

# **Heterotopic Space in Selected Works of J. G. Ballard**

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## **Abstract**

J. G. Ballard's writing confronts the potentiality of space within the contemporary landscape, articulating complex relationships between the external environment and the individual. In 1983, Ballard stated: '[...] the sort of architectural spaces we inhabit are enormously important -- they are powerful. If every member of the human race were to vanish, our successors from another planet could reconstitute the psychology of the people on this planet from its architecture.'<sup>1</sup> Ballard's texts are at all times bounded by a materiality which the reader is obliged to pay close attention to. This thesis takes a distinct approach to the spatial in the work of Ballard by concentrating on the external, physical environment and its psychological effects. It uses Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a theoretical underpinning to describe certain of Ballard's spaces, a term richly generative for a number of reasons. Heterotopias are other spaces, off-centre with respect to the normal and everyday. They modify space in some way, drawing out latent possibilities. Ballard's representations of space operate in a similar manner, from early short stories that contrast the quotidian with the fantastic, to investigations of postcivil society reconfiguring criminality in his final novels. This study approaches Ballard's work in a chronological way, in order to reflect the way in which his heterotopic spaces map changing social conditions. This also enables consideration of Ballard's developing textual spaces, and, following Foucault's definition of disturbing literary heterotopias that destroy in advance syntax holding words and things together, Ballard's unsettling of genre and traditional narrative structures will be examined along with the resistance of Ballard's texts to easy categorisation and critical assimilation. Ultimately, in this thesis I argue that the spatial is a vital critical category for understanding Ballard's work, conceiving him as an explorer of complex heterotopic space and writer of disruptive heterotopic literature.

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<sup>1</sup> V. Vale and Andrea Juno, eds., *J. G. Ballard* (San Francisco: RE/Search Publications, 1984), p. 44.

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**Abbreviations**

*WFN -- The Wind From Nowhere*

*DW -- The Drowned World*

*D -- The Drought*

*CW -- The Crystal World*

*AE -- The Atrocity Exhibition*

*C -- Crash*

*CI -- Concrete Island*

*VS -- Vermilion Sands*

*ES -- Empire of the Sun*

*MSA -- Memories of the Space Age*

*KW -- The Kindness of Women*

*UGM -- A Users Guide to the Millennium*

*CN -- Cocaine Nights*

*SC -- Super-Cannes*

*CSS1 -- The Complete Short Stories: Volume 1*

*CSS2 -- The Complete Short Stories: Volume 2*

*ML -- Miracles of Life: An Autobiography*

## Introduction

The work of J. G. Ballard confronts the spatial as a horizon of possibility within the contemporary environment, perceiving that space is not a neutral quantity and attempting to understand the processes that actively constitute different spaces inscribing certain kinds of reality. In Ballard's fiction, structuring logics that encode behaviours and social relations regulate spatial possibilities. A central dynamic is the individual struggling to assert coherent alternative arrangements of things (physical and psychological), giving credence to the idea that characters shape their environment through imaginative investments that actively question the idea of reality encoded deep within the spatial. Ballard engages in a project of excavation and recovery in which alternative meanings of space are hidden in palimpsest environments making apparent the contingency of present circumstances and limits to totalising authoritative meaning, often forcing characters to pass through gaps and exclusions within the material landscape.

This study reads space in Ballard as heterotopic, concentrating on his descriptions of physical environments and considering the way in which this aspect of Ballard's work develops over the course of his career. In his lecture 'Of Other Spaces'<sup>2</sup> ('Des Espaces Autres') given to the Circle of Architectural Studies (Cercle d'études architecturales) on 14 March 1967, Michel Foucault calls the present an 'epoch of space' defined in the following way: 'We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.'<sup>3</sup> Anticipating a spatial turn within the humanities, Foucault no longer sees space as a fixed, taken-for-granted ontological category. Foucault's epoch

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault's lecture was first published by the French journal *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* in October 1984. It has been translated into English as both 'Of Other Spaces' (in the journal *Diacritics* in Spring 1986 translated by Jay Miskowiec) and 'Different Spaces' (in the collection *Aesthetics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume 2* translated by Robert Hurley). It appears as 'Of Other Spaces' in the recent 2008 translation by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter in the collection *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, which is the version referred to in this study.

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces (1967)', trans. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter, in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 13-30 (p. 14).

is one in which different types of space, or ‘emplacements’ to use his particular term,<sup>4</sup> can be juxtaposed next to each other, existing within the same continuum as separate but related to each other. In ‘Of Other Spaces’, Foucault also defines heterotopia, an extremely rich term that has continued to generate a number of different meanings since 1967. Heterotopias are alternative orderings, heterogeneous to the rest of normalised space all around them. Foucault makes an important distinction: unlike utopias that do not exist anywhere, heterotopias exist in the real world.<sup>5</sup> Peter Johnson notes the concept of heterotopia problematises the utopic nowhere so that ‘heterotopia refers to varied spatial and temporal disruptions that imaginatively interrogate and undermine certain formulations of utopia’.<sup>6</sup> Although heterotopias may spatially encode certain impulses towards a better life, this is always carried out in negotiation within the parameters of material existence, however messy and complex. Heterotopias are therefore defined by their relationship with the real spaces of the world. The concept helps stress physical materiality in Ballard’s work continually reasserting itself against the possibilities of utopic transcendence.

Etymologically, heterotopia combines ‘hetero’ (another or different) and ‘topos’ (place). Originally, heterotopia is a medical term referring to a displaced but otherwise harmless tissue developing in an unusual or abnormal place. According to Heidi Sohn: ‘From the 1920s onwards, heterotopia increasingly appears in medical literature to describe phenomenon occurring in an unusual place, or to indicate “a spatial displacement of normal tissue”, but which does not influence the overall functioning and development of the organism.’<sup>7</sup> Although Foucault does not refer to

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Emplacement’ means different things in French and English. As Dehaene and De Caeter note: ‘In Foucault’s text, emplacement should be considered a technical term, that is space or rather place in the era of the network as opposed to extension. The space of emplacement only exists as “discrete space”, an instance of one of the possible positions that exist within a set of positions [...] On occasion, he uses the term in a non-technical sense to refer more generally to sites and places, but it is clear that he deliberately avoids the common words “place”, “lieu”, or “endroit” and thereby produces an effect of both emphasis and estrangement.’ (Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, pp. 23-24)

<sup>5</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Johnson, ‘Unravelling Foucault’s “Different Spaces”’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 19:4 (2006), 75-90 (p. 75).

<sup>7</sup> Heidi Sohn, ‘Heterotopia: Anamnesis of a Medical Term’, in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 41-50 (p. 41).



the genesis of heterotopia in medical terminology, the idea of a benign spatial displacement within the body is evocative for his use of the term in a social and cultural context.

Before his lecture, in his introduction to *The Order of Things* (1966) Foucault uses heterotopia to denote a textual space by referencing a passage in Jorge Luis Borges describing a Chinese Encyclopaedia<sup>8</sup> that has the power ‘to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other’,<sup>9</sup> revealing a disorder worse than the incongruous and invoking the irregular inflections of the heteroclitite. Foucault sees this disorder as heterotopic and compares it to the reassuring order of utopia:

Utopias afford consolidation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together’.<sup>10</sup>

Utopias synthesise a perfect order of things and are untroubled, but are also chimerical with no real locality. Heterotopias shatter perfectible order to produce impossible spaces revealing the limits of a language going beyond the incongruous. Johnson notes the profound influence of Maurice Blanchot on Foucault’s thinking about literary heterotopias and the ‘spatial dynamics of literature’:

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<sup>8</sup> The Chinese encyclopaedia that Foucault refers to is the ‘Heavenly Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge’ described in ‘John Wilkins’ Analytic Language’ (Jorge Luis Borges, *The Total Library* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 231).

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. xiv.

<sup>10</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xix.

Blanchot's fiction lights up an 'irredeemable incompatibility' between language as it appears and notions of consciousness and subjectivity. Moreover, Blanchot's discourse critically refuses any use of 'reflexive language' that always tries to move towards some inner certainty; it holds no secret but merely dances across a 'neutral space': a dispersion without any foundation [...] Crucially in Blanchot's work, there is an anteriority of language, an existence beyond customary subjectivity. It does not reveal anything except itself [...]<sup>11</sup>

Heterotopias describe a similar spatiality of language moving towards a radically destabilised outside or exterior space rather than inner certainty. Foucault's literary heterotopias inspired by Blanchot represent 'enclosures that are a passage to the outside, detaching us from ourselves'<sup>12</sup> bringing us outside our subjectivity.

The concept of heterotopia as a radical outside space, along with the intersection between the spatial thinking of Blanchot and Foucault, will be considered in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4. The idea of textual heterotopias that destroy syntax holding things together will also be a central theme in a discussion throughout this study of Ballard's texts as heterotopic literature, engaging with Roger Luckhurst's analysis of the essence of unreadability in Ballard's work occupying 'the enigma of the space between'<sup>13</sup> that evades easy classification, disrupts genre, and unsettles traditional narrative structure. Luckhurst suggests that Ballard can never be satisfactorily incorporated into critical discourse so that 'The oeuvre will not give up its irreducible core, the remainder that escapes analysis.'<sup>14</sup> A possible approach to this indeterminability is the concept that heterotopic textual spaces suspend the normative orders that hold things together and make them available for critical appropriation.

In his lecture, Foucault describes heterotopic spaces that exist in the geographical fabric of all societies. He states his intention to analyse the

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<sup>11</sup> Johnson, 'Unravelling Foucault's "Different Spaces"', p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, 'Unravelling Foucault's "Different Spaces"', p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls': The Fiction of J. G. Ballard* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. xix.

<sup>14</sup> Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls'*, p. xix.

heterogeneous space ‘in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves’<sup>15</sup> gesturing towards a Blanchot-inspired passage to the outside so that heterotopias are:

[...] real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted; a kind of places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localizable.<sup>16</sup>

According to Foucault’s spatial analysis, heterotopias are real and locatable counter-emplacements that reflect, contest, and invert the rest of normalised space existing all around them. Foucault goes on to describe six principles by which he defines heterotopia:

1. His first principle is that all cultures constitute heterotopias at some time, meaning that they are varied and non-universal in character, depending on the society in which they are initiated. Foucault does broadly classify two major types: heterotopias of crisis and heterotopias of deviation (or deviance).<sup>17</sup> Heterotopias of crisis are sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals in crisis in relation to the rest of society, presently disappearing to be replaced by heterotopias of deviation as spaces housing those whose behaviour is judged deviant in relation to the required norms of society. Foucault uses rest homes, psychiatric hospitals and prisons as examples of emerging heterotopias of deviation.
2. Foucault’s second principle is that society, at any given time, can make heterotopias function in very different ways. Using the example of the cemetery, he shows how it is a space changing its use and location depending on attitudes to death.
3. Using examples of theatres, cinemas and gardens, Foucault’s third principle is that heterotopias are capable of juxtaposing in a single real

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 18.

place several spaces or emplacements that are in themselves incompatible, recalling the impossible juxtaposing spaces of textual heterotopias described in *The Order of Things*.

4. Foucault's fourth principle is that heterotopias are often linked to slices of time, or absolute breaks with the traditional time of society, that he calls heterochronisms which can either pile up indefinitely accumulating in an archive, such as those found in museums or libraries, or festive heterotopias where different temporalities are experienced at their most transient, such as fairground or carnival spaces (that Foucault describes as 'marvellous empty emplacements at the outskirts of cities, which fill up, once or twice a year, with stands, displays, heteroclit objects, wrestlers, snake women, fortune tellers'<sup>18</sup>).
5. Foucault's fifth principle is that heterotopias have their own systems of opening and closing, both isolating them and making them penetrable. Often access rituals or rites separate heterotopias from the space around them. Apparent openings can conceal barriers so that heterotopias can seem to be simultaneously public and private (or partition part of their space as private).
6. Foucault uses examples of two oppositional forms to explain his sixth principle that heterotopias have a function in relation to the rest of society. Heterotopias such as the brothel can 'create a space of illusion that exposes all real space, all the emplacements in the interior of which human life is enclosed and partitioned, as even more illusory.'<sup>19</sup> At the other end of the scale, the colony is a heterotopia of compensation 'creating another space, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is disorderly, ill constructed and sketchy'.<sup>20</sup>

Foucault's sixth principle of heterotopia describes a tension between heterotopias of illusion and compensation that I argue is central to the kinds of spatiality represented in Ballard's work.<sup>21</sup> Whereas heterotopias of illusion are spaces

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<sup>18</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> As Dehaene and De Caeter note: 'The qualifications "illusion" and "compensation" recall the distinction between heterotopias of crisis and deviance introduced in the first principle' (Foucault, 'Of

imbued with a certain kind of imaginative potential, at the other end of the continuum heterotopias of compensation bring to mind Foucault's work on ordered pieces of space such as the prison. The relationship between heterotopias of illusion and compensation is antagonistic because it is precisely the excessive ordering of space that heterotopias of illusion expose. Heterotopias of illusion are therefore potentially resistive spaces compared to the careful regulation of heterotopias of compensation. Throughout this study, the tension between heterotopias of compensation and illusion will be discussed as a significant spatial dynamic in Ballard's work.

Heterotopias can take on a range of characteristics and can be extraordinarily diverse and elusive. In 'Of Other Spaces', Foucault provides examples of a range of possible heterotopic spaces from the prison to the sauna, library to brothel.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore not surprising that critics have interpreted the concept of heterotopia in a number of different ways. Sometimes heterotopia has been used to denote the transition from a single totalising utopic imagination to postmodern plurality, standing in opposition to Foucault's stated distinction between heterotopia and utopia. Gianni Vattimo traces the contemporary decline of utopic imagining due to a lack of consensus on standardised, communal aesthetic experience so that 'Aesthetic utopia comes about only through its articulation as heterotopia. Our experience of the beautiful in the recognition of models that make the world and community is restricted to the moment when these worlds and communities present themselves explicitly as plural.'<sup>23</sup> Tobin Sieber, also discussing the idea of heterotopia, invokes the idea of heterogeneity as key to postmodern utopian thinking using the metaphor of

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Other Spaces', p. 27). This leads them to distill six main types of heterotopia (crisis, deviance, illusion, compensation, festivity, and permanence) which distinguishes three axes: '[...] an anthropological, a temporal and an imaginary axis. It is clear, however, that there are potentially more, pointing to other dialectical tensions at work in the world of heterotopia. The anthropological axis (1) situates heterotopia on the division normal/abnormal, topos/heterotopos, common place/other place, resulting in the historical qualifications of crisis and deviance. The temporal axis (2) opposes permanence to the event-like character of the feast. The imaginary axis (3) conceives of heterotopias as realized utopias, as real spaces with a specific relation to the non-real spaces of utopia, resulting in the specific function heterotopia has with respect to "the rest of space", namely that of illusion or compensation' (Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 27).

<sup>22</sup> Foucault also names a number of heterotopias that directly resonate with Ballard's work such as psychiatric hospitals, cinemas, and sites on the edge of the city.

<sup>23</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 69.

the romantic couple: ‘where individuals must overcome their differences (the most threatening being sexual difference) to attain happiness (the most sought-after being sexual happiness)’.<sup>24</sup> Whilst heterogeneity is important to Foucault’s concept, it is too reductive to understand heterotopia as a plurality of utopias. As effectively realised utopias and real places, heterotopias actively question the postmodern utopic imagination by transforming fantasy into material reality.

Other critics have focused more directly on the ambivalent textures of Foucault’s notion of heterotopia. Edward W. Soja believes:

Foucault’s heterogeneous and relational space of heterotopias is neither a substanceless void to be filled by cognitive intuition nor a repository of physical forms to be phenomenologically described in all its resplendent variability. It is another space [...] actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices. It is a space rarely seen for it has been obscured by a bifocal vision that traditionally views space as either mental construct or a physical form.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst also describing Foucault’s analysis of heterotopia as ‘frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent’,<sup>26</sup> Soja acknowledges the potential of heterotopias as actually lived spaces, realised socially, but also subject to certain imaginative investments. In *The Badlands of Modernity*, Kevin Hetherington describes heterotopias as ‘spaces of alternative social ordering’<sup>27</sup> that organise a part of the social world in a different way to the surrounding space. For Hetherington, heterotopias exist in a space not of transition but of deferral: ‘spaces where ideas and practices that represent the good life can come into being, from nowhere, even if they never actually achieve what they set out to achieve -- social order, or control and

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<sup>24</sup> Tobin Siebers, ed., *Heterotopia: Postmodern Utopia and the Body Politic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 17-18.

<sup>26</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 162.

<sup>27</sup> Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. viii.

freedom’.<sup>28</sup> According to this analysis, heterotopias are places where utopic ideas can be experimented on whilst tacitly acknowledging that perfection can never really be achieved. Hetherington stresses that heterotopias can be instruments of normalisation and order extending hegemonic power relations (heterotopias of compensation) as well spaces of otherness characterised by inclusiveness and radical openness (heterotopias of illusion).

The more recent *Heterotopia and the City* edited by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter, argues for the relevance of the term in contemporary urban theory and postcivil society, placing heterotopia ‘at a crossroads of the conceptual flight lines that shape public space today’<sup>29</sup> as ‘aporetic spaces that reveal or represent something about the society in which they reside through the way in which they incorporate and stage the very contradictions that this society produces but is unable to resolve’.<sup>30</sup> For Dehaene and De Caeter, heterotopias are situated at an intersection of ‘two axes real/imaginary (utopia-heterotopia) and normal/other (topos-heterotopos)’.<sup>31</sup> The utopia-heterotopia axis is important, charging ‘heterotopia with the full ambiguity, even undecidability, of whether to attribute to it “eutopic” or “dystopic” qualities. Its place in reality as other (topos-heterotopos) opens up its own set of ambiguities, raising the question of whether heterotopia is a world of discipline or emancipation, resistance or sedation.’<sup>32</sup> In the context of this study of heterotopic space in the work of Ballard, a central question is whether heterotopias should be seen as sites of normalisation or resistance, an idea picked up in Hilde Heyden’s ‘Afterthoughts’ to Dehaene and De Caeter’s collection pointing out a doubleness defining heterotopia: ‘Heterotopias can be sites of hegemonic violence and oppression, but they might also harbour the potentials for resistance and subversion. This doubleness differentiates

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<sup>28</sup> Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity*, p. ix.

<sup>29</sup> Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter, ‘Heterotopia in a Postcivil Society’ in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Caeter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 3-10 (p. 4).

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 25.

them from utopias, which are supposedly just benign and non-oppressive -- and therefore non-real.’<sup>33</sup>

In the article ‘Unravelling Foucault’s “Different Spaces”’, Peter Johnson argues against the association of heterotopias with spaces of resistance and transgression that encode certain utopic principles so that Foucault’s concept:

[...] not only contrasts to but also disrupts utopia. Although Foucault describes heterotopia as ‘actually existing utopia’, the conception is not tied to a space that promotes any promise, any hope or any primary form of resistance or liberation [...] heterotopias are fundamentally disturbing places [...] Heterotopias draw us out of ourselves in peculiar ways; they display and inaugurate a difference and challenge the space in which we may feel at home.<sup>34</sup>

In the recent collection, *The Globalization of Space: Foucault and Heterotopia*, Mariangela Palladino and John Miller note a heterotopia ‘is a space or a language in which to think things differently’,<sup>35</sup> but also point out that ‘Heterotopias should not, however, be understood in opposition to the space from which they are differentiated. They remain intimately involved with the rest of the world, even as they suspend its regulations and affects.’<sup>36</sup> Opposed to the utopic imagination that escapes from material reality, ‘The heterotopia is set apart and connected; it exposes, reveals or recreates the “real” spaces of society’,<sup>37</sup> so that heterotopias can complexly both oppose or confirm the dominant spatiality in any given society.

In his study *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place*, Eric Prieto widens the discussion of heterotopia to draw attention to what he perceives to

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<sup>33</sup> Hilde Heynen, ‘Afterthoughts: Heterotopia Unfolded?’ in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 311-124 (p. 319).

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, ‘Unravelling Foucault’s “Different Spaces”’, p. 84.

<sup>35</sup> Mariangela Palladino and John Miller, ‘Introduction’ in *The Globalization of Space*, ed. by Mariangela Palladino and John Miller (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015), pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

<sup>36</sup> Palladino and Miller, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Palladino and Miller, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.



be a poststructuralist resistance to place and preference for space.<sup>38</sup> Prieto notes the important intersection between the spatial thinking of Foucault and Maurice Blanchot by highlighting Blanchot's 1961 essay 'The Conquest of Space'.<sup>39</sup> Celebrating Yuri Gagarin's achievement as the first man to travel to outer space, Prieto sees 'The Conquest of Space' as an implicit critique of Heideggerian dwelling in which the 'sedentary place dweller is considered to embody a universal element of human nature -- but a negative one [...] the attachment to place is a sign of weakness [...] For Blanchot, the man defined by his attachment to place is associated with a whole series of negative, archaic characteristics, including superstition [...] and territorial avidity [...] and even, perhaps, colonial rapaciousness'.<sup>40</sup> Blanchot detects a historical progression from place to space in which 'place serves as the devalued term (that which has been superseded) and space serves as the favoured term'.<sup>41</sup> Foucault goes one step further in 'Of Other Spaces' adding a third stage that Prieto characterises as a poststructuralist 'beyond' of space: 'Foucault's version of the history of space is divided into three epochs, which can be summed up as a movement from place (*lieu*), to space (*étendue*), to something that he at first calls "the site" before settling on the more explicitly structuralist notion of a "set" or "bundle" of "relations" (*ensemble/faisceau de relations*).'<sup>42</sup> This bundle of relations is an erosion of the specifics of place and extension of the qualities of space so that:

Foucault's heterotopias are actual sites/places, located physically in the real world, but they enable us to enter into a kind of structuralist hyperspace that has less to do with actual spatial relations than with the ability to bring together, in one place, representations of other places and spaces that may be distant geographically but close functionally.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Eric Prieto, *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 75-106.

<sup>39</sup> Blanchot's essay also forms an important part of the analysis of Ballard's Cape Canaveral fictions discussed in Chapter 4 where it will be dealt with in more detail.

<sup>40</sup> Prieto, *Postmodern Poetics of Place*, p. 79.

<sup>41</sup> Prieto, *Postmodern Poetics of Place*, p. 83.

<sup>42</sup> Prieto, *Postmodern Poetics of Place*, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> Prieto, *Postmodern Poetics of Place*, p. 85.

Heterotopias therefore present themselves as ‘a kind of intermediary or interstitial site, existing in the *entre-deux*, between existing spatial categories. It is an actual place (he uses the word *lieu*) but to which one goes in order to be (virtually) somewhere else’.<sup>44</sup> As will be expanded on in the following chapters, this spatial slippage of place, first theorised by Blanchot in ‘The Conquest of Space’ allows Foucault’s heterotopias to function as ‘virtual passageways or thresholds -- intermediary spaces whose function is to put two distant realities into contact’,<sup>45</sup> an important concept for Ballard’s writing repeatedly linking or bringing together different kinds of space.

The idea of linking different spaces is an apt starting point when considering the critical reception of Ballard, an author perceived to have brought together distinct literary audiences. As Richard Brown notes, Ballard’s reputation as a writer has undergone recent revaluations shifting his reputation from a ‘bad boy of sixties fiction’ finding an audience of ‘*non-* or even *anti-*literary readers’<sup>46</sup> towards increasing critical and academic respectability. For Brown this is linked to the instabilities of genre which Ballard’s fictions exploit and through which he reveals a deep sense of the ‘undecideability of the contemporary’ intrinsic to the ‘millennial fictions’ of our time. Brown’s reading of Ballard constructs his fictions as intertextual generic spaces populated by their own unstable theorists in figures such as Vaughan, and in the later fictions, Bobby Crawford and Wilder Penrose, whose deep challenge to the history of representation is reflected in the recurrent figure of the wound.<sup>47</sup>

In 1997, Luckhurst admits to what he calls a ‘negotiation with embarrassment’<sup>48</sup> in casting Ballard’s writing in a serious critical light, in part due to Ballard’s protracted ghettoisation in the disreputable science fiction genre: ‘A catastrophe thus appears to await those wishing to claim for Ballard the status of a “major” writer: the catastrophe of the glutinous adherence of his name to the “popular”, the generic: science fiction. To praise Ballard’s name always seems to

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<sup>44</sup> Prieto, *Postmodern Poetics of Place*, p. 85.

<sup>45</sup> Prieto, *Postmodern Poetics of Place*, p. 85.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Brown, ‘Reading J. G. Ballard After the Millennium: The Scars of *Crash*, *Cocaine Nights*, and *Millennium People*’, *Critical Engagements*, 2 (2008), 125-149 (p. 125).

<sup>47</sup> Brown, ‘Reading J. G. Ballard After the Millennium’, pp. 125-149.

<sup>48</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 2.

involve an intensification of the anxiety of legitimisation.’<sup>49</sup> Such anxieties have lessened a great deal (if not disappeared completely) in large part due to Luckhurst’s important justification of Ballard’s work occupying a difficult liminal space ‘in between’ that defies critical convention.

Critics have long noted the complex spatiality of Ballard’s texts, and his defiance of genre conventions. Before Luckhurst’s study, James Goddard and David Pringle recognised Ballard ‘transcending’<sup>50</sup> the science fiction category, believing in 1975 that ‘Ballard has produced work in such a wide spectrum of forms and types that it would be a disservice to call him a “science fiction” writer, an “avant garde” writer, an “experimental” writer or a “new wave” writer. He is all these things and more. Above all, Ballard is a “contemporary” writer.’<sup>51</sup> Early critical approaches to Ballard’s work collected in *J. G. Ballard: The First Twenty Years* (1976) draw attention to the fecundity of Ballard’s writing and themes. Pringle’s *Earth is the Alien Planet* (1979) expands on the suggestive four-fold symbolism he detects in Ballard’s work, and notes that: ‘Ballard’s novels and stories are full of “things seen” -- landscapes, objects, creatures. He is an intensely visual writer who deals in images and “properties.” For anyone who has read more than a few of Ballard’s stories these landscapes and properties are instantly recognizable.’<sup>52</sup>

Peter Brigg provides a survey of Ballard’s career up to 1985, analysing both his short-stories and long fiction. In his conclusion, Brigg continues to bracket Ballard as a serious ‘first-line’<sup>53</sup> science fiction writer, and whilst criticising Ballard’s repetitiveness, static plotting, and aimless action, suggests the originality of Ballard’s style is ‘derived in part from the transfer of surrealism from the painter’s canvas to the printed page and in part from putting to use his personal experience of being an outside and objective viewer of the Western societies in which he has spent his adult

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<sup>49</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> David Pringle, *Earth is the Alien Planet: J. G. Ballard's Four-Dimensional Nightmare* (San Bernardino: Borgo, 1979), p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> James Goddard and David Pringle, ‘J. G. Ballard: Our Contemporary’ in *J. G. Ballard: The First Twenty Years*, ed. by James Goddard and David Pringle (Middlesex: Bran’s Head, 1976), pp. 1-7 (p. 1).

<sup>52</sup> Pringle, *Earth is the Alien Planet*, p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Brigg, *J.G. Ballard* (San Bernardino: Borgo, 1985), p. 109.

life'.<sup>54</sup> The idea of a visual writer transferring the painter's canvas to the printed page, also suggested by Pringle, draws attention to descriptions of external landscapes as a prominent feature of Ballard's work. Anticipating Luckhurst's foregrounding of 'the angle between two walls' (*AE* 71), Briggs suggests 'shifting balances between mental experience and the objective universe and its strange "angle" on the events which surround us'<sup>55</sup> as a central feature. Brigg's recognition of a prominent external objective universe therefore suggests an important early context for this study.

Marxist critic H. Bruce Franklin puts forward a negative view of Ballard as a remote, solipsistic writer of dead-end nihilism, misusing or ignoring history. In 1979 Franklin laments: 'What could Ballard create if he were able to envision the end of capitalism as not the end, but the beginning, of a human world?'<sup>56</sup> Most criticism of the past few decades has effectively challenged this early negative perspective on Ballard's writing. W. Warren Wagar calls Ballard a 'postmodern utopographer' in 1991, believing his landscapes represent liminal worlds through which an individual or utopian cell must pass through in order to arrive at a kairotic moment or opportune time of psychic transformation.<sup>57</sup> In the same year, Gregory Stephenson's *Out of the Night and into the Dream* considers the central theme in Ballard's work 'a crisis of being and of consciousness, an ontological disorder which obtains at three mutually reflective levels: the cosmic, the social, and the individual'.<sup>58</sup> Against this crisis, and occurring on each reflective level, Stephenson reads an archetypal hero journey or quest romance for transcendence in which Ballard's protagonists traverse Jungian landscapes of shadow and anima towards an 'ontological Garden of Eden' (*CSS2* 49). Both Wagar and Stephenson write about moments of transformation in Ballard that push texts towards utopic possibilities, repositioning the author away from nihilistic readings of the entropic environments in his work. Highlighting the dynamic of characters in confrontation and negotiation with landscapes provides an important

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<sup>54</sup> Brigg, *J.G. Ballard*, p. 110.

<sup>55</sup> Brigg, *J.G. Ballard*, p. 110.

<sup>56</sup> H. Bruce Franklin, 'What are we to Make of J. G. Ballard's Apocalypse?' (1979)

<[http://www.jgballard.ca/criticism/ballard\\_apocalypse\\_1979.html](http://www.jgballard.ca/criticism/ballard_apocalypse_1979.html)> [accessed 9 November 2015].

<sup>57</sup> W. Warren Wagar, 'J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia', *Science Fiction Studies*, 18:1 (March 1991), 53-70 (pp. 57-65).

<sup>58</sup> Gregory Stephenson, *Out of the Night and into the Dream: A Thematic Study of the Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (London: Greenwood Press, 1991), p. 147.

insight into the importance of external space in Ballard's work. However, a heterotopic reading of Ballard questions and problematises ideas of transcendent utopias in his work.

Jean Baudrillard's famous description of *Crash* as the 'first great novel of the universe of simulation',<sup>59</sup> suspending value judgements and moral gaze, engages with the postmodern textures of Ballard's work also recognised by Fredric Jameson and Brian McHale. For McHale: 'In his story-sequence *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1969) Ballard finally frees his ontological projections from their epistemological constraints, producing what is essentially a postmodern text based on science-fiction *topoi*', enabling *The Atrocity Exhibition* to fully emerge as game-like 'art in a closed field.'<sup>60</sup> In 'Utopianism After the End of Utopia', Jameson highlights a 'certain spatial turn' as a way to distinguish postmodernism from modernism signalling 'the displacement of time, the spatialization of the temporal'<sup>61</sup> in which historicising existential time and deep memory are lost. He references Ballard's short story 'The Voices of Time' (1960) where he notes 'what Ballard works on linguistically are, in fact, the multiple signatures of Time itself, which his own writing reads'.<sup>62</sup> This resonates with Foucault's description of a contemporary epoch of space (the jumble of simultaneity, juxtaposition, near and far, side-by-side, and dispersed) and is an important starting point for this study since Jameson's reading of 'The Voices of Time' positions the spatial as central in Ballard's work.

Although postmodern theories open critical discourses engaging with important features of Ballard's work, they perhaps allow accusations of solipsism to persist. Jeannette Baxter has valid reservations about a fully engaged postmodern reading that 'accelerates Ballard's project beyond fiction, beyond reality, and,

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<sup>59</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Galser (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1994), p. 119.

<sup>60</sup> Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 69-70.

<sup>61</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 156.

<sup>62</sup> Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 155.

crucially, beyond history',<sup>63</sup> and fails to position Ballard as critic of the postmodern project working 'precisely to recover that which the postmodern condition blocks'.<sup>64</sup>

Roger Luckhurst's previously noted study *The Angle Between Two Walls* recognises the difficulty of placing Ballard as a literary voice, drawing attention to the complex spatiality of Ballard's writing occupying the margins and spaces between frames. Luckhurst uses Jacques Derrida's theory of *la brisure* to explain: 'Ballard, it might be said, is in the place of the hinge, the device which at once joins together and separates two planes or surfaces.'<sup>65</sup> For Luckhurst: 'the Ballard oeuvre is nothing other than a prolonged meditation on the question of protocols, boundaries, frames and the evaluations they set in train'.<sup>66</sup> Although primarily concerned with a poststructuralist analysis of the literary critical reception and distribution of Ballard's texts (oscillating between frames of high and low, *avant-garde* and popular), Luckhurst also draws attention the importance of the juxtaposition of different spaces that occurs in Ballard's texts also highlighted in this study.

Andrzej Gasiorek's 2004 study *J. G. Ballard* responds to the multiplicity of Ballard's writing and recognises his refusal to conform,<sup>67</sup> utilising a range of critical approaches that avoid appropriating Ballard as belonging to any literary tradition. Gasiorek highlights the connective space in between as important, situating Ballard's writing amid a childhood 'colonial and significantly Americanised reality' and 'a parochial and largely decaying English milieu' so that:

The slippage between these two imaginative worlds opens up the creative space in which Ballard's fiction operates. It gives rise to a series of indeterminate, liminal zones that permit the writer to engage in an exploratory, speculative cartography of the contemporary everyday, which has over time drawn on the estranging resources of science fiction, Surrealism, and Pop Art. If it has proved difficult to 'place' Ballard within a 'map' of post-war British

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<sup>63</sup> Jeannette Baxter, *J. G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls*, p. xiii.

<sup>66</sup> Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls*, p. xiii.

<sup>67</sup> Andrzej Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 1.

fiction [...] then this is because his work engages in an idiosyncratic ‘mapping’ process of its own.<sup>68</sup>

Gasiorek’s approach usefully conveys the diversity of Ballard’s work but limits the ability to develop a sustained theoretical model or language applied across his oeuvre.

Jeannette Baxter’s *J. G. Ballard’s Surrealist Imagination* (2009) challenges postmodernist or poststructuralist appropriations of Ballard’s work, repositioning the author as reaching back and engaging with a Surrealist visual and literary tradition so that ‘Ballard’s fictional and non-fictional writings constitute a radical Surrealist experiment in the rewriting of post-war history and culture.’<sup>69</sup> Whilst Baxter’s assertion of Ballard’s involvement in an experimental project recovering hidden and alternative histories rescues him from nihilistic and ahistorical readings of his work, fully aligning Ballard with a Surrealist enterprise imports a certain amount of ideological and political freight that underestimates Ballard’s original and individualistic approach.

Baxter’s two edited volumes of critical essays on Ballard, *J. G. Ballard: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (2008) and *J. G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions* (2012, with Rowland Wymer), offer a series of readings of Ballard’s work utilising a range of contemporary critical perspectives that emphasise ‘all critical moves the capture, know and “explain” J. G. Ballard and his work are fraught with ambiguities, paradoxes and ultimately, uncertainty’.<sup>70</sup>

Samuel Francis’ *The Psychological Fictions of J. G. Ballard* (2011), building on an earlier thesis that examines Ballard’s concept of inner space, analyses the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, as well as the anti-psychiatry of R. D. Laing, as key influences in Ballard’s writing. Like Baxter’s highlighting of Surrealist inspirations, Francis’ study deepens and consolidates critical appreciation of Ballard’s psychological themes often noted but rarely expanded upon.

David Ian Paddy’s recent *The Empires of J. G. Ballard* (2015) highlights Ballard’s engagement with hidden colonial and post-colonial histories and textures and draws attention to Ballard as an international writer with Paddy carrying out an

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<sup>68</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer, ‘Introduction’ in *J. G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions*, ed. by Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1-18 (p. 10).

‘exploration of the ways in which Ballard’s *oeuvre* constitutes a sustained examination of the evolution of imperialism in the post-war period and of the cultural, social, economic and psychological dynamics of international imperial networks that persist today’.<sup>71</sup> Whilst there is a danger of overstating a narrow focus on Ballard as an imperial and post-imperial critic, rather than a wider and more productive understanding of his engagement with the pervasive conditions of contemporary life, Paddy’s study usefully refocuses attention on Ballard’s relationship with Britain as ‘a reluctant immigrant from the Far East’ (*UGM* 138), and highlights certain foreign spaces informing Ballard’s complex and alternative spatial understandings. Paddy also acknowledges the importance of the extant external world in Ballard’s work: ‘[...] Ballard is first and foremost a writer who emphasized the importance of the imagination and the role of the imagination in shaping and skewing “the world,” but this is not the same thing as saying his work amounts to a denial of that world’.<sup>72</sup>

There are an increasing number of academic articles on Ballard’s work that cannot be highlighted here due to restrictions of space, but will be considered where relevant to texts and themes discussed in the following chapters. It is also important to note Ballard’s status within literary and popular culture beyond academic studies, abiding after his death in 2009 and leading to a large amount of material providing insights into his work. Arguably the only author to have made the transition from cult popularity as a member of the British New Wave science fiction group in the 1960s and 1970s to mainstream acceptance, Ballard, Francis notes, exists in an ambiguous position between mainstream acceptance or ‘cultural canonization’ and reputation as ‘a literary maverick, an imaginative radical, a transgressive, subversive writer unafraid to violate taboos and to voice unspoken truths about the state of modern humanity’<sup>73</sup> exemplified by his refusal of a CBE in 2003. Enduring cult popularity has led to numerous references and allusions to Ballard’s work by musicians such as Joy Division, The Normal, and more recently, The Klaxons. Websites such as Rick McGrath’s ‘JG Ballard’<sup>74</sup> and Simon Sellars’s ‘Ballardian’<sup>75</sup> are forums collecting a

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<sup>71</sup> David Ian Paddy, *The Empires of J. G. Ballard: An Imagined Geography* (Canterbury: Gylphi, 2015), pp. 6-7.

<sup>72</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Samuel Francis, *The Psychological Fictions of J. G. Ballard* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> Rick McGrath, ‘JG Ballard’ <<http://www.jgballard.ca/index.html>> [accessed 29 July 2015]

<sup>75</sup> Simon Sellars, ‘Ballardian’ <<http://www.ballardian.com>> [accessed 7 November 2015]



great amount of material written about Ballard on numerous themes and subjects. Publications such as Rick McGrath's annual *Deep Ends* anthology and V. Vale's *Re/Search* publications collect articles and interviews about Ballard. Interviews with Ballard about various subjects are published in *J. G. Ballard: Conversations* edited by V. Vale and *Extreme Metaphors* edited by Simon Sellars and Dan O'Hara. Ballard's writing is often praised in the press by contemporaries such as Martin Amis, Will Self and John Grey. The British Library acquired his archive in 2010, and four films based on Ballard's work have been released: *Empire of the Sun* directed by Steven Spielberg in 1987, *Crash* directed by David Cronenberg in 1996, *The Atrocity Exhibition* directed by Jonathan Weiss in 2000, and *High-Rise* directed by Ben Wheatley in 2015. Ballard's best selling novel, *Empire of the Sun* is a James Tait Black Memorial Prize and *Guardian* Fiction Prize winner and Man Booker Prize nominee. The popularity of Ballard's work has meant that most of his books have been continually in print in various editions that are often supplemented by interviews and other critical insights. The most recent 2015 Fourth Estate re-print of the Ballard oeuvre includes introductions by various writers, literary and cultural commentators such as Neil Gaiman, Hari Kunzru, Zadie Smith, Ali Smith, and Iain Sinclair, showing Ballard's broad appeal as a writer concerned with the contemporary.

In this discussion of critical recognition of Ballard's work, I have highlighted space as important but under-theorised concern in secondary critical works on Ballard. As David James notes in *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space* (2008) representations of landscapes and spatial poetics are a central concern for contemporary writers. James notes the importance of charting 'different topographical "sites" in recent fiction where the interface of landscape and stylistic experimentation also mediates the way we apprehend the formal and ideological imperatives of writers today'.<sup>76</sup> Such topographical sites form an important part of this study of the work of Ballard in which descriptions of certain kinds of space have distinct stylistic effects and consequences.

This thesis takes a distinct theoretical approach to the spatial in Ballard's writing by concentrating on external environments, contending there are two major overlapping categories of space for Ballard. Following his proclamation in 1962 that

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<sup>76</sup> David James, *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 4.

‘The biggest developments of the immediate future will take place, not on the moon or Mars, but on Earth, and it is *inner space*, not outer, that needs to be explored’ (UGM 197), critics have tended to concentrate on Ballard’s inner space as rich ‘psychological realm’ (UGM 189) or ‘internal landscape’ (UGM 200), but sustained analysis of Ballard’s writing problematises dualistic boundaries and blurs apparent distinctions so that inner space must also be understood as a ‘fusion of the outer world of reality and the inner world of the psyche’ (UGM 84) positioning the external, outer world as central. Even as a self-proclaimed cartographer of inner space, Ballard’s writing confronts and negotiates the real spaces of the world leading him to note: ‘Landscape is a formalization of space and time. And the external landscapes directly reflect interior states of mind.’<sup>77</sup> Inner space as a central dynamic in Ballard’s work cannot be understood as insular, interior space as there is clearly a powerful external influence leading Francis to note: ‘Ballard’s “inner space” may be defined partially in ontological, as well as psychological, terms.’<sup>78</sup> For Luckhurst, rejecting the oversimplified definition of inner space as the externalisation of the unconscious, the notion of intersection continues to be important: ‘the solipsistic projection of the unconscious is denied as the sole source for the constitution of landscape. Rather it is the angles between, in the shifting conjunctions of the public, somatic and psychic, where Ballard places the landscape of his fiction.’<sup>79</sup> Inner and outer space must be understood as intimate and mutually constitutive in Ballard’s fiction, and an aim of this study is to refocus attention on external landscapes as a principle consideration in reading Ballard’s work.

