

CHAPTER -I

INTRODUCTION

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- a) A review of contemporary fiction novel
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- d) Life and works

a) A review of contemporary fiction novel:

The themes of the modern novels have become very variegated. No subject is a taboo to the modern novelist. Sex, politics, philosophy, religion, relation of men to women, sciences and their effects on man, womanhood and the place of women in the modern life, children and their education, wars, effects of wars, economy, commerce and the space- world, modern progress and oriental philosophy and the ways of living- in short, there is no limit of themes in the modern novel and the post – modern novel. Freudian theories of psycho- analysis create a new way for the novelists to deal with the human mind at subconscious and unconscious levels.

The outbreak of the world war-I is a major historical event, which has a great effect on English life. The war affects the literary life and writers start to react towards the effects of war. Their writing undergoes a dramatic change in subject matter and methods of narration. The different kind of collective experience we find in the world war –II which has no feature of romantic or patriotic fervor. Writers like Fredrick Manning, Richard Aldington, Mary Sinclair and Rose Macaulay are influenced by experiences of soldiers in the world war – I. Social and political events are reflected in their writing. Certain political ideologies are exhibited more in poetry than in the novels between the years of the two world wars. As young writers belong

to the English upper middle- class they are partly committed to the present socio- political conditions. Because of the effect of war the emerging writers of England unable to use their imagination in their writing as a natural force.

————As Cox and Dyson remark in this context: “The drab English world of the war and immediately post war scene did not lend itself to the transforming effects of the imagination” (Cox and Dyson 1972: 411)

A period of the 1930’s and the early 1940 does create much talent. Young writers like Christopher Isherwood, Graham Greene, Elizabeth Bowen, Henry Greene and L.P. Hartley are dominant writers of the period. Isherwood’s subject matter of his novels is a traditional one. He also discusses the gap between social classes. Graham Greene is equally a great novelist who is very famous for comic writing. His novels are about morality, catholics and communists. Both Greene and Isherwood dominate the literary scene of 1930’s in respect of novels and even years onwards because of their respective qualities. As Cox and Dyson remark in this respect,

“Isherwood stands for the Forsterian tradition of the scrupulous and ironical, individual conscience: Green stands for a kind of new tribalism and grandeurs and miseries of the communist ethic pave.” (Ibid: 41)

During the years of world war-II and in the following years there is not much creativity in literature. War has absorbed all energies of society and it affected badly on creative thought. There is also bloodless social revolution during 1945 to 1951. Naturally the novelists deal with different subject matter and some of them do not go out of England due to international disputes. This state of mind is satirically presented by Evelyn Waugh. Satire is a useful weapon used by the novelists like Huxley, Evelyn Waugh and George Orwell. Huxley’s *Brave New world*, Evelyn Waugh’s *The Loved One* (1948) and George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* and *1984* are good examples of satires. With a philosophic bent of mind William Golding writes a novel *Lord of the Flies*. This novel is concerned with the human heart and moral evil in it. Joyce Cary is concerned with meaning behind experience. His novels are a philosophic with existing and richly drawn characters.

Science fiction became popular in the mid-century as it is used as the art of story-telling with the tension of a detective novel, bloodshed horror, ghost element and the excitement of Gothic tale. The best exponent of Gothic science fiction is John Wyndham who is influenced by H.G. Wells. J.G. Ballard also wrote science fiction which includes *Wind from Nowhere* (1962), the first of his four science fiction novels classified as catastrophe stories. A new generation of writers appears in the mid-fifties who are exponents of social realism. Kingsley Amis, John Wain, Nigel Dennis, Thomas Hinde, A. Wilson and Irish Murdoch are new fiction writers, who explore the spirit of their age in their works. A new type of form developed during mid-century is the chronicle novel. The most important novelists of this form are C.P. Snow's *Strangers and Brothers* and Anthony Powell's *Music of Time*. As Diana Neil remarks about the chronicle novels:

“In the chronicle novels brevity so characteristic of post-war English novel, gives way to Victorian amplitude. In them there is an attempt to catch the timbre of life, which their authors seem to find common principles, beliefs or accepted standards.”
(Neil Diana 1971: 408)

The 70's may have indeed have the “Me decade” (Bradbury Malcolm 2001:421) but to look at the strong titles of the decade is to see the importance of what Bernard Bergonzi called the genre of ‘fictions of history.’ The centrality of the theme of Empire and post-imperialism was noted by J.G. Farrell in his ‘Empire Trilogy.’ It was not simply about fading glorious pasts but a very real present, a continuous shaping process that still had to be understood in its variousness, pointing a way beyond colonialism or imperialism in novelists like V.S. Naipaul. Spy fiction moved ever closer to the main stream, so did science fiction, especially in the work of the ‘New Wave’ writers like J.G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock over the seventies, following on from his political fantasy *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), Ballard produced some of his most notable work, emerging as the surrealist pop – artist of new urban landscapes, techno-horrors, post – modern dreck. *Empire of the Sun* (1984), it is the story of a child learning the art of survival in a Japanese prison camp in Shanghai during wartime. For the ‘New Wave’ writers recent history and the formation of the post-modern science and

technology-based consumer society, the society of the high-rise, the motorway and concrete island, was as grotesque as any fantasy provoking the novelist into new acts and forms of the imagination.

