to find deep connections between war, Surrealism, and science fiction/ technology, and how he in turn developed a type of writing that attempted to synthesize them together. All of Ballard's writing can be understood through this synthesis, and taking a phenomenological approach will help to show how many of the recurrent themes and images in his fiction are analogous with what he experienced during the Second World War.

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[7] Two months before Ballard was born, Adolf Hitler's National Socialist party became a major political force in Germany for the first time, winning 107 seats in the Reichstag election on September 14, 1930. This was a dramatic increase from the 12 seats they previously held (Pollock Jr. 991). The Nazis effectively used modern technology, particularly radio and cinema, in their propaganda efforts, which allowed them to "transform ideology into enthralling and mesmerizing modes of entertainment" (Spiro 24).

**Childhood in Shanghai**

Ballard's family had moved from England to Shanghai a year prior to his birth, as his father had become the head of the China Printing and Finishing Company, a subsidiary of Calico Printers Association, an English textile firm (*UGM* 286). Shanghai was not a British colony like Hong Kong or Singapore, but it was quite "Americanised," and Ballard saw it as being "a media city before its time," a place in which violence, technology, and "[b]izarre advertising displays" blurred together (*ML* 4). An example of this comes in the form of a vivid memory that Ballard retained throughout his entire life: amongst the daily kidnappings and political bombings in Shanghai, Ballard remembered seeing fifty Chinese hunchbacks standing outside the Grand Theatre, hired to promote the newly released *Hunchback of Notre Dame* film. For Ballard, this memory represented the way in which "Shanghai was a vast engine of illusions of various kinds," where "[v]enture capitalism [was] going full blast twenty-four hours a day," and where violence and dehumanization lurked around every corner (*EM* 465).

Despite the danger, Ballard was enamoured with Shanghai, even towards the end of his life, and his childhood experiences are not only important because they had a lasting impact on him personally, but because they also deeply influenced his writing. As explained in his autobiography *Miracles of Life*:

> Shanghai struck me as a magical place, a self-generating fantasy that left my own little mind far behind. There was always something incongruous to see: a vast firework display celebrating a new nightclub while armoured cars of the Shanghai police drove into a screaming mob of rioting factory workers; the army of prostitutes in fur coats outside the Park Hotel […] Open sewers fed into the stinking Whangpoo river, and the whole city reeked of dirt, disease […] In the French Concession the huge trams clanked at speed

through the crowds, their bells tolling. Anything was possible, and everything could be

bought and sold. In many ways, it seems like a stage set, but at the time it was real, and I

think a large part of my fiction has been an attempt to evoke it by means other than

memory. (*ML* 6-7)

In 1937, Japan invaded China in the Battle of Shanghai, and although the Japanese forces did not

initially enter the International Settlement in which Ballard's family lived, the surrounding areas

were being bombed and Chinese civilians murdered. One bomb, which was accidentally dropped

by a Chinese aircraft, landed on the Great World Amusement Park located at the centre of the

International Settlement, a location that was harbouring refugees from the outer districts of

China. This bomb killed over a thousand people, which was "at the time the largest number of

casualties ever caused by a single bomb" (*ML* 26). As the media landscape in Shanghai receded

into the periphery, death and destruction engulfed Ballard's surroundings, and it was not

uncommon for him to see the dead bodies of Chinese civilians on the streets: "Violence was so

pervasive that my parents and the various nannies never tried to shield me from all the brutality

going on" (27-28). Though at this time the Japanese troops did not invade the International

Settlement in which his family lived,[8] "the combined land, naval and air assault" all around them

was very much "a preview of the battlegrounds of the Second World War" (*UGM* 287).

When the Second World War did eventually break out, Ballard experienced the early

years of it through media. He and his father would listen to radio broadcasts from England,

which brought them news of the various battles occurring throughout Europe. Simultaneously,

the German and Italian communities in Shanghai were listening to Nazi radio programmes, and

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[8] Ballard's family actually lived just outside the border of the International Settlement, on the "western outskirts of Shanghai," but due to the extremely close proximity, he would generally say that he lived within the Settlement ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 113).

the German school even began to hang swastikas from their flagpoles (*ML* 37-38). Alongside the radio broadcasts were the newsreels, which Ballard described as being "the dominant weapon in this information war, [with] many of them screened at night against the sides of buildings, watched by huge crowds of passing pedestrians. I think I saw the European war as a newsreel war, only taking place on the silver square above my head" (38). As much as the Second World War was a test of military strength, it was also an "information war," to use Ballard's phrase, and to him this meant that even if one was not physically involved, they were psychologically involved. However, it wasn't long after that the war burst through the radio and newsreels and unwillingly thrust itself upon Ballard's family and countless others living in China.

In 1940, before things dramatically worsened for those living within the International Settlement, Ballard, telling his parents that he was going to visit family friends, would ride his bicycle through Japanese military checkpoints and explore the city. On occasion, he would reach the Bund and look at the Japanese, British, and American military ships, and engage with the British soldiers, who would get him to clean their rifles and who gave him regimental badges in return. But coinciding with these cheerful moments, Ballard's journeys also brought him face to face with extreme acts of violence: "in my mind I can still see a hysterical peasant woman near the Avenue Joffre tram terminal, screaming over her bayonetted husband as he died between the wheels of the passing Lincolns and Studebakers" (*UGM* 288). Ballard's trips to the Bund, however, didn't last much longer, as following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the Japanese took over Shanghai in its entirety, including the International Settlement. As Ballard explained in an interview with James Goddard and David Pringle:

> I was going to do the scripture exam at the end-of-term examinations at the school I went
>
> to. Pearl Harbor had just taken place, the previous night, I suppose, and I heard *tanks*

coming down the street. I looked out the window and there were Japanese tanks trundling

around […] The Japanese took over the place, and they segmented Shanghai into various

districts with barbed wire, so you couldn't move from Zone A to Zone B except at certain

times. (*EM* 84)

Due to the partitioning of Shanghai, on many days the only way that Ballard could get to school

was to first go to a family friend's house that was located on one of the border zones, climb over

a fence, and then walk through the grounds of an abandoned nightclub and casino. As he

explained: "Everything was junked. I remember a roulette table on its side and the whole roulette

wheel section had come out, exposing the machinery inside. There was all this junk lying around,

chips and all sorts of stuff, as if in some sort of tableau, arranged, as I've said, by a demolition

squad. It was very strange" (85).[9] As the war continued, the Japanese troops began to increase

their presence in the International Settlement, confiscating foreign cars, executing Chinese

civilians in the streets, and ultimately, in March of 1943, placing the members of the Settlement

into internment camps.

Interestingly, throughout his life, Ballard looked back upon his two and a half years in the

Lunghua Internment Camp with mostly fond memories, seeing it as being one of his childhood

homes, regardless of the skin infections and the "malnutrition [that] had prolapsed [his] rectum"

(*ML* 67). Ballard roamed around the camp with the other children, played chess, read magazines,

and attended the school that the internees had established, which was set up to meet "the

requirements of the then School Certificate" (72). But as the war dragged on, the standards of

living in Lunghua dramatically worsened, especially after the U.S. military began air and naval

strikes in 1944 and the Japanese came closer to defeat. Rations of food decreased severely. The

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[9] Ballard later commented that the way in which everything in the casino was displaced gave him his "first taste of the surrealism of everyday life, though Shanghai was already surrealist enough" (*ML* 59).

rice and cracked wheat that the internees ate "were little more than warehouse sweepings," and

were infested with weevils, which his family eventually started to eat for protein (*UGM* 291).

Despite Ballard's apparent nonchalance about his years in Lunghua, as the war neared its

end, the internees became gravely concerned, as there were rumblings in the camp that the

Japanese had plans to take them to the countryside and execute them. As Ballard recalls in a

2006 interview with Toby Litt:

> The Japanese traditionally killed all their prisoners before making a last stand, and they
>
> planned to make a last stand at the mouth of the Yangtze. And well-developed decisions
>
> had been made, and plans had been laid out for the marching – for emptying all the
>
> civilian camps around Shanghai, and marching us all up country out of the way, and
>
> getting rid of us. My parents, I think, knew this – this had been talked about – and were
>
> obviously worried sick. (*EM* 426)

It is for this reason that Ballard supported the U.S. decision to drop the atomic bombs on

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an event which effectively ended the war in a matter of days. He

believed that had the U.S. not done this, he, his family, and millions of Chinese civilians would

have been killed: "Like my parents, and everyone else who lived through Lunghua, I have long

supported the American dropping of the bombs […] For a hint of what might otherwise have

happened, we can look at the vicious battle for Manila […] where some 100,000 Philippine

civilians died" (*ML* 90). The atomic bomb later became a symbol of complication for Ballard and

his New Wave compatriots, and was a central image used in their work, such as in Ballard's 1964

short story "The Terminal Beach," which is set on the island of Eniwetok, an atomic testing site.

Whereas many of these writers disagreed with the use of nuclear weapons and called for

disarmament, Ballard contrarily quipped that "far from being an instrument of death, the atomic

bomb has become for me an instrument of protection" (*EM* 222). Whether agreeing or disagreeing with the possession and use of atomic weapons, one thing that the New Wave science fiction writers agreed on was their significance, believing that their appearance "marked the beginning of a new historical era" (Sterenberg 105). For Ballard, this new era provided him with the opportunity for a new life, and at the end of 1945, he, his mother, and sister left Shanghai and sailed to England.

As Ballard said towards the end of his life: "I don't think it's possible to escape from one's past. The brain and the imagination are imprinted for ever with the images of one's first years […] I lived in Shanghai until I was fifteen, went through the war and acquired a special 'language', a set of images and rhythms, dreams and expectations that are probably the basic operating formulae that govern my life to this day" (*EM* 384). Statements such as this make it clear that Ballard's childhood in Shanghai and the years spent the Lunghua Internment Camp had a profound impact on his life and writing, and, as will soon be discussed, many of the images that are common in his short stories and novels—such as drained swimming pools, abandoned hotels, airplanes, and jungle landscapes—can be traced directly back to his wartime experiences.

**Move to England: Years of Study, Discovery of Surrealism, and Early Fiction**

When Ballard arrived in England at the age of fifteen, he was shocked by how different it was from the "dramatised landscape" of Shanghai. To him, for a country that supposedly won the war, England seemed defeated. Its cities were destroyed and the morale of the country was extremely low. Ballard found it to be very strange: "England was a place that was totally exhausted. The war had drained everything. It seemed very small, and rather narrow mentally, and the physical landscape of England was so old" (*EM* 83). As mentioned in an early

autobiography that he wrote for a special issue of *RE/Search* magazine, though the cities were eventually rebuilt and modernized, Ballard largely viewed England as being a land of rolling meadows, which stood in stark contrast to his upbringing in the Shanghai: "England seemed a very strange country. Both the physical landscape and the social and psychological landscapes seemed fit subjects for analysis—extremely constrained and rigid and repressed compared with the sort of background I had […] this was the most repressed society I'd ever known!" ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 114-115). It is also because of Ballard's late arrival to England that "he viewed its landscape, its people, its social forms and its cultural codes from an alien perspective" (Gasiorek 2). This alien perspective played a major role in his ability to diagnose the modern world, drawing parallels between his childhood surroundings and the violence propagated by Western media and cinema, which he believed were stirring violent impulses deep within the psyche and numbing humans to images of atrocity.

While attending the Leys School in the late 40s—a boarding school in Cambridge—Ballard would frequently sneak off to the Arts Cinema and watch French and Italian films, Hollywood noir, and "all those experimental films of the '20s," such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 114). It was also during this period that Ballard first discovered psychoanalysis and Surrealism:

> Freud's works, like Jung's, were easy to come across in the late 1940s, but reproductions of surrealist paintings were extremely difficult to find. Many of the first paintings I saw by Chirico, Ernst and Dalí were in books about abnormal psychology […] The surrealists were still decades away from achieving any kind of critical respectability, and even serious newspapers treated them as a rather tired joke. (*ML* 133)

Ballard claimed to have always been much more interested in Surrealist visual art than Surrealist writing, and this is partly because of the fact that much of the writing had not yet been translated into English, but perhaps more significantly because the Surrealist images reminded him of his childhood, and of war in general. As Ballard stated in discussion with Hari Kunzru: "The war clearly touched my imagination in a way. I needed answers […] some of those answers seemed to be provided by surrealism and psychoanalysis […] And the surrealists of course duplicated in their paintings so many of the scenes I'd seen in Shanghai during the war. War is rather surrealist. You see photos of the Blitz in London. Buses on the tops of blocks of flats. Incredible juxtapositions" (*EM* 469-470). Largely due to his interest in psychoanalysis and Surrealism, Ballard wanted to become either a psychiatrist or a writer. Though he enjoyed writing as a child,[10] and even began to write experimental fiction as a teenager, he ultimately enrolled at the University of Cambridge to study medicine. Along with his interest in psychiatry, he developed a keen interest in anatomy—an interest which later found its way into much of Ballard's fiction, perhaps most notably *The Atrocity Exhibition*—and he said that the process of dissecting a cadaver had a tremendous impact on him. In some ways, he found it rather beautiful that doctors would donate their own bodies to be studied by the next generation of students, but, in other ways, this experience once again reminded him of the war: "The experience of war is deeply corrupting. Anybody who witnesses years of brutality can't help but lose a sense of the tragedy and mystery of death. I'm sure that happened to me […] So spending two years dissecting

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[10] Ballard recalls having to copy out texts while in school in Shanghai—approximate age 9 or 10—but finding it much easier to simply make up his own narratives to fill the exercise book. He was once told by one of the clergymen: "Ballard, next time you pick a book to copy your lines from don't pick some trashy novel like this!" ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 113). He also claims that the first book he produced was on the rules of Contract Bridge, because he was interested in the Bridge parties his mother would throw and the "cryptic and mysterious calls" that were made as part of the game. He had his mother explain the rules and conventions to him, which he then compiled in a school notebook (113).

cadavers was a way of reminding me of the reality of death itself, and gave me back a respect for life" (*Quotes* 256-257).

Even though Ballard decided to pursue medicine at Cambridge, dissecting cadavers and sleeping with an anatomy skeleton under his bed,[11] his interest in art and writing never wavered. In 1950, Ballard took a "self-timer-released, double-exposure photographic self-portrait" which shows two images of himself staring at each other while on a bed, with one projecting a shadow onto the wall behind (Stephenson 10). Though this image is in some ways indicative of Ballard's Surrealist impulse, as Gregory Stephenson notes, it may also be "suggestive of Ballard's unsettled, irresolute state of mind at the time. It may also be seen to prefigure the self-divided protagonists so characteristic of his fiction, and perhaps also his fascination with overcoming the limitations of time" (10). Soon thereafter, in 1951, while still at Cambridge, Ballard entered a crime story competition and won, sharing the first prize with another student. The story he submitted, entitled "The Violent Noon," was written "as almost a pastiche of a certain kind of Hemingwayesque short story," purposely written in a style that would help him win the competition; however, this story "wasn't typical of the other material [he] was writing at the time," which was much more experimental ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 116).[12] Regardless, Ballard's success in the competition did encourage him to ultimately give up medicine and focus on writing more seriously.

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[11] Ballard retained a memory of, while still in Shanghai, making a detour on his way home from school, going to a burial mound, and looking into one of the "lidless coffins." As he stated: "Years later, as a Cambridge medical student, I would sleep in my college room with my anatomy skeleton in a coffin-like pine box under my bed. I was told that the skeleton's modest height did not mean it was that of a child – most anatomy skeletons were those of south-east Asian peasants" (*ML* 33).

[12] Ballard submitted some of his early stories to *Horizon* magazine but knew that they would be rejected "without a second thought by people in charge" due to their experimental nature ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 116).

"The Violent Noon" was Ballard's first published story, appearing in Cambridge's student newspaper, the *Varsity*, on May 26, 1951. It has not been reprinted since.

**"The Violent Noon"**

"The Violent Noon" is set in Malaya during the Emergency, and begins with a car travelling through the jungle, heading towards Kuala Lumpur, a "heavy fetid stench of growth and decay" in the air ("The Violent Noon" 9). In the car is Michael Allison—a plantation owner—his wife Mrs. Allison, their daughter Susan, a man named Hargreaves, and their Malay driver. It is not long before the group is attacked by four Chinese "terrorists" or "bandits," leaving only Mrs. Allison and Hargreaves alive. The two are subsequently rescued by an English police Inspector, Brodie, and taken to Kuala Lumpur. Brodie vows to capture the bandits and bring them to justice; however, without any regard for the perpetrators' true identities, he brings in four Chinese men who Hargreaves knows are not the "bandits" that attacked them. Mrs. Allison, on the other hand, as a way of coping with the death of her daughter and husband, says that the innocent men are guilty. Hargreaves concludes:

> The justice of vengeance, he thought. These innocent men must pay for the deaths of others, yield their lives to give a little consolation to this grieving widow, be martyred in the vain hope of rebuilding her ruined world. Who am I to say no, to invite the anger and resentment of all who have lived and died resisting the onslaught of Communism, who am I to condemn yet more pitiful souls to an ironic death, to the brutal fury of Brodie? Who am I to condemn this woman to mourn unavenged?
>
> He turned to the Inspector: 'Yes,' he said, looking sternly at the limp pathetic line of prisoners, 'these are the bandits. I'm quite sure of it now.' (9)

This story can be read in relation to the political conflict it revolves around, that between British colonial forces and the Communist forces fighting for independence during the Malayan Emergency, and Ballard sheds light on this conflict at the beginning of the story when Allison and Hargreaves get into an argument about the British Empire's involvement in various Asian countries. Hargreaves believes that the British must keep their presence in Asia and should not exit Malaya "without a fight," or else the Empire will collapse: "The Empire is built on purely economic foundations. Without the colonies England ceases to have any actual existence" (9). On the contrary, Allison—though a plantation owner—believes that the Malays should be given "a share in their own government," adding that "they're entitled to it" (9). Interestingly, in modernist fashion, Ballard then enters into the consciousness of the Malay driver, providing his perspective on the situation. The unnamed driver's thoughts are not spoken, they are all internal, and though he sides with Allison's opinions on the Emergency, he criticizes his exploitative behaviour as a plantation owner. He also resists the idea of a Communist takeover, taking issue with the "Chinese gangsters […] promising prosperity to the people and then threatening them and pillaging their homes" (9).

All of this, however, occurs at the beginning of the story, so although Ballard does draw the reader's attention to the Emergency and the conflict of ideas, this is mostly done for context, to set the stage, and it soon fades into the periphery of the story after the shootout occurs. Though "The Violent Noon" differs in many ways from Ballard's later work, there are some commonalities worth mentioning, such as the East Asian setting and Ballard's investigation into the violent nature of humanity. As Gregory Stephenson explains in *Out of the Night and Into the Dream*:

Ballard's short, stark story is less a comment upon the moral ambiguities of colonialism

and de-colonization than a depiction of universal brutality and ignorance. All of the

parties of the tale, the guerrillas, the planters, the police, the Malays, and the Chinese

alike, are caught in a vicious circle compounded of misunderstanding, mistrust,

vengeance, and reciprocal atrocity. (Stephenson 14)

The landscape of "growth and decay" that is described in the opening paragraph is thus reflective

of the deterioration of human values, and the way in which Ballard connects the external

landscape to the interiority of the characters is a common aspect of much of Ballard's fiction, in

particular his apocalyptic novels, which will be discussed in more detail later. Hargreaves, for

example, is said to have been "hardened" by his time in the East, as if the decaying landscape

and its "matted undergrowth" has shrouded his sensibilities and led to an internal decay, of sorts.

Though Hargreaves has a chance to redeem himself at the end of the story and vouch for

the lives of the innocent, he decides against it and simply turns away, turns a blind eye to the

men about to be executed. This sort of "turning away" is another aspect common in Ballard's

apocalyptic novels, in which the protagonists turn their backs on conventional wisdom and the

"real world," and instead follow their impulses and embrace the new logics of the apocalyptic

landscapes in which they find themselves. In these novels, however, even though the

protagonists' actions will undoubtedly lead to their physical death, the turn that occurs is towards

psychological fulfillment. This is markedly different from Hargreaves's actions (or inaction) at

the end of "The Violent Noon," which can be considered "uncharacteristically pessimistic" of

Ballard and thus "be seen to represent a sort of prime meridian of negativity in [his] work, a void

or zero of the spirit to which his subsequent writing is a response and of which, ultimately, it is a

refutation" (Stephenson 15). As will be explained, Ballard viewed his novels as being largely

optimistic, even if they hold a cautionary finger up to the world, and though "The Violent Noon" may differ in this manner from the rest of his oeuvre, it does establish a few key elements that are common in the near futures that Ballard imagines, such as the relationship between inner and outer worlds, and the death of affect, which can not only be seen and experienced in times of war, but also in the modern technological world.

**Ballard's Introduction to Science Fiction**

As mentioned earlier, Ballard didn't complete his medical studies, and he later claimed that he was pursuing medicine for "neurotic reasons" and eventually "learnt enough medicine to cure [himself] of wanting to be a doctor" (*EM* 28). He also admitted that he didn't want to deal with the clinical phase, which was hard on the young doctors who were forced to work very long hours ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 116). With a growing impulse to write, Ballard wasn't prepared to commit to the taxing hours required to complete his medical degree: "I felt I'd completed the interesting phase of studying medicine. The preclinical phase is almost pure science; it's anatomy, physiology, pathology. I felt I'd already stocked my vocabulary enough for me to move on" (117). Ballard dropped out of Cambridge, leaving behind the cadavers and anatomy skeletons, and decided to pursue his creative impulses. He subsequently enrolled at the University of London to study English; however, his time there didn't last long, as he was dismissed after only one year.[13]

After briefly working as a copywriter for an advertising agency, and then as an encyclopedia salesman, Ballard, with his "career as a novelist show[ing] no signs of ever

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[13] The reasons for this are unclear. Ballard only says that he was "turfed" or "thrown out" at the end of the year, after the school decided that he "hadn't got what it took to be a student of English Literature" ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 117).

beginning," joined the Royal Air Force at the age of 23 (*ML* 162). It was during his time spent in

Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan for RAF training that Ballard first became interested in science

fiction. Around this time, science fiction was becoming noticeably more popular, experiencing a

post-war boom. Ballard discovered SF magazines on the "magazine racks of the airbase

cafeteria" ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 117), and started reading short story collections by

authors such as Richard Matheson (*Quotes* 104). Though having not read much SF up until this

point, Ballard soon started writing science fiction of his own:

> I began writing in the mid-Fifties. Enormous changes were going on in England at that
>
> time, largely brought about by science and technology—the beginnings of television,
>
> package holidays, mass merchandising, the first supermarkets. A new landscape was
>
> being created. The so-called mainstream novel wasn't really looking at the present day.
>
> The only form of fiction which was trying to make head or tail of what was going on in
>
> our world was science fiction. (Ballard quoted in Sterenberg 110)

Towards the end of his RAF stint, Ballard wrote his first science fiction story, entitled "Passport

to Eternity," and though this story was not ultimately published until 1962, "it seemed to confirm

his new direction as a writer" (Stephenson 10). "Passport to Eternity" is as conventional a

science fiction story as one can find in Ballard's oeuvre and, as with "The Violent Noon,"

Ballard again claimed that this story was written as a sort of pastiche, "a summary of all the

American SF" he had been reading while in Canada, "a kind of spoof, indistinguishable really

from the American SF" ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 118). Interestingly, it didn't initially

occur to him to submit this story for publication, as he already knew that he "wanted to write a

different kind of SF" (118). Even though this story isn't a typical Ballardian story, it does still

provide an interesting look into the young writer's mind and, once again, some of the themes and

motifs contained within it can be found in Ballard's later work, particularly war as entertainment and the realm of the imagination.

"Passport to Eternity" is set in the Martian city of Zenith and is full of invented scientific devices, such as microphones that can scan text and read it aloud, "bioplastic materials," and "flamingo trees" which sing and mate. The story revolves around Margot and Clifford Gorrell, a married couple who are trying to decide where they should take their annual vacation—to the Venus Fashion Festival, the "fire beaches of Saturn," or go on yet another "honeyMoon"—and Clifford tasks his personal assistant with finding new destinations for them. One agency offers the opportunity to order and participate in war: "Hunting and shooting. Your own war to order. Raiding parties, revolutions, religious crusades. In anything from a small commando squad to a 3,000-ship armada" (*CS* 347). The idea of war being a form of entertainment is something that Ballard takes particular interest in in later works such as *The Atrocity Exhibition*, in which he explores the effects of the media's perpetuation of violent images, those that are consumed for entertainment purposes, for pleasure. Dreams and the imaginative space also play a key role in this story, seeing as Margot discovers a "dream bureau" which designs and tailors "dream plays" for each client. George and Margot's "vacation" ends up being a long voyage in which they are to sleep and experience an adaptation of "The Taming of the Shrew," a reference to Clifford's desire to "tame" his wife, fearing that he'll become "dominated" by her and "forced to spend virtually 24 hours a day with her" (343). Though "Passport to Eternity" uses many of the SF tropes and techniques that he later resisted, such as the surprise ending—when Clifford awakes to find himself already on the voyage—it still seems clear that at this time Ballard already saw the potential to interiorize the genre, and as he continued to write more SF stories, it was this that he decided to pursue.

After his discharge from the RAF, Ballard married Mary Matthews (whom he had met just prior to leaving for his RAF training), and started to submit some of his stories to the various American science fiction magazines he had read while in Saskatchewan, though unsuccessfully. As explained in *Miracles of Life*, the submissions "all came back to me, usually with very dismissive rejection notes, which revealed the narrowness of mind that lurks behind American exuberance. A fierce orthodoxy ruled, and any attempt to enlarge the scope of traditional science fiction was regarded as conspiratorial and underhand" (*ML* 179). However, in 1956, Ballard found his breakthrough and began to have success publishing in the British magazines edited by Ted Carnell, *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*. His stories "Prima Belladonna" and "Escapement" were accepted in quick succession and, in 1957, Carnell also helped Ballard get an assistant editor job for the *Chemistry and Industry* periodical.[14] Ballard credits this job, as well as his medical experience, as being the reason why many of his early stories, especially those written in the early 1960s, had much scientific content ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 119-120).

Still, regardless of the early publishing success that Ballard found, and despite the rapport he had formed with Ted Carnell, he felt like an outsider in the SF community. He didn't interact with any of the writers who would hang around at Carnell's office, referring to them as "hacks" that were more interested in making a bit of money than in the quality of their work. Then, after attending the World Science Fiction Convention in London in 1957, he was so "disillusioned and demoralized" that he didn't write any SF for over a year ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 122).

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[14] "Prima Belladonna" is particularly interesting because it is set in a fictional resort called Vermilion Sands, and not only did Ballard write many other stories set in this same resort (which were later assembled in the *Vermilion Sands* collection), but the location also deeply resembles the settings used in some of his final novels, such as *Cocaine Nights*. It appears that the effects of modern architecture, and of settings such as leisure communities and high-tech business parks, had been on his mind from the time he started publishing stories, and he later cycled back to this interest in his final tetralogy of novels.

In a 1968 interview with Jannick Storm, Ballard said that he felt the attendees—the writers and fans alike—were "just a collection of very unintelligent people, who were almost illiterate, who had no interest whatever in the serious and interesting possibilities of science fiction," and this deeply angered him (*EM* 21).[15] Ballard knew that science fiction had great potential and he thought it should be taken seriously as a genre, but he believed that most of his contemporaries were engaged in a dried-up form of SF that wasn't even interested in science at all—their sole interest was in space fantasy and "a set of imaginary ideas which are conveniently labelled 'science'" (*EM* 17). It wasn't until the New Wave science fiction movement of the 1960s that Ballard met likeminded writers and felt allowed to more deeply explore his experimental and imaginative impulses.

**Reimagining the Genre: New Wave Science Fiction and Ballard's Shift to "Inner Space"**

To Ballard, the Golden Age of science fiction—which can be approximately dated between the late 1930s and early 1950s—was endlessly optimistic about the future of science and technology, even though public consciousness had turned suspicious of scientific advancements following the Second World War. As such, though the public's mood had shifted, science fiction as a genre did not: "You still found this optimistic literature, the Heinlein-Asimov-Clarke type of attitude towards the possibilities of science, which was completely false" (*EM* 15). Ballard found the texts that appeared in magazines such as *Astonishing Stories* and *Astounding Science Fiction* to be boring—those focused on increasingly sophisticated

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[15] This statement also gives one the sense that Ballard was, at least in some ways elitist, disregarding fans and authors alike, and viewing his work as being well above the taste of the mainstream. This may also shed some light on why nearly all of his characters are part of a professional class—they are primarily doctors—though later novels such as *Super-Cannes* and *Kingdom Come* are far more sympathetic in their portrayal of low-income individuals and minorities.

technologies, the distant future, and space travel—and this was symptomatic of the generic

exhaustion that occurred during the Golden Age, in terms of both form and content. There were

only so many new technologies that could be imagined and so many distant planets that could be

travelled to before these tropes became repetitive and unimaginative, and very few of the Golden

Age writers in the 1940s experimented with style and/or narrative techniques, seeing as this was

a sure way of getting rejected by magazines like *Astounding* (Attebery 41). Furthermore, in

addition to this generic complacency, many writers within the SF community began to turn

against the genre, such as Alfred Bester, who, in refutation of his peers' work, claimed that "[t]he

average quality of writing in the field today is extraordinarily low" (quoted in Broderick 50).

In contrast to the aforementioned magazines, Ballard preferred *Galaxy* and *Fantasy &*

*Science Fiction*, seeing as these magazines included stories that "were set in the present or very

near future, extrapolating social and political trends already evident in the years after the war,"

and which were also interested in "[t]he dangers to a docile public of television, advertising and

the American media landscape" (*ML* 166). Ballard's attitude represented a shift in focus that was

later adopted by the New Wave movement of the 1960s, which was a response to the Golden

Age's cliched tropes and lack of formal experimentation, and which took its name from the

1950s French *nouvelle vague* cinema, a movement characterized by the "tapestries of jump cuts,

meanderings, [and the] all-but-plotless immersion in image" seen in the films of Jean-Luc

Godard and François Truffaut (Broderick 49-50).[16]

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[16] In 1999, when asked if the French New Wave directors and their experimental film techniques influenced his
writing, Ballard responded by saying: "I don't think they did, to be honest. My first short story was published in
1956/57. And the other stories for the magazine *New Worlds* were also written around that time. I think I was
exploring my own space. I don't know whether cinema had much influence" (*EM* 366). However, in a much earlier
interview from 1976, he said: "I've transferred what one in film calls the 'cut' into my literary work. I also use
various other filmic methods: like the close-up, slow motion and similar. I wanted to apply equivalents of these
methods in the novel" (*EM* 102). This earlier comment would make one believe that Ballard was aware of the
French New Wave, and though this influence may not be evident in his stories from the 1950s, it is definitely felt in
the stories that would ultimately become *The Atrocity Exhibition*.

Opposing the optimism of the Golden Age, the New Wave held up a cautionary finger to technology, and warned of the detrimental effects it could have on human identity and cognition. As explained by Colin Greenland in *The Entropy Exhibition*:

> They mistrust the machine and suspect that mechanisation is a corruption of the human. Like Leary, Laing, and Burroughs they used electrical and mechanical imagery to evoke what they felt were unreal aspects of contemporary life, to denounce the depersonalising effects of systematic social conditioning and overdependence on technology […] [To the New Wave writers] individual identity and its sense of reality may be in danger.
>
> (Greenland 37)

Though many of the writers that eventually became associated with the New Wave movement were already writing and publishing stories in the 1950s, a turning point came in 1964 when Michael Moorcock took over editorship of *New Worlds* magazine and declared that a literary renaissance was in order. Moorcock initially "included much traditional sf together with the more adventurous work of himself, Ballard, Aldiss," and American writers such as Thomas M. Disch and Roger Zelazny, in order to establish "a contrast […] between the old and new schools" of science fiction (Wolfe 101).

The New Wave writers questioned the ability of nineteenth-century literary techniques and perspectives to make sense of the non-linearity of the modern age (Huntley 24) and, as a result, they purposefully turned away from the "clichéd conventions" and tropes that littered the SF publications of the time, and instead focused on "cultivat[ing] a highbrow, avant-garde sensibility" (Sterenberg 98-99). Moorcock, Ballard, and Brian Aldiss all viewed science fiction as the genre best suited to analyze the contemporary world, and Ballard in particular believed that it was the literature which could, when well-crafted, mediate "between the threatening outer

world and the inner world of the psyche," and which could thus help the individual cope in the new environments dominated by technology, mass media, advertising, and consumerism (108). Even predating Moorcock's editorship, in 1962 Ballard wrote an editorial for *New Worlds*, entitled "Which Way to Inner Space?", in which he took a firm stance against the traditional science fiction of the 1950s, that which aimed to travel further and further away from the human experience on Earth. Instead of imagining "outer space," Ballard proclaimed the need to investigate "inner space,"[17] and he revealed his desire to incorporate elements of Surrealism and psychoanalysis into science fiction in order to accomplish this. As he later noted: "I think there are two movements which have really dominated the imagination of the 20th century. One is Science Fiction. The other is Surrealism" (*Quotes* 116). As will be explored throughout this dissertation, it is clear that Ballard's fiction was an attempt to synthesize the two together.

In "Which Way to Inner Space?", Ballard explains why space fiction should not be "the main wellspring of ideas for s-f," claiming that its appeal is too narrow and that its fans will ultimately be unable "to keep the medium alive on their own" (*UGM* 195-196). Instead, he proposes that SF writers should find inspiration elsewhere, such as music or painting. Further, to reinvigorate the genre, Ballard believed that SF writers would need to turn away from stories of interstellar travel and alien planets, and instead interiorize (and invert) the genre, and thus emphasize the human experience on Earth as affected by modernity: "The biggest developments of the immediate future will take place, not on the Moon or Mars, but on Earth, and it is *inner* space, not outer, that needs to be explored. The only truly alien planet is Earth" (197). Ballard concludes this essay by invoking the speech that Salvador Dalí gave at the 1936 International

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[17] Though Ballard is often credited with coining the term "inner space," it had already been used by J.B. Priestley in the essay "They Come From Inner Space" (1953), and by Jane Dunlap in the 1961 book *Exploring Inner Space: Personal Experiences under LSD-25* (Greenland 51-52).

Surrealist Exhibition in London while wearing a diving suit, in which Dalí declared his intent to

dive to the depths of the unconscious. Ballard agreed with Dalí's pronouncement and related it to

his SF ambitions, stating "[i]t is that *inner* space-suit which is still needed, and it is up to science

fiction to build it" (198). In this essay, Ballard makes clear that his idea of inner space is

inextricably linked to his interest in Surrealism, specifically Surrealist visual art. As stated even

more explicitly in a later essay entitled "The Coming of the Unconscious," "[t]he images of

surrealism are the iconography of inner space" (*UGM* 84), and, as will be investigated shortly, it

is from such images that Ballard drew inspiration for his early novels.

Chapter Two: Ballard's Apocalyptic Novels and the Influence of Surrealism & Psychoanalysis

       Largely due to the influence of Surrealism, Ballard wanted to be a painter but found that he lacked the talent. He often referred to himself as a frustrated painter, while also noting that "[t]hey are all paintings, really, my novels and stories," written to be "visual experience[s]" (*EM* 83). Out of all of Ballard's novels, the final three of his apocalyptic tetralogy—namely *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1965), and *The Crystal World* (1966)—are the ones most closely linked to Surrealism, and this chapter will aim to show how the landscapes depicted in these novels can be conceived of as ekphrastic representations of paintings by Max Ernst, Paul Delvaux, Yves Tanguy, and Arnold Böcklin.[18] By superimposing Surrealist paintings onto various apocalyptic landscapes, Ballard was able to reimagine the disaster story—a common trope in British SF at the time—and interiorize the science fiction genre, shifting the focus away from the external cataclysms themselves, and towards the "inner space" of the protagonists. In these novels, Ballard not only makes the art come alive by placing his characters into the paintings and forcing them to navigate their way through the surreal landscapes, but the paintings also facilitate the psychic journeys of the protagonists, providing them with the cognitive keys needed to complete the process of Jungian individuation.

       Importantly, Ballard believed that times of great upheaval, whether from war or natural catastrophe, open up the possibility for "huge transformations of ordinary life where the barriers between the external world and internal world of the mind begin to break down, and you get a kind of overlap" (*EM* 51). This statement resonates with the Surrealist project as outlined by Breton in his first manifesto, as it is by reconciling formerly separate states—whether it be dreams and reality, or inner and outer worlds more broadly—that the marvellous can be grasped

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[18] The latter is a Symbolist painter, but I will argue that his *Island of the Dead* painting morphs into one of Ernst's phantasmagoric forests throughout *The Crystal World*.

or psychological fulfillment attained. Ballard, like the Surrealists, believed that the external world and the internal world of the psyche are not separate, but instead intimately connected, and if the two are intertwined then it means that the mind can reshape external reality just as much as the external world can reshape oneself (or one's perception).

In this regard, it is very much the case that the cataclysmic landscapes depicted in Ballard's apocalyptic novels are also in part mental projections of the characters. Since there is an overlap between inner and outer worlds, travelling through the external world doubles as a psychic journey through inner space. As explained by Gregory Stephenson:

> Ballard's visions of disaster, by flood, by drought, and so forth, are portrayed in such a
> manner that these events are seen to represent the deepest, most secret desires of
> humankind. It is not Thanatos, the instinctual desire for death, to which I allude here, but
> rather the desire for apocalypse, in the most literal sense of the word: a destruction that
> uncovers, a purifying process by which the false and evil are exposed and abolished and
> the 'New Jerusalem' established. (Stephenson 41)

Roger Luckhurst substantiates this idea in *"The Angle Between Two Walls": The Fiction of J.G. Ballard*, in which he notes that Ballard's apocalyptic novels are situated in-between catastrophes. Therefore, rather than focusing on the actual "disasters" themselves, Ballard places emphasis on the psychological effects experienced by the characters in the wake of catastrophe, a space that is "open, ambivalent, multiple" (Luckhurst 45).

There are thus two iterations of apocalypse, with Luckhurst differentiating between the geophysical *disastro* and the mental *apokalupsis*, the latter of which is a term that refers to the uncovering of something new or previously unseen, "lifting the veil on the hidden" (Luckhurst 46). It is for this reason that Ballard didn't view his apocalyptic novels as being "disaster"

oriented. Instead, in these novels, the disaster trope common in science fiction is used as a way of focusing on "inner space," human interiority:

> People seem to imply that these are books with unhappy endings, but the reverse is true: they're books with happy endings, stories of psychic fulfillment. The geophysical changes which take place in *The Drought*, *The Drowned World* and *The Crystal World* are all positive and good changes […] The changes lead us to our real psychological goals, so they are not disaster stories at all […] Really, I'm trying to show a new kind of logic emerging, and this is to be embraced, or at least held in regard. (*EM* 89)

In these novels, it is by turning away from rational thought and by embracing the new logics of the apocalyptic worlds that the protagonists experience mental apocalypse, and it is in following this pattern that they become Ballardian heroes, figures who, by journeying through the self, become psychically fulfilled, regardless of if these journeys will inevitably lead to their physical death.

### The Wind from Nowhere

Ballard wrote his first novel, *The Wind from Nowhere* (1962),[19] while on a two week vacation with his wife, and it was written with the intent of helping him transition to a full-time writing career. Though Ballard didn't make much money from the novel, he did make enough to quit his editing job and begin work on *The Drowned World*, which he considered to be his "first serious novel" (*EM* 50).[20] Likely due to the fact that it was written so quickly, *The Wind from*

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[19] A shorter version entitled "Storm-Wind" was serialized in *New Worlds* in 1961.
[20] Indeed, Ballard disliked *The Wind from Nowhere* so much that on many occasions he overlooked it completely and simply referred to *The Drowned World* as his first novel, such as in a 1986 interview with Solveig Nordlund (*EM* 226). Though the novel was reprinted on occasion throughout the 1960s and 1970s, in both the US and UK, it has not been in print since 1974, when Penguin reissued Ballard's first four novels, and this is likely due to Ballard's disdain for it.

*Nowhere* reads as the most conventional SF novel in Ballard's oeuvre, and it is also for this reason that Ballard was never fond of it; it abides by many of the SF conventions that he wanted to turn away from: "I don't see my fiction as being disaster-oriented, certainly not most of my SF – apart from *The Wind from Nowhere*, which is just a piece of hackwork" (*EM* 88). Unlike *The Drowned World* and *The Drought*, which are set in the aftermath of cataclysmic events, Ballard's first novel is set amidst the disaster, and it follows the characters as they try to survive a worldwide windstorm that becomes ever more destructive as the novel progresses. As such, Ballard necessarily pays more attention to the catastrophe itself than he does in the novels that follow, and due to the fact that the novel is set during the height of the cataclysm, the characters do not find themselves in a space that is "open, ambivalent, multiple," to use Luckhurst's phrase, the realm of inner space (Luckhurst 45).[21] Consequently, the geophysical landscape depicted in *The Wind from Nowhere* is not as conducive to exploring inner space. However, unlike some critics like Luckhurst who dismiss the novel altogether, I would argue that there are many aspects of the novel worth investigating, such as the way in which Ballard uses tropes and archetypal characters which then reappear in his other apocalyptic novels. Furthermore, even though inner space is far less of a concern, there are still traces of it in *The Wind from Nowhere*, and in this sense, Ballard's first novel can be read as a trial run, of sorts; a novel that tests out various ideas which later became key to Ballard's canon.

The Wind from Nowhere* is set in London, England during a catastrophic windstorm that increases in speed by 5 mph each day, all around the world, and which in turn destroys cities,

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[21] Though *The Crystal World* is also set mid-catastrophe, the slow movement of the spreading crystallization differs greatly from the immense cataclysmic force of the windstorm depicted in *The Wind from Nowhere*. When the characters enter the crystalline forest, they enter into a liminal world where one's sense of time and space is disrupted, and they are slowly drawn towards the possibilities that such a realm possesses, one that promises psychic illumination at the expense of one's physical body. The crystal world is thus a realm of the unconscious that the characters want to merge with, as opposed to the landscape in *The Wind from Nowhere* that the characters want to survive.

renders communications systems ineffective, and forces human civilization to seek refuge underground. The novel begins with one of the protagonists, Doctor Donald Maitland, on his way back home from the airport, unable to leave England due to all flights being grounded. Without telling his wife, Maitland had planned to move to Vancouver in order to continue his research on "virus genetics—the basic mechanisms of life itself" (*WFN* 9). All of Ballard's apocalyptic novels feature protagonists who are doctors and, like a scientist himself, Ballard uses his characters as test subjects, placing them in uninhabitable landscapes and breaking them down to see what vestiges remain. One thing that is clear from the beginning of the novel—even before the windstorm becomes truly catastrophic—is that there is a widespread malaise affecting the characters, and many of them appear to be experiencing an internal numbing that renders them passive in the face of the oncoming destruction. For instance, when Maitland returns to his apartment, he notices that wind has broken the window panes, yet Susan, who is Maitland's wife, and her friend Peter have done nothing to try and fix them or clean up the shattered glass. Instead, both stand by as gusts of wind toss around the contents of the room. For many, this passivity and numbing—which represents the "death of affect," a term later used by Ballard to describe the modern human condition—then becomes exacerbated by the windstorm. As explicitly stated: "In addition, there was the gradual numbness that had begun to affect everyone, a blunting of the sensibilities" (126).

Interestingly, unlike in Ballard's other apocalyptic novels, there are many instances throughout *The Wind from Nowhere* in which Ballard implies that the catastrophe is an act of divine punishment against an affectless, passive civilization. As stated in Chapter 6:

> The same picture emerged; the entire population of one of the world's most highly
> industrialized nations, equipped with an elaborate communications and transport system,

huge stores of fuel and food, large armed services, yet caught completely unprepared by a

comparatively slight increase in one of the oldest constants of its natural environment.

On the whole, people had shown less resourcefulness and flexibility, less foresight,

than a wild bird or animal would. Their basic survival instincts had been so dulled, so

overlaid by mechanisms designed to serve secondary appetites, that they were totally

unable to protect themselves. As Symington had implied, they were the helpless victims

of a deep-rooted optimism about their right to survival, their dominance of the natural

order which would guarantee them against everything but their own folly, that they had

made gross assumptions about their own superiority.

Now they were paying the price for this, in truth reaping the whirlwind! (*WFN* 104)

There are also many references to hell throughout the novel, such as when the sky is described as

"a silhouette of hell" at the beginning (8), and when, at the end of the novel, the light in the room

flickers "across [Hardoon's] granitic features like the flames of some cosmic hell" (152).

Furthermore, when Dr. Lovatt Dickinson gives his interpretation of the cause of the windstorm,

he proposes two hypotheses, one that is scientific and one that is biblical, stating that it may just

be the "deliberate act of an outraged Providence, determined to sweep man and his pestilence

from the surface of this once green earth" (48).

Though biblical references are common in Ballard's apocalyptic novels, they are

generally used to describe the protagonists' respective journeys into becoming the Adam of a

new Eden, a position that can only be attained once they break free from their past selves and the

confines of the old world, and instead embrace the cataclysm and welcome *apokalupsis*, a mental

apocalypse. For instance, *The Drowned World* ends with Kerans becoming "a second Adam

searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn Sun" (*DW* 198). This sort of progression,

however, does not occur in *The Wind from Nowhere*, which ends in a moment of *deus ex machina*, as the heroes of the story (Maitland, Lanyon, and Patricia) are saved from a toppling wall when the wind miraculously subsides: "Amazed, they looked up at this incredible defiance, intervening like some act of God to save them" (*WFN* 159). Due to this inexplicable resolution, the novel stops where Ballard's other apocalyptic novels begin, in the aftermath of catastrophe, but as a result of this we do not get to see the characters journey into a post-apocalyptic world. Importantly, it is the post-apocalyptic world that Ballard associates with the psyche, seeing as it is here where the complete breakdown of the external world coincides with a breakdown of the inner world and, as such, the two begin to overlap in Surrealist fashion. Thus, by travelling through the geophysical landscapes, the characters also embark a journey to the depths of the psyche, a journey which is cut short in *The Wind from Nowhere*.

This doesn't mean, however, that no inward movement or inner/ outer blurring occurs in this novel—it does, but to a much lesser extent. An example of the latter can be seen after Marshall (who is in charge of the Central Operations Executive) is pummelled by a stream of wind and debris that leaves him with serious "air bruises." He is taken back to his room to recover and, though Marshall comes across as being a kind and helpful person that is leading the rescue efforts, the room's interior tells us a different story: "There were abstract statuettes; heavy sporting rifles clipped to the walls, their black barrels glinting; a small winged bull rearing from a dark corner, its hooded eyes blind and menacing. Altogether the effect was powerful, a perfect image of Marshall's own personality, intense and somehow disturbing" (*WFN* 59). The room reflects Marshall's inner self and, like his room, the air bruises he sustains can be understood as an externalization of his inner darkness, desires, and motives. This all foreshadows the fact that Marshall is working for the villain of the novel, Hardoon.

Regarding the "inner space" that is evident in *The Wind from Nowhere*, Stephenson argues that the movement underground which is necessary for the characters' survival "seems also to suggest, in symbolic terms, a retreat from the surface level of consciousness, from the world of the ego, and a corresponding rapprochement with the unconscious" (Stephenson 45). He also notes that the underground spring beneath Hardoon's pyramid, which ultimately breaks apart the tower's foundation and causes it topple, can "be read as a metaphor for the unconscious, which overturns the usurpatory rule of the rational ego-mind, which has, as it were, feet of clay" (44). I would also add that throughout the novel the characters are forced to travel deeper and deeper underground, through a "sub-world of dark labyrinthine tunnels and shafts" (*WFN* 122), to the point that Maitland, Lanyon, and Patricia end up being trapped in the "lowest level" of the underground bunker system below Hardoon's pyramid, "some 200 feet below ground" (148). In this regard, the physical movement downward can be seen as coinciding with a psychological movement inward, a journey through the dark recesses of the psyche that culminates with a meeting with one's core self, or with one's "shadow," to use a Jungian term. In Ballard's other apocalyptic novels, it is only after this meeting that a psychological breakthrough occurs, and perhaps the poetic image that Ballard uses at the end of the novel—of light breaking through darkness—represents this, as the characters defeat the villain and find salvation.

Maitland, in particular, though considered a hero in this story, is not fully heroic by conventional standards, and the anti-hero is a figure that appears in almost all of Ballard's fiction, not only in his apocalyptic novels. In line with this, when we first meet Maitland, he is planning to leave his wife without telling her, and we later learn that Susan is actually afraid of her husband: "I've been frightened for too long, Donald. Of Daddy, and you and myself. Now I'm not any longer" (*WFN* 74). Susan then commits suicide by jumping out of a window, and as

her body is swept away by the wind it smashes "off the roof of the Embassy building" (74).[22]

Though the narrator says that Susan's suicide stuns Maitland and leaves him lying on the floor in disbelief, this moment of shock only lasts for five minutes, and for the remainder of the novel Susan is only mentioned on one other occasion. Coincidentally, this moment occurs just before Ballard describes the "sub-world of dark labyrinthine tunnels and shafts" in which people are crammed together "like the denizens of some vast gallery of the dead waiting for their resurrection" (122). Maitland admits that he is, in some ways, happy about the windstorm because his involvement in the emergency response provides him with "a chance to do something positive" (63), and this seems to indicate that he wants to atone for his past sins and the death of Susan, and come to grips with his true self. Though all of this is part of his psychic journey, as in all of Ballard's apocalyptic novels, to reach a state of psychic completion or fulfillment, the protagonist must confront and reincorporate his shadow, and for Maitland this only occurs during the final standoff with Hardoon.[23]

In *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, C.G. Jung describes the shadow, stating:

> whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we

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[22] This moment resembles the ending of Lautréamont's *Maldoror*, when the titular Maldoror attaches a rope to the young and innocent Mervyn, and swings him around wildly until "his body strikes the Dome of the Pantheon" (Lautréamont 245).

[23] The name Hardoon is almost certainly a reference to Silas Hardoon, an extremely wealthy businessman who constructed various properties around Shanghai and who owned a large estate in the International Settlement. As Ballard recounts in *Miracles of Life*: "[Ballard's father] was always telling the chauffeur to slow down when we passed significant local landmarks – the Radium Institute, where cancer would be cured; the vast Hardoon estate in the centre of the International Settlement, created by an Iraqi property tycoon who was told by a fortune-teller that if he ever stopped building he would die, and who then went on constructing elaborate pavilions all over Shanghai" (*ML* 9). Ballard also states that when in Lunghua, he would "constantly [tell] anyone who would listen about some strange Hardoon temple I had found on my cycle rides" (70).

cover it with the *persona*, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face.

This confrontation is the first test of courage on the inner way, a test sufficient to frighten off most people, for the meeting with ourselves belongs to the more unpleasant things that can be avoided so long as we can project everything negative into the environment. But if we are able to see our own shadow and can bear knowing about it, then a small part of the problem has already been solved: we have at least brought up the personal unconscious. (*Archetypes* 20)

Jung also explains that the shadow often "appears in the phenomenology of dreams as a well-defined figure" (270), and that "there is no development unless the shadow is accepted" (340). As previously established, Ballard was keenly interested in psychoanalysis, and the concept of the shadow is an important part of his apocalyptic novels, seeing as each protagonist is forced to confront a manifestation of the dark side of their psyche, which appears in each novel as another character, usually one that in some way inhibits the protagonist's psychic journey.

In *The Wind from Nowhere*, the shadow manifests itself in the form of Hardoon, an extremely wealthy, power-hungry man with a private army, "an embodiment of ego-mind at its most ruthless and arrogant" (Stephenson 43). In the face of the wind, Hardoon constructs a pyramid, deciding to go up while the rest of civilization burrows underground:

With one exception—myself. I alone have built upward, have dared to challenge the wind, asserting Man's courage and determination to master nature […] That is my sole reason for building this tower. Here on the surface of the globe I meet nature on her own terms, in the arena of her choice. If I fail, Man has no right to assert his innate superiority over the unreason of the natural world. (*WFN* 142)

It is implied throughout the novel that aspects of Hardoon are reflected in Maitland (and in all of the characters), and this is why, for instance, Maitland views the catastrophe selfishly, as being an opportunity to better himself. However, as he goes deeper underground and traverses through the labyrinthine tunnels—and as he thus travels deeper within himself—he undergoes a process of restoration (or individuation, to use the Jungian term) that equips him with the ability to confront his shadow. As a result, this journey prevents Maitland from becoming an "iron-faced man," as Hardoon is often described, a figure void of interiority, and Maitland thus redeems himself as the hero of the novel.