This study conceives the representation of space in Ballard’s work as heterotopic in two ways. The first is an analysis of physical spaces in texts that resemble heterotopias, and the way in which these change over the course of Ballard’s career. The second is a consideration of the way in which Ballard’s writing approaches the idea of literary heterotopias described by Foucault in *The Order of Things* that disrupt conventions such as genre and the syntax holding things together on the page. Both approaches benefit from a chronological approach to Ballard’s texts in order to recognise the way in which the concept of heterotopia develops in his

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<sup>77</sup> Vale and Juno, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 159.

<sup>78</sup> Francis, Samuel, ‘A Critical Reading of “Inner Space” in Selected Works of J. G. Ballard’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2006), p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 51.

writing. Although considerations of space mean that certain texts have been left out, the selection has been chosen in such a way to best represent the idea of heterotopic space in Ballard's work.

Ballard began his career by writing for several science fiction magazines in the 1950s before his first novels were published in the early 1960s, and he continued to write short stories throughout his life. It is important to consider these texts alongside Ballard's longer novels in order to gain the fullest understanding of his fiction and therefore the first chapter of this study compares two heterotopic spaces described in Ballard's first published short stories 'Escapement' and 'Prima Belladonna' considering the ways in which these early stories unsettle conventions of the science fiction genre anticipating Ballard's development as a writer of heterotopic literature. In the May 1962 edition of *New Worlds*, Ballard confidently made a case for a new type of science fiction in his editorial, 'Which Way to Inner Space?', declaring 'The only truly alien planet is Earth' (*UGM* 197) and directing attention away from rocket ships, inter-stellar travel, and extra-terrestrial life. 'Prima Belladonna', set in the desert resort of Vermilion Sands, describes a fantasy zone that diminishes the need for scientific mimesis allowing normative laws to be called into question as Ballard synthesises disparate things. *Vermilion Sands* emerges as a textual zone of untrammelled imaginative potential in which Ballard's 'knots'<sup>80</sup> of language are an expression of the underlying spatial incongruities and impossibilities. 'Escapement', centring on the more quotidian space of a suburban Maida Vale living room, describes a space unsettled by intrusive technologies that foster new temporalities. Ballard describes a series of temporal jump-backs that resemble Foucault's description of heterochronisms as a symptom of heterotopic space and Fredric Jameson's utopic enclaves in which new forms of spatiality can be thought about and experimented on. A comparison of 'Escapement' and 'Prima Belladonna' show two distinct modes of spatiality present at an early stage in Ballard's writing, in which fantastically imaginative spaces are set against normative everyday spaces.

Building on themes of apocalypse and revelation that trouble Ballard's *Vermilion Sands* space, my second chapter considers the triptych of novels, *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World* structured around apocalyptic catastrophes. Catastrophe is an ambiguous phenomenon that re-orders (opens and

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<sup>80</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 175.

closes) certain spatial meanings. Slavoj Žižek describes catastrophe as an ‘answer of the real’ and ‘a non-symbolized kernel that makes a sudden appearance in the symbolic order’,<sup>81</sup> and in order to avoid traumatic encounters, humanity denies the fullness of catastrophe covering ‘the irreducible gap separating the real from the modes of its symbolization’.<sup>82</sup> Open and uncontained heterotopic cemetery spaces become emblematic of post-catastrophic environments in which the dead come traumatically close to the living. Ballard positions his texts in the space between two deaths explained by Žižek as the gap opened up between physical death and death in the symbolic order, and catastrophe accesses a troubling and disruptive other space that resists anthropocene symbolic containment.

My third chapter considers ‘The Terminal Beach’ and *The Atrocity Exhibition*, two of Ballard’s most complex, fragmentary, and challenging texts that resemble Foucault’s description of a heterotopic literature that destroys syntax in advance and promotes the disorder of things placed incongruously side-by-side. Important in these two texts is an intersection of Foucault’s and Blanchot’s theories describing a destabilising outside literary space of fragmentary writing and literature as a workless space of radical openness. Further exploring themes of catastrophe, ‘The Terminal Beach’ and *The Atrocity Exhibition* describe already destroyed landscapes that refuse to disclose final, totalised meaning. Ballard’s literary spaces overflow his characters dispersing them into an endless stream of unworkable discourse that constantly unsettles the idea of a stable external reality.

Chapter 4 considers more of Ballard’s short stories, focusing on his Cape Canaveral fictions produced over a number of years. Further developing the intersection of Foucault’s and Blanchot’s spatial thinking, this chapter considers the dialogue between Foucault’s epoch of space and Blanchot’s essay ‘The Conquest of Space’, articulating the idea of extra-terrestrial space as an unsettling external heterotopic space able to outstrip the human spatial imagination. With the Cape Canaveral stories, Ballard develops the idea of a heterotopic literature within science fiction that questions and problematises assumptions about the spatial in the genre, unsettling the assurances of terrestrial and localised space.

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<sup>81</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 39.

<sup>82</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, pp. 35-36.

Chapter 5 discusses Ballard's novels *Crash* and *Concrete Island* in dialogue with Foucault's heterotopias and Marc Augé's concept of non-place. Foucault talks about marvellous empty emplacements at the outskirts of cities that are potential heterotopias, and Ballard explores gaps within the planned, functional urban environment that are potentially spaces of imaginative investment disrupting the smooth flow of contemporary space through the uncanny recovery of events disavowed in the creation of non-place. In *Crash*, Ballard describes a series of rebellious heterotopic enclaves accessed within the motorway non-place focusing around the personalised space of the car cabin. In *Concrete Island*, Ballard opens a traffic island dead zone to a prolonged spatial investigation that expands and imbues it with various new possibilities. Ballard's heterotopic appropriation of non-places upsets the totalising logic of modern urban environments, offering new opportunities for the evaluation and use of space.

My sixth chapter considers Ballard's autobiographical novels, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* and autobiography, *Miracles of Life*. These texts have an ambiguous and complex relationship, with Ballard showing a compulsive desire to repeatedly re-visit and re-interpret the past, interrogating the authority of a singular and totalising historical record to emphasise contingent rearrangements and alternative orderings. Ballard represents the spaces of his past as uncertain, full of discontinuities, and subject to a lack of historical closure. In particular, Lunghua camp is an unresolved heterotopia that resonates throughout Ballard's writing. The disturbing space of Lunghua becomes complexly suspended somewhere between a heterotopic sanctuary and Giorgio Agamben's theorisation of the camp. Ballard's multiple reconfigurations show the past as mutable, existing at an intersection between physical and imaginative spaces that pushes his autobiographical texts to become a type of heterotopic literature.

Chapter 7 considers Ballard's late novels *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, which rearrange the conventions of crime fiction in order to explore the meaning of crime in contemporary society. Recalling the contrast of spaces in his first short stories analysed in Chapter 1, Ballard contrasts two bounded or gated communities that represent heterotopias of compensation and illusion suspending the normative rules present in the rest of society to operate their own spatial logics. Radically closed-off from outside moral influences, crime becomes an imaginative stimulus in both communities with Ballard's protagonists becoming immersed in compulsive

cycle of repetition of illicit activity. Ballard disrupts the normalising operation of the crime novel, structurally containing and neutralising the actions of the criminal, to elicit a fascination with crime that evokes a sensationalist form of crime reportage and revisits the gothic roots of the detective genre.

Foucault's theory of heterotopia directs attention to the spatiality of human life and lived experience, and Ballard prioritises the arrangement of space as a primary concern in his fiction. Space is never neutral, and it plays an active part in shaping the individual and the horizons of ontological being. Heterotopias are interesting as spaces of alternative ordering, existing in the real world but also as sites (or emplacements) open to imaginative investment as 'a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live'.<sup>83</sup> This cuts to the heart of the ontological concerns in Ballard's fiction in which characters are constituted by spatial arrangements. The heterotopias that Ballard develops throughout his career are changeable negotiated spaces that might oppose or consolidate the logic of the normalised space all around them but cannot fully transcend it.

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<sup>83</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 17.

## Chapter 1

### Two Heterotopic Spaces in ‘Prima Belladonna’ and ‘Escapement’

This chapter considers two significant modes of spatiality described in Ballard’s first published short stories as a professional writer, ‘Escapement’ (1956) and ‘Prima Belladonna’ (1956).<sup>84</sup> Set in the ‘overlit desert resort’ (VS 7) of *Vermilion Sands*, ‘Prima Belladonna’ describes a future zone of fantasy and desire, but also ennui and boredom. *Vermilion Sands* is a protean, chimeric textual space of transformation and hybridity. The synthesis of difference that occurs in *Vermilion Sands*, utilising mystifying similes to place dissimilar things together, resembles Foucault’s heterotopic literature described in *The Order of Things*. Space becomes overdetermined, simultaneously gesturing towards an apocalyptic future and nostalgic, romantic past. In order to bring things together, *Vermilion Sands* incorporates a number of linking spaces such as the balcony. As a fantasy space containing elements of magic, it cheats normative laws and threatens to displace the human within a technological environment. ‘Escapement’ contrasts with ‘Prima Belladonna’ by attempting to adhere to established physical laws and scientific reason. It describes a quotidian environment invaded by novel technologies creating strange new temporalities. The resultant jump-back described by Ballard enables a series of backwards glances problematizing the forward momentum of 1950s science fiction enthusiasm for future spaces. Concerned about the proliferation of technology, in his earliest stories Ballard proposes a series of jump-backs that resemble Foucault’s heterochronisms and Fredric Jameson’s utopic enclaves that suspend the rush towards a technological future.

‘Prima Belladonna’ would later form part of the *Vermilion Sands* collection of stories, first published collectively by Berkley in 1971, which share the desert resort as their location. It is tempting to see the richly coloured sand that gives *Vermilion Sands* its name as Ballard’s reaction against the drabness he perceived when first arriving in England from Shanghai in 1946. Describing his first impressions of England in *Miracles of Life*, Ballard twice refers to the grey sky:

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<sup>84</sup> ‘Prima Belladonna’ was published a few weeks before ‘Escapement’ due to a technicality. Since *New Worlds* was published monthly and *Science Fantasy* bi-monthly, the release dates of the magazines were staggered, so that the *Science Fantasy* issue containing ‘Prima Belladonna’ was released before *New Worlds* containing ‘Escapement’, even though both magazines are dated December 1957.

‘under a cold sky so grey and low’ (*ML* 121) and ‘the sky was slate-grey with soot’ (*ML* 123). In contrast, Ballard’s preface to *Vermilion Sands* claims it ‘is a place where I would be happy to live’ (*VS* 7). Contrasted with rubble, dirt, and rationing (*ML* 122-123), the vividness of *Vermilion Sands* can be read as a form of wish-fulfilment and Ballard’s reaction against the defeatism he perceived in English post-war cultural life, an attitude summed up in Ballard’s fictionalised memoir, *The Kindness of Women*: ‘The English talked as if they had won the war, but behaved as if they had lost it’ (*KW* 62). ‘Prima Belladonna’ and the other *Vermilion Sands* stories structure themselves around a dynamic synthesis of life and art, where ‘work is the ultimate play, and play the ultimate work’ (*VS* 8). That prospect must have been attractive in an England that, for Ballard, was chronically stuck in the past, stultified by an archaic class system (*ML* 125) and with ‘little more to look forward to than [...] nostalgia’ (*ML* 126). The fluidity of the aesthetic transformations that take place in *Vermilion Sands* (with objects constantly moving, growing, and changing shape) focuses the reader’s attention on a protean space that is abundant and rich. All of the *Vermilion Sands* stories are written in the first person, suggesting Ballard’s desire to place himself in the desert resort and imagine it through his own eyes. As one of Ballard’s first fictive spaces, *Vermilion Sands* articulates a zone of fantasy and desire.

*Vermilion Sands* encodes certain utopic qualities, not least because it lacks a certain physical location. Ballard describes the spiritual home of *Vermilion Sands* as ‘somewhere between Arizona and Ipanema Beach’ and ‘in sections of the 3,000-mile-long linear city that stretches from Gibraltar to Glyfada Beach’ (*VS* 7). *Vermilion Sands* exists as a nowhere space, situated in-between continents and cultures. However, chronic boredom unsettles the utopic qualities of this nowhere where no one does any work. Despite the aesthetic and artistic freedoms that *Vermilion Sands* provides, ‘long, empty afternoons’ (*VS* 51) also make boredom a perpetual problem. Everybody suffers from acute ennui in the form of ‘beach fatigue’, which Ballard variously describes as ‘irreversible boredom and inertia’ (*VS* 51-52), and a ‘chronic malaise which exiles the victim to a limbo of endless sunbathing, dark glasses and afternoon terraces’ (*VS* 147). Ballard’s stories describe a Recess that is a ten-year world slump of boredom (*VS* 31), situating *Vermilion Sands* at the epicentre of terminally slackened productive energies, as a space of lethargy and deferral. In contrast to much 1950s science fiction, ‘Prima Belladonna’ introduces readers to a space ruled by lazy artists rather than diligent scientists, leading Gasiorsek to note the



*fin-de-siècle* atmosphere of *Vermilion Sands*.<sup>85</sup> The only rule is the no one does any work, and the narrator of 'Prima Belladonna' is chastised for 'overproduction' (*VS* 31). As Lars Svendsen notes: 'Boredom constitutes a boundary for a utopia. A utopia can never be completely accomplished, for that would be synonymous with boredom - - and this boredom would eat up any utopia from the inside.'<sup>86</sup> This danger is recognised in William Morris's future society -- 'happiness without happy daily work is impossible'<sup>87</sup> -- recognising the necessity of gathering of grapes from thorns and figs from thistles. The daily work lacking in *Vermilion Sands* undercuts its potential as a fictive utopia, and it is a space that actively plays with ideas of boredom. It is a space in which everything is over, including judgements about a good or better life. There are certain utopic potentials within the space of *Vermilion Sands*, but Ballard refuses to coalesce these into something that would resemble a didactic blueprint. Instead *Vermilion Sands* operates as a space of normative suspension and experimentation.

'Prima Belladonna' is the story of Jane Ciracylides. Uniquely in the *Vermilion Sands* stories, she is a mutant, described as having 'a rich patina-golden skin and what looked like insects for eyes' (*VS* 31). Ciracylides can be read as Ballard's knowing concession to 1950s publishers looking for stories about exotic aliens, but there may be more than a hint of parody in 'Prima Belladonna', since Ciracylides's alarming appearance undermines her seemingly intended textual role as an object of desire, especially when her eyes are described as 'writhing insanely' (*VS* 36). Ciracylides is Ballard's response to the parade of stock science fiction females (alien princesses and futuristic damsels in distress), a relic of the pre-war pulp era when, as Mike Ashley notes: 'the plots of most stories could be simplified to the "hero-saves-girl-from-monster" school which has remained as the basis of most puerile sf ever since'.<sup>88</sup> It is this mode of science fiction that Ballard appropriates and subverts in 'Prima Belladonna'. Describing herself as a speciality singer, Ciracylides comes to *Vermilion Sands* and begins an affair with Steve Parker, the narrator and

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<sup>85</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 27.

<sup>86</sup> Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Boredom*, trans. by John Irons (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), p. 138.

<sup>87</sup> William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 123.

<sup>88</sup> Mike Ashley, *Transformations: The Story of the Science Fiction Magazines from 1950 to 1970* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 2.

owner of a choro-flora business breeding singing plants. However, Ciracylides becomes obsessed with the monstrous Khan-Archnid orchid, a large carnivorous plant that is part of the choro-flora stock. After singing to the plant, she succumbs to desire and is consumed by the orchid. Ciracylides therefore refuses to be saved by the hero and sides with the monster.

Ciracylides's strange name resembles 'cycloidea', a term that refers to the evolution of zygomorphic flowers, including orchids<sup>89</sup> (hinting at her affinity for plant life). Ciracylides also appears to be rooted in 'circa', suggesting approximation and ambiguity as characteristic traits. Ciracylides is an approximate figure, complexly gesturing to a number of textual precedents, and in-keeping with the space she inhabits, she is a difficult and problematic creation. An admirer, Harry, recognises her as 'straight out of the primal apocalyptic sea' (*VS* 32), defying conventional understanding. She is a composite, chimerical, and hybrid creature, allowing Ballard to describe the bizarre coupling of Ciracylides and Parker's Khan-Archnid orchid that synthesises human, insect, and plant in a kind of convulsive desire: 'I turned and saw that woman staring intently at the plant, her skin aflame, the insects in her eyes writhing insanely. The Archnid stretched out towards her, calyx erect, leaves like blood-red sabres' (*VS* 37). The chimera is key to the space of *Vermilion Sands*. Thresholds are constantly crossed, often to the point of absurdity, and the threat of a bizarre 'audio-vegetative armageddon' (*VS* 40) is brought on by Ciracylides and the Khan-Archnid orchid.

Synthesis of different elements is therefore a particular effect of the space of *Vermilion Sands*, and Ballard anticipates a kind of heterotopic writing linking together things that are inappropriate, as in Foucault's disorder of the *heteroclit* where 'things are "laid", "placed", "arranged" in site so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a common locus beneath them all'.<sup>90</sup> Colin Greenland argues that Ballard's use of simile is inspired by his interest in Surrealist art, forcing of a conjunction of terms that are entirely unlike. As in Comte de Lautréamont's meeting of umbrella and sewing machine, the vehicle of conjunction in Ciracylides's eyes like insects is 'a special

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<sup>89</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://0-www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/233145?redirectedFrom=zygomorphic#eid>> [accessed 19 November 2015].

<sup>90</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xix.

kind of simile, a comparison which mystifies instead of elucidating'.<sup>91</sup> For Greenland, this is the use of pseudo-simile: 'one in which there is no discoverable parity between the terms. Ballard's version of it [...] keeps the relation but blurs the distinction, so that the two halves of the simile, the actual and the virtual, can be swapped over'.<sup>92</sup> Luckhurst observes that this tactic is used extensively in *Vermilion Sands*, and simile is alarmingly pervasive.<sup>93</sup> In order for the function of 'likeness' to work in *Vermilion Sands*, Ballard's text becomes necessarily flat, laying terms out together and lulling the reader with the connecting 'like'. Luckhurst notes, the flatness of the text reflects the wide expanses of sand and infinitely receding horizons that are particular to *Vermilion Sands*. 'Like' is potentially abused in *Vermilion Sands*, and the problematic chains of meaning set up by its use open Ballard to the accusation of bad writing. What saves *Vermilion Sands* is its self-encryption as a 'self-contained future' (*VS* 7), refolding back on itself.<sup>94</sup> Ciracylides's eyes like insects therefore make sense through repetition in other stories: Lorraine Drexel in 'Venus Smiles' has eyes like black orchids (*VS* 112), and Leonora Chanel in 'The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral D' has jewelled eyes (*VS* 16). These are confusing images, but though an internal echo enforcing the self-contained textual space of *Vermilion Sands*, Ballard manages to set up unique expectations (the reader would be disappointed if the women of *Vermilion Sands* had normal eyes). The meaning behind Ciracylides's insect eyes is the convergence of difference, resistant to being read as a simple or totalised image. Any underlying order or 'place of residence'<sup>95</sup> resolving incongruity is deferred. The authoritative seal of final or definitive meaning is never disclosed, withheld, as Luckhurst suggests, along with the authorial signature.<sup>96</sup> The (anti-)climax of *Vermilion Sands* is that the apocalypse that Ciracylides resembles, like a deferred future, never arrives to make sense of its space defining a common locus. Ballard therefore constitutes the space of *Vermilion Sands* as always chimeric, transformative, and emergent, surfeit with linkages between multiple spaces of potentiality.

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<sup>91</sup> Colin Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 103.

<sup>92</sup> Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition*, p. 103.

<sup>93</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', pp. 173-174.

<sup>94</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 177.

<sup>95</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xix.

<sup>96</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', pp. 168-181

Redolent of leisure, the balcony is a significant space in *Vermilion Sands*. In his introduction, Ballard argues that lying in the sun is the hallmark of *Vermilion Sands* (*VS* 7), a posture most effective on the balcony. There are 42 mentions of balconies in the stories of *Vermilion Sands*. In ‘Prima Belladonna’, Steve Parker and his friends spend most of their time on the balcony, drinking beer and playing i-Go<sup>97</sup> described as ‘a sort of decelerated chess’ (*VS* 31) (appropriately, Ciracylides is first seen from Parker’s balcony ‘rearranging the furniture’ (*VS* 32), a habitual activity in the mutable desert resort). The introductory paragraph of ‘Studio 5, The Stars’ also describes an evocative balcony space:

Every evening during the summer at Vermilion Sands the insane poems of my beautiful neighbour drifted across the desert to me from Studio 5, The Stars, the broken skeins of coloured tape unravelling in the sand like the threads of a dismembered web. All night they would flutter around the buttresses below the terrace entwining themselves through the balcony railings, and by morning, before I swept them away, they would hang across the south face of the villa like a vivid cerise bougainvillea. (*VS* 145)

Broken skeins of coloured tape wrap themselves around the balcony representing the poetic energy of Aurora Day invading the domestic space of the narrator. Difference is suspended within the balcony space so that organic things (bougainvillea) are conflated with technological things (coloured tape). Ballard’s text continually encodes a transformative dynamic expressed in spatial metaphors of crossing boundaries.

Like the later ‘billion balconies facing the sun [...] a final goodbye to wars and ideologies’ (*CN* 180) described in *Cocaine Nights* (a text considered in the final chapter of this study), balconies in *Vermilion Sands* are complex spaces suspending difference, liminal sites that play with Gaston Bachelard’s dialectics of outside and inside:

Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. It has the

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<sup>97</sup> By coincidence, Ballard manages to predict the prevalence of the suffix ‘i’ to denote the technological, coming in to popular usage with the launch of the iMac computer in 1998.

sharpness of the dialectics of *yes* and *no*, which decides everything. Unless one is careful, it is made into a basis of images that govern all thoughts of positive and negative. Logicians draw circles that overlap or exclude each other, and all their rules immediately become clear. Philosophers, when confronted with inside and outside, think in terms of being and non-being.<sup>98</sup>

Bachelard introduces his dialectics with a quote from Paul Éluard, '*Les géographies solennelles des limites humaines*',<sup>99</sup> and it is the solemn geographies of human limits that *Vermilion Sands* plays with (for example, enabling the Kahn-Arachnid orchid's appropriation of human qualities). The *Vermilion Sands* balcony space means a suspension of the spaces of inside and outside standing for easy distinctions and clear rules, enabling problematic conflations defying exclusory laws.

There are also several examples of people gazing voyeuristically from the balcony space in *Vermilion Sands*. In 'The Screen Game', Charles Van Stratten, an eccentric millionaire, imagines his dead mother 'watching his every movement through tripod-mounted opera glasses on some distant balcony' (*VS* 51). Van Stratten employs director Orson Kanin, sometime '*enfant terrible* of the futurist cinema' (*VS* 54), to direct a film for him. Ballard's mention of Futurism recalls 'The Street Enters the House' (1911) and 'Horizontal Construction' (1912) by artist Umberto Boccioni, paintings which situate his mother in the liminal space of the balcony. As Christine Poggi notes, in 'The Street Enters the House', Boccioni's mother leans over the balcony to observe the activity below, 'Her head and upper body plunge into the vortex of the scene before her, so that she seems to collaborate in the interpenetration of interior and exterior forces', whilst in 'Horizontal Construction' she turns her back to the exterior space, and 'She no longer views or participates in the activity of urban life, but submits to its dislocations and transformations.'<sup>100</sup> The balcony is therefore a threshold space, situated as conduit between the interior and exterior forces (inside and outside), and submitting to dislocations and transformations.

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<sup>98</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994), pp. 211-212.

<sup>99</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 211.

<sup>100</sup> Christine Poggi, *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 165.

Arranged as a series of interlocking but differentiated and juxtaposed spaces, it becomes apparent that *Vermilion Sands* has no fixed centre, recalling Foucault's invocation of an epoch of spatiality and simultaneity ('the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed'<sup>101</sup>). The lack of an overarching organising principle or schema within *Vermilion Sands* shows up the heterotopic potential of the resort as a changeable fantasy space, making it difficult to clearly map. The empty 'square in the centre of Vermilion Sands' (*VS* 112) described in 'Venus Smiles' is in fact a palimpsest space overlaying an older story 'Mobile' (published in 1957 and then re-written as a *Vermilion Sands* story), describing the same square somewhere else: 'the square over the new car park in the centre of Murchison'.<sup>102</sup> The difficult location of *Vermilion Sands* slips between textual frames and a comparison between the space of 'Venus Smiles' and 'Mobile' helps define the particular qualities of space in Ballard's resort.<sup>103</sup>

'Mobile' is the story of a sculpture produced by Lubitsch, who is described as:

[...] a small wiry man of about forty, subdued and distant- subdued, as we now knew, only because he was still recovering from his first traumatic

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<sup>101</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 13.

<sup>102</sup> J. G. Ballard, *Billemium* (New York: Berkley, 1962), p. 104.

<sup>103</sup> Comparison between Ballard's stories also highlights some amusing differences. Some of the names of characters are adapted: the narrator of 'Mobile' is informally called Bill, changed to Mr Hamilton in 'Venus Smiles'; Carol is Bill's wife in 'Mobile' whilst in 'Venus Smiles' she is his secretary. It would appear that bachelors better suit the space of *Vermilion Sands* (the one married couple in *Vermilion Sands*, in 'The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista', split up during the course of the story), although Ballard's changes makes for an intimate professional relationship since Carol and Mr Hamilton continue to live in the same house, although Carol's bedroom is 'fortunately on the other side' (*VS* 122) of the building. The sculptor Lubitsch in 'Mobile' becomes Lorraine Drexel in 'Venus Smiles', and Ballard changes the phrase 'three professional sculptures in or near Murchison; the first two we saw were heavy talkative men with enormous red fists and monumental schemes' to 'dozens of professional sculptors in Vermilion Sands, but only three had deigned to present themselves before the committee. The first two we saw were large, bearded men with enormous fists and impossible schemes' (*VS* 112) (presumably enormous red fists clash with the vermilion hue of 'Venus Smiles'). In keeping with the futurity of *Vermilion Sands*, Expo 75 replaces the Rockefeller Plaza and the Festival of Britain in 'Venus Smiles'.

encounter with Neo-Futurism. He had lived in Murchison for three months, arriving via Berlin, Santiago and the Chicago New arts Centre.<sup>104</sup>

Like Charles Van Stratten in ‘The Screen Game’, the name of Lubitsch’s artwork, ‘Form and Quantum: Generative Synthesis 3’, acknowledges an appreciation of the work of Umberto Boccioni, referencing dynamic sculptures expressing motion and fluidity such as ‘Synthesis of Human Dynamism’ (1913) and ‘Unique Forms of Continuity in Space’ (1913). Boccioni’s manifesto, ‘The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting’ (1913) proclaims: ‘If we then go deeper into our perceptive faculties and translate the other value, that is the QUALITATIVE value, we shall discover the MOTION, the impulse of the object. Motion is quality, and, in our sculptural aesthetic, quality equals feeling.’<sup>105</sup> The title of Ballard’s story is therefore well chosen, recognising the motive impulse that Boccioni isolates in his sculpture.

‘Venus Smiles’ replaces Lubitsch with Drexel, who is described in more detail:

This elegant and autocratic creature in a cartwheel hat, with her eyes like black orchids, was a sometime model and intimate of Giacometti and John Cage. Wearing a blue crêpe de Chine dress ornamented with lace serpents and other art nouveau emblems, she sat before us like some fugitive Salome from the world of Aubrey Beardsley. Her immense eyes regarded us with an almost hypnotic calm, as if she had discovered that very moment some unique quality in these two amiable dilettantes of the Fine Arts Committee.

She had lived in Vermilion Sands for only three months, arriving via Berlin, Calcutta and the Chicago New Arts Centre. (*VS* 112)

In ‘Venus Smiles’, ‘Sonic sculpture is the thing’ (*VS* 111) replacing the Neo-Futurist fad in ‘Mobile’. This shifts aesthetic focus from self-consciously modern Neo-Futurism to nostalgic, even elegiac, textures more suited to the space of *Vermilion*

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<sup>104</sup> Ballard, *Billemium*, p. 105.

<sup>105</sup> Umberto Boccioni, ‘The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting 1913’ in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. by Umberto Apollonio (London: Tate, 2009), pp. 88-90 (p. 89).

*Sands*. Having served apprenticeships with the visual artist Alberto Giacometti and composer John Cage, Lorraine Drexel creates the sculpture ‘Sound and Quantum: Generative Synthesis 3’, adding a sonic element to Lubitsch’s ‘Form and Quantum’. Both stories describe their sculptures growing out of control (whereas Lubitsch denies the possibility of this statue growing, the suspension of rules in *Vermilion Sands* enables this feature to be part of Lorraine Drexel’s deliberate design), but ‘Venus Smiles’ adds the element of discordant sound. At the statue’s unveiling, Drexel is described as ‘a grieving widow’ (*VS* 114), and the statue’s sounds are as a ‘pathetic love-call from Lorraine Drexel to her dead lover’ (*VS* 115), and incipient sonic cores work their way through a ‘Romantic catalogue’ of music (*VS* 121).

Whereas ‘Mobile’ looks towards a (Neo-Futurist) future, ‘Venus Smiles’ looks back towards the past, with the romantic catalogue of Drexel’s sonic statue a tribute to her dead lover.<sup>106</sup> *Vermilion Sands* therefore incorporates romanticism and is a space that valorises individualistic artistic expression. The *Vermilion Sands* stories set up a dynamic of nostalgia representing a world of temporal and spatial suspension that anxiously glances back towards past ‘fabulous years’ (*VS* 185). The romantic aesthetic of *Vermilion Sands* is under constantly threat from incipient modernism where technologies like singing plants or self-perpetuating statues have the ability to ventriloquize the creative process of artistic production.

Gasiorek sees the threat of the future in a specific way in Ballard’s text: *Vermilion Sands* as a place where normal laws can be temporarily suspended, a liminal space that he sees as particularly disruptive to the self-assurance of traditional masculine social identities formed around the necessity of work.<sup>107</sup> According to Gasiorek, the narrators of Ballard’s stories are men who are made ‘spectators of their own lives’.<sup>108</sup> They stare on helplessly as powerful females rearrange the furniture around them. A chain of otherness in *Vermilion Sands* conveys the puzzle of women, Ballard setting up series of isolating hermeneutic concentric circles around them. They appear with entourages who actively limit access and convey their enigma. In ‘The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral D’, Leonora Chanel is described as follows:

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<sup>106</sup> The Romantics are also mentioned in ‘Prima Belladonna’ when Parker laments during the audio-vegetative armageddon taking place at his shop, ‘the moderns were immune, but the Romantics burst their calyxes by the score’ (*VS* 40).

<sup>107</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>108</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 30.



‘Look at what arrives -- my apocalypse...’

A white Rolls-Royce, driven by a chauffeur in braided cream livery, had turned off the highway. Through the tinted communication window a young woman in a secretary’s day suit spoke to the chauffer. Beside her, a gloved hand still holding the window strap, a white-haired woman with jewelled eyes gazed up at the circling wings of the cloud-glider. Her strong and elegant face seemed sealed within the dark glass of the limousine like the enigmatic Madonna of some marine grotto. (*VS* 16)

Chanel is an inscrutable apocalypse, shielded by her gate-keeping chauffeur and secretary, and hidden behind gloves and dark glass. Chanel’s jewelled eyes echo Ciracylides’s unreadable insect eyes. Taking on some of Chanel’s mystery by proximity, her secretary, Beatrice Lafferty, is also described as playing ‘games with her eyes’ (*VS* 21). The mysterious women of *Vermilion Sands*, sharing the same qualities, seem to embody and convey the strangeness of the resort, standing as unapproachable ciphers for the desert landscape.

Ballard makes use of gendered imagery to suggest a powerful transfigurative female power harnessing technology to undermine male identity to the extent that it becomes ‘a redundant product’.<sup>109</sup> There are several examples of women threatening masculine power. Ciracylides, whose father ‘couldn’t stand’ her, inherits her voice from her mother, who sang at bordellos (*VS* 43-45). Her singing is implied as a revenge on men and the unloving father figure. Ciracylides always cheats at i-Go, since it’s ‘more fun’ that way (*VS* 44), and Parker is indignant at her dishonesty. Male suspicions are confirmed when Ciracylides cheats with the Khan-Arachnid orchid, an adulterous tryst that is also a cross-species swindle. The courtship between woman and plant exposes the vulnerability of masculinity by making men sexually redundant so that the space of *Vermilion Sands* not only supplants traditional masculine working roles, but also rearranges normative sexual roles.

Gasiorek’s gendered reading of *Vermilion Sands* as a leisured space that makes masculinity redundant recognises the mysterious power of women in Ballard’s text. However, it also stops short of addressing the troubling fates of many of these

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<sup>109</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 30.

women. Whilst it is true that Ballard draws on a ‘gendered symbolism based on the codes of myth, fiction and cinema’<sup>110</sup> (also touching on the nostalgia of the resort) this also effectively traps women in certain roles. Gasiorek’s contention that men are essentially blind to the inner workings of *Vermilion Sands* as a visual, sensual realm only briefly glimpsed (and where women are in control of transformative power),<sup>111</sup> is problematised by the material status of women. For example, in ‘Prima Belladonna’ it is the men who never do any work, and Ciracylides has to trade on her beauty and speciality singing. Ciracylides is never released from her role in the service of men, and even after her disappearance she is sighted ‘doing the nightclubs’ (*VS* 46). Drexel in ‘Venus Miles’ is ever in mourning for her dead lover. Chanel in ‘The Cloud Hunters of Coral D’ suffers a violent death, narcissistically dying amongst her smashed portraits, ‘the torn faces of herself’ (*VS* 29). Furthermore, women like Raine Channing in ‘Say Goodbye to the Wind’ are remade by masculine hands by surrendering her face to scalpel and needle so that her ‘gaze reflected the suicides of Carole Landis and Marilyn Monroe’ (*VS* 132-133). Men effectively create women in *Vermilion Sands*, and whether it is by affairs, inherence of fortunes, or by the surgeon’s knife the shadowy presence of powerful men can always be detected. The fact that women cheat in *Vermilion Sands* opens only a brief moment in which their power can be felt, before it is contained and punished. Although Ballard’s stories often lead men to ruin, disproportionate violence is done to women. The transformative power of *Vermilion Sands* does not belong to women, but rather the technological space of the desert resort itself. *Vermilion Sands* is therefore a space acting as a warning to all humanity, representing a revenge on the organic for ‘reaching the foot of the evolutionary ladder before the inorganic’ (*AE* 38). The resort usurps mankind’s accomplishments with singing plants, sound sculpture, psychotropic houses, and poetry machines. The emphasis on the non-human as an important agent in *Vermilion Sands* opens a sublime and fantastic environment threatening to undermine human control and appropriation of space.

The troubling aspects of *Vermillion Sands*’ spatiality has an impact on the structural features of Ballard’s stories, unsettling their clear classification as science fiction or fantasy stories. The genre divide between fantasy and science fiction has

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<sup>110</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 30.

<sup>111</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 28.

perhaps become increasingly amorphous over time. Used loosely, fantasy is able to incorporate science fiction as Rosemary Jackson notes: ‘As a critical term, “fantasy” has been applied rather indiscriminately to any literature which does not give priority to realistic representation: myths, legends, folk and fairy tales, utopian allegories, dream visions, surrealist texts, science fiction, horror stories, all presenting realms “other” than the human.’<sup>112</sup> According to Tzvetan Todorov’s study of the genre: ‘The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.’<sup>113</sup> The fantastic occupies the duration of uncertainty in which it is either decided that the supernatural event is an illusion, or an integral part of reality. The genre of the marvellous is announced if it is decided that reality is indeed controlled by unknown laws, so that ‘in consequence that the supernatural events which occur are in no way disturbing’.<sup>114</sup> Todorov believes science fiction occupies the marvellous: ‘The initial data are supernatural: robots, extraterrestrial beings, the whole interplanetary context. The narrative moment consists in obliging us to see how close these apparently marvellous elements are to us, to what degree they are present in our life.’<sup>115</sup> Science fiction as marvellous fiction means that it is one step removed from the fantastic. *Vermilion Sands* occupies a fault line between the marvellous and fantastic by containing supernatural elements (mutants, singing plants, growing sculpture, and so on) that appear technological in nature, but continually bring into question explanatory laws of science, holding open Todorov’s hesitation. Jameson sees a far older historical lineage to fantasy fiction compared to science fiction, and he highlights the fundamental role of magic as indicative of the fantastic.<sup>116</sup> Following Darko Suvin’s definition of science fiction as a genre of cognitive estrangement, science fiction continues a tradition of critical emphasis on verisimilitude, and highlighting adherence to established physical laws

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<sup>112</sup> Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen and Co, 1981), pp. 1-2.

<sup>113</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Cornell University, 1973), p. 25.

<sup>114</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>115</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 172.

<sup>116</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 58.

and scientific reason.<sup>117</sup> In *Vermilions Sands*, a lack of commitment to scientific reason explaining supernatural events suggests a strong element of the fantastic. For example, no scientific reason is given for the visions produced by Ciraclyides's singing in 'Prima Belladonna'. Furthermore, the narrator never experiences these visions, leaving the reader to hesitate over their validity, problematising events in the text as potentially illusionary or the result of debased perceptions. Additionally, Ballard often clusters pseudo-scientific jargon around unexpected, magical events such as singing plants -- 'At first I thought it was one of the azalea trios in trouble with an alkaline PH, but the frequencies were too high' (*VS* 33) -- so that *Vermilion Sands* incorporates the mimesis of a science fiction text, whilst accommodating a duration of uncertainty.

The science fiction and fantasy divide is therefore hard to place in a story like 'Prima Belladonna'. The story was first published in *Science Fantasy*, and the editor, Edward John 'Ted' Carnell, recalls receiving it: 'Jim Ballard sent me a story, "Escapement", in the summer of 1956, when I was editing *New Worlds Science Fiction* and *Science Fantasy*, which I liked and offered to buy. He then followed up with a personal visit to the office, bringing with him a fantasy story titled "Prima Belladonna", which I liked even better.'<sup>118</sup> Unlike 'Escapement' that is published as science fiction, Carnell is quite specific in calling 'Prima Belladonna' a fantasy story. His *Science Fantasy* synopsis of the story also calls it 'a fascinating approach to fantasy'.<sup>119</sup>

In 1994, the story was published in the collection *The Ascent of Wonder: The Evolution of Hard SF*. Not only is 'Prima Belladonna' included as a science fiction, but also as *hard* science fiction, which editor David G. Hartwell defines as follows:

When we read a work of sf, we also test it against our scientific and technical knowledge. Scientific principles operating behind the imaginary -- rather than everyday -- experience are at issue. The attitude that underpins science fiction is there is reality beyond appearances which is knowable through science.

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<sup>117</sup> Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p. 63.

<sup>118</sup> Goddard and Pringle, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 79.

<sup>119</sup> Rick McGrath, 'The Terminal Collection: J.G. Ballard First and Variant Editions' <[http://www.jgballard.ca/terminal\\_collection/1956\\_59.html](http://www.jgballard.ca/terminal_collection/1956_59.html)> [accessed 29 July 2009].

There is a particular variety of science fiction, commonly called ‘hard’ sf, that emphasizes the rigorous nature of our relation to this reality behind experience.<sup>120</sup>

Although Hartwell attempts to justify the inclusion of Ballard’s story, he admits that the Ballardian ‘strain’ is controversial because it has the wrong attitude.<sup>121</sup> It is difficult to see how Ballard uses science in a rigorous way, unless it is a way to undermine the reality principle upon which Hartwell’s definition is based. It is more satisfactory to recognise a distinct hybridity of science fiction and fantasy elements. *Vermilion Sands* tends toward the soft end of the science fiction scale, and it seems to distort the possibility of totalising scientific principles.

‘Prima Belladonna’ emerges at an important point in the history of science fiction in the 1950s when, according to Jameson’s scheme, mimesis of science begins to admit sociology, social satire, and cultural critique. This in turn gives way to a 1960s ‘subjectivity’ (‘a more capacious and less dogmatic category under which to range what we find at work in [Philip K.] Dick’s hallucinations as well as in [Stanisław] Lem’s cognitive paradoxes or [Ursula K.] Le Guin’s anthropological worlds’<sup>122</sup>) and then the aesthetics or speculative fiction of the late 1960s and 1970s, of which Ballard was to become a major proponent. Jameson locates an important division in 1950s science fiction that admits the possibility of a softer approach to the genre. ‘Prima Belladonna’ and the other *Vermilion Sands* stories are perhaps better called visionary science fiction, doubled to imply visions of the future achieved through aesthetics rather than scientific reason, as Gasiorek recognises when he highlights the ‘visionary present’ of *Vermilion Sands*.<sup>123</sup>

Having considered a particular fantasy element in Ballard’s first published story, it is now possible to turn to ‘Escapement’, Ballard’s second professionally

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<sup>120</sup> David G. Hartwell, ‘Hard Science Fiction’ in *The Ascent of Wonder: The Evolution of Hard SF*, ed. by David G. Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer (London: Orbit, 1994), pp. 30-43 (p. 30).

<sup>121</sup> Hartwell, ‘Hard Science Fiction’, p. 40.