For the 70's there were other highly important stories to tell. Over the 60's women writers have increasingly begun to explore the rising expectations and the distinctive perceptions that come from female writing in a time of social change and increasing artistic and intellectual confidence. Margaret Drabble had explored the minutiae of thoughtful middle-class female lives, with their liberal, conflicting aspirations and frequent disappointments. Over the 70's Drabble's firm moral realism and sharp social curiosity widened into a thoughtful culture reflected in her novels. Like Drabble many notable female and feminist writers flourished over the 70's, deeply changing the flavor of the novels. Books by Elaine Feinstein, Alice Thomas Ellis, A.L. Barker, Berice Rubens, Susan Hill, Emma Tennant and Rose Tremain changed the scale and terms of female representation enriching the stock of feminist myth and discourse.

The novel in the last decade of the millennium (1989-2001) was seeing some striking changes a significant number of the leading writers like Graham Greene, William Golding, Anthony Burgess, Kingsley Amis, Irish Murdoch and Anthony Powell who had shaped the course of post-war British fiction died in the decade. The striking feature of fiction in Britain as the millennium turned was, then sheer diversity: the mixed and plural origins from which it came. The nineties were indeed an age of sexual anarchy. New woman writers – Janet Galloway's *Foreign Parts* (1994), Lesley Glaister's *The Private Parts of Women* (1996) Lucy Ellmann's *Man or Mango?* (1998) depicted forms of successful and independent existence or an angry assertive sexuality quite different from their predecessors. The question of female expression is crucial to Byatt's story.

It is true that- despite the fashionable view that, as J.G. Ballard put it, 'any novel not set with the last ten minutes is practically costume drama' – a return to history became a dominant theme of British fiction as the century moved to its close. Ballard's good examples of this kind are *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and *The Kindness of Women* (1991) returned to two world wars. Graham Swift in *Ever After* (1992) also returned to Victorian times. McEwan's first book of the 90's *The Innocent* (1990) was immediate

response to the fall of Berlin Wall. The same theme we find in the novel, *Black Dogs* (1992) McEwan's two novels of the late 90's also deal with the world of love and danger- *Enduring Love* and *Amsterdam* (1998). Historical fiction was itself merging with something else- the growing interest in Latin American 'magical realism.' Some writers like Nicholas Shakespeare wrote directly about modern Latin American history in *The Dancer Upstairs* (1995).

Whatever the pressures, the novel does remain various and vivid in the last decade of 20th century. It depends on one of the world's most brilliant communications technologies: the book. It is capable of expressing a subtlety, truth and intimacy, a creative consistency and energy that cannot be had from T.V. or film. It is capable of profound human influence, moral and political wisdom; we still want our novelists to be priests, prophets or gurus, to take us into the depths.

B) Fantasy – a brief study of its nature:

Fantasy has always been an integral part of literature since the beginning of times and it has a broad appeal to people of all ages. It deals not only with the particular forms of fiction, but also it touches broad areas of folk tales, myth, satire, allegory, Gothic fiction and science fiction.

“The word or term ‘fantasy’ is derived from Greek word ‘phantasia.’ The meaning of this term is ‘making visible, capacity for imaging.’ Fancy is supposed to be an abbreviation of fantasy. Both terms are closely related to imagination.” (Preminger Alex (ed) 1965:270).

According to Tolkien fantasy is not part of traditional literature courses. But fantasy differs from all these aspects. It informs the spirit of all but a small part of western literature.

“Fantasy is the fantastic product of imagination.”
(Hornby, Gatenby and Wakefield, ed. 1963:358).

We are curiously blind to its presence because our traditional approaches to literature are based on mimetic assumptions. Even we are unable to develop analytic vocabulary for understanding fantasy. Up to this stage we can form ideas about it only with difficulty and find ourselves in struggle. The doctrine of mimesis is the foundation of the Greek aesthetics

“Fantasy is a playful imagination.” (Waston Owen, ed 1976:375)

The word fantasy is both a literary and psychological term. As a literary term a fantasy means any narrative that deals with impossible and preternaturals. The main charter in *The Day of Creation* is the doctor who 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 chosen impossible task of creating new river.

As a psychological term fantasy has three meanings – the first meaning of an imaginative construction which in some way or other pleases the patient and is mistaken by him for reality. A woman in this condition imagines that some famous person is in love with her. A man believes that he is the long-lost son of noble and wealthy parents and that he will soon be discovered, acknowledged, and overwhelmed with luxuries and honours. The commonest events are foisted, often not without ingenuity, into evidence for the treasured belief. For example, in *The Kindness of Women*, the hero fantasizes his own wife while sexually enjoying with Peggy Gardner and Clio Churchill. But the reality is that his own wife is no more in this world.

