

CHAPTER – V

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Ballard is considered as a 'New Wave' writer. Over the seventies, following on from his political fantasy *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), he produced some of his most notable work, emerging as the surrealist pop-artist of new urban landscapes, techno-horrors, post-modern wreck. His landscape was the world of concrete motorways, high-rise apartment blocks, abandoned film studios, advertising hoardings, and inner-city derelictions. Popular celebrities, dead icons and communal urban myths fed his fiction. Ballard has described *Crash* (1973) as a technological porn novel; it deals with sexual fantasies triggered by a fatal crash on a motorway, and *Concrete Island* (1974) is a dystopian fable set in a 'vertical city', a high-rise apartment block. *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979) is about a fantastic sexual Utopia set in and around Shepperton film studios, that modern park where unlimited dreams are in theory constructed. His gift for surreal fantasy influenced many other writers like Angela Carter. *Empire of the Sun* (1984) is the story of a child learning the art of survival in a Japanese prison camp in Shanghai during wartime, where he becomes a distant witness to the explosion of the atomic bomb over Nagasaki, and is one of the strongest novels of the Eighties.

The word fantasy is both a literary and a psychological term. As a literary term a fantasy means any narrative that deals with impossible. Such type of fantasy rarely used in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* but repeatedly used in *The Day of Creation*. The main character in *The Day of Creation* is the World Health Organization doctor John Mallory who, six months after his arrival in Central Africa, finds that intense guerilla activity has left him without patients. He devotes himself, instead, to the task of bringing water to the region, with dreams of setting the Sahara in flower. It means that Mallory has taken impossible task of creating new river.

"Dreams of pagan powers moved across the surface of the Mallory. I tried to stand back from my obsession with the river, but already I was thinking

of the irrigation of the desert into the Edenic paradise that I saw around me in these green glades and sensed in its sweet airs.” (Ballard 2002: 109)

It is good example of literary fantasy because creating paradise out of desert is impossible but Mallory fantasizes so. As a psychological term fantasy has tree meanings. The first meaning is an imaginative construction which in some way or other pleases the patient and is mistaken by him for reality. This kind of fantasy is dominant in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*. In *Empire of the Sun* Jim is on the way to the camp and he is happy with excitement and freedom. He makes sure the truck keeps moving north, watching the sun's angle as he learns to do at the detention center. Once again Jim is viewing the world from the vantage point of this prisoner truck, as he passes villages, old ceramics works and burns out tenement blocks. At that moment he is enjoying the war and only wishes the prisoners can feel the same. But other prisoners are in terrible condition and not able to see Jim's perspective. Because Jim is living in dreamy world and he wants to escape from stark reality of the war. In other words we can say that Jim is pleasing himself in imaginary world and is mistaken by him for reality. In *The Kindness of Women*, the hero fantasizes his own wife while sexually enjoying with Peggy Gardner and Clio Churchill. In these incidents he has mistaken the reality of his wife. Because in summer 1964 Jim and his family are holidaying at Costa Brava, Spain. But there he loses his wife in one fatal accident. Jim loves his wife very much. The memories of his wife are dominant in his mind. He looks Miriam in Dorothy, and tries to enjoy physically.

“Dorothy calmly stood in front of me as I undressed her palms lightly on my chicks, running her fingers into my mouth.... I kissed her labia and then sat her on my knees, caressing her vulva as if I had parted its lips.....” (Ballard 1994: 168)

In this sense Salvitt David R. describes Jim as a monster in his essay, *The Monster He Became-*

“.....When the protagonist, Jim, comes home from Spain, where he has just buried Miriam, his young wife, and makes love with Dorothy, Miriam’s sister, it is beside the point to wonder whether such a thing actually happened to J.G. Ballard, whether there was or is a Dorothy, or how she or her family might feel about this revelation. Such questions are interesting but idle. The more pressing issue is what kind of monster Jim has turned out to be.” (Salvitt 1991: 1-2)

Such type of psychological fantasy also we find in *The Day of Creation*. When a machine unearths the stump of a huge forest oak, the roots pull free and water oozes into the hole-water that rises, spreads, till it becomes a river stretching to the north like “a third Nile”. Mallory thinks that the dream of green Sahara, named after him that would feed the poor of Chad and the Sudan. Dr. Mallory looks himself as a creator and discoverer. He named the river as the River Mallory. So Dr. Mallory has mistaken the reality and Mrs. Warrender clears the reality.