<sup>122</sup> Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>123</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 26.

published story,<sup>124</sup> as an example of science fiction writing. ‘Escapement’ appears in *New Worlds* in the same month as ‘Prima Belladonna’. The science fiction subtitle of *New Worlds* establishes a commitment to scientific reason compared with the fantasy element of its companion *Science Fantasy* allowing a broader scope in terms of scientific explanation. ‘Escapement’ was published in *New Worlds* alongside a factual science article on the hunt for the sub-atomic neutrino particle, Kenneth John’s ‘The Little Neutral’,<sup>125</sup> and bookended by Alan Barclay’s ‘The Executioner’ and Isaac Asimov’s ‘The Message’. Alan Barclay was the pseudonym of George Barclay Tait, who published stories in *New Worlds* between 1954 and 1956. Isaac Asimov is better known, emerging in the 1940s and 1950s as one of the most influential science fiction writers of his generation. Along with Robert A. Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke, he popularised Jameson’s second stage of science fiction emphasising scientific exactitude and precision. Barclay’s story depends on the appearance of scientific verisimilitude, describing a series of test flights of a space ship by the United Nations Space Service.<sup>126</sup> Asimov’s story is more compact, running at just over one page, about a cadre of professional time-travelling scientists in the Thirtieth Century.<sup>127</sup> ‘Escapement’, also a story about time-travel, qualifies as science fiction according to Suvin’s definition because of the minimal scientific explanation for supernatural events (going back in time) caused by the optical effects of eruptions of gas disturbing the relationship between light and time (*CSSI* 22-23).<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> J. G. Ballard, ‘Escapement’, *New Worlds*, 18:54 (December 1956), 27-39. The story is re-printed in the collection J. G. Ballard, *The Complete Short Stories: Volume 1* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), which is the version used from this point onwards in this chapter.

<sup>125</sup> Kenneth Johns, ‘The Little Neutral’, *New Worlds*, 18:54 (December 1956), 42-47.

<sup>126</sup> Alan Barclay, ‘The Executioner’, *New Worlds*, 18:54 (December 1956), 4-27.

<sup>127</sup> Isaac Asimov, ‘The Message’, *New Worlds*, 18:54 (December 1956), 40-41.

<sup>128</sup> Most of Ballard’s exposure to science fiction up to 1956 took place during his time in the RAF at Moose Jaw in Canada. He admits to reading very little before this, mainly Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon comic strips during his time in Shanghai (*ML* 165). The science fiction he read at Moose Jaw appears to have been exclusively American and Canadian publications, such as *Astounding Science Fiction*, *Galaxy*, and *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, all of which were derivative of the 1930s pulp era and Jameson’s second stage of science fiction. In *Miracles of Life*, Ballard is dismissive of these publications ‘heavily committed to space travel and tales of hard-edged technological future’, perceiving them as expressions of American imperial pretension and ambition to colonise the universe. More interesting to him were stories set in the present or near future, extrapolating present social and political concerns (*ML* 165-166).

According to Ballard's 1956 *New Worlds* profile (which Ballard later claimed to have written<sup>129</sup>), by the time 'Escapement' was published he was living quietly in Chiswick with his wife and son Jimmie. Domesticity was a recent development in Ballard's unsettled early life. Ballard had only married Helen 'Mary' Matthews, in 1955 whilst she was expecting their child, Christopher James 'Jim' Ballard. With little income and a new family to support, the fantasy of escape must have appealed. 'Prima Belladonna' describes a possible destination, whilst 'Escapement', taking a domestic environment as its setting, codifies the desire.

As Gregory Stephenson notes, the multiple meanings of Ballard's title 'Escapement' 'might well serve as a collective title for all of Ballard's fiction'.<sup>130</sup> The etymology of escapement comes from the French *échappement* meaning escape, and according to the OED,<sup>131</sup> escapement can mean variously:

1. The action of escaping.
2. A means of escape.
3. In watchmaking or clockmaking, it is the mechanism which intervenes between the motive power and regulator, and which alternatively checks and releases the train, thus causing an intermittent impulse to be given to the regulator.
4. The mechanism in a typewriter that controls the regular, leftward movement of the carriage between key-strokes.

Escapement meaning escape and clock mechanism is appropriate for Ballard's story describing the slippage of clock time. In addition, referencing a typewriter mechanism seems fitting for Ballard's first professional story sold by the word.<sup>132</sup> Finally, the title can be read as a challenge to the conservative world of science fiction publishing, and the desire to move the genre forward that would become stronger as Ballard continued to publish encouraged by his editor, Carnell: 'away from the old-guard fans, Carnell

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<sup>129</sup> David Pringle, 'You and Me and the Continuum: In Search of a Lost J. G. Ballard Novel' (1993) <<http://www.jgballard.ca/criticism/jgblastnovel.html>> [accessed 19 November 2015].

<sup>130</sup> Stephenson, *Out of the Night*, p. 15.

<sup>131</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/64242?redirectedFrom=escapement#eid>> [accessed 19 November 2015].

<sup>132</sup> Science fiction periodical magazine usually paid their contributors by the word for their stories. *New Worlds* paid £2 2s per thousand words.

told me that science fiction need to change if it was to remain at the cutting edge of the future' (*ML* 180-181).

Although the structure of 'Escapement' is simple, there are certain features that betray the depth of Ballard's imagination. The story describes Mr and Mrs Bartley relaxing by watching television, filling in a crossword, and knitting. Harry Bartley inexplicably begins to experience a series of shortening 15-minute temporal 'jump-backs'. Superficially, 'Escapement' seems humble in its ambitions. Barclay's 'The Executioner' and Asimov's 'The Message' both hint at a larger universes, describing extensive military hierarchies, space pilots, invading aliens, or thirtieth century temporal physicists. Both Asimov and Ballard use time travel,<sup>133</sup> however Asimov placing such technology in the hands of a professionalised elite of scientists engaging with grand epochs of history such as the Second World War. Asimov's story also knowingly appropriates the past in the service of a more positive, rational, and scientific future. Ballard takes a more quotidian space as the subject of his story, and Suvin's cognitive estrangement is experienced by an ordinary middle-class couple, with explanations for time travel in Ballard's story kept to a minimum and not reliant on advanced technologies of any kind.

The Bartleys' home is in Maida Vale, an affluent part of London and location of BBC studios converted in 1934 to become one of the corporation's earliest premises and home to the BBC Symphony Orchestra. During the Second World War, the studio was a standby for the radio news service.<sup>134</sup> In *Miracles of Life*, Ballard recalls the staleness of the post-war British radio service with programmes 'dominated by maniacal English comedians (*ITMA*, totally incomprehensible) or *Workers' Playtime* (forced cheerfulness relayed from factories)' (*ML* 124). The Bartleys' living room is representative of the cosiness of 1950s British suburban life, supported by respected institutions such as the BBC. However, an impression soon emerges that this domestic space is being invaded. Harry's crossword clue, 'told by antique clocks? 5, 5' (*CSSI* 16), initially baffles him. The Olden Times are being replaced by a new space and time, and it is television that comes to occupy a central position in the Bartleys' living room replacing the old radio set.

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<sup>133</sup> 'The Message' is the story of how the mysterious phrase 'Kilroy was here', contra-Pynchon, became popular in World War Two as the result of graffiti left by a thirtieth century time-traveller.

<sup>134</sup> BBC, 'History of the BBC: Maida Vale' <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/buildings/maida-vale>> [accessed 15 November 2015].



The jump-backs are first noticed through television, Harry believing ‘They’ve got their reels crossed’ (CSS1 16). Television propels Ballard’s narrative forward gradually displacing everything in the spatiality of the Bartleys’ living room. Harry’s attempts to use the Olden Times technology of the telephone to call for help fails, as he realises his friend would ‘never make it’ (CSS1 24) subsumed by the jump-back. Ballard implies a shift to kinetic televisual spatiality of ‘Escapement’, writing a series of sentences that break up his text and only make sense visually:

‘...down to the...the...’ I was saying.  
 Helen watched me, frozen. A fraction of a minute left.  
 I started to walk over to her.  
 to walk over to her  
 ver to her  
 er’. (CSS1 27-28)

The Olden Times technology of words on the page is also called into question by new technologies and spatial arrangements.

In Ballard’s *New Worlds* profile he expresses a lack of interest in an intrepid spaceman rocketing round the galactic centrifuge. His unwillingness to use dazzlingly new and inventive technologies as the central element in ‘Escapement’ betrays a suspicion of what he would later call the mimetized disaster of streamlined technologies (AE 38). The television was not a new technology in 1956, and what interests Ballard is profusion, both in terms of the number of sets in homes and content on the screen. The fact that ‘Escapement’ is set in the future is highlighted but the number of television channels, which go as high as KBC-TV, Channel 9. One year before the publication of ‘Escapement’, ITV (Independent Television) was introduced into British homes as the UK’s first commercial television station, breaking the BBC’s monopoly on broadcasting. The BBC’s mid-1950s diet of news, current affairs, history and serious drama was supplemented by ITV’s emphasis on popular programming and light entertainment such as quiz shows, soap operas, and imports of American comedies. Ballard reflects these changes, and the Olden Times BBC radio and television broadcasts are replaced by new formats. The incomprehensibility and forced cheerfulness that Ballard detects in 1940s BBC radio broadcasts are replaced by new forms of banality in ‘Escapement’: Channel 2’s Thursday night melodrama,

‘My Sons, My Sons’, presumably derivative of Arthur Miller’s ‘All My Sons’; a panel of three professors, Roman pot, and chorus girl on Channel 5; and an enormous woman in a cartwheel hat winning a sports-car on Channel 9. The ‘old BBC service’ on Channel 1 is only put out a couple of hours on alternative evenings (significantly, it is this service that provides the minimal explanation of gas eruptions to explain the jump-backs (*CSSI* 22, 26)). When Harry Bartley beaks out of the jump-back, the channels have changed and the old BBC service on Channel 1 displays a breakdown sign, the Olden Times having been left behind.

Ballard’s ‘more means worse’ satire of television disguises a serious point about the imaginative potential of 1950s science fiction and its fascination with new technology. The kinetic visual image of commercial television is a future portal that structures space around it, flattening aesthetic distance and bringing together the incongruous (for example, in the juxtaposition of three professors, a chorus girl and Roman pot in the same space). The proliferation of television channels in ‘Escapement’ anticipates the Americanisation of television across the world, a phenomenon Jean Baudrillard was to consider 30 years later in *America*, a text endorsed by Ballard as ‘an absolutely brilliant piece of writing’:<sup>135</sup>

There is nothing more mysterious than a TV set left on in an empty room. It is even stranger that a man talking to himself or a woman standing dreaming at her stove. It is as if another planet is communicating with you. Suddenly the TV reveals itself for what it really is: a video of another world, ultimately addressed to no one at all, delivering its messages indifferently, indifferent to its own messages.<sup>136</sup>

Furthermore, television sets up its own temporal cycles:

Everything has to be working all the time, there has to be no let-up in man’s artificial power, and the intermittent character of natural cycles (the seasons,

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<sup>135</sup> J. G. Ballard, ‘A Response to the Invitation to Respond’, *Science Fiction Studies* 18: 3 (November 1991), 329 (329).

<sup>136</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 52.

day and night, heat and cold) has to be replaced by a functional continuum that is sometimes absurd.<sup>137</sup>

This conduit to an alien world, enforcing its own functional temporal cycles, is reminiscent of the subtle invasion and new juxtaposition of spaces that takes place in the Bartleys' living room.

Jameson's concept of science fiction as a spatial genre highlights the role of technology in opening new spaces.<sup>138</sup> This is most obviously conveyed by the idea of the space ship accessing multiple new worlds, cultures, and civilisations. Science fiction retains a love of large-scale technologies as symbols of exploration; however, Ballard draws attention to the proliferation of everyday technologies. He expresses the concept in his notes to *The Atrocity Exhibition* some years later: 'Most of the machines that surround our lives -- airliners, refrigerators, cars, and typewriters -- have streamlined their way into our affections. Now and then [...] we can see clearly the deep hostility of the mineral world' (*AE* 38). Television could be added to this list, and streamlined technologies open up troubling new spaces indifferent (perhaps even hostile) to human inhabitants.

'Prima Belladonna' and 'Escapement' describe two distinct modes of spatiality, but share an interest in the past, symbolised by the jump-back set against the forward rush 1950s of science fiction. Like Harry's crossword clue, both 'Escapement' and 'Prima Belladonna' resist future orientation by jumping-back to the Olden Times. 'Escapement' is structured around a brief return to the Olden Times that resists the 'scraping the bottom of the barrow' (*CSSI* 17) future beamed by the Bartleys' television set. The space of *Vermilion Sands*, synthesising Neo-Futurism and Romanticism, allows 'Prima Belladonna' and other stories to nostalgically gesture towards the past. The narratives of both 'Escapement' and 'Prima Belladonna' are based on temporalities suspended between the past and deferred future moments. Both stories wait for something to happen: the Bartleys reaching 'that ebb' (*CSSI* 16) in their living room, and Parker and his friends suffering the workless Recess.

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<sup>137</sup> Baudrillard, *America*, p. 52.

<sup>138</sup> Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, pp. 296-313.

According to Michel Foucault's fourth principle, heterotopias are spaces that enact breaks with traditional time, which he calls heterochronisms.<sup>139</sup> A form of heterochronism is the vacation village, where the heterotopia of festivity or festival time meets the eternity of accumulating time, exemplified by the space of the library or museum. Foucault uses the example of the huts of Djerba, which, by rediscovering a past Polynesian way of life, abolish or suspend time whilst simultaneously bringing history close to hand.<sup>140</sup> 'Escapement' and 'Prima Belladonna' enact a similar kind of heterochronisms by suspending the normative temporal flow and bringing the Olden Times closer. The jump-back in 'Escapement' inaugurates a festival, the 'virtually bottomless bottle of scotch' (*CSSI* 24), despite its short duration. The jump-back is a festival space of crazy merry-go-rounds (*CSSI* 28) and inexhaustible liquor. *Vermilion Sands* resembles Foucault's vacation village where a short break has become a permanent arrangement, and it is a resort nostalgically looking back to the romantic past.

The jump-backs of Ballard's spaces allow the stories to resemble what Fredric Jameson calls the 'utopic enclave':

[...] we can begin from the proposition that Utopian space is an imaginary enclave within real social space [...] that the very possibility of Utopian space is itself a result of spatial and social differentiation. But it is an aberrant by-product, and its possibility is dependent on the momentary formation of a kind of eddy or self-contained backwater within the general differentiation process and its seemingly irreversible forward momentum.<sup>141</sup>

Jameson's utopic enclave and Foucault's heterotopias are spaces where different visions of the social can be experimented on in a speculative way. Traditional science fiction up to the 1950s situates itself as a utopic genre of literature by orientating towards a future that assumes the resolution of certain social and technological problems, evoking a kind of utopian workshop: 'a garage space in which all kinds of machinery can be tinkered with a rebuilt'.<sup>142</sup> In contrast, 'Escapement' and 'Prima

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<sup>139</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 20.

<sup>140</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 20.

<sup>141</sup> Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p. 15.

<sup>142</sup> Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p. 14.

Belladonna' can be seen as the kind of eddies and backwaters, jump-backs within the forward momentum of science fiction. Ballard's 'pockets of stasis'<sup>143</sup> are limited, tallying with the idea of an enclave that is a space that will eventually be swept up and negated by the all-encompassing forward momentum of larger, containing social spaces. Ballard's stories, by avoiding large-scale future projects (the big government schemes hinted at in 'Prima Belladonna'), concentrate on individual and alternative spatial experiences.

Ballard's 1956 stories anticipate a turn away from conventional science fiction, admitting softer elements, and diminishing the necessity for scientific mimesis. In 'Prima Belladonna' Ballard allows a blurring of science fiction and fantasy spaces, providing minimal technical explanation for structural elements in his story allowing things to work as if by magic. Streamlined technologies such as the Khan-Arachnid orchid take on human qualities, threatening a series of taxonomical readjustments. Control of the *Vermilion Sands* space is increasingly ceded to mimetic technology, potentially making the human redundant. The spatiality of 'Escapement' centres on the distinctly non-futuristic space of a suburban Maida Vale living room in order to question the proliferation of new technology unsettling the Bartleys' temporal experience, as television usurps Olden Times technologies orientated towards the human. Against technologically driven futures, Ballard forces a series of jump-backs in his fiction, backward glances that question the displacement of the human. Ballard was later to confidently make a case for a new type of science fiction in his editorial, 'Which Way to Inner Space?', published in the May 1962 edition of *New Worlds*, declaring: 'The only truly alien planet is Earth' (*UGM* 197). This re-directs attention away from rocket ships to the kind of spaces he begins to describe in 'Escapement' and 'Prima Belladonna'. This manifesto was to have implications for the kind of short stories and novels Ballard produced throughout the 1960s, which are discussed in the following chapters.

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<sup>143</sup> Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, p. 14.

## Chapter 2

### Heterotopia and Post-Catastrophic Space in *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*

This chapter investigates Ballard's post-catastrophe spaces as limits to socially constituted heterotopic other spaces. The spatial break that catastrophe represents means that the heterotopic imagination ceases to function, and Ballard's characters increasingly lose the ability to think around catastrophe to imagine different spaces. Although post-catastrophe space may be thought of as an alternative spatiality similar to heterotopia, in *The Drowned World* (1961), *The Drought* (1965), and *The Crystal World* (1966), Ballard describes unbounded or uncontrolled spaces cut free from socially derived and man-made emplacements from which it is possible to imagine different orderings.<sup>144</sup> Using Foucault's example of the cemetery as the other city of the dead moved to the edges of the city, I will show how Ballard's post-catastrophic sites become unmade graves ejecting the dead back into the spaces of the living, and landscapes come to resemble troubling cemetery-like zones constituted by a great mass of dead so that Ballard's protagonists pass over into the inconceivable spaces of the dead. As Blanchot warns early in *The Writing of the Disaster*: 'There is no reaching the disaster. Out of reach is he whom it threatens, whether from afar or close up, it is impossible to say: the infiniteness of the threat has in some way broken every limit.'<sup>145</sup> The disaster or catastrophe that destroys everything also robs of the ability to give clear meaning to the event of the disaster itself.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> This chapter therefore takes an approach to the concept of heterotopia that emphasises Foucault's second principle where 'each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another' (Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 18). Rather than the 'persistent association with spaces of resistance and transgression' (Johnson, 'Unravelling Foucault's "Different Spaces"', p. 81), I here conceive of heterotopias as socially functional, resembling heterotopias of compensation where space is meticulously and perfectly arranged according to social function. For example, the example of the cemetery as heterotopia constructs a space alternative to the everyday where the troubling presence of dead bodies can be organised, arranged and partitioned away from the living.

<sup>145</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>146</sup> It is worth noting that this is especially true of the disasters or catastrophes described in *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World* which emanate from an extraneous space (nature) even through certain of mankind's actions may be partly responsible, unlike a text such as *The*

Before considering the triptych of novels *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*, I will consider *The Wind From Nowhere* (1961) as a cosy catastrophe that reassures the reader that mastery over catastrophe is possible by rational action and that disruptive effects can be successfully curtailed. In contrast, Ballard's later novels open troubling and uncontained post-catastrophic spaces (the underworld city space constituted by traumatic corpses, the drying river and dune limbo beach representative of waning symbolic orders and competition for new meaning, and the clinic at the centre of the colonial jungle expelling its patients and failing to accommodate the unsettling effects of catastrophe) in which the presence of the dead taints the living, eroding reassuring heterotopias of compensation (cemetery spaces that can house the dead). The disturbing return of the dead in catastrophe represents a profound loss of mankind's place or being in the world and opens up an ambivalent gap between two deaths: a complex site situated between biological death and destruction of the symbolic order. Living dead fill this gap and, according to Slavoj Žižek, it can be 'a place of sublime beauty as well as terrifying monsters'.<sup>147</sup>

Foucault's second principle states that heterotopias can change over time, functioning in different ways depending on circumstance, recognising a constant state of flux in the social realm. Foucault elaborates his idea using the example of the cemetery. This is a place that, by housing the dead, is other to ordinary cultural spaces and yet intimately connected since everybody is likely to have relatives or friends situated there. Cemeteries in one form or another have practically always existed in Western cultures, but have undergone important structural changes. According to Foucault, from the nineteenth century, the right to an individual coffin and burial plot was assured by moving cemeteries to the edges of the city, which isolates the dead as threat to the living:

In correlation with the individualization of death and the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery there emerged an obsession with death as an 'illness'. The dead, it is supposed, bring illness to the living, and it is the presence and proximity of the dead right beside the houses, next to the church,

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*Atrocity Exhibition* that describes catastrophe as somehow inherent within contemporary man-made media or communications landscapes. Catastrophe is therefore doubly disruptive as an unpredictable and external threat challenging human assumption, sense, and discourses of meaning.

<sup>147</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 150.

almost in the middle of the street, it is this proximity that propagates death itself.<sup>148</sup>

Fear of contagion leads to an important change whereby cemeteries ‘no longer constitute the sacred and immortal belly of the city, but the “other city”, where each family possesses its dark dwelling’,<sup>149</sup> perpetuating a cult of the dead. Even when societies take broadly atheist cultural turns, the memorialisation of individual dead that occurs in the space of the cemetery is important because the location of the dead body serves as proof of existence in the world. Foucault’s second principle of heterotopia has important consequences for reading *The Drowned World*, *The Drought* and *The Crystal World*. These texts, each describing environments altered through catastrophic events, imagine fluid and protean re-orderings of space. Foucault’s example of the cemetery as a heterotopia is pertinent to Ballard’s stories since catastrophe brings the mass of dead and the other city of the cemetery in close proximity with the living in a disorderly and uncontained way.

Prior to *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*, Ballard’s first full-length novel was the disowned *The Wind From Nowhere*, which he considered a piece of ‘hackwork’ written during a fortnight holiday.<sup>150</sup> *The Wind From Nowhere* describes the sudden appearance of a super-hurricane that sweeps away all man-made structures. One reason Ballard gives for the dismissal of *The Wind From Nowhere* is that it is ‘disaster-orientated’, unlike later novels where ‘The geophysical changes which take place [...] are all positive and good changes -- they are what the books are about [...] they are not disaster stories at all.’<sup>151</sup> *The Wind from Nowhere* breaks down the human world only to affirm the possibility of its triumphant re-emergence. In the first part of the book, hurricane wind forces mankind to shelter underground, approximating the dead. At one point, a mass of people are described emerging from London’s Hammersmith Underground station, resembling the anonymous corpses from charnel houses:

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<sup>148</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 18.

<sup>149</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 18.

<sup>150</sup> Goddard and Pringle, *J. G. Ballard*, pp. 20-23.

<sup>151</sup> Goddard and Pringle, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 24.



[...] the entrance to the station had been fortified with a heavy concrete breastwork that jutted out into the roadway, three circular doors fitted into its domed roof.

These were open now, and emerging from them was a press of struggling people, fighting and pulling past each other in a frantic effort to escape from the station [...] Like petals torn from a wind-blown flower they detached themselves from doorways, took a few helpless steps out into the street and were whipped off their feet and hurled across the road, bouncing head over heels like sacks of feathers that burst and disintegrated as they ripped into the ragged teeth of reinforcing bars protruding from the debris. (*WFN* 123)

The concrete breastwork resembles the coffin or tomb lid, and the emergent bodies resemble the living dead in a state of corporeal disintegration, reduced to bursting sacks of feathers. Ballard's description of catastrophe drags the living down and confines them in the spaces of the dead.

However, Ballard's vivid descriptions in *The Wind From Nowhere* work to valorise the attempts of a tycoon named Haroon to build a sheltering pyramid structure on the surface. The appropriately named Haroon Tower is a phallic extension of the millionaire's forceful masculinity, also reinforced by his constant cigar smoking. He claims: 'As the wind has risen so everyone on the globe has built downward, trying to escape it [...] I alone have built upward, have dared to challenge the wind, asserting Man's courage and determination to master nature' (*WFN* 165). Haroon is an exaggerated caricature of hubristic technological-scientific man, claiming that 'If I fail, Man has no right to assert his innate superiority over the unreason of the natural world' (*WFN* 165). Late in the novel, he is melodramatically sacrificed to the wind, along with his tower, 'like some Wagnerian super-hero in a besieged Valhalla' (*WFN* 181). However, this event also signals the calming of the wind, saving other characters at the last moment. His self-sacrifice achieves the goal of mastering the natural world, and *The Wind from Nowhere* opens a catastrophic space only to pull back and confirm the possibility of human mastery.

Brian Aldiss categorises *The Wind from Nowhere* as a cosy catastrophe story, which he defines as: 'the hero should have a pretty good time (a girl, free suites at the

Savoy, automobiles for the taking) while everyone else is dying off'.<sup>152</sup> For Aldiss, the cosy catastrophe is an anxiety fantasy and form of literary *jouissance* that takes destructive pleasure in the breakdown of civilisation. For Luckhurst, the cosy catastrophe is a dilatory genre that 'opens the fantasy space of violence and aggression, before closing the social once more into a re-vitalised order of technico-scientific rationality'.<sup>153</sup> Just as everything threatens to collapse, a solution is found to restore the pre-catastrophe balance. Sometimes the destructive element actually becomes beneficial, stripping away problematic aspects of the social so that the re-established order is integrated even more efficiently: Hardoon's egomania is effectively sacrificed to the wind so that more balanced characters can emerge victorious. The catastrophe temporally opens a space in which actions excluded in the civilised world (for example, killing rivals) can be satisfied before being shut off again in the service of collective responsibility. It is the ability of the hero to satisfy his desires within certain parameters when the concept of law ceases to exist that marks him out as a leader.

The cosy catastrophe pushes just far enough, pragmatically expediting a situation where a new rule of law embodied by the triumphant hero can once again be re-established. In contrast, as Gasiorek comments: 'Ballard's early works are near obsessed with themes of metamorphosis. The post-apocalyptic worlds they envisage [...] are all in limbo, awaiting rebirth to a radically new dispensation.'<sup>154</sup> This limbo is not the same as the cosy catastrophe's dilatoriness, and characters do not wait for things to return to normal. The appearance of a radically new dispensation subverts the hope that old rationality will triumph over catastrophe. Unlike *The Wind From Nowhere*, Ballard's later novels resist being read as cosy catastrophes. They offer no way back from catastrophe pushing protagonists towards the point of death rather than triumph.

*The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World* describe a series of natural catastrophes as ambiguous spatial phenomena that re-order the world, opening and closing certain meanings. This is the encroachment of an apocalyptic nature, previously thought contained and controlled, into the ordered reason of modern man.

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<sup>152</sup> Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (London: Paladin, 1988), p. 316.

<sup>153</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 37

<sup>154</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 11.

Speaking to Travis Elborough about *The Drowned World*, Ballard comments: 'I've always been interested in the ecological aspects of life on this planet [...] I've always felt that people living in the cosy suburbia of Western Europe and America never appreciate just how vulnerable we were to climatic disasters' (*DW* 178). Recalling the encroachment of other spaces into the quotidian suburban environment in 'Escapement' discussed in Chapter 1, Ballard highlights the vulnerability of a walled, cosy suburbia to outside forces embodied by an unpredictable natural world. He anticipates a certain view of the natural world in which 'ecological succession has no direction, that there is no "progression" of any sort, that change is the only constant, and that nature never reaches a point of stability.'<sup>155</sup> Žižek comments: 'Nature is chaotic and prone to wild, unpredictable and meaningless disasters, and we are exposed to its merciless whims -- there is no Mother Earth watching over us'<sup>156</sup> (in the face of such unpredictability, mankind retreats to sanctuaries of science and reason like the Hardoon Tower in the belief that catastrophe can be contained).

Žižek has described ecological crisis as a profound ontological shock: 'The crisis is radical not only because of its effective danger, i.e., it is not just that what is at stake is the very survival of humankind. What is at stake is our most unquestionable presuppositions, the very horizon of our meaning, our everyday understanding of "nature" as a regular, rhythmic process.'<sup>157</sup> In this way, ecological crisis is a challenge to an established set of certainties about cycles of nature and life on the planet. Ecological crisis is a senseless actuality that cannot be charged with some message or meaning.<sup>158</sup> Žižek has described ecological crisis as a Lacanian answer of the real, making apparent the irreducible gap between the real and its modes of symbolisation: 'The only proper attitude is that which fully assumes this gap as something that defines our very *condition humaine*, without endeavouring to suspend it through fetishistic disavowal, to keep it concealed through obsessive activity, or to reduce the gap between the real and the symbolic by projecting a

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<sup>155</sup> Michael Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), p. 102.

<sup>156</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Joe Public v the Volcano', *New Statesman* (29 April 2010)

<<http://www.newstatesman.com/environment/2010/05/essay-nature-catastrophe>> [accessed 23 April 2015].

<sup>157</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 34.

<sup>158</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 35.

(symbolic) message into the real.<sup>159</sup> This resembles Ballard's comment that we should immerse ourselves in 'the most destructive element'<sup>160</sup> of catastrophe as an acceptance of its senselessness.

Žižek explains the Lacanian real as 'the irreducible kernel of *jouissance* that resists all symbolisation.'<sup>161</sup> Elsewhere, he describes 'the pulsing of the pre-symbolic substance in all its abhorrent vitality'.<sup>162</sup> As Benjamin Noys argues, Žižek constantly tries to approach the real by allusion to contemporary horror texts as providing a moment figuring of the breakdown of representation and the appearance of the horrifying real 'Thing'.<sup>163</sup> In contrast, the symbolic order 'includes everything from language to the law, taking in all the social structures in between. As such, the Symbolic constitutes a good part of what we usually call "reality."' <sup>164</sup> Entrance into the symbolic order causes a loss of the real as 'the world before it is carved up by language'.<sup>165</sup> Although the symbolic works on the real, carving it in various different ways, the real resists full integration into the symbolic order and reappears in the form of traumatic, or horrific, returns.

In *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*, the irreducible kernel of catastrophe displaces the existing symbolic order so that characters are forced into a traumatic encounter with the real. Ballard's 'zone of transit' (*DW* 14) opened by catastrophe positions protagonists in the gap between two deaths: 'the difference between real (biological) death and its symbolisation, the "settling of accounts", the accomplishment of symbolic destiny'.<sup>166</sup> A second symbolic death recognises the possibility of meaningless external shocks (shocks without meaning) that can destroy the psyche of the victim without resonating with any inner traumatic

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<sup>159</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 36.

<sup>160</sup> Jeremy Lewis, 'An Interview with J. G. Ballard' [1991] in *Extreme Metaphors: Interviews With J.G. Ballard, 1967-2008*, ed. by Simon Sellars and Dan O'Hara (London: Fourth Estate, 2012), pp. 106-120 (p. 254).

<sup>161</sup> Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright, eds., *The Žižek Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 14.

<sup>162</sup> Wright and Wright, *The Žižek Reader*, p. 19.

<sup>163</sup> Noys, Benjamin, 'The Horror of the Real: Žižek's Modern Gothic', *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, 4:4 (2010) <<http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/ijzs/article/view/274/372>> [accessed 10 August 2015]

<sup>164</sup> Tony Myers, *Slavoj Žižek* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 22.

<sup>165</sup> Myers, *Slavoj Žižek*, p. 24.

<sup>166</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, p. 150.

truth to be discovered so that the catastrophic cause of shock resists interpretation. The shock caused by catastrophe situates the ‘real-traumatic kernel in the midst of the symbolic order’,<sup>167</sup> bringing the disturbing real to the surface by confronting the subject with an unavoidable event that resists symbolic integration. Ballard’s protagonists in *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World* are forced into the gap between two deaths by contemplating the catastrophic destruction of their symbolic orientation along with the possibility of their physical demise within a newly hostile environment. However, this crucial gap is not present in *The Wind From Nowhere* since catastrophe is successfully integrated within the symbolic order (as a threat to be overcome by rational action) and physical death held at bay by the twin sacrifices of Hardoon and his tower.

Previously hinting with the apocalyptic appearance of Jane Ciracylides in ‘Prima Belladonna’ (*CSSI 2*), Ballard appropriates a certain literary genre of catastrophe and apocalypse in *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*,<sup>168</sup> taking the etymology of disaster (ill-starred or unlucky star<sup>169</sup>) seriously as an omen of apocalypse ambiguously suggestive of both revelation and a portent singling the end of time (eschaton) according to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. This implies the unveiling of apocalypse as a violent breaking apart of the old and the revelation of the new. Accordingly, apocalyptic literature ‘takes the form of a revelation at the end of history. Violent and grotesque images are juxtaposed with glimpses of a world transformed.’<sup>170</sup> As Luckhurst notes, the nature of apocalypse is ambiguous, concerned with what will happen after, the apocalyptic ‘catastrophe after catastrophe’.<sup>171</sup> This catastrophe after catastrophe also gestures towards the gap between the twin catastrophic possibilities of death in physical and symbolic realms.

*The Drowned World* describes a new Triassic age that encodes a catastrophic temporality where the past re-emerges in the future (Ballard’s text being set beyond

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<sup>167</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, p. 150.

<sup>168</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, pp. 46-48.

<sup>169</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/53561?rskey=0AnJzh&result=1#eid>> [accessed 15 November 2015].

<sup>170</sup> Damian Thompson, *The End Of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 13-14.

<sup>171</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 45.

the present). Luckhurst highlights the increasing resistance of the catastrophe after catastrophe in Ballard's text to the symbolic order of the modern world: 'The moment of 'hard' scientific explanation is brief and perfunctory -- solar storms cause heat-rise, the massive expansion of tropical rainforest mutate be excessive radiation and the melting of the polar ice caps flooding much of Europe -- and this catastrophe is displaced by the one that follows it; the return to Triassic landscape provokes "triggers" of regression and devolution, figured as a literal descent down "spinal" consciousness.'<sup>172</sup> Scientific explanation fails to contain the first catastrophe, which subsequently unleashes a devolutionary disaster, causing catastrophe to slip even further from symbolic understanding. For Paddy, '*The Drowned World* depicts a world in reverse, a world in which geographical time has turned backwards',<sup>173</sup> but also where catastrophe specifically plays on anxieties of reverse colonisation where the 'civilised' world (Europe) is on the point of being overrun by 'primitive' forces (colonial) in a process that conflates geographical spaces recognisable to Ballard, bringing 'Europe and Asia together in one location, while temporally this imagined future is swamped with the rush of history [...] we can see the blanketing of Shanghai's topography over the dying terrain of London as an overturning of the fate of imperial history'.<sup>174</sup> Catastrophe here represents an uncanny return of forces disavowed in civilised pre-catastrophic society, a dynamic also highlighted by Francis: '*The Drowned World* superimposes onto a Jungian notion of an inherited collective unconscious [...] a Freudian process of therapeutic abreaction normally applied to the individual rather than collective psyche; its essentially Jungian narrative of individual regression is inscribed with a marked late-Freudian sense of the psyche as dominated by the existence of drives both erotic and disposed towards the dissolution of the individual',<sup>175</sup> contrasting individual reading of the regressive catastrophe against shared, collective, or symbolic understandings.

The first chapter of *The Drowned World* inhabits the space of the cosy catastrophe with Ballard's protagonist, Kerans, finding a free suite at the Ritz that is appropriated by Ballard to represent an increasingly unsettling and disorganised heterotopic space. Critics have acknowledged hotels as heterotopias since they invert

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<sup>172</sup> Luckhurst, '*The Angle Between Two Walls*', p. 53.

<sup>173</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 52.

<sup>174</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 50.

<sup>175</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 77.

and contest real spaces including the domestic space of the bedroom.<sup>176</sup> Foucault mentions the ‘honeymoon’ hotel and motels as heterotopic spaces. Hotels can be liminal ‘nowhere’ spaces where illicit or liminal activity can take place and also presuppose a heterotopic system of opening and closing by containing private bedrooms rooms and accessible public areas. Hotels position themselves on a heterotopic axis of tension between spaces of order and illusion, with the sophisticated regulation of their internal spaces designed to create the illusion of luxury and leisure. In *The Drowned World*, ‘dense groves of giant gymnosperms’ and a sun that ‘fanned out across the eastern horizon like a colossal fire-ball’ (*DW* 7), establishes a space so transformed it displaces the pleasure of the illicitly inhabited hotel suite. The cosy catastrophe is made newly vertiginous. Kerans finds no use for lavish furnishings except ‘savouring the subtle atmosphere of melancholy that surrounded these last vestiges of a level of civilisation now virtually vanished forever’ (*DW* 10). Catastrophe undercuts the heterotopic space of the Ritz, destabilising its social function as a luxurious enclave of imaginative potential where certain fantasies can be played out. The post-catastrophic environment causes a surreal escalation of the heterotopic qualities of the hotel space: ‘rich blue moulds sprouting from the carpets in the dark corridors adding to its 19<sup>th</sup>-century dignity’ (*DW* 10). The anonymity of space is deepened, and Kearns wonders at the location of the Ritz: ‘had it once been Berlin, Paris or London’ (*DW* 9). Heterotopic systems of opening and closing are also inverted. The rising water levels cut off the less exclusive lower levels of the hotel whilst bringing the higher suites and penthouses closer to ground level. Kerans’s suite, originally designed for a rich Milanese financier, is now readily accessible for anybody’s use. The suite becomes a bizarre time-capsule, adrift and suspended gathering ‘little dust’ and receiving ‘scarcely a blemish’ (*DW* 10).

Dislocated by catastrophe, the Ritz becomes a complex linking space between past and present, and entry point to Ballard’s post-catastrophic world. Kerans is first described on the balcony of his suite (a linking space discussed in Chapter 1), and it is

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<sup>176</sup> Alessandro Petti, ‘Dubai offshore urbansim’ in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 287-95 (p. 287); Gil Doron, “‘...those marvellous empty zones on the edge of our cities’: Heterotopia and the “Dead Zone”” in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 203-15 (p. 210).

from this liminal zone that he contemplates competing spaces captured in a single gaze:

Kerans was reluctant to leave the balcony and retreat behind the wire-mesh enclosure. In the early morning light a strange mournful beauty hung over the lagoon; the sombre green-black fronds of the gymnosperms, intruders from the Triassic past, and the half-submerged white-faced buildings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century still reflected together in the dark mirror of the water, the two interlocking worlds apparently suspended at some junction in time [...] (*DW* 10-11)

This is a complex description in which Ballard applies filters, the balcony and the dark mirror, to a troubling reality. The water mirror is able to tentatively hold the old 20<sup>th</sup> Century and new Triassic age within the same frame. Although darkened by catastrophe, it tentatively holds to Foucault's third principle of heterotopia, 'the power to juxtapose in a single place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible',<sup>177</sup> allowing sense to be made of the chaotic jumble indicative of a post-catastrophe environment. Kerans is reluctant to return to the old world of his hotel room or move forward into the new Triassic past. Ballard's description is also the first indication of *The Drowned World* occupying cemeterial space with the half-submerged white-faced buildings approximating tombstones, a resemblance worked and intensified as the text progresses.

Elsewhere, spaces have become entirely alienated from human use. Some are lost forever: 'The bulk of the city had long since vanished [...] only the steel-supported buildings of the central commercial and financial areas had survived the encroaching flood waters' (*DW* 19). Ironically, financial centres remain as a parody of pre-catastrophe capitalist and anthropocene spatial organisation. As Žižek perceptively notes: 'The very notion of nature as "objective reality" deprived of any meaning as the domain of neutral facts opposed to our subjective values, can only emerge in a society in which the commodity form is predominant -- this is why the rise of "objective" natural sciences which reduce natural phenomena to meaningless positive data is strictly correlative to the rise of commodity exchange.'<sup>178</sup> The

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<sup>177</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 19.

<sup>178</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 218.



objective reality promoted by the financial centre of the city is taken over by newly incomprehensible nature, away from the commodity form and indicating mankind's increasingly uncertain foothold in the spaces of the city:

All the way down the creek, perched in the windows of the office blocks and department stores, the iguanas watched them go past, their hard frozen heads jerking stiffly [...] As their seats in the one-time boardrooms indicated, the reptiles had taken over the city. Once again they were the dominant form of life. (*DW* 18)

Kerans is unable to recognise himself in the reflecting windows since his presence is usurped by the iguanas' unreadable frozen heads and 'impassive faces' (*DW* 18), so that his gaze is returned by a blank, impenetrable, and Other stare. This indicates a limit to the anthropocene appropriation of the world and reflects the marginality of mankind in post-catastrophic spaces.

Catastrophe also violently disrupts the foundational objectivity of science, and Kerans begins to question his membership of a survey team investigating the lagoon: 'The biological mapping had become a pointless game' (*DW* 8-9). Kerans and the survey team begin to approximate the dead:

This growing isolation and self-containment [...] reminded Kearns of the slackening metabolism and biological withdrawal of all animal forms about to undergo a major metamorphosis. Sometimes he wondered what zone of transit he himself was entering, sure that his own withdrawal was symptomatic not of a dormant schizophrenia, but of a careful preparation for a radically new environment. (*DW* 14)

Ballard describes a withdrawal caused by the profound shock of catastrophe. These symptoms resemble the emergence of the disengaged subjectivity that Žižek associates with the emblematic post-traumatic figure of the *Muselmann*.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> The figure of the *Muselmann* relevant to Ballard's work is considered in more detail in Chapter 6 of this study.