The second meaning is a pleasing imaginative construction entertained incessantly and to his injury, by the patient, but without the delusion that it is a reality. A waking dream – known to be such by the dreamer – of military or erotic triumphs, of power or grandeur, even of mere popularity, is either monotonously reiterated or elaborated year by year. It becomes the prime consolation, and almost the only pleasure, of the dreamer’s life. Such kind of fantasy we find in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*. It is a kind of castle – building. For example, in *The Kindness of Women* we find

that when Jim was in the bedroom of Dorothy and he imagines his own wife, Miriam.

The third meaning is the activity indulged in moderately and briefly as a temporary holiday or recreation, duly subordinated to more effective and outgoing activities. It is a kind of normal castle – building - the Egoistic and the Disinterested. The Egoistic kind of the day – dreamer himself is always the hero and everything is seen through his eyes. In the Disinterested kind of the day-dreamer is not the hero of the day-dream or perhaps not present in it at all. The egoistic kind of the day – dreaming we find in, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* because Jim sees this world through his eyes.

Utopian Fantasy

Utopian fiction is an old form of literature which has not studied systematically up to the end of nineteenth century. It was taken into consideration when utopian fiction was again recognized as a social influence. Afterwards political economists were attracted towards the proper study of utopian literature. They began to write history of utopian literature. Their history is nothing but summaries and criticisms of the utopian proposals of reform. Sociologists and philosophers went on such reformatory-search. They started defining the principles of utopian thought. The utopians mental attitude became established as one of the most important forces in political reality.

Life in the future haunts the utopia's mind in many different ways. It manages the subject matter for various kinds of speculation on human destiny. But it also gives rise to a new kind of grammatical statement. In a utopia, the narrator first jumps towards future in order to be able to look back at the present. Through this process the writer is able to use 'prophetic past.' He is not content with looking forward and speaking in the future tense, although from time to time such semi- utopian fictions as Judian Huxley's *If I Were Dictator* (1936) make their appearance.

“Pretend that you believe this, and that following is an authentic message from the last men

Otherwise I cannot give life to the great history which it is my task to tell.” (Gerber Richard 1965: 11)

When we consider the translation of the evolutionary hypothesis in detail of the superman we see that the utopian writer look with the desire to transform abstract ideas into myths. In the novel, *The Day of Creation* of J.G. Ballard, the narrator Mallory is creating a “Third Nile”. In the same novel, strongman is twice reincarnated as two African adventures, Capt. Kagwa and Gen. Harare who vie to establish empires in the fertile valley of the River Mallory.

The good utopian writer’s aim is not limited to the creation of single, disconnected details. Generally he is more interested in working out a fundamental hypothesis. At first he is giving imaginative reality and then following it through all its branches. The pleasure of seeing a hypothesis realized in all its significant imaginative details is more important to the utopian writer. It is one of the most characteristic aspects of the utopian imagination that it is limited. It is started from ideas, created its own world and extending its view till it is last in infinity. On the other hand it keeps narrowing its view until it arrives at a minute fact. This tendency is clearly expressed in ‘utopio’ itself. Its communist working society is opposed to capitalism.

In utopian fantasy there are degrees, and the utopian device, which is included among time- honoured fantastic means by Mr. Forster, sometimes mearge with the more usual novel. Fictitious names of countries and towns do not in the least interfere with realism. Inventing a new name for a country does not exist on map. But by such invention of new names realism begins to move back. Such countries as Balkania, Azania and Ruritania represent typical abstract local colour. They are vaguely situated in the Balkans in Africa, or among the South American republics. Such countries are specially adapted to this purpose Ballard’s best novel, *The Day of Creation* contain an obsessive quest. The narrator, Dr Malory is searching for the source of the new river in the heart of South Africa.

Ballard is not the complete post modern. He rejects absolute relativism in favour of a thinly veiled pantheist or mystical world- view. From Kerans in *The Drowned World* (1962) to Mallory in *The Day of Creation* (1987), most of his central characters, and many of the peripheral

figures in his loosely structured pilgrim bands, reach that highest point accessible to consciousness. If 'utopia' is a place where all is well, a place of joy and perfection, and then the psycho-physical landscapes of Ballard's fictions are manifestly such places.

b) Realism – a brief study of its nature:

Realism is an issue not only for literature it is a major political, philosophical and practical issue and must be handled and explained as such – as a matter of general human interest. Realistic fiction is totally different from 'romantic fiction.' Realistic fiction is to present as accurate picture of life as it is. The realist is selective in his material. He prefers as protagonist an ordinary citizen, engaged in the real estate business. The technical term 'realistic novel' is usually applied to works, which are realistic both in subject and manner. In the novels of J.G. Ballard, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* depicts real experiences of the author during the World War- II at China and effects of war on children like Jim.

The centenary of 'realism' as an English critical term occurred but was not celebrated in 1956. Its history has been so vast, so complicated and so bitter that any celebration would in fact have turned into a brawl. Yet realism is not object to be identified or appropriated. It is a way of describing, certain methods and attitudes and descriptions, quite naturally, have varied in the ordinary exchange and development of experience.