After *The Wind from Nowhere*, Ballard's conception of the hero figure changes in many significant ways. Though Maitland resembles the protagonists of *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World* in the sense that they all go through a process in which they confront and reincorporate their shadow, the protagonists in the latter novels do not resist the new logics at play, like the way in which Maitland resists those set forth by Hardoon, who is the only character that goes against the rational mind. For Ballard, anyone that "follows the logic of [their] own mind" is considered a hero, because "anyone who does this is, in a sense, fulfilling [themselves]" (*EM* 50). In the final three novels of his apocalyptic tetralogy, those who are willing to break free from the past and embrace the apocalypse are the ones who reach psychological fulfillment, as they are the characters that pursue their deepest impulses and motives to an end.

If we apply this logic to *The Wind from Nowhere*, it could then be argued that Hardoon is actually the true hero of the novel, since he is the only one that defies conventional wisdom and follows the logic of his own mind, regardless of the fact that doing so culminates in his death. On the other hand, perhaps Hardoon meets his end because he challenges the forces of nature rather

than embracing them. As will be explained, in *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*, it is precisely by submitting to and accepting their respective apocalyptic environments that the protagonists are granted access to the realm of the unconscious, and thus reach a point of psychic fulfillment.

### The Drowned World

Published in the same year as his "Which Way to Inner Space?" essay, *The Drowned World* (1962) is the first of Ballard's novels to significantly explore inner space. This novel follows biologist Robert Kerans and a group of other scientists and military personnel as they travel north through a drowned Europe, conducting a biological mapping of the land. The scientific explanation for the catastrophe is as follows: sixty or seventy years prior, due to a "sudden instability in the Sun" and a succession of solar storms, the Van Allen belts began to enlarge, and this in turn "diminished the Earth's gravitational hold upon the outer layers of the ionosphere" (*DW* 33). As these layers of the Earth's atmospheric barrier disappeared, the temperature around the world steadily increased, and the world's population was forced to migrate either north or south, towards the poles, thus beginning the colonization "of the Antarctic plateau and of the northern borders of the Canadian and Russian continents" (33). Furthermore, as the polar ice-caps and tens of thousands of glaciers melted, they poured into the oceans, eventually turning the major cities of the world into sunken ruins:

> Driving the submerged silt before them, the new seas completely altered the shape and contours of the continents. The Mediterranean contracted into a system of inland lakes, the British Isles was linked again with northern France. The Middle West of the United States, filled by the Mississippi as it drained the Rocky Mountains, became an enormous

gulf opening into the Hudson Bay, while the Caribbean Sea was transformed into a desert

of silt and salt flats. Europe became a system of giant lagoons, centered on the principal

low-lying cities, inundated by the silt carried southwards by the expanding rivers. (34)

Because of this new climate characterized by extreme heat and water, plant life also started to

grow at an accelerated rate, and the increased levels of radiation in the air caused major

mutations to occur. Importantly, as Kerans explains, in this drowned world, "the flora and fauna

of this planet are beginning to assume once again the forms they displayed the last time such

conditions were present—roughly speaking, the Triassic period" (54).

As previously mentioned, unlike *The Wind from Nowhere* which is set during the events

of the catastrophe, *The Drowned World* is set in the aftermath of disaster, and Ballard uses the

conditions of this post-apocalyptic world as a way of investigating inner space. In other words,

the disaster itself is not the main focus of the novel; Ballard's primary concern is the internal

transformations experienced by the characters, and this is consistent with his desire to interiorize

the SF genre and reimagine the disaster story. As Ballard stated in a 1975 interview with James

Goddard and David Pringle:

You're right when you say that it's a classic English SF form, but that's the reason why I

used the formula of the disaster story. Usually these disaster stories are treated as though

they *are* disasters, they're treated straight, and everyone's running for the hills or out of

the hills or whatever […] I use the form because I deliberately want to invert it – that's

the whole point of the novels. The heroes, for psychological reasons of their own,

embrace the particular transformation. These are stories of huge psychic transformations

[...] And I use this external transformation of the landscape to reflect and marry with the

internal transformation, the psychological transformation, of the characters. This is what

the subject matter of these books is: they're transformation stories rather than disaster

stories. (*EM* 90)

Consistent with this statement is the fact that in *The Drowned World*, along with the external

cataclysm, there is a simultaneous, internal process underway: as plant life is reverting to its

prehistoric forms, the characters, too, are receding into the "time jungles" of their mind,

descending into their amniotic pasts, and moving through "archaeopsychic time" so as to

reconnect with biological memories, of their selves and of the species. As explained by Dr.

Bodkin in the novel's third chapter, entitled "Towards a New Psychology": "I am convinced that

as we move back through geophysical time so we re-enter the amnionic corridor and move back

through spinal and archaeopsychic time, recollecting in our unconscious minds the landscapes of

each epoch" (*DW* 57).

The parallel movement occurring between inner and outer worlds indicates that the two

are inextricably connected, and this becomes ever more clear as the novel progresses. Not only

does traversing through the geophysical landscape allow for psychic transformations to occur,

but, equipped with a new sense of perception, it is as if Kerans begins to remake the external

world in the likeness of his own "self." This is why, for instance, the "booming" and

"drumming" sun that beats within his head overlaps with the external sun, a phenomenon

referred to as the "sun : pulse equation" (*DW* 88). Similarly, the water in the lakes and lagoons is

described as being "an extension of [Kerans's] own bloodstream" (86). Furthermore, as the

distinctions between inner and outer worlds dissolve, and as the external landscape is

transformed into a psychic space, Ballard also remakes this psychogeographical landscape to

resemble various Surrealist paintings by Max Ernst, Paul Delvaux, and Salvador Dalí, all of

whom are all mentioned by name in *The Drowned World*, and whose artwork will be returned to momentarily.

At the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Kerans's inner movement—and that of other characters, too—is already underway. The reader is told that Kerans usually wakes up at 5 AM in order to accomplish some work at the testing station before the heat becomes "intolerable"; however, on the morning that the book begins, he finds himself "reluctant to leave the cool, air-curtained haven of the hotel suite," and instead feels the "need to isolate himself" (*DW* 17-18). Kerans is not the only one experiencing this drive towards isolation; everyone at the testing station is, though to varying degrees. Colonel Riggs and Dr. Bodkin are, in particular, aware of the effects taking hold, of the "jungle dreams" being experienced and the growing desire to stay behind, regardless of the increasing temperature, rising water levels, and imminent threats posed by nature. Because of this, Riggs and Bodkin had previously been involved in a largescale evacuation of the area, and are now trying to evacuate the few people who have stayed behind:

> Injured military personnel marooned on an office block in a deserted swamp, dying
>
> recluses unable to separate their own identities from the cities where they had spent their
>
> lives […] all these Riggs good humouredly but firmly helped back to safety, Kerans
>
> ready at his elbow to administer an analgesic or tranquilizer. (23)

The remaining crew members are slowly becoming enchanted by the landscape, which may at first seem paradoxical since Kerans wants to isolate himself in his apartment. However, as the world outside recedes around him—to the point that he is unsure of which city they are in—Kerans sinks deeper into the psyche, and soon begins to see the "time jungles" of his mind reflected in "the dark mirror of the water, the two interlocking worlds apparently suspended at some junction in time" (21). Thus, when Kerans subsequently reappears and continues to

navigate his way through the drowned world, it is not simply indicative of a reengagement with his surroundings. Rather, since inner and outer worlds are evidently connected, Kerans's journey doubles as an inner movement through the labyrinths and lagoons of the self, where descending to the depths of these inner lagoons is consistent with the Jungian archetype of water as being "a living symbol of the dark psyche" (*Archetypes* 17).

Though Kerans's inner movement is noticeable at the beginning of the novel, it is also clear that it is in its primary stages. At this point he is somewhat directionless: he knows that transformations are occurring, but he doesn't yet know whether these changes should be embraced or resisted, whether he should remain where he is or head north to Camp Byrd. The same goes for Beatrice Dahl, another character who is experiencing, but not yet engulfed by, "deep time" and "jungle dreams." In this sense, Kerans and Beatrice are both characters that are in a state of limbo or liminality, malleable and open to the influence of various forces. On one hand, they can heed the advice of Colonel Riggs and head north, an act that would save their lives but leave the transformative possibilities of the drowned world behind. Or, on the other hand, they can stay behind, regardless of the consequences, knowing very well that they might become like Lieutenant Hardman, who has to be awakened every 10 minutes by a device that Dr. Bodkin created in order to prevent him from "slid[ing] off the pre-conscious shelf into deep sleep" (*DW* 49).

Kerans, in particular, remembers that Hardman had become extremely reclusive and "steadily retreated into his private world" over a period of time, and he recognizes these same symptoms in himself, experiencing "an accelerated entry into his own 'zone of transit'" (*DW* 47). Therefore, Kerans is conscious early on that the fate of Hardman may very well be the fate of himself, and the remainder of the novel depicts Kerans's journey towards this fate, right up to the

point that he and Hardman reunite at the end of the novel, both following the "archaeopsychic sun" that resides deep within their minds, a sun that also appears in the paintings of Max Ernst, such as *Forest and Sun* (1927), *The Large Forest* (1925), and *The Embalmed Forest* (1933).

As mentioned, Kerans's psychic journey is in part informed by various Surrealist paintings, as if they provide him with the canvases onto which he can project his own inner space. Ernst, Delvaux, and Dalí are mentioned on many occasions throughout the novel and their paintings—in tandem with key symbols such as broken clocks and compasses—mediate Kerans's journey and reaffirm the direction he must travel. Just as the broken compass he steals always points to the south, Kerans knows that he must travel inward, with the south thus being equated to the self. Ernst and Delvaux are first mentioned in the second chapter, "The Coming of the Iguanas,"[24] when Kerans sees their paintings hanging in Beatrice's apartment, moments after confronting her about her perceived "self-destructive impulses":

> Over the mantelpiece was a huge painting by the early 20th century Surrealist, Delvaux, in which ashen-faced women danced naked to the waist with dandified skeletons in tuxedos against a spectral bone-like landscape. On another wall one of Max Ernst's self-devouring phantasmagoric jungles screamed silently to itself, like the sump of some insane unconscious.
>
> For a few moments Kerans stared quietly at the dim yellow annulus of Ernst's sun glowering through the exotic vegetation, a curious feeling of memory and recognition signalling through his brain. Far more potent than the Beethoven, the image of the archaic sun burned against his mind, illuminating the fleeting shadows that darted fitfully through its profoundest deeps. (*DW* 41)

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[24] The title of this chapter appears to be a pun on "The Coming of the Unconscious," the title of an essay that Ballard later published in 1966, in which he analyzes various Surrealist paintings.

In this passage, Ernst's painting is referred to as a "phantasmagoric jungle" and, as is explained in the novel's penultimate chapter, the world in which Kerans finds himself deeply resembles this painting: "So his descent into the phantasmagoric forest continued, the rain sweeping relentlessly across his face and shoulders" (192). Ernst's artwork and the drowned world are thus not only linked together visually, but also grammatically, seeing as Ballard uses the same terminology to describe both. This is also the case with how Ballard uses the phrase "the drowned world" to refer not only to the sunken cities of the geophysical terrain, but also to "the drowned world of [Kerans's] uterine childhood" into which he recedes (40).

But returning to Ernst's painting, the reader is told that it depicts a sun which burns against Kerans's mind, and, interestingly, a similar sun is seen in both the external world and in Kerans's dreams, that which "booms" and "drums" within the confines of his skull. As mentioned, just as the lakes and lagoons are described as being extensions of Kerans's bloodstream, the beating sun pulses at the same frequency "of his own heartbeats" (*DW* 86), a phenomenon that Dr. Bodkin calls the "sun : pulse equation" (88). This formula furthers the reader's understanding of how, in the apocalyptic worlds that Ballard envisions, inner and outer worlds have overlapped and are on equal planes: the inner world has been externalized and the outer world has been internalized. However, due to Ballard's invocation of the Surrealist paintings, the superimposition of worlds is actually threefold, between the geophysical terrain, Kerans's inner space, and the paintings that are referenced.

In *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination*, Jeannette Baxter refers to *The Drowned World* as Ballard's "most painterly novel" and calls it "a collage of twentieth-century Surrealist fictions in which Ernst's phantasmagoric jungles, Delvaux's haunting cityscapes and Dalí's time-saturated meditations coincide and overlay one another to form a palimpsest of soft, visual

geographies" (Baxter 17). Baxter identifies Ernst's *Europe After the Rain I* (1933) as being a key visual geography in Ballard's novel, stating that it represents "the altered psychic landscape of Europe between the Wars which manifests in a deformed physical wasteland in which all traces of civilisation have been wiped out" (18). Once again, in this way Ballard's work, like that of the Dadaists and Surrealists, can be viewed a reaction to his experiences during the war, and in his apocalyptic novels he imaginatively transforms the geography in order to, as he explained, "return to the Shanghai landscape, to some sort of truth that I glimpsed there. I think that in all my fiction, I've used the techniques of Surrealism to remake the present into something at least consonant with the past" (*Quotes* 359).

Though *Europe After the Rain I* may be significant in the ways mentioned by Baxter, it is not the painting that hangs in Beatrice Dahl's apartment, the one with a "dim yellow annulus […] glowering through the exotic vegetation" (*DW* 41). Many of Ernst's paintings include a similar image of a golden disc hovering atop dense vegetation—such as the aforementioned *Forest and Sun*, *The Large Forest*, and *The Embalmed Forest*—and this makes it difficult to discern the specific painting that Ballard references in *The Drowned World*. Regardless of this, as Baxter explains, "Ernst's forests articulate a moment of sublime hesitation, an oscillation between fear and wonder, as the intense light of the sun plays against the darkness of the hostile trees" (Baxter 33-34). It is also the case that the forest is a symbol of the unconscious, a "site of the repression and fear that must be faced and overcome in order to obtain a new centred equilibrium," and Ernst's forests in particular are often "teeming with animals hidden in the underbrush and permeated with the decay and regenerative life of nature in the process of evolution" (Warlick

193). I would argue that these aspects of Ernst's forest paintings, along with the grattage

technique used,[25] represents the coming of the unconscious and one's meeting with the shadow.

The contrast in Ernst's paintings between the sunlight and the dark vegetation is adopted

by Ballard as a way of representing the light and dark aspects of Kerans's "self," and it is only by

navigating through the dark lagoons and labyrinths of the drowned world that the sun, the point

of transformation and reincorporation, can be reached. As Samuel Francis explains, "Ballard's

encounter with Surrealism is informed by his reading of Freudian and Jungian depth

psychology" (Francis 65), and in *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*, the

landscapes, due to the overlapping of inner and outer worlds, necessarily become mental

projections of the characters' inner selves. As such, aspects of their identity are manifested in the

world around them, and this is the reason why some characters are portrayed in white apparel

and others in black. In *The Drowned World*, in particular, along with the landscape itself, this

light/ dark binary can be found in the characters of Hardman and Strangman, whose similar

names also gesture towards the idea that they are two parts of the same self.

As previously noted, at the beginning of the novel, Hardman is the character whose

descent into deep time is the most advanced and, against the will of Riggs and Bodkin, he flees

from the group and heads south. When Kerans finds him at the end of the novel, Hardman is

depicted as a dark, burned skeleton, with a "black skull" and eye sockets that have turned into

"blackened funnels" (*DW* 195, 194), and with legs that look like "two charred poles of wood"

(193). In contrast, Strangman—a looter who careens across the European lagoons on a

hydroplane, accompanied by a group of stereotyped, black crewman and trained alligators[26]—is

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[25] This refers to the process in which textured objects are placed underneath a canvas and then paint is scraped overtop of them, in turn allowing the textures of the objects to protrude onto the face of the canvas.
[26] Ballard specifically discusses the alligators in his essay "Time, Memory, and Inner Space," in which he explains that their presence in *The Drowned World* specifically invokes a childhood memory: "Among the characteristic

described on many occasions as a being a "white devil": he is always dressed in white, has a bright white sneer, and even his skin is abnormally white (everyone else has been substantially burned by the unfiltered sunlight). Despite their appearances and Hardman's seemingly grim outcome, it is actually Strangman who is considered to be Kerans's "shadow." As Francis explains, "Strangman is exactly the dark or inverse side of the passive Kerans's hypnosis by the vistas of 'archaeopsychic time,'" and "[h]is 'further neuronic role' as a 'warning mirror' for Kerans […] is consistent with the role of the shadow as an unflatteringly honest mirror image in the individual's 'confrontation with the self'" (Franics 71-72). It is Strangman who most obviously impedes Kerans's psychic journey, and his negative influence manifests itself in the form of a dam, built so that his crew can drain the lagoon with which Kerans has come to deeply identify.

Prior to the dam being built, however, in the chapter entitled "The Pool of Thanatos," Kerans dives down and enters into a sunken womb-shaped planetarium, and becomes startled when he sees a figure "in an immense ballooning space-suit facing him ten feet away, white bubbles streaming from his frog-like head, hands raised in an attitude of menace, a blaze of light pouring from his helmet" (*DW* 125). The double that Kerans encounters here is actually his reflection in a mirror, but considering that this moment occurs shortly after he first meets Strangman, it seems to also suggest Kerans's encounter with his shadow. Though his descent into the sunken planetarium nearly results in his death—it is unclear whether his near suffocation is the result of his own actions or Strangman's—it is meaningful because, for one, it reflects

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fauna of the Triassic age were the crocodiles and alligators, amphibian creatures at home in both the aquatic and terrestrial worlds, who symbolize for the hero of the novel the submerged dangers of his quest. Even now I can vividly remember the enormous ancient alligator housed in a concrete pit half-filled with cigarette packets and ice-cream cartons in the reptile house at the Shanghai zoo, who seemed to have been jerked forward reluctantly so many tens of millions of years into the twentieth century" (*UGM* 199).

Kerans's "implicit acceptance of the death instinct" (Francis 75). But perhaps even more significant, it simply represents his descent into the depths of the psyche, a moment in which he comes face to face with the complexities of his self, which is a necessary step of his journey towards individuation: "He drifted from one pool to another, in the limbos of eternity, a thousand images of himself reflected in the inverted mirrors of the surface" (*DW* 128).

However, once Strangman and his crew drain the lagoon, the landscape loses its meaningfulness. The drained city is not the landscape that Kerans has come to identify his psyche with and, as such, it is described as being hellish and an impediment to his psychic journey. As Beatrice comments: "It's like some imaginary city of Hell. Robert, I *need* the lagoon" (*DW* 143). With the lagoon drained, Kerans's shadow starts to overwhelm him, and this is reflected in the external world by the shadows of previously submerged buildings towering over him, casting darkness onto the scene. It is also at this moment that the importance of Ernst's artwork is temporarily relegated to the background of the novel, and Delvaux's skeletal landscape emerges to the foreground.

To reiterate, along with the Ernst painting that hangs in Beatrice Dahl's apartment, there is a Delvaux painting that resides above the mantelpiece "in which ashen-faced women [dance] naked to the waist with dandified skeletons in tuxedos against a spectral bone-like landscape" (*DW* 41). This description informs the reader of the foreground and the background of the painting, both of which are later manifested in the novel: the bone-scape and the skeletal, tuxedoed figures. To begin, along with being described as a "white devil," Strangman is also visually reminiscent of the skeletons in Delvaux's painting:

> Kerans nodded, watching Strangman in his white suit, the bare-legged Beatrice beside
> him. Suddenly he remembered the Delvaux painting, with its tuxedoed skeletons.

Strangman's chalk-white face was like a skull, and he had something of the skeletons'

jauntiness. For no reason he began to feel an intense distaste for the man, his hostility

more generalised than personal. (*DW* 112)

Baxter identifies the Delvaux painting as being *The Worried City* (1941), and this appears to be

the most accurate interpretation. Baxter describes the "haunting topography" of this painting,

explaining how it is "post-apocalyptic in its mood and imagery: signatures of death (skulls,

bones) clutter the deracinated wasteland, whilst the city's inhabitants stumble

somnambulistically across the barren geography, or sit in a series of traumatized poses" (Baxter

32). After Strangman appears, he and his crew come to the fore of the novel and begin to exert

influence over the landscape, and this coincides with the images of bones and skulls becoming

more prevalent. Eventually, when they dam and drain the lagoon, they temporarily rid the novel

of Ernst's "phantasmagoric jungles" and instead reveal the bare "bones" of London, the remnants

of a sunken city in which the windows of buildings look "like empty eyes in enormous drowned

skulls" (*DW* 139).

After the lagoon is drained, the titles of two consecutive chapters seemingly describe

Delvaux's painting: "The Ballad of Mistah Bones" and "The Feast of Skulls." At this point in the

novel, Strangman's crew begins to wear "sported tuxedos and black ties" (*DW* 150), just like the

figures in Delvaux's painting, and they perform a song for Kerans entitled *The Ballad of Mistah

Bones*. Furthermore, Kerans begins to wear a white dinner suit, which again seems to represent

the overwhelming presence of his shadow, seeing as he starts to dress similar to Strangman.

Subsequently, the opening image of "The Feast of Skulls" depicts Kerans sitting atop a throne of

bones: "At his feet, at the base of the throne, the broken white harvest of bones gleamed with

their ivory whiteness: slender tibias and femurs, scapulas like worn trowels, a mesh of ribs and

vertebrae, even two lolling skulls" (157). Once again, all of this supports the idea that the landscape has transformed from one of Ernst's phantasmagoric jungles into one of Delvaux's bone-scapes; however, though Kerans is forced to travel through a labyrinth of "empty streets and gutted buildings," he is "unable to tear himself away from his memories of the old lagoon" (148). As such, in order to escape the state of limbo in which he finds himself, Kerans must find a way out of the skeletal landscape and free himself from the growing influence of Strangman, the embodiment of his shadow, so that he can reclaim dominance over his self and become whole, psychically fulfilled.

When Big Caesar and the Admiral tear the throne of bones from its moorings, Kerans falls to the ground and quickly flees through "the labyrinthine nexus of the University quarter" (*DW* 164). Importantly, at this moment Kerans tears off his white dinner jacket, and thus figuratively frees himself from the grips of Strangman. In doing so, he is then able to take the action that is needed in to continue his psychic journey: bomb the dam and progress south towards an interior sun:

> The shattering of this shell, like the piercing doubts about his true unconscious motives set off by his near drowning in the planetarium, was the necessary spur to action, to his emergence into the brighter day of the interior, archaeopsychic sun. Now he would have to go forward. Both the past, represented by Riggs, and the present contained within the demolished penthouse, no longer offered a viable existence. His commitment to the future, so far one of choice and plagued by so many doubts and hesitations, was now absolute. (167-168)

As is made evident by this quotation, Kerans knows that he must turn his back on Strangman, Riggs, and the relics of the past in order to progress forward and complete his journey to a

"psychological Garden of Eden" (Pringle 20). Bombing the dam not only grants him the opportunity to do this, but it also marks the return of Ernst's painting to the forefront of the novel. At this point, the "archaeopsychic sun" that Kerans has been journeying towards is finally within reach.

With the bombing of the dam and re-emergence of the sun, the landscape that Kerans had equated his psyche with returns, and the overlap between inner and outer worlds becomes evidently more complete: "the archaic sun in his mind beat again continuously with its immense power, its identity merging now with that of the real sun visible behind the rain-clouds" (*DW* 183). In the second chapter, we are told that "a point might ultimately be reached where a second Adam and Eve [find] themselves alone in a new Eden" (35), and it is ultimately by travelling south and following the sun—the simultaneously internal and external one—that Kerans fulfills his role as "a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn Sun" (198). Though this journey will surely result in Kerans's physical death, it is his willingness to follow his imagination and abide by the impulses stirring within his psyche that makes him a hero to Ballard, as it is by doing so this he achieves the psychic fulfillment he had been journeying for and reaches a point of illumination, like "an archetypal figure standing for mankind's longing for a prelapsarian state" (Delville 10).

### The Drought

Whereas *The Drowned World* imagines a near future that resembles the Triassic past, *The Drought* (1965)[27] envisions a future in which all water reservoirs have nearly dried up as a result of human activity: "the vast quantities of industrial wastes discharged into the ocean basins

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[27] A shorter version, entitled *The Burning World*, was published in the US in 1964, but I'm using the revised, expanded edition that was first published in the UK in 1965.

during the previous fifty years" caused a layer of "mono-molecular film" to form on the "air-water interface" (*D* 47). The formation of this film made it so that no water could evaporate into the sky, and this in turn caused a series of droughts all over the world until "areas as far apart as Saskatchewan and the Loire valley, Kazakhstan and the Madras tea country turned into arid dust-basins" (46). However, though the cause of catastrophe differs between these two novels, when we are introduced to Dr. Charles Ransom, it is evident that the novels' protagonists (Ransom and Kerans) are quite similar, both at a similar stage of their psychic journeys at the outset of each respective novel. As is the case in *The Drowned World*, when *The Drought* begins, most of the inhabitants of Hamilton and Mount Royal have already evacuated and are headed for the coast, which is the perceived place of safety. Like Kerans, Ransom, who resides in his "houseboat," is overcome with feelings of isolation and feels inclined to stay behind in Hamilton. The important difference between the two characters, however, is that Ransom eventually acts against his instincts and decides to travel to the shoreline with a group of holdouts. This decision, which sees Ransom going against the impulses stirring within his psyche, results in his decade-long stay in a state of purgatory known as "dune limbo," and it is only when he learns to read and decipher the coded landscape around him (and return to Mount Royal) that his psychic journey moves towards completion.

Even more important to the focus of this section is the fact that in *The Drought* Ballard once again invokes a specific Surrealist painting, this time Yves Tanguy's *Jours de lenteur* (1937). Interestingly, though Jeannette Baxter's *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination* remains the most comprehensive examination of Ballard's Surrealist impulse to date, this book omits all analysis of the reference to Tanguy's painting, and instead simply poses the following questions on the second last page: "What is the significance of Yves Tanguy's *Jours de lenteur* (1937) in

*The Drought* (1963)? How does Tanguy's spectral desert function psychologically and historically in Ballard's novel?" (Baxter 221). This section will aim to take up Baxter's questions by showing how Tanguy's painting not only provides the visual topography for the barren landscape into which Ballard places his characters, but also, along with other aspects of the landscape, provides Ransom with the keys to his psychic journey, instructing him on how to break free from his associations with the past—those which inhibit his ability to embrace the apocalypse—and move north, towards the centre of the drought and towards a resolved psychological future.

Tanguy's painting is first mentioned in the second chapter of *The Drought* when the interior of Ransom's houseboat is described:

Looking at the contents of the cabin as he sipped his drink, Ransom debated which of his possessions to take with him. The cabin had become, unintentionally, a repository of all the talismans of his life. On the bookshelf were the anatomy texts he had used in the dissecting room as a student, the pages stained with the formalin that leaked from the corpses on the tables […] On the desk by the stern window was the limestone paperweight he had cut from a chalk cliff as a child, the fossil shells embedded in its surface bearing a quantum of Jurassic time like a jewel. Behind it, the ark of his covenant, stood two photographs in a hinged blackwood frame. On the left was a snapshot of himself at the age of four, sitting on a lawn between his parents before their divorce. On the right, exorcizing this memory, was a faded reproduction of a small painting he had clipped from a magazine, 'Jours de Lenteur' by Yves Tanguy. With its smooth, pebble-like objects, drained of all associations, suspended on a washed tidal floor, this painting had helped to free him from the tiresome repetitions of everyday life.

The rounded milky forms were isolated on their ocean bed like the houseboat on the

exposed bank of the river. (*D* 24)

As is evident by the last sentence of this passage, Ballard establishes a connection between

Tanguy's painting and the world surrounding Ransom, as the houseboat situated on the edge of

the (nearly) dried-up river is equated to one of the "milky forms" in Tanguy's painting, isolated

on the ocean bed. Furthermore, though this passage tells the reader that Ransom is anchored to

his past, to his childhood memories and his relationship with his ex-wife Judith, it also explains

that Tanguy's painting, with its objects "drained of all associations," can help him to escape from

such "tiresome repetitions of everyday life" (24). As such, though Ransom must abandon "this

insular, sheltered, static world […] [in order] to achieve liberation from the burdens of memory

and identity" (Stephenson 53), the indication here is that Tanguy's painting can be used as a tool

for Ransom on his journey through inner space, an image that is coded with the keys needed to

detach from the past and escape "dune limbo."

Just as the objects in Tanguy's painting are described as being "drained of all

associations," the reader ascertains that the dry, acrid landscape in which Ransom finds himself

is not only literally drained of water, but also drained of its associations with the old world, and

this is something that Ransom, too, is conscious of:

Throughout the long summer Ransom had watched the river shrinking, its countless

associations fading as it narrowed into a shallow creek. Above all, 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 real movements were those random and discontinuous relationships

between the objects within it, those of himself and Mrs Quilter, her son and the dead

birds and fish. (*D* 22)

Interestingly, though Ransom is compelled to stay in Mount Royal and instinctively understands

that the new logics of this apocalyptic world must be embraced in order to move forward, he

resists these impulses and, grasping for vestiges of the old world, concedes to follow the rest of

humanity to the coast. As previously explained, Ballard's heroes are those who break away from

logic and reason, follow their impulses and obsessions, and embrace the new logics at play in the

apocalyptic worlds, and in *The Drought* Ransom's journey to the coast works to repress these

very impulses, the ones that, when followed, hold promise for the future. By failing to embrace

the "random and discontinuous relationships" first outlined in the description of Tanguy's

painting, Ransom becomes trapped, both physically and mentally. Even Richard Lomax—an

extremely rich man who is hoarding water and who we later understand is a symbol of the old

world, and thus a "shadow" of Ransom—warns Ransom against embarking on such a journey,

claiming that it is actually Mount Royal that is the place with "a great deal of future" (62),

adding that "[i]t's the future each of us has to come to terms with now" (63).

Like Kerans's broken compass in *The Drowned World* which reaffirms his sense of

direction south, inward and into the past, south in *The Drought* is also associated with the past;

however, since the landscapes are in direct opposition of each other and thus necessitate different

means of interaction, the topological direction that leads to psychological fulfillment in *The*

*Drought* is the opposite. As Reverend Johnstone, the leader of the parish militia, explains: "I

sometimes think we ought to accept the challenge and set off north, right into the centre of the

drought . . . There's probably a great river waiting for us somewhere there, brown water and

green lands" (*D* 99). Once again, just like the warnings set forth by Lomax and Tanguy's

painting, the signs are there for Ransom to follow, and he even finds himself "effectively alone in Hamilton, as he had unconsciously intended from the beginning," but he misreads the coded landscape (100). Therefore, when Lomax and his deranged helper Quilter set Mount Royal ablaze, Ransom and his fellow group of holdouts—which consists of Catherine Austen, Mrs. Quilter, Philip Jordan, and Philip's "father"—decide to leave.

During this journey, Ransom inherently knows that they are travelling in the wrong direction, a direction that will only impede his psychic journey:

> During their journey to the south he had felt an increasing sense of vacuum, as if he was pointlessly following a vestigial instinct that no longer had any real meaning for him. The four people with him were becoming more and more shadowy, residues of themselves as notional as the empty river. He watched Catherine and Mrs Quilter climb on to a fallen steel girder that spanned the stream, already seeing them only in terms of the sand and dust, the eroding slopes and concealed shadows. (*D* 122)

Here, it is once again clear that the apocalyptic landscape becomes a point of intersection between inner and outer worlds, and though not included in this specific passage, Ballard frequently uses the symbol of a mirror to allude to the fact that inner and outer worlds are reflections of each other. For instance, the oily surface of the water is described as a "darkening mirror" (90) and a "mirror of the cloudless sky" (143), and the polished surface of the hearse that Philip later finds has a "mirror-like brilliance" to it (177). Even more explicitly, when Ransom eventually arrives back at Mount Royal, we are told that the "eyes of the windows were set like mirrors of an interior world" (194), a moment which also coincides with Ransom sensing his "true inner compass […] the white deck of the river was carrying them all in the opposite direction, forward into zones of time future where the unresolved residues of the past would

appear smooth and rounded, muffled by the detritus of time, like images in a clouded mirror"
(192).

But returning to the particular passage outlined above, that which describes the characters
as "shadowy, residues of themselves as notional as the empty river" (*D* 122), the term
"shadows"—which invokes the Jungian shadow—is used again at the end of the excerpt to
describe the sandy, eroding landscape. Therefore, just as in *The Drowned World*, in this moment
Ballard uses the same terminology to describe the characters and their surroundings, which
further works to indicate how inner and outer space have overlapped. Furthermore, seeing as
"[s]and is a symbol of entropy" (Pringle 22), it is clear that as the external world crumbles, so too
does the characters' interiority, and Ransom must thus find a way to repair his inner space, his
fractured psyche.[28] Importantly, just after this moment, Ransom sees a man walking alone
amongst the dunes, and the way in which this figure is portrayed dramatically differs from how
Ransom's group of travellers is described:

> The absolute isolation of the chalk-white promenade, with its empty perspectives,
> focused an intense light upon the solitary traveller. For some reason, his strange figure,
> detached from the pressing anxieties of the drought and exodus, seemed a compass of all
> the unstated motives that Ransom had been forced to repress during the previous days. (*D*
> 122)

Like Tanguy's painting, and the words of Lomax and Reverend Johnstone, this solitary
traveller—which may very well be Ransom's future self—acts as a signpost that nudges Ransom
in the correct direction. At this point in the novel, however, he once again overlooks this sign and

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[28] At times, Ballard also uses anatomical language to blur inner and outer worlds. For example, there is the "skeleton
of a large fishing trawler" (*D* 200), and sand that is referred to as "bone-like dust" (216).

soon after he reaches the coast and ends up in "dune limbo," purgatory, a place in which no psychic progress can be made.

While there, the other inhabitants attempt to restore normalcy by creating a society in the image of the old order, the pre-drought world, one in which hierarchies are formed and where Ransom reconnects with his ex-wife Judith. But by holding on to the past, all of these characters are rendered stagnant and are unable to progress, slaves to a civilization that has long passed by (just like Strangman in *The Drowned World*, who collects relics from the past that bear no relevance in the new world—they are "bones," as Kerans describes them). These characters are like the figures in the foreground of Tanguy's painting, the biomorphic, milky forms that are "creatures halfway between organic life and minerals" (Passeron 241). But, as is also the case in Tanguy's painting, far off in the distance, where the ground and horizon blur, one figure resides on its own, and this form represents the solitary traveller that Ransom had previously seen and who he must become.

As Francis explains: "Despite *The Drought's* orientation towards a future remote from the unconscious past, the narrative also enacts an uncanny return of the repressed which implies the persistence of memory, the impossibility of complete escape from the past" (Francis 83-84). During Ransom's decade spent in dune limbo, we are told that the corpses of humans who died in "bloody battles" would frequently wash upon the shore, which is not only reminiscent of the "corpses" of dead fish that cover the landscape through which Ransom traverses on his way to the shore, but which also evokes the anatomy textbooks kept in his houseboat, those which are "stained with the formalin that leaked from the corpses on the tables" (*D* 24).[29] Again, the recurrence of corpses throughout the novel indicates how Ransom is anchored to the past, and it

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[29] Note how the word "corpses" is used here rather than "cadavers."

implies that existing in such a stagnant state makes Ransom nothing more than a walking corpse himself.[30]

Furthermore, while in "dune limbo," both Ransom and Judith are described as having asymmetrical faces, which indicates a lack of psychic resolution (*D* 152), and it is only because they reside outside of the settlement that they are prevented from fully becoming victims of "the gradual numbing of sense and identity that [is] the unseen gradient of the dune limbo" (154). However, and importantly, it is in thinking about Tanguy's painting that Ransom realizes he must escape purgatory and journey back to Mount Royal in order to find his psychological Eden:

> Often Ransom remembered the painting by Tanguy which he had left behind in the houseboat. 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 wreckage and scrap metal from which they built their cabins. (154-155)

Though the landscape of dune limbo initially appears to resemble Tanguy's painting, it is a false association, and as Andrzej Gasiorek explains, "Tanguy's painting is a talisman warding off the pain of early trauma. Eroded over long aeons, its objects have had their distinguishing features erased, turning them into blank forms no longer subject to the haunting of memory or the passage of time to come" (Gasiorek 32). It is only when Ransom realizes this and begins to sufficiently decipher the codes of Tanguy's painting that he feels "inner conviction" stirring

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[30] Ballard gestures towards the coded landscape on many other occasions in the novel, such as through the symbols that Jonas and his group of fishermen make in the sand, and the various moments in which Ballard mentions calligraphic patterns (Luckhurst 67; Gasiorek 42).

within himself, begins to detach from the past and dune limbo, and reorients himself towards the north.

David Pringle claims that "[i]n cutting off our roots we kill ourselves. At the end of *The Drought,* the protagonist has reached such a state of living death that he does not even notice when it starts to rain again. If *The Drowned World* gave us Ballard's Eden, then *The Drought* certainly represents his Hell" (Pringle 24). I would, however, argue the opposite in regard to *The Drought*, and make the case that it is in "cutting off [his] roots" that Ransom actually reaches a state of psychological fulfillment, not a state of "living death." When Ransom eventually returns to Hamilton and the surrounding city of Mount Royal, everything is markedly different: the city has been burned to the ground and Ransom's houseboat, his "psychic ark," has been destroyed, thus rupturing the past associations he had with the area and in turn freeing him mentally and temporally. Upon return, Ransom instantly breaks away from his group of co-travellers and heads for the Lomax residence, where he finds Miranda Lomax, Quilter, and their three children. It is also at this point that a parody of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* plays out—an intertext that Ballard later returns to in *Concrete Island*—in which Quilter is Caliban, Philip is Ariel, Richard Lomax is Prospero, and Miranda Lomax is Miranda:

> In the inverted drought version of the story, Caliban, representing the base instincts, triumphs over all the other figures; Ariel forfeits every trace of innocence and ethereality; Miranda becomes depraved and debauched and is reduced at last to breeding Caliban's monstrous offspring; and Prospero is revealed not only as being vindictive and selfish, but also silly and ineffectual, and he is overthrown in the end by Caliban. (Stephenson 54)

It is significant, however, that despite Miranda being depicted as extremely grotesque—having cannibalized many travellers—and the children, with their "brachycephalic skull[s]," resembling "the congenitally insane" (*D* 213), Ransom views them all as being beautiful. He embraces those who have embraced the apocalyptic world, and in doing so begins to understand the new realities and logics of the drought, thus finally opening himself up to experiencing *apokalupsis*.

Whereas Quilter, Miranda, and their children "represent an evolutionary step which allows some vital psychological element […] to perpetuate itself into the future" (Francis 84-85), Richard Lomax, who had the most power in the old world, is unable to integrate into the new world of the drought, still obsessed with his supply of water. As Ballard explains, if Miranda and Quilter are "a last Eve and Adam waiting for time's end" (*D* 225), then Lomax is "[t]he serpent in this dusty Eden […] trying to grasp back his apple, and preserve intact, if only for a few weeks, the world before the drought" (222). Like Strangman in *The Drowned World*, "Lomax's self-destructive behaviour is directly linked with his wish to deny or reverse the progress of the catastrophe" (Delville 11-12), and this aspect of his character makes him Ransom's shadow. By turning away from the settlement established in dune limbo, travelling back to Mount Royal, and then confronting and overturning the old logics (and hierarchies) espoused and represented by Lomax, Ransom undergoes a restorative journey in which he learns to embrace the apocalypse.

In doing so, he completes the "expedition into his own future, into a world of volitional time where the images of the past were reflected free from the demands of memory and nostalgia, free even from the pressure of thirst and hunger" (*D* 222). He becomes the solitary traveller he had previously seen and, as indicated by the final chapter's title, "Jours de Lenteur," finds himself fully immersed in Tanguy's painting, in a landscape free of the associations he had been clinging to for so long, "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" (237). Ransom notices that he no longer casts "any shadow on to the sand,"[31] and in this state of completion and psychic fulfillment, it is "as if the whole of the exterior world were losing its existence" (237). The novel ends with rainfall, but Ransom doesn't notice it, as he is now solely focused on finding the lost sea of his interior world.

### *The Crystal World*

*The Crystal World* (1966) is the final installment of Ballard's apocalyptic tetralogy and begins with Dr. Edward Sanders's arrival in Port Matarre, an "isolated corner of the Cameroon Republic" (*CW* 4), having just left his post at the Fort Isabelle *léproserie* (leper hospital). Sanders initially believes that the purpose of his voyage is to reconnect with his friends Max and Suzanne Clair, the latter of whom Sanders had previously had an affair with, but from the outset it is evident that, like Kerans and Ransom, his true intentions are unclear. In the first chapter alone, the reader is told about Sanders's "ambiguous motives" (6, 14), "hidden motives" and "concealed motives" (21), all of which alludes to the fact that Sanders's conscious reasons for travelling to Port Matarre are subservient to the unconscious impulses stirring within his psyche. As we come to learn, the forest near Mont Royal is transforming, undergoing a process of crystallization that is spreading like a plant disease, turning everything it touches into crystalline objects, including humans. As is the case in all of Ballard's apocalyptic novels, the catastrophe isn't just confined to this single forest. It is occurring in other parts of the world as well, such as in the Florida Everglades and the Pripet Marshes in the Soviet Union, and by the end of the novel

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[31] Earlier we are told: "The light illuminated the whole avenue, and flared through the windows of the lounge, throwing Ransom's shadow on to the wall behind him" (*D* 95). At the end, the lack of shadow being cast appears to indicate that Ransom has successfully reincorporated his shadow, which thus stands in contrast with Luckhurst's reading of *The Drought* as representing a psychological hell.

the reader is told that at the current "rate of progress at least a third of the earth's surface will be affected by the end of the next decade […] a vision materialized from St. John the Divine" (201). However, some characters, like Sanders and Suzanne, find themselves entranced by the forest, and slowly become aware that the transformations occurring in the crystal world are connected to a similar process taking place within themselves. As such, the forest of Mont Royal becomes a place of resolution for Sanders's divided psyche, and it is by merging with his crystalline surroundings that he is able to experience a sense of immortality, moving beyond spatial and temporal constraints.

Out of his first four novels, *The Crystal World* is the one most explicit about the external landscape being partly a mental projection of the protagonist. Importantly, the novel is divided into two main parts: "Equinox" and "The Illuminated Man."[32] When Sanders arrives at Port Matarre it is the day of the equinox, "when the sun crosses the equator, and day and night are the same length" (*CW* 35-36). In other words, on this day, day and night are equally divided, a phenomenon that represents Sanders's divided self and, like the equinox, his immediate surroundings become divided in a similar manner. As is described in the second chapter:

> These divisions into dark and light seemed everywhere around them in Port Matarre, in the contrasts between Ventress's white suit and Balthus's dark soutane, in the white arcades with their shadowed in-fills, and even in his thoughts of Suzanne Clair, the somber twin of the young woman watching him across the table with her frank eyes. (36)

Furthermore, on the very first page of the novel Ballard contrasts "the darkness of the river"—which is "almost black, like putrescent dye"—with buildings that "[gleam] across the dark swells with a spectral brightness, as if lit less by solar light than by some interior lantern" (3). Of

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[32] The latter is also the title of a short story Ballard published in 1964, in which the protagonist recounts his experiences during the crystallization of the Florida Everglades, a moment that is referenced in *The Crystal World*.

course, the apparent doubling—of the characters and of the physical world—represents Sanders's own psychic equinox, and this aspect of the novel is made even more clear when Sanders later refers to Suzanne as specifically being a projection of the "dark side of the psyche" (161). However, as Ventress suggests, though outside the forest of Mont Royal "everything seems polarized […] divided into black and white," when Sanders enters into the crystal world, "these things will be reconciled for [him]" (79). The two-part structure of the novel thus not only hints at Sanders's divided psyche, but also at the transformative process underway in which Sanders turns from a fragmented, unfulfilled person into a complete, enlightened figure: the illuminated man. As in *The Drowned World* and *The Drought*, it is by following his impulses and the new logics of the apocalyptic world that Sanders ultimately finds "the missing fragments of himself," escapes purgatory, and becomes one with the new Eden of the crystal world (209).

Importantly for the purposes of this section, I would also posit that the two-part structure of *The Crystal World* refers to the way in which the novel transitions from resembling one painting to another. When the novel begins, as the ship approaches Port Matarre, Father Balthus compares the landscape to Arnold Böcklin's *Island of the Dead* (1880, first version): "The light at Port Matarre is always like this, very heavy and penumbral—do you know Böcklin's painting, 'Island of the Dead,' where the cypresses stand guard above a cliff pierced by a hypogeum, while a storm hovers over the sea? It's in the Kunstmuseum in my native Basel—" (*CW* 6). Böcklin's painting is not only a visual correlative for the journey to the "necropolis" of Port Matarre, but also for Sanders's subsequent journey upriver to Mont Royal, the site of the crystal forest. Sanders and Louise Peret are given a ride by Aragon, a figure who is reminiscent of both Charon—the boatman of the underworld in Greek mythology—and the boatman in Böcklin's painting, whose boat appears to be carrying a casket. As Baxter explains:

Contemporaneous with Freud's developing psychoanalytical enquiries, and a precursor to

Surrealism's fascination with the unconscious, the force of Böcklin's Symbolist

experimentation lay instead in its emphasis on the inner, hidden realities of the artwork.

The impact of a single, definitive look was not a sufficient way of seeing reality. Instead,

Böcklin's symbolist aesthetics called for an enquiry into that which objective perception

obscured – the promiscuous and allusive image which 'learns to become the sign of the

inexpressible'. It is precisely the psychogeographical energies of *The Island of the Dead*

that appeal to Ballard's subversive historical imagination. (Baxter 45-46)

In *The Crystal World*, it is as if Ballard leads his characters into the forest depicted in Böcklin's

painting, and consequently he reveals the world within it, that which is hidden, all while

maintaining the thematic contemplation of death that Böcklin's painting evokes (seeing as

Sanders becomes obsessed with the idea of embalming his body in crystal, and thus experiencing

a physical death in order to attain psychic immortality). Though Baxter also discusses Max

Ernst's *The Entire City* (1934) as being another visual correlative in Ballard's novel—describing

it as a "labyrinthine city [that] is scarred with scratches, indentations and random markings

which bear testimony to [the] latent energies" of the unconscious mind (Baxter 45)—it is worth

noting that she omits mention of Ernst's *The Eye of Silence* (1943-44), which was actually used

as the cover for the first edition of *The Crystal World*. I would argue that it is this painting, *The

Eye of Silence*, that the novel's landscape morphs into once Sanders enters the crystal forest.[33]

In the essay "The Coming of the Unconscious"—which was tellingly published in 1966,

the same year as *The Crystal World*—Ballard labels *The Eye of Silence* a key Surrealist painting,

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[33] In a letter to the director of the Fort Isabelle leper hospital, Sanders calls the crystal world a "phantasmagoric forest" (*CW* 201), and thus once again equates the landscape to the paintings of Max Ernst, seeing as this is the same terminology that Ballard uses in *The Drowned World* to describe the Ernst painting that hangs in Beatrice Dahl's apartment.

and explains that Ernst's "spinal landscape, with its frenzied rocks towering into the air above the silent swamp, has attained an organic life more real than that of the solitary nymph sitting in the foreground" (*UGM* 87). It is no coincidence that the two paintings Ballard references in *The Crystal World*, Böcklin's *Island of the Dead* and Ernst's *The Eye of Silence*, resemble each other in many ways, both with towering rock formations and swampy, forested areas. It is important to note, however, that the perspectives are different: Böcklin's painting provides an overview of the island (from the outside looking in), whereas Ernst's painting is situated within the forest itself. This difference is significant because, when put side by side and conceived of together, it is indicative of a shift from outer to inner, which is akin to Sanders's transformation from equinox to illumination. As Sanders recognizes, it is only by turning away from the "real world" and entering into the crystal forest that his own psychic fragmentation begins to resolve itself, and thus Sanders's literal movement upriver is matched with a "figurative movement […] from obscurity to clarity, from dissonance to consonance, and from purgatory to paradise" (Stephenson 57).

As mentioned, in the bottom right corner of Ernst's *The Eye of Silence* resides a nymph, and I would argue that in *The Crystal World* Suzanne Clair is equated to this figure, seeing as she is described by her husband as being "the princess in the enchanted wood" (*CW* 147). Suzanne is a projection of the dark side of the psyche, and as Samuel Francis explains, "Sanders' feelings towards Suzanne are specifically sadistic, suggestive of a projection outwards of the death instinct" (Francis 91). There is an element of sexual violence implied when Sanders (unknowingly) smuggles Ventress's pistol into Port Matarre, a moment that "seem[s] to symbolize, in sexual terms as well, all his hidden motives for coming to Port Matarre in quest of Suzanne Clair" (*CW* 21). It is also implied throughout that Sanders is in some way responsible

for giving Suzanne leprosy. As such, the way in which Suzanne is depicted differs dramatically from the way in which Louise Peret is portrayed, as the latter is "repeatedly associated with the imagery of light" and thus "implicitly allied to the Freudian Eros or life instincts" (Francis 91). However, despite the way in which these two women are depicted, it is by following Suzanne—a manifestation of the dark side of the psyche, and the nymph in Ernst's painting—that Sanders is led towards the metaphorical light.

Suzanne, like Ventress (who will be discussed further momentarily), is one of the only characters who understands the importance of the forest and its transformative possibilities. Max Clair and Louise, on the other hand, do not understand it, and this is why, for instance, Max laughs when saying that his wife makes the forest "sound like the new Jerusalem" (*CW* 164). Even at the very end of the novel when Suzanne disappears into the forest to be crystallized, "Max [still has] no idea of the significance of the forest for Suzanne and Sanders, that for both of them the only final resolution of the imbalance within their minds, their inclination toward the dark side of the equinox, could be found within that crystal world" (207). Therefore, when Francis claims that Louise represents the Freudian Eros/ life instinct, this is true in the sense that life and death, in the logic of the "real world," is associated with the physical body. This is consistent with the fact that Sanders and Louise have sex on multiple occasions, and Louise is frequently seen touching him, "as if barely convinced of Sanders's physical identity in the nexus of uncertainty at Port Matarre" (51). Within the crystal world, however, life and death are not conceived of in physical terms, and it is actually by accepting one's physical death that transcendence is attained. As Sanders writes in his letter to Dr. Paul Derain, the director of the Fort Isabelle *léproserie*, "the gift of immortality [is] a direct consequence of the surrender by each of us of our own physical and temporal identities" (202-203). The forest is "a fragment of

eternity," void of time, and the crystallization process works to embalm whatever it touches (Pringle 32). Though the body is rendered completely stagnant, the mind is preserved within, and the fusion of the body to its surroundings thus turns the microcosmic into the macrocosmic, making one feel "illuminated," at one with the world.

It is Ventress who initially introduces Sanders to these ideas and who acts as the main guide on his psychic journey. Ventress is described in similar terms to Strangman in *The Drowned World*, a skeletal-like figure who is always wearing white and who looks like Death, "the old man with the scythe" (*CW* 15). Yet despite their similar appearances and the fact that both can be understood as shadows of the protagonists, in *The Crystal World* Ventress is actually a positive force for Sanders, not one that inhibits his journey. Whereas Strangman holds onto the vestiges of a dead civilization and drains the lagoon, it is Ventress who leads Sanders through the forest and opens him to the inner workings of the crystal world. Though Sanders doesn't consciously recognize the importance of Ventress at the beginning of the novel and perceives him dubiously, I would argue that he unconsciously recognizes Ventress's importance, and this is evident by the way in which he is always there to save Ventress from Thorensen's crew. Sanders is rewarded for his actions, as Ventress returns the favour and guides him towards illumination: "Led by this white-suited figure with his preoccupied gaze, they moved on through the forest, sometimes in complete circles, as if Ventress were familiarizing himself with the topography of his jeweled twilight world" (111).

Therefore, throughout the novel, the two main sources of influence for Sanders are Ventress and Suzanne. The former is always dressed in white and the latter always dressed in black, and their combined influence thus implies the reconciliation of the light and dark aspects of Sanders's self. This is consistent with Jung's description of the process of individuation

whereby the "two incongruous halves" of the psyche come together to "form a whole" (*Archetypes* 287), and it is also in line with his conception of the crystal, which is "a key Jungian symbol of the completed Self, holding as much importance in Jung's iconography as the mandala" (Luckhurst 58). Along with these Jungian concepts is the image of the snake, which is described in *Man and His Symbols* as "[p]erhaps the commonest dream symbol of transcendence" (Henderson 154).