[...] a new subject emerges which survives its own death, the death (or erasure) of its symbolic identity. There is no continuity between this new 'post-traumatic' subject [...] and its own identity: after the shock, it is literally a new subject that emerges. Its features are well known: a lack of emotional engagement, profound indifference and detachment -- it is a subject who is no longer 'in-the-world' in the Heideggarian sense of engaged embodied experience. This subject lives death as a form of life [...]<sup>180</sup>

This catastrophic splitting of subjectivity resembles the physical and mental metamorphosis Ballard describes as resembling dormant schizophrenia. For Žižek this new situation is more a form of death than a form of life, 'not an expression of the Freudian death drive, but, more directly, the death of the drive',<sup>181</sup> and the isolation and self-containment of Ballard's characters resembles a similar death of drive.

The impenetrability of the lagoon space in *The Drowned World* is symptomatic of the catastrophic event that is not fully understood or incorporated into the symbolic order. Full understanding of the catastrophe (which has greatly reduced the world's population) would mean a traumatic encounter with the great mass of dead. There is therefore an association between the space of the lagoon and the cemetery. The white buildings that stick up like gravestones indicate the other city of the dead existing under the surface. Knowledge of the dead beneath Kerans's feet is disavowed but their haunting vicinity is felt. The lagoon contains both the physical dead (masses killed by catastrophe) and the symbolically dead (post-traumatic survivors). It is a space situated in the space between two deaths, populated by the living dead that Žižek classifies in two ways: 'For a human being to be "dead while alive" is to be colonised by the "dead" symbolic order; to be "alive while dead" is to give body to the remainder of Life-Substance which has escaped the symbolic colonisation.'<sup>182</sup>

Before considering Kerans's narrative trajectory as a movement towards the state of dead while alive, I want to consider the character of Strangman emerging into the space of the lagoon as alive while dead. To be alive while dead represents a

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<sup>180</sup> Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, p. 294.

<sup>181</sup> Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, p. 296.

<sup>182</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 112.

paradoxical situation in which the subject is freed from the mortified symbolic element of his life, transforming into state of living dead that is more alive than the living: ‘In *this* fantasmatic figure of the undead, not limited by the symbolic order, the obscene immortality of the libido manifests itself as death drive, as a “blind, indestructible insistence” of life cutting across biological cycles of life and death.’<sup>183</sup> Strangman’s sudden appearance halfway through *The Drowned World* injects vigour into Ballard’s text. Strangman (the Strange-man) is described as a living corpse: ‘Strangman’s chalk-white face was like a skull, and he had something of the skeleton’s jauntiness’ (*DW* 94). Strangman is constantly associated with symbols of physical death, and Karans believes his plundered relics resemble bones (*DW* 95). Strangman is also described as a kind of ghost affecting the surrounding environment, and Kearns notices ‘a curiously large number of albino snakes and lizards since Strangman’s arrival [...] There had even been a few albino iguanas’ (*DW* 99). Žižek notes that to be alive while dead is to give body to the persistence of the non-subjective drive existing beyond ordinary death.<sup>184</sup> Using the example of the ghost of Hamlet’s father, Žižek describes ‘actual death unaccompanied by symbolic death, without a settling of accounts’.<sup>185</sup> This type of return is the demand of a symbolic debt persisting after physical demise. Revealing the otherwise hidden human cost of catastrophe as a resurrected corpse, Strangman opens a traumatic space of the real. His demand is from a pre-catastrophic world cut short, embodying a persistent technological enframing and techno-scientific viewpoint. Strangman’s domination of his pet alligators, ‘congregated like hounds around their master’ (*DW* 86), is a potent symbol of his desire for domination of Ballard’s post-catastrophic drowned world. He is driven to drain the lagoon in order reassert control, plundering the resource of the pre-catastrophe treasures hidden underneath. For Paddy: ‘Strangman the pillager and marauder is hardly the novel’s heroic redeemer, and his skull-like face connotes death. Furthermore, that white suit, glowing in the jungle, is a notable icon of colonial dress, the tea planter’s suit, one that makes frequent appearances in a vast range of Ballard’s novels and stories [...] Strangman’s mission is sustained by a desire to make

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<sup>183</sup> Tamas Nagypal, ‘From the Classical “Polis” to the Neoliberal Camp: Mapping the Biopolitical Regimes of the Undead in *Dawn of the Dead*, *Zombi 2* and *28 Days Later*’, *JCRT*, 13:2 (2014), 13-24 (p. 15).

<sup>184</sup> Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, p. 112.

<sup>185</sup> Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, p. 150.

London profitable again, which show him to be pirate and colonial profiteer in equal measure with his dream of reclaiming the riches of the lands.’<sup>186</sup> For Kerans, draining the lagoon would resurrect a corpse, ‘a nightmare world that’s dead and finished’ (*DW* 159), the re-emergence of the great necropolis beneath. For Strangman, as undead avatar, this large-scale resurrection would settle the debts of a city space prematurely ended by catastrophe.

Kerans finds Strangman’s attempt to drain the lagoon deeply disturbing because he represents another form of living dead: Žižek’s dead while alive. Kerans suffers a protracted physical existence after the destruction of his symbolic order (shared by the survey team and other post-traumatic inhabitants of the lagoon) caused by the catastrophic event, and his narrative journey is a slow trajectory toward delayed physical death. Kerans’s physical death is anticipated several times in the text, coming close when he is encouraged by Strangman to undertake a dive down to the cemetery-like dead space of the city beneath the lagoon. ‘The Pool of Thanatos’ is both a play on Kerans’s death-driven desire and Strangman’s facilitation of his suicidal impulses. During the dive, the liquid lagoon becomes a liminal space of life and death, and the surface of the water resembles ‘the barrier of the surface like a plane between two dimensions’ (*DW* 101). Kerans reaches a planetarium, ‘a huge velvet-upholstered womb’ (*DW* 108) representative of an emergent symbolic system encoded by a new constellation of stars and ‘unfamiliar zodiac’ (*DW* 108) where he misrecognises himself as an immense ballooning space-man. Compelled by Strangman towards a wished-for physical death within the space of this new symbolic order, Kerans at the last moment hesitates as his air supply is cut off and he re-emerges uncertain of whether Strangman has tried to kill him, or whether he has tried to kill himself, ‘*Did I or did I not try to kill myself?*’ (*DW* 112), a hesitation that reflects Kerans continued ambiguous situation between two deaths. Existing dead while alive, Kerans’s aborted desire for suicide is an attempt to hasten physical death. However, compelled towards the event, he rejects death on Strangman’s terms as a denial of proper funeral rites and an indecent burial.<sup>187</sup>

Physically existing beyond the dead symbolic order of the pre-catastrophic world and re-emerging for the cemeterial under-city, Kerans becomes a troubling

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<sup>186</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 54.

<sup>187</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 23.

presence for Strangman. Inaugurating a ‘Feast of Skulls’, Strangman ridicules Kerans in an attempt to ritually expel an unsettling element from the lagoon. Kerans is placed at the centre of a carnivalesque space amongst ‘the broken white harvest of bones [...] slender tibias and femurs, scapulas like worn trowels, a mesh of ribs and vertebrae, and even two lolling skulls’ (*DW* 136) as if resembling a corpse. However:

Whatever his motives, Strangman still seemed reluctant to kill him, and the crew reflected this hesitation, always disguising their insults and tortures in the form of grotesque and hilarious jokes, protecting themselves when they pelted him with sea-weed by half-pretending to make an offering to an idol. (*DW* 137)

Strangman’s hesitation to kill Kerans reflects an anxiety about his ontological status since he exists as living dead, and the crew’s pretence that Kerans is an idol hides their deep and troubled uncertainty.

Kerans’s continued existence in the hesitant space between two deaths is kept open until the end of the text when he turns south, away from the northern inhabited world, in an apparent act of self-immolation. With Kerans’s final southern trajectory, Ballard consolidates his spatial metaphor of the cemetery by describing a journey downward *into* the Earth. During his passage towards physical death, Kerans finds Hardman, previously a member of the survey team, emaciated and close to death: ‘like someone jerked from his grave and abandoned to await the Day of Judgement’ (*DW* 171). Hardman becomes another of the living dead occupying *The Drowned World*: obsessed by the movement of the Sun, his eyes are blackened funnels, burnt by his attempt to read the space of the new world. His blindness is a symptom of his post-catastrophe detachment as a subject no longer in the world. For Baxter, Hardman represents ‘Ballard’s criticism of the modern human condition [...] epitomized in the horrific figure of the corpse, an avatar of the living dead. Furthermore, Hardman’s developing blindness signals the onset of critical and imaginative paralysis. Too long a spectator of external fictions, his eyes have petrified into a mass of cancerous growths’,<sup>188</sup> representative of the violence done to the subject by the ‘parasitical

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<sup>188</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 37.

symbolic machine'<sup>189</sup> and unknowingly sacrificing himself to the unattainable object-image of the sun.

Although facing a similar physical dissolution, Kerans's fate can be seen as different. Having already passed through the symbolic spaces of the dead (the city beneath the lagoon), Kerans retains his sight in order to close the opened gap between life and death: an interregnum providing him the opportunity of dying on his own terms. Kerans's southern journey is a final acceptance outstripping his continued animation by a dead symbolic order. He thereby achieves entry into a pre-symbolic space described as 'the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun' (*DW* 175) revealed by the ambiguous forces of catastrophe. For Paddy: 'Kerans wants to become a new Adam, a desire that speaks to the radical possibilities of the changed environment and the need to start anew, but it speaks equally to the recapitulation and repetition of the old world and its accompanying narratives that were meant to be left behind. This makes him a truly uncanny hero, caught in a strange world made of old stories that have made their return.'<sup>190</sup> Kerans knowingly sacrifices himself as a personification of a dead symbolic order and its unsettling continued existence in a new world displaced by catastrophe.

The reconciliation of two deaths, symbolic and physical, caused by catastrophe is played out by Kerans's experiences in *The Drowned World*. The lagoon becomes a space representing the gap between two deaths and resembling an uncontained cemetery and unmade grave. Because of his continued incorporation and reanimation in a dead pre-catastrophic symbolic order, the idea of meaningful physical death preoccupies Kerans. This is pre-figured at various times in the text, in particular, during his suicidal death-dive in 'The Pool of Thanatos'. However, it is with his journey south that Kerans comes to control the events of his physical demise, escaping the demands of being dead while alive.

The structure of *The Drought* differs from *The Drowned World* in a number of ways (representing a different kind of spatial catastrophe). *The Drowned World* describes Kerans's journey towards physical death on his own terms. In contrast, the narrative trajectory of *The Drought* is circular after a long middle interregnum, its structure describing a decaying orbit around the unlucky star of disaster. There is a

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<sup>189</sup> Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, p. 112.

<sup>190</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 61.

palpable sense of decline in the slow catastrophe of *The Drought*, of downward spiral and things running towards a terminal point. Whereas *The Drowned World* eventually compels Kerans to move, *The Drought* slowly calcifies around its characters isolating and stranding them in space. It describes a world decaying due to lack of rain, depleting rivers and oceans. The protagonist, Ransom, witnesses the onset of catastrophe from his houseboat moored on a river in the town of Hamilton and near the city of Mount Royal.

For Paddy: ‘Where the rising water in *The Drowned World* brought forth a rush of ancient race memories, *The Drought*’s realm of disaster burns away the past and opens up a new future.’<sup>191</sup> Pringle also notes that *The Drought* is representative of the future rather than the re-emerging past: ‘Ballard presents a picture of a future in which human beings have become ever more “mental” creatures. As the “intellectualization” of the human race proceeds, men and women remove themselves further from their biological roots. They become lethargic and affectless as the life force itself seems to dry up. A sandy desert becomes the appropriate symbol of this emotional and spiritual state.’<sup>192</sup> If *The Drought* is ‘imaginatively concerned with the future’<sup>193</sup> then it represents a terminal running down of things, including an imaginative investment in space. Luckhurst has suggested that *The Drought* represents an existential catastrophe: ‘The landscape of *The Drought* is one of phenomenological reduction. With the evacuation of Mount Royal effected, the initial catastrophe long passed, Ransom stays behind in an arid landscape with which he profoundly identifies [...] The perverse decision to remain in a landscape that liberates from inauthenticity is, in existential terms, an ethical and indeed necessary choice.’<sup>194</sup>

In *The Drought*, the hot sun presides over the scarcity of the desert rather than the fecundity of the jungle. It describes increasingly catastrophic spaces that are not quite divested of the old, with landscapes littered with various broken things:

The landscape had changed. The placid open reaches of the coastal plain, its perspectives marked by an isolated tree or silo, had vanished. Here the remains

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<sup>191</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 63.

<sup>192</sup> Pringle, *Earth is the Alien Planet*, p. 22.

<sup>193</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 78.

<sup>194</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 64.

of small towns gave the alluvial beach an uneven appearance; the wrecks of cars were parked among the dunes by the river and along the roads approaching it. Everywhere the shells of metal towers and chimneys rose in the air. Even the channel of the river was more crowded, and they wound their way past scores of derelict craft. (*D* 189-190)

Ballard describes spaces drained of dynamism. Transport technologies such as cars or boats cease to function, and remnants remain in the landscape, crowding space with rubbish, blocking roads and rivers. Unlike *The Drowned World*, where a fecund jungle overlay transforms objects into startling new things, in *The Drought*, wrecks retain their shapes but not their functions. As Gasiorek notes: ‘If *The Drowned World* urged a kind of breaking out from the husk of outmoded ways of thinking and living, than *The Drought* is more willing to accept the inescapability of historical residues’, and ‘this landscape, this reality, constructed out of industrialism’s wreckage, must provide the starting point for imagining alternatives’.<sup>195</sup> *The Drought* is a bricolage world that clearly displays the scars of the past. In contrast to the *The Drowned World* that supposes a new kind of organic profusion expressed in the abundant symbol of water, the catastrophe of *The Drought* continually depletes the symbolic resources of its spaces.

Two related spaces stand out as representative of the catastrophic depletion of *The Drought*: the drying river and dune limbo of the beach. The river is the first location mentioned in the text. *The Drought* lacks the pre- and post-catastrophe linking spaces such as the Ritz described in *The Drowned World*, and the fluid conduit of river is emptied:

The continued lateral movements of the river, its rise and fall and the varying pressures on the hull, were like the activity within a vast system of evolution, whose cumulative forward flow was as irrelevant and without meaning as the apparently linear motion of time itself. The real movements were those random and discontinuous relationships between the objects with it, those of himself and Mrs Quilter, her son and the dead birds and fish. (*D* 8)

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<sup>195</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, pp. 40-41.



The impetus to move is lost, and motion becomes random and discontinuous. Objects are isolated and suspended in space, lacking any potential for synergistic relationships. For Luckhurst, random and discontinuous eddies represent ‘multivallic intervals that transverse the space between catastrophe and apocalypse’,<sup>196</sup> so that any assurance of forward momentum (or progressive resolution of meaning) is lost. The corpses of birds and fish are objects stripped of vitality, highlighting the river as a space underlined by death.

The threadbare nature of space in *The Drought* depletes the spaces between the living and dead. Ransom gazes down at the river: ‘At his feet the swollen body of the dog was blurred by the heat, and for a moment the whole landscape seemed to be covered with corpses’ (*D* 95). Like Strangman’s bones, the dead dog allows Ransom to see past the disavowed trauma of catastrophe and confront the reality of a space constituted by a great mass of dead. The unmade grave is brought close to the surface in *The Drought* (until Stangman’s attempts to resurrect the city corpse, the water mirror of the lagoon in *The Drowned World* effectively reflected the gaze away from the underworld of the dead).

The second representative space in *The Drought* is the beach that occupies the middle interregnum of the text. It is also a space where the dead come into proximity with the living:

Then the tide had gathered for them a harvest of corpses. The thousands of bodies they had tipped into the sea after the final bloody battles on the beaches had come back to them, their drowned eyes and blanched faces staring from the shallow pools. (*D* 148)

Like Žižek’s return of the dead denied proper burial rites, the drowned eyes of corpses represent an unpaid debt that continues to make demands of the living. Both the river and beach are landscapes that are traumatically constituted by catastrophic unmade graves that disgorge their contents back into the spaces of the living.

Given its proximity to the dead, the beach is described by Ballard as a ‘dune limbo’:

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<sup>196</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 64.

[...] a waiting-ground, the endless stretches of wet salt sucking away from them all but the hardest core of themselves. These tiny nodes of identity glimmered in the light of the limbo, the zone of nothingness that waited for them to dissolve and deliquesce like the crystals dried by the sun. (*D* 146)

The beach is a place of bare subsistence, a parody of community that cannibalistically feeds on itself, sucking identity away until only a locked hard core of individual subjectivity is left (the subjectivity of living inhabitants ironically come to resemble hard crystals, symbols of permanence resistant to the immanence of death in Ballard's post-catastrophe world). For Gasiorek: 'The beach is a purgatory because it represents a volitionless and eventless horizon. The awaited translation of the self into some new form, which first requires its disintegration, cannot occur in this dead zone.'<sup>197</sup> It is a horizon that denies the final event of death, and a space in which failures of the past are continually repeated:

[...] what was new in their lives and relationships they could form only from the residues of the past, from the failures and omissions that persisted into the present like the wreckage and scrap metal from which they built their cabins. (*D* 147)

Failure and the repetition of mistakes are key features of this post-catastrophic space, with things failing to function. Whereas Kerans is confronted with the possibility of a functioning new world overlaying the old, the beach space of *The Drought* represents a zone of terminal decline with nothing able to emerge positively.

The lack of function in the spaces of *The Drought* serves the unconcealed of cemeterial spaces. The enclosed cemetery, moved to the edge of the city, removes the threat of contamination by the dead. It is a heterotopic space because it is the socially determined containment of the other space of the dead, changing over time to suit a particular society. The running down and loss of social control of space that occurs in *The Drought* leads to a lack of consensus about the constitution of normative and heterotopic spaces. The social no longer has the vitality to define usage of space. This leads to a taint where the other space of the dead leaks back into the space of the

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<sup>197</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 43.

living in a mortifying process (visualised by Ransom as a landscape of corpses). The socially useful function of heterotopias as spaces of imaginative investment is lost. Ransom, reading the landscape, fails to imagine the possibility of a different space that does not chronically repeat the failures of the past or recycle the same things until they become wreckage and scrap.

This terminal running down also affects the symbolic order that holds space together as meaningful. Whereas the lagoon space of *The Drowned World* represented the closing gap between the two deaths of the physical and the symbolic, for Ransom the limbo space of *The Drought* suspends this gap indefinitely. The slow catastrophe of *The Drought* describes a hesitant space in which destruction of the symbolic order is never complete or final. Where Kerans moves towards death to make way for a new emergent zodiac, Ransom continues to try and read the remaining 'brittle ciphers' (*D* 14) of the pre-catastrophic landscape.

The running down, entropic symbolic order also produces alternative and competing readings. Roger Luckhurst notes a rivalry between different characters to impose 'their own psychic investment that would open the landscape to a specific apocalyptic understanding',<sup>198</sup> and as Reverend Johnstone, minister of Hamilton's Presbyterian Church, comments 'There are too many people now living out their own failures, that's the secret appeal of this drought' (*D* 31). This means that the communities of Hamilton and Mount Royal fracture due to their competing symbolic spaces and interpretations of catastrophe. Johnstone clashes with the fisherman Jonas and his crew over the significance of the drought, since catastrophe breaks down the symbolism of Christian belief leading to the emergence of a new primitivism amongst the fishing community. At one point, Ransom notices six carp stood upright on the side of a fishing boat: 'the significance of the mounted fish eluded him [...] the carp were probably some kind of rudimentary totem, expressing the fishermen's faith in their own existence' (*D* 16). During 'The Fire Sermon', a group of fisherman leave 'a small fish-shaped sign' (*D* 46) traced in the dust outside the church, appropriating this Christian symbol. The clashes between Reverend Johnstone and the fisherman leads to a hybrid faith within the post-catastrophic space of the beach limbo, where a chapel port-hole window displays: 'crude glass images of biblical scenes in which some local craftsman had depicted Christ and his disciples surrounded by leaping sharks and sea-

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<sup>198</sup> Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls*, pp. 63-64.

horses' (*D* 154). The slow catastrophe, not fully destroying the existing symbolic order, rearranges it, replacing traditional iconography with leaping sharks and sea-horses representing the emergence of a new post-catastrophic symbolic order obsessed with water and sea.

It is the river dwelling 'idiot son' (*D* 3) Quilter who proves to be most adept at reading the post-catastrophic spaces of *The Drought*. If Ballard's text situates itself between two symbolic orders (the dying pre- and emerging post-catastrophic), in Lacanian terms, Quilter is well named as the *point de capiton* (quilting point) anchoring and fixing the emergence of new meaning. Quilter demonstrates the ability to influence the emerging post-catastrophic symbolic order in a way that is troubling to other characters:

[...] Quilter's presence, like his ambiguous smile, in some way was an obscure omen, one of the many irrational signs that had revealed the real progress of the drought during the confusion of the past months. (*D* 5)

Ransom cannot easily read Quilter's ambiguous smile, but he understands it as an omen and sign revealing something about catastrophe. Quilter's obsession with dead birds and fish is a sign of his ability to manipulate the environment, and he watches Ransom 'from his vantage point above the dead birds' (*D* 7) as if overseeing, or directing, the landscape. During his time on the river, Ransom attempts to resurrect a dying, oil-stained swan as a symbol of hope. As Ransom leaves on his way to the beach limbo of the coast, Quilter gifts him the live swan:

As it flew over, disappearing in a wide arc on the glowing tide of air, Philip waved to Quilter, who stood gazing after them as they faded from sight, his pensive face flickering in the firelight like a lost child's. (*D* 107-108)

Quilter's gift is rejected, and he is left pensive like a lost child on the shore of the river. After a lengthy interregnum, Ransom returns to the river to find the excluded Quilter a dominant force in the post-catastrophic environment. Subverting the pre-catastrophic symbolic order, Ransom's swan becomes an absurd and disturbing helmet for Quilter:

The long russet hair fell to the shoulders, enclosing the face like a partly curtained exhibit in a fairground freak show. Above the notched cheekbones the feathered cap sprouted laterally into two black wings, like a Norseman's helmet. Between them a wavering appendage pointed down at Ransom. (*D* 201)

The phallic image of the swan's neck gestures towards Ransom in an image that is both comic and disturbing. The swan, stained black, becomes a representation of Quilter's control of the post-catastrophic environment. Quilter cannot be read or discerned, his face symbolically enclosed behind long hair. For Francis: 'the idiot-savant Quilter stands for post-Freudian humanity's animalistic and perverse dimensions as evolutionary assets'.<sup>199</sup>

Unlike Kerans, whose final act is a defiant gesture, Ransom only approaches a radical point of transformation through proximity to Quilter. Late in the novel, Quilter's mother notices that Ransom has come to resemble her son (*D* 182), and in the final chapter, Ransom's surrender to Quilter 'left him with a feeling almost of euphoria' (*D* 231). Ransom therefore appears to find meaning through Quilter's reading of space, rather than his own. At the end of *The Drought*, Ransom 'no longer cast any shadow on the sand' (*D* 234), and the resolution of his journey is dissolution in a new symbolic spatial order. Luckhurst comments that Ransom fails to notice the final gift of rain: 'The Catastrophe, and the apocalypse that follows it, is only a translation and re-translation; the catastrophe itself remains hidden. Though Ransom moves through this landscape, it is uncertain whether he is even witness to these ciphers. The coming of rain, that moment of apparent redemption, may still only be a new cipher-script, coming no nearer to the "truth" of catastrophe.'<sup>200</sup> The apocalyptic truth of catastrophe, as the revealing of a new symbolic order, is lost. Ransom does not die (the fact of his physical death remains undisclosed in *The Drought*), but in the final textual instant is dispersed between emergent, but unreadable, post-catastrophic spaces.

The post-catastrophic core, hidden beneath the water in *The Drowned World*, is closer to the surface in *The Drought*, littering the landscape with corpses. Vitality is

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<sup>199</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 85.

<sup>200</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', pp. 67-68.

drained by the taint of the dead, signified by the lack of movement within spaces like the drained river and dune limbo of the beach. The moribund environments of *The Drought* mean a terminal lack of imaginative investment in space, and a corresponding lack in heterotopic possibilities. The unconcealment of meaning in post-catastrophic space is personified by the unreadable Quilter (rather than written into the ciphers of the corpse-strewn landscape). Quilter's abandonment by Ransom on the river early in the text is an attempt at his containment, but Quilter re-emerges as a pervasive force in the post-catastrophic environment. Unlike the alive while dead representatives of dead orders, Quilter shows the capacity to change and modify symbolic meaning. *The Drought* becomes a text about the survival of a particular individual drive (vividly described as the small, crystallised node of identity) rather than the renewal of a community organised around a common symbolic order.

The concept of catastrophe as an event that approaches the Lacanian pre-symbolic real encourages a certain reading of the ambivalent crystallising effect that Ballard describes in *The Crystal World*. The text describes the transformation of the African jungle into a space of prismatic light and multicoloured reflections. The space of catastrophe is one in which fundamental symbolic distinctions are undermined, such as light and dark, alive and dead. Ballard structures his text as a journey toward the space of a leper colony at the heart of an African forest. Baxter's analysis of the 'imperial textures' of *The Crystal World* highlights Ballard's engagement with a Surrealist legacy of anti-colonial politics,<sup>201</sup> so that the text confronts concerns around the necessity of containing difference and drawing clear distinctions. At the heart of *The Crystal World* is the organisation of a colonial space around diseased leper colony, playing on anxieties about excluded other spaces, and the narrative journey of the text continually breaches a series of spaces set up to surround and contain the trauma of catastrophe. Therefore, for Luckhurst: '*The Crystal World* is highly effective in maintaining the enigma of the meaning(s) of the catastrophe. It is suspended through elliptical and at times nonsensical dialogue; through the elusiveness of officials at Port Matarre; through misreading of documents [...]; through the redundancy and incomprehensibility of the 'scientific; explanation [...]. The crystallizing forest seems to attack reference itself.'<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 39.

<sup>202</sup> Luckhurst, '*The Angle Between Two Walls*', pp. 58-59.

The protagonist of *The Crystal World*, a doctor called Sanders, makes his way into the centre of the jungle in order to reunite with his former lover, Suzanne Clair, working at the Mont Royal clinic located fifty miles upriver from Port Matarre. He is joined on his journey by various companions, including a priest, Father Balthus, who mentions Port Matarre's resemblance to Arnold Böcklin's 'Island of the Dead'. Böcklin produced a series of painting with this name in the 1880s depicting a small rowboat arriving at the gateway to a small cemetery island where, in Father Balthus's description: 'the cypresses stand guard above a cliff pierced by a hypogeum, while a storm hovers over the sea' (*CW* 13-14).<sup>203</sup> This passage through Böcklin's vision establishes Port Matarre as a gateway to the heterotopic cemetery as a space of containment set up around the central dead space of the leprosy clinic, referenced by one character commenting: 'outside your colony is merely another larger one' (*CW* 16). Arriving at Port Matarre, Sanders notices a spatial taint emanating from clinic:

At intervals, when the sky was overcast, the water was almost black, like putrescent dye. By contrast, the straggle of warehouses and small hotels that constituted Port Matarre gleamed across the dark swells with a spectral brightness, as if lit less by solar light than by some interior lantern, like the pavilion of an abandoned necropolis [...] (*CW* 11)

Port Matarre is a lit necropolis, but despite its gleam reference to putrescent dye in the river suggests contamination. The quality of light in Port Matarre is therefore spectral, belonging to the dead rather than the living.

For Paddy, the overabundance of light and dark imagery throughout *The Crystal World* 'could feel heavy handed, but the effect is actually quite satirical, as if Ballard is mocking a reader's desire to read the symbolic value of this contrasting imagery. A standard formalist reading -- dark means evil, light means good -- quickly feels inert.'<sup>204</sup> During his journey, Sanders becomes increasing aware that the catastrophe-inflicted forest is a space that suspends categories of difference: 'in that place of rainbows, nothing is distinguished from anything else' (*CW* 135-136). Baxter

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<sup>203</sup> Father Balthus refers to the *Kunstmuseum* in Basil, which would indicate that he is referring to the first version of the painting.

<sup>204</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 71.

draws a useful analogy with Foucault's machine of the visible, the panopticon, to describe the forest: 'in the same way that light in the panopticon was used to measure and condition, so Ballard's ostensibly illuminated world works on a process of perceptual immobility'.<sup>205</sup> Sanders is a complacent observer failing to notice the threat of the forest, loosing scientific objectivity as he is seduced by the visual effects of the forest: 'Transparency [...] reassures the onlookers that the diseased beauty of the forest is innocuous, a benign spectacle of prismatic light.'<sup>206</sup> Nature resists attempts to reduce it to a stable object of study and control, answering back with a sublime aesthetic, leading to a profound ontological uncertainty reflected in the 'strange contrasts of light and dark' (*CW* 30) that occur throughout the text.

'Prismatic light' (*CW* 69) is an important concept in *The Crystal World*, creating a kind of parallax by which objects can be displaced. For Paddy, the precise effect of Ballard's text is that 'Familiar landscapes, texts and ideas become unfamiliar, strange and uncanny. We seem to recognise Conrad's cruiser and Greene's leproserie, but we are mistaken; they have become something else here. The novel is not crystal clear. These crystals do not clarify, but refract.'<sup>207</sup> Žižek describes the possibility of an ontological shift occurring with parallax effect: 'the observed difference is not simply "subjective," thanks to the fact that it is the same object existing "out there" which is seen from two different points of view. It is rather that [...] subject and object are inherently "mediated," so that an "epistemological" shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an "ontological" shift in the object itself.'<sup>208</sup> In a similar fashion, Ballard questions the ontological certainty of Sanders's gaze and what the crystal forest means. Sanders is so certain of the benign beauty of the forest, that he wilfully ignores the catastrophe it represents:

For some reason he felt less concerned to find a so-called scientific explanation for the phenomenon he had just seen. The beauty of the spectacle had turned the keys of memory, and a thousand images of childhood, forgotten for nearly forty years, filled his mind, recalling the paradisaal world when

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<sup>205</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 51.

<sup>206</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 51.

<sup>207</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 81.

<sup>208</sup> Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, p. 244.



everything seemed illuminated by that prismatic light described so exactly by Wordsworth in his recollections of childhood. (*CW* 69)

The spectacle of the forest causes Sanders to abandon his scientific objectivity. He nostalgically associates the image with the paradisaical world of childhood and recollection of Wordsworth's poetry. Sanders's difficulty in reading the forest is due to his misrecognition of the space disguised by the parallax of its prismatic light. The crystal forest is an enigmatic and intensely visual catastrophic space, and the light of crystals is paradoxically transparent and impenetrable. The forest as an object of contemplation blinds the observer to the reality of the corporeal dissolution occurring within it. Ballard describes 'half-crystallised bodies of men and women fused against the trunks of the trees, looking up at the refracted sun' (*CW* 164). The refracted sun distracts Ballard's characters, numbing them into passivity as it pulls them towards catastrophe. The crystal forest opens a new space of spectacular nature hiding a traumatic reality of destructive catastrophe.

Ostensibly, Sanders's quest is to find Suzanne Clair, French for clear or light, a character that promises to make clear the crystallised space of the forest. She is located in the leper colony at the centre of the forest, and like the eye of the storm, it is a space that suspends the catastrophe happening all around it:

The road marked the final boundary of the affected zone, and to Dr. Sanders the darkness around him seemed absolute, the black air inert and empty. After the endless glimmer of the vitrified forest the trees along the road, the ruined hotel and even the two men with him appeared to be shadowy images of themselves [...] Despite his relief at escaping from the forest, this feeling of flatness and unreality, of being in the slack shadows of a spent world, filled Sanders with a sense of failure and disappointment. (*CW* 119-120)

The epicentre of post-catastrophic space is experienced as an inert pseudo-space of shadow images and darkness. Finding Clair's hospital empty of patients, the colony becomes a complexly inverted and unbound heterotopia.

Foucault mentions the colony as a heterotopia of compensation (containing and taming the messiness of space all around it<sup>209</sup>). For Sanders, in his medical role, the leper colony containing Clair's hospital should represent a reassuring space enforcing professional barriers between doctor and patient. However, the presence of catastrophe profoundly disrupts the organisation of this space. Sanders enters symbolically wearing 'dead man's clothes' (*CW* 128), commenting that the colony resembles an 'unmade grave' (*CW* 134), referencing the contamination of the colony by the presence of the dead and living dead. Sanders finds that Clair is infected with leprosy (a further loss of distinction between doctors and patients), and rather than making clear the space of catastrophe, Clair becomes synonymous with it.

The hospital is emptied of patients, inhabiting the forest outside its walls. Ballard's description of leprous bodies, 'gazing out with dead eyes' and with 'skeleton-like shoulders and arms' (*CW* 130-131), knowingly references the historical understanding of the leprosy as a form of living death,<sup>210</sup> and the post-catastrophic hospital becomes an uncontained cemetery space transmitting contagion. The Mount Royal clinic becomes an ambiguous space of breached order, representative of the unmade grave of post-catastrophic space, a profoundly disturbing site returning the excluded other of the living dead and allowing traumatic intrusions of the real.

One explanation for the ontological uncertainties surrounding the crystallised forest in Ballard's text is its emanation from a pre-symbolic real space: a state of nature barred by entrance into language. Sanders's recall of childhood memories and illuminated paradisaic world (referencing a pre-linguistic state of being) when viewing the crystallised forest indicates proximity to the real. The forest can be seen to represent an impossible state of satisfaction that erases separations enforced by symbolic and linguistic orders, literally fusing the individual and the external world (graphically depicted as a mass of bodies fused with trees gazing at the refracted Sun). In his approach to the forest space, Sanders experiences 'answers of the real' that Žižek defines as: 'The role of the Lacanian real is [...] radically ambiguous: true, it erupts in the form of a traumatic return, derailing the balance of our daily lives, but it serves at the same time as a support of this very balance. What would our daily lives

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<sup>209</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', pp. 21-22.

<sup>210</sup> Peter Lewis Allen, *The Wages of Sin: Sex and Disease, Past and Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), p. 35.

be without some support in an *answer of the real*?<sup>211</sup> Confronting the reality of catastrophe, Sanders attempts to master the cognition of leprosy linked to the crystallised forest. The empty hospital and infection of Clair signify Sanders's loss of control, and he tries to regulate anxieties with the fantasy that Clair's infection is an intended consequence of their earlier affair:

He realized that he had been waiting for Suzanne to catch the disease, that for him this had probably been her one valid role. Even their affair had been an unconscious attempt to bring about this very end. It was himself, and not the poor devils at the leproserie, who had been the real source of infection for Suzanne. (*CW* 126)

Imagining himself as the source of infection is a response to his own impotence that, for Žižek, is the repetition of the elementary phallic gesture of symbolisation by conceiving himself as radically responsible for the intrusion of the real: 'such a "phallic" inversion of impotence into omnipotence is bound up with an answer of the real. There must always be some "little piece of the real," totally contingent but nonetheless perceived by the subject as a confirmation, as the support of its belief in its own omnipotence'.<sup>212</sup> Sanders confirms his omnipotence by believing that he is responsible for the contingent event of Suzanne Clair's infection. In relation to the larger catastrophe of the crystallising forest, Sanders's phallic inversion of impotence means an absurd reimagining of himself as Christ, healing the crystallised forest (*CW* 162-166).

Despite Sanders's attempts to control and incorporate these intrusions of the real, the reality of catastrophe slips from his understanding (like Ransom's failure to notice the gift of rain). Sanders is reduced to the role of passive observer, separated from the post-catastrophic space of the crystallised forest and leprosy victims contained within it: 'Through the trees [Sanders] saw the train of the procession but they seemed to vanish as quickly as they appeared, as if eager to familiarize themselves with every tree and grove in their new-found paradise' (*CW* 165). The

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<sup>211</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 29.

<sup>212</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 30.

vanishing procession of lepers is representative of Sanders's loss of control over the post-catastrophic symbolic space, a paradise from which he is barred.

The spatial proximity of the Lacanian real in *The Crystal World* is profoundly disruptive, eroding critical distance by collapsing distinction such as light and dark. The crystallised forest is an image that escapes Sanders's understanding contained by the symbolic order. This is a tension also present in the unreadable ciphers of landscape in *The Drought*. The crystallising catastrophe is a complex metaphor to describe the radical disturbance of differential categories, literally fusing the landscape together. This eradication of difference has profound effects on the stable categories of living and dead, and the clinic at the centre of catastrophic space becomes an unmade grave, expelling its contents (the living dead of the leprosy victim) back into the space around it. Sanders attempts to contain the simultaneous catastrophes of leprosy contagion and the crystallising forest by imagining himself radical responsible and in control of these answers of the real. However, the crystallised bodies within the forest throw off any attempt at interpretative containment, and catastrophe continually breaks through the spaces of containment set up around it.

In this chapter I have considered post-catastrophic spaces in Ballard's novels *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World*. I have argued a space linking in all these novels is the uncontained cemetery space of the unmade grave that traumatically returns the dead. Ballard positions his texts in the gap between two deaths explained by Žižek as the space opened up between physical death and death in the symbolic order. Catastrophe is an event that generates a great mass of physically dead, with cadavers literally constituting the landscape, but also does profound damage to the symbolic order, in particular the idea of balance within nature. There are many examples of living dead in these texts, either as reanimated corpses or individuals suffering a profound loss of symbolic orientation in the world. In *The Drowned World*, a text haunted by the cemetery space of the dead city beneath the lagoon, the figures of Strangman and Kerans represent two types of living dead, and Kearns's narrative trajectory is towards an inevitable physical death as a meaningful event. In *The Drought*, Ransom finds difficulty in reading an exhausted symbolic order represented by spaces such as the drying river and dune limbo beach. Coming into proximity with the spaces of the dead, individual subjective experience takes precedence over the possibility of a unified symbolic understanding of space

that is able to contain the disruptive effects of catastrophe. Unable to maintain his own symbolic investment in space, Ransom is eventually dissipated amongst competing readings of space. The crystallising forest in *The Crystal World* approaches the real, beyond and prior to the symbolic order, which collapses differences and causes profound disruption of symbolic representation. The ambiguous reality of catastrophe continually defies attempts at spatial containment, and the colonial clinic space at the centre of the catastrophe becomes paradoxically inverted, collapsing distinctions by infecting its doctors and expelling its patients outside its walls.

I have argued that the space of the cemetery is a defining feature of Ballard's catastrophes. Unlike Foucault's contained space of the heterotopic cemetery, which attempts to accommodate a proper place for the dead within the world of the living by being placed on the outskirts, catastrophe remakes the cemetery as an unmade grave contaminating the space of the living. All of Ballard's protagonists move through a cemetery-like space coming close to the dead. Some characters are more successful than others at reading the space of the unmade grave, but all are barred from the emergent symbolic order. Considered in the next chapter, Ballard's next collection of stories published as *The Atrocity Exhibition*, continue to explore the idea of catastrophic space and attempts to read it in a way 'that makes sense' (AE 50).

### Chapter 3

#### Heterotopia and *Désœuvrement* in ‘The Terminal Beach’ and *The Atrocity Exhibition*

This chapter considers the literary theories of Foucault and Blanchot in relation to Ballard’s experimental texts, ‘The Terminal Beach’ (1964) and *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970). I discuss these works as literary heterotopias and spaces of *désœuvrement* or worklessness in which the order of things can be questioned. In ‘The Terminal Beach’, Ballard investigates a form of already destroyed, post-catastrophic space that resists understanding. The space of Ballard’s Eniwetok is complex and difficult to read since it discloses a series of ontological objects outside the working of discourse. *The Atrocity Exhibition* describes a post-catastrophic environment that undermines concepts of rational order. The causes of catastrophe are hard to locate in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, attributed to an omnipresent and multifarious media landscape constituted by a series of ambiguous, and often traumatic, events. *The Atrocity Exhibition* represents a difficult space of literature in which a paradoxical process of condensing and expansion takes place, describing subjective experiences of space in which an individual tries to make sense of his environment. The fragmentary and decentred nature of *The Atrocity Exhibition* moves it towards a site of radical openness and worklessness that threatens to undo everything, questioning the will towards explanation. The impossible, non-working spaces of *The Atrocity Exhibition* refuse to be sealed off and mastered, unsettling any attempt at framing. Both texts act as literary heterotopias, challenging the reproduction of normalised space and opening fissures of meaning.