“Realism thus appeared as in part a revolt against the ordinary bourgeois view of the world; the realists were making a further selection of ordinary material, which the majority of bourgeois artists preferred to ignore.” (Lodge 1972:482)

Engels defined 'realism' as 'typical characters in typical situations', which would pass in a quite ordinary sense, but which in this case has behind it the body of 'Marxist nineteenth century, is commonly described as a tradition of 'realism' and it is equally assumed that in the west at any rate this particular tradition has ended.

Henry James claimed

“the novel remains still under the right persuasion, the most independent most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms.” (James Henry 1968:326)

then the term ‘realism’ must surely be the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of critical terms. Roland Stromberg authorizes this skepticism of theory when he says that

“realism and naturalism must be defined by their historical content. The terms were shorthand for certain cultural phenomena of the times and can be grasped only through a study of this phenomena” (Stromberg R.S. 1968:19)

Rene Wellek deliberately avoids what he sees as-

“the whole fundamental epistemological problem Of the relation of art to reality” (Rene Wellek 1963:224)

Domian Grant has arranged the types of realism in alphabetical order : “ critical realism, durational realism, dynamic realism, external realism, fantastic realism, formal realism, ideal realism, intra- realism, ironic realism, national realism, naturalism realism , objective realism, optimistic realism, pessimistic realism, plastic realism, poetic realism, psychological realism, quotidian realism, romantic realism, satiric realism, socialist realism, subjective realism, super – subjective realism and visionary realism.”

Fantastic realism, national realism, naturalistic realism, psychological realism, romantic realism and subjective realism is dominant in many of Ballard’s short-stories and novels. The psychological and subjective realism is dominant in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* because author’s personal experiences at Shanghai; China, during Second World War are expressed minutely. The fantastic realism is expressed in *The Day of Creation*. Very little realism which Domian Grant

has mentioned are found in the works of Ballard; others are from modern criticism. Wimsatt and Brooks create a scale of low realism, high realism and drab realism in their *Literary Criticism*.

In the overwhelming majority of modern novels, the ordinary criteria of realism still hold. In many ways elements of ordinary everyday experiences are evident in the modern novel than in the 19th century. Nobody will complain of the modern novel that it lacks those startling or offensive elements, which it was one of the purposes of the term 'realism' to describe. Most description is still realistic. The realistic novel has been replaced by 'psychological novel'. It is obvious that the direct study of certain states of consciousness, certain newly apprehended psychological states, has been a primary modern feature yet, realism in this state has not been widely abandoned. It is merely that 'everyday, ordinary reality' is now differently conceived.

In the novels of J.G. Ballard, *Empire of the Sun* studies the eleven years old boy's (Jim's) psyche and experiences in the camps during the Second World War. And in the novel, *The Kindness of Women* studies the adolescent boy's (Jim's) psyche and sex experiences at Langhwa camp.

It may indeed be possible to write the history of the modern novel in terms of a polarization of styles, object realist and subject impressionist, but the more essential polarization, which has mainly occurred since 1900, is the division of the realist novel, which had created the substance and quality of a way of life in terms of the substance and qualities of persons, into two separate traditions, the 'social' novel and the 'personal' novel. In the social novel there may be accurate observation and description of the general life; in the personal novel there may be accurate observation and description of persons, the units.

There are two main kinds of 'social' novel – the descriptive social novel, the documentary. This creates a general way of life, a particular social or working community. Sometimes characters are quite carefully drawn. What we say about life in a mining town, or in a university or on a merchant ship, or on a patrol in Burma, this is the book many novels of this kind are valuable; the good documentary is usually interesting. Novels of this kind

should go on being written, and with the greatest possible variety of setting. The dimension that we miss is obvious; the characters are miners, dons, soldiers first; illustrations of the way of life. This kind of novel is nearest to the realist novel. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* recounts the author's boyhood in Shanghai during the Second World War and his internment in a prison camp in Japan. The second type of social novel is very lively, quite different from the first on, is now significantly popular. The tenor, here, is not description, but the finding and materialization of a formula about society. *Brave New World*, 1984 are good examples of this kind.

The 'realist' novel is divided into the 'social' and the 'personal' and 'the social novel' in our time has been further divided into 'social documentary' and 'social formula.' In many personal novels, often very good in their own terms, the general way of life does not appear even in this portraiture guise, but as a simple back cloth of shopping and the outbreak of war. If to the writers, society has become the dull abstract thing of the social novels as its worst; it is not surprising that they do not see why it should concern them. They insist on the people as people first, and not as social units and they are quite right to do so. J.G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* are good examples of the personal realistic novels. In these two novels Ballard has presented his auto-biographical experiences in Shanghai during the Second World War and his internment in a prison camp.

Realism in a literary art may be approximately defined as the science of exact presentation of many complexities, abstract and concrete. Realism and romance are found to be as indissoluble as soul and body in a living human being. The true artist is he who is neither a realist nor a romanticist, but in whose work is observable the shaping power of the higher qualities of the methods of genuine realism and the higher qualities of the methods of genuine romance. The realism and romance we find in *Empire of the Sun* (1984), Ballard's conventional novel. The story of his own boyhood in a Japanese internment camp for enemy aliens at Langhua, just outside Shanghai, during World War-II. Ostensibly, this is not a work of science fiction or utopian fiction. There is no clearly kairotic moment. But the novel is not without a certain utopian savor. Jim Graham, the adolescent hero, is obsessed with the bright transforming violence of air war and fantasies of

resurrection. Little by little, the prisoners of Langhua camp form a post-disaster utopia of mutual aid and support. Near the end of hostilities, after the Japanese guards have left the camp and Jim sees several former prisoners trying to return, he waves to his old comrades. He even fantasizes about returning voluntarily with his parents to his perilous freedom after the war, and realizes he would miss the Japanese guards.

