

CHAPTER -III

The Day of Creation-
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The protagonist of this novel is Dr. Mallory. He is a WHO (World Health Organization) doctor who, six months after his arrival in Central Africa, finds that intense guerilla activity has left him without patient. He devotes himself, instead, to the task of bringing water to the region, with dreams of setting the Sahara in flower. When he accidentally manages to achieve his task by creating a river, he becomes prey of an increasing delirious spiral of fantasies, starting to identify himself with the new river that he has named "Mallory". Obsessed, he decides to go up the river in order to "kill" its sources, together with a teenaged African girl, whom he considers a sort of spirit of the water, and other characters including a half-blind British documentary film-maker and two ruthless local chieftains trying to take advantage of the new prosperity brought by the water. 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 novel, and he imposes himself on the landscapes, not the other way around. The rich descriptions of plants and watercourses in *The Day of Creation* may stem in part from young Jim's childhood on the margins of the Yangtze and Whangpoo rivers in Shanghai, as well as the older Ballard's trip on the Nile and his impressions of the rain forest that encroaches on Rio de Janeiro. But he has never visited the part of central Africa where he has set this novel.

In the unnamed central African republic, two political factions are vying for power: on one side the guerrillas of General Harare, a television documentary film-maker, Sanger and his associate Mr. Pal, a Japanese photographer Miss Matsuoka, a boatload of whores led by a widow named Mrs. Warrender, a child-women called Noon who communicates by tapping her teeth. On the other 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.

At the beginning of the story, the narrator, Dr. Mallory, is being helped prisoner by a twelve-year-old African girl with a wounded foot, a child soldier among General Harare's rebel. She is about to execute him, but the arrival of Captain Kagwa with the television crew- saves Mallory. He had treated her infected foot when she wandered into the field clinic that morning.

Mallory's main purpose is to visit the African country and is to run a clinic for the World Health Organization. But later on he finds that intense guerilla activity has left him without patients. So he has dreamed of bringing water to the arid land and flowering of Sahara, from which Lake Kotto has receded only two years before. The southward creep of the Sahara and the drying up of nearby Lake Kotto have driven most of the native residents away, leaving the physician with hardly anyone to treat but General Harare and his ragtag band of Marxist guerillas. To that end he has been drilling the lake bed. With the execution temporarily averted because Noon saved him. 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.

Dr. Mallory looks himself as creator and discoverer. Named after its creator and discoverer the River Mallory is the real protagonist of Ballard's novel. Once it wells up in Chapter VI (The Oak and the spring). Meanwhile this mysterious stream had bathed everything with a subterranean light. As he walked through the trees, trying to devise some means of building an effective dam. And he sensed around him the atmosphere of a new world. The central action consists of Dr. Mallory's odyssey to the water's southern source. With the 12-year-old girl, whom he names Noon, once nearly his executioner, now his metaphysical guide. Some women take bath in the river and Mallory becomes angry. But Mrs. Warrender has spoken only the truth- he had made the river but he did not own it. As Mallory tells us- over and over- he created the river, it bears his name, and in every way it's a projection of him. When others attack it, he defends it. When his self-hatred grows too great, he labors to destroy it.

The River Mallory rises over a wasteland strewn with beer bottles, cigarette packs and French pornographic magazines, as well as powdered milk and crushed drug ampoules. Briefly, Dr. Mallory hopes the welling water will wash all this way; but almost as soon as it appears, the river is studded with a legion of beer bottles and aerosol cans and a regatta of used condoms, jettisoned by the French oil-company workers who had built their camp beside the airstrip. This rubbish soon becomes one with the water spider's hydra and infusorians that, along with flies and mosquitoes and the general slough of weeds and branches, infest the river.

By the time Mallory and Noon reach Harare's irrigation projects, six months on and 200 miles south, the river is wholly diseased. Unused to dealing with such "vast volumes of water", the Africans have not done much with the water system. Fever and flies have infected everyone and everything. And the dam that stems the current is composed of old air conditioners water coolers, tires and fuel drums. All this shows a terminal moraine of modern technology. The area surrounding the river, which at first seemed Edenic, becomes poisoned by the water's now miasmatic influence, the people along its banks falling deathly ill with fever and starvation. Mallory himself slides into full fledged dementia and delirium as he battles the guerrillas, the militia and the forces of the nature.