Before considering ‘The Terminal Beach’ and *The Atrocity Exhibition*, it is important to consider Blanchot’s theories about the space of literature, and how these relate to my overall argument about the representation of Foucault’s concept of heterotopic space in Ballard’s fiction. Foucault acknowledges the influence of Blanchot’s thinking in the essay ‘Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside’ (1966)<sup>213</sup> that was published one year after his lecture on heterotopia, ‘Of Other Spaces’. Foucault’s essay highlights the primacy of exterior or outside spatiality in Blanchot’s work resistant to ‘setting down ready-made meanings that stitch the old

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<sup>213</sup> Blanchot later returned the compliment by writing ‘Michel Foucault as I Imagine Him’ (1986).

fabric of interiority back together in the form of an imagined outside',<sup>214</sup> echoing the concept of the heterotopic other space. Blanchot's literary outside and Foucault's heterotopia are both representative of unconventional and experimental spaces that unsettle the rest of homogenous space all around them. For Johnson, they are both placeless places that 'form enclosures that are a passage to the outside, detaching us from ourselves'.<sup>215</sup>

Foucault's essay on Blanchot also focuses attention of the importance of the representation of space in literary fiction declaring 'space is to fiction what the negative is to reflection'.<sup>216</sup> Like the heterotopia of the mirror, fiction from the outside is a placeless place that 'renders this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the looking glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since, in order to be perceived, it has to pass through this virtual point, which is over there'.<sup>217</sup> Foucault's recognition of a literary exterior space defined by Blanchot is important in his thinking about heterotopias as spaces that remain radically open by refusing the closure and fixture of meaning. The outside language of fiction:

[...] must no longer be a power that tirelessly produces images and makes them shine, but rather a power that undoes them, that lessens their overload, that infuses with an inner transparency that illuminates them little by little until they burst and scatter into the lightness of the unimaginable. Blanchot's fictions are, rather than the images themselves, their transformation, displacement, and neutral interstices.<sup>218</sup>

This resonates with Foucault's introduction to *The Order of Things* that directly relates heterotopia to literature, in particular a passage in Borges describing a Chinese Encyclopaedia that has the power 'to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old

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<sup>214</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside', in *Foucault Blanchot*, by Michel Foucault and Maurice Blanchot, trans. by Jeffery Mehlman and Brian Massumi (New York: Zone, 2006), pp. 7-58 (p. 21).

<sup>215</sup> Johnson, 'Unreavelling Foucault's "Different Spaces"', p. 86.

<sup>216</sup> Foucault, 'Maurice Blanchot', p. 24.

<sup>217</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 17.

<sup>218</sup> Foucault, 'Maurice Blanchot', p. 23.

distinction between the Same and the Other'.<sup>219</sup> For Foucault, Borges's passage reveals a disorder worse than the incongruous, invoking the irregular inflections of the heterocline. This disorder is a heterotopia, which Foucault compares to the reassuring ordering of utopia.<sup>220</sup> Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia removes the *tabula* that allows the ordering of the entities of the world, and this disruption is made possible by the space of literature. Heterotopic literature is a privileged site, an experimental 'operating table' where 'language has intersected space',<sup>221</sup> functioning as a repository of imaginative potential rather than the rigid ordering of things, and an intersection between the real and imaginary.

Foucault's literary heterotopias resemble the spaces of literature that Blanchot describes where words on a page make demands on the reader and writer. In *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot begins with the statement: 'A book, even a fragmentary one, has a centre which attracts it. This centre is not fixed, but is displaced by the pressure of the book and circumstances of its composition.'<sup>222</sup> Blanchot identifies a certain frustration, which also elicits fascination, that literature is its own space: an exterior realm that displaces its own fixed centre. Literature gives words a fecundity that takes them beyond the normative structures of language, letting them be in their own right. The understanding of literature as its own space anticipates the understanding of the author as an errant referent and false centre, and the displaced centre of the text lies in an unreachable space. The authorial challenge is how to express the demanding open space of literature, whilst at the same using a syntax that can be comprehended in the knowledge that this is in itself a restriction and curtailment. The displaced centre of literature isolates the writer from his work as the core that he seeks but cannot reach.

As Blanchot explains, the writer cannot hope to have mastery since the work arrives exterior and remote. The work occupies its own independent space that is infinite and demanding. Through the process of writing, the writer is forced outside himself: 'He who writes the work is set aside; he who has written it is dismissed.'<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xvi.

<sup>220</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xix.

<sup>221</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xix.

<sup>222</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. iii.

<sup>223</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 21.



The writer does not finally master his work by finishing it, since the limitations he imposes are always premature and false: ‘The writer never knows whether the work is done. What he has finished in one book, he starts over or destroys in another.’<sup>224</sup>

Since the true ending of the work is always missing (‘The work is without any proof. Just as it is without any use. It can’t be verified’<sup>225</sup>), the essential solitude of the work is a separate space of literature that opens into the infinite. The imposition of an ending on the literary work forces it out of its own space, making it occur as an event in the space of the writer and his work. This is similar to Foucault’s idea of the literary heterotopia as a text attempting to keep itself open to the infinite space of literature, resisting the threat of premature endings by having a minimum of authorial organisation.

At a limit point the literary work is resistant to being made. By placing it into a system of understanding, damage is done to its potential. Blanchot’s ideas of *désœuvrement* help keep the work open. As Pierre Joris notes in his translator’s notes to *The Unavowable Community*, *désœuvrement* ‘has at its core the concept of the “œuvre” (work, body of work, artistic work, etc.) and implies a range of meanings: idleness, a state of being without work, unoccupied, etc.’<sup>226</sup> Ann Smock’s notes to *The Writing of the Disaster* provide a further gloss on the word: ‘*Le désœuvrement* is a word Blanchot has long used in close association with *l’œuvre* (the work of art, of literature). It means the work as the work’s lack- the work as unmindful of being or not being, as neither present nor absent: neutral. It also means idleness, inertia.’<sup>227</sup> *Désœuvrement* implies a kind of inertia or worklessness, and Lydia Davis translates Blanchot as follows: ‘To write is to produce absence of the work (worklessness). Or: writing is the absence of the work as it *produces itself* through the work and throughout the work. Writing as worklessness (in the active sense of the word) is the insane game, the indeterminacy that lies between reason and unreason.’<sup>228</sup> The approach of *désœuvrement* in writing is an insane game that acknowledges the

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<sup>224</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 21.

<sup>225</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 22.

<sup>226</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. by Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988), pp. xxii-xxiii.

<sup>227</sup> Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 148.

<sup>228</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*, trans. by Lydia Davis (Barrytown: Station Hill, 1981), p. 147.

expansiveness of things as they are, and where nothing is put in service of restrictive systems and structures of thought. Blanchot therefore detects a profound and infinite space behind literature, and *désœuvrement* describes an inertia that allows a letting be, rather than forced systems of comprehension and understanding.

Blanchot's theory of *désœuvrement* centres around an essential inertia that appreciates the *a priori* existence of the work before it begins: 'It is a region anterior to the beginning where nothing is made of being, and in which nothing is accomplished. It is the depth of being inertia (*désœuvrement*).'<sup>229</sup> For Blanchot, this inertia speaks with an ineffable voice because it is errant and does not fit, casting the writer out of his own being. This is the a displacement of the subjective 'I' that returns in literature in the form of a de-personalised 'Someone.' The loss of the assured space of 'I' becoming a 'vertiginous separation',<sup>230</sup> and the lost of the 'I' interacting with 'You' causes the anonymous to be a feature of literature:

Never anyone in particular, never you and I. Nobody is part of the They. "They" belongs to a region which cannot be brought to light, not because it hides some alien secret to any revelation or even because it is radically obscure, but because it transforms everything which had access to it, even light, into anonymous, impersonal being, the Nontrue, the Nonreal yet always there.<sup>231</sup>

The depersonalisation of the author also highlights the importance of death's relationship with literature in *The Space Of Literature*. Literary work shares in many of the qualities of death through its exteriority, its movement outside mastery and the sovereign point of 'I.' Like death, it is impossible to reach the central point of the work: 'The central point of the work is the work as origin, the point which cannot be reached, yet the only one which is worth reaching.'<sup>232</sup> The point of origin in the literary work as a realm of depersonalised worklessness undoes any possibility of mastery.

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<sup>229</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 46.

<sup>230</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 31.

<sup>231</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 31.

<sup>232</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 54.

Blanchot's concept of *désœuvrement* manifests in the form of fragmentary writing. As Leslie Hill notes, against Adorno's theory of the fragment expressed in *Aesthetic Theory*, in which 'fragmentary writing [...] is merely one of the ways in which compromised, damaged or unachievable totality, in pessimistic if critical vein, speaks of its fraught, divided relation to itself',<sup>233</sup> Blanchot proposes a new concept of the fragment:

[...] what if the abiding labour in vain towards the completion of the work, suggested instead an entirely different conception of literature, one that was no longer subject to the logic of the work but, beyond presence, autonomy, or reflexive closure, affirmed itself instead as the futural promise of a radical multiplication of writing as a proliferating series of singular events?<sup>234</sup>

This resistance to the logic of work resembles Foucault's heterotopic literature in which the taxonomy of Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia, 'overburdened with complex figures, with tangled paths, strange places, secret passages, and unexpected communications',<sup>235</sup> represents multiplication and proliferation rather than a totalising order of things. The refusal of fragments to coalesce around a whole, whether present or absent, resonates with the radically openness of 'The Terminal Beach' and *The Atrocity Exhibition*. As Philip Tew notes, whilst *The Atrocity Exhibition* denies the contrived utopian closure of artworks detected by Adorno it also goes beyond so that the text 'incorporates and amplifies' open forms.<sup>236</sup> Refusing the possibility of reflexive closure, Ballard instead creates his texts from 'Elements in a quantal world' (CSS2 40), clearly rendering gaps and discontinuities between singular events. The reason for this is not to contemplate the potential future existence of the completed work, but as the only possible way to describe the spaces of modernity that arrive as always already destroyed and blasted apart, so that events refuse to resolve into a

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<sup>233</sup> Leslie Hill, *Maurice Blanchot and Fragmentary Writing: A Change of Epoch* (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>234</sup> Hill, *Blanchot and Fragmentary Writing*, p. 6.

<sup>235</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xx.

<sup>236</sup> Philip Tew, 'Acts of Reconsideration: J.G. Ballard (1930-2009) Annotating and Revising Editions of *The Atrocity Exhibition*', *Textual Practice*, 26: 3 (2012), 399-420 (p. 405).

clear totalising narrative. *Désœuvrement* is therefore an approach to the proliferation of singular events that refuses to work them into a resolved, coherent whole.

Although there seems to be a tension between Foucault's idea of heterotopias that describe 'real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself'<sup>237</sup> and literarily heterotopias that occupy a complex outside, other zone (as in Blanchot's space of literature), this dichotomy is anticipated by Ballard's concept of the externalisation of the fictional, expressed in his introduction to *Crash* (a novel that finds its 'gene' (*AE* 157) in a chapter of *The Atrocity Exhibition*): 'We live inside an enormous novel [...] The fiction is already here. The writer's task is to invent the reality' (*C* v). This statement has profound implications for a crossing over of the space of literature considered in this chapter, predicting the need for external reality to be read as an enormous novel.

'The Terminal Beach' is a complex and fragmentary text, in which Ballard investigates a contemporary environment, notionally the post-catastrophic atoll of Eniwetok, site of multiple American nuclear tests in the decade between 1948 and 1958. Luckhurst draws attention to the space of Eniwetok constituted by a series of ciphers in Ballard's story: 'Brittle ciphers track a path in the interval between the catastrophe and its apocalyptic disclosure, but any meaning offered is merely a translation or re-translation of the impenetrable signs.'<sup>238</sup> For Baxter, Ballard's Eniwetok is an attempt to overcome historical amnesia concerning the devastating effects of the hydrogen bomb, and the experimental texture of the story 'ruptures the ostensive seamless narrative of historical representation in order to mobilise the historical unconscious. But each move to puncture reified models of history is overlaid with another instance of repression.'<sup>239</sup> Eniwetok is therefore a palimpsest space that continually blocks attempts to read it. Ballard's protagonist, Traven, isolated on the island, tries to reconcile himself with this post-catastrophe landscape after the death of his wife and son in a car accident. In trying to make sense of the destroyed environment, Traven attempts to reach an ontological zero point via a highly personal and idiosyncratic journey, which progressively strips away layers of his subjectivity. His sense-making activity can be understood as a gesture that makes

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<sup>237</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 17.

<sup>238</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 69.

<sup>239</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 21.

the world more meaningful, however, the possibility of reaching a resolution seems to be excluded by an environment which is already appropriated by the devastation of a totalising catastrophe.

In ‘The Terminal Beach’, Eniwetok exists as its own entity that cannot be fully grasped by Traven and his uncertainty is clear from the start: ‘Traven walked through the dark sand, already forgetting where the shore lay’ (CSS2 29). Each item on the island has significance, and the heavy military concrete architecture of bunkers, observation blocks and submarine pens exert a pull on the imagination, with Traven referring to them as individual ‘ontological objects’ (CSS2 49). Suspended between these objects, the island space exists within an ambiguous temporality described as a ‘zone of non-time’ (CSS2 33). Traven’s perambulation of the island constantly brings him back to the same starting points, and Eniwetok is a space that refuses to develop a cumulative spatial understanding:

[...] for the first few weeks Traven made little attempt to leave the bunker, and postponed any further exploration of the island. The symbolic journey through its inner circles set its own times of arrival and departure. He evolved no routine for himself. All sense of time soon vanished, and his life became completely existential, an absolute break separating one moment from the next like two quantal events. (CSS2 35)

The island is contained by a series of inner circles, a circularity that erases temporal development and progressive understanding. It is a space that separates out events eroding associations so that the narrative enacts no forward motion, suspending itself in a moment of incomprehension experienced by Traven. For Francis, Ballard’s story is representative of an ‘extreme and shocking implication; that of the actual desirability of the annihilation the Bomb offers’, and the circular island ‘symbolizes the sought after psychic null-point evoked by Freud explicitly in terms of the destructive detonation of the hydrogen bomb’, whilst also evoking ‘the mandala which in Jungian psychology is a “symbolical representation of the *self*” in its totality’.<sup>240</sup> Francis highlights the difficulty Traven has in coming to terms with the

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<sup>240</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 55-56.

island as due to the externalisation of his unconscious within the space of the island, creating a landscape that resists a straightforward reading.

The fractured structure of 'The Terminal Beach' is also representative of Traven's troubled psyche, and the story fits the modernist paradigm of the traumatic aesthetic in literature explained by Luckhurst as 'uncompromisingly avant-garde: experimental, fragmented, refusing the consolations of beautiful form and suspicious of familiar representations and narrative conventions'.<sup>241</sup> Trauma has the effect of disturbing narratives by freezing time: 'Because trauma cannot be integrated into diachrony, it is a blockage',<sup>242</sup> and the temporal disruption of 'The Terminal Beach' is linked to Traven's trauma as past events continuously break into the present. Luckhurst notes: 'the traumatic memory persists in a half-life, rather like a ghost, a haunting absent of another time in our time'.<sup>243</sup> Ghosts are therefore 'signs of atrocities, marking sites of untold violence, a traumatic past whose traces remain to attest to a lack of testimony. A haunting does not initiate a story; it is the sign of a blockage of story, a hurt that has not been honoured by a memorializing narrative.'<sup>244</sup> These traumatic blocks are represented in the physical landscape of the island dominated by concentric concrete blocks that are marked with 'the faint outlines of human forms in stylised poses, the flash-shadows of the target community burnt into the cement' (CSS2 37). These flash-shadows, like ghosts frozen in a single moment, represent the missing body that is able to testify to past events. The event of the hydrogen bomb scars the landscape: 'The desolation and emptiness of the island, and the absence of any local fauna, were emphasised by the huge sculptural forms of the target basins set into the surface' (CSS2 32). This description of desolation, emptiness, and absence represented by target basins attests to the lack of a memorializing narrative to reanimate the space of Eniwetok, in Baxter's terms an historical amnesia surrounding the reasons why the island has been left scarred and ruined.

Within this landscape constituted by traumatic blocks and absences, Traven is troubled by the ghosts of his wife and son (representative of personal trauma), and also a dead Japanese man who reveals himself as Dr Yasuda (representative of

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<sup>241</sup> Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 81.

<sup>242</sup> Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, pp. 80-1.

<sup>243</sup> Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 81.

<sup>244</sup> Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 93.

impersonal, large-scale trauma). Dr Yasuda's corpse is a signifier of Nagasaki and Hiroshima: his minimal biographical details, 'Traven guessed that the Japanese had been a doctor or lawyer' (CSS2 47), are a reminder of the anonymity of thousands of victims.<sup>245</sup> Details of how Dr Yasuda arrived on the island are therefore undisclosed and he is without a memorialising narrative. Dr Yasuda's unspoken history is a final reminder of Traven's amnesiac condition and the active forgetting necessary in a totalising narrative capable of nullifying personal and historical trauma: 'the white leviathan, zero' (CSS2 49). As will be discussed later, Dr Yasuda's corpse acts as an interruption in Traven's working towards understanding, throwing him back into a state of workless patient waiting (CSS2 50).

Eniwetok's space is contested, and its traumatic ghosts are one challenge to Traven's reading of the island. The arrival of Dr C. Osborne also unsettles Traven by introducing another understanding of the island space. Osborne's threat is made clear by a female companion who defies Traven's attempts to fix an image of her:

She smiled to Traven as he stepped through the scaffolding. A dozen fragmented images of herself were reflected in the broken panes -- in some she was sans head, in others multiples of her arms circled about her like the serpent limbs of a Hindu goddess. Confused, Traven turned and walked back to the jeep. (CSS2 43-44)

Traven's vision recalls Shiva in the annihilating manifestation of Bhairava, re-framing the catastrophe of Eniwetok as a divine or supernatural apocalypse. Osborne, through association with this young woman, takes on another aspect of the island's post-catastrophic space as an avatar of the destructive science that made the hydrogen bomb possible. Stumbling across Osborne's camp, Traven attempts to read a series of mutated chromosome charts (implied to show the result of radiation):

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<sup>245</sup> Traven later mentions the deaths of Dr Yasuda's sister's children in Osaka, 1944 (CSS2 48), a possible reference to the American B-29 bombing raids on the city, although these actually took place in 1945. This hints at a familiarity between Dr Yasuda and Traven, though it is more likely Traven is recalling a traumatic bombing mission he took part in, personalising his victims and projecting his guilt onto the anonymous corpse of a Japanese man.

The abstract patterns were meaningless, but during his recovery he amused himself by devising suitable titles for them. (Later [...] he found the half-buried juke-box, and tore the list of records from the selection panel, realizing that these were the most appropriate captions. Thus embroidered, the charts took on many layers of associations.) (CSS2 39-40)

Later, before leaving the island, the young woman brings Traven a gift:

As a final present, an ironic gesture unexpected from the old biologist, she had brought from Osborne the correct list of legends for the chromosome charts. They stopped by the derelict juke-box and she pasted them on to the selection panel. (CSS2 43)

Osborne's ironic gesture corrects Traven's reading of the images that in fact reveals many layers of associations. Traven's accidental and unconscious discovery of the juke-box, like Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia, creates a classification based around *désœuvrement* where things are found rather than worked into a system or order, but Osborne's presence threatens such non-working, as he attempts to scientifically explain that things he finds on the island.

Osborne's interruptive discourse cuts across the fragmented text of 'The Terminal Beach' in the form of his 'Eniwetok Diary', that has the double purpose of diagnosing Traven and also re-imposing a temporal structure on the island zone of non-time. His italicised diary entries, dated the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> August describe Traven as a 'strange, derelict figure [...] suffering from severe exposure and malnutrition' (CSS2 40) which gives a possible explanation for Traven's eccentric behaviour. Importantly, however, it is a discourse that is problematized by the evocative island space. Osborne's diary entry on the 6<sup>th</sup> August reads: '*He has the eyes of the possessed*' (CSS2 40), allowing superstitious belief to supplant scientific explanation. The date is the anniversary of the destruction of Hiroshima, and it seems that this event has enough resonance on Eniwetok to undermine the work of scientific understanding.

Set against Osborne's rationalising scientific discourse, Traven's conception of Eniwetok as a collection of ontological objects suspended in a zone of non-time resembles the attempt to access the other space of a literary text described by Blanchot. Traven's reading of Eniwetok is therefore also an attempt to re-write the



island space. This elicits fascination rather than understanding of space, and is based not on sensible ‘internal rationality’ but *désœuvrement*.<sup>246</sup> The space of worklessness belongs to the complex neutral neither/nor: ‘The neuter is not a term in a relation, but neither is it nothing; it supposes another relation, a relation without a relation.’<sup>247</sup> This is a space of heterogeneous relations among entities with the distance in between preventing unity and identity, causing an insistent decentring. Traven’s experience of Eniwetok is very much one of worklessness, and he does not impose any prior knowledge, understanding or discourse. Traven’s Eniwetok is therefore disclosed in the neuter as a series of ontological things that refuse a rational relationship between them. The island refuses to be mastered, placing Traven outside its space represented by the maze of blocks at the centre that cannot be penetrated physically or psychologically. Ironically, despite the presence of a ‘narrow inspection door’ on the fourth wall of each block: ‘It was this feature [...] that Traven found particularly disturbing. Despite the considerable number of doors, by some freak of perspective only those in a single aisle were visible at any point within the maze’ (*CSS2* 37). Access to the interior on a single aisle precludes the rest, and following a certain line of perspective curtails full knowledge. For Traven, this is a disturbing spatial manifestation of the omissions necessary in the working of discourse and understanding.

Eniwetok places itself outside the work of meaning and each element on the island becomes set free as an individual, separate entity. Bruns notes that Blanchot’s concept of neutral speech describes ‘speech which is neither sense nor non-sense but which works like brackets or quotation marks insofar as these figures of speech (figures of neutralization) function by placing words outside the movement of discourse, excluded from language, in the region of neither/nor’.<sup>248</sup> In the section ‘Traven: In Parenthesis’, Traven himself is suspended outside discourse, occupying the neutral space of neither/nor. His perception of the island becomes fragmented and disconnected:

#### Elements in a quantal world:

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<sup>246</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 154.

<sup>247</sup> Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 155.

<sup>248</sup> Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 155.

The terminal beach.  
 The terminal bunker.  
 The blocks. (CSS2 40)

Each object becomes terminal, an end-point of its own meaning. The full stop and paragraph break at the end of each separate them from one another. They are outside, occupying their own space. Traven, in a zone of suspension, does no work to connect them.

Traven's suspension in the space of Eniwetok also ironically gestures towards Thomas More's utopic island described by Foucault as offering consolidation. Louis Martin notes that the 'merging place' of Utopia is 'a neutral place, an island in between two kingdoms, two States, the two halves of the world, the interval of frontiers and limits by way of a horizon that closes a site and opens up a space; the island Utopia merging into the "indefinite"'.<sup>249</sup> Eniwetok becomes a disturbing heterotopia (rather than a consolidating utopia) because the destruction wrought on the island before Traven discovers it (the result of a clash between two States) precludes any possibility of it being a better place. The neutral or in between space that Traven occupies refuses to be a merging place, except in the destructive sense where the 'heat released by nuclear weapons had fused the sand' (CSS2 29).

Despite the fissures caused by the other space of Eniwetok, an animating scientific discourse of understanding nevertheless puts pressure on Traven to read the island space in a progressive way, and Traven's confusion at the start begins to resolve. The narrative drive of 'The Terminal Beach', whilst fractured, allows for temporal suspensions to be lifted and time to creep back into existence by tracing a slow forward trajectory. Despite Traven's circular perambulation, a series of sub-titles ('The Blocks (I)', 'The Blocks (II)' and 'The Blocks (III)') are suggestive of a progressive sequence indicating cumulating knowledge. At certain points, Traven is rehabilitated into a slow temporal existence: for example, 'Traven felt the sense of fatigue that had dogged him for so many months begin to lift' (CSS2 38). In a section titled 'The Catechism of Goodbye', Traven vanishes the blocks, and the traumas of the modern world inherent within them:

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<sup>249</sup> Krishan Kumar and Stephen Bann, eds., *Utopias and the Millennium* (London: Reaktion Books, 1993), p. 10.

‘*Goodbye, Eniwetok,*’ he murmured.

Somewhere there was a flicker of light, as if one of the blocks, like a counter on an abacus had been plucked away.

*Goodbye, Los Alamos.* Again, a block seemed to vanish. The corridors around him remained intact, but somewhere in his mind had appeared a small interval of neutral space.

*Goodbye, Hiroshima.*

*Goodbye, Alamogordo.*

‘*Goodbye, Moscow, London, Paris, New York...*’ (CSS2 45-46)

This neutral space suggests the utopic merging place of difference, the zero point, and soon after Traven notices a shadow:

Among these, where a narrow interval revealed the open space beyond, was a crescent shaped shadow, poised in the air above the ground.

During the new half an hour it moved slowly, turning as the sun swung, the profile of a dune. (CSS2 46)

This interval is evidence of temporality starting up once again, the shadow marking the passage of time. Time passes, indicating that Traven has begun to work through past trauma. In the penultimate section of text, Traven’s conversation with Dr Yasuda’s corpse focuses on the presence of a fly, and Traven speculates: ‘whether this is the ontological fly is doubtful. It’s true that on this island it’s the *only* fly, which is the next best thing...’ (CSS2 49). Like the blocks, the fly presents itself as an ontological object. Traven kills the fly, seemingly to assert his will over the island, but is an action ironically undercut since it is commanded by Dr Yasuda: ‘Kill that fly!’ (CSS2 48). The dead fly stands for the closing down of interpretive possibility, contradicting Dr Yasuda’s earlier warning to ‘Have a proper humanity, pursue a philosophy of acceptance’ (CSS2 49). Acceptance would mean worklessness, and the refusal of the work necessary to impose one’s own meaning on the island. The merging that Traven accomplishes in the ‘The Catechism of Goodbye’ is in fact a false unity imposed in his desire to make sense of Eniwetok, and is a disavowal of the already destroyed space that the island represents (a heterotopic space that undoes

all attempts to impose order). Ironically, it is the tiny unplaced ontological object of the fly that shows up the vulnerability of Traven's nascent order of things. The killing of the fly, 'not an end, or a beginning' (CSS2 48), throws Traven back in to a waiting, workless space where there is 'only his own motion varying the shifting ciphers' (CSS2 49) on the island. These ciphers hang in the air unread, with Traven's movements, like his previous perambulation of the island, making them indiscernible.

Throughout 'The Terminal Beach', Traven attempts to hold open the possibility of a totalised system of understanding that will explain destroyed, post-catastrophic space. This is a denial of the reality of Eniwetok's space (a forced goodbye to the island). The killing of the ontological fly shows up Traven's ordering as a negative community of one which excludes difference. The utopic neutral point that Traven desires, the white leviathan of zero, where difference can be subsumed is undercut by the negative, heterotopic slope of this neutral space that shows up a series of ontological objects in profound 'quantal flux' (CSS2 48). The space of the island exists as a fragmentary, workless non-totality that refuses to be re-made.

In 1968, during the writing of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard stated: 'My new stories, which I call "condensed novels", stem from "The Terminal Beach". They're developments of that [...]'.<sup>250</sup> For Philip Tew: 'stories such as 'The Terminal Beach' rehearse Ballard's aesthetic more fully developed in *The Atrocity Exhibition*'.<sup>251</sup> In addition to aesthetic qualities, Ballard also makes clear a link between the post-nuclear environment of Eniwetok and the landscapes of the stories that would later become *The Atrocity Exhibition* which also describe an already destroyed post-catastrophic space with an important qualification: the nature of catastrophe differs and is harder to locate. Although the hydrogen bomb has a huge impact on the space of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, it also conflates with other important contemporary events occurring in a multifarious landscape. In his 1990 annotations, Ballard makes references to the 'media landscape' that is 'at the heart of *The Atrocity Exhibition*' (AE 163):

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<sup>250</sup> Storm, Jannick, 'An Interview with J.G. Ballard [1968]', in *Extreme Metaphors: Interviews With J.G. Ballard, 1967-2008*, ed. by Simon Sellars and Dan O'Hara (London: Fourth Estate, 2012), pp. 14-21 (p. 19).

<sup>251</sup> Tew, 'Acts of Reconsideration', p. 404.

[...] given the unlimited opportunities which the media landscape now offers to the wayward imagination, I felt we should immerse ourselves in the most destructive element, ourselves, and swim. (*AE* 37)

The media landscape of the present day is a map in search of a territory. A huge volume of sensational and often toxic imagery inundates our minds, much of it fictional in content. (*AE* 145)

*The Atrocity Exhibition* is a text obsessed with mapping the media landscape, which, as Perry and Wilkie note, now constitute the whole of reality: ‘What [Ballard] implies is that advertising and the visual media in some meaningful sense are the world.’<sup>252</sup> Similar to Guy Debord’s analysis of the collapse of lived experience into the society of the spectacle, the media landscape is an all-consuming phenomenon that integrates a range of events. Ballard makes it clear it conveys an already destroyed environment that encourages the most destructive tendencies in all its inhabitants. The first casualty is reality itself, and the media landscape becomes difficult to read since it blends reality and fiction, collapsing ontological certainty. The abstracted reality of the representational map overtakes the ground beneath our feet. This section will consider Blanchot’s complex space of literature against the slippage of reality that occurs in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and relating this to the theme of heterotopic space defining this study.

*The Atrocity Exhibition* represents its already destroyed space as a fundamental imbalance represented by the event of World War III that seems to exist only as a theoretical or psychological occurrence: ‘In his mind World War III represents the final self-destruction and imbalance of an asymmetrical world’ (*AE* 9). As Tew notes with reference to Blanchot, Ballard shows awareness of the always destructive and incomplete nature of contemporary existence: ‘the mourning is not just orientated towards the deathliness inherent in contemporary culture, but towards the impossibility of taking a position, of accounting for any global meaning beyond an innate spectacular morbidity’.<sup>253</sup> Awareness of this spatial imbalance leads to an

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<sup>252</sup> Nick Perry and Wilkie, Roy, ‘The Atrocity Exhibition’,

<[http://www.jgballard.ca/criticism/atrocity\\_exhibition\\_perry-wilkie.html](http://www.jgballard.ca/criticism/atrocity_exhibition_perry-wilkie.html)> [accessed 28 July 2015].

<sup>253</sup> Tew, ‘Acts of Reconsideration’, p. 406.

inherent paradox between the curiosity to explore the possibilities of asymmetry, the gaps in a ‘neural interval’ or Luckhurst’s noted ‘angle between two walls’ (*AE* 71), and the desire to constitute a new order of things to restore balance, ‘The Lost Symmetry of the Blastosphere’ (*AE* 8). This paradox is noted by Gasiorek: ‘The tension between a practice that evades closure, refusing premature resolutions, and one that seeks synthesis lies at the heart of *The Atrocity Exhibition*.’<sup>254</sup> *The Atrocity Exhibition* obsesses over the fragments left in an already destroyed landscape as ciphers to be read and understood: ‘The fragments collected together [...] would then carry a symbolic significance and would function as the luminous shards that cast light on the inner reality of the time.’<sup>255</sup> Unfortunately, the possibility continually explored is that there is no longer any reality (inner or outer) to be disclosed which has not already been blasted out of existence. At a textual level, the fragmented structure of *The Atrocity Exhibition* holds itself radically open, threatening possible collapse into a troublingly expansive space, giving the appearance that Ballard (as author) does not have authority over his work.<sup>256</sup>

In Luckhurst’s reading of the text, ‘Reality is defined as that constituted by the media [...] This is the media as the embodiment of the death drive, the compulsion to repeat’,<sup>257</sup> leading to the endless replaying of traumatic events in the attempt to make sense of them. Francis takes a different approach to the imbalance present in the text, reading it as representative of ‘the psychology of the late 1960s in terms of madness or mental breakdown’,<sup>258</sup> stressing a Freudian reading that implicates the media landscape as a cause of psychosis present in the modern subject. It is a sickness that is partly the consequence of attempting a psychological reading of media spaces, illustrated by Henri Lefebvre’s nihilistic concept of a ‘pathology of space’ resultant from the ‘inevitable partial and incomplete nature of psychoanalysis as a system for understanding space’.<sup>259</sup> The realisation that only imbalanced readings of space are possible reinforces the suspicion that space is somehow always fragmented, partially formed, and never fully complete. Tew notes Lefebvre’s concept of ‘mental space’ in

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<sup>254</sup> Gasiorek, *J.G. Ballard*, p. 79.

<sup>255</sup> Gasiorek, *J.G. Ballard*, p. 79.

<sup>256</sup> Gasiorek, *J.G. Ballard*, p. 75.

<sup>257</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 95.

<sup>258</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 93.

<sup>259</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 103.

his reading of *The Atrocity Exhibition* that allows Ballard to answer spatial hegemony with rebellious incoherence: ‘it is the cultural shift from understanding concrete conditions towards evoking abstractions and absurd contradictions that most obsessed Ballard in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Its world evokes a hegemonic space that is controlled, that yet might be subverted.’<sup>260</sup> Despite the possibility of subversion, this is only possible as a partial critique, implicitly illogical and contradictory, so that ‘hegemony prevails in spite of [...] ideas of potentially radical resistance, surely another Ballardian undercutting of the ethos of this epoch’.<sup>261</sup> Baxter warns that *The Atrocity Exhibition* anticipates how ‘Language [...] has been colonised by the mass-media systems, and with it all sense of agency, emotion and imagination has been replaced by ready-made formats,’<sup>262</sup> which inevitably results in a loss of space for critical reflection. Criticism of this landscape from the outside only becomes possible using the same ready-made, and already imbalanced, formats. This lack of critical apparatus leads to a desperately resistive spatiality, leading Luckhurst to observe that *The Atrocity Exhibition* is forced into spaces that do not work, and that it is the spaces in-between, the absurd and impossible angles, that are foregrounded.<sup>263</sup> These impossible spaces are rebellious in their radical openness and refusal of closure attempting to offer the opportunity for interruptive expansion.

*The Atrocity Exhibition* operates as an assemblage of fifteen fragmentary chapters, that Ballard refers to as condensed novels (‘[...] in the latest stories I’ve started to write, these stories written in paragraph form, which I call “condensed novels”, there I’m using the landscape of the present day’),<sup>264</sup> along with various appendices depending on the edition. Little attempt is made to surmount the gaps left between these stories, stretching the space of the text in interesting ways. *The Atrocity Exhibition* was originally published in several places between 1966 and 1969, appearing as follows:

1. ‘You and Me and the Continuum’, *Impulse*, 1:1 (March 1966).
2. ‘The Assassination Weapon’, *New Worlds*, 50: 161 (April 1966).
3. ‘You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe’, *Ambit*, 27 (Spring 1966).

<sup>260</sup> Tew, ‘Acts of Reconsideration’, p. 413.

<sup>261</sup> Tew, ‘Acts of Reconsideration’, p. 413.

<sup>262</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 73.

<sup>263</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 90.

<sup>264</sup> Storm, ‘An Interview with J. G. Ballard’, p. 16.

4. 'The Atrocity Exhibition', *New Worlds*, 50:166 (September 1966).
5. 'The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race', *Ambit*, 29 (Autumn 1966).
6. 'Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy', *Ambit*, 31 (Spring 1967).
7. 'The Death Module', *New Worlds*, 51: 173 (July 1967). Later re-titled 'Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown' in *The Atrocity Exhibition*.
8. 'Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan' (Brighton: Unicorn Bookshop, 1968). This was limited print run chapbook of 250 editions.
9. 'Love and Napalm: Export USA', *Circuit*, 6 (June 1968).
10. 'The University of Death', *Transatlantic Review*, 29 (Summer 1968).
11. 'The Great American Nude', *Ambit*, 36 (Summer 1968).
12. 'The Generations of America', *New Worlds*, 183 (October 1968).
13. 'The Summer Cannibals', *New Worlds*, 186 (January 1969).
14. 'Crash!' (London: ICA-Eventsheet, 1969).
15. 'Tolerances of the Human Face', *Encounter*, 33: 3 (September 1969).

The appendices added to the 1990 Re/Search edition were original published as follows,

1. 'Princess Margaret's Facelift', *New Worlds*, 199 (March 1970).
2. 'Mae West's Reduction Mammoplasty', *Ambit*, 44 (Summer 1970).
3. 'Queen Elizabeth's Rhinoplasty', *TriQuarterly*, 35 (Winter 1976).
4. 'The Secret History of World War 3', *Ambit*, 114 (Autumn 1988).

The lack of internal focus within *The Atrocity Exhibition* is in part explained by this publication history. The text was published as a single volume by Jonathan Cape in 1970 which changed the order of the stories from their original publication order and did not include any appendices. The re-ordering is an indication that this is how Ballard felt *The Atrocity Exhibition* should stand as a single text, and has not been changed with subsequent editions. The addition of the four unnumbered appendices along with extensive marginal annotations written by Ballard were added to the illustrated 1990 Re/Search edition. The most recent 2006 Harper Perennial and 2014 Fourth Estate paperback editions omit the 1990 illustrations and two appendices ('Queen Elizabeth's Rhinoplasty' and 'The Secret History of World War 3'), and Ballard's annotations are relocated to the end of each chapter rather than placed in the margins. This publication history begins to elicit an understanding of *The Atrocity*



*Exhibition* as a text that refuses to coalesce around a single, unified whole, and in which meaning is shifted and relocated, evidenced by Ballard's additional discursive annotations that interrupt and interrogate the text from its own margins. As Tew notes, Ballard's annotations revise and justify the text as if he was not fully satisfied with its form: 'in the revised editions one does not encounter a bifurcation; that is the original ideas and drafts are not just supplemented at a certain crossroads by additions going off on a new tangent. Rather, the whole is quite radically transformed, becoming a cartographically far more complex and demanding series of aesthetic acts, the act of its comprehension entirely reconfigured.'<sup>265</sup>

Surmising an overall plot, or tracing the sustained working-out of a theme, is a frustrating task. A central character appears in various guises, mutating into Travis, Talbot, Traven, Tallis, Trabert, Talbert, Travers (hereafter referred to as T) that all appear to be modulations around the same central personality. Going against Ballard's advice, 'simply turn the pages until a paragraph catches your eye' (*AE* vii), I believe an instructive reading of the text can be achieved by conventionally starting at the beginning since Ballard also admits to 'repetition' (*AE* 14) in writing *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Therefore, I wish to consider the first few of Ballard's condensed novels as they appear in the text. In the first story, 'The Atrocity Exhibition', T appears to be a doctor at some kind of psychiatric institution or hospital, where patients exhibit work at an annual exhibition that associate with T's own collection of 'terminal documents' describing a 'theme of world cataclysm' (*AE* 1). The institutional space soon gives way to broken environments of suburbs, zoos, and weapon ranges, all of which seem implicated in some coming apocalypse and T's obsession with 'the complex of ideas and events represented by World War III' (*AE* 6).

In relation to World War III, Ballard uses a pun on the word 'blastosphere', in the sense of a 'blastula' or early animal embryo consisting of a spherical layer of cells around a central cavity, to imply the destructive sphere radius produced by a detonating blast such as in the explosion of a bomb. The blastosphere is 'the primitive precursor of the embryo that is the last structure to preserve perfect symmetry in all planes' (*AE* 9), leading to the suspicion that World War III would therefore be a rebalancing event in an asymmetrical world. T's desire for embryonic symmetry highlight the spatial discontinuities, fragments, and disjunctions operating throughout

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<sup>265</sup> Tew, 'Acts of Reconsideration', p. 401.

the text. Although World War III is an uncertain event, I would speculate that certain italicised sections of text, noted in passing by Nick Perry and Roy Wilkie,<sup>266</sup> actually shift forward in time and space to describe a post-War landscape that is also unmediated:

*In the suburbs of Hell Travis walked in the flaring light of the petrochemical plants. The ruins of abandoned cinemas stood at the street corners, faded billboards facing them across empty streets. In a waste lot of wrecked cars he found the burnt body of the white Pontiac. He wandered through the deserted suburbs. (AE 10)*

This passage indicates a destructive and troubling re-balancing of the world. The hell of petrochemical plants stands for atmospheric poisoning similar to the irradiation produced by nuclear conflict that also burns the Pontiac, symbol of America as the only country to use nuclear weapons in warfare. The abandoned cinema and faded billboards represent the collapse of the media landscape, and the deserted streets an effect of mass casualties.

‘The Atrocity Exhibition’ introduces T’s terminal documents:

(1) Spectro-heliogram of the sun; (2) Front elevation of balcony units, Hilton Hotel, London; (3) Transverse section through a pre-Cambrian trilobite; (4) ‘Chronograms,’ by E. J. Marey; (5) Photograph taken at noon, August 7th, 1945, of the sand-sea, Qattara Depression, Egypt; (6) Reproduction of Max Ernst’s ‘Garden Airplane Traps’; (7) Fusing sequences for ‘Little Boy’ and ‘Fat Boy’, Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-Bombs. (AE 1-2)

Ballard explains that these lists were the result of ‘free association’ (AE 14), but nevertheless placing disparate objects in the same frame draws out equivalence achieved through mediation of objects. T’s terminal documents are all representations: spectro-heliograms, front elevations, transverse sections, chronograms, photographs, and reproductions. This is a slippage of the Kantian Thing-In-Itself into representations caused by the imposition of a mediating layer.

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<sup>266</sup> Nick Perry and Roy Wilkie, ‘The Atrocity Exhibition’.

The importance of these terminal documents, as the final thing to remain, enacts a hollowing out that replaces things with representational counterparts creating reality as an already destroyed and dispersed relic.

The lists of terminal documents lack underlying explanation, putting things together randomly rather than imposing an organisational schema. As Baxter notes, these lists resemble Foucault's uneasiness when reading Borges's Chinese Encyclopaedia and the discovery that 'the threat of discursive contamination is an inevitable consequence of Western History's obsession with the implementation of coherence and order'.<sup>267</sup> In Baxter's view, Ballard's terminal documents set out to obliterate 'the coherence and limitation of verbal and epistemological exchange'.<sup>268</sup> *The Atrocity Exhibition* has the qualities of Foucault's disturbing heterotopic literature that destroy the syntactic quality of words and sentences, and that are appropriate to the already destroyed spaces that Ballard describes. An important difference between the discursive contaminations of the Chinese encyclopaedia and T's terminal documents is that whereas the encyclopaedia is worrying in its disruption of an existing coherence and order, *The Atrocity Exhibition* supposes such systems are already lost. Rather than obliterate order, T's lists are instead 'assembly kits' (AE 151, 154), suggesting the need to construct a new order from fragments. Reality has been abstracted to such a degree that it can only be glimpsed as a thin thread in the minimal linkages between disparate things, rather than in the thickness of connectivity implied by established orders.