Raymond Williams offers four-fold classification – social description, social formula, personal description, and personal formula – as a way of beginning a general analysis of contemporary novel and of defining by contrast, the realist tradition which, in various ways, these kinds have replaced.

The realist novel needs a genuine community: a community of persons linked not merely by one kind of relationship – work or friendship or family- but many interlocking kinds. It is obviously difficult in the 20th century, to find a community of this sort. Where *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* is a complex of personal, family and political working relationships.

The ordinary 20th century novel ends with a man going away on his own, having extricated himself from a dominating situation and found he in so doing.

The contemporary novel has both reflected and illuminated the crisis of our society, and of course we could fall back on the argument that only a different society could resolve our literary problems. Realism, as embodied in its great tradition, is a touchstone in this, for it shows, in detail, that vital interpretation, idea into feeling, person into community, change into settlement which we need, as growing point, in our divided time.

D) Life and works of J.G. Ballard:

James Graham Ballard (b. 1930) is one of the most innovative and respected contemporary science fiction authors. He explores in his work the interior landscape of isolated humans in a postmodern world transformed by

science and technology. The inner space he chronicles lies between the external world of reality and the internal world of the psyche. His characters interact with an Earth made surreal by environmental degradation, media intrusion, and perversity, and they typically appear in the midst of a quest and strive for an individually defined transcendence. His best known work—including *The Crystal World* (1966), *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), *Crash* (1973), *Hello America* (1981) and *Empire of the Sun* (1984) – illuminate the many paradoxes and underlying debasements of contemporary life.

Ballard's birth and early life in Shanghai, China, profoundly shaped his worldview and fiction. His father was a chemist at a Manchester – headquartered textiles firm, the Calico Printers Association, and became chairman and managing director of its subsidiary in Shanghai, the China Printing and Finishing Company. His parents were members of the privileged British colonial class and provided a luxurious home for the young Ballard and his sister. He spent his early childhood in and around the Shanghai International Settlement, an area under foreign control and dominated by American cultural influences. He was sent to the Cathedral School in Shanghai. After the outbreak of the Second Sino- Japanese war his family was forced to temporarily evacuated their suburban home and rent a house in downtown Shanghai to avoid the shells fired by Chinese and Japanese forces. Ballard found some aspects of his life in the camp enjoyable despite the atrocities and hardships be endured there; he chronicled the experiences of those war years in the autobiographical novel *Empire of the Sun* upon his release, Ballard resumed his studies. He attended the Leys School, Cambridge, from 1946 to 1949 and then studies medicine at King's College, Cambridge where he considered becoming a psychiatrist. After two years he left King's College without taking a degree and moved to London University, where he studied English. In 1954 Ballard joined the Royal Air Force and was sent to Canada for his training. He married Helen Mary Matthews in 1955 and started work as an editor of technical journals, writing stories for science fiction magazines on the side. While on holiday, Ballard wrote *The Wind from Nowhere* (1962) the first of his four science fiction novels classified as catastrophe stories. He followed with *The Drawned World* (1962) and *The Burning World* (1964), later edited and reissued as *The Drought* (1965). His wife died suddenly in 1964, leaving him with three young children to rise. Two years later, he published *The Crystal World*, the last of his four catastrophe novels. Ballard's work

moved into a different phase with the publication of *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979), *Hello America*, and *Empire of the Sun*, the last of which awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Guardian Fiction Prize and was nominated for a Booker Prize. Aside from volumes of short stories, essays, and criticism, Ballard's later works have primarily been novels, including *The Day of Creation* (1987) *Running Wild Dies* (1994) and *Cocaine Nights* (1996).

Major works

Ballard's writing embodies his belief that science fiction is the only genuine literature of the twentieth century—that is, the only fiction to have responded imaginatively to the revaluation and moral crises wrought by advances in science and technology. In terms of the internal and external landscapes examined, his work is composed of three phases.

Phase I:

Phase I contains descriptions of imaginary place inspired by the surrealist painters and ends with *The Crystal World*.

The Wind from Nowhere (1961)

The Wind from Nowhere, though it is something of a potboiler, does share much of the structure to be found more fully developed in Ballard's next three novels. This should not be surprising, since elements of the structure may be found in several of the short stories preceding *Wind*.