Likewise, there is the uroboros, a circular symbol depicting a serpent eating its own tail, and which on one level indicates a cycle of destruction and rebirth. But in Jungian psychoanalysis the uroboros more specifically represents the process by which one incorporates their shadow and gives birth to a more complete version of oneself. As Jung explains in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*:

> The uroboros is a dramatic symbol for the integration and assimilation of the opposite, i.e., of the shadow. This 'feed-back' process is at the same time a symbol of immortality, since it is said of the uroboros that he slays himself and brings himself to life, fertilizes himself and gives birth to himself. (*Mysterium* 365)

It is interesting, then, that the landscape of *The Crystal World* is depicted as resembling a serpent on many occasions. Early in the novel, we are told that the river "turn[s] like an immense snake into the forest" (*CW* 16), that its "black surface […] spangled like the back of a sleeping snake" (39), and that when the sun rises it "illuminat[es] the serpentine course of the river as if revealing a secret pathway" (49). Later, when Sanders and Ventress find the crystallized body of the army captain Radek, with "rainbows" glowing in his eyes, the body is lying atop the "serpentine roots" of a large oak tree (112). Furthermore, near the end of the novel, Father Balthus finds a "blind python" whose "eyes had been transformed into enormous jewels that rose from its forehead like

crowns" (192). It is worth noting how Radek and the python are similarly described, both with crystals glimmering in their eyes, and this appears to indicate that Radek has reached a point of illumination after having merged with the crystal world. Sanders tries to "save" Radek by detaching his body from the base of the oak tree and throwing him in the river as a way of dissolving the attached crystals; however, the next time the two encounter each other, Radek screams for Sanders to "Take [him] *back!*" into the crystal world where he can once again become illuminated (138). In this sense, Radek is like Hardman in *The Drowned World* and the solitary traveller in *The Drought*, a projection of Sanders's future self and a signpost directing him towards transcendence.

At the end of the novel, the completion of Sanders's transformation and process of individuation is explained using religious terminology, as Father Balthus, who is an apostate priest, describes the crystal world as such:

> It may sound heretical to say so, but the body of Christ is with us everywhere here […] in each prism and rainbow, in the ten thousand faces of the sun […] Once I was a true apostate—I knew God existed but could not believe in him […] Now events have overtaken me. For a priest there is no greater crisis, to deny God when he can be seen to exist in every leaf and flower […] In this forest we see the final celebration of the Eucharist of Christ's body. Here everything is transfigured and illuminated, joined together in the last marriage of space and time. (*CW* 193-194)

Through this passage the reader ascertains that the crystal world is a new Eden on Earth, a space that harbours the promise of immortality should its followers agree to relinquish their physical bodies and, consequently, escape from spatial and temporal constraints. When Sanders does momentarily leave the forest and returns to the mundane world, he feels incomplete, "like the

empty projection of a self that still wandered through the forest with the jeweled cross in his arms, re-animating the lost children he passed like a deity on his day of creation" (206). Like Kerans and Ransom in the previous books, feeling empty and incomplete, Sanders ultimately turns around and travels back to the forest of Mont Royal with the assistance of Aragon.

In this regard, the novel ends where it begins, with Sanders's journey upriver; however, this time, just as the symbol of the uroboros represents, he has reconciled his divided psyche and given birth to a new version of himself, and this in turn opens up the pathway for him to fulfill his destiny as the new Adam of this crystal world, illuminated and immortal.

The next phase of Ballard's literary career carries forth many of the themes from his apocalyptic novels, but resituates them in the modern world. In his modern disaster novels—*The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Crash*, *Concrete Island*, and *High-Rise*—the natural elements of wind, water, fire, and earth are replaced by the new elements of modernity: advertising, automobiles, celebrity, and violence, and Ballard investigates the potential impact that these colliding elements may have on human identity and cognition. However, as is the case in his first tetralogy, it is when the characters pursue their latent impulses and rising psychopathologies that they reach a sense of psychic fulfillment or illumination, despite the fact that this is often achieved through profound acts of dehumanization.

Interlude I: *Hello America*

Following the first phase of his literary career, Ballard returned to a post-apocalyptic

landscape in only one other novel, *Hello America* (1981), which takes place after the complete

environmental and economic collapse of the United States, caused by the exhaustion of all fossil

fuels on the continent. As explained in the novel: "In 1997 the last barrel of crude oil was

pumped from an American well. The once huge reservoirs of petroleum which had fuelled the

US economy through the twentieth century, and made it the greatest industrial power ever

known, had at last run dry" (*HA* 51-52). Low on oil, coal, and gas—and unable to import enough

from other countries, who had also almost exhausted their own reserves—America was forced to

strictly limit its fuel consumption, and then strictly limit its use of electricity once the price of the

dwindling fossil fuel supplies reached extreme heights. With almost no energy available, an

exodus from America ensued, and by 2030 the entire continent was abandoned. As such, the

catastrophe in *Hello America* was caused by human neglect and consumption and, like *The

Drought*, it can thus be considered as an example of "cli-fi," a subgenre of science fiction

focused on climate change.[34] However, unlike Ballard's apocalyptic novels, *Hello America* does

not invoke any Surrealist artists or paintings, and it consequently does not fit in with the primary

focus of the previous chapter. Despite this noticeable difference, the blurring of inner and outer

space is still key to this novel, as the apocalyptic setting provides the characters with an

opportunity to indulge in their fantasies of an America that has long since passed, and to tap into

their dreams so as to "find that special 'America' inside each one of us" (101).

Each character on the expedition to this post-apocalyptic USA is a descendant of

Americans who were forced to flee the country, and they feel an innate connection to it and its

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[34] Currently, the preeminent figures who work in this genre include Kim Stanley Robinson, Barbara Kingsolver, and Richard Powers, the latter of which has won both the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Booker Prize.

myths, sharing a "collective fantasy of America […] united by their shared dream of 'freedom' (the last great illusion of the twentieth century)" (*HA* 33). Despite the climactic upheaval that has left much of the landscape devastated and unrecognizable, when they reach the eastern shore of the United States, they don't find a desert, but a land full of "gold dust," as if believing that the country still retains its supposed magic—a place, like Disneyland, where one's dreams can come true. As in Ballard's other apocalyptic novels, it is clear that there is a difference between the characters' conscious and unconscious motives and, as is always the case in his work, their unconscious impulses prevail. Though the reader is told that the main purpose of the expedition is to investigate the cause of increased levels of radioactivity in the atmosphere, it soon becomes clear that "the *Apollo* carried an invisible cargo of dreams and private motives" (16), and that "[t]he possibility of leaving America and making the return voyage had ceased to exist in their minds" (77). Instead, the characters begin to recede into their inner space, and the world that in turn opens up before them is a stage on which they can enact their deepest dreams, those that have been carried forth for many generations, even long after America ceased to exist.

Slowly, as their investigation into the atmospheric radiation becomes relegated to the back of their minds, the characters begin play-acting, pretending to be figures they had seen in old magazines and films. Professor Anne Summers buys a black evening gown and begins to indulge in her dreams of being an actress; Dr. Paul Ricci begins wearing a pin-striped suit and carrying around a Tommy gun, thus resembling a character in a gangster film; and the protagonist Wayne, who leads the group across the desert landscape on horseback, dreams of one day becoming president, thus evoking Ronald Reagan, a Hollywood Western actor turned president. As Ballard explained in an interview with Thomas Frick, *Hello America* is constructed using the most potent images of twentieth century American society:

*Hello America* is about that image which the States has chosen, in this century, to present

of itself to the world at large. That image, and no country has been so consistent or

effective in presenting an image of itself, is made up of its film stars and gangsters,

presidents and their assassins, flashy cars, skyscrapers, Las Vegas, Disneyland, Cape

Kennedy, the Mafia, all-powerful advertising, casually owned guns, Coca-Cola, blue

jeans, street violence, drugs, and so on. I don't think there's any doubt that these

constitute the image that the States has presented, and they would come first to the mind

of anyone stopped in the street and questioned in Singapore, Sydney, Sweden or

wherever.

Have they anything to do with life as actually lived in the States? Only marginally, I

dare say. But I was trying to construct a society using just these images. (*EM* 195)

As members of the exhibition continue their journey across the desolate country, they encounter

a group of Americans whose ancestors had never left, and who are named after American

corporations and products (GM, Xerox, Heinz, and Pepsodent), which once again shows Ballard

depicting the power of images and American consumer culture. These nomadic characters claim

that they have frequently experienced earthquakes and visions of "dragons leaping from the

ground, strange wingless machines speeding through the air" (*HA* 94), though their claims are

brushed aside as simply being the beginnings of a new set of religious iconography. However,

the reader soon learns that these tremors and visions are not at all figments of the imagination,

they are the nuclear games being played by America's forty-fifth president, who goes by a name

that had completely saturated the media landscape of the late-1960s and early-1970s: Charles

Manson.

Around the time that Ballard was working on *Hello America*, he was reading various articles in 1979 on the fallout from nuclear testing, some of which he clipped and kept, and which are included in his archives at the British Library. The two articles are from the *New Scientist*, and the first, entitled "Disease legacy from Nevada atomic tests," concerns the US Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and its testing of nuclear weapons at the Yucca Flats test site between 1951 and 1962. Importantly, it turned out that the fallout from this nuclear testing wasn't limited to the Yucca Flats area, and that "[a]n AEC pamphlet distributed to towns in nearby southern Utah in 1955 told witnesses, 'You are in a very real sense active participants in the nation's atomic test programme'" (Torrey 336). The article then suggests that this nuclear testing was linked to "staggering cancer mortality rates" in many small, mainly Mormon, towns in Utah, leading to "the single largest lawsuit ever brought by US citizens seeking compensation from the federal government" (336). The first sign that something was wrong came in 1953 when 4200 sheep were found dead "wintering 80 km north of Yucca Flat," and a US Public Health Service autopsy report in 1953 found that the sheep had "a concentration of iodine-131 in their thyroid glands which was 1000 times the maximum permissible level for humans" (337). The second article that Ballard kept is titled "Europe cruises into a new nuclear age," and is about the development of "robot bombers," or cruise missiles, which had the capacity to carry "nuclear warheads that can devastate targets deep in Eastern Europe" (Hewish 676). Ballard's research on nuclear fallout and cruise missiles is evident in *Hello America* and, though the novel is largely satirical in its depiction of America and the potency of American myth and iconography, it also provides stark warnings about the development and use of nuclear weapons and how combining such weapons with an obsession for power is a recipe for disaster.

When Wayne reaches the jungle of Las Vegas and meets President Charles Manson, he meets a man who is a former war criminal, and who had spent time in a mental institution in Berlin. Manson is obsessed with the idea of using his newly acquired nuclear warheads to wipe a new "plague" off the face of America, a plague that Wayne quickly discovers is actually other humans, those, like him, who have come on expeditions to this land of dreams: "It's the most threatening disease of all. It's called 'other people'. They'll be coming soon, in ever-larger expeditions, eager to colonise this land again" (*HA* 183). It is important to note that *Hello America* was published during the first year of Ronald Reagan's presidency, and Reagan was a figure who, as will be discussed in the next chapter, Ballard found to be particularly intriguing, having predicted his presidency over a decade earlier. In the context of *Hello America*, however, Ballard explained that the image of a President Charles Manson playing nuclear roulette was "not an incredible thesis, given that we now have a Hollywood actor playing nuclear roulette in the White House, with the latest 'nuclear war is winnable' strategy endorsed by the Pentagon" (*EM* 195-196). The novel makes many references to Reagan's "Let's Make America Great Again" slogan, with the irony being that the United States envisioned in the novel is a barren, unpopulated land that exhausted its own resources, and Manson, who plays nuclear roulette with cruise missiles, is attacking the land that he supposedly wants to bring back, polluting it with high levels of radiation.

Interestingly, despite its satire and warnings, *Hello America* ends on a rather optimistic note. Though the land is in a dire state and has nuclear radiation in the atmosphere, after Manson is killed, it is clear that the America that Wayne travelled to is still not short on dreams, though the dreams have changed: "The old dreams were dead, Manson and Mickey Mouse and Marilyn Monroe belonged to a past America, to that city of antique gamblers about to be vaporised fifty

miles away. It was time for new dreams, worthy of a real tomorrow, the dreams of the first of the Presidents of the Sunlight Fliers" (*HA* 234). By ending the novel with this image, Ballard shows an appreciation for the sense of hopefulness that is embodied in American myth, and, as explained in the novel's introduction, it is for this reason that "*Hello America* is strongly on the side of the U.S.A., and a celebration of its optimism and self-confidence, qualities that we Europeans so conspicuously lack" (10). The optimism at the end of the novel is also apparent through the image of flight, which Ballard uses in many of his short stories and novels as a way of representing an exploration of the imagination, or some sort of psychic transformation. As Wayne flies off, he still sees great potential in America, and he envisions himself as being part of a new group of pioneers called the Sunlight Fliers, at the helm of an American rebirth amidst nuclear devastation.

Chapter Three: Ballard's Experimental Work and Modern Disaster Novels

In 1964, Ballard's wife, Mary, unexpectedly died of pneumonia while the two were on vacation in Spain, an event that had a dramatic impact on Ballard's life and writing (Holliday 105; *AE* 99). Mary's death occurred after Ballard had finished writing *The Drought* but before it was published in 1965, and in the wake of this tragedy, which left Ballard a single father to three children, "the flow of stories ceased for around eighteen months" (Holliday 106). When he did eventually return to writing, the type of stories that he produced were markedly different, with critics describing Ballard's shift in the mid-60s to early-70s as being "more grimly apocalyptic" than his first tetralogy (Huntley 23).[35]

In an interview with Alan Burns, Ballard explained that the changes evident in his writing during this period, in terms of both form and content, were partly due to the trauma in his life:

I'm conscious of the fact that in the mid-sixties something happened to me… I think I was trying to make sense of my wife's death by taking as a subject matter the world of the '60s, particularly that around Kennedy's death, and trying to make sense of it, trying to find in a paradoxical way something good. Now I know that's a sort of nightmare logic, but that's what *Atrocity Exhibition* is, a book of nightmare formulas… Desperate, desperate measures—I suppose the whole of *Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash* is summed up under that heading. A kit of desperate measures, desperate devices. (quoted in Holliday 113)

As will be explored throughout this chapter, though the influence of Surrealism is still present in Ballard's second tetralogy—particularly in *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*—the shift in these

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[35] Similarly, Andrzej Gasiorek says that "Ballard's take on the 1960s is in *The Atrocity Exhibition* an uncompromisingly bleak one" (66), while Michel Delville explains that "[t]he 'redemptive and therapeutic power' Ballard associates with the Surrealists' inner space poetics, however, seems absent from the neurological nightmares of *The Atrocity Exhibition*" (25).

novels from the near future to the immediate present is indicative of Ballard's engagement with a new set of influences, ones that would be of better assistance to his exploration of the modern technological world. This chapter will explain how Ballard's modern disaster novels—*The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Crash*, *Concrete Island*, and *High-Rise*—converse with, and expand upon, many of McLuhan's most prophetic observations about the electronic age, particularly those regarding the threats it poses to human identity and cognition. Both McLuhan and Ballard use collage in their work as a way of representing the amount of stimuli that bombards and overloads the sensorium, and both were concerned with topics such as technological dominance, dehumanization, the numbing of the sensorium, and how a breakdown—of self or external world—can lead to breakthrough in consciousness. Both believed that art and literature could bring awareness to such oncoming changes, and I would argue that this is exactly what their work aimed to do.

**Ballard's Literary Shift: Collages, Advertisements, and "Condensed Novels"**

Between March and June of 1966, the stories "You and Me and the Continuum," "You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe," and "The Assassination Weapon" were published in various periodicals in quick succession, all of which highlighted Ballard's new direction as an author. These stories—or "condensed novels," as Ballard called them—are fragmented and non-linear, and include headed paragraphs, which make them resemble scientific reports.[36] Interestingly, an earlier version of the protagonist of these stories, Traven, appeared two years prior in "The

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[36] In addition to the material gathered through his editing job at *Chemistry & Industry*, Ballard sought out scientific material on his own, calling it "great inspiration" for his writing, even though it became difficult to access for a variety of reasons: "But there's this crucial problem of gaining access to scientific material, which is more and more difficult for the lay person to do. Years ago I did subscribe to one or two specialist scientific journals, but by the start of the 1970s the subscription costs went right up to the ceiling" ("Interview with JG Ballard: Psychoanalyst of the Electronic Age" 10).

Terminal Beach" (1964), which Ballard referred to as being his "most important story" since it "marks the link between the science fiction of [his] first ten years, and the next phase of [his] writings that led to *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*" (Ballard quoted in Gasiorek 61).

Though the stories that followed "The Terminal Beach" are far more radical in terms of style, Ballard's experimentation with narrative techniques was already present in this earlier story. In "The Terminal Beach," the reader is introduced to Traven, a former military pilot who has marooned himself on the island of Eniwetok, a former atomic testing site, following the death of his wife and son in a car crash. Amidst the abandoned bunkers, dunes, and a labyrinth of concrete blocks, Traven drifts around, deprived of food, and hallucinates as he searches for his deceased wife and son. Ballard explained the importance of this story:

> In 'The Terminal Beach' the elements of the sequential narrative had been almost completely eliminated. It occurred to me that one could carry this to its logical conclusion, and a recent group of stories [for *The Atrocity Exhibition*] show some of the results. Apart from anything else, this new narrative technique seems to show a tremendous gain in the density of ideas and images. In fact, I regard each of them as a complete novel. (Ballard quoted in Barber 8)

Though in this quotation Ballard emphasizes the narrative strategy used in "The Terminal Beach," I would also argue that its content is equally important in mapping the trajectory for the stories that he would produce shortly thereafter, for the landscape is coded with signs of the present which must be deciphered in order for Traven to simultaneously make sense of the modern world and his personal trauma (or find some sort of answer about his personal trauma in the ciphers of modernity).

Despite the sand and the few remaining palm trees on Eniwetok, the reader is told that "the entire landscape of the island [is] synthetic, a man-made artefact with all the associations of a vast system of derelict concrete motorways," and that it is also "a state of mind" (*CS* 590). Eniwetok is thus paralleled to the modern technological world—which is itself an atomic testing ground of the psyche—and as such it is littered with signs of the present, such as concrete, nuclear weapons, damaged crash test dummies, and even a broken bottle of Coca-Cola that washes ashore. Just as "[t]he series of weapons tests had fused the sand in layers" (591), the images that pervade Traven's psyche fuse with those in the external landscape, and this blurring of inner and outer worlds disorients Traven, who throughout the story envisions his deceased wife and son walking amongst the dunes and in the concrete labyrinths of the island. The landscape is thus a disorienting space comprised of juxtaposed images that do not on the surface appear to be cohesive, and the result of this is that Traven, mimicking the fragmented external world, begins to crack: "For the first time since his arrival at the island the sense of dissociation set off by its derelict landscape began to recede […] The page [a picture of a child] was falling to pieces, like a fragmenting mirror of himself" (595-596). As will be discussed more when analyzing *The Atrocity Exhibition*, it is clear that the inner world of Traven's psyche in some ways reflects the fragmented outer world; however, the question then becomes: is this breakdown of the self for better or for worse? Is the breakdown detrimental to the psyche or is it a necessary recalibration that helps Traven make sense of the world around him?

Along with the narrative techniques that Ballard experimented with in "The Terminal Beach," when working on his "condensed novels" between 1966 and 1970, Ballard also found inspiration in a set of collages he had assembled much earlier, in 1958. These collages, which

were retrospectively given the title *Project For A New Novel*,[37] are comprised of various

"[l]etters, symbols, headlines, tables, and paragraphs [that Ballard] cut from a variety of print

sources, primarily Society of Chemical Industry journals, and arranged on to backing sheets with

glue" (Ferris 127). As alluded to earlier, Ballard and his contemporaries viewed the realist novel

as being outdated, believing that it could not capture the discontinuous reality of the modern

world, and as Ballard explained:

> It seemed to me that the only way to write about all this was to meet the landscape on its
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> own terms. Useless to try to impose the conventions of the nineteenth-century realistic
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> novel on this incredible five-dimensional fiction moving around us all the time at high
>
> speed. And I tried to develop – and I think successfully – a technique of mine, the so-
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> called condensed novels, where I was able to cross all these events, at right angles if you
>
> like. Like cutting through the stem of a plant to expose the cross-section of its main
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> vessels. So this technique was devised to deal with this fragmentation and overlay of
>
> reality, through the fragmentation of narrative. (*EM* 52)

This formal experimentation wasn't only being explored by Ballard and his New Wave

contemporaries; many other British writers were conducting similar literary experiments at the

same time, such as B.S. Johnson, Ann Quin, and Alan Burns. However, Ballard's collages in

particular were early attempts at showing how the mind of the reader (and humans in general)

was changing, influenced by the bombardment of external stimuli in the modern world that

forces information to be consumed in a new way.

The primary idea behind Ballard's collages was that "the imaginative content could be

carried by the headlines and overall design, so making obsolete the need for a traditional text

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[37] The collages were eventually published in *New Worlds* in 1978, twenty years after they were initially created.

except for virtually decorative purposes" (Ballard quoted in Vale and Juno 38). In other words,

since the headlines do not clearly relate to the accompanying paragraphs of text—Ballard

referred to the paragraphs as being "deliberately meaningless" (38)—it is up to the reader/

viewer to make connections for themselves, to observe the manifest content (that which appears

on the collages) and discover the latent content (that which lies beneath). Ballard was actually

"so taken with the potential of the *Project* to disrupt the communications landscape that he even

considered mounting the collages onto advertisement billboards for display throughout London"

(Ferris 127). He even wanted to compose an entire novel in a similar format, saying: "I wanted to

publish a novel that looked like that, you see—hundreds of pages of that sort of thing. Get away

from text altogether—just headlines!" ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 122).[38] Though the full-

length collage-novel never came to fruition, *Project For a New Novel* did serve to provide

Ballard with the "chromosomes" for his condensed novels. Phrases that appear in his collages,

such as "the terminal beach" and "mr f is mr f," were later used as titles for stories, and the

characters Coma, Kline, and Xero—words also taken from his collages—appear throughout *The

Atrocity Exhibition* as manifestations of Traven's unconscious. As will soon be discussed,

Ballard's use of collage is also reminiscent of the "mosaic" technique McLuhan used in books

such as *The Medium is the Massage* (1967) and *War and Peace in the Global Village* (1968).

At the same time that Ballard was working on his condensed novels, he also followed up

on *Project For a New Novel* in another way, by creating a series of "advertisements" and paying

to have them run in *Ambit*, a literary magazine founded by Ballard's friend Martin Bax.[39] As Bax

explained: "What [Ballard] said was—what people read nowadays is advertising, so if you want

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[38] In 1972, Alan Burns published a novel called *Dreamerika! A Surrealist Fantasy*, which is formatted in ways similar to Ballard's description here. The entire novel consists of large headlines that are accompanied by short paragraphs of text.
[39] Ballard also worked as an editor for *Ambit*, starting in 1967.

to have novels that people read, you should publish them as advertisements!" (Bax 39). The first

of these advertisements, "Homage to Claire Churchill" and "The Angle Between Two Walls,"

appeared in consecutive issues of *Ambit* in 1967 and were followed by "A Neural Interval" in

1968, "Placental Insufficiency" in 1970, and "Venus Smiles" in 1971. Ballard apparently claimed

to have also published these advertisements in other "European experimental literary/arts

magazines (though no trace of those further publications subsists in his archive)," and he wanted

them to ultimately be published in magazines such as *Vogue* and *Paris-Match* (Barber 12).[40]

These advertisements, like Ballard's *Project*, also contain text and motifs that appear in

Ballard's condensed novels, such as the recurrent question "does the angle between two walls

have a happy ending?" As such, it is conceivable that the advertisements placed in *Ambit* are

actually part of the media landscape depicted in *The Atrocity Exhibition*; however, even more

importantly, these advertisements show how Ballard conceived of his work across various media,

as having both visual and textual components. Though *The Atrocity Exhibition* is branded as a

novel, it is a novel that is extremely focused on *image*, much like the Pop Art that Ballard had an

affinity for, and it thus examines a world dominated by images and considers the effects (and

affects) of such a world. Ballard posits in his novel that the modern technological landscape, in

which reality has become an extension of media images, can have a fragmenting and numbing

effect on the individual; however, he also leaves the door open to the possibility that being

attuned to one's surroundings can lead to an escape from the "image maze" of the surrounding

world, a moment in which one's breakdown can lead to a breakthrough in consciousness.

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[40] Both magazines are also mentioned in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, as Dr. Nathan studies the "mysterious advertisements which had appeared" in them (*AE* 71), seemingly a reference to Ballard's own advertisements that were run in *Ambit*.

**A Descent into the Modern Maelstrom: Exploring the Connections Between Ballard and McLuhan**

The events surrounding the publication of *The Atrocity Exhibition* were marred with controversy, starting with when the Unicorn Bookshop in Brighton, England published Ballard's story "Why I Want To Fuck Ronald Reagan" as a chapbook in 1968. As Mike Holliday explains, on the day of publication, the Unicorn Bookshop was raided by police and "thousands of magazines and books, including three copies of the 'Reagan' booklet" were seized and later used as evidence in an obscenity trial against the shop's owner, Bill Butler (Holliday 109). In his annotations to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard claims that Butler's lawyer had asked him to appear as a witness in the trial and explain why the story is not obscene. Ballard, in response, told the lawyer that the story was *intended* to be obscene, to which the lawyer said that Ballard would be a strong witness for the prosecution (*AE* 169).[41] Later, after *The Atrocity Exhibition* first appeared as a Danish translation in 1969 (entitled *Grusomhedsudstillingen*), the book's U.S. publisher, Doubleday, ordered all copies of the first print run to be destroyed after executives found out about its content, and Ballard specifically pointed towards the "Reagan" piece as the reason for this decision (Holliday 112; *AE* 168). Though the novel was eventually published in the U.S. by Grove Press under the title *Love and Napalm: Export U.S.A.*, what makes the scrapped Doubleday version intriguing is that it was printed with illustrations by Michael Foreman, and was thus more consistent with Ballard's initial desire to have the book published with images alongside the text: "My original idea for *The Atrocity Exhibition* was that I would do

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[41] "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan" was later distributed by "ex-situationists" at the 1980 Republican Convention, where Reagan was elected as the Republican nominee for president (Vale and Juno 88). In the marginal notes to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard also claims that the delegates who received a copy of the story took it seriously, accepting it "for what it resembled, a psychological position paper on the candidate's subliminal appeal, commissioned from some maverick think-tank" (*AE* 170).

collage illustrations. I put that up to Cape. I originally wanted a large-format book, printed by photo-offset, in which I could prepare the artwork—a lot of collages, material taken from medical documents and medical photographs, crashing cars and all that sort of iconography" ("From Shanghai to Shepperton" 124).

As mentioned, Ballard's desire to publish a book with collages is reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan's books from around this same time, specifically *The Medium is the Massage* and *War and Peace in the Global Village*, which McLuhan and Quentin Fiore composed using a "mosaic" technique, a blending of text and images aimed at capturing the technological environment's field of effects, one that "creates an interplay of all the senses" and exposes us to the non-linear patterns that saturate the external world (Gordon 210). Ballard was familiar with McLuhan's work, and he not only mentions McLuhan by name in the oft-cited introduction to the French edition of *Crash*, but also in the foreword to the Danish edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition*:

> The marriage of reason and nightmare which has dominated the 20th century has resulted
> in an increasingly surreal world. In the course of my own lifetime the mushroom cloud
> over Nagasaki has been replaced on the psychic menu by Oldenburg's giant hamburger.
> The murderers of presidents and cities have become media personalities […] The
> Vietnam war has been taped for television viewing. Sigmund Freud's profound
> pessimism in *Civilization and Its Discontents* has been replaced by McLuhan's delight in
> proliferating information mosaics. The hydrogen bomb is a potent symbol. Our moral
> right to pursue our own psychopathologies as a game is proclaimed in nearly every mass-
> circulation magazine, film and experimental play. ("Foreword to *The Atrocity Exhibition*"
> 27)

In this passage, there does appear to be a strong misreading of McLuhan on the part of Ballard. Contrary to the popular view of McLuhan, he wasn't actually overly delighted about the psychic and social changes that he saw occurring because of modern media and technology. This is a complexity that I will explore in more detail shortly, as McLuhan's thinking and Ballard's thinking are much more akin to each other than Ballard's comment indicates. For now, however, it is important to note that McLuhan's primary concern was making the reader aware of the world around them, and he, like Ballard, used his work to try and reveal the various effects of the modern technological landscape, those which largely go unnoticed.

McLuhan's book *The Mechanical Bride*—which is titled in reference to Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, "a huge two-panel glass sculpture on the theme of the eroticization of the machine" (Coupland 130)[42]—evolved from an earlier, unpublished book that McLuhan had written called "Guide to Chaos." As W. Terrence Gordon explains, McLuhan had constructed this book "like a vortex, where readers could make their own observations and discover a means of escape from the maelstrom by making connections for themselves" (Gordon 139). Though the overall structure changed, *The Mechanical Bride*, like "Guide to Chaos," couples advertisements with short analytical essays, and McLuhan held onto the image of the vortex to, as he explains in the book's preface, "set the reader at the center of the revolving picture created by these affairs where he may observe the action that is in progress and in which everybody is involved" (*MB* v). McLuhan took the image of the vortex from Wyndham Lewis, but he used it for his own purposes: to awaken people to the "revolving picture" of modernity that constantly surrounds and impinges upon the human sensorium.

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[42] Ballard also uses the name of Duchamp's sculpture as a paragraph heading in "The Assassination Weapon," which is the third chapter of *The Atrocity Exhibition*.

To further explain his intent, McLuhan invokes Edgar Allan Poe's short story "A Descent into the Maelstrom," in which the sailor saves himself "by studying the action of the whirlpool and by co-operating with it" (*MB* v). McLuhan wanted his readers to adopt a similar mindset when it came to living in the electronic world, and the purpose of invoking Poe's story in *The Mechanical Bride* is to show that by reading and understanding one's environment, the latent patterns and effects of that environment can be revealed. Once these hidden patterns are revealed, one can then escape from what Ballard calls, in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the "image maze" of the present, and in turn their identity can be preserved or retained. In a 1979 lecture at York University, McLuhan further elaborated on the importance of Poe's story, explaining that

> Pattern recognition in the midst of a huge, overwhelming, destructive force is the way out of the maelstrom. The huge vortices of energy created by our media present us with similar possibilities of evasion of consequences of destruction. By studying the patterns of the effects of this huge vortex of energy in which we are involved, it may be possible to program a strategy of evasion and survival. ("Man and Media" 285)

Here, it is clear that McLuhan's tone is not one of joy or delight towards modern media and technology, but one of warning. Unlike Poe's sailor, the survival that McLuhan discusses is not physical, it is psychological and social, and the pattern recognition he seeks to instil in his readers is thus aimed at helping them cope with a world in which technology is not merely an extension of humans, but where humans are becoming extensions of technology.

It is along these lines that McLuhan viewed *The Mechanical Bride* as a book of science fiction. As he explained in a letter to his mother: "[*The Mechanical Bride*] is really a new form of science fiction, with ads and comics cast as characters. Since my object is to show the community in action rather than prove anything, it can indeed be regarded as a new kind of

novel" (McLuhan quoted in Lamberti 179). In this "new kind of novel," the humans in the advertisements are no longer themselves, but are fictional duplicates of themselves, and McLuhan thus surreally blurs the lines between the natural and the artificial in a hyper-consumerist environment, portraying humans "as servo-mechanisms of an artificial landscape they no longer master" (Lamberti 180). McLuhan believed that "[i]f we understand the revolutionary transformations caused by new media, we can anticipate and control them; but if we continue in our self-induced subliminal trance, we will be their slaves" ("*Playboy* Interview" 239). As such, I would argue that both *The Mechanical Bride* and *The Atrocity Exhibition* can be considered anti-environments, books that make use of collage and juxtaposition in order to show the reader that which constantly surrounds them but which largely goes unnoticed, operating unconsciously. In Ballard's artistic representation of McLuhan's modern maelstrom, Traven, like Poe's sailor, navigates through a panorama of media, technology, sex and violence as a way of revealing the latent patterns of the modern "image maze" and repair his fractured psyche. As Ballard stated: "This is the environment in which we are immersed, and we might as well keep our eyes open, and try to swim through all this so we get to the other end of the pool" (*EM* 254).

### The Atrocity Exhibition

*The Atrocity Exhibition* begins with the description of an art exhibition in which the paintings have a "marked preoccupation […] with the theme of world cataclysm" (*AE* 1). These paintings, however, do not depict what one is likely to imagine upon hearing "world cataclysm," a term that generally denotes vast destruction in the outer world, like the landscapes depicted in Ballard's first tetralogy of novels. Instead, as Catherine Austin walks around this exhibition, "bizarre images, with their fusion of Eniwetok and Luna Park, Freud and Elizabeth Taylor,

reminded her of the slides of exposed spinal levels in Travis's office […] like the codes of

insoluble dreams, the keys to a nightmare in which she had begun to play a more willing and

calculated role" (1). This opening makes clear that the cataclysm Ballard is referring to is not a

natural catastrophe in the outer world, but a psychic cataclysm, one spurred on by media and

technology, specifically by the extreme juxtapositions perpetuated by media that threaten one's

psychological stability. This psychic cataclysm is the Third World War that Ballard discusses

throughout *The Atrocity Exhibition*, that which "will be fought out on the spinal battlefields, in

terms of the postures we assume, of our traumas mimetized in the angle of a wall or balcony"

(7). It is thus the case that in this phase of his literary career, Ballard relocates his stories from

apocalyptic, near future settings to the present, and he replaces the elements of the natural world

with the new elements of modernity: advertising, celebrity, violence, and automobiles,

investigating the potential impact that these colliding elements may have on human identity and

cognition.

The juxtaposition evident in the novel's opening is also significant because it works to

blur these elements together in a way that mimics the discontinuity of a medium such as

television, which flips between images of atrocity, celebrity, and advertising instantaneously. As

Ballard explains in his annotations to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, this type of juxtaposition gave a

"carnival air" to "the endless newsreel clips of nuclear explosions that we saw on TV in the

1960s" (*AE* 14). Furthermore, for Ballard, the fusion of Eniwetok (an atomic testing site) and

Luna Park (an amusement park in Paris that the Surrealists frequented) is emblematic of the way

in which footage of atrocity is consumed for pleasure in the modern world, as if it is a film.

Ballard believed that this sort of sensationalized violence had the potential to cause a widespread

"death of affect," a numbing of human sensibilities that results from how the genuine brutality of

such images is masked by the way in which they are presented, defused by accompanying images of entertainment and advertisements. Ballard's hypothesis was that this would create a cycle in which "human responses [would be] *dulled* by exposure to images of violence," until all affect is erased (*EM* 250).[43] Therefore, in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, by collapsing images of the Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam War, celebrity and consumer culture onto a single plane, he reproduces the ways in which such catastrophes are absorbed into the mass communications landscape, and where "amplified by advertisers, mass-merchandisers, and media programmers— they [feed] society's latent desire for images of destruction and brutality" (Sterenberg 107).

As Susan Sontag would later explain in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), the Vietnam War marked a particular turning point in the way people were informed about, and consumed, war. Whereas the young Ballard would listen to radio broadcasts with his father and see newsreels projected onto the sides of buildings in Shanghai, the sophistication of technology changed to such a degree that by the 1960s, the Vietnam War was shown on television as it unfolded. The images were nearly instantaneous, and households thus experienced a new form of "tele-intimacy with death and destruction" (Sontag 21). According to Sontag, one by-product of this kind of "tele-intimacy" with destruction is a drive on the part of photographers/ media to find ever more dramatic, enhanced, visceral images to keep the interest of the viewer piqued, to the point that "[t]he real thing may not be fearsome enough, and therefore needs to be enhanced; or reenacted more convincingly" (63). All of this can lead to the sort of numbing of affect that Ballard had posited decades earlier, and the various perversions and psychopathologies explored in *The Atrocity Exhibition* can be understood as attempts to produce some sort of emotional

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[43] Ballard also remarked that this idea could be traced back to his experiences during the war, noting that "In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, I had already shown how technology kills feeling. In Shanghai, I was in a similar situation" (*EM* 220).

response in an affectless world: "We need to invent a series of imaginary sexual perversions just to keep our feelings alive" (*AE* 95). However, this inner numbing (or death of affect) is exacerbated due to the fact that people have no choice but to see these images—they saturate one's surrounding environment to such an extent that they cannot be escaped from, and this in turn makes humans passive bystanders, assuming a position that is subordinate to the images.

McLuhan said that "[w]ithout an anti-environment, all environments are invisible," and that the "role of the artist is to create anti-environments as a means of perception and adjustment" (*Culture is Our Business* 192). This sentiment is echoed in an earlier one of McLuhan's books, *Through the Vanishing Point* (1968), written with Harley Parker:

> A poem or painting is in every sense a teaching machine for the training of perception and judgment. The artist is a person who is especially aware of the challenge and dangers of new environments presented to human sensibility. Whereas the ordinary person seeks security by numbing his perceptions against the impact of new experience, the artist delights in this novelty and instinctively creates situations that both reveal it and compensate for it. (*TVP* 238)

Like the Pop artists before him, Ballard creates an anti-environment by putting images of the present at the forefront of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, trying to make visible to readers the invisible world around them. At the same time, within the novel itself, the muted narration—which often sounds like a scientific report—makes it evident that the death of affect is already underway for Traven, and his attempts to escape from the so-called "image maze" of the present may thus be futile.[44]

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[44] The narrative tone can partially be explained by the material that Ballard was reading at the time, which included an FAA (Federal Aviation Agency) report called "Tolerances of the Human Face to Crash Impact," written by John J. Swearingen. Ballard adopted this title for one of his condensed novels, "Tolerances of the Human Face," which is chapter 8 of *The Atrocity Exhibition*.

Traven is the protagonist of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and though his name morphs throughout—alternately referred to as Travis, Talbot, Tallis, Talbert, Trabert, and Travers depending upon the chapter—I will simply refer to him as Traven throughout this chapter, seeing as Ballard called Traven the character's "core identity" (*AE* 36).[45] Traven is ambiguously described as being both a psychiatrist and patient at the "Institute," which is some combination of a psychiatric institution and a scientific laboratory out of which Traven conducts his various experiments. These experiments often consist of Traven placing juxtaposed images alongside each other, such as photos of himself over which "simulated newsreels of auto-crashes and Vietnam atrocities" are projected (19), or by creating a "[d]isquieting diorama of pain and mutilation: strange sexual wounds, imaginary Vietnam atrocities, the deformed mouth of Jacqueline Kennedy […] Why was Travers obsessed by these images?" (104-105). Through his experiments, Traven tries to decipher the hidden codes and logics of the modern image maze, trying to, like Poe's sailor, find continuity in the discontinuous and master the whirlpool of effects surrounding him in order "to surmount this death of affect" (120).

The landscape of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, just like the modern technological landscape, is fragmented and discontinuous, and Traven—who has been remade by, and in the likeliness of, this world—reflects this, becoming a fragmented subject, similar to the earlier iteration of this character in "The Terminal Beach." It is also worth noting, however, that though the modern world appears to have caused Traven's mental breakdown and/ or psychosis, it is from this position that he adopts a rhizomatic mind—to borrow a phrase from Deleuze and Guattari— which may in turn allow him to "make sense of the modern world and of his place in it"

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[45] Ballard said that the name Traven is a reference to B. Traven, the pseudonym of an unknown author who Ballard "admired for his extreme reclusiveness – so completely at odds with the logic of our own age, when even the concept of privacy is constructed from publicly circulating materials" (*AE* 36).

(Holliday 107). As Michel Delville explains, "the insanity of Ballard's patients, far from being due to their failure to make contact with the outside world, results from an *excess* of awareness" (Delville 27). As such, through his various experiments, Traven begins to analyze the various fragments of the modern world simultaneously rather than linearly or hierarchically; though this causes a mental overload, it also shows that he is attuned to the maelstrom of modernization, and he in turn starts finding patterns that may lead to the restoration of his psyche.

As mentioned, since media has forced everything to collapse onto the same plane of existence—war, technology, advertisements, sex, beaches, multi-storey car parks, and architecture—Traven aims to figure out the ways in which all of these fragments align, as doing so can turn the meaningless into the meaningful. It is also the case that within the patterns he discovers he can make sense of his wife's death. As explained in the eighth chapter, "Tolerances of the Human Face": "Travers had embarked on the invention of imaginary psychopathologies, using her [Karen Novotny's] body and reflexes as a module for a series of unsavoury routines, as if hoping in this way to recapitulate his wife's death" (*AE* 110).[46] It is worth briefly noting that Karen Novotny is a character that Traven uses in his experiments, a "mere modulus" whose body Traven frequently imagines in connection with various items, structures, and events (85), and she often "dies" as a result of Traven's experiments (or Traven at least imagines her death). As the reader is told: "A crushed fender: in its broken geometry Talbot saw the dismembered body of Karen Novotny, the alternate death of Ralph Nader" (32). Throughout *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the female body is depicted as nonautonomous, used in the service of Traven, and, as Roger Luckhurst poignantly notes, Karen Novotny in particular is the "meat" of the novel, "the

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[46] In this chapter, Travers seems to embody certain autobiographical elements, as not only has his wife died but, like Ballard, we are told that he was also interned in the Lunghua internment camp in Shanghai (*AE* 112).

traversed site on which discursive regimes simultaneously condense and disseminate meaning" (Luckhurst 106).[47]

In contrast to Karen Novotny, Dr. Nathan, who works at the Institute and who seems to be supervising Traven's experiments, is described in Ballard's annotations as representing "the safe and sane voice of the sciences" (*AE* 89). It is also the case, however, that since he is the rational and reasonable mind, he cannot fully grasp the significance of Traven's findings, as "there are so many subjects today about which we should not be reasonable" (89). As such, Dr. Nathan is shocked by what Traven's experiments reveal. By placing together pictures of "the most commonplace objects"—such as an office, skyscrapers, naked bodies, and "the face of a catatonic patient"—Traven reveals "[a] very different world" to Dr. Nathan, one in which "[t]he familiar surroundings of our lives, even our smallest gestures, [are] seen to have totally altered meanings" (6). These experiments, and Traven's obsession with finding connections between seemingly unrelated things, leads to Dr. Nathan trying to diagnose Traven's condition: "What the patient is reacting against is, simply, the phenomenology of the universe, the specific and independent existence of separate objects and events, however trivial and inoffensive these may seem" (46). The reader is told that the phenomenology of the universe, which is "the fact of your own consciousness […] is Traven's hell. You can see he's trying to build bridges between things – this Kennedy business, for example. He wants to kill Kennedy again, but in a way that makes sense" (50).

The idea here is that the modern technological environment has saturated the outer world to such an extent that it cannot be escaped from, and as a result it has begun to pervade the psyche, to the point that Traven's own identity exists only in relation to these other images and

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[47] It is also possible that the repetitiveness of Karen Novotny's death and rebirth coincides with the Freudian view of repetition as a way of overcoming trauma, with Karen Novotny acting as a stand-in for Traven's deceased wife.

events. McLuhan describes a similar process in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* by explaining how "as

our senses have gone outside us, Big Brother goes inside. So, unless aware of this dynamic, we

shall at once move into a phase of panic terrors, exactly befitting a small world of tribal drums,

total interdependence, and superimposed co-existence" (*GG* 32). Traven's rejection, then, of "the

phenomenology of the universe" seemingly stems from this process, as it is when everything

collapses onto the same plane of existence—as Ballard argues it has—that one loses their sense

of individuality.

It is also important to note that the form of *The Atrocity Exhibition*—which can be

considered a collage or "mosaic," albeit one without images— is an attempt to represent this

"superimposed co-existence," and Ballard even mentioned McLuhan in an interview with David

Pringle when discussing the effects of the modern technological world:

As McLuhan said, it's a high-speed information mosaic which passes by, this jostling

mass of panel games, sitcoms, political reports and advertising, with everything presented

in the most sensational and upbeat way possible. And this charges these figures: it's

rather like the flow of ions, charged particles, in a chemical battery. Powerful currents are

moved about, electrons and so forth jumping from image to image, charging them in a

way that is independent of the fact that we see these images of public figures on our TVs.

This has always interested me; it's the subject matter, really, of *The Atrocity*

*Exhibition*, where our own fantasies interlock with the fantasies projected by the media

landscape. Ambivalent feelings are stirred. The theme of parricide, or regicide (they're

indistinguishable), taps our need to cope with this colliding mass of sensational fiction. I

don't think the parricide theme relates to my own need to dispose of my father, to

displace him in my mother's affections. I think it's part and parcel of the attempt by the

individual to grapple with this sensory overload that is going on all the time, to cut the colossus down to his clay heels. ("Interview with JG Ballard: Psychoanalyst of the Electronic Age" 14)

In the foreword to the Danish edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard specifically describes how he envisions an intersection of three planes of existence: 1) "the world of public events, as mediated by television, mass-circulation magazines, advertising and so on," 2) our personal relationships and immediate personal environment, and 3) the inner world of the mind ("Foreword to *The Atrocity Exhibition*" 28).[48] Since in the modern world these three planes are constantly interacting with each other, semblances of reality can only be found in their points of junction.

The mass intersection of all things in modern media landscape is also consistent with Breton's definition of Surrealism, which relies upon the convergence of juxtaposed states and/ or images "into a kind of absolute reality," and it is by changing one's perception so as to perceive these different states (or planes) simultaneously that the marvellous can be found (Breton 14). It is no surprise, then, that Ballard again returns to Surrealist imagery throughout *The Atrocity Exhibition*, frequently citing painters such as Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, Yves Tanguy, Giorgio de Chirico, and Óscar Dominguez. Doing this further allows him to gesture towards the idea that the modern technological landscape has given way to an increasingly surreal world, where the lines of reality and fantasy are continuously blurred.[49] But in *The*

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[48] This is also echoed in the novel itself: "Planes intersect: on one level, the tragedies of Cape Kennedy and Vietnam serialized on billboards random deaths mimetized in the experimental auto-disasters of Nader and his co-workers. Their precise role in the unconscious merits closer scrutiny, by the way; they may in fact play very different parts from the ones we assign them. On another level, the immediate personal environment, the volumes of space enclosed by your opposed hands, the geometry of your postures, the time-values contained in this office, the angles between these walls. On a third level, the inner world of the psyche. Where these planes intersect, images are born, some kind of valid reality begins to assert itself" (*AE* 72).

[49] This, too, is something that McLuhan noticed, stating in a 1968 letter to Pierre Elliott Trudeau that: "The cover of the June 8-14 *TV Guide* is a Dalí masterpiece. It manifests in detail the tactile quality of the TV image. The

*Atrocity Exhibition* itself, one of the ways that Ballard alludes to this convergence of planes is through the recurring phrase "the angle between two walls," which, as previously mentioned, was also used in one of the advertisements that Ballard placed in *Ambit* in 1967. The angle is a key image as it represents the points of junction that Traven starts to uncover through his experiments, "a fusing device by which Talbot hopes to bring his scenario to a climax" (*AE* 32). It is also the case that due to the extraordinary amount of "angles," or points of intersection that he finds, Traven's sensorium becomes overwhelmed. Though this may be his equivalent of finding the marvellous, it also ruptures his psyche and leaves him fragmented rather than whole.

## *Crash*: A Planned "Science Theatre" Performance and Ballard's "Crashed Cars" Exhibition

Following *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard began work on various projects that culminated in the controversial *Crash* (1973), a novel that gained instant notoriety due to its depiction of characters becoming aroused from watching and engaging in car crashes. Ballard had already experimented with this idea in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, specifically in the twelfth chapter entitled "Crash!", and one of *Crash*'s major characters, Vaughan, also appears in "Tolerances of the Human Face" as a former patient of the Institute who Traven follows around through "a nexus of endless highways, a terrain of billboards, car marts and undisclosed destinations" (*AE* 106). However, in visual art and literature, the exploration into our fascination with automobiles and crashes goes back much further than Ballard's work. For example, in the

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extension of our central nervous system via electricity is environmentally indicated in the upper right corner by a segment of brain tissue. The two thumbs with the TV images on the nails are carefully separated to indicate the 'gap' or interval constituted by touch. The age of tactility via television and radio is one of the innumerable interfaces or 'gaps' that replace the old connections, legal, literate and visual" (*Letters* 354).

essay "'Crash!' on Television: Primetime Autogeddon," Jack Sargeant quotes a passage from

Émile Zola's novel *La Bête Humaine* (1890), which gestures towards this notion:

> She had come to look at the body… Accidents had always fascinated her. The minute she
>
> heard that an animal had been knocked down or that someone had been run over by a
>
> train she would come running to see. She had got dressed again to come to inspect the
>
> corpse. (Zola quoted in Sargeant 49)

Though significant in its early look into the infatuation with death by machine, since this

quotation refers to a train accident, perhaps a better starting point for the purposes of my analysis

would be Filippo Marinetti's "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism" (1909). In this

manifesto, Marinetti explains that his conception of Futurism stemmed from a combination of

"the terrifying clatter of huge double-decker trams jolting by" (Marinetti 2), "the sudden roar of

ravening motor cars" (3), and his own automobile crash, which, far from being a terrifying

experience, left him with the "wonderful sense of [his] heart being pierced by the red-hot sword

of joy!" (4). Even more relevant to my upcoming discussion on Ballard and McLuhan is the way

in which Marinetti insightfully compares the body of a car to that of a human, and how he

recognized that a juxtaposition exists between the sheer power of the automobile and its "soft,

comfortable upholstery" (4).[50]

The architect Le Corbusier—who Ballard was familiar with, as will be elaborated upon

more in the section on *High-Rise*—also described the breathtaking power of cars in the foreword

to his book *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning* (1929), saying: "Motors in all directions,

going at all speeds. I was overwhelmed, an enthusiastic rapture filled me. Not the rapture of the

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[50] Ballard specifically references Marinetti's manifesto in his 1984 essay "Autopia or Autogeddon?", citing the comparison that Marinetti makes between a speeding car and the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, and Ancient Greek sculpture, thus a comparison between machine and human body (*UGM* 232).

shining coachwork under the gleaming lights, but the rapture of power" (Le Corbusier xxiii).

That same year, Ilya Ehrenburg's novel *The Life of the Automobile* (1929) "set out in highly

caustic ways the negative impacts the car was having on different countries around the world"

(Inglis 215). For instance, in this novel, Ehrenburg says that creation of the internal combustion

engine caused "the first suspicious tremors [to resound] in the womb of humanity," which

gestures towards the dystopian potential held within the image of the automobile (Ehrenburg 9).

Furthermore, as explained by Chris Beckett in the essay "Jim's Desk," during the next decade,

Salvador Dalí exhibited an installation called *Rainy Taxi* (alternatively called *Mannequin Rotting*

*in a Taxi-Cab*) at the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition, which included a real car with two

mannequins inside, one of which was a woman with exposed breasts, an installation that Ballard

actually made reference to in an early draft of *Crash* ("Jim's Desk" 289-290). Later, in 1966,

Edward Keinholz's installation *Back Seat Dodge '38* was exhibited—set in the same year that

Dalí's *Rainy Taxi* was shown at the International Surrealist Exhibition—a tableaux assembled

"from a variety of found and adapted junk material," and which contained a copulating

mannequin couple in the backseat of a car littered with empty beer bottles and clothes (287).

Importantly, however, even before Keinholz's installation, McLuhan explicitly discussed

the fusion of human and automobile in *The Mechanical Bride*, stating in the "Husband's Choice"

section that "[t]he body as a living machine is now correlative with cars as vibrant and attractive

organisms" (*MB* 84). This quotation, which harkens back to Marinetti's claim that "a roaring

motor car […] is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace" (Marinetti 5), suggests

that there are simultaneous processes underway in the modern world: as technology becomes

more "organic," the human body becomes more mechanized. This, just like the title of

McLuhan's book suggests, indicates a coming together of humans and technology, flesh and

metal. One of the ways in which McLuhan recognized this "marriage" was by analyzing advertisements, through which he realized that the modern styling of cars was often described in sexual terms. For instance, in his analysis of an advertisement for a 1941 Buick Roadmaster, McLuhan highlighted the seductive phrasing used in the sales pitch, which described the car's "quiet-voiced life," "satiny smoothness," "[h]andy controls," and "big billowy tires," all of which supposedly made the car "a ride that's like a dream" (*MB* 83). In McLuhan's follow-up analysis, he gestures towards the idea of dehumanization by explaining how in this "interfusion of sex and technology," the human body "gets linked with the desires, sexual and otherwise, for mechanical power [...] the car ads make it plain that there is a widespread acceptance of the car as a womb symbol and, paradoxically enough, as a phallic power symbol" (84).