The second story in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, 'The University of Death', begins with T contemplating an experimental World War III scenario in front of students in an unnamed lecture hall. Like 'The Atrocity Exhibition', this institutional space is quickly displaced by a series of spatial snapshots, operating much like a series of hurried instant camera prints, displaying lovers' bedrooms, cinema foyers, fields of radio telescopes, motorway overpasses, urban plazas, and research laboratories. Both 'The Atrocity Exhibition' and 'The University of Death' begin in institutional settings that resemble Foucault's heterotopias of compensation: spaces that actively organise their disruptive elements, patients or students, and direct them towards certain desired goals. In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, heterotopias of compensation are contaminated and

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<sup>267</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 82.

<sup>268</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 82.

undercut, so that patient exhibitions resemble the ‘insoluble dreams’ (*AE* 1) of the media landscape and student seminars are hijacked by the pseudo-events of ‘simulated newsreels’ (*AE* 19). These contained spaces soon unravel into a succession of disjoined spaces. This unravelling is accompanied by the aggressive growth of the media landscape. The spatial disruption is profound, leading to a destabilisation of T’s identity and a question that problematizes any possibility of control and mastery: ‘Was my husband [T] a doctor, or a patient?’ (*AE* 6)

‘The University of Death’ makes explicit T’s desire to manipulate the content of the media landscape. T’s actions towards his students are therefore interpreted as an attempt to take control:

Far from the students making an exhibition of an overwrought instructor, transforming him into a kind of ur-Christ of the communications landscape, Talbot has in fact exploited them. This has altered the entire direction of the scenario, turning it from an exercise of ‘the end of the world’ into a psychodrama of increasingly tragic perspectives. (*AE* 24)

T’s ‘deliberate self-involvement’ (*AE* 24) is an attempt at mastery over narratives, turning away from scenarios dictated by the media (or communications) landscape. The emerging obsession in ‘The University of Death’ is the event of the car crash, that T hopes to abstract utilising photographic images in order to reveal hidden meanings:

These images of angles and postures constitute not so much a private gallery as a conceptual equation, a fusing device by which Talbot hopes to bring his scenario to a climax. (*AE* 32)

Fusing and fusing devices are mentioned several times in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and the fusing sequences of the atomic bombs Little Boy and Fat Boy (used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) are part of T’s terminal documents. Fusing is a strategy to bring things together, shoring them against the dispersal of reality within the media landscape. The car crash becomes one such fusing device, centring on a man-machine complex that resembles F. T. Marinetti’s fantasy of a metallised body that is immune to shocks with ‘organs adapted to the needs of an environment in which there are continuous

clashes'.<sup>269</sup> T's fusing devices are also an ironic appropriation of Eniwetok's fused sand and 'the unconscious role of thermonuclear weapons in bringing about the total fusion and non-differentiation of all matter' (*AE* 46); and as such they are part of the post-catastrophic landscape the text inhabits. As Gasiorek notes: '*The Atrocity Exhibition* is haunted by the implosion of space-time caused by nuclear fission, which destroys vast tracts of space and shatters the lived time of numberless individuals'.<sup>270</sup> The fusing of terminal documents is a slight-of-hand to covering of the fragmentation of the already destroyed landscape. Terminal is therefore glossed to mean a point of connection, documents that 'stitch together a set of emergency scenarios' (*AE* 145) opening a space for critical reflection.

Following 'The University of Death', 'The Assassination Weapon' takes place in a depleted urban setting, with motorway embankments prominent. The first section of the story mentions the 'spinal landscape' revealed by artist Oscar Dominguez via his technique of decalcomania (*AE* 41). Ballard's image of a spinal landscape also resembles Walter Benjamin's 'history against the grain'<sup>271</sup> that blasts open the historical continuum:

The clinker-like rock towers, suspended above the silent swamp, create an impression of profound anguish. The inhospitability of this material world, with its inorganic growths, is relieved only by the balloons flying in the clear sky. They are painted with names: Jackie, Lee Harvey, Malcolm. In the mirror of this swamp there are no reflections. (*AE* 41)

The inhospitality of the landscape resembles a 'silent swamp' of history, recalling Benjamin's homogenous empty time of history. Rather than the forced working of the historian reading events like the beads of a rosary, Ballard's landscape is full of anguish expressed as inorganic growths cutting against the harmonious organic unfolding of events. The swamp offers no reflection, and the reader of this landscape is unable to place himself within it. The only prominent features are painted balloons

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<sup>269</sup> F. T. Marinetti, 'Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine' in *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings*, ed. by Günter Berghaus, trans. by Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2006) pp. 85-88 (p. 86).

<sup>270</sup> Gasiorek, *J.G. Ballard*, p. 65.

<sup>271</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), p. 257.

in the clear sky that are blotches obscuring the open future. The names painted on these balloons all resonate as blasts in the course of history with the names (Jackie, Lee Harvey, Malcolm) representing historical discontinuities clustering around the violence of assassination. The title of Ballard's story, 'The Assassination Weapon', betrays T's desire to master these events, to read the beads of history, through building and controlling the assassination weapon that arranges alternative deaths 'in a way that makes sense' (*AE* 50).

The idea of a spinal landscape also highlights the placement of the human body so that events leave a residue that can be excavated like marks on the body. Against this sprawl of the media landscape, T's attempts to make sense of space by relying on two levels of perception, which are the feeling body and dispassionate gaze of science. These two slopes of understanding are often combined in troubling ways in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. T is continually positioned as a scientist or doctor. Ballard borrows form and content from obscure scientific texts, a prominent example being John J. Swearingen's *Tolerances Of The Human Face To Crash Impact* (1965) that was also instructive in his writing of *Crash* (*AE* 103). References to scientific theory are abundant, often utilising hypotheses in rebellious ways, such as T's experiments with Marey's Chronograms, which are explained as 'multiple-exposure photographs in which the element of time is visible -- the walking human figure, for example, is represented as a series of dune-like lumps' (*AE* 6). The word 'chronogram' actually means the arrangement of letters in a sentence to stand for a numerical date, and it is likely that Ballard was referring to 'chronophotography', a word derived from 'chronos' (time) and 'photography' used by Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904) to describe early photographic techniques used in the study of phases of motion. The image that Ballard references is Marey's 'Geometric Chronograph Of The Man In The Black Suit' (1883) (a title that could have been taken from *The Atrocity Exhibition*), in which human motion is conveyed by removing superfluous body parts by dressing the subject, George Demeny, in a black suit with stripes showing up movements involved in walking. The result is an abstract stripping down of the corporeal form into 'essential physiognomic elements'.<sup>272</sup> The dune-like resemblance of the human body in motion resonates with a fusing device of body and landscape.

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<sup>272</sup> Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (California: University of California Press, 1992), p. 117.

As Anson Rabinbach notes, Marey's motion studies attempted to show 'The central feature of all work -- whether of humans or machines -- was the suppression and transformation of irregular, inconsistent, and jarring shocks into regular and uniform activity [...] Shock was at once productive and destructive.'<sup>273</sup> Like the fusing car crash, the body-machine synthesis that Marey's images project work to transform the feeling human body into a machine that is able to work through shock in a productive way: 'Like a machine's piston, the body possessed an elasticity that permitted the suppression of shock into regular effort.'<sup>274</sup> In a similar way, T works to transform the shocks of the media landscape into a productive, regular and uniform activity where events make sense.

T's approach to Marey's images is experimental, shifting the temporal to the spatial: 'Using a series of photographs of the most commonplace objects -- this office, let us say, a panorama of New York skyscrapers, the naked boy of a women, the face of a catatonic patient -- he treated them as if they already were chronograms and extracted the element of time' (AE 6). In his annotations, Ballard expands upon this complex displacement of time using a quote from A.S. Eddington's *Space Time And Gravitation* (1920):

It is in the external world that the four dimensions are united -- not in the relations of the external world to the individual which constitute his direct acquaintance with space and time. Just in that process of relation to an individual, the order falls apart into the distinct manifestations of space and time. An individual is a four-dimensional object of greatly elongated form; in ordinary language we say that he has considerable extension in time and insignificant extension in space. Practically he is represented by a line -- his track through the world. When the world is related to such an individual, his own asymmetry is introduced into the relation; and that order of events which is parallel with his track, that is to say with himself, appears in his experience to be differentiated from all other orders of events.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, p. 118.

<sup>274</sup> Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, p. 118.

<sup>275</sup> A.S. Eddington, *Space Time and Gravitation: An Outline of the General Relativity Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), pp. 51-52.

Ballard's reading of Eddington suggests that it is the extension in time of the individual that produces asymmetry in the order of events. By removing the element of time T produces a symmetrical model of spatial extension. This allows events to resonate in space so that things happening at different times can be brought together on the same plane. This 'very different world' (AE 6) would entail objects taking up more than their usually perceived volumes in space resonating with ideas of spatial expansion elsewhere such as the magnification enacted by the 'giant replicas' (AE 4) of billboards. T's spatial experiments have the effect of creating images of excessive detail. Whereas Marey traces development through time, T's static images, like the catatonic patient, concentrate on the 'smallest gestures' (AE 6), and T's creation of a symmetrical spatial continuum unwittingly opens up a confusing depth of image detail.

Marey's 'Geometric Chronograph Of The Man In The Black Suit' and T's appropriation of the image fixate on the human body as an experimental locus. Cutting against scientific understanding, a repeated phrase in *The Atrocity Exhibition* is 'the phenomenology of the universe' (AE 46, 50, 134), referencing T's obsession with his corporeal consciousness. The body is placed at the centre of a fluctuating process of compression and expansion. This is the central feature of T's relationship with Karen Novotny, a character split between corporeal exteriority, represented as 'The Karen Novotny Experience', a series of impersonal photographs, or a disturbing sex kit (AE 68, 84), and the realisation of the vast space behind these images where her body is conflated with the external environment: 'The white flanks of the dunes reminded him of the endless promenades of Karen Novotny's body' (AE 59).

T draws a series of outlines around Novotny:

- (1) sitting, in the posture of Rodin's 'Thinker', on the edge of the bidet, (2) watching from the balcony as she waited for Koester to find them again, (3) making love to Talbot on the bed. (AE 29)

An obsession with the minutiae of detail is apparent abstracting Novotny into posture and gesture. T attempts to master the other person's body by fixing its limits, outlines, and volumes in space defining corporeality as finite. Like Traven in 'The Terminal Beach', this is the result of an anxiety around the phenomenology of the universe as separate ontological objects. T's outlines miss the centre representing it as an empty



space. Novotny's body, refusing to be fixed, slips through the gaps of T's understanding tending towards the infinite. T enacts terrible revenge, and Karen Novotny is subjected to repeated violence and dismemberment, almost as if T is trying to break open images to reveal obscured depths.

T's experiments with reading the body cross a threshold into a space of obsessive fascination that Blanchot associates with literature. Similarly, throughout *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Ballard appropriates scientific texts as if they were an imaginative form of literature, and *Tolerances Of The Human Face To Crash Impacts* finds itself in a 'rendezvous with a Ballard fiction' (AE 123) opening up an investigative space that does not seek the closure of proving its hypothesis, deferring conclusions. Blanchot explains this space in the following way:

What fascinates us robs us of our power to give sense.<sup>276</sup>

Of whoever is fascinated it can be said that he doesn't perceive any real object, any real figure, for what he sees does not belong to the world of reality but to the indeterminable milieu of fascination. This milieu is, so to speak, absolute. Distance is not excluded from it, but it is immeasurable. Distance here is the limitless depth behind the image, a lifeless profundity, unmanipulable, absolutely present though not given, where objects sink away when they depart from their sense, when they collapse into their image.<sup>277</sup>

This immensurable distance and limitless depth behind the image resembles T's orientation to the media landscape in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. His obsession with image detail that soon collapses into the infinite space behind it is a departure from the working of knowledge and sense. T's two slopes of understanding, science and the feeling body, are threatened with collapse into a spatially expanded milieu of fascination.

The milieu of fascination created by the depth behind the image is expressed by the contradictory tactic of condensed expansiveness in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Picking up on in the text's dizzying magnification of image, Burroughs' preface notes

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<sup>276</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 32.

<sup>277</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 32.

*The Atrocity Exhibition* is ‘literally an explosive book’ (*AE x*) warning of a cautious approach to Ballard’s condensed novels. As Luckhurst notes, Ballard’s ‘strategy of condensation is to be taken seriously; to unpack the compacted space of this disquieting text or set of texts will require a counteracting expansiveness,’<sup>278</sup> describing an oscillation enacted between compulsive tactics of contraction and expansion that open out the text in a series of blow-ups.<sup>279</sup> The work of literature tightly closing around authorial intent is forced to open through digressive displacements with each section or paragraph of the text becoming its own core of meaning that progressively displaces the explanatory centre. The continual piling-up of chapter and paragraph headings continually re-opens the literary space of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, refusing to allow the text to fully resolve itself. This structure indicates a conceptual sprawl beyond the text itself. Luckhurst asks the question ‘Where to insert the border?’<sup>280</sup> and the structure of *The Atrocity Exhibition* explodes the frames where the authorial authority may be enacted. As Greenland notes, *The Atrocity Exhibition* represents ‘a minimal overlay of narrative gestures on a mass of theory’<sup>281</sup> that defers closure keeping the space of the text perpetually held open. The text enters a space in which ‘writing is now the interminable, the incessant. The writer no longer belongs to the magisterial realm where to express oneself means to express the exactitude and the certainty of things and values according to the sense of their limits.’<sup>282</sup> The flux enacted is the refusal of final resolution and explanation, made clear by Ballard’s return to the work years after its composition to add annotations that open, expand, and refuse to elucidate the text.

The blow up of image details in *The Atrocity Exhibition* causes reality to slip through the cracks. This allows theory to endlessly replicate because it no longer needs to reference anything existing externally. It is a space of literature concerned only with its own endless multiplication. The modulation of the character T is a complex literary tool that expresses this radical interpretive uncertainty and in the final chapters of *The Atrocity Exhibition* we are confronted with the total immersion of T into the text’s mass of theory only appearing in paragraph headings and gradually

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<sup>278</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 73.

<sup>279</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 82.

<sup>280</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 74.

<sup>281</sup> Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition*, p. 115.

<sup>282</sup> Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 26.

disappearing completely, as Luckhurst explains: ‘dispersed into traces, footnotes of a main document that has now been lost’.<sup>283</sup> The text overflows T’s will to understand, and he disappears into his own story and space of literature. *The Atrocity Exhibition* enacts the erasure of T as a fixed point from which the reader attempts an understanding of the space of the text.

This chapter has considered complex spaces of literature described in ‘The Terminal Beach’ and *The Atrocity Exhibition*. It has looked at the openness of both texts, and their refusal to impose meaning that would make sense of their spaces. Ballard allows a workless space that lets things be without imposing prior understandings that attempt to fit ontological objects into discourses of meaning. His writing is fragmentary, cut through with headings and lists. Rather than mourning a loss of an unachieved whole, Ballard’s fragments represent already destroyed spaces that preclude the possible existence of totalities. As literary experiments ‘The Terminal Beach’ and *The Atrocity Exhibition* come close to Foucault’s description of a heterotopic literature that destroys syntax in advance and Blanchot’s theory of a radically destabilising outside literary space. Ballard’s texts therefore create impossible spaces that refuse to be resolved, mastered, and worked to disclose meaning. The space of the text overflows characters, dispersing understanding into the endless generation of theory that cannot be worked towards final meaning. The dislocation occurring in these texts is the irreversible loss of a stable external reality within the always already destroyed landscapes of the modern world, continually precluding spaces for critical reflection. Characters, like readers, are therefore set adrift in the workless (non-working, unworkable) spaces of the text.

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<sup>283</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 117.

## Chapter 4

### Heterotopia and ‘The Conquest of Space’ in *Memories of the Space Age*

This chapter examines Ballard’s treatment of the space age in his stories ‘The Cage of Sand’ (1962), ‘A Question of Re-Entry’ (1963), and ‘News from the Sun’ (1981), part of a series written between 1962 and 1985 that can be referred to as the ‘Cape Canaveral fictions’.<sup>284</sup> It utilises Foucault’s mapping of the contemporary epoch of space in ‘Of Other Spaces’ to place the concept of extra-terrestrial space in a theoretical framework. Further developing the dialogue between Foucault’s and Blanchot’s spatial theories of the external or outside, it also draws on Blanchot’s short essay ‘The Conquest of Space’ (1961) that resonates with many of Ballard’s concerns about space travel. Through these engagements, I develop the concept of extra-terrestrial space as a unsettling heterotopic other space. As Simon Sellars notes: ‘Ballard’s short stories are renowned for predicting the Death of the Space Age. His metaphor of the “dead astronaut” caught in a time fugue stands in for America’s vainglorious attempts to assert dominance on the world stage.’<sup>285</sup> Beyond an incipient critique of American hubris, Ballard also advances a complex understanding of the profound disruption to lived space-time caused by the inception of extra-terrestrial travel. The Cape Canaveral stories pose a series of questions around new concepts of the spatial and man’s place within an expanded universe.

‘The Cage of Sand’ utilises established science fiction tropes about alien invasion to explore the blending of fantastic alien and terrestrial spaces, further expanding on the theme of spatial conflation discussed with reference to *Vermilion Sands* in the first chapter of this study. The spatial containment of time is apparent in the story ‘A Question of Re-entry’, and the movement of the astronaut into an external, outside space allows him to access different terrestrial times and spaces in a complex way. ‘News from the Sun’ explores the transition to Foucault’s spatial epoch initiating a concern with containment and the placement of things in space. In all these stories, extra-terrestrial space is considered to be an expansive outside space, outstripping human fantasy and ambition, and profoundly disruptive to progressive

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<sup>284</sup> Melanie Rosen Brown, ‘Dead Astronauts, Cyborgs, and the Cape Canaveral Fiction of J. G. Ballard: A Posthuman Analysis’ <<http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/043/brown.htm>> [accessed 29 July 2015]

<sup>285</sup> Simon Sellars, ‘“The Dead Astronaut”: RIP Neil Armstrong, 1930-2012’ (2012) <<http://www.ballardian.com/dead-astronaut-rip-neil-armstrong-1930-2012>> [accessed 29 July 2015].

temporal development, reflecting back the contingency of man's spatial constructiveness.

A textual fragment highlights Ballard's complex engagement with extra-terrestrial space. 'Neil Armstrong Remembers his Journey to the Moon' (not included in the 2014 *The Complete Short Stories* and mostly overlooked by critics), was published at the beginning of the 1990s, a decade that saw a sharp decline in America's space age aspirations. The story recounts a dream-like scenario in which Neil Armstrong drifts through an ice-bound nightclub, socialising with Hitler and Eva Braun, and expecting to make a speech but disappointed that 'no-one from NASA was there, and I felt that I had nothing to tell them that they would want to hear'.<sup>286</sup> By placing Armstrong and Hitler in the same space (along with the frozen nightclub suggestive of temporal paralysis and the non-arrival of future aspirations), Ballard implies temporal collapse. Neil Armstrong and his achievements are relegated to the ash heap of history. For Ballard, extra-terrestrial travel is something profoundly damaging to space and time, causing him to proclaim that 'By leaving his planet and setting off into outer space man had committed an evolutionary crime' (*MSA* 108). This chapter will investigate the nature of this crime, and its implications for representations of the spatial in Ballard's work.

For Foucault, the discovery of the Copernican cosmology fundamentally alters Earth's relationship with space, leading to a radical revision of the concept of local space and a new discourse of spatial expansion (two years after his lecture, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first men to walk on the Moon, the zenith of the American space age), and Foucault begins by contrasting a nineteenth century obsessed with history and a twentieth century defined by space: 'We are at a moment, I believe, when our experiences of the world is less that of a great life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skin.'<sup>287</sup> Foucault describes a revolution in space occurring with Galileo Galilei's heliocentrism, which opens up the medieval space of extension set against localisation:

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<sup>286</sup> J. G. Ballard, 'Neil Armstrong Remembers His Journey to the Moon', *Interzone*, 53 (November 1991), 33 (p. 33).

<sup>287</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 14.

[...] for the real scandal of Galileo's work is not so much his discovery, or rediscovery, that the Earth revolved around the sun, but his constitution of an infinite and infinitely open space [...] starting with Galileo, starting with the seventeenth century, extension supplanted localization.<sup>288</sup>

Galileo's rediscovery of Copernican cosmology caused a profound shift in perspectives in which extra-terrestrial space can no longer be considered local to Earth, imagining a universe far larger and emptier than previously thought. As Alexander C. T. Geppert notes, it is a paradigm that goes on to influence the psychological awareness of space:

Numerous ventures to 'explore', 'conquer' and 'colonize' the depths of the universe in both fact and fiction must be read as attempts to counter the prevailing *horror vacui*, the fear of empty spaces and voids of infinity felt and explicitly formulated since the sixteenth century. They all aim at overcoming what Sigmund Freud [...] termed in 1917 humankind's 'cosmological mortification', the humiliating decentering of the earth effected by Nicolaus Copernicus's [...] heliocentric cosmology.<sup>289</sup>

The idea of *horror vacui* is a determining factor in shifting emphasis away from a positivist view of space exploration as a rational, scientific activity towards more anxious view of extra-terrestrial space as in some way a threat to be overcome.

If we consider Galileo's space of extension as an underpinning of the space age, Foucault recognises that even as the fullness of this space is established it is supplanted:

Today the emplacement substitutes extension, which itself had replaced localization. The emplacement is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements; formally, we can describe these relations as series, trees, or grids [...] the problem of place or the emplacement arises for mankind in terms

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<sup>288</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 15.

<sup>289</sup> Alexander C. T. Geppert, 'European Astrofuturism, Cosmic Provincialism: Historicizing the Space Age' in *Imagining Outer Space: European Astroculture in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Alexander C. T. Geppert (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 3-26 (p. 3).

of demography. This problem of the human emplacement is not simply the question of knowing whether there will be enough space for man in the world -- a problem that is certainly quite important -- but it is also the problem of knowing what relations of propinquity, what type of storage circulation, spotting, and classification of human elements, should be adopted in this or that situation in order to achieve this or that end. We are in an epoch on which space is given to us on the form of relations between emplacements.<sup>290</sup>

Foucault expresses the difficulty in trying to find some common relationship between differentiated emplacements made urgent by a perceived lack of space. As localities increasingly come into contact with each other, control and regulation become necessary. One reason for the substitution of the space of extension with a concern for emplacement lies in the failure of the space age to produce a viable space of extension: the ability of science to conquer the void and find an extra-terrestrial space for humanity to go. As Howard E. McCurdy points out, one of the reasons the space age captured the popular imagination is that ‘By introducing space travel as an extension of terrestrial exploration, advocates of space flight found themselves promoting the traditional image of “small ships and brave men” sailing off into the unknown’,<sup>291</sup> but underlining this is the realisation that skirting the unknown is necessary since there is ‘nowhere to go but up’.<sup>292</sup> The popular myth of spatial conquest attempts to downplay the profound loss of *terra firma* and massive otherness of the universe beyond Earth, and the difficulty in finding a secure emplacement (physically and psychologically) in such a vastly extended space.

The complex shift in perspectives that occurs with the extra-terrestrial space journey is elucidated by Maurice Blanchot in ‘The Conquest of Space’ (1964), a short article published in celebration of Yuri Gagarin’s achievements.<sup>293</sup> Like his ideas about the external space of literature considered in the previous chapter, for Blanchot extra-terrestrial space represents a radically different space that threatens the work of discourse and understanding. Blanchot investigates the problem of unfamiliarity

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<sup>290</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 15.

<sup>291</sup> Howard E. McCurdy, *Space and the American Imagination* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 31.

<sup>292</sup> McCurdy, *Space and the American Imagination*, p. 32.

<sup>293</sup> Although published in Italian magazine *Il Menabò*, 7 (1964) the piece was actually written in 1961.

posed by extra-terrestrial space: ‘Man does not want to leave his own place.’<sup>294</sup> The extra-terrestrial journey threatens to displace mankind’s relationship with Earth, making him ‘the nomad [...] incapable of acquisition’.<sup>295</sup> Space travel makes man homeless, and the true significance of leaving Earth is that man is freed from the concept of place. Freedom is gained by breaking away from locality, but Blanchot also recognises a pure void capable of creating a spatially unbound ‘man with no horizon’.<sup>296</sup>

Blanchot notes repeated attempts by Earth governments to appropriate the event of space travel: ‘Gagarin’s feat -- in its political repercussions and in its mythical ones -- gave grounds to the Russians to inhabit Russian land even more staunchly’.<sup>297</sup> Such political appropriations fail to recognise the consequence of space travel as ‘the breaking down of all sense of belonging and the questioning of place, in all places’.<sup>298</sup> The cosmonaut breaks free of localised, Earthly places and enters the vast void of space where the concept of solid ground ceases to exist. Rather than scientific triumphalism, Blanchot sounds a note of caution:

The condition of the cosmonaut is, in some respects, pitiful: a man who is the bearer of the very sense of liberty and who has never found himself a greater prisoner of his own position, free of the force of gravity and weighed down more than any other being, on the way to maturity and all bundled up in his scientific swaddling clothes, like a new-born child of former times, reduced to nourishing himself with a feeding bottle and to wailing more than talking.<sup>299</sup>

The space capsule is a floating piece of the Earth, and therefore a limited perspective. The astronaut cannot safely exist in outer space, and is encased in his capsule, so that Blanchot implies an astronaut’s perception of outer space is akin to that of a child. Contemplation of the void is alarming, and man feels the need to fill the empty space with speech, as a way to extend him beyond the physical barriers of body and capsule:

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<sup>294</sup> Michael Holland, ed., *The Blanchot Reader* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995), p. 269.

<sup>295</sup> Holland, *The Blanchot Reader*, p. 269.

<sup>296</sup> Holland, *The Blanchot Reader*, p. 269.

<sup>297</sup> Holland, *The Blanchot Reader*, p. 270.

<sup>298</sup> Holland, *The Blanchot Reader*, p. 270.

<sup>299</sup> Holland, *The Blanchot Reader*, p. 270.



[...] the slightest break in the noise would already mean the everlasting void; any gap of interruption introduces something which is much more than death, which is the nothingness outside entered into discourse. It is therefore necessary, up there, for the man from the Outside to speak, and to speak continually, not only to reassure us and to inform us, but because he has no other link with the old place than that unceasing word, which, accompanied by hissing and conflicting with all the harmony of the spheres, says, to whoever is unable to understand it, only some insignificant commonplace, but also says this to him who listens more carefully: that the truth is nomadic.<sup>300</sup>

Blanchot announces the cosmonaut, like the writer, as a man journeying to a disturbing outside, breaking apart the bounded nature of terrestrial space and introducing the groundless logic of the nomad. The nature of extra-terrestrial space is the void and nothingness that exists outside discourse. The anxious cosmonaut fills the encroaching void with his speech, and communication back to Earth serves as proof of his continued existence. The inadequacy of this communication conflicts with the harmony of the spheres. The desire to establish a place for man in outer space (a site from which Foucault's relationship between emplacements can be established) is unsettled by vast distances. The cosmonaut, with his knowledge of external space, becomes cut off from Earth.

Blanchot's understanding of the new space opened up by extra-terrestrial travel resonates with Ballard's Cape Canaveral fictions. Ballard's space stories generate a discourse of inside/outside, terrestrial/extra-terrestrial space. What Ballard calls the 'evolutionary crime' of the space journey represents a loss of secure place: 'a breach of the rules governing his tenancy of the universe and of the laws of time and space' (*MSA* 108). Ballard's astronauts are continually made to pay the price for the transgression, spatially displaced 'like a lost star searching for its zodiac' (*MSA* 68). Dead in their capsules, they are no longer able to speak back to Earth.

Ballard published several short stories that take the ruins of a post-space age Cape Canaveral as their setting. The first of these was 'The Cage of Sand', followed by 'The Dead Astronaut' (1968), 'Memories of the Space Age' (1982), and 'Myths of

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<sup>300</sup> Holland, *The Blanchot Reader*, p. 271.

the Near Future' (1982). The story, 'News from the Sun' shares many similarities with these earlier Cape Canaveral fictions, but is located in the Nevada desert around Las Vegas. These stories are published collectively as *Memories of the Space Age* in 1988 by Sauk City based Arkham House (along with 'A Question of Re-entry', 'My Dream of Flying to Wake Island' (1974), and 'The Man Who Walked on the Moon' (1985)). Arkham House is a publisher primarily associated with H. P. Lovecraft, set up by August Derleth following Lovecraft's death in 1937. Arkham House's website identifies 'macabre, fantasy, and horror' as the mainstay of its output, categorised as 'weird fiction'.<sup>301</sup> *Memories of the Space Age* is interesting because it maps an important intersection between Ballard's fiction, the popular imagination of the American space age, and the Lovecraft's pessimism. Eugene Thacker's Lovecraft inspired study of horror fiction draws a distinction between three particular kinds of space: the *world-for-us* ('the world that we, as human beings inhabit, interpret and give meaning to'<sup>302</sup>), the *world-in-itself* (the remainder that "'bites back," resists, or ignores our attempts to mold it into the world-for-us'<sup>303</sup>) and the *world-without-us* ('the subtraction of the human from the world. To say that the world-without-us is antagonistic to the human is to attempt to put things in human terms, in terms of the world-for-us. To say that the world-without-us is neutral with respect to the human, is to attempt to put things in terms of the world-in-itself. The world-without-us lies somewhere in between, in a nebulous zone that is at once impersonal and horrific'<sup>304</sup>). As Thacker argues, horror is a genre that should 'be understood not as dealing with human fear in a human world (the world-for-us), but that horror be understood as being about the limits of the human as it confronts a world that is not just a World, and not just the Earth, but also a Planet (the world-without-us). This also means that horror is not simply about fear, but instead about the enigmatic thought of the unknown'.<sup>305</sup> He cites Lovecraft as a writer of 'cosmic outsidersness' who understands the concept of world-without-us as a huge cosmic indifference to human life. The

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<sup>301</sup> Arkham House Publishers, <<http://www.arkhamhouse.com/about.htm>> [accessed 1 November 2015].

<sup>302</sup> Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 1* (Alresford: Zero, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>303</sup> Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet*, p. 4.

<sup>304</sup> Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>305</sup> Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet*, pp. 8-9.

void of understanding between the world-for-us and the world-in-itself resembles the *horror vacui* described by Geppert in man's confrontation with extra-terrestrial space. It is possible to see how Ballard's Cape Canaveral fictions, collected together by Arkham House, resonate with Lovecraft's themes. Ballard's pronouncement in his genre manifesto, 'Which Way to Inner Space?' (1962), that 'the only truly alien planet is Earth' (*UGM* 197) shows an appreciation of a slippage between frames that re-positions the world-for-us as a possible world-without-us. His assertion that extra-terrestrial travel is an evolutionary crime acknowledges that by leaving the proper space of the world-for-us and entering the outside space of the world-without-us there is the threat of alienation and horrific returns.

Also in 'Which Way to Inner Space?' (published the same year as 'The Cage of Sand'), Ballard writes:

One unfortunate by-product of the Russian-American space race is likely to be an even closer identification, in the mind of the general public, of science fiction with the rocket ships and ray guns of Buck Rogers. If science fiction ever had a chance of escaping this identification -- from which most of its present ills derive -- that chance will soon be gone, and the successfully landing of a manned vehicle on the Moon will fix this image conclusively. (*UGM* 197)

Ballard's attack on the Buck Rogers form of classic science fiction concerns the largely American adoption of the genre as an extension of the Western last frontier narrative (carrying over colonial overtones) established during the 1950s and 1960s pulp era of Space Operas,<sup>306</sup> failing to take seriously the threat of spatial alienation that arises with extra-terrestrial travel. This undermines the idea of the otherness in outer space, leading Ballard to proclaim in 1993:

One reason the Apollo moon-landings failed to touch our imaginations is that science fiction got there first, just as it has anticipated so much of our lives, effectively taking all the fun and surprise out of existence. (*UGM* 193)

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<sup>306</sup> Space Opera is a pejorative term used to describe science fiction that exaggerates melodramatic story elements, resembling a soap opera in space.

The reality of extra-terrestrial space as a world-without-us void is replaced by reassuring fictions that appropriate space as a frontier to be conquered. Ballard's Cape Canaveral stories shift attention back to the void, and the difficulty of leaving the space of the world-for-us. The dead astronauts of Ballard's fiction become sacrificial victims to the alarming Otherness of a spatial void potentially harmful to the human world.

In 'The Cage of Sand', '[...] the dead astronaut had served for so long as a symbol of unattained ambition' (*MSA* 26). For Francis, the orbit of the dead astronaut is the traumatic return of repressed material and compulsion to repeat, with the reader 'encouraged to contemplate the repressed of the space programme, the story enacting the vision of dereliction, failure and exhaustion elided from the triumphalist broadcasts of NASA's achievements during the 1960s'.<sup>307</sup> Ballard describes the zodiac emblem formed by the space capsules of dead astronauts:

[...] a distinctive but unusual pattern resembling the Greek letter  $x$ , a limp cross, a straight lateral member containing four capsules more or less in line ahead  
 [...] The pattern had been variously identified as a hammer and sickle, an eagle, a swastika, and a dove, as well as a variety of religious and runic emblems. (*MSA* 21)

This is an overdetermined symbol, representative of religion, the Greek  $x$  or 'chi' standing in for Christ (Christos or Χριστός), and politics, the hammer and sickle of Russia and the eagle of America. Also juxtaposed are the Nazi 'Reichsadler' and swastika along with the UN peace dove. The symbol of the capsules therefore defies easy interpretation, and, as Gregory Stephenson notes, the figure of the dead astronaut has 'metamorphic possibilities',<sup>308</sup> able to conform to various human fantasies and desires.

In the story 'The Dead Astronaut', Ballard casts the returning corpse of the astronaut, Robert Hamilton, as a mute and empty symbol that is also a portent of doom. Passing over into outside extra-terrestrial space, Hamilton's last signals from his capsule are described as 'an incoherent babble' (*MSA* 69) resembling Blanchot's

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<sup>307</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 56.

<sup>308</sup> Stephenson, *Out of the Night*, p. 115.

hissing communication. Relics from another capsule (cans of film that record Russian Valentina Prokrovna's death) are 'films of horrific and dreamlike violence played out in the underground cinemas of Los Angeles, London, and Moscow' (*MSA* 73).

Spatially dislocated, communication with astronauts is always mediated by technology. Like the effects described in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the body of the astronaut, exiting the space of the world, disappears from view to become subsumed in a sensationalist media landscape. At one point, Ballard describes the re-entry of Hamilton's capsule:

Reflected in the windows of the buried cars, a thousand images of the capsule flared in the saw grass around us. Behind the satellite, a wide fan of silver spray opened in a phantom wake. (*MSA* 74)

The image of the capsule is multiplied to fill the sky with silver spray. Ironically, this is in fact evidence of the capsule's and body's disintegration:

It was this slow disintegration of the aluminium shells that made them visible- it had often been pointed out that the observer on the ground was looking, not at the actual capsule, but at a local field of vaporised aluminium and ionized hydrogen peroxide gas from the ruptured altitude jets now distributed within half a mile of each of the capsules. (*MSA* 22)

Re-entering terrestrial space, the absent physical body of the astronaut projects a thousand images filling the sky in a process by which myth displaces reality. A covering of a lack, the empty symbol of the astronaut becomes representative of the unknowable extra-terrestrial space he has traversed.

The location of 'The Cage of Sand' is Cocoa Beach. As Tom Wolfe documents in *The Right Stuff*:

Cape Canaveral was Cocoa Beach. That was the resort town at the Cape.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Tom Wolfe, *The Right Stuff* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), p. 161.

[...] nobody built hotels in Cocoa Beach, only motels; and they built apartment houses, they built them like motels, so that you could drive up to your own door. At neither the motels nor the apartment houses did you have to go through a public lobby to get to your room. A minor architectural note, one might say -- and yet in Cocoa Beach, like so many towns of the new era, this one fact did more than the pill to encourage what would later be rather primly named 'the sexual revolution'.<sup>310</sup>

Touched by the glamour of the space age, Wolfe's description of Cocoa Beach resembles Foucault's heterotopic description of the space of the American motel room used for illicit sex without systems of openings directed towards public access.<sup>311</sup> The quality of Cocoa Beach as a space enabling the fulfilment of fantasies effectively displaces the technological seriousness of space programme as the main focus of the site.<sup>312</sup> In 'The Cage of Sand', bars with names like 'The Orbit Room' and 'The Satellite Bar' become prominent signifiers of the passing space age and 'The whole trash of amusement arcades and cheap bars on the outskirts of the beach resorts were a depressing commentary on the original space-flights, reducing them to the level of monstrous side-shows at a carnival' (*MSA* 7), so that Cocoa Beach here becomes an extension of the ambivalent fantasy space of Ballard's *Vermilion Sands*.

For the characters inhabiting 'The Cage of Sand', debased glamour is the meaningful legacy of the space age. Louise Woodward keeps a watch for her dead husband's orbiting capsule, but 'the memories she unconsciously wished to perpetuate were those of herself twenty years earlier, when her husband had been a celebrity and she herself courted by magazine columnists and TV reporters' (*MSA* 8). Elsewhere, Travis pretends to be an astronaut, showing up their powerful allure: 'now they were virtually forgotten he must singlehandedly keep alive the fading flame of their memory' (*MSA* 9), and the fantasy figure of the astronaut outstrips the reality of space age achievements. Powerful fantasies surrounding Cocoa Beach nourish the characters

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<sup>310</sup> Wolfe, *The Right Stuff*, p. 196.

<sup>311</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 21.

<sup>312</sup> Ballard picks up on this fantasy element in his review of *The Wright Stuff* asking: 'How far was the NASA publicity machine to blame? Perhaps it deliberately created the rock-jawed, taciturn image of those heroic but somehow rather dull men, living examples, incidentally, of that wooden characterization for which science fiction writers have always been criticized' (*UGM* 273).

in 'The Cage of Sand' giving them compulsive energy and determination. Bridgman is an ex-architect transfixed with an imaginary Martian city:

Pinned to the walls around him were a series of huge white-prints and architectural drawings, depicting various elevations of a fantastic Martian city he had once designed, its glass spires and curtain walls rising like heliotropic jewels from the vermilion desert. In fact, the whole city was a vast piece of jewellery, each elevation brilliantly visualized but as symmetrical, and ultimately as lifeless, as a crown. Bridgman continually retouched the drawings inserting more and more details, so that they almost seemed to be photographs of an original. (*MSA* 7)

The perfect but empty city represents the fantasy of appropriating Martian space for human use. It is full of closed surfaces (curtain walls and glass facades that hide its interiority) and the perfect symmetry of the image signals inauthenticity (the city resembling a photograph of an original). For Bridgman, Martian space represents an abstract fantasy zone, resonating with a space programme in which fantasy images usurp any real achievement. As Francis notes, 'The Cage of Sand' 'is an exercise in melancholia in the specifically Freudian pathological sense, the implied association between the space race and pathological narcissism suggesting, if not a political critique, then at least a disillusion with expansionist dreams of outer space exploration'.<sup>313</sup> Ballard's characters therefore narcissistically defend against admitting their failures by transferring ambitions to perfectible fantasy spaces. Cocoa Beach is positioned as a rich landscape granting the capacity for sustaining illusions.

'The Cage of Sand' describes a post-space age landscape that resists easy interpretation. For Francis, this landscape is analogous in spatial terms with the collective and composite figures that arise in Freud's process of dream condensation.<sup>314</sup> Ballard's post-space age landscape is therefore perhaps best conveyed in the dream-like white nightclub space of 'Neil Armstrong Remembers his Journey to the Moon' (David Pringle, who published the story, understands it to be a

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<sup>313</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 58.

<sup>314</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 56.

transcript of one of Ballard's dreams).<sup>315</sup> The complexity of Ballard's landscape in the Cape Canaveral fictions lies in the uneasy combination of distinct spaces caught in a moment of convergence. In 'The Cage of Sand', sand is a significant feature of the landscape (resembling part of Ballard's fourfold symbolism described by David Pringle as 'a symbol of entropy, the shape-destroyer'<sup>316</sup>), indicative of indistinct shapes and the possibility of spatial blending. 'The Cage of Sand' begins with contrasting spaces: 'At sunset, when the vermilion glow reflected from the dunes along the horizon fitfully illuminated the white faces of the abandoned hotels, Bridgman stepped on to his balcony' (*MSA* 3). The scene is reminiscent of the liminal balcony spaces of *Vermilion Sands* or *The Drowned World*, with Bridgman (the 'bridge man') positioned between two distinct spaces (the Martian sand and the terrestrial).