The river, then, is never innocent of modern technology. Even Noon becomes the guide because she has watched cassettes of old Tarzan 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. Noon's pursuit of such Western "distortions" of her own land turns her into an image Mallory himself can pursue to his dream-river's vanishing point. And Mallory kneels in it means that modern technology has changed the life style of common people. And Noon is no exception for this.

Ballard's prose is full of irony and vivid lyricism in it. His characters are larger than life, each carrying the destructive impulses that decimate civilization. Some readers may resist the unrelievedly dark, ominous atmosphere, a profoundly depressing nightmare that goes on a little too long, and find that Mallory is too much an opaque, unsympathetic character, almost a device. Ballard's scorn for

technological “marvels” i.e. the makers of TV documentaries are “the conmen and the carpetbaggers of the late 20th century”, sometimes overpowers his story telling skills, and the roots of Mallory’s suicidal obsession are never made clear. Because Modern Age is an age of complexity and obscurity.

The long view gives this novel a rich allegorical air, a sense of quest and a steady rise in action-helicopter raids, blown-up dames, 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.

Fantasy in *The Day of Creation*:

The word fantasy is both a literary and psychological term. As a literary term a fantasy means any narrative that deals with impossible. 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 chosen impossible task of creating new river.

“With the drying out of the lake and the virtual death of the Kotto River- its head waters were now little more than a string of shallow creeks and meanders- he had decided to extend his domain to Port-la-Nouvelle, and impose his Marxist radio stores.”
(Ballard 2002:15)

Mallory also takes one more impossible task in his hand of making paradise from desert.

“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 entire Sahara, of the transformation of the desert into the Edenic paradise that I saw around

me in these green glades and sensed in its sweet airs”
(Ibid: 109)

It is good example of literary fantasy because creating paradise out of desert is impossible but Mallory fantasizes so. In this sense Paul Gray comments in his essay *A Tale of Time and the River The Day of Creation* as-

“The southward creep of the Sahara and the drying up of nearby Lake Kotto has driven most of the native residents away, leaving the physician with hardly anyone to treat but General Harare and his ragtag band of Marxist guerrillas. But these rebel patients do not trust Mallory, because he has conceived a scheme to drill the dry lake bed and tap into a potential third Nile, which will turn the parched land green and fruitful.” (Gray 1998: 1-2)

As a psychological term fantasy has three meanings. The first meaning of psychological fantasy is an imaginative construction which in some way or other pleases the patient and is mistaken by him for reality. Such type of psychological fantasy 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. 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)

The second meaning of psychological fantasy 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. This type of fantasy is reflected in this novel. The mysterious stream has bathed everything with a

subterranean light. As Mallory walked through the trees, trying to devise some means of building an effective dam. He has to face many difficulties but he sensed around him the atmosphere of a new world.

“Above all it was the river, which had once tried to take my life that now revived me. In the weeks that I spent on the veranda I watched it flow past the grounds of the breeding station.” (Ballard 2002:71)

In this sense Christopher Priest also comments in his essay ‘*Return to the Source*’ about *The Day of Creation* as

“Sometimes Dr. Mallory wishes to revive the weakening flow of water so that the desert may be irrigated, at other times he seeks to strangle it at source.” (Priest 1987:26)

One more example of waking dream is Mallory’s fantasy about the river and Nora Warrender. For Mallory, he himself and the river are not two different things. And Nora Warrender also believes the same. When she bathes in the river Mallory fantasizes as if he is physically in contact with her.

“This intimacy with the hidden fathoms of the river its longest reaches and eventual source, I took to be the reason for her attachment to me. Unlike the others, Sanger and Captain Kagwa and Nora Warrender, she accepted that the river and I were one (Ballard 2002:151)

Mallory knew now why he liked her to bathe naked in the river, to immerse her in that larger dream that sustained their journey. As they moved upstream, his wish to destroy the river is giving away to the belief that there is some secret at the Mallory’s source and that Noon alone will guide him towards it.