The "exterior" and "intermediatory" levels of *Wind* are developed in much the same manner as in the subsequent novels. The destruction of urban civilization by the mysterious 550-mile-per-hour winds is foreshadowed in the kind of disruption in the life of the main character, Donald Maitland, which corresponds to Ransom's divorce in *Drought*, Sander's unhappy love affair in *Crystal World*, and the death of Halloway's parents in "city" Even before the urban old order is destroyed,

Maitland has already begun to break the bonds of his personal "old order" by divorcing his wife, leaving his job, and preparing to move to America. On the "exterior" level, the central events in *Wind* are acts of natural destruction: first of London, then of the giant steel pyramid built by the industrial Hardoon to challenge. As the novel closes the wind inexplicably stops; the old urban order is dead, and the brightening sky hints at the birth of a new order. What is missing from *Wind* is the "psychic level" Maitland does not undergo the sort of psychic transmutation experienced, in varying degrees, by Kerans, Ransom, or Sanders. Yet Ballard's first novel, following up on his earlier stories does exhibit something of the structure and the attendant atmosphere of mystery and ambiguity elaborated in his next three novels.

The Drawned World (1962)

The themes of birth, death, and the city achieve their greatest structural unity and create the deepest sense of ambiguity in *The Drawned World* the novel is set in the near future, when a warming of Earth's climate has melted the polar ice caps and flooded much of the planet's surface. Steamy Jungles arise, and reptiles dominate the animal kingdom; there are even unconfirmed reports of dinosaurs. In this vision of a diluvian apocalypse, the symbolic meaning that generally attaches to water in Ballard's fictions is most explicit; it is linked to the theme of (re) birth. The entire earth has become a warm, water-filled womb, giving birth to new (or rather, very old) life – forms and to a "new psychology". The "intermediary" level reflects the death of values in *Drawned World* by its absence: there are no meaningful personal relations in the book, in either a conventional or an unconventional sense. Each character is isolated exploring his or her own inner universe. In the emerging new order isolation seems to be the rule- and not only in *Drawned World* but also in other novels.

The climax of *Drawned World* closely resembles the climax of the later novel, *Drought*. Kerans blows up to dikes holding back the waters from the drained city; and as in *Drought*, this act of destruction aimed at a technological product in an urban environment signals the triumph of the new order. At the end of the novel, Kerans course seems suicidal. Ballard is

suggesting that his “heroes” will be reborn in the jungle or desert; yet both deaths. Must one die to be reborn in the new order, in a bizarre twist on Christian themes in western thought? Or as Ballard later has Sanders suggest, have birth and death- and in fact all fundamental values of western culture – ceased to have any meaning at all in the new order.

The Crystal World (1966) :

The imponderable ambiguity has to do with the mysterious “crystallization” of living matter. Here again, Ballard begins by establishing the “intermediatory” level of his story. As the novel opens Dr. Sanders is returning to an African jungle prompted by a letter from the women with whom he had a long and unhappy love affair. Ballard immediately evokes a sense of uncertainty, at the same time hinting at a connection between the “intermediatory” and “psychic” levels; for Sanders is not of one mind about Suzanne, and his divided feelings are symptomatic of a deeper ambivalence in his personality. He and Suzanne had been working together in a leper colony; and he came to see his love for her as a manifestation of the troubled mental state which strangely attracted him to leprosy.

Those “ambiguous motives” are tied up with the disease which is the central symbolic motif of *Crystal World*. The physical separation of the lepers from himself and others, his sense of strangeness and alienation. The process of crystallization is strangely similar to leprosy since both transform the state of living tissue and both result in a prolonged state of existence suspended between normal life and death.

The journey to the interior must be by way of a river is important. Water is central to Ballard’s symbolism water here also has psychological significance in connection with the amniotic fluid of the womb. The trip upriver may accordingly be interpreted as a trip through the birth canal, supported by life- giving fluid, to a new birth in the Jungle. Thus the physical environment (“exterior” level) is once again ambiguously linked through the theme of rebirth to a transformed mind and personality (“psychic “level)

Phase-II:

This phase begins with *The Impossible Man and Other Stories* (1966) and examines landscapes of technology and the communication industry. The second phase of Ballard's fiction comes to full flower in the short stories of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Crash*, *Concrete Island* and *High Rise*.

The Atrocity Exhibition (1969)

The Atrocity Exhibition (published in the United States as *Love and Napalm: Export USA*). In this book Ballard shows a fascination for modern architecture. Claustrophobia is a key to Ballard's view of present world. There is a continual sense of being hemmed in and enclosed by a universe of concrete. This is quite literally the case in the early short story called "The Concentration City". Here the protagonist attempts to escape from the city that he has grown up. He goes on a long journey on the underground railway, only to end up at the point he started from.

The atmosphere of claustrophobia is more subtly conveyed in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. The hero's world is claustrophobic because it represents an exteriorization of his own mind- or rather, of the collective mind of modern urban man. In this environment, everything is man-made, and thus is psycho-analyzable, like the contents of an individual mind. Every sky-scraper, advertising hoarding or television broadcast has its latent as well as overt meaning. In the 'concrete' stories man is trapped within his own creations, and thus within himself. He is living in a completely 'fictional' world- a world that is in fact a work of science fiction, since it has been brought into existence by technology. As Ballard puts it, life becomes a huge novel. In this enclosed narcissistic present, he sees man as having a terrible existential freedom. The individual can choose to do literally anything he wants to do. Consequently, he is turning increasingly to perversions, particularly those involving violence. After all, man is a naturally perverse animal; his perversity is the measure of his

removal from the normal biological round. Most men who have ever lived have in fact followed the traditional Arcadian rhythms of existence; they have not 'planned' their lives, but have simply lived, following the way of all flesh. However, contemporary man's technological expertise has now given him the means to escape this lot and to fulfil his perverse nature, to realize his every fantasy. Sex has ceased to be a biological function; it has become a purely conceptualized pleasure and this has led to what Ballard calls "the death of affect".