By being both a womb and phallic symbol, the automobile thus represents the dual desires of "comfort and power," which according to McLuhan "could not be more directly stated in terms of sex and technology," and he concludes his analysis of the Buick advertisement by warning that, as a result of this collision of sensibilities, the individual can be easily rendered entranced and thus unable to see the tensions at play (*MB* 84). In other words, since the car condenses an enormous amount of power into a sleekly designed and internally comfortable vehicle, the driver is rendered unconscious to the actual power at their fingertips (similar to how Ballard believed that television works to defuse the images of war and atrocity that it endlessly shows). It is this very notion that appears to have attracted Ballard to the image of the automobile, which he saw as being the primary symbol of the modern technological landscape. As explained in his notes to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the car is "the most powerfully advertised commercial product of this century, an iconic entity that combines the elements of speed, power, dream and freedom within a highly stylised format that defuses any fears we may have of the

inherent dangers of these violent and unstable machines" (*AE* 157). The car crash, then, represents a collision between, or fusion of, "[a]lmost every aspect of modern life […] our sense of speed, drama and aggression, the worlds of advertising and consumer goods, engineering and mass manufacture," and it is for this reason that Ballard believed some latent truths about the modern world can be revealed in the crash (*UGM* 262).

Following what McLuhan laid out in *The Mechanical Bride*, visual artists such as Richard Hamilton and Eduardo Paolozzi—both of whom were members of the Independent Group and whose work was shown at the "This is Tomorrow" exhibition that Ballard had attended—investigated the interfusion of flesh and metal, sex and violence in their art. In 1955, Hamilton held an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) called "Man, Machine and Motion," which "displayed some 200 photographs of people and transportation […] juxtaposing images of technology and fantasy in close proximity in an immersive and collagist exhibition environment." The introduction to the exhibition catalogue also "emphasized the 'union' of man and machine" ("J.G. Ballard's 'Crash! A Science Theatre Presentation for the ICA': The Context of a Document Newly Discovered" 6). In that same year, the critic Reyner Banham wrote an essay called "Vehicles of Desire," in which he envisions the automobile as an "artefact in evolution," a phrase which lends a biological/organic dimension to a mechanical object (Banham 4). Furthermore, in this same essay Banham discusses how the design of the car creates a balance between "the sense of masculine power and feminine luxury" (5), which echoes McLuhan's observation regarding the car as both a womb and phallic symbol. Also like McLuhan, Banham made note of a sensually described Buick that appeared in *Industrial Design* magazine: "the dip in the body and the chrome spear express how the thrust is dissipated in turbulence toward the rear […] The driver sits in the dead calm at the centre of all this motion—

hers is a lush situation" (quoted in Banham 5). Richard Hamilton then continued this

investigation into the fusing of organic and mechanical bodies in his 1957 paintings *Hommage à*

*Chrysler Corp* and *Hers Is a Lush Situation*.[51] In the article "Banham Avec Ballard: On Style and

Violence," Mark Dorrian explains that these paintings "drew directly on automobile advertising"

and show how "styling—the body styling of both car and female model, which were typically

coupled in advertisements—becomes the precondition for a merging of the two" (Dorrian).

In 1964, Eduardo Paolozzi created a sculpture called *Crash*, an amalgamation of pipes

and other car parts that resemble humanoid figures with flailing limbs, and which can be

conceived of "as analogous to the fragmentary texts that Ballard was then starting to produce"

(Ford 66). Ballard and Paolozzi had actually become close friends and, in 1968, the two, along

with Dr. Christopher Evans, had planned to produce a play, or a "Science Theatre" performance,

called *Crash* at the ICA.[52] Though this play never came to fruition, it was described by June

Rose in the *Sunday Mirror* (May 19, 1968) as such:

> all the horror and realism of an actual road smash will be played out in front of the
>
> audience. The young driver, in blood-covered track-suit, will lie beside the mangled car.
>
> His girl friend will kneel beside him, caressing him. Dummies will mouth words about
>
> the beautiful and desirable features of the motor car. Behind them, film of cars crashing
>
> will make up the stark and terrible accompaniment. (quoted in Ford 66-67).

According to Chris Beckett in "J.G. Ballard's 'Crash! A Science Theatre Presentation for the

ICA': The Context of a Document Newly Discovered," Rose's article was the only documented

mention of this planned play until 2017, when Nancy Evans, the widow of Christopher Evans,

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[51] The title of the latter was taken from the *Industrial Magazine* article cited above, that which Banham references in "Vehicles of Desire."

[52] This was the same year that Ballard's short stories "Crash!" and "The University of Death" were published, the latter of which includes a crashed cars exhibition.

found a copy of Ballard's typed outline for it in one of her husband's trunks of books and papers (3). This outline is titled "Crash! A Science Theatre Presentation for the ICA," and it is now housed at the British Library.

In this manuscript, Ballard states that "[a] dominant element in this reality is science, and its instrument, the machine. In most of its roles the machine assumes a benign or passive posture […] The 20th century has also given birth to a vast range of machines […] where the real identity of the machine is more ambiguous" (Ballard quoted in "The Context of a Document Newly Discovered" 29-30). In what appears to be planned dramatizations of Traven's experiments in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard intended for film reels of automobiles to be projected onto the background throughout the play (in both their mundane and violent states), and at different points the reel would cut to commercials and/or erotic imagery, thus blurring human and machine bodies in ways similar to Richard Hamilton's paintings. As the play progresses, and as the main subjects become ever more enamoured by the new car they purchase, all of their relationships become mediated by it, and it thus becomes "clear to the audience that they are making love as much to the car as to themselves" (Ballard quoted in "The Context of a Document Newly Discovered" 32).

Though this play was never produced, Ballard continued to pursue similar ideas regarding the latent meaning of cars and car crashes across media. From April 4-28, 1970, Ballard held a crashed cars exhibition at the New Arts Laboratory in London, aptly titled "Jim Ballard: Crashed Cars," an event that played a pivotal role in his investigation into how the modern technological world massages the psyche so as to unconsciously fuse advertising, violence, and eroticism together. Similar to what is written in the manuscript of Ballard's planned theatrical performance, an excerpt of the exhibition handout reads:

Each of these sculptures is a memorial to a unique collision between man and his

technology. However tragic they are, automobile crashes play very different roles from

the ones we assign them. Behind our horror lie an undeniable fascination and excitement

[…] The 20th century has given birth to a vast range of machines—computers, pilotless

planes, thermonuclear weapons—where the latent identity of the machine is ambiguous.

An understanding of this identity can be found in a study of the automobile, which

dominates the vectors of speed, aggression, violence, and desire. (quoted in Ford 69)

For his version of a Pop Art exhibition, Ballard obtained three cars from a junkyard called Motor

Crash Repairs—a Pontiac, an Austin Cambridge A60 and a Mini—each of which was

purposefully picked because they represent different phases of automobile styling (Ford 68).

Along with these three cars, television monitors were set up so that guests could see themselves

walking around the vehicles, alcohol was served, and a naked woman was hired to interview the

guests (though she later agreed only to do so topless, which Ballard thought was in itself a

significant response).

As all of this alludes to, under the guise of an art show, Ballard's "Crashed Cars"

exhibition was intended to act as a psychological test. Ballard recounts the results of this

experiment in his autobiography, *Miracles of Life*:

I have never seen the guests at an art gallery get drunk so quickly. There was a huge

tension in the air, as if everyone felt threatened by some inner alarm that had started to

ring. No one would have noticed the cars if they had been parked on the street outside,

but under the unvarying gallery lights these damaged vehicles seemed to provoke and

disturb. Wine splashed over the cars, windows were broken, and the topless girl was

almost raped in the back seat of the Pontiac. (*ML* 239-240)

Over the course of the month that the cars were exhibited, they became increasingly damaged and mutilated by the visitors and, to Ballard, this worked to confirm that he had struck "a psychological nerve" (*EM* 143), that the psyche was forming unconscious connections between sex, violence, and technology, and that these connections threatened to rupture the psyche from within, in turn making us more violent.

On February 10, 1971, approximately nine months after the crashed cars exhibition, a short film directed by Harley Cokeliss and starring Ballard aired on BBC2 (Sargeant 53). This film, titled *Crash!*, depicts Ballard engaging in various mundane acts involving automobiles—such as driving on a highway, going to a carwash, and looking through the showroom at a car dealership—acts which are, at times, juxtaposed with reels of crashing vehicles. Furthermore, along with a narrator who reads lightly revised excerpts from Ballard's story "You and Me and the Continuum," Ballard himself also provides narration, expressing the importance of the automobile as a coded image of the twentieth century: "I think it would be possible to reconstitute almost every element of human psychology from the design of a vehicle like this" ("Transcript of the Film 'Crash!'" 62). As Ballard's character goes about his tasks, a woman portrayed by Gabrielle Drake begins to appear and disappear, seemingly projected from the mind of Ballard's character. In one scene, the camera watches voyeuristically as Drake slowly maneuvers her body whilst stepping out of the car, and in another scene the film juxtaposes a carwash with Drake showering. In both cases, parts of Drake's body are equated to parts of the vehicle, and as Jack Sargeant notes, "[b]oth female and automobile are rendered here as loci of seduction […] The curved shapes created by the erotic contours of the female form find their mimesis within the smooth design of the vehicle, the flow of a fender and the architecture of the hood" (Sargeant 55). Regarding the shower/ carwash scene in particular, as the camera fades

back and forth between water running over Drake and the car, the viewer's gaze is obscured, and at times it cannot be discerned whether said parts are human or machine, as the overlapping contours are almost visually identical.

All of Ballard's work across media led him to pursue his thoughts on consumer culture, power, violence, and eroticism—through the image of the automobile—in novel form. Following *The Atrocity Exhibition*, however, Ballard deemed it necessary to return to a linear narrative in *Crash*, saying in an interview with the CBC that the percepts put forth in *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash* "are so unexpected, incomprehensible to some people" that "[t]he best way of expressing them is in a straightforward way" (quoted in Holliday 111). Therefore, though differing in terms of form and narration, *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash* are undoubtedly situated in the same world: both are saturated with signs and symbols of the present, and both explore the potential impact of the modern technological landscape on human identity and cognition. Unlike *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Crash* is centred upon the image of the automobile, thus following the lineage outlined above, and in it Ballard uniquely imagines the perversions and psychopathologies that arise out of such an interfusion of flesh and metal, those which drive the characters to find stimulation in violence, but which also render then mechanical and affectless.

### *Crash*

In *Crash*, the reader once again sees the collapsing of planes onto each other, public onto private, fantasy onto reality, and mechanical onto natural. As the narrator, James Ballard—a commercial producer who works at the Shepperton film studios—lies on a hospital bed following his initial crash with Dr. Helen Remington and her husband, he describes his life as

taking place within the other scenes of violence that are repeatedly shown on, and diffused by, television:

> This violence experienced at so many removes had become intimately associated with our sex acts. The beatings and burnings married in our minds with the delicious tremors of our erectile tissues […] even the vagal flushes that seized at my chest seemed extensions of that real world of violence calmed and tamed within our television programmes and the pages of news magazines. (*C* 37)

As is made evident by this quotation, Ballard uses the term "marriage" throughout *Crash* to articulate the ways in which these sorts of binaries are unconsciously blurred together in the modern world. It is implied that prior to his crash, James is unaware of how he has been shaped and hypnotized by mass media and technology; however, post-crash he experiences an awakening, as the collision jars his perception, and he in turn learns to more sufficiently *see* and understand the world around him. Just as depicted in Cokeliss's film, one of the things that James realizes post-crash is that there is a deeper connection between the human body and the automobile than appears on the surface: "the precise make and model-year of my car could have been reconstructed by an automobile engineer from the pattern of my wounds" (28).

Likewise, the transformation of James's perception is further evident when he is discharged from the hospital and realizes that the entirety of the world around him is, like McLuhan described, a new nature, a technosphere rather than a biosphere, an environment that threatens one's old identity: "I realized that the entire zone which defined the landscape of my life was now bounded by a continuous artificial horizon" (*C* 53). In *Crash*, the artificial has subsumed the natural, and this indicates that there has been a shift in power between humans and the technology we create (that which reciprocally re-creates us). Enveloped by, and thus

subordinate to, this technological world, the characters vie for transcendence by merging with it, accepting physical and psychological damage in exchange for stimulation, that which awakens them from their somnambulistic state. As the novel progresses, James and Catherine Ballard embrace the new logics set forth by "hoodlum scientist" Robert Vaughan, and they in turn vigorously explore the impulses stirring within their psyches, those which are simultaneously fertilizing and destructive.

As mentioned in the last section, Ballard not only specifically invoked Freud and McLuhan in the foreword to the Danish edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, but also in the introduction to the French edition to *Crash*. In the latter, he writes:

> The marriage of reason and nightmare which has dominated the twentieth century has given birth to an ever more ambiguous world. Across the communications landscape move the spectres of sinister technologies and the dreams that money can buy. Thermo-nuclear weapons systems and soft-drink commercials coexist in an overlit realm ruled by advertising and pseudo-events, science and pornography. Over our lives preside the great twin leitmotifs of the twentieth century – sex and paranoia. Despite McLuhan's delight in high-speed information mosaics we are still reminded of Freud's profound pessimism in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Voyeurism, self-disgust, the infantile basis of our dreams and longings – these diseases of the psyche have now culminated in the most terrifying casualty of the century: the death of affect. ("Introduction to the French edition of *Crash*" 359)

As will be examined in this section, Ballard's invocation of both Freud and McLuhan is apt, seeing as, like Ballard, both were concerned with the notion of identity and the individual's place within society. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, for example, Freud argues that the will of the

individual is often at odds with the society in which he or she resides, seeing as the rules and barriers upheld by society run contrary to, and work to repress, the instincts and drives that are natural to the individual. He explains that in life, the individual is threatened from three directions: "from our own body; which is doomed to decay and dissolution […] from the external world […] and finally from our relations to other men" (Freud 24).[53] According to Freud, in order to alleviate the pain that stems from this, the individual creates "auxiliary constructions," which is a term that Freud borrowed from Theodor Fontane to explain how we do, use, or create various things in order to help us cope with the innumerable pressures that are constantly exerted upon us. These auxiliary constructions can take various forms, such as art, drugs, or isolation, but the one that Freud focuses on the most is community, which people join because it is an easy way of alleviating many different pressures. It is the case, however, that within the latter exists a constant struggle between Eros and Thanatos, "between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction" (69). It is this struggle that Freud says characterizes one's integration into society, as doing so makes life easier and fruitful, but it comes at the expense of one's own free will and identity.

Similar to Freud, McLuhan also believed that a tension exists between one's identity and the external world, and that the external world often impinges upon the individual in painful ways, unconsciously *massaging* them into new modes of being. As explained by McLuhan, "the new media are not bridges between man and nature – they are nature" (*Book of Probes* 18-19), and the result of this is that humans experience an adaptive response as they unknowingly (and perhaps unwillingly) conform to the pressures of the modern technological landscape. In

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[53] It is also worth noting that the three directions listed by Freud here correspond with the three planes of existence that Ballard outlined in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, those which he believed have all collapsed onto one in the modern world.

*Understanding Media*, McLuhan frequently discusses the psychic and social consequences to the advancement of media and technology, explaining that "the interplay among media is only another name for this 'civil war' that rages in our society and our psyches alike," and that "[m]ost of this civil war affects us in the depths of our psychic lives, as well, since the war is conducted by forces that are extensions and amplifications of our own beings" (*UM* 57). This "civil war" that occurs within and between the psyche and society is reminiscent of the tension between Eros and Thanatos that Freud discusses in *Civilization and its Discontents*, as it is by merging with the dominant external structure—society or the technosphere alike—that the individual is rendered subordinate to it, regardless if doing so comes with certain pleasures.

Interestingly, McLuhan also specifically discusses the automobile in *Understanding Media*, claiming that "[t]here is a growing uneasiness about the degree to which cars have become the real population of our cities, with a resulting loss of human scale, both in power and in distance" (*UM* 194). In this quotation, McLuhan clearly gestures towards the notion of technological dominance: the idea that the more power technology gains, the more invasive it becomes. I would argue that Ballard then expands upon this notion by explaining how the violent and dangerous potential of technology—as represented by the automobile—is often masked by its commercial or highly stylized properties. It is perhaps for a similar reason that McLuhan concluded that "[t]he modern metropolis is now sprawling helplessly after the impact of the motorcar […] And a technological extension of our bodies designed to alleviate physical stress can bring on psychic stress that may be much worse" (72). Here, McLuhan is describing what he refers to as "counter-irritants," which are mechanisms designed to counter the effects (or affects) of modern technologies. It is often the case, however, that since in the electronic age these counter-irritants often take the form of other technologies, they thus have effects opposite to their

designed intensions, causing physical or psychological stress that may be "a greater plague than the initial irritant, like a drug habit" (71).

As previously explained, McLuhan upheld the importance of art, believing that in the electronic world it is art that can provide the "exact information of how to rearrange one's psyche in order to anticipate the next blow from our own extended faculties" (*UM* 71).[54] It is exactly this that I would argue Ballard is trying to accomplish in his modern disaster novels, warning of the coming violence to the psyche and exploring possible psychopathologies that may arise due to our (often unwilled) interaction with media and technology, that which cannot be escaped from. Though in *Crash* Ballard refrains from any sort of moral commentary, he does wave a cautionary finger at the reader as he works to "expos[e] the latent meaning of automobile culture" and display the impact that media and technology can have, and will continue to have, on our lives (Sterenberg 114). In the world of *Crash*, Ballard uses the image of the automobile to show how technology has taken on a life of its own, and how, having been massaged by a world saturated with "all this power and explosive violence," people find themselves "processing and siphoning it off into some form of fantasy" in order to cope and stimulate the sensorium as a way of resisting the death of affect (*UM* 196).

As previously established, the crash that occurs at the beginning of Ballard's novel—that which leaves Dr. Helen Remington's husband dead, and James and Helen hospitalized—is an apocalyptic moment for James, as he is jarred free from his usual patterns of observation. As B.W. Powe explains, in this sense apocalypse refers to "heightened awareness, the moment of epiphany, where an individual sees into, or acutely apprehends, his or her time and place." This moment can also "seem violent" and be "a heart- and mind-wrenching experience" (Powe 16).

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[54] As stated earlier, McLuhan also specified science fiction as being a genre capable of doing this, stating: "Science-fiction writing today presents situations that enable us to perceive the potential of new technologies" (*MM* 124).

The impact of James's collision initiates a process through which he begins to apprehend the world around him more clearly, and he begins to observe and read the latent signs and symbols of the technological environment's coded landscape. As Helen is helped from her vehicle by first responders, James begins to reassess the human body, which post-crash "appeared to mimic the distorted streamlining of the two cars" (*C* 22). Importantly, however, as this quotation indicates, James sees the body as resembling the contours of the car, not the opposite, and this further establishes technology as being the dominant force in this world, thus flipping McLuhan's notion of technology being an extension of humans.

As McLuhan explains in *The Medium is the Massage*: "All media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the massage. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments" (*MM* 26). McLuhan's alteration of the aphorism "the medium is the *message*" to "the medium is the *massage*" indicates a shift in focus from the subliminal effects of technology to its tactile, physical effects, and likewise, as James's body changes post-crash, his body itself becomes a symbolic landscape embedded with the codes of technology: "all my organic expertise for dealing with physical injury had long been blunted or forgotten. The crash was the only real experience I had been through for years. For the first time I was in physical confrontation with my own body, an inexhaustible encyclopedia of pains and discharges" (*C* 39). As is evident, technology has embedded itself into the characters both physically and psychologically, and this is why they begin to feel each other's bodies in the curvatures of the vehicle, and feel the vehicle by touching the wounds and scars on the human body—the two have "married" and are unable to divorce.

The car crash, however, can be considered a "fertilizing rather than a destructive experience" because it makes the individual aware of this marriage (*AE* 157). As Ballard's voiceover explains in Cokeliss's film, the crash is an ambiguous event because "[i]f we really feared the car crash, none of us would ever be able to drive a car" ("Transcript of the Film 'Crash!'" 63). As such, once James is released from the hospital, he returns to the site of the accident, realizing that "the image of the car had changed, almost as if its true nature had been exposed by [his] accident" (*C* 49). He in turn feels a "growing sense of a new junction between [his] own body and the automobile" (55), and though it is clear that James has experienced a moment of apocalypse—an awakening or internal transformation—at this point in the novel he is still unsure about its exact significance. It is only when he meets Dr. Robert Vaughan that he is guided through the inner and outer labyrinths of this new world, one of flesh and metal, Eros and Thanatos: "The spurs of deformed metal, the triangles of fractured glass, were signals that had lain unread for years in this shabby grass, ciphers translated by Vaughan and myself as we sat with our arms around each other in the centre of the electric storm moving across our retinas" (200).

Vaughan is a former "TV scientist" who had appeared in "a dozen forgotten television programmes and news-magazine profiles," only for his television career to be derailed by an automobile accident (*C* 63). Vaughan, however, is like Poe's sailor, described by James as "the eye of this illumination of the landscape around us," and it is he who thus holds the keys to deciphering this new world, as he is fully immersed in it by the time James and Catherine meet him (200). Vaughan's body is covered in scars from various crashes, imprints that the others read, his wounded body a literal sign of technology embedding itself into human consciousness:

All the experiences of our weeks together had left me in a state of increasing violence, which I knew only Vaughan could resolve. In my fantasies, as I made love to Catherine, I saw myself in an act of sodomy with Vaughan, as if only this act could solve the codes of a deviant technology. (194)

As Emma Whiting explains, "Vaughan's multiple scars act as 'handholds' for James, signs of intersections and wounds that guide James up a 'ladder of desperate excitement' […] towards the potential that would be released in the full crash wound" (Whiting 101). All of the relationships in *Crash* are mediated by technology—or mediated by Vaughan, who is himself a medium between humans and technology—and this leads to the apparent mechanization of the characters, all of whom experience the death of affect because of a lack of direct, immediate interpersonal relationships. As James specifically states, his relationships with Catherine, Vaughan, Helen Remington, and Gabrielle, are all "mediated by the automobile and its technological landscape" (*C* 101) and it is thus "[t]he elements of new technologies [that link their] affections" (32). It gets to the point that the characters cannot maintain any sort of relationship (sexual or otherwise) if a car is not involved, and the more dependent they become upon the technology, the more they become affectless extensions of it.

McLuhan spoke about the death of affect in very similar terms to Ballard, believing that "[t]he fateful consequence of this media take-over" would be "the gradual spread of what he [McLuhan] called 'social numbness'" (Debrix 21). Paradoxically, but consistent with Ballard's blurring of inner and outer space, in *Crash* the inner numbness of the characters is evident in their outer appearances, as they are frequently described as humanoid as the novel progresses. For instance, when James watches Vaughan and Catherine copulating in the rear-view mirror, he says that they look "like two semi-metallic human beings of the distant future making love in a

chromium bower […] celebrating in this sexual act the marriage of their bodies with this benign technology" (*C* 162). And earlier in the novel, James observes his "own metal body" (113), and says that Vaughan's body has developed "an unhealthy and metallic sheen, like the worn vinyl of the car interior" (90). In each example, it is clear that the body as organic has turned into the body as mechanical and robotic. As Martin Bax says of Ballard's work: "Ballard is the chronicler, if you like, of the third stage of the industrial revolution. All of us are now, in fact, *bio-robots*—we can't exist without the equipment which we have around us, like cars, telephones, tape recorders, contact lenses, so we're no longer just biological organisms, we're *bio-robotical* organisms" (Bax 36). All of this is further elucidated as the novel nears its climax, with the symbiotic process speeding towards its fateful conclusion.

In what is perhaps the most explicit description of the interfusion of flesh and metal underway, James's body is described as literally transforming into an automobile: "The murmur of the transmission system reverberated through my legs and spine, echoing off the plates of my skull as if I myself were lying in the transmission tunnel of the car, my hands taking the torque of the crankshaft, my legs spinning to propel the vehicle forwards" (*C* 197). Subsequently, just prior to Vaughan's plunge off of the London Airport flyover in which he tries to collide with a limousine containing Elizabeth Taylor, his car becomes increasingly damaged:

> Vaughan's car was becoming increasingly battered. The right-hand fender and doors were marked with impact points scored deep into the metal, a rusting fretwork that turned more and more white, as if revealing a skeleton below […] I saw that two of the rear windows had been broken.

>Further damage continued. A body panel detached itself from the off-side rear wheel housing and the front bumper hung from the chassis pinion, its rusting lower curvature touching the ground as Vaughan cornered. (217)

The implication here is that as Vaughan's car deteriorates, so does his body, and it is not long after that he performs his auto-crucifixion (the prefix "auto" referring to both self and machine). As he drives at maximum speed and "tr[ies] to launch himself into the sky," a large group of people gather around "the logic and beauty" of Vaughan's performance, that which he had rehearsed numerous times before (222). Though this event—a literalization of Freud's death drive—culminates in Vaughan's death (Thanatos), it coincides with a moment of extreme bliss (Eros), while also working to create new apostles, "pav[ing] the way for his 'disciples' – James, Catherine, Gabrielle – who, through their own crashes, have been […] 'baptised' into the new faith" (Whiting 98). Vaughan's climactic crash works to open the eyes of the crowd to the collision of celebrity, sex, violence, and technology that constantly surrounds them, but which largely goes unnoticed, and therefore in his death the spectators are cognitively reborn.

One final point of intersection worth discussing is between Ballard, McLuhan, and the theories of Jean Baudrillard. In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan explains the reciprocal cycle of human-technology recreation, saying that with every new technological advancement, the individual

>is perpetually modified by it and in turn finds ever new ways of modifying [their] technology. Man becomes, as it were, the sex organs of the machine world, as the bee of the plant world, enabling it to fecundate and to evolve ever new forms. The machine world reciprocates man's love by expediting his wishes and desires, namely in providing

him with wealth. One of the merits of motivation research has been the revelation of

man's sex relation to the motorcar. (*UM* 55-56)

While the final sentence is relevant to my analysis of *Crash* for obvious reasons, the passage as a

whole portrays technology as having a biological dimension, involved in a process of evolution

alongside humans, and McLuhan describes the way in which we create the things that then

recreate us. Similarly, just after referencing McLuhan in his chapter on *Crash* in *Simulacra and

Simulation* (1981), Baudrillard seemingly extends McLuhan's thought to say that not only is

there a process of shaping and reshaping, but that due to the exponential rate of technological

advancement, machines are "destined to become the organic body of man" (Baudrillard 111).

Ballard conceives of the automobile along similar lines in *Crash*, with the car being described as

an organic cocoon that is as natural as the human body: "For Vaughan the smallest styling details

contained an organic life as meaningful as the limbs and sense organs of the human beings who

drove these vehicles" (*C* 169).

For Baudrillard, however, once technology penetrates the human psyche and body to

such an extent that it becomes experienced as organic, it can no longer be considered "a

functional medium, but the extension of death," and with the signs of the body confused with the

signs of technology, the body is no longer itself an independent entity (Baudrillard 111). In

*Crash*, the tension that Ballard generates between Eros and Thanatos, life and death, shows just

this, because though the characters are in one way rewarded by their merging with technology—

exploring previously repressed impulses and finding stimulation in doing so—in another way

they are rendered deadened and affectless. This tension can even be observed in the narration

itself, largely due to Ballard's use of the first-person, which he had not used in any of his other

novels up until this point, and which, because of the character being named James Ballard, blurs

the lines between fiction and autobiography. Ballard's decision to use first-person narration not only forces the reader to see the events through the eyes of a narrator who slowly becomes indoctrinated into the new world unfolding in front of him, but it also allows for him to relay James's mechanization to the reader. Whether it is sex, automobiles, controlled crashes or real crashes, everything is described in a monotonous tone, as if everything is equal. This is why even moments of excitement and stimulation are described in a muted tone; for instance, how the body during intercourse is described using only anatomical language, no slang, which suggests that the interfusion of metal and flesh has had mechanical effects on James.[55]

Baudrillard devotes entire chapters of *Simulacra and Simulation* to *Crash* and the genre of science fiction, and he explains that while traditional SF was based upon doubles—for instance, human vs. android or human vs. alien—in new SF, this doubling needs to be rethought seeing as, in the modern technological landscape, the natural and the artificial have embedded themselves into each other to such an extent that they have effectively become one: "the few natural orifices to which one usually attaches sex and sexual activities are nothing next to all the possible wounds, all the artificial orifices […] [the body] no longer knows either interior nor exterior" (Baudrillard 114). It is likely for this reason (among others) that Baudrillard was enamoured with Ballard's novel, because it explores how, in the present, the signs of human and technology are continuously confused, a blurring of inner and outer worlds, and in doing so it also collapses the traditional SF trope of the double. However, as will be explored in the next

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[55] This narrative style can also be understood in relation to the texts that Ballard was reading at the time, specifically scientific articles and a book called *Crash Injuries* by Jacob Kulowski. According to Ballard, *Crash Injuries* "deals with every conceivable aspect of the automobile crash and its effects on the human passenger […] It's exhaustive in its descriptions of the nightmare interface between human body and technology at a moment of severe crisis […] For me, reading that book and the use I made of it was an example of what I feel the sf writer should be doing. He should be looking at reality in its (excuse the pun) sharpest points of contact with ourselves, rather than relying upon endless fantastications of an already well established set of interplanetary conventions" ("Interview with J.G. Ballard: Psychoanalyst of the Electronic Age" 10).

section on *Concrete Island*, when these signs become confused to such an extent that the individual sees themself as having both human and technological selves, a violent break from the technological world may be necessary in order to preserve one's human identity, even if this experience is physically and psychologically damaging in other ways.

### Concrete Island

*Concrete Island* (1974) is in many ways a sequel to *Crash*, as it continues Ballard's investigation into the modern technological landscape and its impact on the psyche. The novel is set in the same landscape of high-speed motorways and hypnotized drivers, office blocks and high-rise apartments, airports and runways, and Ballard also reuses many character names to further draw attention to the interconnectedness of the novels (Robert Vaughan and Robert Maitland, Helen Remington and Helen Fairfax, Catherine Ballard and Catherine Maitland). Likewise, *Concrete Island* begins where *Crash* ends, with a plummeting automobile and its subsequent crash:

> Soon after three o'clock on the afternoon of April 22nd 1973, a 35-year-old architect named Robert Maitland was driving down the high-speed exit lane of the Westway interchange in central London. Six hundred yards from the junction with the newly built spur of the M4 motorway, when the Jaguar had already passed the 70 m.p.h speed limit, a blow-out collapsed the front nearside tyre. The exploding air reflected from the concrete parapet seemed to detonate inside Robert Maitland's skull. During the few seconds before his crash he clutched at the whiplashing spokes of the steering wheel, dazed by the impact of the chromium window pillar against his head. The car veered from side to side across the empty traffic lanes, jerking his hands like a puppet's […] Leaving the hard

shoulder, the car plunged down the grass slope of the embankment. Thirty yards ahead, it

came to a halt against the chassis of an overturned taxi. Barely injured by this violent

tangent that had grazed his life, Robert Maitland lay across his steering wheel, his jacket

and trousers studded with windshield fragments like a suit of light. (7)

As one critic explains, "[t]he density of details" in this opening paragraph—the exact date, the

age of Maitland, the distance, and the speed—indicates that the external world is "a reality far

too dense for the narrator to escape from, until he is marooned and loses his sense of selfhood"

(Groes 130). But even more significant to the scope of my analysis is the way in which the

opening paragraph of *Concrete Island* also establishes an intimate connection between Maitland

and his Jaguar, an aspect of the novel that is carried forth from the interfusion of flesh and metal

observed in *Crash*.

The reader is told that the exploding tire coincides with a "detonat[ion] inside Robert

Maitland's skull," and Maitland is further likened to a "puppet," which thus places him in a

position subordinate to the technology that enthralls him. As Ballard explains in the introduction

to the 1994 edition of *Concrete Island*:

Modern technology, as I tried to show in *Crash* and *High-Rise,* offers an endless field-day

to any deviant strains in our personalities. Marooned in an office block or on a traffic

island, we can tyrannise ourselves, test our strengths and weaknesses, perhaps come to

terms with aspects of our characters to which we have always closed our eyes. (quoted in

Wilson 90)

The crash that Maitland experiences is another apocalyptic moment, as the "detonation" that

occurs within his skull signifies a shift in perception, an awakening, and, therefore, though the

crash leaves him physically injured, it also sets into motion a process of psychic rebirth.

Maitland is forcefully—and, as the reader later assumes, willingly—torn free from the physical and psychological constraints of the modern technological landscape in a moment that can be conceived of in relation to McLuhan's notion that a breakdown can lead to a breakthrough (*Take Today* 282; *Laws of Media* 108). This moment brings with it the opportunity for Maitland to reengage with his past and with various interpersonal relationships he has and, from this point, it then makes it possible for him to reach a state of psychic fulfillment that he couldn't whilst hazed by a technological fog, that which also numbs his sensorium.

In *The Medium is the Massage*, McLuhan explains how electric technology is an externalization of basic biological processes, and that it is thus "an extension of the central nervous system" (*MM* 40). This notion is based upon the understanding that humans *are* electricity: the body communicates with itself through electrically charged nerve impulses which allow for major cognitive/ physiological processes to occur. It is McLuhan's view that the electronic circuitry found in the external world is thus an extension of the neural networks found in the human body. This notion is alluded to in both *Crash* and *Concrete Island*, with these externalized neural networks indicated through the "traffic mov[ing] like blood in a dying artery" (*C* 149) and through "the complex shadows and geometries formed by the route signs and overhead wires, lamp standards and concrete walls" (*CI* 169). As previously explained, McLuhan also said that, once externalized, technology reciprocates the process of creation by reshaping us. In other words, we create the environments that affect us both physically and psychologically, not only changing the ways in which we interact with each other, but also forcing the human sensorium to adjust in response to the new stimuli forced upon it.

McLuhan expands upon this notion in *War and Peace in the Global Village*, referring to the modern technological landscape as the most extraordinary form of "clothing" ever devised:

Since the new information environments are direct extensions of our own nervous

system, they have a much more profound relation to our human condition than the old

'natural' environment. They are a form of clothing that can be programmed at will to

produce any effect desired. Quite naturally, they take over the evolutionary work that

Darwin had seen in the spontaneities of biology. (*WP* 36-37)

In this passage, McLuhan emphasizes the interfusion of humans and technology that is evident in

the modern world, noting that there is a "profound relation" between the two, one that he

characterizes in evolutionary terms. The underlying idea here is that the more the technological

environment expands, the more humans become "clothed" by it, enshrouded by its invisible

environment; however, when there then is breakdown in this order, and one, like Maitland,

becomes violently stripped bare of their technological clothing, one may, in their new anti-

environment, start to recognize the ways in which they have been altered by it. Therefore,

"[b]reakdown becomes breakthrough" (*Laws of Media* 108).

To further elucidate this percept within the context of *Concrete Island*, Maitland's crash

at the beginning of the novel acts to violently remove him from the surrounding technological

world, and thus also from his "psychotic twin brother," which he becomes while driving at high

speeds, enraptured, hypnotized by the technological shell that he's in. This breach is made

evident when, splattered with dirt and oil post-crash, Maitland's "[h]eavy jaw and hard cheeks

[are] drained of all blood" and "[t]he eyes staring back at him from the mirror [are] blank and

unresponsive, as if he were looking at a psychotic twin brother" (*CI* 9). Furthermore, as the

narrator explains in a later chapter, "[a]s well as breaking up his car, the crash seemed to have

jolted [Maitland's] brain loose from its moorings" (37). While on the road, Maitland is an

example of what McLuhan called "discarnate man," a term used to describe an individual who,

by adapting to modern technology, finds that "[t]heir old physical beings are entirely irrelevant to the new situations" (*Laws of Media* 72). As Philip Marchand explains in *The Medium and the Messenger*, "discarnate man" becomes so used to being in various places simultaneously due to technology—by telephone, television, internet, etc.—that "his self [is] no longer his physical body so much as it was an image or a pattern of information, inhabiting a world of other images and other patterns of information" (Marchand 249). In this state, the identity of the individual is "virtually swamped by the barrage of images and information in a phantom electronic world," and it induces a hypnotic state in which "[p]sychically, discarnate man suffer[s] a breakdown between his consciousness and his unconscious" (249).

Maitland, while driving at high speed on the highway, is an example of this sort of "disembodied intelligence" (*Laws of Media* 72), as he is described as a "puppet" who is hypnotized by the environment swirling around him. Specifically, the reader is told that when Maitland enters an automobile, he experiences a behavioral shift: "Once inside a car some rogue gene, a strain of rashness, overran the rest of his usually cautious and clear-minded character" (*CI* 9). However, as Sebastian Groes further explains, "[t]he potentially lethal power of the motorcar brings to the surface a curious urge normally buried within the unconscious: an escapist act of violence directed against the self" (Groes 128). It is thus the case that in his reimagining of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Ballard creates a survival story for the modern age by inverting the "stranded on an island" trope in order to suggest that, despite the sensory stimulation we might experience because of it, "we secretly wish to escape civilization" (Sivyer 74). As such, the marooning of Maitland allows for him to experience a shift in perception in which he is torn free from his technological, discarnate "self," and in this newly found state Maitland begins to *think* and *see* again. As the sensory haze is slowly lifted, Maitland begins to

recede into his psyche and he conjures past memories, those that he must confront in order to achieve a sense of psychic completion and rebirth.

The fact that the novel is set in April—which, to readers to twentieth-century poetry, has obvious allusions to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*—gestures towards the process of renewal that is spurred on by Maitland's crash, a point that is further suggested at the beginning of the second chapter when the earth is described as "flow[ing] around him like a warm, alluvial river" (*CI* 15). Importantly, the triangular plot of land on which Maitland finds himself is "sealed off from the world around it" by two embankments and a wire fence, and it is thus a bubble just outside the reach of the technological environment's influence (13). Roger Luckhurst explains that it is in this liminal space that Maitland finds himself in a position opposite to the characters of *Crash*: "Maitland's gaze is reversed from that of [James's] in *Crash*; from the island he can see the anonymous balconies of the high-rises—the type of place where [James] convalesced (and whose functionalist order atavistically degenerates in *High Rise*)" (Luckhurst 135-136). The island represents the eye of the maelstrom of modernization—which I described earlier when analyzing the "image maze" seen in *The Atrocity Exhibition*—a place where, like Poe's sailor, Maitland can observe the world around him without being affected by it.

As such, in experiencing this gaze reversal, when Maitland subsequently climbs one of the embankments and tries to flag down a passing driver, he recognizes that the drivers show signs of the same "rogue gene" seen in himself while driving—they are reflections of his discarnate self. In this moment, Maitland is

> rendered insignificant in the eyes of passing drivers by the scale and speed of the
>
> mechanized landscape, blotted from their view by the opacity of a purposeful technology.

In *Concrete Island* the cityscape repeatedly interposes inhuman distances and hard,

opaque barriers in the way of human contact. (Francis 123)

Confirming Francis's comments, Maitland's shouts for help are overpowered by the roaring

engines and, after nobody stops to offer him assistance, a wooden trestle hit by a passing car is

hurled at him, sending him falling back down the hill and resulting in a further injury.

Believing his leg to be broken, Maitland makes a crutch out of his Jaguar's exhaust pipe,

an act that symbolizes his technological dependency; however, though physically injured,

"Maitland's head fe[els] clear," his "mind free," and he unconsciously begins to conspire to keep

himself on the island (*CI* 23). Though he often declares his desire to leave, he continuously acts

in ways that work to keep him there. For instance, in chapter four, one passing driver notices

Maitland on the island and signals to him with his thumb, offering him a ride, but Maitland does

not respond to this gesture (35). Later, when a man on a motorcycle approaches the island,

Maitland becomes convinced "that this machine he was wheeling was not in fact a light

motorcycle, but a horrific device of torture," and he thus foregoes another opportunity to escape

(60). Later, when Maitland lights his Jaguar ablaze under the pretense of creating a rescue signal,

he does so under a "rain-clouded sky," and all traces of the fire are soon extinguished. Rather

than securing his rescue him from the island, what this act in particular does is destroy the

technology that controls him and helps him to remain on the island. As such, rather than escaping

the island, the implication is that the island is the escape: "Maitland's existence on the island is in

a sense more human than his previous life. It is paradoxically only in leaving behind his

humanity that Maitland is able to rediscover a more authentic version of it" (Sivyer 75). It is thus

fair to conclude that the moments listed above are evidence of Maitland's unconscious motives,

those which, though initially unbeknownst to him, had led him to "willfully devis[e] the crash" (*CI* 9).

Alienated, injured, and in need of food and shelter, Maitland turns his attention to dominating the island. In ways similar to Ballard's apocalyptic novels, the reader is made aware of the fact that inner and outer space have blurred together. Maitland's quest to conquer the island doubles as a quest to conquer himself. As the narrator states: "More and more, the island was becoming an exact model of his head. His movement across this forgotten terrain was a journey not merely through the island's past but through his own" (*CI* 69-70). A similar statement is then made towards the end of the novel, when Maitland's travel across the island is paralleled to him "following a contour line inside his head" (131). Interestingly, both of these examples are accompanied by the same epiphany, in which Maitland comes to the conclusion that "I am the island" (71, 131).[56] As such, the more that Maitland investigates the island, the more he recedes into his past. Consequently, he unlocks avenues of investigation into himself and muses on his personal life, thinking about his wife and son, his affair with Helen Fairfax, and his childhood:

> Mastering his self-pity, he thought again of Catherine and his son. He remembered his cold euphoria as he tottered about on the motorway, screaming his wife's name at the cars. If anything, he should have thanked her for marooning him here. Most of the happier moments of his life had been spent alone – student vacations touring Italy and Greece, a three-month drive around the United States after he qualified. For years now he had re-mythologized his own childhood. The image in his mind of a small boy playing endlessly by himself in a long suburban garden surrounded by a high fence seemed

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[56] This is further made clear by "triangular bruise" that he is left with on his temple post-crash, that which corresponds to the triangular plot of land that he finds himself trapped on (*CI* 8-9).

strangely comforting. It was not entirely vanity that the framed photograph of a seven-

year-old boy in a drawer of his desk at the office was not of his son, but of himself.

Perhaps even his marriage to Catherine, a failure by anyone else's standards, had

succeeded precisely because it recreated for him this imaginary empty garden. (27)

*Concrete Island* makes great use of omission, as the reader only gets brief glimpses into the

characters' pasts—Maitland, Jane, and Proctor alike—yet these glimpses provide important

insights into their motivations for, whether consciously or unconsciously, isolating themselves on

the island, that which, though initially frightening, is equated to the idyllic garden mentioned in

the above quotation.

Though the reader does not initially know much about Maitland's personal life, Ballard

slowly provides information that informs about his unresolved inner conflicts. As the story

progresses, it becomes evident that he harbours feelings of resentment towards his mother,

emotions that also seem to inform his troubled marriage to Catherine. As the following quotation

shows, Maitland's relationships with his mother and wife converge in his mind:

His infantile anger as he shouted aloud for Catherine reminded him of how, as a child, he

had once bellowed unwearyingly for his mother while she nursed his younger sister in the

next room. For some reason, which he had always resented, she had never come to pacify

him, but had let him climb from the empty bath himself, hoarse with anger and surprise.

(*CI* 70)[57]

This same childhood memory is returned to later in the novel, when the narrator compares

Maitland's pleading for help on the side of the road to the time that "he had sat in that empty bath

as a child, screaming with the same resentment" (117). Furthermore, Maitland's inner conflict is

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[57] This climbing out of the bathtub is also paralleled with Maitland's struggle to climb the highway embankments, thus collapsing temporalities.

alluded to by Jane, who, after telling Maitland that he is always talks to himself, says that he must be "tremendously angry with [him]self about something" (84). However, as alluded to in the previous paragraph, Maitland isn't the only one on the island who shows signs of trauma and/ or inner turmoil, the other inhabitants that Maitland meets—Jane and Proctor—have troubled pasts of their own, and the three interact with each other in ways that that force them to reengage with their past lives.

As is the case with Robert Maitland, it is difficult to gain a clear understanding of Jane Sheppard's past; however, by piecing together various conversations that occur, and by taking into consideration the photographs that Maitland finds hidden in one of Jane's drawers in the basement of the abandoned cinema, certain conclusions can be made. The reader knows that Jane's mother killed herself by overdosing on barbiturates, that Jane in some way lost a child (miscarriage and abortion are both alluded to as possibilities), and that she makes money through prostitution. Jane, having lost her child, and Maitland, having childhood trauma, become a perfect match for each other, and consequently Jane becomes Maitland's surrogate mother. After Jane and Proctor find the injured and ill Maitland, Jane nurses and soothes him like a child, and later, when Maitland begins to assert his dominance over the island and make thus make progress on his inner journey, he tells Jane that he is "not going to play the part of [her] baby" (*CI* 138).[58] As Samuel Francis explains in *The Psychological Fictions of J.G. Ballard*, Maitland's fall off the air-raid shelter and his entry into the green bower of the underground cavern, along with "his subsequent mothering by Jane in a windowless underground room or womb [imply] a process of rebirth" (Francis 124). It is also important to remember that Maitland is an architect and, by

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[58] A specific example of Jane treating Maitland like a baby occurs in chapter 11 when Maitland is suffering with an extreme fever. As Jane is "rocking his head and murmuring to him reassuringly," she says: "You'll be all right, love. Try to sleep, you'll feel better when you wake. I'll look after you, dear. You're sleepy, aren't you, my baby? Poor bundle, you need so much sleep. Sleepy baby, my rock-a-bye babe …" (*CI* 89).

unconsciously removing himself from the external world, what he creates for himself on the island is an inner labyrinth, or a "central citadel" (to use R.D. Laing's term), one that is even complete with a Minotaur, the "bull-like figure" of Proctor (*CI* 76).

As McLuhan explains in *Understanding Media*, "[m]ental breakdown of varying degrees is the very common result of uprooting and inundation with new information and endless new patterns of information" (*UM* 31). As he then later mentions in *War and Peace in the Global Village*, though the technological landscape can be harmful, causing pain and anxiety due to the individual's forced adaptation to it, it is also the case that the pain experienced can have positive effects: "As with all new technologies, pain creates a special form of space, just as they also create pain" (*WP* 16). This is akin to the way in which, as mentioned in the last section on *Crash*, an apocalyptic moment can be "a heart- and mind-wrenching experience," one that, though violent and painful, brings about illumination (Powe 16). In the context of *Concrete Island*, then, the twofold pain that Maitland experiences—both physical and psychological—is thus necessary as it places him in the "special form of space" (the island) that McLuhan describes, that which is necessary for him to drive towards psychic completion, as it is in this place that he finds himself stripped bare of his technological clothing.

Samuel Francis reads Ballard's novel in conversation with the theories of R.D. Laing, a Scottish psychiatrist who is generally grouped in with the anti-psychiatry movement and who viewed alienation as "the normal condition of modern man" (Francis 120). Ballard, who was familiar with Laing's work, made very similar comments in an interview with V. Vale: "If you have a world like that, without any kind of real freedom of the spirit, the only freedom to be found is in *madness*. I mean, in a completely sane world, *madness* is the only freedom!" (*EM* 154). Laing and McLuhan also shared many ideas, specifically regarding the ways in which both

emphasized how one's external environment plays a major role in shaping their behaviour. It has already been established that McLuhan encouraged his readers to study the surrounding environment in order to decipher it and thus make visible its effects, but Laing, in a similar manner, also believed that rather than diagnosing an individual, one must diagnose "their 'social situation', their relational environment" in order to understand that individual's experiences and behaviour (Brignola 250).

Furthermore, in his studies of schizophrenia, Laing explains that a "schizoid" individual is one who experiences a split between mind and body, and that, as a result of this, rather than feeling like a complete person, they feel like "a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, as two or more selves" (*Divided Self* 17). According to Laing, as this individual experiences the mind as being more "real" than the body, the body thus becomes viewed as a false self. In response to this, and as an attempt to hold onto what they perceive as being their last semblance of autonomy and control, the individual will then alienate his or her self from the outer world, turning inward towards their "real" self: "If the whole of the individual's being cannot be defended, the individual retracts his lines of defence until he withdraws within a central citadel" (*Divided Self* 77). I would argue that Laing's "central citadel" and McLuhan's "special form of space" are referring to a similar process, an inner journey towards self-preservation that Laing believes "could have a central function in a truly sane society" (*Politics* 107), and which McLuhan views as being a necessary step on one's "new quest for identity" (*WP* 126).

In *Concrete Island*, Maitland's split identity is between his inner self and what I will refer to as his technological self, that which he becomes when clothed by the technological world, as indicated by the "psychotic twin brother" that he sees in the rearview mirror post-crash. Therefore, in his subsequent breakdown (and breakthrough), Maitland negates the outside world

in "a direct response to the alienating nature of the rationalized technological landscape" (Francis 122), and he thus feverishly begins to identify his "self" with the island, which becomes in part an externalization of his psyche (remembering his "I am the island" line). This is why various descriptions of the island's grassy landscape are "repeatedly imaged as an ocean or a sea […] imagery which traditionally, and in Ballard's previous work, has been used to suggest the unconscious" (Stephenson 77). As Laing explains using Ballardian terminology: "Sometimes having gone through the looking glass, through the eye of the needle, the territory is recognized as one's lost home, but most people now in inner space and time are, to begin with, in unfamiliar territory and are frightened and confused" (*Politics* 104). Laing believed that when the schizoid individual becomes immersed in this realm of "inner space and time," receding into an amniotic state, they can then reverse the process and begin a journey outward, "from a cosmic foetalization to an existential rebirth" (106).[59]

Similarly, McLuhan believed that if one could be "freed from the shackles of mechanical culture," then they can "plumb to the depths of [their] own being […] We live in a transitional era of profound pain and tragic identity quest, but the agony of our age is the labor pain of rebirth" ("*Playboy* Interview" 268). Though Maitland is initially disoriented and violently ill, the more he navigates the island—and thus the more he traverses through the depths of himself—he begins to heal: his fever and the pain in his leg subside, and he turns his attention to dominating the island, including its inhabitants, as a way of completing his rebirth.

As previously alluded to, the "cosmic foetalization" that Laing theorized is evident in the way in which Jane becomes Maitland's surrogate mother, but his psychic recession also

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[59] Laing also conceives of this inner journey in ways that are eerily similar to the occurrences in Ballard's *The Drowned World*, saying that as the individual goes further inward, they go "in and back and through and beyond into the experience of all mankind, of the primal man, of Adam and perhaps even further into the being of animals, vegetables, and minerals" (*Politics* 104).

manifests itself physically, when Maitland rubs his "bruised chest" at the beginning of chapter 12 and "realize[s] that his body [is] more and more beginning to resemble that of his younger self" (*CI* 91-92). Since Maitland's unresolved inner conflicts stem, at least in part, from a lack of maternal bonding and a subsequent failed marriage, he must dominate Jane, the mother of the island, in order to overcome the resentment that he harbours. As the narrator explains:

> His relationships with Catherine and his mother, even with Helen Fairfax, all the thousand and one emotionally loaded transactions of his childhood, would have been tolerable if he had been able to pay for them in some neutral currency, hard cash across the high-priced counters of these relationships. Far from wanting this girl to help him escape from the island, he was using her for motives he had never before accepted, his need to be freed from his past, from his childhood, his wife and friends, with all their affections and demands, and to rove for ever within the empty city of his own mind.
>
> (142)

After Maitland overcomes Proctor by beating him with his crutch and urinating on him,[60] he begins to humiliate Jane as a way of exerting his power, "playing on her muddled feelings of guilt and deriding her in a way that he had never thought himself capable of doing" (139). Maitland rationalizes his debauched behaviour by claiming that it is part of his quest for survival, necessary actions intended to help him escape from the island; however, Maitland's unconscious motives differ from his claims. Maitland *wants* rather than *needs* to take these actions, as the sense of retribution that he experiences in doing so is fulfilling, while also working to rid the island of its inhabitants so that he can have full dominion over it, and thus over himself.

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[60] Maitland here plays on an inner weakness of Proctor's, who is traumatized from being urinated on by a police sergeant many years before.

*Concrete Island* thus ends in a way that is similar to Ballard's apocalyptic novels, with Maitland resolving to stay on the island, despite the "unseen powers of his body" beginning "to discharge their long-stored energies," and despite him learning that there never was a secret passageway off the island—all that is needed to "escape" is to climb the embankment, which he watches Jane do (*CI* 175). After Proctor dies, dragged behind a repair vehicle and into a concrete pillar, Maitland buries him along with various parts taken from his Jaguar, a moment that indicates Maitland successfully coming to grips with and burying his past and his "technological self." Following this, he recedes into the pavilion of car parts that he had previously commanded Proctor to build for him, a further literalization of Laing's "central citadel" and the place from which he plans to continue his inner journey.[61] The novel ends with Maitland awaiting the next step on his journey towards individuation, all of which may eventually allow him to reintegrate with the outside world in a more fulfilling and less detrimental way.