“Mrs. Warrender has spoken the truth-he had made the river but he did not own it.” (Ballard 2002: 61)

So the heroes in three novels- Jim in both novels, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* and Mallory in *The Day of Creation* fantasizes themselves and are mistaken by themselves for reality.

The second type of psychological fantasy is a kind of castle-building. In the Egoistic kind the day-dreamer himself is always the hero and everything is seen through his eyes. This kind of fantasy is dominant in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* because the world is seen through the eyes of hero, Jim. In *Empire of the Sun* a young boy called Jim is at the centre of the story. He is representative of the author and everything is seen through his eyes. The same point is focused by George Carte in his essay *Sourdough* as-

“The story is a great look through a child’s eyes at the WWII experience in Eastern China for British Citizen captured by the Japanese. It goes from pre-

war opulence to devastating prison camp existence to liberation.” (Carte 2008: 1)

The novel *The Kindness of Women*, which begins at a point in Ballard life just before the opening of *Empire of the Sun* and proceeds, selectively, through the next half century. In this novel the Egoistic kind of day-dreamer we find because the hero is always present and everything is seen through the eyes of Jim. In *The Day of Creation* the world is seen through the eyes of Mallory. The boy in *Empire of the Sun*, Ballard says when he was interviewed by Michelle Field about *The Day of Creation*, grows up to be Dr. Mallory, the main character in this novel. In a way, Ballard says, it is the story turned inside-out:

“The circumstances in *Empire of the Sun* completely enclose the boy and shape him; in *The Day of Creation* it is Mallory himself who creates the landscapes in the book, and he imposes himself on the landscapes, not the other way around.” (Field 1998: 1)

Hero’s journey into the past illustrates what may be called the “Kairotic moment” and decisive point in time when psychic transformation occurs in almost every story of J.G. Ballard. Usually Kairotic moment is a disaster or the free choice of a hazardous alternative, the resolve to

“Live dangerously” (Philmus and Mullen. March 91: 57)

The story of *Empire of the Sun* is conventional one and based on J.G. Ballard’s actual experiences, is about a young British teenager who lives with his parents in Shanghai at the eve of Pearl Harbor and is then interned by the Japanese from 1942-1945 in the Lunghua prison camp near Shanghai. In my opinion, for Jim, the freedom of the camp was the freedom to live dangerously, to be bombed, to be starved, to live outside the norms and constrains of ordinary bourgeois existence and dare to face the Kairotic moment. *The Day of Creation* is one of the most obviously topographic novels of J.G. Ballard. It is the story of a physician’s journey to the source of a new river that sprang (or so he believes) from his imagination. In this instance the utopian cell is quite small, consisting

chiefly of the hero, Mallory, and his shadowy female companion Noon, with occasional aid from an old flame, Nora Warrender, and the all-female crew of her brothel-boat, the Diana. Another major character, Sanger, a false Prospero, exploits Mallory's visions by trying to make a documentary film of the voyage; but he is not an integral part of the quest. No doubt there is touch of fantasy in the novel but there is also touch of realism. The opening lines of the novel show that it is a dream of river no doubt but the passage is between memory and desire. It means that realism reflected in this novel is inward and psychic one.

Realism is, in the broadest sense, simply fidelity to actuality in its representation in literature. Realism has been defined as "the truthful treatment of material." (Thrall, Hibbard and Holman 1960: 397) *Empire of the Sun* is set in Shanghai during the war years, and is concerned with the story of a young boy called, whose idyllic early life is shattered by the war and the internment of all foreign nations by the Japanese. Jim is separated from his parents and left alone in Shanghai.

"There were so many beggars in Shanghai. Along Amherst Avenue they sat outside the gates of the house, shaking their craven tins like reformed smokers. Many displayed lurid wounds and deformities but no one noticed them that afternoon."
(Ballard 1984: 11)

The above passage shows the realistic picture of beggars and common men. It also shows social realism because the war effected on the life of beggars and they are forced to starvation. Not only the beggars are starved but also the prostitutes are trying their level best to attract customers towards them. The thieves and gangsters are also suffered. Frank and Basie, American merchant seaman turned scavengers. And for earning money they used to sell gold teeth taking all from corpses. Jim is also forced for starvation. In that sense Edward Fox has commented in his essay *Goodbye, Cruel World-*