The re-entry of astronaut's space capsules in 'The Cage of Sand' is described as 'an invasion from deep space' (*MSA* 21) and the story is structured around the trope of alien invasion that also incorporates anxieties around disease and contamination. Martian sand reaches 'up to within two feet of Bridgman's balcony' (*MSA* 3),<sup>317</sup> so that Ballard plays on themes of invasion, with sand replacing the terraforming red weed described by H. G. Wells in *War of the Worlds*. For Brian Baxter, this allusion is significant since Wells's fiction is often based on the idea of the human biological entity affected by a changing organic world which resonates with Ballard's idea of extra-terrestrial travel as an evolutionary crime and 'a modern evolutionary biology that fatally undermines the idea of human domination over the Earth'.<sup>318</sup> The presence of Martian sand transforming Earth's landscape is disturbing because it brings a new alien space into proximity with terrestrial space. The sand threatens to usurp terrestrial space via a virus that (in a reversal of Wells's saving microbial infection) is benign to animal life but which kills off all vegetation. The

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<sup>315</sup> Sellars, "'The Dead Astronaut': RIP Neil Armstrong, 1930-2012'.

<sup>316</sup> Pringle, *Earth is the Alien Planet*, p. 22.

<sup>317</sup> Ballard's explanation for the presence of the sand is improbable, but appropriate to his thesis about the crime represented by space travel, imported to offset a gravitational disturbance caused by rocket launches from Earth

<sup>318</sup> Brian Baker, 'The Geometry of the Space Age: J.G. Ballard's Short Fiction and Science Fiction of the 1960s' in *J.G. Ballard: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. Jeannette Baxter (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 11-22 (p. 20).



threatening nature of alien space in Cape Canaveral and Cocoa Beach is emphasised by its quarantining by wardens and high walls, and wardens are reluctant to leave their cars ‘and be contaminated by the poisonous dust’ (*MTA* 12).

By killing off the vegetation in the Cape Canaveral area, the virus creates an entirely synthetic environment. The sand carries with it ‘Barbs of rusting metal’ (*MSA* 20) that are the remnants of Mars satellites carried back to Earth. Cocoa Beach is transformed into a space of unattained technological ambition. Ballard describes: ‘a complete section of hull plate like a concave shield, [that] still carried part of an identification numeral, and stood upright in the dissolving sand like a door into nowhere’ (*MSA* 20). This anonymous piece of technological detritus, with its useless identification numeral, acts as a symbol of scientific failure.

The creation of a post-scientific synthetic environment by the virus, along with the fantasies that cluster around the Cocoa Beach space, feed back into a undermining of authenticity in space that occurs in ‘The Cage of Sand’. Inhabitants such as Bridgman are not only physically isolated but also suspended in a strangely mediated zone. The memo-tapes that Bridgman compulsively listens to are a series of isolated and fragmented memories:

Invariably on these nights he remained in his room, playing over the old memo-tapes he had salvaged from the submerged chalets and motels further along the beach (the hysterical ‘This is Mamie Goldberg, 62955 Cocoa Boulevard, I really wanna protest against this crazy evacuation...’ or resigned ‘Sam Snade here, the Pontiac convertible in the back garage belongs to anyone who can dig it out’). (*MSA* 4)

These dislocated voices in time nostalgically describe a lost world. When the wardens try to communicate with Bridgman they use one of these tapes (*MSA* 17), an indication that the Cocoa Beach space has become so displaced that direct communication between the inside and outside is not possible, and Bridgman is only able to hear the disembodied and mediated voice of the warden through the use of the memo-tape technology (like the mediated communication of Blanchot’s astronaut back to Earth).

Foucault talks about heterotopias of deviation that are designed to contain disturbing subjects: ‘those in which individuals are placed whose behaviour is deviant

in relation to the mean or required norm'.<sup>319</sup> The sealed-off nature of the Cape Canaveral site is in large part due to the undesirability of the dangerous imagination of its inhabitants. Walls and wardens not only contain the Martian virus, but also isolate the unsettling fantasies emanating from this transformed physical environment. The discourse of contamination that runs through 'The Cage of Sand' is therefore complex, emerging from a convergence of alien spaces, fantasy, and scientific hubris, creating a synthetic space open to fantasy and malleability. Ballard's Cocoa Beach is located in a spatial gap, between Earthly reality and Martian fantasy, and the creation of this new space is completed by a new constellation of stars (the orbiting dead astronauts).

Questions about the effects of returns from extra-terrestrial space are also posed in 'A Question of Re-entry'. The meeting of extra-terrestrial space with terrestrial space is represented by the re-entry of the astronaut: a process that juxtaposes radically differentiated spaces and times. The all-encompassing outside perspective of extra-terrestrial space converges multiple times and spaces on Earth that can be accessed simultaneously. 'A Question of Re-entry' considers the spatial containment of different Earthly places and temporalities, and, as Prieto notes, the broader perspective of the spacemen, 'whose ability to take in the entirety of the planet Earth in one glance makes the old-fashioned attachment to a homeland seem quaint',<sup>320</sup> acts as a powerful metaphor for broadening critical perspectives.

Ballard's story concerns the loss of an astronaut, Colonel Spender, in the Amazon jungle. Lieutenant Connolly of Reclamation Division of the UN Space Department is sent to investigate. During his journey he meets Ryker, a westerner who has re-located to the jungle living amongst a local tribe. Symbols of clocks or watches reoccur throughout 'A Question of Re-entry' representing the possibility of different temporalities occurring within the same space. Ryker is obsessed with clocks, and Ballard describes a dresser in his accommodation: 'In the centre [...] its multiple reflections receding to infinity in a pair of small wing mirrors, was a cheap three-dollar alarm clock, ticking away loudly' (*MSA* 43). Trapped within the reflection of the dresser mirrors, the alarm clock is spatially contained (although its reflection recedes to infinity). Later, Ryker locks the alarm clock away in a cupboard,

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<sup>319</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 18.

<sup>320</sup> Prieto, *Postmodern Poetics of Place*, p. 81.

‘like an officer dismissing a faithful if stupid minion,’ (*MSA* 44) reflecting the possibility of mastering temporality by containing and controlling time.

Entry into the pre-civilised space of the Amazon Indians has the quality of movement back in time: ‘the curving wake of the launch was dissolving in a final summary of their long voyage up-river to the derelict settlement, fading into the slack brown water like a last tenuous thread linking him with the order and sanity of civilisation’ (*MSA* 39), and Ballard converges physical and psychological spaces so that Connolly’s movement up the river becomes a Conradian journey into a mutable space of ‘the drifting archipelagos of a dream’ (*MSA* 31) allowing transit into the past. The Amazon Indians occupy a space of stasis, symbolised by the slack water lacking the forward momentum. Opposed to the linear, mechanised time symbolised by Ryker’s clocks, the Indians exist in a loop of circular pre-modern time. Ryker’s presence introduces a new temporal dynamic into the jungle space: he is able to predict the appearances of the satellite Echo III, fostering a cargo-cult amongst the tribe based around a modern concept of emergent future expectation: ‘Some time in the future they expect a magic galleon or giant bird to arrive carrying an everlasting cornucopia of worldly goods, so they just sit about waiting for the great day’ (*MSA* 55). According to Gregory Stephenson, Ryker becomes a Kurtz figure and also serpent in the Garden of Eden, driven by hubris and the nemesis of egotism. He is ‘a covert megalomaniac and a callous and obtuse impostor. He utterly fails to recognize or comprehend the truer, deeper sense of time [...] possessed by the tribe which he dominates’.<sup>321</sup>

The question of re-entry posed by Ballard therefore concerns the interruption of one space-time by another. Just as the jungle space of the tribe is interrupted by Ryker and his clocks, so the astronaut re-enters terrestrial space from outside extra-terrestrial space. This is a complex process of spatial and temporal conflation. The vastness of outer space surrounds and permeates all terrestrial space-times, and history is conceived as a series of different spaces accessed by the astronaut travelling beyond the physical and psychological confines of Earth. The re-entry of Spender’s space capsule from outside profoundly disturbs the equilibrium of space-time, bringing with it the premature entrance of modernity and concept of the future into the jungle community, the emergent twentieth century ‘Transforming the Indians into

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<sup>321</sup> Stephenson, *Out of the Night*, p. 19.

a community of superstitious and materialistic sightseers' (*MSA* 62). The 'huge disintegrating fantasy' (*MSA* 56) of space flight is something that cannot be contained by terrestrial space-time. The re-entry of extra-terrestrial space into terrestrial space disrupts equilibrium and unravels temporality. The figure of the astronaut is forced back down to Earth, dangerously disrupting the security of local space-time through exposure to a larger extra-terrestrial space.

Mike Holliday outlines the way in which Ballard's later Cape Canaveral stories 'News from the Sun', 'Memories of the Space Age', and 'Myths of the Near Future' are 'concerned with a psychological disturbance of our perception of the flow of time, a dislocation that has been caused, somehow, by human space-flight'.<sup>322</sup> The space age is a suspended temporal moment of infinite present that simultaneously gestures towards the past and future without inhabiting either category. Holliday explains Ballard's obsession with frozen time as a symptom of his childhood experiences, and his children leaving home in the late 70s, leaving a vacuum in his life. Ballard's theme of lived time as a construct means 'it becomes possible to conceive of an alternative form of reality that contains some form of timelessness or a non-linear time'<sup>323</sup> that brings past, present and future together simultaneously. For Holliday: 'The essential thesis of these three stories is that the withdrawal or transfiguration of past and future should enable us to live in a more real and rewarding eternal present' or 'an eventless eternity'.<sup>324</sup> The eternal present of Ballard's fictions is an opportunity to free ourselves from the tyranny of past and future: 'just as "the past" disappears, so does "the future", or at least that idea of the future as something that helps tie together our activities and lives. Instead we have an open plain of endless possibilities.'<sup>325</sup> Against the negative intrusion of the astronaut Spender into the temporality of the Amazon Indians in 'A Question of Re-entry,' Ballard's later stories all theorise possible transcendence and the 'preparations for departure' (*MSA* 163).

I wish to consider the story 'News from the Sun' (although both 'Memories of the Space Age' and 'Myths of the Near Future' articulate similar concerns: all three

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<sup>322</sup> Mike Holliday, 'Ballard and the Vicissitudes of Time' (2008) <<http://www.ballardian.com/ballard-and-the-vicissitudes-of-time>> [accessed 18 October 2014].

<sup>323</sup> Holliday, 'Ballard and the Vicissitudes of Time'.

<sup>324</sup> Holliday, 'Ballard and the Vicissitudes of Time'.

<sup>325</sup> Holliday, 'Ballard and the Vicissitudes of Time'.

stories display recurrence and circularity that recalls Roger Luckhurst's observations about the obsessive repetitions of the *Vermilion Sands* stories<sup>326</sup>), which describes the breakdown of temporal flows and the simultaneity of past, present, and future manifested in fugue states or the space sickness suffered by Ballard's characters. Ballard's themes in 'News from the Sun' help build a critical mythology of the space age, and as Luckhurst notes, generate 'particular unease by rendering spectacularly redundant the most advanced technological sites'.<sup>327</sup> The foreclosure of the near future that occurs in 'News from the Sun' can be explained by the fact that, unlike the earlier 1960s stories, they are all published in the early 1980s, almost a decade after the last manned flight to the Moon (when Ballard's earlier predictions about the decline and failure of the space age had been written in historical fact). The ambivalent and uncertain symbol of the dead astronaut dramatically re-entering terrestrial space is therefore replaced by the more quotidian figure of the aging and grounded astronaut, living in the shadow of the past.

In 'News from the Sun' Ballard calls extra-terrestrial travel an evolutionary crime:

By leaving his planet and setting off into outer space man had committed an evolutionary crime, a breach of the rules governing his tenancy of the universe, and of the laws of time and space. (*MSA* 108)

This recalls Blanchot's warning about the nomad, placeless, and pitiful astronaut. Surrounded by technological props, mankind breaks out of his proper place in the universe, and the effect is of profound spatial and temporal crisis, opening up a vast space that leads to loss of secure human emplacement. 'News from the Sun' concerns a former NASA psychiatrist, Franklin, and the story is located near Las Vegas, a space that now resembles Ballard's descriptions of the ruined Cape Canaveral:

He had taken a touching pleasure in the derelict landscape, in the abandoned motels and weed-choked swimming pools of the small town near the air base, in the silent runways with their dusty jets sitting on flattened tyres, in the over-

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<sup>326</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 180.

<sup>327</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 138.

bright hills waiting with the infinite guile of the geological kingdom for the organic world to end and a more vivid mineral realm to begin. (*MSA* 96)

Ballard later elaborates on the image of a threatened organic world:

The landscape was not so much desolate as derelict- the untended irrigation canals, the rusting dish of a radio-telescope on a nearby peak, a poor man's begging bowl held up to the banquet of the universe. The hills were waiting for them to go away. A crime had been committed, a cosmic misdemeanour [...] (*MSA* 98)

Like the encroaching alien sand in 'The Cage of Sand', space is threatened by mineral realm set against the crumbling man-made technological landscape. Ballard continues to use the concept of spatial contamination by conflating of two different spaces, and the untended desert landscape of Las Vegas 'more and more resembled the lunar terrain' (*MSA* 95) bringing together terrestrial and extra-terrestrial spaces. Man has a tenuous foothold in the universe, evoked by the begging bowl radio-telescope. The spatial intrusion of the mineral world leads to the slowing of the rhythms of organic life, and symptomatic of this process are lengthening fugue states in which 'time poured in a torrent from the cracked glass of [peoples] lives' (*MSA* 96).

As Luckhurst notes, the ruins of the space age are places where mystic events can take place, sites that produce 'fugues in their itinerant population, states which go beyond life and death, and outside chronological time. In terms of the Surrealist Manifesto, this is the exact state of the *sur*-real: a point beyond the oppositions of subject and object, reality and imagination, life and death.'<sup>328</sup> Although the experience of the fugues is of temporal disturbance, the true nature is spatial. The fugues are symptomatic of a distancing crisis: a lack of a sense of place that causes the perception of great distance between individuals and things, and also recalling Zeno's arrow paradox as a future point never reached. The spatial expansion brought on by Ballard's eternal present means that man is unable to transverse the suddenly vast distances in between one point and another. In 'Memories of the Space Age' repeating the themes of 'New from the Sun', the protagonist, Mallory, is pursued by a

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<sup>328</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 138.

cheetah: ‘Only the cheetah was moving, still able to outrun time [...] But Mallory felt no fear for this violent cat. Without time it could never reach him, without time the lion could at last lay down with the lamb, the eagle with the vole’ (*MSA* 144). Ballard describes an ever-increasing distance between two points caused by temporal dilation, symptomatic of the vast distances opened by extra-terrestrial travel that drain time as a meaningful concept and open impossibly large distances between cosmic emplacements (the vast and empty desert landscape of Nevada is also representative of this new expansiveness).

Ballard describes the triumvirate of Franklin’s obsessions as ‘speed, time, sex’ (*MSA* 97). Speed becomes a way to conquer distance and retain a sense of the temporal: ‘the fast driving had become a dangerous game spurred on by the infantile hope that speed in some way would keep the clock hands turning’ (*MSA* 97). Slade (an aspiring astronaut rejected by the space programme) menaces Franklin with his small aircraft, a machine capable of greater speed and movement than Franklin’s automobile, with its ‘small, vicious propeller that shredded the light and air, time and space’ (*MSA* 102). Slade shares Franklin’s obsession with sex, in particular the refinement of sex acts as conceptual games, and his shoulders ‘bore the scars of a strange harness- the restraining straps of a psychiatric unit [...] or some kind of sexual fetishism’ (*MSA* 100). Like speed, sex becomes a way to overcome distance, and Slade and Franklin’s conceptual approach has much in common with *The Atrocity Exhibition*’s abstract terminal documents and survival kits designed as a way to bring together disparate objects. Throughout ‘News from the Sun’, Slade appropriates fetish objects to construct tableaux similar to T’s survival kits, ‘psychosexual shrines to the strange gods inside his head’ (*MSA* 103), such as his study of Franklin’s college, Dr Vaisey, built inside her bidet: ‘an ugly assemblage of hypodermic syringes, fractured sunglasses and blood-stained tampons’ (*MSA* 103). The arrangement of these objects seems to be an attempt by Slade to break down distance between himself and his subject through the use of objects that have previously penetrated the physical boundaries of the body.

‘News from the Sun’ describes the dilation of time-space in which objects drift further apart. Characters overcome increasing distance by the association of disparate objects with each other, a bid, in Foucault’s terms, to establish a relationship between different spatial emplacements with associations becoming fragile nets holding space together. The nature of the spatial crisis in ‘News from the Sun’ has to

do with the ability of characters to put themselves in an expanded, placeless universe. The old astronaut Trippett, treated by Franklin, visualises his reflection in the mirror of a radio-telescope dish as '[...] himself suspended in space, this time upside down in the inverted image, hung by his heels from the yardarm of the sky' (*MSA* 98). This disorientation is a symptom of the expanded space, first experienced by astronauts and now filtering through to the fantasies of Earth's population. Expansive space generates the desire for corporeal extension eradicating distance, coalescing around images of expanded bodies. Caught in the desert after a car crash, Franklin perceives the reflected fantasy image of an oasis:

Within this fertile valley everything multiplied itself without effort. From his outstretched arms fell a dozen shadows. Each cast by one of the twelve suns above his head. (*MSA* 123)

Rescued by Trippett's daughter, Ursula, he perceives the multiplication of her body in space:

As Franklin waved to her she was joined by her twin, another grave-faced young woman who walked the same cautious step. Behind them came other sisters, moving through the palms like schoolgirls from their class, concubines from a pavilion cooled by the lake. (*MSA* 123-124)

The fantasy of spatial expansion of the body allows for its dispersion and movement through the extended landscape. The image of the spatially expanded body complexly fuses with visions of hybrid bird-men:

[...] Franklin could see images of himself flung up into the sky, the outstretched sleeves of his white jacket like the wings of a deformed bird. (*MSA* 98)

Slade darkly shadows this image, his aircraft reflected in the mirror as 'hundreds of vulture-like birds that hungrily circled the sky' (*MSA* 100). The trajectory of Ballard's story therefore moves towards the intensification of the expanded bird-man image in space. In the denouement to 'News from the Sun', Franklin confronts Slade amongst a line of mirrors: 'High above, he could see the reflection of himself in the collector



dish, a stumbling cripple who had pirated the sky' (*MSA* 129). As Slade beckons to Franklin his arm forms a 'winded replica of itself' (*MSA* 130), and in the final moments of the text:

The sky was filled with winged men. Franklin stood among the mirrors, as the aircraft multiplied in the air and crowded the sky with endless armadas. Ursula was coming for him, she and her sisters walking across the desert from the gates of the solar city. (*MSA* 130)

The synthesis of these images of bird-men and extended bodies becomes a way to conquer newly expansive and threatening space.

Ballard's Cape Canaveral fictions bring together spaces creating problematically undefined landscapes. 'The Cage of Sand' describes the convergence of two incommensurable spaces: terrestrial sites are contaminated by extra-terrestrial spaces creating an imaginative zone where dangerous fantasies are enacted. 'A Question of Re-Entry' describes the spatial containment of temporality with an astronaut moving between modern and pre-modern spaces. In 'News for the Sun' realisation of the increasing distance between objects due to exposure to the vastness of extra-terrestrial space creates the desire for corporeal extension in the form of a hybrid bird-man able to surmount mankind's spatial limitations. As in Blanchot's 'The Conquest of Space', Ballard's Cape Canaveral fictions reveal an expansive extra-terrestrial space that problematises the idea of the terrestrial and dismantles the assurances of localised space. In all the stories, there is awareness of the need to overcome great distances, to establish communication between increasingly disparate spatial emplacements. For Ballard, extra-terrestrial space (an expansive outside) is incommensurate with smaller terrestrial spaces, and crossing the boundary between one space and another astronauts lose touch with terrestrial reality. The question of re-entry considered by Ballard is the attempt to fit a larger, expanded outer space into smaller terrestrial space, threatening to break apart local space and time with the pressure of upward projection.

## Chapter 5

### Hidden Heterotopias in *Crash* and *Concrete Island*

This chapter examines the tension between theories of heterotopia and non-place in two of Ballard's texts, *Crash* (1973) and *Concrete Island* (1974), highlighting the way in which space can be appropriated to challenge critical discourses about proper use. Ballard's novels focus on a series of enclaves resistant to the increasing prevalence of homogenised space within the urban environment. These enclaves are paradoxically other spaces located both at the centre and margins. They are situated as useless waste spaces of exclusion and abandonment away from the ordered parts of the city, existing as forms of absence in the contemporary landscape. For Ballard, these locations are where alternative orderings of the social can be imagined and experimented on, acting as a counter-point to the expansion of non-places. I want to look at the motorway as one such space open to alternative kinds of access. I will consider the idea of embodied driving and the car cabin as a hidden space that allows the characters of *Crash* to open heterotopic enclaves rebelliously established within the motorway non-place. In the second part of this chapter, I will identify the way in which undefined, unregulated and informal spaces are re-appropriated in *Concrete Island* as sites of imaginative potential. In his description of heterotopia, Foucault writes about 'marvellous empty emplacements at the outskirts of cities'<sup>329</sup> that act as counter-points to the continuing expansion of the city. Located outside officially designated socio-economic activity and problematically undefined, these spaces often house detritus and waste (and are made into waste spaces). In *Crash* and *Concrete Island*, waste becomes an important material, and crashed cars become important building blocks for imagining new spatial potentials.

As Ballard recounts, the genesis or 'gene' (AE 157) for *Crash* was the condensed novel, 'Crash!' in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), a story that announces 'The latent sexual content of the automobile crash' (AE 153). *The Atrocity Exhibition* obsesses over environments comprised of motorways and embankments, describing a conflation of internal and external spaces: 'The concrete landscape of underpass and overpass mediated a more real presence, the geometry of a neural interval, the identity latent within his own musculature' (AE 20). As Ballard commented in 1970, the same year as publication of *The Atrocity Exhibition*:

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<sup>329</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 20.

I think the twentieth century reaches just about its highest expression on the highway. Everything is there, the speed and violence of our age, its love of stylisation, fashion, the organisational side of things -- what I call the elaborately signalled landscape. (*EM* 31)

By recognising the organisation side of things, contrasted with the imaginative investments of stylisation and fashion, Ballard acknowledges the regulatory effects of motorway space on human behaviour. With *Crash*, Ballard takes the opportunity to carry out a sustained and focused investigation of the motorway's elaborately signalled landscape in a way precluded by the dizzying multiplicity of concerns in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. As several critics have noted, whilst *Crash* emerges out of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, its form is very different. For Luckhurst, the 'move from the polylogue of *The Atrocity Exhibition* to the remorseless monologism of *Crash* is a startling transition',<sup>330</sup> whilst Baxter observes 'Following *The Atrocity Exhibition*'s promiscuity of forms, *Crash* stages a contest of pornographic forms -- encyclopaedia (perverse taxonomies) versus collage (metaphorical obscenity) -- which works to criticise and reinvigorate tired textual and sexual narratives through an imaginative exercise in obscene parody.'<sup>331</sup> The radically different textual structure of *Crash* sacrifices the disparate and fragmentary collage effects of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, substituting the single obsessive voice of narrator James Ballard for the wildly modulating persona of T. This focus allows Ballard to isolate and investigate the motorway space that informs *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and *Crash* expands on themes of externalising hidden spaces: the neural intervals and latent identities explored in Ballard's earlier text.

Gasiorek notes that the brilliance of *Crash* 'derives in part from its overdetermined nature: it can never finally decide what kind of text it is -- a moral tract, or paean to the joys of sexual violence? This indecision makes it a liminal work that blurs the boundaries between the moral and the immoral, and it keeps crossing back and forth between these discourses.'<sup>332</sup> The spatiality of *Crash* problematises

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<sup>330</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 123.

<sup>331</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 114.

<sup>332</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 18.

normative moral judgements, opening a series of enclaves that operate in spaces suspended between correct and incorrect behaviour. For Baxter, *Crash* is a work of ‘serious protest’ with the violence of the text opening up disavowed histories: ‘the official, instantaneous reaction to this violent display of contorted flesh and metal is to whitewash its history. With cautious brushstrokes the underlying physical and psychological realities of the car crash are overlaid and concealed before being swept aside out of view. It is precisely this repression of material realities by dominant cultural systems which Ballard’s art counters.’<sup>333</sup> The recovery of a car crash swept aside by officials can also be considered in spatial terms, as a rebellious enclave opened up in the officiated space of the motorway.

Two important contexts for my reading of space in *Crash* are Foucault’s idea of heterotopia and Marc Augé’s concept of non-place. Augé has called the conglomeration of contemporary transport and transit spaces non-places:

If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological spaces and which [...] do not integrate with earlier places.<sup>334</sup>

Non-places resist easy interpretation by denying the validity of their own history as in itself meaningful, becoming self-enclosed and self-referential only to other non-places. They are spaces produced by the current epoch which Augé calls supermodernity. For Augé, non-places necessitate a certain understanding of space, and ‘the word “non-place” designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces’.<sup>335</sup> The concept investigates both the logic of supermodernity as prioritising the movement of people, goods, and commerce, and the way in which the individual is integrated within space. This

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<sup>333</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 103.

<sup>334</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 2008), p. 63.

<sup>335</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 76.

underlying organisational logic means that non-places are predicated on the slackening of communal ties so that people can be moved without resistance: ‘As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality.’<sup>336</sup> The individual is a target within non-place because they are spaces reliant on the movement of free and unburdened commercial agents. In contrast to places shaped and orientated to the use local inhabitants, non-places are designed as transitory and mobile, promoting a free flow of movement. Non-places are spaces occupied by shoppers, commuters, migrants, or transitory workers. The increasingly prevalence of non-places means that occupied space becomes less about the needs of a small community of individuals, and is instead abstracted by the demands of a global flow of capital.

Luckhurst notes that *Crash* takes place in and around a series of non-places. The motorway is the most prominent example, but airports and hospitals are also important. For Luckhurst, the non-places described in *Crash* are unstable and unable to fully displace or erase ‘recalcitrant traces’<sup>337</sup> of the past, which return in a process of uncanny haunting. *Crash* can be read as a text which systematically destabilises non-place, but emphasis should also be placed on the agency of characters in the text to bring about their own alternative readings of space, enabling acts of resistance.

In contrast to non-place, Foucault’s concept of heterotopia describes alternative spaces to the normal or everyday. The concept helps define the unruly alternative spaces opened up in *Crash* since heterotopias are ‘real places, effective places’.<sup>338</sup> Elaborating his concept, Foucault differentiates between heterotopias of illusion and compensation. Heterotopias of illusion (exposing the rest of space as enclosed and partitioned<sup>339</sup>) are potentially spaces of imaginative investment set against heterotopias of compensation that order and perfect their space. The relationship between heterotopias of compensation and illusion is antagonistic: heterotopias of illusion are potentially resistive spaces, and a possibility held open is that heterotopias of compensation could be exposed by accessing them in imaginative and rebellious ways. In one example pertinent to the themes of *Crash*, Foucault describes an American motel room: ‘where one goes with one’s car and one’s

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<sup>336</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 76.

<sup>337</sup> Luckhurst, ‘*The Angle Between Two Walls*’, p. 131.

<sup>338</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 17.

<sup>339</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 21.

mistress and where illicit sex is both absolutely sheltered and absolutely hidden, kept isolated without, however, being left in the open'.<sup>340</sup> The motel is a regulated space open to the public access, but within this space the inhabitants are able to kept illicit sex hidden from view.

Baxter notes that the narrative of James Ballard in *Crash* is 'replete with verbs pertaining to multiple ways of seeing -- to spectate, to witness, to see, to visualise, to watch, to look and to observe'.<sup>341</sup> The different ways of seeing in *Crash* correlate with an equally important discourse of not seeing. The operation of the non-place of the motorway relies on users not seeing Luckhurst's recalcitrant traces that Ballard's text attempts to bring to the open. Similarly, the tension between Foucault's heterotopias of illusion and compensation is arranged around discourses of seeing and not seeing. Ordered and meticulous, heterotopias of compensation attempt to make their space visible, as opposed to absolutely hidden heterotopias of illusion such as Foucault's motel room. A heterotopic reading of *Crash* reveals it as a text cut through with hidden spaces established within the seemingly open and visible space of the motorway. The text also subverts a series of visualising technologies, such as documentary and scientific evidence, that attempt to bring the event of the car crash into a transparent realm of knowledge. This subversion takes the form of obscuration in official readings of space disclosing hidden meanings.

The motorway space explored in *Crash* is identified by Augé as a prime example of non-place:

The real non-places of supermodernity -- the ones we inhabit when we are driving down the motorway [...] have the peculiarity that they are defined partly by the words and texts they offer us: their 'instructions for use', which may be prescriptive ('Take right-hand lane'), prohibitive ('No smoking') or informative ('You are now entering the Beaujolais region'). Sometimes these are couched in more or less explicit and codified ideograms (on road signs, maps and tourist guides), sometimes in ordinary language.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 21.

<sup>341</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 101.

<sup>342</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, pp. 77-78.

The motorway is a space which is cut through with prohibitions and regulatory information in the form of instructional words and texts. The information given to the user is directed towards certain regulated ends. It is governed by a set of rules, boldly announced by road signs dictating access and use, attempting to guarantee the smooth operation of space. The motorway necessitates constant movement and slackens the possibility of any localised or communal ties within its space. Motorways are zones of transit that the user passes through without really noticing. The driver does not remain long enough to build meaningful spatial ties. Attention is constantly shifted from the possibilities of other kinds of surrounding space:

Main roads no longer pass through towns, but lists of their remarkable features -- and, indeed, a whole commentary -- appear on big signboards nearby. In a sense the traveller is absolved of the need to stop and even look [...] The landscape keeps its distance, but its natural or architectural details give rise to a text, sometimes supplemented by a schematic plan when it appears that the passing traveller is not really in a position to see the remarkable feature drawn to his attention, and thus has to derive what pleasure he can from the mere knowledge of its proximity.<sup>343</sup>

This distancing is a prominent feature of *Crash*. The motorway abstracts other spaces and landscapes, constituting knowledge through proximity rather than direct experience. As Sebastian Groes notes, Ballard's description of motorways resembles a distinctly American form of road building that accentuates automation within its space: 'The American system of motorways is characterized by fluidity and movement and reduces space to a pure Idea, which is the opposite of the stasis of the European city, with its mass organized around the unity of a social centre. There is a paradox at the heart of driving an automobile: 'auto', etymologically derived from 'self', suggests that it is the subject who is in control of his or her mobility, but the opposite is happening. The autonomous subject is subjected to a process, a collective

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<sup>343</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 78.

experience in which (s)he is a figure whose unconscious yields control'.<sup>344</sup> In *Crash*, James Ballard contemplates his domestic space bounded and contained by the surrounding motorway system:

Our own apartment house at Drayton Park stood a mile to the north of the airport in a pleasant island of modern housing units, landscaped filling stations and supermarkets, shielded from the distant bulk of London by an access spur of the northern circular motorway which flowed past us on its elegant concrete pillars. I gazed down at the immense motion sculpture, whose traffic deck seemed almost higher than the balcony rail against which I leaned. I began to orientate myself again round its reassuring bulk, its familiar perspectives of speed, purpose and direction. (C 36)

The speed, purpose and direction of the motorway pulls the surrounding environment into its orbit, shielding it from the intrusion of the outside space of London. The housing units, filling stations, and supermarkets become distant features of a landscape dwarfed by the towering traffic deck of the motorway. James Ballard observes 'the human inhabitants of this technological landscape no longer provided its sharpest pointers, its keys to the borderzones of identity' (C 36). The dominance of the motorway supplants direct experience of the landscape that includes James Ballard's domestic environment.

Augé draws attention to the motorway as a non-place that must be accessed in the correct way by keeping to the right side of the road, obeying the speed limit, and so on. These rules are announced by a familiar series of signs dictating proper use. In the UK, the question of proper use has been troubling authorities since the building of the first inter-urban motorway, the M1 between London and Leeds, in 1959. Peter Merriman's study of the M1 perceptively notes that the motorway emerges as a space of 'scientific experiment, economic calculation and death'.<sup>345</sup> Merriman shows how the space of the motorway becomes the target of 'all manner of programmes of

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<sup>344</sup> Sebastian Groes, 'The Texture of Modernity in J.G. Ballard's *Crash*, *Concrete Island* and *High-Rise*' in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions*, ed. by Leanne Baxter and Rowland Rymer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 123-141 (p. 128).

<sup>345</sup> Peter Merriman, *Driving Spaces: A Cultural-Historical Geography of England's M1 Motorway* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 186.



government, including seemingly large-scale (state) programmes concerned with governing others at a distance'.<sup>346</sup> Traffic flows and their economic impacts are predicted, quantified and costed so that the motorway becomes an experimental space in which every movement becomes a statistic. Attempts are made to quantify and show up incorrect use, and attention is focused on 'the irregular and undesirable movements and performances of both motorists *and* the motorway: the irregular movements of vehicles involved in accidents, the presence of broken-down vehicles, and movements or failures in the construction materials'.<sup>347</sup> The motorway becomes a target for a series of regulatory governmental tactics since, as a transient non-place, it also offers a number of opportunities for resistance with authorities recognising it is 'a difficult space to police, and a space where criminals can slip away undetected'.<sup>348</sup>

*Crash* positions itself in an interesting way in terms of the governance of the motorway and attempts by agencies to bring to light improper use of the space. The characters of *Crash* utilise the mobile space of the motorway to realise a series of experiments that are often criminal in nature. The motorway is a space that offers opportunities for resistance circulating around points of governmental concern precisely because it is a fluid and unfixed space. The car crash as undesirable performance within the space of the motorway is reconfigured by *Crash* as a locus point of resistance to the smooth running of non-place. The imaginative restaging of crashes enacted in the text disrupts governance and regulation, allowing a reinvestment in space.

Early in the text, James Ballard visualises a series of subversive crashes:

[...] absurd deaths of the wounded, maimed and distraught. I think of the crashes of psychopaths, implausible accidents carried out with venom and self-disgust, vicious multiple collisions contrived in stolen cars on evening freeways among tired office-workers. I think of the absurd crashes of neurasthenic housewives returning from their VD clinics, hitting parked cars in suburban high streets. I think of the crashes of excited schizophrenics colliding head-on into stalled laundry vans in one-way streets; of manic-

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<sup>346</sup> Merriman, *Driving Spaces*, p. 142.

<sup>347</sup> Merriman, *Driving Spaces*, p. 190.

<sup>348</sup> Merriman, *Driving Spaces*, p. 160.

depressives crushed while making pointless U-turns on motorway access roads; of luckless paranoids driving at full speed into the brick walls at the ends of known culs-de-sac; of sadistic charge nurses decapitated in inverted crashes on complex interchanges; of lesbian supermarket manageresses burning to death in the collapsed frames of their midget cars before the stoical eyes of middle-aged firemen; of autistic children crushed in rear-end collisions, their eyes less wounded in death; of buses filled with mental defectives drowning together stoically in roadside industrial canals. (C 7-8)

The imagination of the crash opens fissures in the operation of non-place. James Ballard's fantasies uncover a series of disavowed events within the spaces of road and motorway. He imagines intentional crashes caused by people excluded by normative governmental authorities, accessing space in deviant ways so that crashes become spatial extensions of their undesirability.

The text of *Crash* knowingly appropriates the event of the car crash as a hidden point of resistance in the space of the motorway by utilising the same experimental techniques designed to make the motorway appear safe. The character of Dr Robert Vaughan, 'nightmare angel of the expressways' (C 66), is also described as a 'hoodlum scientist' (C 11), hiding his subversive actions under the veneer of investigative science. This allows Vaughan to effectively disguise himself as both a 'white-coated doctor' (C 31) and 'police photographer' (C 51) when meeting James Ballard for the first time. Vaughan's background in 'the application of computerized techniques to the control of all international traffic systems' (C 48) shows up his knowledge of the kind of intervention designed to make the motorway into a regulated and predicible space. He is attracted to the Road Research Laboratory, an organisation established by the UK government concerned with road safety, planning, and control, where he watches 'calibrated vehicles crashing into [...] concrete target blocks' (C 3), Vaughan utilises and subverts governmental techniques used to regulate and control the motorway space in order to produce his own results. He evaluates the event of the crash, preparing meticulous documentary evidence including questionnaires: 'In each questionnaire the subject was given a list of celebrities from the world of politics, entertainment, sport, crime, science and the arts, and invited to devise an imaginary car-crash in which one of them might die' (C 107), which show 'all the benefits of an exhaustive and lingering research' (C 107). This

evidence is supplemented by a series of illustrating photographs: ‘assembled with enormous care, torn from the pages of forensic medical journals and textbooks of plastic surgery, photocopied from internally circulated monographs, extracted from operating theatre reports stolen during his visits to Ashford Hospital’ (C 108).

Vaughan’s cataloguing plays on governmental tactics of knowing, and arrays of technologies used to intervene in the space of the motorway are subverted to become points of resistance designed to produce a radically different *connaissance* of the crash.

Whilst governmental understanding of the motorway effectively tries to avoid the improper event of the car accident, Vaughan’s investigations linger over the crash subjecting it to perverse knowledge and understanding: ‘units in a new currency of pain and desire’ (C 109). His repeated photographing of victims and wreckage is a further subversion of the systems of knowing applied by governing authorities:

I looked down at the discarded prints below my feet. Most of them were crude frontal pictures of motor-cars and heavy vehicles involved in highway collisions, surrounded by spectators and police, and close-ups of impacted radiator grilles and windshields. Many had been taken by an unsteady hand from a moving car, showing the blurred outlines of angry police and ambulance attendants, remonstrating with the cameraman as he swerved past them. (C 76)

The act of photography captures fleeting moments disavowed by the quick clearing away of debris, setting up a block to the fluid space of the motorway. The evidence of the photograph is used as a technology of resistance. Vaughan’s photographic evidence offers the possibility of reconfiguring the accident by utilising its hidden recalcitrant traces (close-ups of impacted radiator grilles and windscreens) disavowed by governing authorities. The photographs taken from a moving car defy authority, angering police and ambulance attendants, but the fluidity of the motorway allows Vaughan to swerve past them. Casting Vaughan as a Surrealist photographer, Baxter notes that by ‘isolating the detail of an event (a crushed door, a blood-soaked seat, an amputated leg), Surrealist photography functions to install moments of critical and historical reflection by bearing witness to that which threatens to pass unnoticed and

undocumented'.<sup>349</sup> Vaughan's documentary evidence is a reading of hidden detail written into non-place.

In *Crash*, the motorway is accessed in a number of rebellious ways. As Merriman's study of the M1 motorway points out, driving on the motorway 'is a complex *social* practice and activity, and drivers do communicate and interact with people and all manner of things, inhabiting and consuming the spaces of the car and road in a myriad of distinctive ways'.<sup>350</sup> In particular: 'The materiality of cars and vehicles is intimately entwined with the spaces, embodied actions, identities and subjectivities of *driving* (as well as simply *owning* a car), and it is important to recognize that there are clear differences between the experiences and embodied actions of drivers and passengers.'<sup>351</sup> This postulates a kind of "tight-coupling" or hybridisation of drivers and vehicles',<sup>352</sup> an embodied driving that appropriates the space of the motorway in original ways. This is an important observation as vehicles become vital in a process of identity formation as individualised extensions of their drivers in *Crash*. The type of car you drive, and how you drive, can enable an act of resistance. *Crash* describes a complex synthesis of the human and machine, and vehicles constantly mark their owners in physical ways. After his accident, the instrument panel and steering wheel imprint themselves on James Ballard to such a degree that an automobile engineer could predict the exact make and model of his car from his wounds (C 18).

Cars become extensions of their owners. Vaughan's car is described as dusty and dirty, and the way in which Vaughan aggressively drives his vehicle is an extension of personality: 'The way Vaughan handled the car set the tone for all his behaviour- by turns aggressive, distracted, sensitive, clumsy, absorbed and brutal' (C 70). In opposition to governmental space, the motorway opens up the possibility of the circulation of resistive enclaves expressed through the materiality of the vehicle in the form of embodied driving. It is no surprise that Vaughan's car is dirty, its 'dusty windows' (C 122) making the interior cabin space opaque to the outside gaze of authority. The importance of embodied driving in *Crash* explores the idea of the heterotopic enclave, and the enclosed site of the car cabin becomes a site of

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<sup>349</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 131.

<sup>350</sup> Merriman, *Driving Spaces*, p. 11.

<sup>351</sup> Merriman, *Driving Spaces*, p. 7.

<sup>352</sup> Merriman, *Driving Spaces*, p. 193.

imaginative investment as a personalised locus of resistance. James Ballard describes the cabin of his car, as ‘the perfect module for all the quickening futures of my life’ (C 53). Throughout *Crash*, it is turned into a heterotopia much like Foucault’s motel room used for illicit sex. His lover, Helen Remington’s car cabin is transformed and expanded by imaginative investment: ‘In my mind I visualized the cabin of Helen’s car, its hard chrome and vinyl, brought to life by my semen, transformed into a bower of exotic flowers, with creepers entwined across the roof light, the floor and seats lush with moist grass’ (C 97). The cabin is a space marked by personal use, and semen and other corporeal fluids continually stain fabrics and plastics. The cabins of cars are never clean, and James Ballard notices evidence of prior use clinging to interiors:

Despite the effort made to clean these cars, the residues of the previous drivers clung to their interiors -- the heelmarks on the rubber mats below the driving pedals; a dry cigarette stub, stained with an unfashionable lipstick shade, trapped by a piece of chewing gum in the roof of the ashtray; a complex of strange scratches, like the choreography of a frantic struggle, that covered the vinyl seat, as if two cripples had committed rape on each other. (C 44)

These residues trace the way in which interiors are appropriated by their owners defying sanctioned use. In particular, it is possible to trace evidence of sexual acts taking place in car cabins as a form of rebellious social rule breaking.