The third type of psychological fantasy, which is the activity indulged in moderately and briefly as a temporary holiday or creation, 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 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. The egoistic kind of day-dreamer we find in *The Day of Creation* because the world is seen through the eyes of Mallory, who is hero of the novel. The boy in *Empire of the Sun*, Ballard says with a smile when he was interviewed by Michelle Field about *The Day of Creation*, grows up to be Dr. Mallory the main character in this novel. Mallory is a World Health Organization doctor in the dead heart of the African continent that accidentally unearths a subterranean river that springs forth in the desert. He gives the river his own name and tries to sail to its source, pursued by two worrying guerilla units and a T.V. documentary filmmaker. In a way, Ballard says, it is the story of *Empire of the Sun* 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 crates the landscapes in the book, and he imposes himself on the landscapes, not the other way around.” (Field 1998:1)

The rich descriptions of plants and watercourses in the novel, *The Day of Creation* may stem in part from young Jim’s childhood on the margins of the Yangtze and the Whangpoo rivers in Shanghai as well as the older Ballard’s trip on the Nile and his impressions of the rain forest that encroaches on Rio de Janeiro. But he has never visited the part of central Africa where he has set this novel. He has created imaginary landscape.

“The landscape convinces me as I wrote it, and hopefully it will convince the reader.” (Ibid: 2)

So the egoistic kind of fantasy is dominant in this novel because the world is seen through the eyes of the hero.

Hero’s journey in to the past illustrates what may be called the “Kairotic moment” (Wagar W. Warren 1991:57), the opportune and decisive point in time when psychic transformation occurs in almost every story of Ballard. Usually the Kairotic moment is a disaster, or the free choice of a hazardous alternative, the resolve to live dangerously. In such a moment, the hero (or rarely, heroine) becomes Nietzsche’s Overman, the self-vanquisher, and is reborn. All that distinguishes one

Ballard's story from another, in this sense, is whether the Kairotic moment is followed by a lengthy psychic adventure in which the transforming power awakened at the Kairo is more fully revealed in *The Day of Creation*.

The Day of Creation is one of the most obviously topographical novels. 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 exploits Mallory's visions by trying to make a documentary film of the voyage; but he is not an integral part of the quest.

"I imagined her becoming a princess of the river and the forest, ruling the leopards and the giant oaks with an authority and allure modeled entirely on the poses in Sanger's tawdry films. In many ways Noon's progress charted the future of a special kind of self-consciousness, pandered to but constrained by the limitations of this small screen." (Ballard 2002:142)

So the journey is going in his mind from Shanghai to the central part of Africa. It is a journey of soul of Mallory. It is journey between memory and desire. In other words it is a adventure of Mallory's mind.

Realism in *The Day of Creation*:

Realism is in the broadest sense, simply fidelity to actuality in its representation in literature; a term loosely synonymous with 'verisimilitude'; and in this sense it has been a significant element in almost every school of writing in human history. Realism has been defined as

"the truthful treatment of material". (Thrall, Hibbard and Holman 1960:397)

In the novel *The Day of Creation* is virtually static in form. The real journey described in this novel is an inward one. So this novel is good example of psychological realism and personal realism. There is an old fashioned adventure tale going on, along with a peculiar love story, a mythic quest, a laborious fertility rite and a perilous journey of psychological discovery. So the journey is going in his mind from Shanghai to the central part of Africa. All in all, a journey of some two hundred miles. Although covered with warnings of flash floods, treacherous viaducts, scarcity of fuel and spare parts, the map carried no contour lines and Mallory could only guess that his new river, assuming it flowed from the mountains of the Massif, followed a course close to the lost road.

The personal realism and the social realism are reflected in the novels, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*. The social realism and the personal realism is reflected by concentrating on the expatriate colony of Shanghai, and by showing us the events following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor during the Second World War. The personal realism is reflected in both the novels because the hero, Jim is nobody else but Ballard himself. In the novel *The Day of Creation* we also find personal realism because some personal experiences are reflected in this novel. When Ballard was interviewed by Michelle Field about *The Day of Creation* said that-

“The boy in *Empire of the Sun* grows up to be Dr. Mallory, the main character in *The Day of Creation*.” (Field 1998:1)

In a same interview Ballard says

“It is the story of *Empire of the Sun* turned inside out: the circumstances in *Empire of the Sun* completely encloses the boy and shape him; in *The Day of Creation* it is Mallory himself who creates the landscapes, not the other way around.” (Ibid: 2)

The rich descriptions of plants and watercourses in *The Day of Creation* may stem in part from young Jim’s childhood on the margins of the Yangtze and Whangpoo rivers in Shanghai.