### High-Rise

In many ways, the setting of *High-Rise* is the inverse of *Concrete Island*, with Ballard yet again switching the position of the characters, moving them from an island just outside of the technological landscape's reach back to full immersion in it. Just as Robert Maitland stares up at motorways and high-rise buildings from his spot on the island, the protagonists of *High-Rise*— Robert Laing in particular—are often seen gazing out their apartment windows, looking down upon the world around them. However, as their lives become ever more confined to the apartment building, the outer world slowly begins to recede from their view. Since the high-rise

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[61] Colombino also notes that Maitland's pavilion resembles Eduardo Paolozzi's *Patio and Pavilion* installation that what shown at the "This is Tomorrow" exhibition, "a tangible meditation on the demands of the habitat and a warning against the technocratic fetishism of urban planning" (Colombino 25).

is a not a bubble detached from the technological landscape, but rather a concentrated microcosm of all the modern world has to offer, the characters do not experience the same sort of "rebirth" that Maitland does in *Concrete Island*. Instead, within the confines of a utopian architectural project, the residents of the high-rise begin to explore the violent impulses rising from deep within their psyches, and what start out as microaggressions turn into widespread acts of violence and degradation, acts that the reader learns are partially incubated by the architecture itself. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud proclaims that "what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery, and that we should be much happier if we gave it up and returned to primitive conditions" (Freud 33). In the final installment of his modern disaster tetralogy, Ballard tests such a statement, envisioning an isolated world in which the characters' latent impulses break through the societal constraints imposed upon them, leading them back to a primitive world characterized by hyper-violence and dehumanization, where the residents experience "a falling interest in civilized conventions of any kind" (*HR* 138).

In the previous section on *Concrete Island*, I explained how both McLuhan and Laing emphasized the impact that the external world and one's social setting can have on one's behaviour. This section will in part continue this line of inquiry, narrowing the focus so as to analyze the effects of architecture in particular. As Ballard said in a 1975 interview with Philippe R. Hupp about the yet to be completed *High-Rise*: "Cut off from the rest of the world [...] all sorts [of things] can happen. Above all I'd like to examine the psychological modifications which occur without the knowledge of the inhabitants themselves, to see to what degree the mind of someone who drives a car or lives in a concrete high-rise has been altered" (*EM* 80).[62] It should first be explained, however, that the idea of architecture altering, or even controlling, the

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[62] This interview originally appeared in French, and was translated to English by Dan O'Hara, one of the editors of *Extreme Metaphors*.

behaviour of an individual or population is by no means an idea unique to Ballard. Some of Charles Baudelaire's poetry, for instance, was a response to the significant architectural changes that occurred in Paris following the French Revolution of 1848, in which many areas of the city were destroyed out of a "political desire to move the working classes out of the city center and widen the streets to prevent crowds from easily throwing up barricades against the forces of order" (Lloyd 142). In other words, the intent of this new city design was to create an area that was "less vulnerable to riots in an age marked by a series of climactic uprisings and revolutions" (139).

Similarly, in *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault engages with a similar time and place as Baudelaire, declaring that the year of 1840—the year that the Mettray Penal Colony opened—marked a significant shift in modern incarceration and discipline. As Foucault explains, the Mettray Penal Colony opened as a prison intended for juvenile criminals, but it also held minors who were condemned by courts (but not formally charged), and it thus acted as "an alternative to parental correction" (Foucault 296). The inmates of this prison were broken up into small groups that were structured like a miliary regiment, and the inmates were forced to abide by a very rigorous schedule, with minor offences being harshly punished. According to Foucault, the staff at Mettray were thus "technicians of behaviour: engineers of conduct, orthopaedists of individuality. Their task was to produce bodies that were both docile and capable" (294). The idea here is that by making one physically capable but internally void, one can be easily exploited, and for Foucault traces of this sort of control and discipline started to seep out into society at large, with the "carceral circles" widening and moving "from the penal institution to the entire social body" (298), creating a "panoptic society of which incarceration is the omnipresent armature" and which thus induces docility (301).

Though Ballard's *High-Rise* is not responding to the same structures that Baudelaire and Foucault were, similar to them he was responding to new architectural spaces that were arising and exerting influence in his contemporary London. Like Foucault's theory on the diffusion of the carceral system into society at large, the happenings within the high-rise in Ballard's novel are compared to attempted prison breakouts on numerous occasions, which thus parallels the drive of the characters to break through the societal constraints impinging upon them so that they can instead allow their impulses to reign. One of the protagonists, Richard Wilder, is making a documentary on prison unrest, and in the second chapter a newsreel of an attempted prison breakout plays on Charlotte Melville's TV, with Robert Laing noticing that those "same images glowed through his neighbours' doorways when he returned to his apartment" (*HR* 35).[63] All of this indicates that while the old "carceral circles" that Foucault spoke of still exist, the technological landscape has created new kinds of carceral circles, those which, rather than inducing docility, may be inducing other kinds of behaviour:

> It's a book about what in England and the USA are called 'high-rises', these residential towers which can have forty or fifty floors or more. I saw a film about Poland last week, in which one complex of apartments had twenty floors and was a kilometre in length! I've been interested for several years now in new lifestyles which permit modern technology; skyscrapers have always attracted me. The life led there seems to me very abstract, and that's an aspect of setting with which I'm concerned when I write – the technological landscape. (*EM* 79)

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[63] The reader is also told that as Wilder walks through his own apartment, it reminds him "of a cell he had filmed two days earlier in the psychiatric wing of the prison" (*HR* 56-57). Wilder's wife, Helen, also specifically refers to her husband's high-rise documentary as being "[a]nother prison documentary" (57).

Along with his engagement with Foucault's theories and his interest in human behaviour, Ballard was also influenced by Le Corbusier, an architect who, in designs such as *Unité d'Habitation* and *La Ville Contemporaine*, envisioned utopian living complexes with individual "cells" or "habitation units" that were intended to fulfill the physiological and psychological needs and desires of their inhabitants (Groes 134; Beauman ix). Le Corbusier in particular believed that "tall towers surrounded by green space held the promise of social equality, and even of universal happiness" (Stoner 180). However, in *High-Rise* Ballard resists this utopic vision and instead takes a structure to Le Corbusier's liking and imagines it as dystopian.

  *High-Rise* is one of Ballard's most dystopian novels, since even though it can be argued that the characters do find a sense of psychic fulfillment in exploring new psychopathologies, doing so results in rape, murder, and even cannibalism.[64] So, though psychically fulfilling to some of the characters, the behaviour that overcomes the high-rise is unquestionably damaging to others. Interestingly, however, in many ways the building that Ballard envisions in *High-Rise* appears to be much closer to reality than Le Corbusier's utopian projects. For instance, complexes that resemble Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation* and *La Ville Contemporaine* were undertaken in both Europe and North America starting in the late 1930s—though mainly after the Second World War—but, as Francesco Di Bernardo explains, these housing projects, which applied "the principles of social order, rationalization, and functionality of modernist architecture," were largely failures (Di Bernardo 85). One of the most notorious examples was the Pruitt-Igoe complex in St. Louis, Missouri, which completed construction in 1955:

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[64] Ballard admitted that the descent into violence and destruction, as well as the social regression and de-evolution depicted in *High-Rise* partly stems from his experiences in Lunghua, experiences which gave him "a tremendous insight into what makes up human behaviour" ("An Investigative Spirit" 250).

The result of a postwar Federal public-housing program, Pruitt–Igoe was a racially

segregated, middle-class complex of 33 towers, each of 11 floors, developed as a

response to the need of a growing population. Within a few years, however, following the

growth of suburban areas to which the white middle class started to flock, the complex

became a 'decrepit warehouse exclusively inhabited by poor, black residents' […] Due to

financial constraints and likely racial discrimination the Housing Authorities stopped

repairing the buildings, which were built with cheap materials and subject to frequent

breakdowns and outages. The project's common areas in the shape of galleries located

every three floors, connected by skip-stop elevators and staircases, became nuisances and

danger zones instead of spaces of encounter and community bonding. Crime, anti-social

behavior, and vandalism began to proliferate. Increasingly depopulated, the complex's

demolition began in 1972 and was completed in 1976. The postmodern architect Charles

Jencks saluted the demolition of Pruitt–Igoe as the moment when modern architecture

died. (Di Bernardo 85)

Though the tensions that arise in Ballard's *High-Rise* are not racially driven, they are class

driven, even if none of the characters would be considered part of the working-class, per se.

Rather, the high-rise that Ballard envisions is broken up into three distinct sections that divide its

residents along middle-to-upper class lines. Sebastian Groes notes that although Ballard embeds

the utopian, egalitarian goals and visions of the 1960s into his novel, with the high-rise being "a

direct echo of Le Corbusier's utopian concept for a vertical garden city in Marseille" (Groes

134), he exposes the inherent conflict in trying to situate "the egalitarian impulses of the post-

war period" into a vertical structure (136). As is the case, the residents on the lower floors feel as

if a great weight is always pushing down upon them, and even during Anthony Royal's brief visit

to the lower floors, he feels "crushed by the pressure of all the people above him" (*HR* 122).

Unlike Ballard's other novels up until this point, there are three protagonists, each of

whom represents one of the aforementioned class factions. Richard Wilder is a television

producer who lives on the second floor and who decides to make a documentary film about "the

physical and psychological pressures" of life in the high-rise, wanting to capture the residents as

they return to a primitive state (*HR* 14). Robert Laing is a doctor who lives on the 25th floor, and

who slowly divorces himself from his job at the nearby medical school, confining himself to the

high-rise and observing (and eventually partaking in) the building's descent into chaos. Finally,

Anthony Royal, the architect of the building, resides in the uppermost penthouse apartment, and

it is his building that represents the artificial subsummation of the natural world, that which

challenges nature in ways similar to Hardoon's pyramid in *The Wind from Nowhere*: "Laing was

the first to concede that these huge buildings had won their attempt to colonize the sky" (20).

The tension between these three factions is most directly stated in the novel's fifth chapter, when

the narrator explains that

> What angered Wilder most of all about life in the apartment building was the way in
>
> which an apparently homogenous collection of high-income professional people had split
>
> into three distinct and hostile camps. The old subdivisions, based on power, capital, and
>
> self-interest, had reasserted themselves here as anywhere else.
>
> In effect, the high-rise had already divided itself into the three classical social groups,
>
> its lower, middle, and upper classes. (69)

From the beginning of the novel it is clear that the residents on the upper floors of the high-rise

do not want the children from lower floors swimming in the pool on the 35th floor, and the lower

floor residents resent the "discreet oligarchy" situated on the top five floors, "with their high-speed elevators and superior services, their carpeted staircases" (70). As these tensions are exacerbated, and as microaggressions subsequently become more frequent, all of the residents become more callous to such events—symbolizing Ballard's proposed "death of affect"—and this allows for ever more heightened acts of violence to break out.

It is, however, also due to these violent acts that the hierarchy of the building starts to crumble, and much of the thrust of the novel can be found in Wilder's attempts to scale the ranks of the high-rise and kill its architect, thus symbolically killing the building itself. Though his initial attempt to do so fails, his persistence is rewarded when at the end of the novel he reaches the top of the building and shoots Royal in the chest. This act then sets into motion the opposite journey for Royal, who, after being shot, drags himself downward until he is helped to the 10th floor by Laing, with Royal then pulling himself into the drained swimming pool that is "covered with the skulls, bones and dismembered limbs of dozens of corpses" (*HR* 243). As such, whereas Wilder ascends, Royal descends, but the question then becomes: what good, if any, comes from this toppling of the hierarchy? One answer is typically Ballardian: the breakdown of social order allows for the characters to explore previously repressed impulses. At the same time, if these are the impulses that reside deep within the human psyche, those that encourage rape and murder, Ballard is making a damning critique of what it means to be truly human and free.

Similar to the ideas expressed by Freud, in the preface to the Pelican edition of *The Divided Self,* R.D. Laing agrees that civilization is repressive because of the ways in which it thwarts our "instinctive energies," but he also takes this a step further by saying that it "represses not only 'the instincts', not only sexuality, but any form of transcendence" (*Divided Self* 11). Laing later elucidated this point in *The Politics of Experience* by explaining that "[t]he condition

of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one's mind, is the condition

of the normal man" (*Politics* 24), who is rendered somnambulistic by various forces at play in

the external world, to the point that "we hardly know the existence of the inner world" at all (22).

Furthermore, Laing believed that children are born with a certain mode of perception that slowly

becomes distorted as they grow and fall into the grips of society, to the point that by adolescence,

they begin to resemble "half-crazed creature[s], more or less adjusted to a mad world. This is

normality in our present age" (50). In this sense, though the characters in *High-Rise* can be seen

as shaking free of pre-existing social and hierarchical structures, in doing so they also fall victim

to the influence of the building itself, that which acts as a hyper-concentrated version of modern

life and which thus spurs on a process that may be even more damaging than what Laing

theorized: "an architecture designed for war, on the unconscious level if no other" (*HR* 5).

As McLuhan explains in *War and Peace in the Global Village*, though new environments

can lead to the formation of new perceptions, it is often the case that these environments also

"inflict considerable pain on the perceiver" (*WP* 7), and the more powerful a new medium,

technology, or environment is, the more it becomes "exceedingly unpleasant to sensibilities

earlier oriented to less demanding technological environments" (10). According to McLuhan,

due to the pain inflicted, the individual feels a deep desire to return to their former world rather

than experience the sensory realignment that comes with adaptation to a new environment. The

high-rise observed in Ballard's novel is a technological one, as it is "a huge machine designed to

serve, not the collective body of tenants, but the individual resident in isolation" (*HR* 6). The

sensory realignment of the residents, then, is evident in the way in which the "cells" of the body

overlap with the "cells" of the rooms, and with how the high-rise itself is often depicted as if it is

an organic entity. The building has elevators that move up and down like the "pistons in the

chamber of a heart," residents who walk the hallways like "the cells in a network of arteries,"

and lights in the apartments that resemble "the neurones of a brain" (50).[65] However, it is again

the case that as the technology begins to assume characteristics of human biology, the characters

begin to resemble the machine-like architecture, which indicates that they are being shaped by it:

"A new social type was being created by the apartment building, a cool, unemotional personality

impervious to the psychological pressures of high-rise life, with minimal needs for privacy, who

thrived like an advanced species of machine in the neutral atmosphere" (43).

Along with the high-rise's technological dimensions and the machine-like characters it

creates, the environment within the confines of the building also resembles a "global village,"

which is a term McLuhan used to describe how modern media and technology has caused space

and time to collapse—largely due to the hyperconnectivity and instantaneity of

communication—and which in turn "insures that all factors of the environment and of experience

co-exist in a state of active interplay" (*MM* 63). Because of the bombardment of information

experienced in the global village, McLuhan believed that humans were in the process of

returning to a "tribal" world, or, in other words, returning to the sensory alignment seen in

humans prior to print literacy. This tribal world is one that is characterized by acoustic space,

dominated by auditory senses, and which thus greatly differs from the visual space that came

about when humans entered the Gutenberg Galaxy and were given "an eye for an ear," becoming

more individualistic/ analytical rather than collective/ responsive: "Oral cultures act and react

simultaneously, whereas the capacity to act without reacting, without involvement, is the special

gift of 'detached' literate man" ("*Playboy* Interview" 240). Returning to the tribal world means

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[65] We are also told that as the chaos ensues, the "huge building [Royal] had helped to design was moribund, its vital functions fading one by one" (*HR* 93).

that "it is impossible to not be involved," and this sort of hyperconnectivity, which is overwhelming to the human sensorium, often comes with unforeseen consequences (Brignola 252).

Despite the utopian connotations that are often carried with the term "global village," McLuhan didn't simply conceive of it in an optimistic manner. As the title *War and Peace in the Global Village* suggests, the global village can also be dangerous in certain ways, and McLuhan on multiple occasions expressed the idea that the more contact there is between people, and the more overloaded the sensorium becomes, the more opportunities there are for conflict and violence to arise: "When people get close together, they get more and more savage, impatient with each other [...] The global village is a place of very arduous interfaces and abrasive situations" ("Violence as a Quest for Identity" 265). After the initial blackout occurs in *High-Rise*, which leaves a dog dead and others injured (some sexually assaulted), Laing tells his work colleague and fellow high-rise resident Adrian Talbot that the clans forming in the building "constituted the members of a village" (*HR* 37). Then, in a follow-up to this conversation that occurs much later in the novel, Talbot tells Laing that "[i]t's a mistake to imagine that we're all moving towards a state of happy primitivism" (153). Though it is true that much of the violence and dehumanization that occurs throughout Ballard's novel is directed towards members of the other "clans" or "tribes," it is also the case that the characters are at war on both the conscious and unconscious levels: consciously against the other "tribes" and unconsciously against the high-rise itself, that which is puppeteering their behaviour and incubating the "new social type" of human previously discussed.

As McLuhan explains, "[w]hen one has been hurt by new technology, when the private person or the corporate body finds its entire identity endangered by physical or psychic change, it

lashes back in a fury of self-defense" (*WP* 97). As such, though the class conflict is definitely

partially responsible for the outbreak of violence, since the high-rise itself is responsible for said

class conflict through its hierarchal ordering of residents, the residents begin to lash out against

it, as it is the environment itself that actually "inflicts most of the unnecessary pain" upon them

(*WP* 150). Vandalism is prevalent; empty elevators are damaged; apartments are ransacked, with

the damage possibly "inflicted by the owners themselves" (*HR* 149); and we later learn that

Wilder's drowning of the Afghan hound made him feel as if "he had been struggling with the

building itself" (63). Acts such as these lead Wilder to note in the fourth chapter that "[i]n fact,

it's not really the other residents. It's the building …" that's behind the high-rise's descent

towards violent primitivism (59).

In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), Erich Fromm discusses what he calls

benign aggression and malignant aggression, terms which differentiate between "biologically

adaptive aggression (which is not evil) [and] human destructiveness which indeed is evil"

(Fromm xvi). Whereas benign, or defensive, aggression is evolutionary and aimed at ensuring

the survival of a species, malignant aggression has no real purpose and is unique to humans.

Fromm explains that whereas it is rare for animals in the wild to kill members of their own

species, this is a fairly common occurrence in human behaviour. Interestingly, Fromm cites

evidence regarding the differences in aggression between wild animals and those in captivity,

explaining that, for instance, primates in the wild show very little aggression versus those kept in

a zoo. Furthermore, it is also the case that even in the wild "crowding is the main condition for

increased violence" (105). The conclusion that Fromm draws throughout his book is that

violence in humans must be, at least in part, a result of "aggression-producing *conditions* [that]

are much more frequent for humans than for animals living in their natural habitat" (185), and he

thus parallels animals in captivity to humans in their societies. McLuhan also alludes to a similar idea in *Through the Vanishing Point*, explaining that an animal's natural environment is composed of various sounds, odours, and colours, and which is thus defined by an "orchestration of the senses compatible with the total life of the species" (*TVP* 3). The zoo, on the other hand, is merely a "rationally and visually contrived space" that eliminates "the complex spaces generated by the animals in their normal habitat" (3).

The notion that one's environment can negatively impact one's behaviour is a common thought between all of the writers discussed in this section (Freud, Foucault, Laing, McLuhan, and Ballard), changes that largely go unnoticed because the environments are invisible to us (in the electronic age, we are like fish in water, according to McLuhan). Importantly, however, consistent with Fromm's observations detailed in the previous paragraph, the high-rise in Ballard's novel is frequently compared to a zoo, which indicates that its inhabitants are not only like prisoners in a jail (as discussed earlier), but also like captive animals. Nearly halfway through the novel, the reader is told that "Zoos, and the architecture of large structures, had always been Royal's particular interest" (*HR* 111). In creating the high-rise, Anthony Royal— who deeply resembles Strangman in *The Drowned World*, often wearing a white suit and described as an "illuminated corpse" (107)—has constructed a building that fulfills both of his interests: it is at once a zoo and a large architectural marvel, and as its residents recede from the outside world, their behaviour resembles that of caged animals. However, once the "hundreds of cages" in Royal's "gigantic vertical zoo" eventually open (191), both the literal and figurative ones, the captive residents begin to "rebe[l] against [their] keeper" (202).

When Wilder kills Royal at the end of the novel, it not only completes his personal ascension, topples the building's hierarchy, and indicates the total rising of violent impulses

throughout the building, but killing the architect can also be seen as figuratively putting a stake through the heart of the high-rise itself, which perhaps means that the characters, having endured their violent quests, can begin to regain their "humanity." It is also possible, however, that since the vertical structure still stands, the old order may soon re-establish itself and bring about a new wave of violence, for better or for worse. As Robert Laing looks out his apartment window at another high-rise descending into the same sort of chaos, the one thing that is made clear is that, in the modern technological world, these sort of events are becoming the norm.

Though *High-Rise* puts an end to the second phase of Ballard's literary career, it does not end his investigation into the effects of architecture and the "new social types" that are being incubated within the confines of these new spaces and communities. Ballard returns to this line of inquiry decades later in his final tetralogy of novels, which, similar to *High-Rise*, are set in closed-societies—private resorts and high-tech business parks. In these novels, Ballard investigates what he called "the suburbanization of the soul," a spiritual malaise induced by new architectural spaces and communities that renders their inhabitants docile and in need of stimulation and reawakening, by any means possible.

Interlude II: *The Unlimited Dream Company*

In many ways, *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979) can be understood as reflecting and combing aspects of the first two phases of Ballard's literary career. The plot of the novel resembles that of *Concrete Island*: just as Robert Maitland finds himself marooned on the titular island following a car crash, the protagonist of *The Unlimited Dream Company*, Blake, becomes trapped in Shepperton after stealing a Cessna airplane and crashing it into the Thames River (all of which follows the attempted murder of his fiancée). As will soon be discussed, whether or not Blake survives this crash is left to interpretation, but regardless of this fact, as he pushes open the cabin door of the sinking plane, the landscape around him, like those depicted in Ballard's apocalyptic novels, is described as "an enormous illuminated painting, lit both by the unsettled water and by a deep light transmitted through the body of the canvas" (*UDC* 9). Despite Blake's ostensible wish to leave the suburban town in which he has crashed, all of his attempts to do so are unsuccessful, as the space around him appears to extend infinitely into the distance. Importantly, however, just as Maitland's brain is "jolted […] loose from its moorings" (*CI* 37), Blake's crash also alters his perception: "Clearly the crash had dislocated my head in more ways than I realized" (*UDC* 28). Unable to escape, Blake begins to superimpose his imagination onto the suburb of Shepperton and thus transforms it into a jungle landscape full of exotic vegetation, birds, and aquatic animals. Though most of the existing criticism on *The Unlimited Dream Company* explores the intertexts between Ballard's novel and William Blake, I would argue that the theories of R.D. Laing may actually be the key to analyzing this novel, as Blake, who at times feels that he is both dead and alive, may be suffering from a schizophrenic episode, one that resembles what Laing describes in *The Divided Self*.

Ballard was familiar with the work of both William Blake and R.D. Laing and, seeing as one of the protagonists of *High-Rise*—the novel that immediately preceded *The Unlimited Dream Company*—is named Robert Laing, and since there is a Dr. Laing in the story "My Dream of Flying to Wake Island" (1974), it would appear likely that Ballard had been thinking about Laing's theories when he was working on *The Unlimited Dream Company*. Laing himself was an admirer of William Blake, and at one point he had actually planned for his first book to be a study of Blake (Beveridge 160), believing that Blake's books "require prolonged study, not to elucidate Blake's psychopathology, but in order to learn from him what, somehow, he knew about in a most intimate fashion, while remaining sane" (*Divided Self* 162). Laing believed that, though he was not schizophrenic himself, parts of Blake's books depict what we now consider to be symptoms of schizophrenia, specifically the "split states of being in his Prophetic Books," and the way in which a "schizoid" individual has, according to Laing, "a tendency to *become what one perceives*" (198). For instance, Laing explains how one of his patients would confuse herself with things in the external environment, such as rain. This type of behaviour is evident in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, with Blake experiencing a similar sensation: if he sees a bird, he becomes a bird, flying over Shepperton; if he thinks about aquatic animals or mammals, he becomes them, and in this process he begins "to remake Shepperton in [his] own image" (*UDC* 105).

There is clearly a connection between Ballard, Laing, and Blake: both Ballard and Laing read Blake, Ballard was familiar with Laing's work, and Laing uses the Ballardian term "inner space" frequently throughout *The Politics of Experience* when explaining his understanding of schizophrenia. In a passage that could have appeared in Ballard's "Which Way to Inner Space?" essay, Laing states:

> We are far more out of touch with even the nearest approaches of the infinite reaches of
>
> inner space than we now are with the reaches of outer space. We respect the voyager, the
>
> explorer, the climber, the space man. It makes far more sense to me as a valid project –
>
> indeed, as a desperately urgently required project for our time, to explore the inner space
>
> and time of consciousness. (*Politics* 105)

Importantly, all three writers intersect in their depiction of split states of being, and in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, this is most evident when analyzing the contradictory evidence that Ballard leaves which supports different interpretations about Blake's survival or death. Blake has a vision when he crashes, one that includes a bright light that he believes to be a premonition of impending disaster, perhaps a nuclear explosion, but which may in fact be the light that one supposedly sees before they die (*UDC* 23). Furthermore, though at times Blake questions his survival of the crash and feels as if he is still trapped in the airplane and thus "might be dead" (39), on other occasions he feels as if he is more alive than ever, having unlocked the doors to a surreality, or to the "real world" (102).[66] Some witnesses of Blake's crash claim that he was only underwater for a few minutes (which implies that he may have survived), while others say that he was underwater for over eleven minutes (which implies that he likely died). Some, including Blake himself, believe that he died before being resurrected. Though it may be the case that Blake either survived or died in the crash, the fluctuation in his sense of life and death may rather be explained as a sort of schizophrenic episode, correlating with Laing's ideas about a "divided self."

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[66] Throughout the novel, there are many references to doors and passageways that Blake claims he has broken through and which have led him to a higher, more illuminated reality. One would assume that these doors are references to William Blake's "doors of perception," which he describes in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite. / For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (Blake xxii).

As discussed in the previous chapter, in *The Divided Self*, Laing expresses his theories on schizophrenia, and explains that one common symptom is the feeling of dislocation between one's mind and body. Whereas one without such a condition feels as if they are *embodied*, that their mind and body are part of the same being, an individual with schizophrenia will often closely identify with their mind and reject their body, viewing the body "as the core of a *false self*" (*Divided Self* 69). When this happens, it can feel as if the individual's inner self, their mind, has become "phantasticized," dislodged from their body, and this may in turn lead to them feeling like "a mental observer, who looks on, detached and impassive, at what his body is doing or what is being done to the body" (79). According to Laing, it is also common for an individual in this state to suffer from a messiah complex, believing that they are "someone very special, with an extraordinary mission, a reincarnation perhaps of the Buddha or Christ" (141).

In *The Unlimited Dream Company*, Blake shows signs of these symptoms, and Ballard even provides the reader with a psychological profile of Blake at the beginning of the novel, one that Alistair Cormack describes as being similar to "a case study we might find in the works of R.D. Laing" (Cormack 147). This allows us to analyze Blake's past for a better understanding of his psychological state. As a child, Blake was injured in a car crash that killed his mother, and he engaged in "compulsive role-playing," thinking about himself "as a new species of winged man" (*UDC* 4). It is also the case that he developed a messiah complex as a child, fantasizing that his "real father" had been an American astronaut "and that I [Blake] had been conceived by semen ripened in outer space, a messianic figure born *into* my mother's womb from a pregnant universe" (5). Evidently, this complex followed Blake into adulthood, and throughout the novel he is aware of his own "messianic delusions" (67), even coming to believe that he is "the first living creature to escape death, to rise above mortality to become a god […] Already I suspected

that I was not merely a god, but the first god, the primal deity of whom all others were crude anticipations, clumsy metaphors of myself" (153). It may thus be the case that after the crash Blake's newly acquired abilities to fly, cheat death, heal the sick with his blood, and transform Shepperton are no more than just part of such delusions, which Blake has experienced since childhood.

Furthermore, the split between Blake's mind and body is largely suggested by the struggle that seemed to occur within the cockpit of the Cessna, between Blake and another mysterious figure. After Blake arrives on shore, Miriam tells him: "We weren't sure you were alone. Just before you escaped there seemed to be two people there" (*UDC* 23). This motif is repeated throughout the rest of the novel, and Blake often tries to recall if in fact there was somebody else in the plane with him, or if the struggle that occurred was merely internal. As such, there are many moments when there appears to be another body trapped in the plane, such as in the ninth chapter, for instance, when Blake paddles out on a dinghy to look at the sunken Cessna and sees a "dark figure at the controls," which he ultimately dismisses as being his "own shadow cast through the water" (41). Later, he believes that he sees "the dead pilot in his ragged flying suit, his skull-like face a crazed lantern […] com[ing] ashore to find me, able to walk no further than these skeletal trees" (97). Eventually, however, when the Cessna is finally pulled out of the water, Blake realizes that the figure in the cockpit is his own body:

> This drowned flier was my former self, left behind when I escaped from the Cessna. Half-submerged, as if between two worlds, he sat at the controls […] I felt a profound pity for this dead creature, all that remained of my physical being from which my spirit had broken free. I held this earlier self in my arms like a father carrying his dead son, warming his bones for the last time before I laid him to rest. (189)

In this passage, Blake is reunited with his body, which he refers to as both his "former self" and his "earlier self" (and on the next page he calls it his "dead self"), all of which contrasts with how he describes his mind/ imagination, the source of his godlike abilities (even if this happens to be part of a delusion, it is still his experience that his freed mind has afforded him these powers). Just as Laing believed that one experiencing a schizophrenic episode will closely identify with their mind and reject their body, Blake feels as if his real self has been projected out of his body, merging with everything around him and leading him to a higher reality: "I chimerized myself, a multiple of all these creatures passing through the gateway of my body to the realm above" (194).

As such, Blake's real self (the mind) triumphs over his false self (the body) and, as is the case in *The Crystal World*, it is by escaping bodily constraints that he reaches a point of psychic bliss and illumination. However, this idea is complicated in *The Unlimited Dream Company* because, as has been proposed here, Blake may be suffering from mental illness, and his perception of illumination may simply be a symptom of this, characterized by his mind-body split and messianic delusions. This would then mean that, far from becoming whole like Sanders in *The Crystal World*, Blake's "self-annihilation" (to use a Blakean phrase) leaves him divided, and his redemption may therefore only be illusory.

Chapter Four: Elation and Somnambulism—Ballard's Closed Community Novels

In many ways, the final phase of Ballard's literary career continued to explore many of the ideas that he had already investigated in the short story collection *Vermilion Sands* (1971), in *High-Rise* (1975), and in the novella *Running Wild* (1988), the latter of which was published nearly a decade before his final tetralogy and which acts as a bridge between his modern disaster novels and closed community novels. Perhaps uncoincidentally, the narrative strategy used in *Running Wild* also shows Ballard reengaging with an early draft of *High-Rise* that was written in the form of a "social worker's report," a draft that Ballard regrettably destroyed, later claiming that "it was better than the novel" (*EM* 186). Though not a social worker's report, *Running Wild* is written as a series of "forensic diaries" by Dr. Richard Greville, the story's protagonist and a psychiatric advisor for the Metropolitan Police department, who is reviewing his notes pertaining to the Pangbourne Massacre case and preparing them for publication. Just as Ballard was experimenting with narration when composing *Running Wild*, he was also experimenting with genre, using the murder-mystery premise as a new means of investigating his ideas regarding the effects of modern architecture and surveillance on the psyche. Ballard saw enough potential in not only the murder-mystery genre, but also the closed community setting, that he used both in each of his final four novels.

The reason behind this decision appears to have been twofold. Ballard saw this generic shift as being apt because the human psyche itself is a mystery: "There is a darker corner of the human psyche which intrigues us, and which we feel might benefit us if we started to explore it. It's almost a kind of murder-mystery investigation. A crime happened perhaps, or some strange event in the human past, and we are drawn to try and understand what happened" (*EM* 378-379). As for the closed community setting, Ballard was also troubled by the way in which the

professional class, such as doctors and lawyers, those whom society heavily relies upon, were beginning to shut that very society out of their purview and hide away in gated neighbourhoods. Ballard called the rise of gated communities all over the world "an *ominous* sign […] a sign that something is deeply wrong with the societies that have evolved at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century" (*Quotes* 202). It is by combining these two ideas that Ballard arrived at the concept for his final tetralogy, in which he upholds the gated community as a major symbol of the twentieth century—a new "frontier," as the late 1970s McLuhan would call it—and investigates the potential impact this kind of environment may have on the psyche. Above all, in these novels, violence is conceived of as a potential form of therapy, a way of snapping people out of their affectless and somnambulistic states so that they can *feel* and *think*, regardless of the consequences, and despite the fact that ever-increasing acts of violence become necessary in order to stimulate a population that is experiencing a widespread "brain-death." As Ballard concludes in *Millennium People*, it may get to the point that completely meaningless (or motiveless) acts of violence become commonplace in the near future because, since these acts cannot be fully rationalized, they are all the more jarring to the public, and they thus stimulate the sensorium in powerful yet harmful ways.

### Running Wild

Though this chapter is primarily focused on Ballard's final tetralogy—*Cocaine Nights* (1996), *Super-Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003), and *Kingdom Come* (2006)—a brief analysis of *Running Wild* is imperative, as it provides the basis for much of what follows in his later novels. *Running Wild* is set in a gated community called Pangbourne Village, the site of a massacre that left all of the adult residents murdered—as well as many security guards and

chauffeurs—and all thirteen children missing. Though it is widely believed that the intruder(s) entered the complex, murdered the residents, and kidnapped the children, as Dr. Richard Greville reviews his notes, he is convinced that this theory is incorrect, realizing that important evidence had been hiding in plain sight the entire time, overlooked because the clues point to an unfathomable conclusion.

At the beginning of the novella, the reader, like Greville, notices that beneath Pangbourne Village's sleek, modern external surfaces reside the dark inner desires of its residents. Upon watching the police video of the crime scene, Greville notices that all of the houses have "blank façades" and that under the surface "everything is strangely blanched, drained of all emotion, and one seems to be visiting a set of laboratories in a high-tech science park where no human operatives are employed" (*RW* 4). The affectless nature of the residents is thus reflected in and by the architecture itself. It comes as no surprise to learn that Pangbourne Village is a panoptic society: it is filled with security cameras, parents communicate with their children via computer, and the children are in turn "being watched every hour of the day and night. This was a warm, friendly, junior Alcatraz" (40). As previously discussed, Ballard, like McLuhan, Foucault, and Fromm, was interested in how the conditions of a society shape and determine behaviour, and the events that occur throughout *Running Wild* show Ballard continuing to probe this idea.

The pressures exerted upon the children of Pangbourne Village induce a "state closely akin to sensory deprivation" (*RW* 83). This line is particularly significant as the idea of modern society being a vast chamber of "sensory deprivation" is repeated in each of Ballard's final four novels. For instance, in *Cocaine Nights*, Ballard writes that "[t]otal security is a disease of deprivation" (*CN* 293), and in *Super-Cannes*, the protagonist, Paul Sinclair, is told that "[i]f you don't keep busy it's easy to find yourself in a state close to sensory deprivation. All kinds of

chimeras float free, reality becomes a Rorschach test where butterflies turn into elephants" (*SC* 271). In *Millennium People*, Kay Churchill tells David Markham that he is "entering an area of almost total deprivation […] A zone of intense spiritual poverty" (*MP* 84). And at the beginning of *Kingdom Come*, the reader is informed that the suburban town of Brooklands is "a geography of sensory deprivation" (*KC* 6). The repetition of this idea leads one to conclude that Ballard believed such a state of sensory deprivation was being induced by the modern technological world, and he proposes in his novels that in order to escape such a state, it may be necessary to take extreme measures, such as those taken by the children in *Running Wild*, who attempt to break free from a community "that had erased all freedom and all trace of emotion," no matter the cost (*RW* 82-83).

The twist in this novella, though fairly obvious from the beginning, is that the children of Pangbourne Village secretly conspired and killed their parents.[67] It is interesting to note, however, that in line with what Ballard explored in earlier works such as *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the murders in *Running Wild* can also be understood as replicating footage of atrocities seen on TV. When the police find a home video filmed by two of the children, they are puzzled by why footage "culled from TV news documentaries, of car crashes, electric chairs and concentration camp mass graves" had been interspersed throughout an otherwise mundane walkthrough of the Village, "transform[ing] the film into a work of eerie and threatening prophecy" (*RW* 72). Sergeant Payne—who along with Greville is convinced that the children were the culprits of the massacre—believes that this home video serves as a "a detailed blueprint for the killings," as

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[67] In this regard, *Running Wild* is similar to Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt" (1950), a short story in which two children under similar conditions murder their parents by luring them into the nursery in their house, a room that contains crystal walls onto which the children's imaginations are projected. Though the father hires a psychiatrist to diagnose the situation, it is far too late: the children already see their parents as disposable, as the advanced technology in the home has replaced them.

some of the parents were shot, stabbed, electrocuted in a bathtub, and run over by an automobile, thus mimicking the footage of atrocity mentioned above, that which was spliced into the home movie (72-73). Furthermore, one of the security guards was murdered by "a strange cat's cradle of wire and bamboo (a device used by the Viet Cong to trap and kill American soldiers)," which again indicates that the children's actions were modelled by events seen on television (28).

The connection between the events of *Running Wild* and footage of atrocity is further established when the Pangbourne Massacre itself becomes a media spectacle. The widespread attention and intrigue in the case causes a frenzied crowd to form outside the gates of the Village, with hundreds of sightseers flocking to it, some hanging from trees just to get a glimpse inside the gated community. We here see Ballard engaging with the same feedback loop that he had identified in *The Atrocity Exhibition*: violent images are seen on television and internalized by the children, who then commit the massacre that gets fed back into public consciousness via media, and which in turn piques the interest of viewers and potentially stirs violent impulses within their psyches. However, it is even more troubling that the assailants in this case are children, with Ballard imagining what can happen to young, highly impressionable minds that are subjected to such pressures. The emphasis on the cognitive development of children is also evident in *Running Wild* through the mention of Jean Piaget, one of the most important psychologists of the twentieth century. In the novella, Greville takes a Piaget book off a bookshelf in the Maxteds' house and finds that its pages have been stabbed through, with someone having "systematically mutilat[ed] its pages" (*RW* 43). Though this is a relatively minor part of the story, it indicates that the children are consciously aware of, and displeased with, their parents' child-rearing practices, and it further indicates that they are aware of how the society in which they live has shaped them. It also implies that in the new technological world we are all

children, trying to understand and unconsciously adapt to our new environment, while being unwillingly shaped by it. As McLuhan said, when one's identity is threatened, violence is often an expected outcome (*WP* 97).

Even though Greville and Payne compile more than enough evidence to prove that the assailants were the children, nobody believes them. Importantly, beyond having a hard time believing the children to be capable of such gruesome acts, the public finds it even more difficult to accept that such activity could occur within one of these new gated communities, which supposedly harbour pockets of utopia with no crime, no instances of abuse, and a beautiful external appearance. The perceived success of Pangbourne Village has led to the planning of similar estates elsewhere:

> Another factor may have been the reports, well-advertised in the architectural press, that the 'success' of Pangbourne Village had led to plans for the construction of similar estates nearby, and that within two or three years these would be amalgamated in a super-Pangbourne with its own schools, community clubs and resident youth counselors, protected by even more elaborate security systems. (*RW* 85)

Everybody, from the police to the media, overlooks the literal and figurative dry rot that is "quite common on the estate," found "all over the place" (39), and this allows for the new carceral circles established in Pangbourne Village to widen, to be diffused outward into the larger social body. As will be explained shortly, in Ballard's worldview, these carceral circles are not only spreading throughout England and America, but also throughout the rest of Europe, such as in the fictional locations of Estrella de Mar in *Cocaine Nights* and Eden-Olympia in *Super-Cannes*. Like the "young minds willing themselves into madness as a way of finding freedom" that occurs in *Running Wild* (72), the residents of the closed communities in Ballard's final tetralogy

enter into a similar sort of willed madness (or "elective psychopathy") in order to counter the

paralytic state they have fallen into, finding freedom in violent, even murderous acts, and

paradoxically in the case of *Kingdom Come*, finding freedom in fascism, though these are often

false senses of freedom.

### *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*

Up to this point, I have given each of Ballard's novels their own section, analyzing them

individually as well as explaining how they relate to a particular phase of Ballard's literary

career, and to his oeuvre as a whole. However, since *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* are

companion pieces and share much in common in terms of plot, setting, and themes, I will

analyze them in tandem to elucidate their many points of intersection and further show how

Ballard often reused and rewrote old ideas. As previously alluded to, both *Cocaine Nights* and

*Super-Cannes* build upon various ideas that Ballard had already experimented with in *Vermilion*

*Sands*, *High-Rise*, and *Running Wild*, continuing Ballard's investigation into the cognitive

impacts of such closed community settings. In *Cocaine Nights*, Ballard imagines a leisure

community where the near total stagnation of life has led to a widespread "brain-death," a

spiritual malaise that is partly caused by the complex's "memory-erasing white architecture,"

which incubates "a special kind of willed limbo" (*CN* 34). In *Super-Cannes*, Ballard envisions

life in a high-tech business park—his version of Silicon Valley—where the non-stop work of the

residents renders them overly fatigued and somnambulistic, thus susceptible to exploitation.

Importantly, though these competing views of the future are markedly different, the outcome of

both is the same: at risk of quietly withering away, the residents are in need of an awakening, and

in typical Ballardian fashion this occurs by witnessing and engaging in various types of psychopathological activities.

Ballard was intrigued by isolated or gated communities from the very beginning of his career, and this is evident by the fact that many of his earliest stories—including his first "professionally" published story, "Prima Belladonna" (1956)—are set in them.[68] As Ballard states in the preface to *Vermilion Sands*: "The earliest of these tales, 'Prima Belladonna', was the first short story I published, seventeen years ago, and the image of this desert resort has remained remarkably constant ever since" (Preface 8).[69] Along with the setting, it is evident throughout *Vermilion Sands* that the resort community, which is home to many retirees and inactive artists, is overcome with a "chronic malaise." The narrator of "Studio 5, The Stars" (1961) explains this as such: "Most of us were suffering from various degrees of beach fatigue, that chronic malaise which exiles the victim to a limbo of endless sunbathing, dark glasses and afternoon terraces" (*CS* 209). Ballard's final four novels, while set in similar locations, largely revolve around this notion: that there is a pervasive malaise spreading through society, seeping out of the gated communities and into the suburbs and cities, where hazed by the bright lights of advertisements and consumerist indulgence, humans are being rendered docile, a position from which they can be more easily controlled and exploited.[70]

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[68] Ballard's burgeoning Surrealist impulse is also evident in "Prima Belladonna," which contains Surrealist images of singing and murderous plants. Furthermore, his interest in Surrealism is noticeable throughout the entirety of *Vermilion Sands*, with characters being named after Surrealist artists, such as Leonora Chanel in "The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral D" and Lunora in "The Singing Statues," both of which are references to Leonora Carrington. In the latter story, we are also told that Lunora's home has many Dali and Picasso paintings on the walls, and in "Studio 5, The Stars," Dali's *Cosmogonic Venus* and *The Persistence of Memory* are referenced. Furthermore, the story "Cry Hope, Cry Fury" contains a reference to Lautréamont's *Maldoror*, and many of the stories depict a blurring of inner and outer space, such as "The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista," which imagines "psychotropic houses," houses which adopt the memories and psychic states of its owners.

[69] Ballard edited and changed many of the stories before they were included in *Vermilion Sands*, but the versions that I cite here are the ones that appear in that collection.

[70] Ballard also wrote an untitled and unpublished story, circa 1958, that is also set in Vermilion Sands. This story is about a man, Max Caldwell, who accepts a job as private secretary for a millionaire named Samuel Hardoon. Hardoon's estate is described as an "absolute architectural folly" ("Untitled Story" 3), a conglomeration of various

Similar to the resort community depicted in *Vermilion Sands*, *Cocaine Nights* is set in Estrella de Mar, a fictional Spanish resort located in the Costa del Sol, where a spiritual malaise is spreading, a "Brain-death disguised as a hundred miles of white cement […] Stand still for a moment and you find yourself roped into a revival of *Waiting for Godot*" (*CN* 43). Likewise, *Super-Cannes* is primarily set in Eden-Olympia, a fictional high-tech business park located in the Côte d'Azur of France, where the rigorous work schedule of its residents causes a similar type of brain-death seen in the leisure communities of *Vermilion Sands* and *Cocaine Nights*, and where "[g]oing mad" becomes "their only way of staying sane" (*SC* 222). Unlike *Vermilion Sands*, however, Ballard's final tetralogy abides by various conventions of the murder-mystery/detective genre (while also diverging from these conventions in other important ways), and this generic shift afforded Ballard the opportunity to explore various aspects of modernity from a different angle, as he did in *Running Wild*. Importantly, whereas the hardboiled novels of the likes of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett depict protagonists who are able to resist the temptations of the crime-riddled worlds that surround them, in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, the respective protagonists, Charles Prentice and Paul Sinclair, are seduced by the new logics of violence and vice hidden beneath the sleek external surfaces of the communities where they have arrived. Furthermore, whereas the thrust of the plot in traditional detective fiction is aimed at identifying the perpetrator of a crime, in Ballard's reworking of the genre, the perpetrator accused at the beginning of the novel is in fact guilty of the crimes committed. This means that, in these novels, Ballard shifts the focus of the murder-mystery story from identifying

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architectural styles that do not cohesively align. To add to this, Hardoon tasks his architect, Hugo, with designing a house that resembles "the Minoan 'labryia' – the insoluble maze," which is used "in laboratories to induce nervous exhaustion in rats" (6), but which also resembles "the vessels of the brain, interlocking in a thousand permutations" (17). The story ends with Hardoon falling to his death in this maze house—it is ambiguous as to whether this was accidental, suicide, or murder—with the idea being that the Minotaur (Hardoon) had "trapp[ed] himself in his own maze" (19).

a culprit to understanding their motives, trying to understand the forces behind their actions. He thus uses the genre as a "mechanism for unveiling social reality" (Di Bernardo 93).

Along with these similarities, the plots of *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* are also very similar. In *Cocaine Nights*, the protagonist, Charles Prentice, arrives at Estrella de Mar, where his brother, Frank, has confessed to setting fire to the Hollinger house, an event that resulted in the death of five people. Charles's initial outsider status allows him to quickly notice that there is something wrong at Estrella de Mar and, like the reader, he finds it odd that Frank will never outright admit his guilt to him, though he had already confessed to the police. Charles believes that this indicates that Frank is innocent and is being forced to confess by some outside influence, and he in turn begins investigating Estrella de Mar and its seedy underworld in hopes of freeing his brother. In reality, however, Charles prolongs his investigation because he is intrigued by the inner workings of the resort, and though he isn't initially aware of it, he exhibits a willingness to be corrupted by it, for it is in this way that he experiences a sense of freedom, freedom through madness, and it is not long before he is convinced that this may be the key to the future.

Similarly, *Super-Cannes* begins with Paul Sinclair, a former RAF pilot, and his paediatrician wife, Dr. Jane Sinclair, arriving at the newly built Eden-Olympia business park. Jane has been hired to replace David Greenwood as the complex's paediatrician, the man who supposedly went on a murderous rampage in which he shot and killed seven of Eden-Olympia's upper executives, three hostages, and himself. When Jane goes to work, Paul, whose leg is braced from a plane crash injury that resulted in the loss of his pilot's license, sits around their new home, deeply unsettled by the fact that he is living in the house formerly occupied by Greenwood. The more time that Paul spends around the house, the more he begins to obsess

about Greenwood, and he soon becomes convinced that there is more to the story than reported. As such, he starts to retrace Greenwood's steps as a way of trying to understand the doctor's state of mind at the time of the rampage, hoping to uncover the truth about the murders. As is also the case in *Cocaine Nights*, the more that Paul Sinclair explores his surroundings and interacts with dubious characters such as Wilder Penrose,[71] Eden-Olympia's resident psychiatrist, the more he begins to engage with the dark underworld that exists beneath the complex's technological clothing, a process that also takes him on a journey through the dark recesses of his own mind, entertaining the depraved impulses lying dormant in his unconscious.

In *War and Peace in the Global Village*, McLuhan discusses "the invisible environments created by technological innovation" (*WP* 97), alluding to the fact that the modern technological landscape has both physical and invisible components. There is the physical architecture—such as the buildings, the highways, and the surveillance cameras—and the subliminal environment that is a by-product of the physical architecture and which shapes behaviour and identity. It is in this regard that McLuhan is indebted to the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who, in *The Phenomenon of Man* (1955), outlined his concept of the noosphere, a "thinking layer" of the world that represents a global consciousness and which "has spread over and above the world of plants and animals […] outside and above the biosphere" (Teilhard 182). In *Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye: Apocalypse and Alchemy*, B.W. Powe explains that this "noosphere idea suggested that the planet's atmosphere itself was an externalization of thought" (Powe 307), and that McLuhan's "global village" is a reworking of de Chardin's idea (159). McLuhan himself

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[71] This name is possibly a reference to Roland Penrose, an English Surrealist painter who attended the 1936 International Surrealist Convention in London (an event that was discussed in Chapter Two), or to the neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield.

specifically references the noosphere in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* to help explain how, in his

reshaping of this idea, technological development has forced the human sensorium to be

> snapped round the globe by the electric dilation of our various senses. This
>
> externalization of our senses creates what de Chardin calls the 'noosphere' or a
>
> technological brain for the world. Instead of tending towards a vast Alexandrian library
>
> the world has become a computer, an electronic brain, exactly as in an infantile piece of
>
> science fiction. (*GG* 32)

Technology plays a much more important role in McLuhan's thought than in de Chardin's, and

McLuhan often referred to this new technological world as being a frontier, a new environment

that forces one to leave their old self behind in order to adapt to the technosphere that engulfs

them. As explained in the previous chapter, however, this process of identity change can be

frightening to the individual, and it is thus often accompanied by violence: "Yes, all forms of

violence are quests for identity. When you live out on the frontier, you have no identity. You're a

nobody. Therefore you get very tough. You have to prove that you are somebody, and so you

become very violent. And so identity is always accompanied by violence" ("Violence as a Quest

for Identity" 266).

In his final series of novels, Ballard takes McLuhan's observations one step further by

positing that not only is the modern technological environment a new frontier, but within this

macro-environment are smaller, concentrated frontiers that take the form of closed communities.

Since these communities are separated from the world around them, a certain type of evolution is

occurring within them, perhaps one that transpires more rapidly and therefore foreshadows what

is to come for the rest of society. It is for reasons such as this that Ballard begins *Cocaine Nights*

using McLuhanian terminology: "Crossing frontiers is my profession […] As the customs

officials rummage through my suitcases I sense them trying to unpack my mind and reveal a contraband of forbidden dreams and memories" (*CN* 9). The frontiers that McLuhan and Ballard speak of are both physical and mental, and since there is a connection between inner and outer worlds, the new frontiers of the technological age can cause fissures in the psyche. This is exactly what happens to Charles Prentice and Paul Sinclair.

It is evident in both *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* that the architectural design of the respective communities plays a large role in the characters' somnambulism and affectless relationships. As David Spurr explains in *Architecture and Modern Literature* (2012),

> Ballard's fiction is distinguished by the way it imagines radical transformations in the
>
> social fabric that are driven by specifically contemporary architectural structures […]
>
> These transformations are violent and socially regressive, as if intended to put an end to
>
> the utopian dreams of early modernist architecture. (Spurr 225)

In *Cocaine Nights*, the reader is told that the "depthless" (*CN* 16) and "memory-erasing white architecture" of Estrella de Mar "enforce[s] leisure that fossilize[s] the nervous system" and causes an amnesia of the self (34). Being exposed to, and contained in, this type of architectural system in turn results in the characters being forced to relinquish their old identities and kowtow to the new way of life induced on this new frontier. Likewise, in *Super-Cannes*, the "invisible infrastructure" (*SC* 41), the "artificial lakes and forests" (10), and the extreme use of surveillance cameras results in a similar type of stagnation.[72] These conditions are depicted as creating "a new race of highly intelligent" individuals who resemble the "glass doors and bare white walls" that surround them, and the characters (like the architecture) display "little trace of human

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[72] Though Eden-Olympia is fictional, Ballard locates it in the Côte d'Azur and it is partially based upon the Sophia-Antipolis business park. Further, many of the "architectural oddit[ies]" that exist in the surrounding French Riviera area, such as the Marina Baie des Anges apartment complex, the Port la-Galère resort, and the Pierre Cardin Foundation building, all appear in *Super-Cannes* (Author's Note xvii).

experience" (Spurr 233). As another critic explains it, Eden-Olympia is "designed in accordance with a mechanised view of humans as automata and an instrumental conception of their affectless relations" (Gasiorek 175-176).