Crash (1973)

According to Ballard it is "first pornographic novel based on technology". The narrator – protagonist of *Crash* is named "James Ballard" although this is not finally confirmed until the beginning of chapter 8. This investiture of the narrator with the authority of the author through the name of the author strongly suggests that *Crash* is autobiographical –a personal statement that from the point of view of an unsympathetic critic may be read as an indulgence in an unfortunate and grotesque sexual fetishism, (given that *Crash* originates in Ballard's earlier controversial fiction, *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) as a piece of atrocious exhibitionism.

"Ballard" the narrator of *Crash*, is involved in a car crash that has the consequences of transforming his awareness about his own real desire. These are congruent with the desire of the late 20th century technological culture that he embodies. The car "accident" is no accident, but the product of a psychopathology operating at the cultural level that is working out according to a post- Freudian logic. Sexuality is "no more than the reflection of a drive called desire". (*Crash* 316). Baudrillard reads the "violently sexualized world" in *Crash* as one at the same time "totally lacking in desire", sexuality having become absorbed by the "universe of simulation" (319). However, the sexualization of the auto-mobile for the narrator after his crash surely functions as a metaphor of revelation of the real object of his desire, namely death and reunification with the organic realm. Far from being abolished, this is desire intensified and freed; but it is

a desire beyond the pleasure principle, absolutely unamenable to reason and hostile to consciousness. The violent, perverse, graphically – depicted death – oriented sexuality in *Crash* is an extended metaphor for this insatiable cultural death- lust.

High – Rise (1975)

The novel deals with the events taking place in a forty- storey building, occupied by high – income professionals whose behavior suddenly and rapidly deteriorates into the most horrifying experience.

Ballard compares his high- rise to a zoo and attempts to use it as a microcosm of society as a whole. The population of the building is divided into three classes various clans with a ‘feudal chief’ at its head and its people are at war with each other. As wars go, this one is more senseless than most, or so it seems sex, violence and social greed are closely linked to each other as the law of the jungle develops.

The violence which erupts suddenly before taking over the whole building is hard to take. Ballard’s style is often vivid. Some readers will find it difficult to follow the author to the end of this horrifying tale in which violence and destruction become ends in themselves. This novel will join others in the controversy by claiming that violence is inevitable and even necessary in a world where man’s natural instincts are repressed within his own ‘civilising’ process.

The Third Phase:

Phase third contains fictions set in actual geographic locations, beginning with *The Unlimited Dream Company*.

The Unlimited Dream Company (1979)

It is a book of this kind a remarkable piece of invention, a flight from the world of the familiar and the real into the exotic universe of dream and desire. Indeed, the image of flight dominates the novel.

The emergence in the novel of a pagan paradise from the world motorways and supermarkets is as much a play on wish – fulfillment as an allegory of salvation the topical landscape (the protagonist) Blake ‘dreams up’ enacts Freud’s analogy between fantasy and ‘nature reservations,’ and the novel mysteriously but alluringly describes what might happen if archetypal dreams of eroticism and ambition were to ‘come true’ in the real world. There is too much decoding to do every detail needs interpreting and the hero’s name is an irritant – but this nagging potential, common to allegory, is diverted by Ballard’s almost Melvillean eloquence (‘Already I saw us rising into the air, fathers, mothers and their children, our ascending flight swaying across the surface of the earth, beneath tornadoes hanging from the canopy of the universe’), as lush as the flowering vines he hangs from his multi- storey garages.

Hello America (1981)

Ballard’s latest novel *Hello America* In many respects is a return to his earlier sci- fiction mode. Set towards the end of the 21st century, the novel follows the course of an exploratory expedition to the USA, now, as a result of a series of ecological disasters, an unpopulated wasteland. As the small band of explorers moves across the continent they encounter, in various strange and hybrid forms, the remnants of the American Dream, its icons, totems and myths exposed in the harsher glare of the country’s dystopia isolation.

Ballard’s re-evaluation of the role America has played in our consciousness and the pervasive nature of its influence on the 20th century is fascinating. However harsh and satirical he might be at times, on the whole Ballard’s attitude is approving. The properties of American life can provide marvelous opportunities for the imagination and its in this area in particular that *Hello America* excels as the novelist indulges in some superb- and quintessentially Ballardian- set- pieces Ballard’s unique style function at

full power in this novel, practically every page provides a compelling example.