“Jim crossed the field to a line of stunted poplars. He climbed a wooden stile on the floor of a dried-out rice-paddy. The leathery carcass of a water buffalo lay in the shade under the hedge, but otherwise the landscape was empty, as if the Chinese in the Yangtze basin had left the country side for the refuge of Shanghai.” (Ballard 1984:17-18)

The older Ballard's trip on the Nile and his impressions of the rain forest that encroaches on Rio de Janeiro. But Ballard has not visited the central part of Africa where he has set this novel. The landscape which he has created is which landscape imprint created on his mind when he was eleven year old boy at Shanghai. Of course Ballard does not deal with landscape in the manner of a contributor to *The National Geographic Magazine*. He is not a travel writer or a tour guide. The places he describes so bewitchingly are always metaphors for states of mind and soul, psychic or spinal landscape, as in the canvasses of Max Ernst. To know them, to examine them in meticulous detail, is to know the human spirit in all its mad convoluted joy. 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.

“Dreams of rivers, like scenes from a forgotten film, drift through the night, in passage between memory and desire.” (Ballard 2002:7)

One more aspect of realism reflected in this novel is an obsessive quest for control and power. Dr. Mallory wants supreme authority over the River Mallory because he thinks that he has created and discovered the river and he has given his name. He wants to own that river. The two competing guerrilla groups are also in hot pursuit of the river Mallory. According to Mallory the area of the River Mallory is a kind of war zone.

“Think of it, Nora-thanks to the River Mallory this area is about to become a war zone. Already Harare calls it the Red Nile Kagwa thinks he's going to be the proconsul of a new Sahara province with secessionist ambitions.” (Ballard 2002:77)

In this sense W. Warren Wagar comments in his essay, *J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia* as

“In *The Day of Creation*, strongman is twice reincarnated as two African adventurers, Capt. Kagwa and Gen Harare, who vie to establish empires in the fertile valley of the river Mallory. Their pathetic efforts convert the new Eden into a fetid Hell. (Wagar.91:66)

The good example of social realism is also reflected in this novel. In the beginning Mallory's companion, Noon was very innocent and cheste. But later on modern technology effected on the life of Noon. The river then is never innocent of modern technology. Even Noon becomes the guide because she has watched cassettes of old Tarzan 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. Noon's pursuit of such western distortions of her own land turns her into an image Mallory himself can pursue to his dream river's vanishing point. And Sanger also gives him the truth which is merely the lie and Mallory must believe it.

“After all, your creation of the river has sprung from a familiar repertory of childhood clichés. I even suspect that your wish to destroy it is really an attempt to destroy television's image of the world.....” (Ballard, 2002:157)

We also learn more about Ballard's indifference to political solutions form what leaves out of his fictions than from what he puts in. Even the occasional sly dig at Marxism-the good example is the canting messages on the cassette tapes used to teach English to Africans in *The Day of Creation* tells us little about Ballard's political philosophy or lack of one, We must take him at his word, When he tells Graeme Revell:

“Revolutions in aesthetic sensibility may be the only way in which radical changes can be brought about in the future. The economic system of the world are now locked into one huge coalescing world banking system, controlled by government who sit on the

back of his enormous elephant, trying to steer it in one direction or the other..... I think (radical change) can come only from the confines of the skull – by imaginative means, whatever the route may be”
(Graeme JGB: 52)

In brief the novel; *The Day of Creation* is a nightmarish vision of a corrupted world. Dr. Mallory has come to a backward, draught- plagued and poverty ridden African country to run a World Health Organization clinic, but constant warfare between a ragged band of guerillas and the local chief of police has caused the tribal residents to flee. By accident, Mallory discovers a mysterious stream that soon becomes a swiftly flowing river, and he dreams of creating a green Sahara and saving the Third World. Naming river after himself and obsessively identifying with it, he immediately finds himself in conflict with Dr. Sanger. Mallory undergoes a sinister change of heart, acknowledging a self-destructive impulse whose origins in his past are only dimly described. Suddenly deciding he must destroy the river, he travels towards its source on a derelict ferry with a former guerilla, a 12-year-old girl he names Noon, and who progresses in a matter of weeks from Stone Age primitivism to a fascination with technology. Mallory encounters terrifying dangers at every stage of his quest. The area surrounding the river, which at first seemed Edenic, becomes poisoned by the water's now miasmatic influence, the people along its banks falling deathly ill with fever and starvation. Mallory himself slides into fullfledged dementia and delirium as he battles the guerillas, the militia and the force of nature. Ballard's characters are largely than life, each carrying the destructive impulses that decimate civilization.

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