It is also worth briefly noting that the connections being made between Ballard and McLuhan in this section may be more direct than they appear. Though minor, a single line in *Super-Cannes* seems to indicate this. When Paul and Jane Sinclair are discussing their first interaction with Wilder Penrose, Jane refers to Penrose as "an intellectual thug" (*SC* 35). In a letter dated June 22, 1951, McLuhan wrote to Ezra Pound, stating: "I am an intellectual thug who has been slowly accumulating a private arsenal with every intention of using it. In a mindless age even insight takes on the character of a lethal weapon. Every man of good will is the enemy of society" (*Letters* 227).[73] In both *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, the protagonists encounter the "intellectual thugs" of Bobby Crawford and Wilder Penrose, figures that guide them through life on the new frontier, and it is by following these characters that Charles and Paul, like the other residents of their respective communities, are slowly awakened. However, just as the reader learned with *High-Rise*, it is clear that "what initially appear as utopian spaces quickly turn out to be far from perfect" (Cord 135).

In *Cocaine Nights*, Bobby Crawford is the ringleader of Estrella de Mar, a professional tennis player who works at the resort's sports club, the Club Nautico. When Charles arrives in Estrella de Mar, the Club Nautico is a vibrant, popular place with many members and lots of activity; however, through Charles's conversations with characters such as Dr. Paula Hamilton (the resort's resident physician) and Crawford himself, we learn that the whole of Estrella de Mar

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[73] This letter was reprinted in *Letters of Marshall McLuhan*, which was first published in 1987, so it is possible that Ballard had read this prior to writing of *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, which were respectively published in 1996 and 2000.

was a static community before Crawford arrived, with residents experiencing the sort of "beach fatigue," "chronic malaise," and "limbo of endless sunbathing" that Ballard depicted in *Vermilion Sands* (*CS* 209). But as Paula Hamilton states:

> We sing to Bobby's hymn-sheet now. He's changed our lives and practically put the Clinic out of business. Before he arrived it was one huge, money-churning de-tox unit. Alcoholism, ennui and benzo-diazepine filled our beds. Bobby Crawford pops his head around the door and everyone sits up and rushes out to the tennis courts. He's an amazing man. (*CN* 121)

The title of the novel is not only a direct reference to Crawford's replacement of benzodiazepines (depressants) with cocaine (a stimulant) at Estrella de Mar, but also to the overall sense of stimulation that his methods have given the community, tactics that have jolted their nervous systems and stimulated their imaginations. Estrella de Mar is compared to a nearby community called the Residencia Costasol, which acts as an anti-environment to Estrella de Mar, and which is an alternative vision of the future that exists without the intervention of Crawford's tactics, where the widespread brain-death has been taken to its end point and gone unresolved.

The Residencia Costasol looks very similar to Estrella de Mar on the surface, with beautiful houses and swimming pools set along a beach; however, it is marked by total inactivity. The swimming pools are drained, there are no clocks or watches, and all of the residents are hidden away inside their houses. Everything is in a state of limbo. The residents of the Residencia Costasol mindlessly stare at the glow of their televisions as they wait "for Paula Hamilton to arrive with a new prescription. When you think of the Costasol complex think of the Sleeping Beauty" (*CN* 213). Bobby Crawford, however, knows how to snap the Residencia

Costasol out of its somnambulistic state and free its residents from the prison they are trapped in, as he has already accomplished this at Estrella de Mar. He explains this to Charles in Chapter 19:

> The Residencia Costasol is a prison, just as much as Zarzuella jail. We're building prisons all over the world and calling them luxury condos. The amazing thing is that the keys are all on the inside. I can help people to snap the locks and step out into real air again. Think, Charles — if it works you can write a book about it, a warning to the rest of the world. (220)

As explained, Crawford's answer—though he himself presents it with "warning" in the above quotation—is to stimulate the residents through violence and vice, and as such Estrella de Mar becomes a ground for psychological experimentation, testing what really excites humans and what our latent desires are. Crawford wants to expand this experiment to the Residencia Costasol with the help of Charles, as a way of confirming his hypothesis. As Ballard suggests, in this sense, Crawford is "the saint as psychopath, or the psychopath as saint […] He stumbled on the first and last truth about the leisure society, and perhaps all societies. Crime and creativity go together, and always have done. The greater the sense of crime, the greater the civic awareness and richer the civilization. Nothing else binds a community together. It's a strange paradox" (280-281).

The idea here is that violence and vice are sources of creative energy, and might become necessary in the future in order to prevent the emergence of a totally affectless population. The ability to *feel* something, anything, is important in Ballard's work, even if this stimulation comes at a cost, and from violent, often depraved means. As McLuhan said, in the modern world, by stripping away one's old identity, the modern technological environment has caused "a lust for violence as *compensatory* feedback" (*WP* 76; emphasis mine), but this violent response can also

be viewed as an indication that people have been snapped from their dazed states and are perhaps becoming aware of the field of technological effects working upon them. As previously mentioned, McLuhan upheld the artist as being the figure furthest out on the frontier, the one who is attuned to the state of affairs before anyone else:

> The artist is a person who is especially aware of the challenge and dangers of new environments presented to human sensibility. Whereas the ordinary person seeks security by numbing his perceptions against the impact of new experience, the artist delights in this novelty and instinctively creates situations that both reveal it and compensate for it. (*TVP* 238)

In this way, Bobby Crawford in *Cocaine Nights* and Wilder Penrose in *Super-Cannes* can be understood as artists, of sorts, figures who understand their respective environments and the threats posed to human sensibilities. However, though they may be forces for good in some sense, they also pose a great threat. If violence is used as a means of stimulation, there will be a necessary need for ever increasing acts of violence, as the sensorium becomes numbed to the lesser forms. Therefore, despite the fact that this extreme measure may cause a reawakening, danger increases all around, and this notion is evident in both novels as violent little games gradually morph into rape and murder.

Early in *Cocaine Nights*, Charles is aware of the fact that he feels a sense of elation when witnessing violent events, such as the attempted rape he sees in the fourth chapter, which occurs in front of a row of spectators in parked cars, as if a performance: "They had watched the rape attempt without intervening, like a gallery audience at an exclusive private view" (*CN* 58).[74] Moments such as this or the explosions at the marina are indeed performances, ones that have

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[74] This scene may very well be a reference to Ballard's "Crashed Cars" exhibition, during which a woman was "almost raped in the back seat of the Pontiac" (*ML* 240).

been orchestrated by Bobby Crawford as part of his treatment plan for Estrella de Mar, and as more of these moments occur—such as when Charles is attacked in his brother's apartment, a moment that leaves him feeling a sense of "Post-traumatic euphoria" (95)—the more Charles realizes that they are rites of passage, initiations into this new kind of community.

Interestingly, the more that Charles investigates Estrella de Mar in hopes of finding answers about his brother and the Hollinger murders, the more he falls victim to it, to the point that he almost entirely forgets about his initial reason for being there: freeing Frank. Rather than working to free his brother from prison, Charles slowly becomes him, taking up residence at his apartment and later becoming the manager of the sports club at the Residencia Costasol, just as Frank had become manager of the Club Nautico: "I had wilfully forgotten Frank, pushing him and his absurd confession into a side corridor of my mind. In this new and more bracing air I was free of the restraints that had hobbled me since childhood, and ready to face myself afresh without fear" (*CN* 276). The novel ends with Charles being framed for the murder of Bobby Crawford, with other residents believing that his experiments needed to be stopped, and like his brother, Charles knows that he will plead guilty, not wanting to expose the inner workings of the resort community, hoping that "Crawford's mission would endure, and the festivals of the Residencia Costasol would continue to fill the sky with their petals and balloons, as the syndicates of guilt sustained their dream" (329).

In *Super-Cannes*, Paul Sinclair is a pilot grounded by an injury, but the reader understands that this lingering injury is really an external manifestation of an internal issue, and that Paul is unconsciously searching for new ways to take flight post-crash. Like the attempted rape that Charles witnesses early in *Cocaine Nights*, Paul witnesses an assault of a Senegalese trinket salesman, while a group of spectators watch the event unfold, again, like a performance.

Though Paul claims to be disturbed by this event, soon after his wife, Jane, steals a magazine at random, and Paul himself steals a car and takes it for a joyride—all of which indicates that the effects of Eden-Olympia have begun to take hold and influence their behaviour, stimulating them in ways that they didn't think possible. This leads Paul to conclude that he "needed to dream the psychotic's dream" (*SC* 138). In this novel, however, the "psychotic's dream" gets taken even further than in *Cocaine Nights*, and it also differs from its predecessor because of the overt politics that Ballard engages with, an aspect of *Super-Cannes* that foreshadows his final two novels, *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come*, and which fills in the gaps left in earlier novels regarding race. Like Bobby Crawford, Eden-Olympia's psychiatrist Wilder Penrose begins to prescribe psychopathy to the business park's residents as a way of snapping them out of their dazed states; however, this prescribed psychopathy largely manifests itself as attacks on marginalized groups outside of the Eden-Olympia complex—ratissages, or raiding parties, as these attacks are called—to the point that by the end of the novel the executives begin "setting up 'hunting lodges' near the immigrant housing estates in La Bocca and Mandelieu" (377). It is for this reason that some critics such as Francesco Di Bernardo believe that Ballard may have foreseen some of the anti-immigrant sentiment that would arise post-9/11, explaining that *Super-Cannes* "reveals Ballard as an astute observer of contemporary society: while rights are being eroded and inequalities and conflicts are spreading, the elites have never been so rich and successful" (Di Bernardo 96).

Ballard said that the idea for these novels came from the "security-obsessed enclaves with tele-surveillance and armed guards and smart cards […] like a kind of maximum security state, reduced to the size of a village" (*EM* 321). However, it is also the case that Eden-Olympia is much more totalitarian than the resort community envisioned in *Cocaine Nights*, and it is

perhaps for this reason that it is all the more damaging, with one's sense of free will thwarted to an extreme degree (even if the characters *feel* as if they are experiencing freedom through their madness, this is generally an illusion in *Super-Cannes*). Not only is there a clear power dynamic by which the powerful exploit the marginalized, but the residents of Eden-Olympia are also subjected to a much higher degree of surveillance.[75] Eden-Olympia has 400 surveillance cameras that oversee the complex, and Paul becomes uneasy with how the complex "was keeping its cyclops eye on me" (*SC* 120), further explaining that all of the cameras make it seem is as if everybody in Eden-Olympia is unwillingly "taking part in an extraordinary film that no one will ever see" (148). But the cameras also serve an alternative purpose: to record the crimes so that they can be used in films shown by Wilder Penrose at his "therapy classes," viewed by his patients for their pleasure. Along with the ratissages, these recordings are another way in which Penrose doses his patients with psychopathy, and how he ultimately turns a docile population into an awakened yet bloodthirsty pack.

Beyond the cameras, the executives of Eden-Olympia even consider implementing a technology that can be used to monitor the workers' health. This process is explained by Jane as such:

> Every morning when they get up people will dial the clinic and log in their health data: pulse, blood-pressure, weight and so on. One prick of the finger on a small scanner and the computers here will analyse everything: liver enzymes, cholesterol, prostate markers, the lot. (*SC* 73)

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[75] The gated community itself helps to establish this power dynamic. By admitting certain people and excluding others, often along the lines of class and race, the architecture elevates one group over the others, and this sort of elevation might help to explain why the characters feel they can abuse those outside of the complex without consequence.

The rationale behind this planned program is to make sure that each employee is in optimal

health in order to ensure overall workplace efficiency. However, Jane recognizes it as being

"totalitarian" and Paul sees the proposal as being "Utterly bonkers" (73). I would argue that it is

likely because of the increased totalitarian pressures exerted upon the residents of Eden-Olympia

that they are rendered even more docile than their counterparts in *Cocaine Nights*, and it is for

this reason that enhanced acts of violence and degradation are required in order to jolt them from

their paralytic states. But in this novel, participating in these acts is really just another sign of the

characters' docility, as it indicates that they have hypnotically fallen under the control of Wilder

Penrose. The architecture lulls the characters to sleep, and in this state Penrose easily exploits

them.

In *The Medium is the Massage*, McLuhan explains how privacy has been compromised in

the electronic age:

Electrical information devices for universal, tyrannical womb-to-tomb surveillance are

causing a very serious dilemma between our claim to privacy and the community's need

to know. The older, traditional ideas of private, isolated thoughts and actions—the

patterns of mechanistic technologies—are very seriously threatened by new methods of

instantaneous electric information retrieval, by the electrically computerized dossier

bank—that one big gossip column that is unforgiving, unforgetful and from which there

is no redemption, no erasure of early 'mistakes.' (*MM* 12)

Two years later, in a 1969 letter to Pierre Elliot Trudeau, McLuhan summed up this idea more

succinctly, stating: "Under electric conditions there can be no privacy" (*Letters* 367). Ballard

himself specifically talked about surveillance when discussing the implementation of a

"Congestion Zone" in London, which charges drivers a fee so as to decrease traffic during

specific times of day, and which consists of a "huge network of cameras linked to a central body of computers which read the license plate numbers and check to see whether the driver has paid five pounds [...] This Orwellian system of surveillance has not really prompted any protest" (*Conversations* 26). In the same interview he continued to explain his belief that this obviously "taps some deep need in the British psyche to be watched, as if we were children reverting to a kind of docile state of existence under the all-seeing gaze of a stern nanny!" (28).

For McLuhan, the sort of sensory overload that comes with this type of environmental shift can cause what he referred to as "psychic diseases": "These kinds of psychic oscillation resulting from large environmental change are no longer necessary, any more than the plague. Psychic diseases can now be treated for what they are, namely manifestations of the response to man-made technologies" (*Letters* 490). I would posit that the psychic diseases McLuhan mentions are akin to the psychopathologies that Ballard explores in his novels, and in *Super-Cannes*, in particular, one of the most depraved of these is pedophilia, which characters seemingly turn to once all other dehumanized acts have been exhausted. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* are important intertexts to *Super-Cannes*, as David Greenwood had used a library of *Alice* books as a booking system for a child prostitution ring, and Eden-Olympia itself is described as a sort of fantasy world into which Paul and Jane Sinclair fall, dipping their toes into a vision the near future.[76]

Importantly, towards the end of the novel, the reader learns that Greenwood was actually exploited into acting in this manner. It is only when he realized he had gone too far over the edge

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[76] Ballard commented on Lewis Carroll, saying: "Society as a whole is desperately in need of new vices, and there aren't enough criminal acts to go around! So we need to criminalize more human behavior. This has been going on for years. Lewis Carroll, the author of the *Alice* books, would be in jail if he were alive today. You know, for photographing underage little girls that were half-naked—in some cases, they *were* naked" (*Conversations* 110).

that he lashed out and exacted revenge on those who designed his perversion (or who exploited a latent but unexplored desire). As his friend Frances explains:

> He blamed me. I was too tolerant, I was involved in the deep sickness of Eden-Olympia. The last time we met I could see the disgust he felt for me. I was his Hindley or Rosemary West, I'd turned him into this perverted librarian. He wanted to destroy all those sick people playing their deranged games. (*SC* 382)

Throughout *Super-Cannes*, the reader recognizes that Paul himself is susceptible to the influence of Penrose and nearly falls into the same trap that Greenwood did, as he slowly appears to develop a pedophilic perversion. Having passed through the looking glass, entering into Eden-Olympia, Paul enters a new world in which his deepest desires can be played out, but by "tracing his predecessor's trajectory through the Alice-world of the corporate estate" he is clearly "following a path mapped out for him by an experiment that has been planned in advance" (Gasiorek 178). However, though dabbling with the offerings of this psychopathological world, he is ultimately able to pull back, understanding that he has become like Alice "swallowing her 'drink me' potion." It is at this moment that he realizes that he must find a way to survive: "Carroll had furnished his young heroine with every manner of threats to her sanity, but she had survived them all with her unstoppable good sense" (*SC* 354). Being snapped out of this state allows him to save his wife, who herself had fallen victim to Penrose's deranged psychiatry. Paul's awakening—which is an awakening of his own design (as opposed to Penrose's)— coincides with his "hostility to a system that Penrose celebrates with pride" (Gasiorek 178), and unlike Charles in *Cocaine Nights*, Paul Sinclair turns his back on the gated community for good. He vows to finish what Greenwood started, and the novel ends with him loading a shotgun and planning to murder Eden-Olympia's executive class, those responsible for all of the depravity.

One of the main points of difference between Ballard's final tetralogy and his earlier apocalyptic novels is that the sense of passivity in psychopathological acts has been corrupted, and they thus occur without the same sense of illumination. For instance, in his apocalyptic novels, the characters find themselves in new worlds and use the rapidly changing landscapes as ways of exploring the depths of their psyches; however, in his final set of novels, the characters, being targeted and exploited for dubious means, often experience exacerbated docility, and any sense of freedom they feel is illusory.

### Millennium People

In this dissertation, Ballard's final two novels—*Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come*—are being considered as part of a tetralogy due to the many similarities that all four novels share, namely the closed community settings and the overlapping idea that the numbed sensibilities of humans may in the near future induce a state of mass willed madness. It should be noted, however, that these two post-9/11 novels can also be considered a subcategory of their own. Philip Tew, for instance, separates these novels (and *Super-Cannes*) from the likes of *Cocaine Nights* and *Crash*, because in Ballard's earlier work "there is not such much an *ennui* as a flirtatious kind of madness which adopts the language of excess" (Tew 115). Ballard's post-9/11 novels, however, appear to be far more pessimistic in terms of tone and plot, and, as Tew alludes to, they do not depict the same type of Ballardian illumination that is characteristic of his earlier novels. It is also the case that by this point in his life Ballard had

> grown more sceptical about both the artist's capacity of predicting and provoking change,
>
> and the ability of the intellectual class of salaried professionals to develop a potential for

irony. This disillusionment […] is the result of what he feels as the increasing irrelevance

of the cultured middle class in contemporary society. (Colombino 59-60)

By combining Tew's and Colombino's observations, one is led to believe that Ballard's personal

skepticism and pessimism crept into his novels at the time. This notion is supported by

comments that Ballard himself made. In interviews, his tone became much harsher, referring to

England as a Third World country (*Conversations* 317), calling the increased surveillance seen in

the Western world "deplorable," and calling Westerners themselves "brainwashed" for believing

that such surveillance is "a public service" (*EM* 390-391). He also claimed to be worried about

the possibility that dystopias may unconsciously be more appealing than utopias, as they might,

like in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, tap into masochistic impulses that lay dormant in the

population: "People begin to feel that a *dystopia* might be more fun! […] I'm frightened that the

possibilities of a genuine dystopia may be much more appealing than any utopian project that

people can come up with" (*Conversations* 74).

Though the beginning of this chapter continued to unpack the literary connections

between Ballard and McLuhan, and though many of the concepts are still applicable to

*Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come*, I will not revisit them going forward so as not to be

repetitive. Rather, I will encourage the reader to see the implicit connections between these

novels and McLuhan's thought as I discuss topics such as modern technological environments,

panoptic societies, consumerism, and the numbing of the sensorium. The remainder of this

chapter will instead focus on elucidating the pessimistic turn that is evident in Ballard's final two

novels, from the meaningless violence and futility of revolution depicted in *Millennium People*,

to the rising wave of fascism that he prophetically envisioned in *Kingdom Come*, all of which

sees him reflecting on major aspects of the twentieth century and trying to predict their extreme

end points. The new millennium that Ballard envisions in these novels is thus not the one of great promise that symbols such as the Millennium Wheel tried to signify, but one of violence, destruction, and racial hatred. As Ballard stated in a 2004 conversation with V. Vale: "I sometimes think that in a sense we're entering a New Dark Age. The lights are full on, but there's an *inner darkness* […] Reason is evaporating. It may well be that a Dark Age is slowly advancing over us. It's difficult to see how we're going to get out of it […] of course, highly advanced scientific societies can co-exist with the most absolute un-reason" (*Conversations* 24).

In *Millennium People*, Ballard depicts a society in uproar. The middle class residents of Chelsea Marina (a gated community), deeming themselves to be "new Proletariat," believe that they have been taken advantage of by society and in turn begin planning and partaking in a series of protests, revolts, and ultimately terrorist attacks to signal their displeasure. Unbeknownst to them, however, it is clear from the outset that as much as they are protesting against their society at large, they are also rebelling against themselves and the constraints that their gated community has placed upon them. As mentioned at the beginning of the novel: "For reasons no one understood, the inhabitants of Chelsea Marina had set about dismantling their middle-class world" (*MP* 6). The protagonist, David Markham, is a psychologist at the Adler Institute and works as a consultant for corporations regarding "industrial relations and the psychology of the workplace" (8). Importantly, at the beginning of the novel, Markham is not an inhabitant of Chelsea Marina and thus only engages with the spates of violence and protests remotely, through the TV. However, his comfortable life is soon upended when on the television he sees that his ex-wife, Laura, has been injured, and ultimately killed, in a bomb attack at Heathrow Airport. The images of the bombing and its aftermath alter Markham's perception and cause a rupture within his psyche, similar to that experienced by Robert Maitland in *Concrete Island* after he crashes his

car. Subsequently, Markham begins to partake in various demonstrations throughout London and its surrounding suburbs, saying that he is doing so in order to investigate the Heathrow attack and gain information on its perpetrators. All of this leads him to the gated community of Chelsea Marina, and after meeting various actors involved in the planning of the bombings, Markham is lured in as a direct participant in these violent acts.

As with *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, there is a spiritual malaise that is spreading throughout the society depicted in *Millennium People*. As Kay Churchill, one of the leaders of the revolution, tells Markham: "You're entering an area of almost total deprivation […] A zone of *intense spiritual poverty*" (*MP* 84; emphasis mine). In this regard, one of the main areas of investigation in this novel is carried over from the previous two: how can the human sensorium be roused in a world that has become stagnant and docile? How do we prevent ourselves from unconsciously entering into a somnambulistic state induced by modern architecture, surveillance, and the mindless consumerism that we participate in? Though somewhat similar to the answers provided in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, I would argue that the answer Ballard presents us with in *Millennium People* was inspired by the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, as well as by motiveless murders such as the Hungerford massacre, both of which Ballard specifically references in the novel.[77]

It is worth noting that Ballard gave competing interpretations of the 9/11 attacks in different interviews. In one, he claimed that it was a meaningless act of violence and that the World Trade Center was only "elevated into this position of representing American capitalism *after* the event" (*Conversations* 12). In the same year, Ballard gave another interview in which he

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[77] In Chapter 17, Gould tells Markham that the 9/11 attack was "a brave attempt to free America from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The deaths were tragic, but otherwise it was a meaningless act" (*MP* 139-140). The Hungerford massacre is later mentioned in Chapter 33, where the motiveless murders are described as having "sent a tremor of deep unease across the country, redefining the word 'neighbour'" (279).

said that acts of violence without a clear motive—such as the Hungerford massacre, the

Columbine shootings, and the murder of Jill Dando (a British television personality)—"are much

more difficult to explain than the 9/11 attacks, and say far more about the troubled state of the

Western psyche," thus implying that the 9/11 attacks did have some sort of symbolic meaning

(*EM* 412). Theorists such as Slavoj Žižek in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* have claimed

that the attack on the World Trade Center was indeed a symbolic attack, a moment in which "the

image entered and shattered our reality" (Žižek 16), and which reproduced "the stuff of popular

fantasies" seen on TV and in Hollywood blockbusters (17). Whether or not this was the case, to

Ballard the attack ultimately "didn't achieve anything, apart from killing a huge number of

people" (*Conversations* 12-13), and despite his shifting interpretations, the most important thing

here is that Ballard viewed motiveless acts of violence as being much more shocking and

unsettling, seeing as they cannot be easily rationalized (or rationalized at all). If an act of atrocity

cannot be understood, the public finds it to be much more jarring. It is this line of thinking that

seems to have led Ballard to wonder if such motiveless acts of violence will become

commonplace in the near future, as they may become the only way to stimulate a truly numbed

populace. Through the character of Wilder Penrose, Ballard foreshadowed this specific idea in

*Super-Cannes*: "Meaningless violence may be the true poetry of the new millennium. Perhaps

only gratuitous madness can define who we are" (*SC* 288).

This idea of meaningless acts of violence harkens back to Erich Fromm's discussion of

benign versus malignant aggression, which was introduced in the previous chapter when

analyzing *High-Rise*. In Freudian psychoanalysis, the death instinct (Thanatos) is generally

understood as being directed at oneself, thus making it a drive towards self-destruction; however,

Freud also believed that the death instinct could be projected outward, at one's surrounding

environment. Though Freud believed that this death instinct is present in all living organisms,

Fromm argues that this type of behaviour is not found in the animal kingdom at large, and that

violence in the wild can be largely understood as simply having to do with survival. Therefore, it

is generally the case that violence is not directed at an animal's own species, but at others. As

previously mentioned, the type of malignant aggression seen in humans may partly be caused by

us living in a "technosphere" rather than a "biosphere," living in an unnatural habitat, like caged

animals in a zoo. But as Fromm also explains:

> What has happened in modern industrial society is that traditions, and common values,
>
> and genuine social personal ties with others have largely disappeared. The modern mass
>
> man is isolated and lonely, even though he is part of a crowd; he has no convictions
>
> which he could share with others, only slogans and ideologies he gets from the
>
> communications media. (Fromm 107)[78]

As is the case in *Millennium People*, although Markham becomes part of the crowd he is

protesting with, he does not actually have any strong convictions about what is being protested,

such as an exotic cat show. Importantly, however, though he claims that his main purpose of

partaking in such protests is to gain information on the bombing that killed his ex-wife, he does

find a lot of excitement in this process, and finds that the physical participation is much more

exhilarating than watching the protests unfold on TV. Markham is a psychologist, and by

participating in dozens of demonstrations he becomes attuned to the concept of "crowd

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[78] McLuhan used this same term, "mass man," in relation to his notion of the "discarnate man." A discarnate man is a figure who has adapted to technology to such an extent that "[t]heir old physical beings are entirely irrelevant to the new situations" (*Laws of Media* 72). However, in undergoing this process of adaptation, which forces one to relinquish their old self, one becomes like everybody else, a "mass man" without private identity. As McLuhan explained in an interview with Mike McManus: "Yes, everybody tends to merge his identity with other people at the speed of light. It's called being mass man. It began quite a long time ago […] They become alienated from themselves very quickly, and then they seek all sorts of bizarre outlets to establish some sort of identity by put-ons" ("Violence as a Quest for Identity" 268).

psychology" (*MP* 34), and he makes an early observation that "Protest movements, sane and insane, sensible and absurd, touched almost every aspect of life in London, a vast web of demonstrations that tapped a desperate need for a more meaningful world" (37).

In *Crowds and Power*, Elias Canetti analyzes the type of crowd psychology that Ballard references in *Millennium People*, and explains that when in a crowd one feels as if they are part of a larger body and thus immune to the sort of power structures that can be overbearing for an individual. It is for this reason that Canetti posits that people partaking in protests have a tendency to move close together, in order to feel as if they have elevated above the level of the individual and merged with the mass (Canetti 15). He also explains that destructiveness, and even the noise of destruction—such as the shattering of windows—is satisfying to the crowd, because it feels like "an attack on all boundaries" (20). It is by breaking down such boundaries that the members of the crowd experience a heightened sense of power. Furthermore, Canetti uses the term *discharge* in reference to "the moment when all who belong to the crowd get rid of their differences and feel equal" (17). But it is also the case that this feeling of freedom and equality is an illusion, as the group of people who *feel* equal have not actually *become* equal, and when the crowd ultimately disperses, the members simply return to their previous states of inequality.

In *Millennium People*, when taking part in the protests and subsequent bombings, Markham experiences the same sort of excitement that Canetti describes in *Crowds and Power*, and this is recognized by his wife, Sally, who tells him that he hasn't "been so fired up for years" (*MP* 67), and by Kay Churchill, who, after a sexual encounter in the wake of one of these attacks, tells David that "[i]mpotence would have been the normal reaction. Instead of which, you were like Columbus sighting the New World" (163). Also aligning with Canetti's ideas, the

crowd in *Millennium People* does have an egalitarian impulse and experiences a heightened sense of power. Markham explains this: "I was dazed and exhausted, but still excited by the camaraderie, by the sense of a shared enemy. For the first time I fully believed that Kay was right, that we were on the edge of a social revolution with the power to seize the nation" (229-230). However, as explained in the previous paragraph, this feeling of power and change is merely an illusion. Not only is Markham aware of the fact that the police could easily intervene and thwart their protests at any moment if they wanted to, but when the moment of discharge expires and the crowd disperses, the Chelsea Marina rebels simply fall back into their suburban, middle class lives, indicating that despite all of their outrage, they are cemented there, with suburbia being depicted as the fabric of society that cannot be broken: "We had won, but what exactly? Gazing at the quiet streets, I was conscious of an emotional vacuum […] I understood now why Richard Gould had despaired of Chelsea Marina and the revolution he had launched. Without his radicalizing presence the estate would revert to type" (234). In reality, what happens is that the Chelsea Marina rebellion does nothing to cause the social revolution that they claim to be in favour of, and the so-called "upholstered apocalypse" continuously returns to a state of complacency within the confines of their gated community.

This behaviour may well again be a by-product of the panopticon, as the city is filled with countless CCTV cameras, and Chelsea Marina itself is often described as a prison, despite all of its activity and uprisings: "She had brought me home out of genuine concern for me, but already I felt that I was becoming a prisoner […] I was sitting somewhere in Chelsea Marina, an estate of executive housing to the south of the King's Road and, to my mind, the heart of another kind of darkness" (*MP* 50-51). The perceived site of revolution is thus just another cell in a larger prison, and as further elucidated by Ballard in an interview with Jeannette Baxter,

For all their efforts to throw off their chains, the revolution achieved nothing, and the

rebels returned to Chelsea Marina, resuming their former lives, even more docile than

before. What I'm arguing in *MP* is that in our totally pacified world the only acts that will

have any significance at all will be acts of meaningless violence. (*EM* 409-410)

Throughout the novel, the Chelsea Marina rebellion is given two paths to follow to try and

escape this societal prison and their own docility: one set forth by Kay Churchill and one set

forth by Richard Gould. Kay Churchill is an organizer of protests and terrorist attacks who broke

away from the path envisioned by Gould—a former pediatrician who had previously been

puppeteering all of the action—in order to target large, symbolic institutions, such as the

National Film Theatre and the Tate Modern art gallery. Gould, on the other hand, upholds the

notion that only meaningless targets should be attacked, as these attacks are the most impactful,

for reasons described earlier. As David explains, "the public was unsettled" by these sorts of

attacks, "aware of a deranged fifth column in its midst, motiveless and impenetrable, Dada come

to town" (*MP* 205).

As the reader learns, Gould's belief in the necessity of meaningless (or motiveless) acts

of violence is not a reflection of some nihilistic impulse; rather, he is convinced that these actions

may be a way of finding some sort of meaning in the modern world. This notion is elucidated

during a conversation between Gould and Markham:

'It doesn't matter. In fact, the ideal act of violence isn't directed at anything.'

'Pure nihilism?'

'The exact opposite. This is where we've all been wrong – you, me, the Adler, liberal

opinion. It isn't a search for nothingness. It's a search for meaning. Blow up the Stock

Exchange and you're rejecting global capitalism. Bomb the Ministry of Defence and

you're protesting against war. You don't even need to hand out the leaflets. But a truly

pointless act of violence, shooting at random into a crowd, grips our attention for months.

The absence of rational motive carries a significance of its own.' (*MP* 194)

In this passage, we also see Ballard's Surrealist influence emerging once again, as Gould's talk of

"shooting at random into a crowd" echoes a line from Breton's second *Manifesto of Surrealism*,

in which he states that "[t]he simplest Surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street,

pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd" (Breton 125).

It is also worth briefly noting that the shift from Breton's first to second manifesto marked a

stark change in thought, as he became more militaristic in his views on how to change society

and spark a Surrealist revolution.

In *The History of Surrealism*, Maurice Nadeau explains that at the time of Breton's

*Second Manifesto*, the Surrealist movement had split into two separate paths, "that of the

political Revolution, [and] that of the ever widening exploration of the unknown forces of the

unconscious" (Nadeau 175). Breton followed the first path: though he believed that the alteration

of one's perception was necessary in order to spur on societal change, he also amended this idea

in his *Second Manifesto* (1930), explaining that political/ social change may have to occur first,

before the desired change in perception could:

> I doubt that anyone will be surprised to see Surrealism turn its attention, in passing, to
>
> something other than the solution of a psychological problem […] It is in the name of the
>
> overwhelming awareness of this necessity that I believe it impossible for us to avoid most
>
> urgently posing the question of the social regime under which we live […] The entire aim
>
> of Surrealism is to supply it with practical possibilities in no way competitive in the most
>
> immediate realm of consciousness. I really fail to see—some narrow-minded

revolutionaries notwithstanding—why we should refrain from supporting the Revolution.

(Breton 139-140)

Ballard's final two novels follow a similar sort of shift, as politics emerge to the foreground and aesthetics move to the background.

As one critic explains it, "Ballard regards minor surrealist actions as generating a positive delirium of the senses by virtue of their origin in individual consciousness rather than in beliefs induced in the mass by religion or the media" (Colombino 60). And as Ballard himself said: "I think everyone has to carry out a meaningless act—paint up a portion of the sidewalk, or invent an imaginary flag and fly it from one of the telegraph poles—anything! Announce meetings that will never take place, rediscover the old Surrealist attempts to undermine bourgeois society" (Ballard quoted in Colombino 60-61). In *Millennium People*, David Markham understands the idea put forth by Richard Gould that "[i]nexplicable and senseless protests [are] the only way to hold the public's attention" (*MP* 204), and he even comes to view Gould as a Surrealist hero, of sorts, as he believes that these moments have the potential to act as counter-irritants to the numbing effects of modernity, creating a sense of flux that jars people out of complacency. In some sense, the world depicted in *Millennium People* can be understood as a type of "crystal world," only one that is characterized by stagnation *without* illumination (in Ballard's earlier novel one's physical death and crystallization leads to a sense of psychic freedom outside of bodily constraints). As such, Gould's meaningless attacks create ruptures in this static world, and when the Chelsea Marina rebellion goes its own way, shifting away from Gould's newly desired tactics, he continues the revolution of his own design and commits meaningless acts of violence on his own, hoping to shock and awaken society so that a real revolution may subsequently occur.

One of the most significant of these acts is Gould's killing of a female TV personality, a recreation of the real-life murder of Jill Dando, who, as explained above, Ballard mentioned in an interview when discussing meaningless acts of violence. It is also worth noting, however, that Ballard's decision to leave this character unnamed gestures towards the idea that though she is a public figure, she is not of high enough status for the public to expect any sort of assassination attempt on her. By Gould's (and Ballard's) logic, this makes the murder all the more shocking. As the reader learns towards the end of the novel, even Gould's bombing at Heathrow was not an attack on the airport itself or on a British landmark: the real target was in fact David Markham, whose book, *A Neuroscientist Looks at God*, Gould had read. As Gould tells Markham:

> A motiveless act stops the universe in its tracks. If I'd set out to kill you, that would have been just another squalid crime. But if I killed you by accident, or for no reason at all, your death would have a unique significance. To keep the world sane we depend on motive, we rely on cause and effect. Kick those props away and we see that the meaningless act is the only one that has any meaning. (*MP* 255)

Though Gould is ultimately killed, the reader sees a clear contrast between him and the rest of the Chelsea Marina rebels. Despite his twisted vision and murderous actions, like Bobby Crawford and Wilder Penrose, Gould is a catalyst for change, and Markham respects him for this, saying that his "motives were honourable" and that he was "the first of a new kind of desperate man who refuses to bow before the arrogance of existence and the tyranny of space-time. He believed that the most pointless acts could challenge the universe at its own game. Gould lost that game" (292). At one point in the novel, the residents of Chelsea Marina leave their gated community in an act of defiance, only to return later, and as such they revert back to the very lives that they were rebelling against. The rebellion is, in essence, void, and it thus has

no lasting impact on society. The implication here is that should Kay Churchill and the rest of the Chelsea Marina rebels have followed the path set forth by Gould, the rebellion would have ended with a bang and not gone out with a whimper, and this may have potentially led to real societal change. It is important to note, however, that their decision to return to the gated community is not simply of their own volition, as throughout the novel their behaviour is being shaped by invisible forces that are operating in the shadows of society.

In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), theorist Dick Hebdige explains how subcultural movements become incorporated by the dominant culture as a way of trivializing the Other and thus taking away any power that the subcultural group might feel. This is turn helps to defuse the subculture's threat to the dominant society. As Hebdige explains, this feat can be achieved in multiple ways. First, there is "the commodity form" of incorporation, which is a term used to describe how the dominant culture turns innovations—such as clothing, symbols, and music—made by subcultures into commodities so as to make them more widely available and thus render them "frozen" and less impactful (Hebdige 96). The other way that a subculture's power and presence can be defused is through "the ideological form" of incorporation, which occurs when media strips away the rebellious identity of a subcultural group by portraying them as both "more and *less* exotic than they actually are," and thus transforming them into "meaningless exotica" that are deemed unimportant (97). As Florian Cord mentions in relation to *Millennium People*, the media plays "a crucial role in the commodification of the revolution" because, following the uprising, Kay Churchill receives a large book advance and becomes a columnist and TV pundit, and she is thus "wholly sucked into the capitalist media-machine, which exploits her experiences and personality and, of course, always prescribes the forms her reports may take (and, possibly, the content as well)" (Cord 205). This is a notion that Simon

Sellars also makes note of, explaining that the rebellion is "remembered more for a childish, tabloid act of violence than any sustained programme of social change. Inevitably, the authorities move in as martial law is declared and Chelsea Marina becomes 'an anomalous enclave ruled jointly by the police and the local council'" (Sellars 240).

It has therefore been established that by the end of the novel the Chelsea Marina rebellion has been incorporated back into dominant society, but the ending also makes clear to the reader that these methods of control had been covertly operating the entire time, unknowingly exerting influence upon the characters. For instance, CCTV cameras are everywhere, and Gould, who is in some ways the most perceptive, is extremely wary of them, trying to avoid them at all costs: "These security cameras . . . I have to be careful […] There's another bloody camera […] The world has too many cameras" (*MP* 202). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Markham is well aware of the fact that the police could easily thwart the protests if they want to, meaning that the rebellion does not in actuality have the sort of power that it may think. The character Major Tulloch—who works for the Home Office's anti-terrorist unit—is a symbol of the panopticon, "constantly presented as 'scanning' the environment, 'keeping an eye on' the revolution, as 'ever-watchful' and 'all-seeing,'" and "since there is nothing that escapes the gaze of power, nothing that can really threaten it, it can afford to stand back and allow events to run their course" (Cord 207). At the end of the novel, David Markham even realizes that he was unknowingly being used as an undercover agent for government the entire time. Though David begins partaking in the demonstrations to gain information on the death of his ex-wife, and though he later thinks that he has become an agent for social change, he is actually a mere puppet for the Home Office: "So, all along I've been a police spy? Without realizing it?" (*MP* 268). As the dominant society swallows everything within its reach (or gaze), nothing is autonomous and

nothing is free. As Ballard depicts in his final tetralogy, in such a society, when there is no true agency, any feeling of freedom is an illusion, and one's behaviour is being constantly shaped by unseen forces.

### *Kingdom Come*

Ballard's final novel, *Kingdom Come*, has much in common with its predecessor, as it is set in a suburban community, envisions a society descending into mass psychopathy, and investigates the violent underpinnings of modern society. One major difference between *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come*, however, is that the narrator of the latter, Richard Pearson, is a figure intimately involved in the town's descent into fascist chaos, whereas David Markham is a naïve participant in the protests and bombings, unknowingly acting as an undercover spy for the government. As Ballard stated about the premise of *Kingdom Come*: "The thing is, I wanted the protagonist – the narrator – to be more involved professionally, and emotionally, in the events that are unfurling. If you go back to my previous novels, something like *Super-Cannes*, the narrator of that finds himself in this strange business park in the south of France by chance, really, whereas the narrator in *Kingdom Come* is directly involved" (*EM* 432). It is also the case that in the leadup to writing *Kingdom Come*, Ballard had been reading and making notes on Robert O. Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2004), and Paxton's book played a large role in generating the novel's overall thesis, which is summed up by the question: "Could Consumerism turn into Fascism?"[79]

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[79] This question appears in draft material for *Kingdom Come*, on paper that Ballard later used to receive a conference programme by fax. On the paper, this question is followed by a brief synopsis and the beginning of the novel ("J.G. Ballard: Assorted Reviews and Commentary," item 12).

*Kingdom Come* is set in Brooklands, a fictional suburban town known for its giant mall called the Metro-Centre, a structure that is similar to the apartment building envisioned in *High-Rise*, as it is a massive "utopian" complex designed to satisfy the consumer's every need. This enormous structure looms over the entire town, casting Brooklands in its shadow, and the residents flock to it, eager to fulfill their sole civic duty: contributing to consumer culture. As the reader is told at the beginning of the novel: "There were no cinemas, churches or civic centres, and the endless billboards advertising a glossy consumerism sustained the only cultural life" (*KC* 6). In many regards, Ballard viewed the suburbs as being more interesting than the city. This is why many of his earlier novels—such as *Crash* and *The Unlimited Dream Company*—are set in such locations, and perhaps why he also decided to live in Shepperton his entire adult life. As Ballard explained in an interview with Iain Sinclair: "I think the suburbs are more interesting than people will let on. In the suburbs you find uncentred lives. The normal civic structures are not there. So that people have more freedom to explore their own imaginations, their own obsessions" (*EM* 367-368).

The above quotation is taken from a 1999 discussion about *Crash* (both the novel and Cronenberg's film version), but it is clear that Ballard's view of the suburbs took a far more dystopian turn by the time he began working on his final two novels. By this point, Ballard saw a streak of violence and hatred spreading beneath the façade of suburban docility, and in the case of *Kingdom Come*, much of this violence is taken out on immigrant communities. As the residents of Brooklands depart from the Metro-Centre or from football matches, wearing jerseys and shirts emblazoned with the cross of St. George—the symbol from which England's flag is derived—riots are incited and immigrant businesses are vandalized and their owners attacked. Though an article in *The Athletic* about the most recent presidential election in Brazil claims that

"[i]n any other country, turning the national football team shirt into a political weapon would sound absurd" (Alencar and Lang)—this election saw the right-wing incumbent, Jair Bolsonaro, turn the Brazilian football jersey into a nationalist symbol—this is exactly what Ballard envisioned in *Kingdom Come*. In his novel, Richard Pearson uses experimental marketing strategies to prop up a new führer in Brooklands, turn a TV audience into foot soldiers by dosing them with "a hint of madness, a little raw psychopathology" (*KC* 147), and in turn he is able to consolidate a group of neo-fascists who will take a stand against anybody they believe undermines their new hyper-consumerist way of life and their new altar of the Metro-Centre. Ballard believed that he was truly on to something significant with this novel, something prescient, and he claimed that "*Kingdom Come* is my most radical novel for some time, because it deals with events that are literally around the next street corner" ("J. G. Ballard: Interviews by Fax" 7). As the above example from the last Brazilian election indicates—along with the rise of far-right parties worldwide in recent years—one can reasonably conclude that Ballard was eerily prophetic in his final novel, and it is in this novel that he may have posed his most ominous warning about the new millennium.

Though for many decades scholars believed that the main era of fascism ended in 1945, towards the end of Ballard's life it was clear that a new wave was on the rise: in the 1990s there was "ethnic cleansing in the Balkans," instances of "'skinhead' violence against immigrants in Britain, Germany, Scandinavia, and Italy," and an Italian party called Alleanza Nazionale, which was a "direct descendant of the principal Italian neofascist party, the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), joined the first government of Silvio Berlusconi" (Paxton 173). According to Paxton, this trend continued into the new millennium, with "the entry of Jörg Haider's Freiheitspartei (Freedom Party) […] into the Austrian government in February 2000; the

astonishing arrival of the leader of the French far Right, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in second place in

the first round of the French presidential elections in May 2002; and the meteoric rise of an anti-

immigrant but nonconformist outsider, Pym Fortuyn, in the Netherlands in the same month"

(173). This was a trend that Ballard noticed, and he mentioned the rise of such parties/ leaders in

various interviews throughout the early 2000s (*EM* 418; *Conversations* 50).

As previously mentioned, Ballard had read and made notes on Paxton's *The Anatomy of*

*Fascism*, a book that tries to dissect fascists movements and understand what drives their leaders

and supporters. In the Ballard archives at the British Library, typed notes of Ballard's can be

found from the time he was working on *Kingdom Come*, and in these notes are quotations that

Ballard copied down from Paxton's book. As one note that Ballard left himself reads:

"REPHRASE. THESE ARE DIRECT QUOTES FROM PAXTON" ("Resource Material," item

2).[80] It is clear through these copied passages, and through his subsequent notes on them, that

Ballard was very much thinking about how he could apply many of Paxton's ideas to his novel in

progress. For instance, after referencing Paxton's notion about fascism being a revolt against

liberty, reason, harmony, and progress, Ballard finds a connection to consumer culture and adds a

parenthetical note to extend Paxton's idea: "(JGB – consumer society opposed to liberty, reason

and progress)." In a series of handwritten notes, Ballard then expanded upon this idea:

"Consumerism reminds us of the failure of liberation, and the failure of individual liberties and

reason. Ever since the Enlightenment there have been an endless stream of destructive wars.

Consumerism offers us a new aesthetic of instinct and gratification" ("Resource Material").

Additionally, after typing out a quotation from Paxton's book regarding fascism being "a new

invention created afresh for the era of mass politics," Ballard makes another parenthetical note:

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[80] The page numbers in this particular file are not indicated.

"(JGB – perhaps fascism alone can hold a modern soc together)." Then again, he expands upon this idea in handwriting: "Consumerism is a new form of mass politics […] Consumerism today is drawn, not by reason, but by emotion […] When we buy something we unconsciously feel we have been given a present. Modern politics demands this constant stream of presents. Only consumer society can hold modern societies together"  ("Resource Material").

Many of these same ideas are found in *Kingdom Come*, often verbatim, such as during this conversation between Pearson and William Sangster, a teacher at Brooklands High School:

'*Consumerism is a new form of mass politics*. It's very theatrical, but we like that. It's driven by emotion, but its promises are attainable, not just windy rhetoric. A new car, a new power tool, a new CD player.'

'And reason? No place for that, I take it?'

'Reason, well . . .' Sangster paced behind his desk, nail-bitten fingers to his lips. 'It's too close to maths, and most of us are not good at arithmetic. In general I advise people to steer clear of reason. Consumerism celebrates the positive side of the equation. *When we buy something we unconsciously believe we've been given a present*.'

'And politics demands a constant stream of presents? A new hospital, a new school, a new motorway . . .'

'Exactly. And we know what happens to children who are never given any toys. We're all children today. Like it or not, *only consumerism can hold a modern society together*. It presses the right emotional buttons.' (*KC* 85-86; emphasis mine)

Ballard's typed and handwritten notes provide us with insight into his writing process, showing how he identified important ideas from Paxton's book, and reworked them into his novel so as to fit his own hypothesis regarding the connections between fascism and consumer culture.

In these same notes, Ballard also expressed his views on how German citizens during the

rise of Nazism

deliberately allowed everything to get out of hand, knowing that only then could they

burst out in an orgy of death. The same process can be seen in all communities where

there are repressed tensions. People deliberately allow themselves to be led by a hot head

or fanatic, and then explode in a cathartic rush of violence against the target figures. They

allowed themselves to be led into a state of willed psychopathy. ("Resource Material")

As discussed earlier, Ballard expressed similar ideas in various interviews, such as when he

explained that there may "be profound masochistic strains running through modern industrial

man" (*Conversations* 100), and said that he was "frightened that the possibilities of a genuine

dystopia may be much more appealing than any utopian project that people can come up with"

(74).[81] As such, throughout *Kingdom Come*, Ballard draws many parallels between contemporary

consumer society and Nazi Germany, and thus between consumerism and fascism, such as the

way in which both benefit from, and are often characterized by, extreme surveillance, mass

gatherings, an understanding of the power of images, and an escape into unreality.

*Kingdom Come* begins with Richard Pearson, a former advertising executive, arriving in

Brooklands following the death of his father, who had been caught in the crosshairs of a lone

shooter at the Metro-Centre, an instance which also sees Ballard paying "literary homage to the

by now familiar social phenomenon of the shopping mall murder spree, a deadly cousin of the

shopping spree" (Spurr 236). Though initially shocked by the spread of violence and lack of

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[81] It is also worth briefly noting that the idea of "willed psychopathy" that Ballard's final tetralogy largely revolves around has its roots in Freudian psychoanalysis. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud explains that since all societies work to repress individual instincts and desires, the individual is left with some strained impulses (masochistic or otherwise) that they are forced to repress. However, in Ballard's work, it seems to be the case that as societies then become ever more panoptic, and thus more ever more repressive (despite the various comforts that they may possess), these strained impulses that have long repressed may begin to surface, as the individual finally begins to lash out against the society that has caused their docility.

police enforcement, Pearson, like most of Ballard's protagonists, slowly begins to understand and engage with the happenings that surround him. Later, once he realizes that the sense of community and national pride that has been established around the Metro-Centre can be easily exploited, he uses his background in marketing to intensify and perpetuate the elective psychopathy that is rising in the population. As Colombino explains:

> Pearson, the advertising man of *Kingdom Come*, is a true Dadaist artist: breaking away from a traditional advertising practice that promotes recognizable contents, he reconceives commercials as an art form whose meaning is constituted by design alone. In the suburban citadel of consumerism depicted in the novel, he is the perfect model of the infiltrator who tries to subvert the system from within, yet his motives and intentions remain ambiguous, and dangerously so, preventing us from embracing his surrealist strategies as those of a moral guidance. (Colombino 60)

To assist in his experiment, Pearson recruits David Cruise—who is the face of the Metro-Centre's TV station—and props him up as the de facto führer of Brooklands, a vessel through which he can communicate with and incite the population at large. As a result of this, Brooklands becomes a testing ground that the federal government observes and studies, wondering how a docile, consumer-driven suburb could have turned into a fascist micro-state. There is also the implication that this type of transformation is only bound to spread throughout the rest of England, perhaps the Western world: "The Home Office want to see what happens. The suburbs are the perfect social laboratory. You can cook up any pathogen and test how virulent it is. The trouble is, they've waited too long. The whole M25 could flip and drag the rest of the country into outright psychopathy" (*KC* 210).

Pearson is interested in the various forms of mass gatherings that are prevalent in Brooklands, from sporting events to shopping, gatherings that work to build a sense of unity between participants, a bond which is then reinforced by symbols such as the St. George's cross, a "crusader" symbol and a national symbol of England (*KC* 8). Interestingly, regardless of the form of gathering, it is clear that the residents are being lulled into a state of simultaneous elation and somnambulism: they are elated by the football matches or by the rush they get when purchasing items, but are also "sleepwalk[ing] to oblivion, thinking only about the corporate logos" that saturate the landscape (41). The paradoxical blurring of these two states leaves the residents in a position from which they can be easily exploited, and tensions within the community are then stoked by media figures such as David Cruise, even before Pearson begins his "experiment." As Cruise says during a television segment:

> I don't want to blow the Metro-Centre's trumpet, but consumerism is about a lot more than buying things. You agree, Doreen? Good. It's our main way of expressing our tribal values, of engaging with each other's hopes and ambitions. What you see here is a conflict of recreational cultures, a clash of very different lifestyles. On the one side are people like us—we enjoy the facilities offered by the Metro-Centre, and depend on the high values and ideals maintained by the mall and its suppliers […] On the other side are the low-value expectations of the immigrant communities. (78)

Here, Cruise emphasizes cultural differences to not only strengthen the nationalist bond of Brooklands' residents, but to also marginalize the immigrant communities. The paranoia that arises due to the prospect of their way of life being disrupted results in an increase in race-based assaults and vandalism on immigrant businesses, all of which then draws a stricter divide between cultures and solidifies one as being dominant over the other. Furthermore, due to the

words of high profile people like Cruise, the lack of police intervention, and because a majority

of residents become involved with such activities, the acts of violence become the norm,

accepted by the public at large.