"After three years of fending off starvation, Jim wonders of life will continue after the war ends, or if a new war, World War III, has already begun.....
The haze of malnutrition and disease blurs in his

mind the distinctions between life and death, war and peace.” (Fox 1985: 89)

So the incidents-legless beggars, prostitutes waiting for customers, spread of cholera and small pox etc. shows the social realism and the effect of war on soldiers, common people and children like Jim. The social realism is related to personal realism because in this novel Jim's (author's) personal experiences during World War II are described minutely. *The Kindness of Women* begins at a point in Ballard's life just before the opening of *Empire of the Sun* and proceeds, selectively through the next half century. The novel describes Jim's internment in a Japanese prison camp; arrival in England; reading medicine at Cambridge; the RAF and soon. The social realism is dominant in this novel because the picture of China during the Second World War is portrayed in this novel. The novel opens during 1937 in Shanghai. Jim is a 7 years-old who has witnessed the bomb explosion which killed over 1000 people at the Great World Amusement Park on the Avenue Edward VII. In this sense David Pringle has described about the opening of the novel in his essay *Fact and Fiction in J.G. Ballard's The Kindness of Women-*

“This Fiction is based on a factual background. Such a bomb did fall on Shanghai; it's also referred to in *Empire of the Sun* (Page 25). However, it's extremely unlikely that the young Ballard actually saw the event with his own eyes.” (Pringle Aug 1993: 1-2)

One more incident also shows social picture during the World War II. After August 1945 the guards disappears from Lunghua and Shanghai. When Jim leaves the camp and walks back to Shanghai along a railway line. At a station on the way he encounters a group of Japanese soldiers who are strangling a Chinese captive. The Japanese soldiers are frustrated and they are mad with rage. This incident in the novel is much factual. The event Jim has witnessed at the railway station is clearly traumatic for Ballard. The good example of social realism is also reflected in *The Day of Creation*. In the beginning Mallory's companion, Noon is very innocent and chaste. But later on she watches cassettes of old Trazan and Sheena, Queen of the Jungle films on the portable video-cassette recorder owned by a nearsighted television producer who accompanies them on

part of the Journey. And Noon's mind changes because of modern technology. It means that social life of simple and innocent people are affected by the modern technology.

The personal realism is dominant in *Empire of the Sun* because the story is based on J.G. Ballard's actual experiences, is about a young British teenager who lives with his parents in Shanghai at the eve of Pearl Harbor and is then Lunghua prison camp near Shanghai. The psychological realism is there because it focuses the psyche of 11 years old boy, Jim who is separated from his parents and starved many days. In this sense Steven Charles comments in his essay, *Humanity, Stripped to its Core* that-

“The novel overpowers the reader from start to finish by Ballard's stark account of Jim's survival against all odds, in conditions stacked heavily against him. Death, betrayal, illness, and hunger surround Jim and yet somehow he always managed to survive because he never despairs, never gives up, always keeps his wits about him, and as he himself explains, because he ‘take nothing for granted’. The World War II Shanghai strips humanity to its bare, naked, ugly core.” (Stevens 2007: 2)

The personal realism is also reflected in *The Kindness of Women*. It brings his autobiography up to the 1970's. It discusses Jim's departure from China, where he had been born and had been inherited, to visit England, other parts of Europe and the U.S.A. The fourth chapter of this novel is very famous for the love-affair of Jim and Miriam. This love affair at Cambridge between Jim and Miriam is very factual and real. The death of Miriam and the incident of car accident are also shows personal realism. The personal realism is reflected in both novels, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* because the hero, Jim is nobody else but Ballard himself. In the novel, *The Day of Creation* we also finds personal realism because some personal experiences are reflected in this novel. When Ballard is interviewed by Michelle Field about *The Day of Creation* says that-

“The boy in *Empire of the Sun* grows up to be Dr. Mallory, the main character in *The Day of Creation*.” (Field. 1988: 1)

In brief Ballard’s novels are full of fantastic incidents and realistic incidents. In many incidents there is touch of fantasy but there is no mere fantasy but there is touch of realism. In this sense Ballard himself comments about 20th century novel as

“Any novel not set within the last ten minutes is practically costume drama- a return to history became a dominant theme of British fiction.” (Bradbury. 2001: 527)

In the novels, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* Ballard has dealt with the history of China, Shanghai during the World War II. Ballard has very minutely portrayed social life of China in these novels.

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