Empire of the Sun (1984)

The novel based on events which Ballard himself witnessed and suffered while interned as a boy in Shanghai during the Second World War; this is an extraordinary addition to our modern literature of war. By concentrating on the expatriate colony of Shanghai, and by showing us the events following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor through the eyes of an eleven-year-old boy, Ballard achieves the creation of an amazing microcosm. Above all, the book has a triumph of truthfulness of tone. The boy, Jim separated from his parents, camping out first in his own empty house and then in the deserted house of his parent's friends, eventually interned for four years in the camp at Lunghua. This novel has the authority of experience. If it lacks the more than makes up for this by the impressive quality of its matter-of-fact reporting.

The Day of Creation (1987)

In the unnamed Central African Republic of the English writer Ballard's novel, two political factions are vying for power: on one side are the guerrillas of General Harare, one a dental student, now afflicted with boils and bad teeth. On the other hand is the police chief Captain Kagwa, nominally friendlier to the resident whites but with his own obsessive priorities, first of which is his ancient Mercedes and second the television crew that arrives at the town of Port-la-Nouvelle to document his suppression of the Harare insurgents.

Mallory, an Englishman who has come to this African country to run a clinic for the World Health Organization, has dreamed of bringing water to the arid land, from which Lake Kotto has receded only two years

before. To that end he's been drilling the lake bed. With the execution temporarily averted Kagwa assigns the doctor to guide a crew of bulldozers repairing the Port-la-Nouvelle airstrip. As 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" with its source somewhere in the southern mountains. The long view gives this book a rich allegorical air, a sense of quest and a steady rise in action – helicopter raids, blown up dams, mysterious sexual trysts and clashes with Captain Kagwa- to suggest a near- classic adventure. But when we move in to look at the people the relations between them, or the simple succession of events, things get very cloudy.

***The Kindness of Women* (1991)**

This novel is sequel to *Empire of the Sun* reflects personal realism and social realism. It brings his autobiography up to the 1970s. 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. Here, Ballard is honest, self- deprecating and wildly vivid in laying out the tracks of his adult life. And it is very funny, too full of keenly applies and international humour, like this description of being serviced by a prostitute (p.250): "like a fisherwoman at an angling hole, patiently waiting for a bite, she moved about on her heels, the tip of my penis between her labia". This book has a brutal spine- plenty of hardware and violence and graphic and clinical sex scenes. But it is also, in its own chilly way, enormously tender and likeable with huge vision and ambition.

***Running Wild* (1989)**

J.G. Ballard frequently invokes Manson, an American type to inform a story of a mass parricide. Although the story is set in Britain, Ballard's vision of the world has a distinctly American cast, ruled by icons of Hollywood film (Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor), of political power (John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan), and car crashes (James Dean) that have defined much of America's national and international image.

At the opening of the novel, all the adults in Pangbourne village have been murdered and the children have vanished, presumed kidnapped. Pangbourne village is a wealthy condominium development, a dozen or so houses fenced in, electronically monitored, professionally maintained by a small army of keepers. The narrator, a psychiatrist hired by the police, solves the small mystery of the book: the children themselves killed the adults and fled.

The role of film and video in postmodern culture does have a comforting aspect: when limited to the already represented, reality remains representable and hence understandable, subject to control. Hyperreality implies a total correspondence between the real and the knowledge and therefore denies that might exceed or evade representation. As pubescent teenagers, however, the Pangbourne village children were becoming aware of some unknowable excess through the experience of their sexualized bodies-new, alien bodies suddenly bereft of the compact forms and the pleasures of childhood. The children looked for the parental guarantee that maturity would compensate them for what they had lost. But for all their parents' wealth and health, the guarantee was empty, the law missing.

Cocaine Nights (1996)

It is Ballard's new novel, follows in this tradition although as British critics have pointed out, it's one of the author's most accessible novels – a crime story more plot driven than his earlier work. Travel writer Charles Prentice has been summoned to the Costa del Sol in southern Spain, where his brother, Frank has been charged with five counts of murder. When he arrives, he learns that Frank, manager of an athletic and social club attached to a resort known as Estrella de Mar, has confessed to five-bombing the home of an elderly couple, killing them, their niece and two employees. Charles is convinced of his brother's innocence, so much so that he launches his own investigation into the horrible deaths. And the more he learns about life in this staid retirement community, the more he senses a palpable evil lurking beneath its placid surface, a hidden world of drugs, illicit sex and violence.

One of the charming aspects of this novel is Ballard's ability to turn what appears to be a mystery novel into an exploration of human nature. As Charles wades through the murky waters of Estrella de Mar, he not only uncovers a dark conspiracy that implicates the whole community but also receives an education in the netarious philosophy supporting its lifestyle – a philosophy expressed by the resort club's tennis pro, Bobby Crawford.

Ballard's latest novels are *Supper- Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003) and *Kingdom Come* (2006), tracing the different permutations the ex- concentration- camp prisoner's obsessions with sex, violence and the effects of technology and the media on the contemporary psyche (among) other things have taken over the decades. His other non-fictional work is *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews* (1996). Ballard is also good short- story writer. He has published stories like *Bellennium* (1962), *The Terminal Beach* (1964) *The Day of Forever* (1967), *Vermilion Sands* (1971), *The Voices of Time_* (1985), *War Fever* (1990) etc.

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