Hitler understood the power of mass gatherings and their ability to induce a state of

"mass suggestion," and he was well aware of the power of the spectacle long before Guy Debord

wrote about it. As Mia Spiro explains in *Anti-Nazi Modernism*, Hitler wrote about this in *Mein*

*Kampf*, in which he detailed the ways in which large demonstrations (events of "mass

suggestion") could be used to strengthen the bond of the individual to the group. Being

surrounded by thousands of people with similar opinions leaves one in a state of "suggestive

intoxication and enthusiasm," and whether or not the individual initially agreed with the group's

ideas/ beliefs, they start to assume them, as the ideas become appealing and validated by the

thousands of people chanting in unison (Hitler quoted in Spiro 26). Importantly, however, as the

term "mass suggestion" implies, the intoxicated state in which the individual finds oneself leaves

one susceptible to "suggestion," which implies that one's adoption of such beliefs occurs

covertly, or subliminally, without conscious consent, and when this happens to an entire

population, they can be controlled and exploited.[82] Mussolini was also familiar with this idea,

and frequently referred to a book called *La Psychologie des foules* (The Psychology of Crowds),

in which the author, Gustave Le Bon, takes "a cynical look at how passions rose and fused within

a mass of people who could then be easily manipulated" (Paxton 34). And even before Mussolini

rose to power, a popular Italian writer named Gabriele D'Annunzio, who acted as a forerunner to

the Italian fascist movement, "invented the public theatricality that Mussolini was later to make

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[82] In 1969, Ballard wrote a review of *Mein Kampf* that was published in *New Worlds*. Referring to Hitler as a "half-educated psychopath" who "inherit[ed] the lavish communications systems of the twentieth century" (*UGM* 223), Ballard believed that *Mein Kampf* outlined "the precise psychology he [Hitler] intended to impose on the German people and its European vassals" (221).

his own: daily harangues by the *Comandante* from a balcony, lots of uniforms and parades, the

'Roman salute' with arm outstretched, the meaningless war cry '*Eia, eia, alalà*'" (Paxton 59). In

*Kingdom Come*, shirts with the St. George's cross are the new fascist uniforms; the football

hooligans are the "local militias" (*KC* 68); the Metro-Centre and "sports parades" are the major

sites of mass suggestion (151); and David Cruise is the new führer, reciting harangues on

television. As depicted throughout the novel, consumerism lulls the population to sleep, and

media is then used to exploit it.

The longer that Pearson stays in Brooklands, the more he begins to notice a change in

himself—perhaps partly due to the type of mass suggestion outlined above—and as this shift

occurs, he begins to make direct connection between the attacks on immigrant communities in

Brooklands and the actions taken by "Hitler's elite corps." As stated in Chapter 7:

> I seemed more aggressive, not in the bully-boy way of the street thugs who had driven
>
> the imam from his suburban mosque, but in the more cerebral style of the lawyers,
>
> doctors and architects who had enlisted in Hitler's elite corps. For them, the black
>
> uniforms and death's-head emblems represented a violence of the mind, where aggression
>
> and cruelty were part of a radical code that denied good and evil in favour of an
>
> embraced pathology. Morality gave way to will, and will deferred to madness. (*KC* 56)

In this quotation, Ballard gestures towards the way in which fascist groups often use violence

and symbology to reinforce their ideology, and this is another topic of discussion in Paxton's

*Anatomy of Fascism*. During Mussolini's rise to power, for instance, "some of his followers in

rural northern Italy" formed *squadrismo*, "strong-arm squads" that "applied the tactics they had

learned as soldiers to attacking the internal enemies (in their view) of the Italian nation" (Paxton

58). Likewise, Hitler's Storm Troopers used "selective violence against 'antinational' enemies

who were perceived by many Germans as outside the fold" (67). It is also the case that "Nazi violence was omnipresent and highly visible after 1933. The concentration camps were not hidden, and executions of dissidents were meant to be known" (135). Likewise, in Ballard's novel, the violence that occurs is never covert—it does not occur under the cover of darkness— and it's not meant to be. It's there to be seen, felt, and experienced, so as to punish the marginalized and scare away detractors, all whilst strengthening the bonds between those who are complicit in the actions.

Though Pearson says that he plans to stay in Brooklands to fully investigate the circumstances surrounding his father's death, his ulterior motives are quite different. In actuality, his reasons for staying are much more nefarious than the motives of the other protagonists of Ballard's final tetralogy, characters who are much more passive in their embracing of the dark underworlds in which they find themselves. As Pearson says on the first page of the novel: "Beyond Heathrow lay the empires of consumerism, and the mystery that obsessed me until the day I walked out of my agency for the last time. How to rouse a dormant people who had everything, who had bought the dreams that money can buy and knew they had found a bargain?" (*KC* 3). In this regard, Pearson is much more consciously involved in the events that unfold than the other protagonists of Ballard's final tetralogy, and because of his experience in the advertising sector, he is deeply attuned to the power that images and theatricality can have in shaping behaviour. As such, when he begins working on a marketing campaign for the Metro-Centre, he creates television ads, posters, and even badges for supporters to wear: "A vast social experiment was under way, and I had helped to design it" (152).[83]

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[83] The fact that Pearson is a former advertising executive shows Ballard returning to one of his earliest interests: the power of ads and images, which he had had experimented with in his *Project For a New Novel* billboards and the various ads that he ran in *Ambit* between 1967 and 1971.

David Cruise is the main star of these television ads and posters, and is alternatively

depicted as a "haunted hero of a *noir* film," a "husband who had woken into the innermost circle

of hell," and as a "trapped creature of strange and wayward moods" (*KC* 154). Another billboard

that Pearson designs depicts "a deranged young woman dragging a blood-spattered child across a

deserted car park, watched by a smiling couple who picnicked beside a Volvo with a damaged

wing" (155).[84] As Pearson explains, "[t]he storylines were meaningless, but audiences liked

them. Together they made sense at the deepest level, scenes from the collective dream forever

playing in the back alleys of their minds" (155). And as he further elucidates to the naïve David

Cruise, in the modern age coherent messages don't matter, only emotions matter, how you can

make one feel.[85]

Cruise is a self-confessed "fake" and says that he merely "play[s] a role" on TV: "I'm

still an actor, I act being a sports commentator. Do I know anything about sports? Between you

and me, almost nothing" (*KC* 144). But Pearson realizes that in the current environment none of

this matters:

> Now. I see you as tomorrow's man. Consumerism is the door to the future, and you're
>
> helping to open it. People accumulate emotional capital, as well as cash in the bank, and
>
> they need to invest those emotions in a leader figure. They don't want a jackbooted
>
> fanatic ranting on a balcony. They want a TV host sitting with a studio panel, talking
>
> quietly about what matters in their lives. It's a new kind of democracy, where we vote at
>
> the cash counter, not the ballot box. Consumerism is the greatest device anyone has

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[84] See the connections to *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* here: a violent act that is voyeuristically watched as if a performance.

[85] This idea is also reminiscent of McLuhan's notion of Hot and Cool media, which refers to how certain personalities better fit, and are more impactful on, certain media. Ballard had already touched upon this notion with his story "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan," a piece that is largely focused on media portrayal and how media can be exploited for political gain.

invented for controlling people. New fantasies, new dreams and dislikes, new souls to

heal. For some peculiar reason, they call it shopping. But it's really the purest kind of

politics. And you're at the leading edge. In fact, you could practically run the country.

(145)

Pearson recognizes that though Cruise may not appeal to *logos* or *ethos*, he does appeal to

*pathos*, and thus exhibits what Paxton calls *charisma*. *Charisma* is what many fascist leaders

such as Hitler and Mussolini relied upon in order to effectively communicate with their

respective populations, "a mysterious direct communication with the *Volk* or *razza* […]

resembl[ing] media-era celebrity 'stardom,' raised to a higher power by its say over war and

death" (Paxton 126). Their larger than life personalities and appearances made it seem as though

they were "the bearer[s] of the people's destiny," and though fascist leaders are not the only

political figures to rely upon *charisma*, they do so "more nakedly […] than any other kind, which

may help explain why no fascist regime has so far managed to pass power to a successor" (126).

In *Kingdom Come*, it is important to note that Cruise's *charisma* is evident even before

the influence of Pearson, and this is made clear at the end of the novel when we learn that it was

in fact Cruise who was the real target of the Metro-Centre shooting, not Pearson's father. The

rebel group in Brooklands—comprising psychiatrist Tony Maxted, Dr. Julia Goodwin, solicitor

Geoffrey Fairfax, and police Sergeant Falconer—had decided to fight back against the

widespread violence overtaking their community and saw Cruise's death as being a symbolic

death of the Metro-Centre, and thus of fascism and consumerism. As such, they recruited Duncan

Christie to be the gunman, a mentally unstable man with a deep hatred of the Metro-Centre

(whose perceived "madness" by others in Brooklands is a strong indicator that he actually

perceives the situation clearer than anyone else). As Tony Maxted explains:

> We had to move fast, while the whole nasty business was still controllable. A soft fascism was spreading through middle England, and no one in authority was concerned […] Think of Germany in the nineteen-thirties. When good men do nothing . . . We needed a target, so we picked David Cruise. He wasn't ideal, but shooting him down in the Metro-Centre, in the middle of one of his television rants, would make a powerful point. People would think hard about where they were going. (*KC* 259)

The rebels believe that killing Cruise would put an end to the fascist uprising in Brooklands and snap the public out of its somnambulistic state; however, as Ballard made clear when commenting on Nazi Germany, it is as if the residents have an unconscious *desire* to embrace Cruise and his brand of "soft fascism," and by doing so they are able to participate in acts of depravity and dehumanization all while defusing their own responsibility in such acts by shifting the blame to their fascist leader.

Paxton explains that "[f]ascist propagandists wanted us to see the leader alone on his pinnacle, and they had remarkable success" in accomplishing this; however, this also meant that after the Second World War many of the people who were complicit in the Nazis' depraved acts claimed to have been "the fascists' victims rather than their accomplices" (Paxton 119). Regardless of how complicit one actually was, they could psychically (and socially) shift the blame by saying that their actions were the result of being exploited—by the fascist leader or by the ideology in general—and without such influence they would not have acted in such a manner. But, in the case of the Second World War, Ballard believed that the German public had an unconscious desire for such depravity, and remembering that Hitler was democratically elected, it is important to note that the public often gives fascist leaders their power in the first place.

In *Kingdom Come*, "Insanity" and "[t]he freedom deliberately to lose control" is what really appeals to the characters (*KC* 99), and the result of this is the extraordinary disintegration of civilization. It is no surprise, then, that many of the images that saturate Part III of the novel reflect the living conditions that Ballard experienced during the Second World War while placed in the Lunghua Internment Camp: hostages are split into labour groups, a strict rationing system is put in place, and dead bodies are found floating in the water of the Metro-Centre's wave machine. Ballard, who by this point was already in bad health, may very well have been reflecting on his own past as he wrote *Kingdom Come*. In doing so he predicted some rather frightening aspects of the future.

Interlude III: *The Day of Creation* and *Rushing to Paradise*

*The Day of Creation* (1987) follows the psychic journey of Dr. Mallory, a British physician working at a WHO-affiliated clinic in the fictional town of Port-la-Nouvelle in Central Africa. Port-la-Nouvelle is a warzone rampant with guerilla activity, and because of this it is largely abandoned, thus leaving Mallory with a dwindling number of patients. Mallory, dreaming about the emergence of a green Sahara, turns himself "into an amateur engineer and hydrologist" and begins an irrigation project (*DC* 19), trying to tap into a large reservoir of water that he believes resides deep beneath the surface of a dry lake. Though his own project is unsuccessful, when a sergeant in Kagwa's private army uses a tractor to remove a collection of roots from a dead oak tree, water begins to flow up from underground, first filling the lake and soon thereafter expanding into a river.

Though *The Day of Creation* is not set in an apocalyptic landscape, and though it doesn't invoke any Surrealist art, it is still very similar to Ballard's first tetralogy in a number of ways. Like the protagonists of *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*, Mallory defies conventional wisdom and decides to stay in Port-la-Nouvelle despite the growing danger, thus pursuing an inner logic, believing that the newly formed river has leaked out from the inside his head and thus fulfilled his vision of a third Nile. However, though Mallory's dream of green Sahara may at first come across as "a laudable dream of topographic transformation that is intended to be beneficial," as is typically the case in Ballard's work, it becomes clear that Mallory has ulterior motives, and that his inner space that has been manifested in the outer world signals "a viral sickness that spreads out from an egoistic identification of self and world" (Gasiorek 135).

As with Ballard's first tetralogy, the blurring of inner and outer space is key to *The Day of Creation*, and it is clear from the outset that Mallory's desire to find a hidden source of water is emblematic of an inner journey, through "the profiles of a nightmare slumbering inside [his] head" (*DC* 20). Like in *The Drowned World*, where the water is referred to as "an extension of [Kerans's] own bloodstream" (*DW* 86), in *The Day of Creation* the reader is told that it is as if the water has "flowed from [Mallory's] own bloodstream" (*DC* 119). Furthermore, when the river forms, Ballard once again uses mirror symbolism to elucidate the intertwined relationship between Mallory's inner space and the external landscape he traverses. As a reminder, in *The Drowned World* water is referred to as a "dark mirror" (*DW* 21), and in *The Drought* the oily surface of the remaining water is described as a "darkening mirror" (*D* 90). In both instances, the water/ mirror symbolism informs the reader about the protagonists' inward shift and the progression of their psychic journeys. This idea is returned to in *The Day of Creation*: just as the water begins to flow up from underground, Mallory looks down to see his "own face reflected in the black mirror" of the emerging water (*DC* 43).

*The Drowned World*, in particular, also uses labyrinthine imagery to describe Kerans's movement through his inner world, a network of lagoons that he must travel through in order to confront his shadow and reach a point of psychic completion. The same thing is evident in *The Day of Creation*: as Mallory progresses upstream on a stolen ferry, looking for the source of the river, the water resembles "a dark mirror that contained no reflections" that "divid[es] itself into a maze of channels" (*DC* 186-187). In both novels, the symbols of water, mirrors, and mazes converge so as to indicate the superimposition of the protagonists' inner world onto the external world, and it is thus the case that navigating the outer world doubles as an inner voyage. In *The Day of Creation*, the fact that Mallory names the river after himself—The River Mallory—

further helps to indicate this blurring of inner and outer space. The protagonists in both novels, however, are internally fragmented subjects and, as their journeys progress, the mirrors that they encounter also begin to reflect their fractured interiorities. For instance, towards the end of *The Day of Creation*, when Mallory is searching the empty cabins of a boat for Noon, he sees his fragmented reflection: "In the cracked mirrors I could see disjointed sections of myself" (245-246). An instance such as this informs Mallory about his unresolved state, and he must thus continue to navigate and overcome the various impediments in the external world (which are in part mental projections) in order to reach a point of psychic completion.

In *The Day of Creation*, it is also the case that Mallory's inner world appears to be the source of much of the sickness that is spreading throughout the landscape, having leaked out from his skull. Therefore, as Mallory's journey progresses, more and more people begin to die around him, and the river not only starts to drain but also becomes a "poisoned paradise" (*DC* 221). I would remind the reader that, as discussed in Chapter Two, in Jungian psychoanalysis water is considered to be a "living symbol of the dark psyche" (*Archetypes* 17), so it should come as no surprise that The River Mallory becomes a cesspool, reflecting Mallory's own inner darkness:

> All of us were now infected by the same fever, carried by the flies and mosquitos from the noxious waters of the river […] But the higher reaches of the Mallory frightened me with their blue beaches and dead snakes, and the palpable presence of the poison which its waters had leached from my head. (*DC* 236)

From a postcolonial perspective, the transformation of Port-la-Nouvelle into a landscape that has gushed forth from Mallory's inner world is indicative of the West imposing itself unwillingly on the African continent. Even after the town has all but cleared out, a poison—represented by

Mallory and his desire to create a third Nile—still lingers and desecrates the land. As mentioned earlier, under a guise of humanitarianism, Mallory sees the exotic landscape as a means for self-use, a way of resolving his own internal battle.

The imposition of the West onto Port-la-Nouvelle is also evident by the way in which, even before The River Mallory forms, a tractor, which is digging "hillocks of pulverized earth," is described by as "a trace of the passing imprint of western technology on the African land" (*DC* 41). This notion also arises when Professor Sanger brings a film crew to Port-la-Nouvelle, hoping to record a television documentary about the happenings in Central Africa. As Gasiorek explains,

> The entire narrative, moreover, is from the outset subjected not only to the fevered imagination of its main protagonist but also to the controlling influence of the television documentary, a new form of colonisation, which divides the African continent up in accordance with a new logic: 'The prime sites – Ethiopia, Chad, the Sudan – had been allocated to the most powerful television interests, the huge American networks and the British record companies.' (Gasiorek 134-135)

Though *The Day of Creation* is very similar to *The Drowned World* in terms of its blurring of inner and outer space, symbolism, and postcolonial undertones, the inclusion of mass media is an added dimension that distinguishes *The Day of Creation* from its predecessor. Just as Mallory's dream of a green Sahara may initially come across as being a utopian vision, Sanger's documentary and delivery of food can initially be seen as part of a humanitarian effort; however, the reader is quick to learn that Sanger's real intent is to simply save his own struggling television career, and that his concern for the unrest in Central Africa is nonexistent.

Sanger's film, which in one sense acts as a colonial eye observing postcolonial territory and using it as entertainment, ultimately finds its true subject in Mallory, the mad doctor who is obsessed with the newly formed river: "Sooner or later, everything turns into television. Consider, Dr Mallory, you may already be the subject of a new documentary about a man who invents a river" (*DC* 64). The watchful eye of the camera also appears to impede Mallory's own psychic journey at times, and it is in this regard that Ballard described *The Day of Creation* as being "in part about what creativity means today when the imagination is invaded by the watching camera which is using the experience for its own ends and then playing back some sort of sentimentalized version of the original at the same time as the original is unfolding" (*Conversations* 173-174). In this sense, Ballard's first two phases—apocalyptic novels and modern disaster novels—converge in *The Day of Creation*, in which an externalization of inner space becomes enveloped by a technological field, and which thus goes to show how, in the modern world, anything can be media spectacle: one's interiority, warfare, colonial enterprises, and one's descent into madness.

Mass media also plays a significant role in *Rushing to Paradise* (1994), a novel that follows a group of environmentalists who travel to Saint-Esprit—a fictional island southeast of Tahiti that serves as a nuclear testing site—to protest the decline of the albatross population in the region. When Neil is shot by French troops (albeit only in the foot), he is turned into a media celebrity, which helps to spark public outrage regarding the happenings on Saint-Esprit. This event also turns the leader of the protests, Dr. Barbara Rafferty, into a "minor media phenomenon" herself (*RP* 27), and it helps her to gain the resources needed to make another trip to the island, including a boat. The next voyage that they make to Saint-Esprit is then accompanied by a television crew and, as is the case in *The Day of Creation*, it is the characters

that become the real story, not the albatross that they're supposedly trying to save. As is typically the case in Ballard's work, each character has wayward impulses that they become far more attentive to: "Their original reason for coming to Saint-Esprit, to save the albatross from the threatened nuclear tests, had faded into the dusty forest as soon as the support flights and media attention had ceased" (117).

As such, on the surface, *Rushing to Paradise* can appear to be another early example of "cli-fi," as the reader is told that the initial purpose of the group's journey is to raise awareness about nuclear radiation and the dwindling albatross population on the island. This aspect of the novel, however, is relatively minor since the primary focus is on the characters' unconscious pursuits. Neil, for example, wants to visit Saint-Esprit in hopes of actually seeing a nuclear explosion on the island (his father was a radiologist who, after getting cancer, killed himself, and Neil thus feels that there is some latent connection between his father and the nuclear testing site). Dr. Barbara's motives, on the other hand, are less clear at the beginning of the novel, and though she plays up her role as an environmentalist, Neil is quick to notice how "the Greenpeace and environmental activists kept their distance from Dr Barbara, as if they suspected that her passionate defence of the albatross concealed more devious aims" (*RP* 37). As the reader learns, when she was a practicing physician, Dr. Barbara had been convicted on eight counts of manslaughter after using a combination of drugs to kill suffering, elderly cancer patients, and though Neil is enamoured with her, he also realizes that "[t]he slim, over-intense face of the guilty physician, shadowed by the dark tones of her suit, might have belonged to a war criminal or psychopath" (40).

Dr. Barbara is like Vaughan in *Crash*, and she foreshadows the figures that would later emerge in Ballard's closed community novels, such as Bobby Crawford in *Cocaine Nights* and

Wilder Penrose in *Super-Cannes*, characters who introduce a perverse logic that the other

characters then come to accept as their own. Importantly, though the novel is told through Neil's

perspective, everything actually revolves around Dr. Barbara, and she controls not only the

action of the plot but also the other characters. It is in this regard that Dr. Barbara can be

considered the first female protagonist to appear in Ballard's novels. Though Ballard described

Dr. Barbara in similar mythic terms as his earlier female characters, it is also clear that he tried to

make her a compelling, more well-developed character:

> But the satire on the extremist fringes of the feminist movement is more ambiguous,
>
> because I actually take the side of Dr Barbara […] I can see that this is an immensely
>
> powerful, strong-willed woman who has all the ancient, ancestral power of women as
>
> creators, as controllers, as enchanters of men, as crones, as mothers – all those archetypal
>
> female images, which have so terrified and inspired men through the ages, are incarnated
>
> in a small way in this character. As a reader of my own book, I respond to her – although
>
> on a technical level she is a serial killer – as she is nonetheless immensely appealing.
>
> Leaving my book aside, people of that kind are immensely dangerous; they are the stuff
>
> of which charismatic leaders are made. (*EM* 306)

The island becomes a closed community, of sorts, and, as in Ballard's final tetralogy, this

community has its own charismatic leader. It is significant, however, that in *Rushing to Paradise*,

this leader is a woman. After the French troops leave, Dr. Barbara—like Mallory in *The Day of*

*Creation*—begins to transform Saint-Esprit into an island of her own dreams, a realm in which

her inner desires can manifest themselves and play out.

Dr. Barbara's true vision of the island becomes clear towards the end of the novel, when

she reveals that "Saint-Esprit isn't a sanctuary for the albatross, it's a sanctuary for women – or

could be. We're the most endangered species of all. We came here to save the albatross and what did we do? We turned Saint-Esprit into just another cosy suburb, where we do all the work, and all the caring and carrying, all the planning and worrying" (*RP* 170). As the quotation in the previous paragraph shows, Ballard viewed *Rushing to Paradise* as partly being a satire on radical feminism; however, though one might conclude that his comment in some ways puts Ballard at odds with the feminist movement in general, it is also the case that Dr. Barbara can be viewed as a character who is progressive in her attitudes towards sex and gender norms. As Ballard explained in a 1995 interview with Will Self:

> There is another element in *Rushing to Paradise* that is equally important, and that is Dr Barbara's attitude towards sex. She represents the way that women have begun – thanks to the feminist movement in large part – to resexualise themselves. They have begun to resexualise their imaginations. I imagine that Dr Barbara would endorse the pro-pornography feminist lobbyists who believe that women have as much right to make, read and enjoy pornography, to express their own sexual imaginations, as men do. Dr Barbara has resexualised herself. Sex for her is as intense as it is for anyone else. She has not allowed herself to be stereotyped in a way that the traditional middle-class professional women would probably have been. (*EM* 312)

In this sense, though it is true that Dr. Barbara is sexually exploitative, she is also sexually liberated, and is thus not simply a figure of domesticity and compliance, such as one plucked from the nuclear family. Unlike Ballard's other novels in which the female characters are there to serve and support to male protagonists' journeys, everything in *Rushing to Paradise*, even Neil, is there to serve Dr. Barbara, to help her achieve her goals of creating a female sanctuary on Saint-Esprit.

It is also the case that as Dr. Barbara takes on what may be considered to be traditionally masculine attributes, there is a role reversal on the other end as well. Towards the end of the novel, the few remaining men—who are unknowingly being poisoned by Dr. Barbara—are forced to take on traditionally feminine roles, caring for the sick and preparing meals: "He and Carline had been left to care for the dying Kimo on their own, bathing and comforting the feverish Hawaiian, clumsily trying to ease his distress as the sweat drained from his wasting body and soaked the mattress in his tent" (*RP* 200). Dr. Barbara, frustrated with women being "the first domesticated animals" (171), pushes back against gender norms and forces them to flip, though this also happens to be achieved through violent, often inhuman means (most of the men and baby boys are killed). It is also important to remember, however, that Ballard almost always uses exaggeration in his novels for dramatic effect and to draw attention to certain truths that may be overlooked by the public. In this sense, perhaps the exaggeration used in *Rushing to Paradise*, in which the island becomes an "extermination camp" for men (224), is aimed at drawing attention to the historical treatment of women, or it may even be a commentary on Ballard's own work, which up until *The Kindness of Women* lacked well-developed female characters. *Rushing to Paradise* is the novel that immediately followed *The Kindness of Women*, and with the emergence of other significant female characters in his final tetralogy—such as Kay Churchill in *Millennium People*—it is possible that Ballard had become more conscious of how his earlier work had neglected to include such characters.

Chapter Five: War Fiction and Semi-Autobiographical Novels

When *Empire of the Sun* was published in 1984, Ballard for the first time in his career achieved a combination of widespread critical acclaim and commercial success. The novel won the Guardian Fiction Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, it was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, and it continues to be regarded as Ballard's "most critically acclaimed novel" (Baxter 135).[86] Interestingly, despite the success that Ballard found with *Empire of the Sun*, it still appears as if his early connection to science fiction, as well as his transgressive novels such as *Crash*, had left a stain on his reputation. Angela Carter—with whom Ballard shared the 1984 James Tait Black Memorial Prize—alluded to this notion in her 1984 review of *Empire of the Sun*, explaining that critics always seemed hesitant to give Ballard his due and recognize him as an important writer, despite the clear influence he had on many: "Ballard is rarely, if ever, mentioned in the same breath, or even the same paragraph, as such peers as Anthony Powell or Iris Murdoch. Fans such as Kingsley Amis and Anthony Burgess praise Ballard to the skies but they themselves are classified differently, as, God help us, 'serious writers' in comparison" (Carter 46). Carter also commented on the new attention being given to Ballard's work following the publication of *Empire of the Sun*, poignantly stating:

> Ballard's thirty-odd-year career as a cult classic is, however, about to come to an end. He
> has, in his mid-fifties, produced what they call a 'breakthrough' novel. No doubt the
> 'literary men' (and women) will now treat Ballard as the sf writer who came in from the
> cold. Who finally put away childish things, man-powered flight, landscapes of the flesh,

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[86] This claim is supported by Roger Luckhurst, who says that with the release of *Empire of the Sun*, critics suddenly accepted Ballard as a serious novelist (Luckhurst 154), and by Samuel Francis, who explains that the success of this novel allowed Ballard to transition "[f]rom a position of cult popularity" to a mainstream figure "[p]raised by critics, writers, and thinkers" (Francis 7).

the erotic geometry of the car crash, things like that, and wrote the Big Novel they always

knew he'd got in him. (Carter 47)

Though the critical hostility towards Ballard's work was clearly starting to dissipate at this point,

Carter implies that the primary reason he was finding new levels of success was simply because

*Empire of the Sun* was seen as falling in line with what critics deemed to be good, "serious"

literature.

In both of his semi-autobiographical novels, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of*

*Women* (1991), Ballard shifts his writing in the direction of autobiography, memoir, and war

fiction and, as Roger Luckhurst explains, at the time these genres were viewed as being more

literary and worthy of praise than science fiction: "The reason for this sudden acceptability—a

conjunction of mass audience with critical elevation to 'serious' novelist—can be

incontrovertibly traced to a perceived generic shift: SF to 'autobiography.' More than this,

*Empire* could be rendered generically safe in another sense: it was a Second World War novel"

(Luckhurst 154). Seeing as the critical attention that Ballard received for *Empire of the Sun* was

repeated when *The Kindness of Women* was published, it is likely the case that this notion—that

genre influences acclaim and attention—does in fact happen, and did occur with Ballard's work.

However, as this chapter will explore, it is also the case that *Empire of the Sun* and *The*

*Kindness of Women* were not as indicative of the major generic shift that many critics believed to

have occurred within Ballard's work. Rather, though these two novels appear on the surface to be

quite different from Ballard's earlier work, largely because of their presentation as

autobiography, it is clear that they are still very much in conversation with the rest of Ballard's

oeuvre, investigating similar themes, motifs, and ideas, and I would argue that it is in these

novels that Ballard, to the greatest extent, synthesizes the three primary topics being examined in this dissertation: Surrealism, World War II, and modern technology.

In this chapter, Ballard's two semi-autobiographical novels will also be read alongside some of his short stories from this era—namely "The Dead Time" (1977), "Theatre of War" (1977), "The Secret History of World War 3" (1988), and "War Fever" (1989)—all of which can be grouped together into a sort of "war" phase of Ballard's career. Likely due to his childhood in Shanghai and internment in Lunghua, the topic of war (and its effects) gave much inspiration to Ballard throughout his career, and, as will be discussed at the end of this chapter, he returned to this familiar ground once again near the end of his life, in a planned book-length project referred to in his notes as "War V US."

## *Empire of the Sun*

*Empire of the Sun* was the first of Ballard's novels to explicitly engage with his experiences during the Second World War but, as discussed earlier, he also claimed that he had been writing about his wartime experiences throughout his entire career, only "in disguised form" (*EM* 226). In this regard, many of Ballard's earliest stories, such as "The Concentration City" (1957), "Manhole 69" (1957), "Thirteen to Centaurus" (1962), "The Watch-Towers" (1962), and "End-Game" (1963)—stories of confinement, claustrophobia, and surveillance—can be viewed as being in some way a representation of the imprisonment Ballard experienced while in Lunghua. Ballard was also very open about the fact that the apocalyptic worlds depicted in his first four novels undoubtedly resemble landscapes of war. For instance, in the essay "Time, Memory and Inner Space" (1963), he explains that "the image of an immense half-submerged city overgrown by tropical vegetation, which forms the centrepiece of *The Drowned World*, is in

some way a fusion of my childhood memories of Shanghai and those of my last ten years in London" (*UGM* 199).[87] I would add that there are also many references to Shanghai and Lunghua that appear throughout *The Atrocity Exhibition*, such as in the miniature autobiography of Traven in "Tolerances of the Human Face": "Two weeks after the end of World War II my parents and I left Lunghua internment camp and returned to our house in Shanghai, which had been occupied by the Japanese gendarmerie. The four servants and ourselves were still without any food" (*AE* 112).[88]

Despite the traces of autobiography that can be found scattered throughout most of Ballard's work, as was often the case, Ballard planned specifically for *Empire of the Sun* by testing out his new form of semi-autobiographical fiction in a short story called "The Dead Time" (1977). "The Dead Time" is set in China in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, just as the Japanese troops begin to abandon the area surrounding an unnamed internment camp. The narrator is a 20-year-old internee who, in the chaos of war, had been separated from his parents and sister and placed in a separate camp, and the story follows his post-war journey to try and reunite with them. When a Japanese officer tasks the unnamed narrator and another internee with transporting fifty corpses to a Protestant cemetery, they gladly agree, with the narrator knowing that doing so will afford him the opportunity to look for food and find his family. With no intention of taking the corpses to the cemetery, the two men are quick to unload

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[87] On this topic, Ballard also said that "the setting of *The Drowned World*, the apartment blocks rising out of the swamp, is like the landscape of immediate post-war China where I was brought up […] I'm sure now that was the landscape I used in *The Drowned World*, though I thought I'd invented it when I was writing the book" (*EM* 27).

[88] Further, in the first chapter, "The Atrocity Exhibition," the reader is provided with more information of Traven's backstory: "The next day, as he walked back to Shanghai, the peasants were planting rice among the swaying legs. Memories of others than himself, together these messages moved to some kind of focus. The dead face of the bomber pilot hovered by the door, the projection of World War III's unknown soldier. His presence exhausted Travis" (*AE* 5). The landscape of Shanghai is also described in "The Great American Nude": "Various landscapes preoccupied Talbert during this period: (1) The melancholy back of the Yangtse, a boom of sunken freighters off the Shanghai Bund. As a child he rowed out to the rusting ships, waded through saloons awash with water. Through the portholes, a regatta of corpses sailed past Woosung Pier" (82).

them from their trucks; however, every time they attempt to do this, they are thwarted and must reload the dead bodies, and thus are unable to escape from these spectres of death.

They first toss the bodies into a canal, but over a dozen of the corpses float downstream and block their way, and the two men are in turn forced to retrieve them from the water. The narrator—who begins to feel a connection with the corpses, recognizing their faces—loads them back onto his truck, and continues the search for his family with his new companions:

> But within this empty landscape they did at least provide an element of security, particularly if a hostile Japanese patrol came across me. Also, for the first time I had begun to feel a sense of loyalty towards them, and the feeling that they, the dead, were more living than the living who had deserted me. (*CS* 936)

In *Empire of the Sun*, there is a scene at the beginning of Part Three in which Jim hides amongst dead bodies, pretending to be dead himself, in order to survive a Japanese "night march" (*ES* 216), and a similar scene occurs in "The Dead Time," when the narrator lies amongst his group of corpses and tricks Kuomintang soldiers into thinking that he's dead. In both texts, these scenes work to bring the protagonists closer to the corpses around them and to the landscapes of death that they occupy, and they psychically begin to associate with them, feeling as if they share a bond. This perhaps indicates the effect that war can have on deadening one's interiority, and numbing one's sensibilities. Importantly, as Paul Crosthwaite notes in *Trauma, Postmodernism and the Aftermath of World War II*, "the corpses that appear in *Empire*, *Kindness*, and 'The Dead Time' rarely, if ever, symbolize the past" (Crosthwaite 107), and it is clear to the reader that though the literal war may have ended, a psychological war is still present, and the spectres of death that fill the characters' minds cannot be easily forgotten or fully understood. This is why throughout "The Dead Time," the narrator feels as if the death-strewn landscape is a premonition

as much as it is a part of the historical past and present, constantly sensing a "presentiment of death" lurking around him amongst the debris of war (*CS* 928, 929, 933, 935, 937).

In the context of "The Dead Time," this "presentiment of death" that the narrator senses foreshadows his own arrival at the internment camp in Soochow where his family is being held, only to be met by another group of corpses that he subsequently, psychically, raises from the dead. In the larger context, however, this "presentiment of death" alludes to the fact that every physical war is followed by a traumatic psychological war, whereby physical corpses turn into ghostly presences that cannot be evaded, continuously haunting one's mind. It also alludes to the fact that regardless of the atrocity that has occurred, there is always more creeping just around the corner, and this was no better proven than by the First and Second World Wars. And in fact for Ballard, he often claimed that when the Second World War ended the Third instantly began, largely because of the use of a new super-weapon, the nuclear bomb, and because of the media landscape that emerged in the 1960s which seemingly played violent images repeatedly. In a 1970 interview with Lynn Barber, Ballard stated: "Well, look at the events of the last thirty years, the slaughter of human life alone, anything from thirty to fifty million people dead in World War II. World War III, still a possibility, would multiply that figure by ten presumably" (*EM* 27).[89] In a later interview, too, he said that in *Empire of the Sun* Jim understands that with "the dropping of the atom bomb, World War III has actually begun, and this is what he feels that none of the adults around him, none of his fellow prisoners, recognise […] He realises that war in the mid-twentieth century and in the late twentieth century to come is endemic to the human condition,

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[89] Ballard also discussed this notion in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, though in a different way, claiming that World War III may not be a physical war as much as a psychic war, where "the blitzkriegs will be fought out on the spinal battlefields," on the psychic plane, "in terms of the postures we assume, of our traumas mimetized in the angle of a wall or balcony" (*AE* 7). Similarly, in *The Kindness of Women*, Jim explains that his move to England after the war made it feel as if he "had woken from a dream of the Second World War into an England that seemed like the aftermath of the Third" (*KW* 154).

and that human beings must accept this: that they're deluding themselves by imagining that peace will ever come" (*EM* 226).

Though the landscape of "The Dead Time" and aspects of its plot are definitely reminiscent of Ballard's wartime experiences in China, it is also clear that this story belongs much more to the realm of fiction than autobiography, and in it Ballard simply uses the landscapes he had seen as a child as grounds onto which he superimposes his imagination. *Empire of the Sun* is similar in this regard: though it does contain many autobiographical elements, it is still a novel and is intended to be read as one, not as a memoir. As Ballard himself explained it, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* are stories of "my life seen through the mirror of the fiction prompted by that life […] written with the full awareness of the fiction that that life generated during its three or four decades of adulthood" (*EM* 314-315). As such, it should be no surprise to the reader that Ballard takes many creative liberties regarding the chronology and actuality of certain events, and it is important to make clear that the historical accuracy of the events described was not of utmost importance to him. It was, rather, much more important for him to try and capture the psychological essence of that time and of his experiences, what he saw and felt, and this is why he claimed that *Empire of the Sun* is "literally true half the time, and psychologically true the whole of the time" (Ballard quoted in Baxter 138).

It is also for this reason, however, that many former Lunghua internees took issue with the novel. Ballard kept multiple letters that he had received from other Lunghua internees about *Empire of the Sun*, most of which called into question his depiction of the camp and the accuracy of the events described. For instance, one of these letters told Ballard that "many of the survivors of internment camps in Shanghai, particularly those who were in Lunghua, will be distressed at

the lurid picture drawn in your book […] Most will think they endured enough without having their ordeal turned into a tale of falsehoods" ("Letters Received from Lunghua Camp Internees," item 2). Another stated: "Holy Smoke, your description of Lunghua is ENTIRELY MISLEADING. Where were the graves of internees in the 'camp cemetery'? You describe mounds of earth with rotting limbs protruding – somehow I missed that […] Nearly everything you say about the camp is wrong" (item 2). One of the other former internees, however, thought that Ballard's depiction of Lunghua "caught the flavour of the place remarkably" (item 4), and this was, in the end, what Ballard was hoping to achieve, giving up total historical accuracy for the sake of psychological accuracy.

This isn't something that Ballard tried to conceal either, and to the astute reader it is evident from early in the novel that *Empire of the Sun* shouldn't be taken strictly as autobiography. The main thrust of the novel—like that of "The Dead Time"—is the protagonist's drive to reunite with his family, from whom he was separated before being placed in Lunghua; however, in reality Ballard was never physically separated from his family at all, and the authorial decision to make Jim a "war orphan" is perhaps the best example of Ballard's desire to capture a psychological truth rather than a complete historical truth. As he later explained in his "true" autobiography, *Miracles of Life*:

> In my novel the most important break with real events is the absence from Lunghua of my parents. I thought hard about this, but I felt it was closer to the psychological and emotional truth of events to make 'Jim' effectively a war orphan. There is no doubt that a gradual estrangement from my parents, which lasted to the end of their lives, began in Lunghua Camp. (*ML* 82)

To Ballard, "a literal account would hardly manage" to capture the essence or core truth of his experiences, so he instead "enlarge[d] the vision" so as to present "a hypertrophied truth" (*EM* 215). This is akin to the writing of Christopher Isherwood, whose *Goodbye to Berlin* also took a semi-autobiographical approach in order to capture the "dress-rehearsal of a disaster [...] the last night of an epoch" that occurred in Germany during the leadup to the Second World War (Isherwood 219). More significantly, this aspect of Ballard's novel, which blurs historical and psychological truths, also shows him following the path of the Surrealists before him, such as André Breton, who experimented with the fluidity of autobiography in his novel *Nadja* (1928), making it so that "fact is indistinguishable from fiction, whilst dream is inextricable from reality" (Baxter 139). As Baxter explains, "Autobiographical fiction is an unstable and unreliable form of narrative for Ballard and not at all the strong arm of authenticity which classic realism claims it to be" (142).

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the subtitle of this dissertation identifies three central topics and influences of Ballard's work—Surrealism, the Second World War, and modern technology—and gestures towards how different variations and degrees of these topics/ influences appear in each of his four major phases. In *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, war and technology are, of course, evident seeing as both novels revolve around the Second World War and the trauma it caused, and in them Ballard often discusses various technological advancements that were used for military and/ or propaganda purposes during and after this time. But war itself is also quite surreal, and since some of the Surrealists served in the military during the First World War, it is not uncommon to find images of war and destruction in their writings or paintings. I would remind the reader of a quotation used in the first chapter of this dissertation, of Ballard saying that "the surrealists of course duplicated in their paintings so

many of the scenes I'd seen in Shanghai during the war. War is rather surrealist. You see photos of the Blitz in London. Buses on the tops of blocks of flats. Incredible juxtapositions" (*EM* 470). Since Ballard viewed war itself as surreal, it makes sense that he would use certain Surrealist techniques to describe it, merging fact and fiction, and blurring inner and outer worlds, as a way of recording war and his personal experiences in a new and perhaps more accurate way. As Ballard explained: "It may be that at last in *Empire of the Sun* I was able to strike a different balance between the imaginative and the realistic, write in a Surrealist vein but set it in naturalistic settings" (*Conversations* 182).

In this regard, the Surrealist aspects of *Empire of the Sun* are noticeable from the very outset. The narrator describes a blurring of inner and outer worlds, with Jim believing that the images in his head have come to life, manifested in the world around him:

> Jim had begun to dream of wars. At night the same silent films seemed to flicker against the wall of his bedroom in Amherst Avenue, and transformed his sleeping mind into a deserted newsreel theater. During the winter of 1941 everyone in Shanghai was showing war films. Fragments of his dreams followed Jim around the city; in the foyers of the department stores and hotels the images of Dunkirk and Tobruk, Barbarossa and the Rape of Nanking sprang loose from his crowded head. (*ES* 3)

In this excerpt alone—which is the second paragraph of the novel—it is clear that *Empire of the Sun*, despite the perceived shift in genre, is still closely related to the rest of Ballard's oeuvre. Ballard applies his brand of science fiction, that which is centrally focused on "inner space," to war fiction and autobiography, and thus disrupts the conventions of these genres. Jim feels as if the images that saturate his psyche have begun to leak out into reality, but it is also important to note that many of these images find their roots in mass media, coming from various films and

newsreels he has seen, of both real and fictional wars. In this sense, the images that fill Jim's imaginative space are not new, they are replays and/ or reproductions of events that have already happened, yet the way in which they play on his mind make it so that they are always of the present. However, these images also act as premonitions, presentiments of death, and Jim intuitively knows that these films and newsreels are gesturing towards the imminent events of a very near future: "Had his brain been damaged by too many war films? […] In an eerie way, these shuffled images of tanks and dive-bombers were completely silent, as if his sleeping mind were trying to separate the real war from the make-believe conflicts invented by Pathé and British Movietone" (5).

Further, there is a Surrealist juxtaposition of images that occurs throughout *Empire of the Sun*, such as how places of entertainment (cinemas and stadiums) are turned into detention centres, and how Jim imagines piles of dead bodies occupying empty swimming pools. Such juxtapositions make it seem as if Jim has entered into a disturbing version of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, a novel that Jim reads in its entirety at one point in *Empire of the Sun* and which is described as "a comforting world less strange than his own" (*ES* 60). The life that Jim has been thrust into is paradoxical, and within Lunghua Jim fluctuates between seeing dying internees, doing algebra prep, fighting off disease of his own, and reading magazines and listening to radio broadcasts with Basie, an American merchant seaman. Though Baxter claims that the reference to Carroll's novel "is a contextual nod to the severity of his situation" (Baxter 149), it is also the case that many of the connections Jim makes in this paradoxical space informs his understanding of the world, allowing him to see that there are inherent connections between technological advancements and mass human suffering.

As Jean-Francois Lyotard states in "Defining the Postmodern" (1986), "[t]he development of techno-sciences has become a means of increasing disease, not of fighting it," and as such "[w]e can no longer call this development by the old name of progress." To Lyotard, it is because of this that the motor of history, "motricity," has begun to spiral out of control, putting humanity at an ever-increasing risk of danger (Lyotard 1467). I have already discussed a similar line of inquiry when describing the hesitancies that both McLuhan and Fromm wrote about regarding technological progression and the potential effects it may have on human identity and cognition, but another writer who is of relevance here is George Steiner. In particular, Steiner's *In Bluebeard's Castle* (1971) concludes with an explanation of how humans appear to have an innate drive towards inquiry, regardless of the consequences: "We open the successive doors in Bluebeard's castle because 'they are there,' because each leads to the next by a logic of intensification which is that of the mind's own awareness of being" (Steiner 136). The paradox that Steiner alludes to here is that one of the qualities that makes us uniquely human— our ingenuity and inventiveness—also happens to be one of our most destructive qualities, one that has led to true catastrophe, and for Steiner, the "real question" becomes "whether society and the human intellect at their present level of evolution can survive the next truths" (136).

To all of these thinkers, there is a deep connection between human ingenuity, technology, and destruction, and Ballard refers to this connection throughout *Empire of the Sun* by juxtaposing images of technology with images of death and destruction. For example, in Chapter 19, Jim sees "a row of parked aircraft" situated directly in between a collection of "burial mounds," and seeing these two images next to each other causes his mind to fuse them together, to see them as one (*ES* 120). Furthermore, similar to how Ballard depicts the automobile as being a key symbol of the twentieth century in *Crash*—an image that blends technology, luxury, power,

and commerce all into one—the airplane acts as a similar symbol in *Empire of the Sun*, an image that fuses technological innovation, war, power, flight, and freedom together, thus containing within it both positive and negative aspects of human thought and behaviour. But as Jim becomes ever more overwhelmed by the war, images of war and destruction, like those listed above, begin to pervade his psyche to such an extent that everything starts to resemble, or be compared, it. For instance, early in the novel, Jim sees a drained swimming pool and in his mind this image transforms into "the concrete bunkers in Tsingtao, and the bloody handprints of the maddened German gunners on the caisson walls" (47). Later, as Jim watches a mother trying to comfort her sons, his mind filters this image so as to perceive the "mother [lying] on the stone floor in her drenched frock, like a drowned corpse raised from the river" (92). And again, as his group is being transported to Lunghua, in Jim's mind "[t]he landscape of paddy fields, creeks and deserted villages" that pass by resemble "the milled bones of all the dead of China […] a sea of the dead" (117). Jim's mind, having been reshaped by the war, begins to perceive things differently, unable to view the outside world or mundane objects without superimposing onto them the death and destruction he has seen (and perhaps that which is still to come).

In this sense, the trauma experienced causes Jim's mind to become just as imprisoned as his body, and this physical and psychic imprisonment leads Jim, as well as many of the other Lunghua internees, to experience Stockholm Syndrome, a feeling of attachment to both their captors and their prison. Similar to the characters in "The Dead Time" who remain at the internment camp despite having the chance to leave following the war, Jim often thinks that he and the other internees are safe precisely *because of their imprisonment*, and that were it not for the Japanese troops "guarding" them, they would be in an even worse position: "Before the war a small English boy would have been killed for his shoes within minutes. Now he was safe,

guarded by the Japanese soldiers" (*ES* 96). Even in the immediate aftermath of the war, after having already left Lunghua, Jim still feels as if he is trapped in the internment camp: "Although he had left Lunghua, Jim felt imprisoned by the camp. Everyone he had ever helped was still clinging to him" (194). According to Ballard, the sense of attachment that the internees came to have with their place of imprisonment was a genuine occurrence, and he said that even long after the war had ended, many people didn't want to leave Lunghua, viewing it as their home and a place of security. As Ballard explains in *Miracles of Life*: "I heard that many of the Lunghua internees were still living in the camp six months after the war's end, defending their caches of Spam, Klim and cartons of Lucky Strike cigarettes" (*ML* 115).

Importantly, however, Jim doesn't only feel imprisoned physically and psychically by the war and by the internment camp, but he also experiences a third type of imprisonment, a cultural imprisonment, and much of *Empire of the Sun* is about Jim trying to understand the mentality of the adult British internees around him. As a way of coping, and to give themselves a false sense of familiarity, when their lives become upended by the war and their safety in the International Settlement vanishes, the British internees in Lunghua turn to nostalgia and try to establish a miniature version of England in the camp. Jim finds the adults to be always talking about pre-war England, and they name various paths and hallways in Lunghua after streets in London, coping mechanisms that Jim finds to be rather strange:

> But this was Lunghua, not England. Naming the sewage-stained paths between the rotting huts after a vaguely remembered London allowed too many of the British prisoners to shut out the reality of the camp […] To their credit, in Jim's eyes, neither the Americans nor the Dutch and Belgians in the camp wasted their time on nostalgia. The years in Lunghua had not given Jim a high opinion of the British. (*ES* 131)

Jim also takes issue with the fact that many of the British internees only seem to be worried about taking care of their own and not anybody else. When Mrs. Vincent tells Jim that he shouldn't be spending time with Americans like Basie, saying that "we," the British, "come first," Jim corrects her and says that "G Block comes first, Mrs Vincent" (136). As is then seen in *The Kindness of Women*, Jim doesn't think particularly highly of England when he arrives there following the war, but it is also because of his sense of alienation and because of his outsider status that he feels as if he can more clearly see and decipher the landscape around him, despite his perception being clouded by his traumatic past.

Despite his threefold imprisonment, Jim knows that he must find a way to escape and move on from Lunghua, no matter how difficult it might be (and as is seen in *The Kindness of Women*, the war continues to follow him through every major moment of his life). To find his own sense of freedom and escape, both within Lunghua and after, Jim relies upon his imagination, using it as a means to take flight, to become like the planes that he watches and hears overhead. As Angela Carter states in the previously mentioned review, since Jim is "[t]oo young to feel nostalgia" like the adults around him, he instead "focuses his memory forward" (Carter 49). Though his childhood is harshly interrupted, the extreme circumstances force Jim to quickly become an adult, and he thus transforms from the child "Jamie" into the young man "Jim."[90] As Michel Delville explains, "Ballard turns the whole novel into a *Bildungsroman* that retraces Jim's development from childhood to maturity through a double process of initiation and individuation, one which revolves primarily around his changing sense of self as well as his relationship with other human beings" (Delville 68-69). This transition, however, also coincides

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[90] In Chapter 11, when talking to Frank and Basie, Jim is asked "What did they call you, before the war started?" to which he replies "Jamie" (*ES* 70). This simple name change at once indicates the disruption that the war caused and Jim's personal sense of growth.

with the sense that something has been lost, a feeling of emptiness, and Jim is left "saddened by the memory of all he had been through, and of how much he had changed" (*ES* 118).

When conducting archival research at the British Library, I spent time looking through all of the available pictures, many of which were from Ballard's childhood. Perhaps distorted by the way in which Ballard himself talked about his childhood, I was surprised to find an image taken just after the war that shows Ballard looking much older than I expected, truly looking like a young man ("Photographs," item L). This image makes one realize how the two and a half years he was imprisoned for occurred at such a pivotal moment in his life, a period of adolescence, of cognitive growth and development. Likewise, for the protagonist of *Empire of the Sun*, his transition from childhood to adulthood is doubly intertwined with his move from Lunghua to England. Neither transition, however, can be declared fully successful, as he feels strongly anchored to the past, to his past self and to his former home. As written on the final page of the novel, just as the *Arrawa* is about to set sail for England: "Yet only part of his mind would leave Shanghai. The rest would remain there forever, returning on the tide like the coffins launched from the funeral piers at Nantao" (*ES* 279). As will be discussed shortly, trauma can linger for a lifetime and, in *The Kindness of Women*, no matter the amount of success he finds or the happiness he feels, Jim is plagued by the past, and it is only as he nears the end of his life that he reaches a point of comfort and becomes content with all that had happened, with the haunting images that still play on his mind.

**War Stories: "Theatre of War," "The Secret History of World War 3," and "War Fever"**

Along with "The Dead Time," Ballard published another war story in 1977, entitled "Theatre of War," and later, in between *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, he

published "The Secret History of World War 3" (1988) and "War Fever" (1989). While these stories are not semi-autobiographical like the novels, since much of Ballard's work at the time revolved around the impact of war, one can group these texts together into a sort of "war phase" of Ballard's career. Collectively, the aforementioned short stories continue Ballard's exploration into various ideas that he had already written about in texts such as *The Atrocity Exhibition*: for instance, the role of media in war, consuming war as entertainment, the power of invisible forces on human behaviour and cognition, and the death of affect. However, aspects of these stories, particularly "War Fever," also foreshadow conversations that occur in *The Kindness of Women*, in which an aging Jim Ballard looks back on the war and his internment, and realizes how "corrupting" it all was: "it wasn't the dead who were devalued, but the living. Our expectations of life were lowered" (*KW* 255). In each of these stories the characters are, in one way or another, corrupted by outside forces, whether it be government, media, military, or supra-national entities, and it becomes clear that the idea of personal freedom is nothing more than an elaborate illusion.

"Theatre of War" imagines a future outbreak of civil war in the United Kingdom. As Ballard states in the author's preface, with "*rising unemployment and industrial stagnation, an ever more entrenched class system and a weak monarchy detaching itself from all but its ceremonial roles, is it possible to visualize the huge antagonisms between the extreme left and right resolving themselves in open civil conflict?*" (*CS* 953). In the story, all of this has led to a large divide between the British government and civilians. Though the government remains in control of major cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, the NLF (National Liberation Front) have taken control of the countryside and, when the story begins, the NLF has employed guerilla warfare tactics in London, where they are trying to gain foothold. In this

scenario, Ballard envisions all of the political parties uniting, forming an all-party coalition, a last ditch effort to cling to power and exert governmental control over the populace. However, during this four-year war "hundreds of underground schools and factories have been built" (961), the NLF have taken control of all of the agricultural areas, and young people on the side of the government continuously flee to join the NLF. At risk of losing the war, the government—which is also described as a puppet regime for the US—launches a so-called "Pacification Probe" in order to "re-establish the government's authority" in certain key areas, all of which is being followed and documented by a television reporter (962). As would be expected, this offensive ends in devastation, devastation that also happens to be the climax of an episode of a television show.

In terms of form, "Theatre of War" is one of Ballard's most distinct stories, written as a script for the television show *World in Action*. As such, it includes commentary on the combat, interviews with soldiers and journalists, descriptions of newsreels, and an excerpt from a radio broadcast. "Theatre of War" thus continues to pursue a major line of inquiry that Ballard had explored around the time of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, depicting modern warfare as having become television spectacle. In this story (or script), not only is the British civil war being consumed by viewers for their own entertainment, but what is shown on television is also highly edited, which in turn gives it a cinematic feel. The documentary program employs the techniques of cinema—juxtapositions, jump cuts, voiceovers—and by presenting war in such a manner, the real and the fake begin to blur, confused in the minds of the viewers, who digest real images of war as if they are part of a movie.

In Chapter Three, I used Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* to help explain how modern media and technology have changed the way in which we engage with and

understand war and violence. Ballard was particularly interested in the Vietnam War because of how it seemed to unfold in real time on television, and how it thus made it so that everybody watching became, in essence, a participant in the war: "We've all taken part in this war, given the tremendous TV coverage; we're all combatants" (*EM* 32). As previously explained, by partaking in war through television, a medium that defuses the actual brutality of it by juxtaposing violent images with the likes of advertisements and cartoons, it leaves one susceptible to an inner numbing, or what Ballard called the death of affect. Sontag extends this notion in *Regarding the Pain of Others* by explaining that one by-product of this type of "tele-intimacy" with death and destruction is that media outlets will then try to satisfy the viewer by showing ever more violent images, trying to arouse an increasingly dulled sensorium. This is exactly what happens in "Theatre of War" as the war correspondent and film crew documenting the government's "Pacification Probe" get so close to the action that the correspondent ends up getting killed. This turn of events, however, only makes for more enthralling television.

The climax of "Theatre of War" begins when the government troops storm a village occupied by the NLF:

> They are still unaware of the government forces, and carry their rifles slung casually over their shoulders. One of them, a young Pakistani, has spotted something moving across the field. He follows it between the cabbages, then bends down and picks it up. It is an American cigarette pack. Puzzled, he looks up. Ten feet away he sees the barrel of a light machine-gun aimed at him by Sergeant Paley. Crushing the pack in his hand, he opens his mouth to shout. (*CS* 966)

This scene is presented cinematically and, in the context of Ballard's story, it would thus be difficult for the viewer of this fictional *World in Action* episode to see those involved as anything

other than characters in a film. The medium of television creates a distancing effect, which in turn works to dehumanize the combatants, allowing for the death and destruction depicted to be brushed off by the viewer (perhaps similar to how a soldier must dehumanize their enemy in order to kill them). "Theatre of War" alludes to the fact that, in the modern world, the perpetuation of violent images is so pervasive that they cannot be escaped from, and Ballard presents the media as stopping at nothing in order to saturate the screens with such images, as it is often the most heinous acts that generate the most intrigue. As such, even after the *World in Action* reporter dies on the battlefield, he is simply replaced with another one: "As he followed the first wave of American soldiers he was shot by an unknown enemy sniper and within a few minutes died of his wounds. His report on this war has been shown as he made it" (967).

Ronald Reagan appears briefly in "Theatre of War" as the American president who is continuously feeding more and more soldiers into what is referred to as "the European Vietnam" (*CS* 954). In this sense, he is also feeding the public's desire for televised violence. It is also worth noting that this story was published three years before Reagan's first presidential election victory, which once again shows Ballard's prophetic powers on this subject. Reagan is also a primary figure in "The Secret History of World War 3," which was published near the end of Reagan's second term, a story that sees Ballard further investigating the power of media and images, expanding upon his earlier story, "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan." In "The Secret History of World War 3," a major spike in geopolitical tensions around the world has led to a widespread public nostalgia for Reagan, and Congress amends the constitution to allow for him to serve a third term. Even with the aging, ailing Reagan back in power, however, the geopolitical tensions refuse to cease, ultimately leading to a brief nuclear war between the US and Soviet Union. Interestingly, however, this nuclear war occurs without the public's

knowledge, as they are too enamoured with the live transmissions of Reagan's medical tests and conditions being shown on their television screens.

   After many televised moments have led the public to question Reagan's general health and mental acuity, the White House decides to regularly release reports of his heath. This includes broadcasting on television the "[p]recise details of Reagan's blood pressure, his white and red cell counts, pulse and respiration," in order to calm the public (and Wall Street). It is, however, also noted that these results have been "corrected for age," and are thus faulty (*CS* 1118). Surprisingly, due to a sharp increase in public interest, the media begins to broadcast "every detail of the President's physical and mental functions" (1119). Doing this not only occupies public consciousness and creates a sense of intimacy between the American public and their president, but it also works to mask the heightened geopolitical tensions that have begun to boil over. As stated on one broadcast:

> . . . here's an update on our report of two minutes ago. Good news on the President's CAT scan. There are no abnormal variations in the size or shape of the President's ventricles. Light rain is forecast for the DC area tonight, and the 8th Air Cavalry have exchanged fire with Soviet border patrols north of Kabul. We'll be back after the break with a report on the significance of that left temporal lobe spike . . . (1120)

In "Theatre of War," warfare is put at the forefront of television so as to feed the public's latent desire for violence; however, in "The Secret History of World War 3," Ballard shows how media can be used as a smokescreen, distracting the attention of viewers and defusing their concerns for political gain.

   As evident in the above quotation, under these circumstances, the outbreak of war becomes nothing more than a passing comment. To distract viewers from the impending danger,

the public is no longer fed violence, but a different form of entertainment, which is used to hide the real news:

> . . . psychomotor seizures, a distorted sense of time, colour changes and dizziness. Mr Reagan also reports an increased awareness of noxious odours. Other late news – blizzards cover the mid-west, and a state of war now exists between the United States and the Soviet Union. Stay tuned to this channel for a complete update on the President's brain metabolism . . . (*CS* 1121)

In comparing "Theatre of War" and "The Secret History of World War 3," it seems that the proximity to war can, in some instances, determine how it will be viewed and/ or consumed. In the former, Reagan sends soldiers overseas, fuelling the civil war in England, but since the war does not pose an immediate danger to the American homeland, it can be consumed as entertainment. In the latter, as the US and Soviet Union are on the brink of a nuclear war that could devastate America, the government and media work in tandem to cover it up, and the war thus begins and ends without the public's knowledge. At the end of the story, there is an assassination attempt on Reagan, and though, live on television, his blood pressure collapses and his pulse levels out, they return only ten minutes later, as strong as ever: "Had the President died, perhaps for a second time? Had he, in a strict sense, ever lived during his third term of office? Will some animated spectre of himself, reconstituted from the medical print-outs that still parade across our TV screens, go on to yet further terms, unleashing Fourth and Fifth World Wars" (1123). The narrator realizes that the image of Reagan is far more powerful than the man himself and, even if Reagan is deceased, it is implied that his image presides over public consciousness to such an extent that it is as if he is alive, preserved by the power of television.

"War Fever" is another story from this era of Ballard's work that explores how various external forces can impinge upon the individual, unknowingly shaping one's thought and behaviour. This story is set during a decades-long war in Beirut, in which many different factions are at odds with each other: the Christians, the Nationalists, the Fundamentalists, the Royalists, and the International Brigade. The protagonist is a seventeen-year-old named Ryan, who is part of the Christian militia and who "killed with a will," just "[l]ike the other young fighters" (*CS* 1145). Those in the warzone have been entirely cut off from the rest of the world, and the only knowledge that Ryan has of it is from forty-year-old magazines found in abandoned buildings, which depict a world in turmoil. He believes that the situation in Beirut simply reflects the rest of the world: war is normal. However, after realizing that he was involved in the killing of one of his friends, Ryan's bloodlust suddenly diminishes, and he begins to see the war in Beirut with greater clarity. He begins to dream of a ceasefire, and after some time believes that he has found a way of accomplishing it.

There are many United Nations workers present in Beirut, observing the war and treating injured combatants. But Ryan harbours resentment towards these UN workers, who, in his mind, are not doing enough to stop the fighting:

> They ringed the city, preventing anyone from entering or leaving, and in a sense
> controlled everything that went on in Beirut. They could virtually bring the war to a halt,
> but Dr Edwards repeatedly told Ryan that any attempt by the peacekeeping force to live
> up to its name would lead the world's powers to intervene militarily, for fear of
> destabilising the whole Middle East. So the fighting went on. (*CS* 1149-1150)

The UN workers wear blue helmets to distinguish themselves from the combatants, and Ryan's plan for a ceasefire begins with convincing more and more people to don the blue helmets, since

those who wear them are not targeted. This plan is initially successful and, as everybody begins to wear the helmets, the fighting stops, and the rival factions begin to get along, playing organized football matches together. However, when a bomb unexpectedly goes off and Ryan is detained by Dr. Edwards (a United Nations medical observer) and a group of UN guards, he learns the truth about the never-ending war in Beirut.

Edwards explains to Ryan that the war is being controlled by the United Nations, that they have been providing weapons to, and printing propaganda for, the various factions. The whole war is an experiment. Edwards compares war to the smallpox virus, which he claims the World Health Organization has allowed to "flourish in a remote corner of a third-world country, so that it could keep an eye on how the virus was evolving" (*CS* 1157). He explains that the war in Beirut is similar, prolonged by supra-national entities so that it can be observed in order to better understand violent impulses and how they can be controlled/ exploited:

> The virus of war. Or, if you like, the martial spirit. Not a physical virus, but a psychological one even more dangerous than smallpox. The world is at peace, Ryan. There hasn't been a war anywhere for thirty years […] We have to see what makes people fight, what makes them hate each other enough to want to kill. We need to know how we can manipulate their emotions, how we can twist the news and trigger off their aggressive drives, how we can play on their religious feelings or political ideals. (1157-1158)

As with many of Ballard's novels—such as *High-Rise*, *Super-Cannes*, and *Kingdom Come*—one of the primary focuses of "War Fever" is one's lack of autonomy and free will. Unbeknownst to the combatants, their entire lives are being controlled, and they are nothing more than simple pawns in a game being played by powerful external forces. Cut off from the world at large, the

combatants are easily exploited and corrupted, and with large organizations constantly stoking the hate and anger, war becomes inescapable.

When this happens, when one's fight or flight response triggers and flight is not an option, bloodlust takes over. As will soon be discussed in greater detail when analyzing *The Kindness of Women*, the entire process of war is corrupting; it numbs one's sensibilities, deadens interiority, and fractures the psyche. In "War Fever," this is not only experienced by Ryan, who at the beginning of the story feels "dazed and numbed" by all the fighting (*CS* 1145), but also by Dr. Edwards, a non-combatant: "Sometimes Ryan worried that Dr Edwards had spent too long in Beirut. He had become curiously addicted to the violence and death, as if tending the wounded and dying satisfied some defeatist strain in his character" (1146). When one becomes corrupted by war and violence, they perpetuate it; therefore, even though Ryan knows that the UN is controlling the war, at the end of the story he falls victim to Dr. Edwards' mind games. Upon being shown a picture of his deceased sister and aunt, who were supposedly executed by the Royalists, Ryan returns to the battlefield, corrupted by a world from which he cannot escape, once again prepared to spread the virus of war.

### *The Kindness of Women*

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, when *The Kindness of Women* was released in 1991, the same sort of critical attention that Ballard had received for *Empire of the Sun* was repeated. On its week of publication, *The Kindness of Women* was serialized in *The Independent*, Ballard did "major interviews on Radio 3 [and] Radio 4," had a documentary air on BBC2, and "later, that most English of accolades, Ballard [appeared] on Desert Island Discs" (Luckhurst 154). The aforementioned BBC2 documentary was filmed for a series called

*Bookmark*, which decided to honour the publication of *The Kindness of Women* by producing an episode on Ballard's life and career. Though most of the filming was conducted in Shepperton, part of this series also entailed bringing Ballard back to Shanghai, and in this sense not only did the process of writing his semi-autobiographical novels provide Ballard with a sense of psychic relief, but it also led to a physical return to his personal ground zero. Though the landscape had changed dramatically, with his family's old house now overlooking a cityscape rather than farmland, Ballard felt as if he had returned home: "I worried that I had waited too long to return to Shanghai, and that the actual city would never match my memories. But those memories had been remarkably resilient, and I felt surprisingly at home, as if I was about to resume the life cut off when the *Arrawa* set sail from its pier" (*ML* 269). This experience, which had previously been a void that he filled by writing the likes of *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, left Ballard "feeling mentally bruised but refreshed," and he claimed that following his return to Shanghai "[t]he next ten years were among the most contented of my life" (273).

Part I of *The Kindness of Women* is very similar to *Empire of the Sun* in that it recounts many of the key events that happened in Jim's life prior to and during the Second World War, such as the bombing at the Great World Amusement Park, Jim's separation from his parents, his subsequent internment in Lunghua, and the dropping of the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The remainder of the novel, however, explores Jim's life following the war, from his move to England and years studying at school, to his wife's death and his successful writing career. However, throughout all of these events, it remains clear that, during all parts of his life, the war has not ended for him—the lingering effects of trauma are always present. Through Jim's gaze, the reader sees images of his childhood emerge and superimpose themselves on the post-war British landscape that he finds himself in, and, as Crosthwaite explains, the novel thus traces

Jim's "movement from childhood traumatization, through adolescent repetition, to partial recovery, and then from a second period of overwhelming experience, which reawakens the first, through a prolonged process of 'working through', to eventual psychic restoration" (Crosthwaite 111). As Jim progresses from adolescence to adulthood, the reader sees him trying to find new effective coping mechanisms for his trauma, including using art and imagination to try and decipher the technological world around him, that which constantly reminds him of the war. However, as the novel explores, trauma cannot be easily escaped from, and for the traumatized subject, time is not experienced linearly. It is constantly disrupted, with the past unwillingly impinging upon the present, altering Jim's perception, and influencing his decisions and behaviour.

The media landscape of the 1960s is at once depicted as a recapitulation of the Second World War—with its perpetual cycle of violent images keeping Jim's wartime memories at the top of his mind—and a means of curing himself. Though Jim claims that the media landscape makes it feel as if he "had woken from a dream of the Second World War into an England that seemed like the aftermath of the Third," he also says that the "unique alchemy of the imagination" that was taking place and blurring together images of the space race, Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam War, and Marilyn Monroe "was a laboratory designed specifically to cure me of all my obsessions," obsessions rooted in the war and his years in Lunghua (*KW* 154). The war looms over everything, from Jim's decisions to study medicine and join the RAF, to his attraction to Surrealist art and his desire to become a writer. It becomes clear to the reader that his interest in all of these things is because of his inability to understand and/ or escape from the past, but also because he has a latent desire to overcome his trauma and reach a point of psychic tranquility.

Throughout his adult life, Jim remains lost in the post-war world in which he finds himself, but as he recounts his life story he realizes that at each stage of his life there was an important female figure who was there to help and guide him on his journey to overcoming his trauma. As alluded to earlier in this dissertation, Ballard never really wrote well-developed female characters—all of his protagonists are men, and the women in his novels often act as ciphers or symbols, part of the protagonists' journeys and acting in service of them. When Ballard was once asked if he would agree that his female characters aren't "very alluring," he did, but elaborated by explaining that

> You've got to accept the fact that I'm not writing naturalistic fiction. In fact, I'm writing a very stylised form of fiction. It is almost always about extremely solitary people, a fiction of fabulation. A lot of the women characters, and the men for that matter, have to be seen within the conventions of similar kinds of fiction – in that realm of princesses in castles, the roles that women assume in legends and fairy tales. My fiction really belongs in that sort of terrain […] where the protagonist *remakes* the women around him, within an image he has assigned to them because they can fulfil certain basic needs.
>
> Women tend to take up those rather threatening, sinister, magical roles […] I accept that. But it's necessary, it seals off a whole area . . . the protagonists would never be able to embark on their voyages because the boat would be leaking if they were engaged in warm naturalistic relationships. (*EM* 204)[91]

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[91] Ballard's wife had also noticed this aspect of his work and asked him about it, wondering why such "strange women" occupy his stories. But Ballard said that in *The Kindness of Women* things changed, as for the first time he "presented about half a dozen women and that all of them, as far as I can see […] are presented very sympathetically. Quite unlike all my previous books, which is very weird. The title is fully merited. It's difficult to explain that. I think it's that the conventions in certain fiction that I used to write—I'd almost say the conventions of imaginative fiction—do not allow warm personal relationships" (*Conversations* 183).

Though the female characters in *The Kindness of Women* are still secondary to Jim, mostly operating in service of his own story, assisting his personal journey, they are also depicted as being far more autonomous than those in the rest of Ballard's work, and they are often revealed as being better able to adapt and cope than he is. There is Olga, Jim's nanny from Shanghai, and Peggy Gallagher, who took care of him in Lunghua and who, unlike Jim, is quick to adapt and feel "at home in England" (*KW* 62). Then there is Jim's wife, Miriam, who he meets while at Cambridge and with whom he later has three children with. And finally there is Sally Mumford, who helps Jim and his children after the sudden death of his wife, and Cleo Churchill, who helps him transition into old age.

There is also the figure of Dr. Elizabeth Grant: the cadaver that Jim dissects as part of his medical studies, a body soaked in formaldehyde that reminds him of the dead bodies he had seen during the war. For Jim, dissecting this former doctor's body represents his desire to dissect and come to grips with his past, as if the cadaver is in some way linked to the corpses he had seen in the streets of Shanghai. This part of the novel is also very much in line with what happened in Ballard's own life, as he called his time spent dissecting cadavers at Cambridge "a very important experience":

> I think it came only second to my experience of the camp during the Second World War. When I came to England, I was still carrying all these memories of the thousands of dead Chinese I'd seen, ever since the Japanese invasion in 1937 – the bodies that lay in the streets. I think I was carrying a huge cargo of death really and I couldn't understand why all this had happened. Why did human beings behave in such a bestial way towards each other? Because there is no doubt the Japanese behaved atrociously towards the Chinese.

The behaviour of the Japanese in China from 1937 onwards was very close to

genocide; they looked down on Chinese as an inferior people. I mean, the things that

went on in an educated officer class: the Japanese officer class took part in competitions

to see how many Chinese they could behead with their swords. All that was just . . . it

was impossible to understand it . . . and in a way the anatomy, the dissecting room, was a

way of exploring death at very close quarters. (*EM* 476-477)[92]

Similarly, just as the past comes to visit Jim in the dissecting room, even the smallest of things in

the outside world, such as seeing a Chevrolet in the Psychology Department parking lot, remind

him of the war: "it must be the only Chevvy in Europe. God, it made me think of Shanghai and

all those Americans" (*KW* 63).

After this particular comment, Peggy Gallagher—also a former Lunghua internee and

Cambridge student—tells Jim that he needs to stop thinking about the war, and he replies by

saying that he "[doesn't] think about it, actually. But it isn't over" (*KW* 63). This statement is

significant precisely because it is paradoxical. Though Jim says that he doesn't think about the

war anymore, it is clear that it presides heavily over his mind, and the second part of his

statement alludes to this very fact, when he says that the war "isn't over." Though the physical

war may have come to an end, the psychological war is still ongoing, and at this point in the

novel the latter shows no signs of resolving itself. Following this conversation with Peggy, Jim

buys a motorcycle—which resembles the bicycle he would ride around on in Shanghai—and,

unable to escape from the past, he begins making trips "into the flat countryside to the north of

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[92] This interview was conducted in 2008, the year before Ballard's death, so it is interesting to see how these images from the war still played on his mind in great detail.

the city, a realm of fens and watercourses that vaguely resembled the landscape around Shanghai" (65).[93]

At moments like this, Jim's memories from the Second World War superimpose themselves onto his post-war English surroundings, and the sense of trauma detected in this reminds the reader of one of Ballard's obsessions: time. In Ballard's exploration of trauma in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, it is evident that past, present, and future cannot be easily detached from one another. Rather, they are deeply intertwined and Jim's experience of linear, mechanical time is disrupted, with the past forcefully asserting itself, rupturing his perception and causing him to see landscapes of the past in his immediate present. On many occasions, this is depicted as being uncontrollable and inescapable, occurring against Jim's will:

> Through the milky eyes of this silent woman [Miriam] I felt that I was joined once again to the Shanghai I had left behind, but which I still carried with me like a persistent dream that gripped my shoulders. Inside my head hung the facades of the Bund and the Nanking Road. When I looked from the windows of the Anatomy Library at the flat Cambridgeshire countryside, with its American air-bases and their glowing vision of a third world war, I could see the abandoned paddy fields near Lunghua. The railway lines that carried me back to Cambridge after my weekend visits to London seemed to lead to the small country station where the four Japanese soldiers still waited for me. (*KW* 72-73)

The way in which Jim experiences perceptual fissures in the outer world through which his memories surface is akin to the way in which Freud conceives of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure*

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[93] A similar moment to this occurs shortly after the birth of Jim's second child. He says that "[t]he past had slipped away, taking with it my memories of Cambridge and Canada, of the dissecting room and the snow deserts of Saskatchewan, and even of Shanghai. The warm light over Shepperton reminded me of the illuminated air that I had seen over the empty paddy fields of Lunghua as I walked along the railway line, but the light that filled the splash meadow came from a kinder and more gentle sun" (*KW* 101). As with the above quotation, though Jim claims the past to be behind him, he also says that the "warm light over Shepperton" reminds him of the view of the paddy fields that he would look at whilst in Lunghua, thus indicating that moving on is much easier said than done.

*Principle* (1920). Freud explains that one of main signs of trauma is when external stimuli "are so strong that they break through the protective shield" of one's psyche and thus impair normal cognitive functioning (*Beyond* 21). In Freudian psychoanalysis, this means that one of the effects of trauma is that, at certain moments, the pleasure principle is temporarily "put out of action" so that "[t]here is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus, and another problem arises instead—the problem of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the psychical sense, so that they can then be disposed of" (23-24). In this book, Freud also makes a specific connection between war and trauma, discussing what he calls "war neuroses," and noting that in the aftermath of the First World War, there was a great increase in traumatic illnesses (6).

Freud also wrote about trauma in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). In this essay, Freud differentiates between these two terms, first explaining that mourning occurs when one is consciously aware of the source of their sadness—which is identified as typically being the loss of a loved one—and since they are aware of the precise source of their sorrow, they are able to overcome in time and it thus doesn't develop into a pathological condition ("Mourning and Melancholia" 243-244). Melancholia, on the other hand, is conceived of as a pathological condition that arises because one is unable to understand, or even identify, the source of their experienced trauma: "one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either" (245). The sense of loss is key to Freud's definition of melancholia, and because of the way in which he describes melancholia as an experience of sorrow that is rooted in something that cannot be identified, there is a sense that the melancholic subject is haunted by some unidentifiable presence. In

*Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, it is clear that Jim's trauma comes from the war, but it is unclear to him what exactly has been lost because of it, and over the course of both novels he works to identify and understand this source of absence.

I would like to briefly draw the reader's attention back to *Empire of the Sun*, specifically to the various moments in which Jim thinks about the soul leaving one's body. Jim first takes interest in this notion in Chapter 25 when he, after helping to dig graves, asks Mrs. Phillips if the soul leaves the body before or after it is buried (*ES* 162). This image then reappears throughout the rest of the novel, such as when, after hearing some rumblings about the potential Japanese last stand and welcoming any sort of end to the war, Jim feels as if his own soul has departed: "Jim's soul had already left his body and no longer needed his thin bones and open sores in order to endure. He was dead, as were Mr. Maxted and Dr. Ransome. Everyone in Lunghua was dead. It was absurd that they had failed to grasp this" (186). Later, after Mr. Maxted dies at the beginning of Part Three, Jim "keep[s] away the flies until he [is] sure that his soul had left him" (216), and as he looks at his own hands, Jim feels a disconnect between his mind and body, at once feeling alive and dead: "He knew that he was alive, but at the same time he felt as dead as Mr. Maxted. Perhaps his soul, instead of leaving his body, had died inside his head?" (217).

Ballard's discussion of the soul leaving the body in *Empire of the Sun* alludes to an absence that Jim feels, as if something has escaped him or been lost, such as a part of his self. In *The Kindness of Women*, then, Jim tries to find ways of alleviating the sensations of loss and trauma that he feels, devising various means of exploring them, trying to become whole again. Importantly, Jim doesn't try to suppress his memories—he pursues them. As explained above, one way that he does this is by studying medicine and dissecting cadavers, an experience that, far from distancing himself from his past, allows Jim to confront the death he saw in Shanghai on a

much more intimate level. Then, along with David Hunter—another one of Jim's friends from Shanghai who remains just as obsessed with the war as Jim—he decides to enlist in the RAF, which allows him to take the place of the World War II fighter pilots that he had seen flying overhead whilst detained in Lunghua. As Jim explains:

> A career as a military pilot offered an even more direct entry to the realm of violence for which we hungered. For both of us the war years in Shanghai still set the hidden agendas of our lives. David dreamed of violence, in his concerned and thoughtful way, while I was looking for a means of recreating the pearly light I had seen over the rice-fields of Lunghua beside the railway station and which seemed to hover so promisingly over the American air-bases near Cambridge. (*KW* 83)

As Baxter explains, Jim's desire to confront and explore his past "stands in marked contrast to the collective British post-war psyche […] a collaborative psychological response to trauma" that Jim rejects and finds to be disingenuous (Baxter 162). He knows that suppressing his memories will only work to worsen his sense of self, and even though studying medicine, joining the RAF, and trying LSD all provide him with a fleeting sense of enlightenment, he knows that he must find a way to more fully, and successfully, incorporate his past into his present self.

Ultimately, the most successful way in which Jim "recreat[es] the pearly light" that he had seen during nuclear bomb explosion is through art (*KW* 83). Art becomes his primary and most useful tool or coping mechanism, presented as being his saving grace (and metafictionally *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* are Ballard's own most direct narrative attempts of coming to grips with his past). Without art, it is implied that Jim would become like his friend David, who is, in many ways, his double in this novel, another man who takes various desperate measures to try and cope with his childhood experiences during the war. Both Jim and David are

aware of the fact that had they been just a bit older, they would likely have been on the battlefields, fighting in the war, and may very well have died doing so. There seems to be a sense of guilt related to this that David has a particularly difficult time dealing with. David goes back to Shanghai—Jim doesn't go along with him, not yet ready to face it in such a direct way—and later buys his own plane, and begins to drive his car extremely recklessly, in the end resembling Vaughan in *Crash*. This all leaves David mentally broken, and he is forced to spend time in a psychiatric hospital as a result. Even after all of this and his supposed recovery, near the end of the novel we are told that David and his girlfriend are trying to adopt an Asian child, which once again implies that he has been unsuccessful in his attempts to integrate the past into his present. None of his attempts work, and as Sally Mumford explains, "David's dead […] I heard it in his voice. He died years ago" (*KW* 239).

Unlike David, Jim copes through his artistic experiments and practices, and as Francis notes, this idea parallels "the paranoiac survival-strategies" of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, suggesting that "trauma may be processed on the level of fantasy, through the abstract freedoms of the imagination" (Francis 140). But even this method of coping has its limitations, and though the title "Part III: After the War" implies that Jim has come to grips with his past and is finally, psychically, able to move on, there is also evidence to suggest that such finality cannot really be attained. There is an important scene towards the end of the novel in which a pilot who had crashed into a creek—like Blake in *The Unlimited Dream Company*—is buried, a moment that is surely supposed to be an indicator of Jim figuratively laying to rest his memories of the war. However, even after this moment the past continues to haunt him.

When Jim is talking to his friend Dick Sutherland, who is dying of thyroid cancer, Dick—who himself is trying to understand death, mortality, and human suffering, making a

television show about it—asks Jim about his past and how it affected him. Jim explains that the entire experience of the war and his internment was very "corrupting," saying that "it wasn't the dead who were devalued, but the living. Our expectations of life were lowered" (*KW* 255). Though in this moment the direct question posed by Dick forces a retrieval of the past, the memories don't fade afterward, and the final time that Jim sees Dick, the image of his dying friend changes before his eyes, just like the transformation of images that occurs in *Empire of the Sun*, where everything becomes related back to war, death, and suffering: "He no longer wore his wig, and his face seemed to have been sucked into the mask, as if his wasted body was about to drain away down these encircling tubes, their coils like the telephone wire looped around the chest of the young Chinese on the railway platform" (258).

Throughout the entirety of the novel, Jim is depicted as fragmented, with Ballard carrying over the motif of mirrors from *Empire of the Sun* to *The Kindness of Women* to show this. In *Empire of the Sun*, we are told that "Jim avoid[s] mirrors" (*ES* 84) and that a "strange doubling of reality had taken place, as if everything that had happened to him since the war was occurring within a mirror. It was his mirror self who felt faint and hungry, and who thought about food all the time. He no longer felt sorry for this other self" (77). These are only a few examples of the mirrors that appear in *Empire of the Sun*—Jim's fragmented self is also reflected by "fractured" (45) and "broken" mirrors (46)—but it is no coincidence that they appear throughout *The Kindness of Women*, too. The rearview mirrors of cars are mentioned on six occasions—implying that Jim is looking back on something in his past—and importantly the wardrobe mirror in his bedroom is described as multiplying the reflections of him and Cleo, leaving them "surrounded by the images of ourselves […] watched by the lenses of a dozen cameras, multiplied and dismantled at the same time" (*KW* 265). There is a sort of haunting that is implied in this scene,

as if a part of Jim's own self is looming over him, but when Cleo kicks the wardrobe shut and these multiplied reflections vanish, it indicates that a sense of healing has been reached. Even if this healing is not fully complete, it is clear that, at this late stage of the novel, Jim's fragmented self has finally started to reunite, and he is able to look upon the past without it lurking over him.

**"War V US" and *Miracles of Life***

Near the end of his life, Ballard had considered returning to the war genre once again, in a book that was given the working title "War V US" (also referred to as "The US Vs. The World" and "An Immodest Proposal, or How the World Declared War on America"). In the Ballard archives at the British Library, there are five spiral-bound notebooks that primarily contain notes for this project, in which Ballard envisions a future World War against the United States. Unlike the way in which *Hello America* critiques aspects of American myth but ends on an optimistic note, in "War V US" Ballard had planned to depict the country unsympathetically, "as dangerous as Nazi Germany or the Stalinist S.U." ("Five Spiral-Bound Notepads" 2). The notes for this project—estimated to be from 2005—were presumably written after Ballard completed *Kingdom Come*. This is evident by the way in which Ballard, on multiple occasions throughout the notebooks, said that he felt as if he had exhausted the themes and ideas explored in his final tetralogy: "Have I exhausted the social pathology theme? Yes, though a striking example would be possible if presented in a different way" (50). Three pages later, as he continued to muse on the possibilities for his next project, Ballard stated the same thing, that the notion of psychopathology being "positively selected" or having a "beneficial role" had run its course in his work (53). Interestingly, though he was looking for new ideas to pursue, it appears as if

Ballard strongly considered turning back to one of his earliest (and most profitable) interests, war, that which had provided him with an abundance of ideas throughout his entire career.

In this planned book, Ballard envisions a world in which the United States has expanded its power and influence, having installed puppet governments throughout the world, and using them to enforce American values. In this future world, the "US insists on preferential empire-style trade agreements, forcing its goods on the rest of the world" ("Five Spiral-Bound Notepads" 7), and controls the oil reserves in many Middle Eastern countries, thus deciding how it should be allocated throughout Europe. Though America has allies via the puppet governments they have established, other countries, particularly France, harbour deep anti-US sentiment, which has largely arisen due to America's withholding of oil and the resulting economic instability experienced by those countries. In defiance of the US, France begins to acquire oil illegally, and this results in a standoff with the American military. According to Ballard's notes, Phase 1 of this war consists of a series of uncoordinated attacks against the US, first by France and later by other nations that join the resistance, targeting various "US blockades, naval & air bases" (29). The US, however, is quick to shut down these offensives, and in response begins to launch powerful counterattacks, thus forcing the resisting nations to find new, more effective methods of attack.

Unlike Phase 1, Ballard planned for Phase 2 to be a coordinated military attack on America, though it, too, would be unsuccessful. Realizing that they will never be able to match the sheer strength of American military power, the allied nations turn to a new tactic in order to bring down the United States: psychology. The alliance begins attacking various "psycho-targets," important American symbols, such as the Empire State Building, Mount Rushmore, the Golden Gate Bridge, the White House, Wall Street, and the Academy Awards, symbols that are

key parts of America's constructed identity. The idea here is that by the alliance engaging in this type of psychological warfare, attacking the image of America that has been imprinted upon the the world, the US will collapse from within and start attacking itself. As written in Ballard's notes: "Perhaps an internal confrontation, a kind of civil war, breaks out – so the US effectively destroys itself – a chain reaction begins" ("Five Spiral-Bound Notepads" 11).

Ballard planned for the six or seven major characters to all be personally involved in Phase 3 of the war, with each being "thoughtful & of heroic potential" ("Five Spiral-Bound Notepads" 35) and, as written on a single typescript page, "hav[ing] suffered in some way from the US – lost relatives, have relatives imprisoned, lost children" (69). These characters are all connected to the US in a way that permits them entry into the country (such as being married to an American), and this is why they are recruited into the war, to help destabilize the US from within. Ballard also planned to supplement the testimonials of these characters with other material such as "TV news, secret videotaped film, cinema propaganda film, internet film clips, magazine articles" (69). In this respect, it is possible that the novel may have turned out similar to *The Atrocity Exhibition* (or "Theatre of War"), a collage that would have depicted the war from various angles, incorporating both personal accounts and the media's portrayal of it.

There appears to be two reasons why Ballard decided against pursuing this project any further. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, Ballard's roots in science fiction meant that there was a stigma associated with his work, since SF was often considered to be a subliterary genre by critics, and Ballard only started to truly shake free from this stigma with the publication of *Empire of the Sun*, which critics deemed to be more "serious" and "literary" than the rest of his oeuvre. Interestingly, even though towards the end of his life Ballard was a well-respected and successful writer, it is clear that he was still thinking about the SF stigma when planning

"War V US," saying that he felt hesitant to write the novel because it could too easily be viewed as conventional science fiction: "Very Important. Must not allow this to become s-f. That would lower its credibility & impact" ("Five Spiral-Bound Notepads" 10). Ballard references this issue on two other occasions in his notes, stating that "[p]art of the problem is that it all too easily becomes in my mind a familiar land of s-f story" (14), and that though "The US Vs. The World is very strong – I still feel reservations, possibly to do with the s-f overtones, but reservations are not as strong as they were" (41). Perhaps concerned about his reputation, Ballard veered away from this project, though, as far as one can tell, the notes for "War V US" remain the closest that Ballard got to writing another novel.

The other, most plausible, reason that Ballard may have reconsidered pursuing this project was his declining health. Ballard was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer in July 2006 and, as he explained in a faxed letter to V. Vale, he believed that "[i]t had probably been going on for a year, or possibly two years" prior, seeing as it had already spread to his spine and ribs ("Letters Sent" 19). It is likely the case that because of this he decided to turn his attention away from another novel and towards his autobiography. As stated in his notes: "Difficult to decide what to do next. The autobiog[raphy] is almost a last word. Something out of character, like *Old Man and the Sea*, would be OK" ("Five Spiral-Bound Notepads" 56). Based on the dates given, when writing the notes for "War V US," Ballard would have already had cancer, albeit undiagnosed, and though he was considering this project, perhaps his declining health prevented him undertaking another novel.

Ballard's final book ended up being his autobiography, *Miracles of Life: Shanghai to Shepperton* (2008), which was published two years after his cancer diagnosis and a year before his death. Despite the fact that Ballard had already covered much of the material in *Empire of the*

*Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, since those two books present fictionalized versions of events and people, *Miracles of Life* can be seen as trying to provide a "true" account of Ballard's life, attempting to defictionalize and demythologize his earlier semi-autobiographical novels. However, it is also important to remember that memory can be slippery, and one's recollection of events can change over time, become influenced, or even distorted, by one's life experiences.

Almost the entirety of *Miracles of Life* focuses on the first thirty-five years of Ballard's life, particularly his formative years in Shanghai, his move to England and subsequent medical studies, and the death of his wife. In many ways, this makes sense, as his early years were exceptional, far from what would have been considered normal to his readership. But it is also possible that by placing the spotlight on his early years, Ballard may be suggesting that those years are central to understanding his body of work, having given rise to many of the images and obsessions that he explored throughout his career as a writer.

Though *Miracles of Life* is relatively short, Ballard's decision to focus on his formative years also enables him to provide the reader with a more historically accurate account of the events that unfolded, as opposed to the psychologically accurate account that he gives in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*. As such, in *Miracles of Life*, Ballard clarifies various aspects of his life that he changed in his novels for dramatic effect; for instance, regarding his time in Lunghua, where he was interned with his parents, not separated from them like Jim in *Empire of the Sun*. Ballard explains why he removed his parents from the novel, claiming that it was more psychologically accurate to portray Jim as a war orphan, seeing as the whole experience led to Ballard having a fractured relationship with his parents: "One reason for our estrangement was that their parenting became passive rather than active – they had none of the usual levers to pull, no presents or treats, no say in what we ate, no power over how we lived or

ability to shape events" (*ML* 82). He also discusses the events surrounding his wife's death, how she didn't die from a fall like Miriam in *The Kindness of Women*, but instead from pneumonia while they were vacationing in Spain.

Though much is clarified in *Miracles of Life*, and though Ballard tries to provide reason for the development of his various literary obsessions, much is also left out. As Umberto Rossi notes, the

> slim size and selective perspective means that [*Miracles of Life*] is yet another *partial* version of Ballard's life. Furthermore, its frequent intertextual nods to Ballard's previous life narratives characterize *Miracles* as a kind of 'auto-biographia literaria'; that is, a literary autobiography which mixes life narrative and metafictional commentary. (Rossi 70)

Throughout *Miracles of Life*, Ballard provides much more detail about his children, whose fictionalized versions are relatively absent from *The Kindness of Women*. However, although saying that his children are the "miracles of life" referenced in the book's title, as Rossi points out, it is also the case that Ballard's son, James, is rarely mentioned (68). There was some sort of estrangement between Ballard and his son: the *Daily Mail* reported that out of Ballard's £4 million fortune, only £100,000 was left to James, while each of his daughters, Fay and Beatrice, received £1.1 million. Ballard's long-time partner, Claire Walsh, received £300,000 (Young). The reasons for this disparity remain unclear and, despite opening up about his estrangement with his own parents, Ballard does not discuss the fractured relationship with his son in *Miracles of Life*. Ballard also omits discussion of a serious event in which a gas pipe burst in the nursery of his home in 1959, which rendered the young James and Fay unconscious "for more than an hour," according to one newspaper article that reported on the incident ("Newspaper Cuttings" 1).

According to another article, "[e]xperts believe the children would probably have died had they remained undiscovered for ten more minutes" (2). It is for reasons such as these that some critics encourage *Miracles of Life* to be read as the final testament of a dying man, "in which he details how he wanted to be remembered" (Groppo 143).

The above examples are used to show how autobiography is an elusive genre, never as "true" as it claims to be, seeing as everything written is still filtered through the mind of the writer. It is also worth noting that the condensed version of Ballard's life discussed in this book may be partly due to his declining health, and his desire to complete the book before he died, unsure of how long he had to live. In terms of tone, *Miracles of Life* does read like a more conventional autobiography: most of the material is presented in a relatively straightforward, linear manner, and one does not get the impression that Ballard has glazed the book with a streak of Surrealism, like he did with *Empire of the Sun*. However, as a genre, autobiography is largely characterized by its conventions and by how one decides to present one's past. As such, though aspects of *Miracles of Life* conform to what would be considered standard conventions of autobiography, it is also important to remember that Ballard was a skilled *novelist*, one who had been hyper-aware of generic conventions throughout his entire career, often purposely working to disrupt them. Just as Ballard referred to *The Kindness of Women* as being "my life seen through the mirror of the fiction prompted by that life" (*EM* 314), *Miracles of Life* can be considered an autobiography that is conscious of the fiction that he produced, and which is aware of, and perhaps at times indulges in, the fact that memory is malleable. The more one becomes temporally detached from an event, the more that the mind can change it, and one must thus ask if any wholly "true" account of one's life can ever be recorded.

War, both internal and external, is a key component of Ballard's work, and throughout his entire life he remained open about the fact that, when writing his novels, he often drew upon images from his childhood in Shanghai and from his experiences during the Second World War. The apocalyptic landscapes depicted his first tetralogy resemble those seen in the aftermath of war, and in his second tetralogy, the focus on modern technology and its dehumanizing effects alludes to the fact that with the progress of science comes the potential for ever-increasing acts of destruction. In his final tetralogy, Ballard explores how the death of affect that occurs from our interaction with technology and architecture can lead to a state of widespread somnambulism, and he explains how, when in such a state, one can be easily exploited and controlled, and thus be violently turned against self, other, and/ or community. *Empire of the Sun*, *The Kindness of Women*, and *Miracles of Life* all help to shed light on Ballard's obsessions as a writer—war, time, technology, the fragility of civilization—while also importantly being Ballardian texts themselves, texts that blur fiction and reality as a way of trying to capture both historical and psychological truths, to varying degrees.

Epilogue

Following *Miracles of Life*, Ballard planned to write one last book, a joint effort with his physician, Jonathan Waxman, a respected oncologist who was treating Ballard for cancer. The two had known each other since the 1990s, when Waxman cared for one of Ballard's friends, and at that time Waxman had just finished a novel of his own and asked Ballard to read it. Ballard did, and sent the book—*The Fifth Gospel* (1997), published using the pseudonym David Alexander—to his agent, which led to its publication (Waxman x). Ballard later credited Waxman's treatment and encouragement with affording him the opportunity to write *Miracles of Life*, and he concludes his autobiography by paying tribute to his doctor:

> It was Jonathan who convinced me that within a few weeks of the initial treatment the pain would leave me and I would begin to feel something closer to my everyday self. This proved true, and for the past year, except for one or two minor relapses, I have felt remarkably well, have been able to work and enjoyed my restaurant visits and the company of friends and family.
>
> Jonathan has always been completely frank, leaving me with no illusion about the eventual end. But he has urged me to lead as normal a life as I can, and he supported me when I said, early in 2007, that I would like to write my autobiography. It is thanks to Jonathan Waxman that I found the will to write this book.
>
> Jonathan is highly intelligent, thoughtful and always gentle, and has that rare ability to see the ongoing course of medical treatment from the point of view of the patient. I am very grateful that my last days will be spent under the care of this strong-minded, wise and kindly physician. (*ML* 277-278)

As Ballard's bout with cancer worsened and he neared the end of his life, he and Waxman decided to work on a book that would detail various conversations between the two, as doctor and patient. Ballard wrote an outline, and an £80,000 advance had been agreed upon (Phillips 64); however, with Ballard's health in sharp decline, this project never came to fruition. Waxman did eventually write *The Elephant in the Room* (2012), a book that he dedicated to Ballard and which, as their unrealized book intended to do, tells various stories regarding the relationships between doctors and cancer patients. Ballard eventually died on April 19, 2009.

Ballard was one of the most important authors of the twentieth century, and his body of work can be considered a vast critique of that century, during which technological innovation exponentially increased, mass media dramatically grew in scope and power, and some of the most devastating calamities occurred. Perhaps Ballard was speaking for himself, giving insight into his overall project, in *Millennium People*, when one of the characters explains what the real target of the rebellion is:

> The 20th Century […] It lingers on. It shapes everything we do, the way we think. There's scarcely a good thing you can say for it. Genocidal wars, half the world destitute, the other half sleepwalking through its own brain-death. We bought its trashy dreams and now we can't wake up. All these hypermarkets and gated communities. Once the doors close you can never get out. (*MP* 63-64)

As explored throughout this dissertation, Ballard worked to decipher the twentieth century not only by incorporating many of its major symbols into his work—television, cars, planes, nuclear weapons, and gated communities—but also by conversing with various artistic, psychological, and theoretical movements that arose during that century. The four major phases of Ballard's career synthesize, to varying degrees, Surrealism, psychoanalysis, New Media studies, and R.D.

Laing's brand of anti-psychiatry. In doing so, Ballard was able to reveal many of the latent patterns and effects of the modern technological landscape, such as its potential to numb the sensorium, induce docility and somnambulism, make humans more violent, and cause new psychopathologies to arise.

It is also by peering deeply into his own time that Ballard was able to foresee much of what would come in the first part of the twenty-first century. Ballard's apocalyptic novels—particularly *The Drought*—can be considered early examples of "cli-fi" (or climate fiction), acting as forerunners to that specific genre and anticipating the current environmental crisis. In these novels, Ballard's depiction of ecological destruction also evokes the landscapes of war that plagued the first half of the twentieth century, such as those he had seen in Shanghai during the Second World War, and he thus not only imbued his novels with a streak of Surrealism, but also with a streak of history. In this regard, the cataclysmic landscapes in Ballard's first tetralogy also evoke the new super-weapon that was used during the Second World War, that which was detonated not far from where the young Ballard was, and which then presided over the collective mind of the twentieth century: the nuclear bomb.

Though implicit in his apocalyptic novels, the nuclear bomb became a more explicit symbol in Ballard's work as he transitioned to the next phase of his career, using it in texts such as "The Terminal Beach" and *The Atrocity Exhibition*. However, perhaps sensing that nuclear weapons were not going to lead to the disaster that many believed was imminent during the Cold War, in his modern disaster novels Ballard proposed that the next, more immediate war would be psychic rather than physical. He aimed to reveal this in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Crash*, *Concrete Island*, and *High-Rise*, in which he investigated the potential cognitive effects of modern media, technology, and architecture.

To do this, Ballard saturated *The Atrocity Exhibition* with powerful and pervasive images of his present—the Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam War, Elizabeth Taylor, Ronald Reagan, advertisements, automobiles—all of which, when combined, create an "image maze," one that is similar to the vortex that McLuhan outlines in the preface to *The Mechanical Bride*. Interestingly, in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the fusion of such images is actually depicted as being akin to nuclear weapons, with Ballard gesturing towards the potential calamitous effects that such a fusion can have on the fragile psyche:

> In the case under consideration the previous career of the patient as a military pilot should be noted, and the unconscious role of thermonuclear weapons in bringing about the total fusion and non-differentiation of all matter. What the patient is reacting against is, simply, the phenomenology of the universe, the specific and independent existence of separate objects and events, however trivial and inoffensive these may seem. (*AE* 46)

*The Atrocity Exhibition* explores how, in the modern world, juxtaposed images are absorbed by media, collapsed onto the same plane, and then projected back onto the individual. In Ballard's opinion, when images of atrocity, advertising, and sex collapse into one, such images would also become blurred deep within the psyche, and would thus threaten to fracture it from within. Ballard warned that this blurring, which is spurred on by the media's portrayal of violent acts, would numb our reaction to violence and lead to an ever more affectless world. As is depicted in much of Ballard's work, when one becomes affectless and somnambulistic, unaware of how their environment is affecting them, one may engage in psychopathological acts in order to jolt their nervous systems and find some sort of stimulation.

In *Crash*, Ballard identifies the automobile as one of the foremost symbols of the twentieth century, a symbol that combines luxury, violence, power, sex, and advertising into one

image, and he examines how the violent potential of the automobile is masked by its commercial/ highly stylized properties. This is similar to how the medium of television defuses one's reaction to violence by presenting it alongside cartoons and advertisements, in turn making the viewer consume it as entertainment. It is also in *Crash*—as well as in other novels such as *High-Rise*, *Super-Cannes*, and *Millennium People*—that Ballard prophesied about how modern technology and architecture can often mediate interpersonal relationships and shape behaviour, though unbeknownst to the individual.

In *Crash*, for instance, all of the interpersonal relationships are "mediated by the automobile and its technological landscape" to the point that no affectual responses can be elicited without it (*C* 101). This indicates that the characters have begun to resemble the technology that consumes them, and the blurring of flesh and metal that occurs in this novel is a way of indicating their mechanization, their numbed sensoria. When one looks at the immediate present, it is clear that Ballard's observations about human relationships in the technological age ring true. With the advent of the internet and cell phones, it is now common for people to have "internet friends" or "online friends," those who they never meet with in-person and who they thus solely interact with via technology. Furthermore, many couples now maintain long-distance relationships that are mediated through text messages and video chats, while others use dating apps as a way of mediating sexual encounters. It is also along these lines that, during the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns, some of Ballard's stories took on new meaning. In 2020, for instance, Will Self read an excerpt from Ballard's "The Intensive Care Unit" on BBC Radio 4, which Self describes as being a story that "anticipates a future in which nobody is in physical contact with one another," their relationships solely mediated by technology ("Will Self talks about J.G. Ballard").

As for the way in which modern media, technology, and architecture can shape one's behaviour, Ballard's novels are frequently in conversation with the likes of Freud, Foucault, McLuhan, Fromm, and Laing, all of whom explored the various ways in which one's external environment can unknowingly influence one's cognition and behaviour. In Ballard's work, this notion is perhaps most noticeable in his final tetralogy—*Cocaine Nights*, *Super-Cannes*, *Millennium People*, and *Kingdom Come*—in which Ballard attempts to decipher the closed community setting, yet another twentieth century innovation that Ballard found to be alarming. In these novels, both physical and subliminal environments lull the characters into a docile and somnambulistic state and, in need of an awakening, they engage in various psychopathological acts so as to experience a sense of stimulation. In these novels, however, the dazed state in which the characters find themselves leaves them susceptible to external forces, and they are thus controlled and exploited for inhuman and/ or political purposes.

This brings me to how Ballard's final novel, *Kingdom Come*, interrogates the major, and most destructive, political innovation of the twentieth century: fascism. It may be in this way that Ballard's work has proven to be most prophetic, anticipating the dramatic rise of far-right politics. By reading the trends of his time—taking note of the increased support of figures such as Jean-Marie Le Pen, and seeing a rise in racial hatred post-9/11—Ballard foresaw much of what was to come in Europe and North America in the first part of the new millennium. As alluded to earlier, almost all of Ballard's novels envision the extreme end points of certain situations, and though they are thus not entirely accurate in what they depict, Ballard's use of exaggeration helps to bring attention to the consequences that are lurking around the corner but which may be invisible to the reader. In this regard, hyperbole and exaggeration not only allowed Ballard to diagnose certain issues, but it also helped him to effectively communicate such issues

to the reader. As with McLuhan, the hope was that this would alter the reader's perception so as to make them see more clearly the world in which they are living. In some instances, however, such as in *Kingdom Come*, Ballard's exaggeration happened to predict the near future more accurately than one would initially think.

For all of the reasons outlined above, I believe that Ballard's work will only continue to grow in relevance as we progress through the twenty-first century. Though he was initially looked down upon by critics because of his ties to science fiction, towards the end of his life Ballard was held in high regard, and many significant writers have credited him as being an inspiration for their own work, including Martin Amis, William Gibson, Jean Baudrillard, and Iain Sinclair. His inspiration of rock bands such as Joy Division and Klaxons, the electronic duo Empire of the Sun, as well as the film adaptations of *Empire of the Sun* (1987), *Crash* (1996), and *High-Rise* (2015), have helped to keep Ballard's work in public consciousness, and I believe that as technology continues to progress, the more relevant Ballard will become.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Ballard, like McLuhan, believed that one must become attuned to the effects of the modern technological landscape in order to combat the spiritual malaise that is pervasive in the modern world, and his books can thus be understood as anti-environments, attempts at showing the reader that which constantly surrounds them but which largely goes unnoticed. It is only when one becomes aware of their environment that they can consider the possible consequences of it, and decide whether or not such technological "advancements" are truly progressive for humanity or if they are simply forces that will leave humans in positions similar to many of Ballard's characters: affectless, somnambulistic, and dehumanized.

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