Contained within the larger motorway space, the car-cabin is a personalised space allowing the characters of *Crash* to open up the idea of a hidden heterotopia that can be rebelliously established within the parameters of non-place. The cabin, physically marked by the presence of the owner, becomes an enclave within the containing motorway. This is akin to a heterotopia of illusion, a space of imaginative possibility, established within an ordered heterotopia of compensation. It is a site from which new possibilities can be imagined and experimented upon. The cabin enclave, surrounded by the material of the car, defies pronouncements about the correct use of space. Embodied driving becomes a way to defiantly access non-place, imprinting personality on to anonymous and impersonal spaces.

The prominence of sexual activity within the cabin of the car is a hidden form of improper use that challenges the logics of the non-place of the motorway. One vivid section of *Crash* depicts James Ballard voyeuristically observing his wife

Catherine copulate with Vaughan in the back seat of a car going through a car-wash. The trip to the car-wash is necessitated by mysterious streaks of ‘black gelatinous material’ (C 129) smeared across the nearside front wheel of the car, arousing the fear that the police will impound the car. The car-wash is therefore a way to evade the unwanted attention of the police, and James Ballard conspires with Vaughan to cover up their deviant access of the motorway space. The ‘all-night car-wash in the airport service area’ (C 129) is a corollary of the motorway non-place where cars are cleaned day and night, ensuring their smooth functioning and proper appearance. In *Crash*, the space of the car-wash becomes an opportunity for concealment that at the same time absolves Vaughan by washing away incriminating evidence. On the journey to the car-wash, James Ballard notices the ‘evening air was crossed by the navigation lights of airliners and maintenance vehicles, by the thousands of headlamps flowing along Western Avenue and the flyover’ (C 130). This is a space of excessive illumination open to observation. In contrast, watching the car-wash, he sees a taxi going through the machine and the interior of the cabin is hidden by the rollers and soapy water so that the driver and his wife become ‘invisible and mysterious mannequins’ (C 131), becoming a temporary hidden enclave. Inside the car-wash, James Ballard watches Vaughan have sex with Catherine, an act which is described as ‘a stylized encounter between two bodies which recapitulated their sense of motion and collision’ (C 132). Washing clean the outside of the car, and removing incriminating traces of blood, the car-wash covers the subversive coupling of Vaughan and Catherine. Ironically, the car-wash becomes a space that unearths rebellious sexual desire effectively hidden from view. The cabin is hidden from view by machinery associated with cleanliness and transparency. A discourse of seeing is contrasted with concealment operating in apparently open and accessible space. The car cabin, inserted into non-place, becomes a space of resistance hidden from external gaze.

The opening up of spaces that occurs in *Crash* allows the text to access a new type of economy that recovers recalcitrant traces unseen by authority. This economy revolves around investing waste and waste spaces with new imaginative value. *Crash* recovers and utilises things discarded by authority as rubbish. The effectiveness of the car-wash scene described above is due to the tension between dirt and cleanliness in

the text, becoming ‘a ritual in cleansing and defilement’.<sup>353</sup> The central technological object of *Crash* is the automobile, and the materiality of the car obsesses Ballard in a way that contradicts the advertising mythology discussed by Roland Barthes in his reading of the Citroën DS (*Déesse* or ‘Goddess’) as a ‘superlative object’:

We must not forget that an object is the best messenger of a world above that of nature: one can easily see in an object at once a perfection and an absence of origin, a closure and a brilliance, a transformation of life into matter (matter is much more magical than life), and in a word a *silence* which belongs to the realm of fairy-tales. The D.S. -- the ‘Goddess’ -- has all the features (or at least the public is unanimous in attributing them to it at first sight) of one of those objects from another universe which have supplied fuel for the neomania of the eighteenth century and that of our own science-fiction: the *Déesse* is *first and foremost* a new *Nautilus*.<sup>354</sup>

Barthes’s reference to a nautilus represents the DS as smooth, self-enclosed and perfect. The object of the car is a conflation of a perfect natural object and a futuristic thing from another universe, a point where technology becomes a world above nature. It is precisely these perfect, closed off surfaces that *Crash* violently breaks open to reveal marked and smeared interiors.

Jean Baudrillard describes the waste-producing car crash as a secret sacrifice towards a fully developed consumer society:

‘Smash up your car, the insurance will do the rest!’ Indeed, the car is without doubt one of the main foci of daily and long-term waste, both private and collective. Not only is it so by its systematically reduced use-value, its systematically increased prestige and fashion coefficient, and the outrageous sums invested in it, but -- without doubt much more deeply that this -- by the spectacular collective sacrifice of sheet-metal, machinery and *human lives* in the Accident. The Accident: that gigantic ‘happening’, the finest offered by

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<sup>353</sup> William Viney, “‘A fierce and wayward beauty’”: Waste in the Fiction of J.G. Ballard, Part III’ (2007) <<http://www.ballardian.com/a-fierce-and-wayward-beauty-part-3>> [accessed 23 January 2014].

<sup>354</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 2009), p. 101.

consumer society, through which society affords itself in the ritual destruction of materials and life the proof of its excessive affluence (a proof *a contrario*, but one that is much more effective in the depths of the imagination than the direct proof by accumulation).

The consumer society needs its objects in order to be. More precisely, it needs to *destroy* them.<sup>355</sup>

For Baudrillard, the car crash is a secret, and hidden, ritual in capitalist society functioning (like Foucault's heterotopic motel room) to preserve social functioning. The ritual destruction of the car crash hints at the performance of rites implying regeneration, consistency or making anew. This expresses the paradoxical idea of a generative destruction in Ballard's text. For Samuel Francis, the phrase 'benevolent psychopathology' (C 112) is central to his late-Freudian reading of *Crash*, and the text 'is precisely concerned with the new psychological possibilities of the machine landscape [...] which might enable human beings to reconnect with the alienating surfaces of their high-tech environment'.<sup>356</sup> The destructive, waste-producing happening of the car crash may resist officially sanctioned uses of the machine landscape, but could be a generative event in other ways. The crash is a particularly potent event because of the object of the car is the locus for much financial and imaginative investment.

As William Viney points out, *Crash* 'presents a barrage of images that expresses collapse, dereliction, and waste: a seemingly endless carnival of sex and destruction; intoxicating, perverting, and desensitising the reader'.<sup>357</sup> For Viney, the novel is a 'brothel of images' (C 19), in the etymological sense of the word, 'from the Middle English; broðen, "ruined, degenerate" the past participle of breoðan; "to go to ruin"'.<sup>358</sup> In particular, Vaughan, tight-coupled with his dusty car, is suggestive of degenerative dirt that also sexually arouses James Ballard:

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<sup>355</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, trans. Chris Turner (London: SAGE, 1998), p. 47.

<sup>356</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 108.

<sup>357</sup> Viney, "A fierce and wayward beauty".

<sup>358</sup> Viney, "A fierce and wayward beauty".



[...] the elements that constituted Vaughan's image in my mind: his hard buttocks held within the worn jeans as he rolled himself on to one hip to leave the car; the sallow skin of his abdomen, almost exposing the triangle of his pubis as he lounged behind the steering wheel; the horn of his half-erect penis pressing against the lower rim through the damp crotch of his trousers; the minute nodes of dirt he picked from his sharp nose and wiped on the indented vinyl of the door panel; the ulcer on his left index finger as he handed me the cigarette lighter; his hard nipples through the frayed blue shirt brushing against the horn boss; his broken thumbnail scratching at the semen stains on the seat between us. (C 93-94)

The eroticism of Vaughan's hard buttocks and nipples are combined in James Ballard's imagination with his damp crotch, nodes of dirt, and his broken thumbnail. Vaughan's clothes, worn and frayed, also tend toward ruin. Dirt enters a newly sexualised economy of desire and lust. Despite Viney's statement that in *Crash*, 'Ballard prevents any association [...] between semen and its common life-giving properties',<sup>359</sup> I would contend that Vaughan's semen retains its generative properties. Throughout the text, this fluid, wastefully spilt, is described as finding its way onto every surface and into every orifice:

After a near collision at a traffic intersection semen jolts across a cracked speedometer dial. Later, the dried residues of that same semen are brushed by the lacquered hair of the first young woman who lies across his lap with her mouth over his [Vaughan's] penis [...] (C 9)

The final paragraph of *Crash* describes the fertilising potential of Vaughan's semen:

Meanwhile, the traffic moves in an unceasing flow along the flyover. The aircraft rise from the runways of the airport, carrying the remnants of Vaughan's semen to the instrument panels and radiator grills of a thousand crashing cars, the leg stances of a million passengers. (C 185)

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<sup>359</sup> Viney, "A fierce and wayward beauty".

Vaughan's semen becomes a lubricating fluid, aiding the movement of traffic, spreading itself across the world, and fertilising imaginative and rebellious readings of space.

The location from which Vaughan's semen is spread is a police pound, described by James Ballard during an earlier visit as a 'museum of wrecks' (C 51). The characters of *Crash* are obsessively drawn to this space housing the detritus of car crashes. This is a space of rubbish, where James Ballard's recognises his own car under a veneer of dirt:

The remains of towing tackle were attached to the front bumper, and the body panels were splashed with oil and dirt. I peered through the windows into the cabin, running my hand over the mud-stained glass. (C 52)

The dirt attached to cars at the police pound gives them a powerful resonance, and it becomes a place where James Ballard can imaginatively reassemble the 'identity' (C 52) of his car, rediscovering recalcitrant traces of the crash. At the end of *Crash*, James Ballard notices his ex-lover Dr Helen Remington and Gabrielle, 'a creature of free and perverse sexuality' (C 79), amongst the wrecks:

That they should be drawn here for a last glimpse of what remained of Vaughan seemed appropriate. I visualised them touring the car-parks and expressways marked in their minds by Vaughan's obsessions, celebrated now in the gentle embraces of this woman doctor and her crippled lover. I was glad that Helen Remington was becoming ever more perverse, finding her happiness in Gabrielle's scars and injuries. (C 184)

From the pound, the influence of Vaughan's obsessions brings alive the non-places of the car-parks and expressways. Like an extension of the dirty space of the car cabin, it becomes a heterotopic enclave from which new possibilities can be imagined. The car pound is a space where Gabrielle's wasted body comes newly alive, her scars and injuries marking the contours of Helen Remington's future happiness. The reconfiguration of the car pound as space of perverse transgression once again puts pressure on points of regulatory spatial intervention by authority. It belongs to the police, and they anxiously patrol its space (James Ballard having to show passes or

collect keys from ‘sharp-eyed’ (C 183) guards, and noticing when two policemen watch him next to his dirty car, ‘as if they resented my touching it’ (C 52)). However, defying these authority figures, the car pound is reconfigured as space of transgression and social experimentation, unofficially accessed as a meaningful space that resists integration into the hegemonic structures of urban society.

What is particularly suggestive about *Crash* is that its economy of waste is extended to the human body. The most overt example is Gabrielle’s body, repeatedly described as ‘crippled’ (C 76, 79, 81, 86, 98, 144, 147, 148, 165, 184). Viney also draws attention to the car-wash episode to ask: ‘is Vaughan’s semen analogous to, or at odds with, the soap that is jetted across the body of the car? Who, or what, is being cleaned?’<sup>360</sup> Catherine’s body is described as immaculately clean, ‘as if she had individually reamed out every square centimetre of her elegant body, separately ventilated every pore’ (C 111). In the car-wash, Vaughan re-makes her body in terms of waste, leaving it bruised and marked:

Later that night, I explored her body and bruises, feeling them gently with my lips and cheeks, seeing in the rash of raw skin across her abdomen the forcing geometry of Vaughan’s powerful physique. My penis traced the raw symbols that his hands and mouth had left across her skin [...] I touched her body with the head of my penis, marking out the contact points of the imaginary automobile accidents which Vaughan had placed on her body. (C 136-137)

The bruises left by imaginary automobile accidents open Catherine’s body to imaginative possibilities. James Ballard had previously described the materiality of Catherine’s clean body as closed:

At times the porcelain appearance of her face, an over-elaborate make-up like some demonstration model of a beautiful woman’s face, had made me suspect that her whole identity was a charade. (C 90)

By being marked, Catherine’s body becomes more organically real, opposing the porcelain cast of her skin. Disturbingly, an overlay of scars and bruises, rather than

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<sup>360</sup> Viney, “‘A fierce and wayward beauty’”.

concealing, makes the body more transparent. This is similar to the way in which covering dirt paradoxically reveals the object of the car. *Crash* lays waste to both body and machinery in a way that breaks through the integrity of borders. This violently opens a series of internal spaces to external scrutiny, and Ballard puts the private car-cabin or the corporeal inside on display, revealing dirty internal spaces.

The machine/body complex of *Crash* is constructed in such a way that the body becomes extended and unbounded in order to incorporate technology. As Baxter notes: ‘Ballard’s obsessive cataloguing of viscera works [...] to introduce the body back into the realm of visibility and give it substance at a time when man is on the verge of obsolescence [...] The automobile has had an organic re-spray; shit overlays metal, blood imbricates chrome and pieces of vinyl and plastic are encrusted with bodily tissues.’<sup>361</sup> Machinery is stained with the fluids of the body, creating a complex synthesis that disrupts ideas of external and internal, visible and hidden space. Through bleeding, vomit, and ejaculation the internal waste fluids are brought into the open transformed into an organic overlay that incorporates the car as an extended body part. This necessitates an opening up of internal spaces in a process of violent conflation of the organic and inorganic. Machinery constantly threatens to rip open flesh, and the smearing of organic material on hard metal surfaces reconfigures them as organic objects. Cars come to resemble intimate prosthetics redefining the boundaries of the body. Freud’s theory of the ‘prosthetic god’ describes the way in which man utilises technology: ‘Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times.’<sup>362</sup> As Tim Armstrong has pointed out, prosthesis is highly ambivalent, operating in both a positive and negative way: ‘What I would label a “negative” prosthesis involves the replacing of a bodily part, covering a lack. The negative prosthesis operates under the sign of compensation (Freud’s “suffering”). A “positive” prosthesis involves a more utopian version of technology, in which human capacities are extrapolated.’<sup>363</sup> In *Crash*, the car is ambiguously positioned as both a negative and positive prosthesis.

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<sup>361</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 104.

<sup>362</sup> Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), p. 77.

<sup>363</sup> Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, p. 78.

Attempting to compensate for those things lacking in contemporary non-place, it is also a technology for the extrapolation of unpredictable and perverse potentials.

*Crash* describes a series of the spaces located around the motorway (including the car pound) that are left-over spaces housing waste and not activity incorporated into the fabric of urban life. Pamela Shaw and Joanne Hudson describe the way that dilapidated and marginal urban sites can act to ‘punctuate the staged and controlled official public spaces and the everyday, ubiquitous space of the contemporary city’.<sup>364</sup> Used unofficially and falling outside the gaze of urban authorities, such sites have been referred to as *terrain vagues* by Ignasi de Solà-Morales. *Terrain vague* are unincorporated margins, interior islands void of activity, and oversights. They are places that exist outside the city’s effective circuits and productive structures: ‘where the city is no longer [...] simply *un-inhabited, un-safe, un-productive*’.<sup>365</sup> For Doron, *terrain vague* is a species of dead zone, spaces that cannot be easily zoned, defined or named by city planners:

These spaces are difficult to utilize by the common means of planning and architecture for various reasons, too small or of irregular shape, with tricky ownership rights, not lucrative, with other regular usage at some part of the day that might be in discord with other suggested usages, and so on. These places, ‘left empty’, are opened to unplanned activities and unofficial communities. From this perspective they have been places of transgression in two ways: as spaces that cannot be utilized by hegemonic culture and as spaces of minority groups.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Pamela Shaw and Joanne Hudson, ‘The Qualities of Informal Space: (Re)appropriation within the Informal, Interstitial Spaces of the City’ (2009)  
<[http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/44850/41\\_Pamela-Shaw,-\\_Joanne.Hudson\\_The-Qualities-of-Informal-Space.pdf](http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/44850/41_Pamela-Shaw,-_Joanne.Hudson_The-Qualities-of-Informal-Space.pdf)> [accessed 7 April 2014].

<sup>365</sup> Ignasi de Solà-Morales, ‘*Terrain Vague*’, in *Terrain Vague: Interstices at the Edge of the Pale*, ed. By Manuela Mariani and Patrick Barron (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 24-30 (p. 26).

<sup>366</sup> Gil Doron, “‘...those marvellous empty zones on the edge of our cities’: Heterotopia and the “Dead Zone””, in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Caeter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 203-15 (p. 207).

Doron names the edge of highway as one such a space, a gap with no planned function and of irregular form.<sup>367</sup> In *Crash*, placed under the gaze of anxious authorities, these sites are unofficially and fleetingly accessed by characters attempting to reconfigure them as spaces of transgression and experimentation. The follow-up to *Crash*, *Concrete Island*, explores a dead zone gap between motorways, the left over traffic island, hidden from the view. Maitland, the protagonist of *Concrete Island*, is stranded in this nowhere space after sustaining injuries in a car crash. Unlike *Crash*, a novel of continual transit, *Concrete Island* is a pause focused on a single piece of ground. It expands on a concern with spaces residual or leftover in the creation of non-place, taking them as the starting point for a heterotopic re-building that utilises waste as its primary material.

Critics have drawn attention to Ballard's island as both a psychical and psychological location, partly existing in Maitland's mind. Francis reads *Concrete Island* next to R. D. Laing's theory that alienation is the normal condition of modern man, with Maitland's marooning 'portrayed progressively more insistently as an unconsciously deliberate withdrawal into a citadel-like microcosmos akin to that constructed by Laing's schizoid'.<sup>368</sup> Luckhurst reads *Concrete Island* as an investigation of *unheimlich* space: 'producing a kind of technological uncanny, in which surmounted and abandoned technologies and artifacts live on in the interstices of new economies. The rubble and ruins of the concrete island constitute the surmounted urban spaces that *Crash*, in its glazed, ecstatic rhetoric, seeks to repress but cannot.'<sup>369</sup> Drawing attention to rubble and ruins suggests that waste is an important constituent of the new economies found on the island. For Gasiroek: 'The concrete island on which Maitland crashes is not just a metaphor for his mind but a symbol of the waste and destruction modernity leaves in its wake.'<sup>370</sup> Stranded on the island Maitland subsists on waste, such as a 'discarded sandwich' (*CI* 55) and fish and chips 'tossed down during the night from a car or truck moving along the feeder road' (*CI* 62). The island exists not only as a waste space in terms of its physical location and the detritus found there, but also as space containing everything disavowed by Maitland's contemporary psyche.

<sup>367</sup> Doron, "...those marvellous empty zones on the edge of our cities", p. 207.

<sup>368</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 121.

<sup>369</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 135.

<sup>370</sup> Gasiroek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 108.

The first few sentences of *Concrete Island* give an exact set of space-time coordinates:

Soon after three o'clock on the afternoon of April 22nd 1973, a 35-year-old architect named Richard Maitland was driving down the high-speed exit lane of the Westway interchange in central London. Six hundred yards from the junction with the newly built spur of the M4 motorway, when the Jaguar had already passed the 70 m.p.h speed limit, a blow-out collapsed the front nearside tyre. (*CI* 7)

As Groes notes, this density of detail provides 'too much fact, a reality too dense for the narrator to escape from'.<sup>371</sup> It locates and scrutinises Maitland in a precise way, even within the mobile space of the motorway. Exacting details such as time, location, age, profession, and make of car as sign of social status can be discerned even as Maitland passes through at speed. Hidden in the cabin of his car, Maitland is still made visible.

Maitland is constituted by his habitation of non-place, slackening his sense of community: 'Most of the happier moments of his life had been spent alone' (*CI* 27). Happily isolated in the cabin of his car, exit from the non-place of the motorway is therefore a violent spatial expulsion. Aware that he is over the speed limit, Maitland's rule breaking is the partial cause of his crash that throws man and vehicle out of control:

The shredding tyre laid a black diagonal stroke across the white marker lines that followed the long curve of the motorway embankment. Out of control, the car burst through the palisade of pinewood trestles that formed a temporary barrier along the edge of the road. Leaving the hard shoulder, the car plunged down the grass slope of the embankment. Thirty yards ahead, it came to a halt against the rusting chassis of an overturned taxi. (*CI* 7)

The crash is a transgression of limitation lines, boundaries, and thresholds marking the regulated space the motorway. Maitland's car slashes open this space with a black

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<sup>371</sup> Groes, 'The Texture of Modernity', p. 130.

diagonal scar. The well-defined edge of the motorway gives way to the grass slope of the embankment partitioned and hidden by barriers. The rusting chassis of the taxi marks this as a non-functioning waste space. Maitland's entry into this space is partially transcendent, triumphantly emerging from the accident with 'his jacket and trousers studded with windshield fragments like a suit of lights' (*CI 7*), an early example of the transformation of waste that will occur throughout Ballard's text.

Ballard's island is described as 'a small traffic island, some two hundred yards long and triangular in shape, that lay in the waste ground between three converging motorway routes' (*CI 12*). The island is delineated on all sides by motorway routes with these tracts of non-place also expanding vertically so that the space is contained and enclosed in three dimensions. This means the island exists within the non-place of the motorway, at the heart of three converging routes, as a kind of surplus space that cannot be fully incorporated or evacuated. The island is a displaced but tenaciously persisting negative space created by the realisation of motorway non-place. It is a space 'hidden behind the over-heated light of the island, by the wild grass, abandoned cars and builder's equipment' (*CI 12*). Elsewhere the light of the island is described: 'A thin yellow light lay across the island, an unpleasant haze that seemed to rise from the grass, festering over the ground as if over a wound that had never healed' (*CI 14*). The reference to the island as a wound that has never healed resonates in several ways. As a space that cannot be expunged, the island is an open wound in the non-place of the motorway, becoming a nexus point for hidden recalcitrant traces generating their own sick light. It is also an open wound in the sense that it is a space housing sick post-traumatic subjects, including Maitland after his accident. Finally, the open wound troubles the integrity of the border between inside and outside, and is an unhealed access point denoting some kind of access to the interior space of the body.

Another important feature of the island is the wild grass that effectively hides it from view. One of Maitland's first acts is to try and 'fix in his mind this place of wild grass and abandoned cars' (*CI 11*) but the island resists investigation: 'the grass weaved and turned behind him, moving in endless waves. Its corridors opened and closed as if admitting a large and watchful creature to its green preserve' (*CI 42*). The reference to Maitland as a watchful creature is apposite, referring to contemporary desire to map and know everything (but the landscape of the island is deceptive with corridors admitting and swallowing Maitland). This highlights the liminality of the



island as an unknowable space that always lacks clear definition. The ‘coarse’ (*CI* 11), ‘wild’ (*CI* 120), ‘waist-high’ (*CI* 14) grass seals the island from observation: ‘even the most astute detective retracing Maitland’s route from his office would be hard put to spot the car shielded by this sea of grass’ (*CI* 44). This is a fluid and constantly shifting space, like the sea, that authority cannot fix in its gaze. The island is therefore free of the ‘compulsory landscaping’ that would homogenise its space and remove the problematic elements.

The island surprises Maitland with two inhabitants, the tramp and ex-circus performer, Proctor, and prostitute, Jane Sheppard. Both are marginal and socially excluded figures, fitting in with the landscape. Proctor, unable to leave the island, becomes a personification of its space. He is badly scarred, the text drawing attention to ‘Ridges of silver scar tissue marked his cheeks and eyebrows’ (*CI* 87) and ‘the livid scar that ran like a lightening blot from the back of his right ear down his neck to his shoulder, the residue of some appalling act of violence’ (*CI* 93). Like the automobile accident victims in *Crash*, Proctor’s scars mark undisclosed acts of violence, signifying hidden traumas. They also link him to the open wound of the island: ‘For Proctor [...] the deep grass was his vital medium. His scarred hands felt the flexing stems, reading their currents as they seethed around him’ (*CI* 127-128). Proctor is able to perfectly read the shifting space of the island, his scars becoming the locus for the transmission and reception of the island space. His hands also constitute him as an individual perceiving the world through touch and feel, contrasting with the cool, disconnected intellectualism of Maitland. This is emphasised by Ballard’s description of Proctor as ‘a mental defective of some kind’ (*CI* 86), and highlighting of his animalistic qualities. His previous role as a circus trapeze artist also signifies his marginal place in society: the transient space of the circus (described by Foucault as heterotopic ‘marvellous empty emplacements at the outskirts of cities, which fill up, once or twice a year, with stands, displays, heteroclite objects, wrestlers, snake women, fortune tellers’<sup>372</sup>) is a liminal space shared by humans and animal, often collapsing the distinction between both categories (an example being Foucault’s ‘snake women’).<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 20.

<sup>373</sup> Ballard’s little discussed short story ‘The Recognition’ (1967) takes a circus setting in order to unsettle human and animal distinctions.

Jane Sheppard is, in many ways, an even more marginal figure than Proctor. Like the women of *Vermilion Sands* she represents an interloper, able to come and go from the island as she pleases, who unsettles the island space and acts as a challenge to Maitland's will. Realising she had once been pregnant, Jane's absent child resonates with Maitland's own unresolved familial relationships: 'he had once bellowed unwearyingly for his mother while she nursed his younger sister in the next room. For some reason, which he had always resented, she had never come to pacify him' (CI 70). A shadowy character, she bridges the gap between the heterotopic internal space of the island and the external world. She contests the internal economy of waste utilised by Maitland, showing it up as worthless by having access to things from outside the island. Maitland therefore resents his lack of control over Jane Sheppard, attempting to regulate her actions within the island space: 'she was spending less and less time on the island -- he would have to think up some way of keeping her there' (CI 162).

The space of the island continuously extends itself to model of Maitland's own subconscious. He finds the island becoming 'an exact model of his own head' (CI 69), his scribbled messages appealing to the authorities of the outside world to rescue him, 'HELP INJURED DRIVE CALL POLICE' (CI 62), shifting to become distorted unconscious appeals: 'CATHERINE HELP TOO FAST' (CI 73) and 'MOTHER DON'T HURT POLICE' (CI 73). Finally finding a position from which to survey the landscape, he observes that the island 'was far older than the surrounding terrain, as if this triangular patch of waste ground had survived by the exercise of a unique guile and persistence, and would continue to survive, unknown and disregarded, long after the motorways had collapsed into dust' (CI 68), and impossibly consists of a pre-World War II churchyard, ground-courses of Edwardian terraced houses, a breaker's yard containing wrecked cars, air-raid shelters, the remains of a 15 year-old Civil Defence post, and the ground-plan of a flea-pit post-war cinema (CI 68-69). The island comes to represent a complex synthesis of external physical space and Maitland's internal psychological space. As Gasiroek notes: 'Maitland's realisation that the island is a historical site marks the beginning of a more perceptive mapping of the terrain on which he is ostensibly trapped and leads him to relate the sedimentation of history disclosed by the island's topography to his own past'.<sup>374</sup> This contrasts the

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<sup>374</sup> Gasiroek, *J.G. Ballard*, p. 113.

island with non-places that deny the historicity of their construction. Born in 1938, Maitland's historical memory is reflected in the architectural history of the island, with churchyards and Edwardian architecture supplanted by air-raid shelters and militaristic defence posts. There is also the contemporary overlay of a breaker's yards, wrecked cars, and an abandoned cinema (supplementing the representation of similar spaces in *Crash*<sup>375</sup>). The waste spaces present on the island are physical manifestations of spaces marginalised in the creation of the motorway non-place, but are also representative of Maitland constituted by non-place. His sense of community, represented by childhood pre-War churchyard and Edwardian homes, is supplanted by a guarded adult 'Civil Defence post' (*CI* 69) psychology that makes him happiest when alone (*CI* 27).

Gasiorek notes that Ballard's island:

[...] is a non-place in precise ways: it exists solely as the space left over and in between a series of interlocking highways, which define and isolate it; it is a forgotten patch of waste ground shaped by discarded remnants of urban life; it is a habitus for the city's rejects, who are forced to live on its margins. This non-place functions as an abject, alienated microcosm, the dark other to the mundane reality from which Maitland is so suddenly removed.<sup>376</sup>

As Groes points out, although the idea of non-place is suggestive, Gasiorek's description draws attention to the island as 'an unformed residue defined by the motorway non-place, not built with man in mind',<sup>377</sup> rather than a non-place fitting Augé's definition, and goes on to suggest that the island resembles Rem Koolhaas's concept of 'Junkspace': 'Junk-Space is the residue mankind leaves on the planet [...] Junkspace is what remains after modernization has run its course, or, more precisely, what coagulates while modernization is in progress, its fallout.'<sup>378</sup> The wasteland of *Concrete Island* cannot be defined as a non-place in Augé's terms, since it is not a space with a defined function, nor is it integrated into the larger economy (it is rather

<sup>375</sup> An abandoned cinema is located next to the Northolt car pound in *Crash* (*C* 51).

<sup>376</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 108.

<sup>377</sup> Groes, 'The Texture of Modernity', p. 129.

<sup>378</sup> Rem Koolhaas and Hal Foster, *Junkspace and Running Room* (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2013), p. 3.

a space defined by the non-place of the motorway). Groes astutely draws attention to the island as an unformed residue, highlighting its fluidity and lack of fixity. However, also problematic is the idea that the island is Junkspace, an idea that tends to overemphasise the uselessness of the island space. Although the island is an ill-defined repository of waste (in terms of both objects and inhabitants) it is also important to highlight the ways in which it is imaginatively fecund, challenging Maitland to use its space in a positive way: ‘he was at last beginning to shed sections of his mind, shucking off those memories of pain, hunger and humiliation of the embankment where he had stood screaming like a child for his wife, of the rear seat of the Jaguar, where he had inundated himself with self-pity...All these he would bequeath to the island’ (CI 156). The island can be defined as a heterotopia that allows waste (physical and psychological) to be creatively reconfigured.

The prominent wild grass on the island is suggestive of growth, renewal, and a resurgent nature. In *The Unofficial Countryside*, published in the same year as *Crash*, Richard Mabey describes his discovery and experience of burgeoning nature in derelict urban sites. As Iain Sinclair notes in his introduction: ‘Mabey’s rogue plants, scuttling creatures migrating along central reservations and colonising abandoned filling stations, are the local jungle into which Ballard’s architect, Robert Maitland plunges in *Concrete Island*’.<sup>379</sup> The end of Mabey’s text describes persistent natural growth at the edge of an abandoned brickyard, where a saloon car had been pushed into a deep pit:

The air and weather had already begun to get hold of it. The bodywork was rusting and the rubber beginning to peel off the tyres.

But there were more miraculous healing forces at work. Sidling over the bonnet and poking through the hold where the windscreen had been, were sweep upon sweep of spotted orchid, in every shade of pink. This most delicate of flowers, hounded by new roads and car-borne trippers, had found refuge amongst the clutter, and was having its revenge.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Richard Mabey, *The Unofficial Countryside* (Dorset: Little Toller Books, 2010), p. 12.

<sup>380</sup> Mabey, *The Unofficial Countryside*, p. 183.

One of the first things Maitland notices on the island are abandoned vehicles similar to Marbey's car overrun by nature:

In front of him was the rusting chassis of the overturned taxi into which the Jaguar had slammed. Half hidden by the nettles, several other wrecks lay nearby, stripped of their tyres and chromium trim, rusty doors leaning open. (CI 9-10)

Within the island space, cars as waste objects are slowly stripped-down (open doors exposing private cabins to external nature). The car cabin and island therefore become linked together spatially. Like the car cabin in *Crash* transfigured by James Ballard into a space of exotic flowers and moist grass (C 97), cabin and island become spaces of rebellious imaginative potential. The natural fecundity of the island (the long grass) makes it a blind spot and enclave where authority does not penetrate, and, paradoxically, the technology of the car becomes a hot house for the re-emergence of the natural world.

The importance of nature has been increasingly recognised by planners attempting to incorporate fluidity and dynamism in urban space. James Corner imagines a landscape urbanism that accommodates nature as central: 'In conceptualizing a more organic, fluid urbanism, ecology itself becomes an extremely useful lens through which to analyse and project alternative urban futures.'<sup>381</sup> Such a landscape would highlight the 'fluid, process-driven characteristics of the city'<sup>382</sup> where 'The designation *terra firma* (firm, not changing; fixed and definite) gives way in favour of the shifting processes coursing through and across the urban field: *terra fluxus*.'<sup>383</sup> As a text that describes the re-emergence of the natural in the urban environment, *Concrete Island* anticipates such an urban environment open to the dynamics of diversity, contingency and change.

The difficulty of defining spaces in *Crash* and *Concrete Island* is due to their essential in-between quality as both physical and psychological spaces, and what can appear physically moribund and decaying can be a rich psychological space. As non-

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<sup>381</sup> James Corner, 'Terra Fluxus', in *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*, ed. Charles Waldheim (New York: Princeton Agricultural, 2006), pp. 21-34 (p. 29).

<sup>382</sup> Corner, 'Terra Fluxus', p. 30.

<sup>383</sup> Corner, 'Terra Fluxus', p. 30.

place colonises more of the modern world (spaces that deny their own history and discourage any kind of psychological engagement), the car crash is an event that forces an effective break and sudden stop that opens a number of hidden spaces denied by the prosaic surfaces of the motorway.

Both *Crash* and *Concrete Island* describe a series of spaces defined by, separate from and alternative to the space of the motorway. *Crash* coalesces around a central tension between discourses of seeing and not seeing. Against a discourse of seeing that attempts to open the space of the motorway to the light of knowledge and regulation, *Crash* establishes a series of resistive heterotopias within the motorway non-place, in particular around the personalised space of the car cabin. The character of Vaughan, hiding as an authority figure, carries out a series of investigations utilising techniques of knowing appropriated from regulatory governmental interventions in motorway space. The car cabin becomes a hidden enclave where it is possible to imagine alternative spatial possibilities. Characters utilise the car-wash, machinery in the service of visibility designed to make things clean, to hide illicit activity. The subversive project of *Crash* is an attempt to recover hidden meaning. The text's appropriation of physical spaces, scientific discourse, and documentary evidence engenders resistance at precisely the points where authority attempts to intervene and regulate.

In *Concrete Island*, Ballard's island, existing as a species of de Solà-Morales's *terrain vagues*, is a blind spot in the contemporary urban landscape that is brought to light, drawing attention to it as a hidden and changeable *terra fluxus*. This contrasts the island with the spaces described in *Crash* that effectively removes all traces of a regenerative natural world in the urban environment. Maitland's desire to dominate the island is parodic of contemporary man's instrumental use of nature, but the space of the island resists his intrusion to expand indefinitely around him. The final chapter of *Concrete Island*, ironically titled 'Escape', describes Maitland's mistaken confidence that he has established domination over the island and slackening desire to leave. Hidden by the island space he becomes invisible: 'A police car moved along the motorway, the co-driver watching the deep grass. Secure in his pavilion, Maitland waited for it to pass' (*CI* 176). Watching from the motorway non-place, police authorities are unable to see Maitland within the island *terra fluxus*, obscured by deep grass and secure in his pavilion. Maitland, invigorated by hidden heterotopic space, evades outside authority choosing not to be rescued.

Hidden heterotopic enclaves are spaces where everything judged undesirable and disavowed in the creation of non-place can be recovered. Often these spaces are only briefly accessible, quickly shut down by the regulatory demands of non-place. The 'extreme metaphor' (*C ii*) represented by the car crash functions as a transient heterotopic site. Placed under surveillance as an event that is incommensurable with the functioning of non-place, the crash cannot be effectively integrated within the space of the motorway and is therefore quickly cleared by governing authorities. The actions of the rebellious subjects dwelling in the waste spaces opened by the crash attempts to recover the event as a sustained point of resistance.

## Chapter 6

### **Autobiography and Heterotopia: Reading *Empire of the Sun* with *The Kindness of Women* and *Miracles of Life***

This chapter will consider Ballard's fictionalised autobiographical novels, *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and *The Kindness of Women* (1991), and autobiography proper, *Miracles of Life* (2008). These texts have an ambiguous and complex relationship with each other. Each re-writes the other and Ballard shows a desire to revisit and reinterpret the past, questioning the authority of historical records. Luckhurst suggests: 'Throughout both *Empire* and *Kindness* is a sense of doubling, of an uncanny re-staging that accompanies every significant event.'<sup>384</sup> Furthermore, Luckhurst notes that no hierarchical chain can be established between imagination and fantasy, history and reality, and the authoritative signature of 'J. G. Ballard' is withheld in these texts, signalling a break with the autobiographical pact. This lends the texts a confusing circularity and a sense of the always already restaged.<sup>385</sup> Ballard's autobiographical texts convey a tension between the truth of a confessional mode and uncertainty generated by fictive elements. Baxter takes into account Ballard's understanding of 'differentiated histories, multiple realities and heterogeneous temporalities [...] which point towards a world epistemological uncertainty and endless fictionalisation',<sup>386</sup> emphasising a constant rearrangement of the spaces of the past. This epistemological uncertainty and endless fictionalisation is suggestive of Ballard's difficult approaches to the heterotopic spaces of his past, resistant to simple or straightforward understandings. Two of these spaces, the Shanghai International Settlement and Lunghua, are present in all three autobiographical texts, as Ballard attempts an experimental and imaginative cartography that stands in opposition to official mappings of space that I discuss here in terms derived from both Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben.

This chapter opens two lines of enquiry into Ballard's autobiographical texts, exploring them as representative of both heterotopic literature and heterotopic space. This chapter further highlights Ballard's development as a writer of disturbing heterotopic literature that disrupts genre by destroying in advance 'syntax which

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<sup>384</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 165.

<sup>385</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 165.

<sup>386</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 142.



causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to “hold together”<sup>387</sup>, constantly unsettling conventions. By turning to autobiographical writing, Ballard establishes a corpus of heterotopic literature that gestures in three different directions, writing texts that unsettle the future (speculative and science fiction), present (contemporary media and urban landscapes), and past (autobiography and the historical record) simultaneously.

This chapter also explores the heterotopic spaces of Ballard’s past that do not accord with official historical narratives by resisting easy interpretation as never fully explained or understood. Continuing to exert an imaginative influence, Ballard continually returns to these spaces in an experimental process that draws out new understandings about the contingency of subjectivity. Shanghai and Lunghua, both central spaces in Ballard’s childhood, exist for him both physically and imaginatively. They are difficult spaces to approach because tensions in both unsettle established subject positions from which space can be mapped, working to erase secure identity.

Reading all three of Ballard’s autobiographical texts next to each other reveals discontinuities and contradictions. This resonates with the spinal landscape described in *The Atrocity Exhibition* discussed in Chapter 3 as representative of Benjamin’s disruptive history against the grain. As Baxter notes, Ballard’s complex relationship with the past also recalls Foucault’s genealogical view of history: ‘Transcendental subjectivity [...] has no place within this historical model. Foucault dispels any total theory of history with its unifying and historical framework. In its place, universality splinters into multiple specificities, historical sameness transforms into historical differences and grand mastering narratives are broken down into individual experiences with their own spatialities and their own chronologies.’<sup>388</sup> Baxter draws attention to the specific spatiality of one’s own experience, highlighting a concern with autobiography as description of the space of the past differentiated with (and not necessarily constituent of) the space of the present. This opens the possibility of an experimental, alternative ordering of the past emphasising irregularity, inconstancy, and discontinuity. Uncertainty and lack of historical closure are used by Ballard as a way to approach the ambiguous spaces of the past, interpreted simultaneously in several different ways throughout his texts. Ballard’s multiple approaches and

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<sup>387</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xix.

<sup>388</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, pp. 141-142.

reconfigurations show up a tension between official history and individual responses to the past as ambiguous and contingent. It is these complex knots of meaning that I wish to explore in this chapter, considering the past as an ambiguous and personal heterotopia that exists both in the reality constituted by the historical record and as a mutable space of imaginative investment.

The slippage of the past into heterotopic space is announced on the first page of *Empire of the Sun*, with the deceptively complex statement:

*Empire of the Sun* draws on my experiences in Shanghai, during the Second World War, and in Lunghua C.A.C. (Civilian Assembly Centre) where I was interned from 1942-45. For the most part this novel is based on events I observed during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai and within the camp at Lunghua.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour took place on Sunday morning, 7 December 1941, but as a result of time differences across the Pacific Date Line it was than already the morning of Monday, 8 December in Shanghai.  
(*ES* 1)

This piece of text is signed *J. G. Ballard*. As Baxter notes, with this statement ‘Ballard introduces received notions of time, space and the chronicling of historical events only to call them into question. As the preface unfolds [...] the temporal and spatial exactitude of Ballard’s narrative knowingly fracture’.<sup>389</sup> Furthermore, the uncertainty about when the attack on Pearl Harbour took place in Ballard’s second paragraph folds back into the first, highlighting phrases such as ‘draws on’ and ‘for the most part’, tainting historical fact with doubt. Ballard allows his text to slip into an unspecified space, marked by an inexact date between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941, the result of different international time zones. He situates *Empire of the Sun* in a temporal break, which also allows it to exist between fiction and fact. From the start, the text disavows of the possibility of transparency by calling into question the authority of the official historical record, staging a contest between fact, autobiographical form and personal recollection. This announces the past as a

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<sup>389</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 142.

heterotopic space open to imaginative investment, fracturing the facts and dates that allow totalising historical narratives to hold together.

Ballard's assertion that his childhood reality was like a stage set that could be 'dismantled overnight'<sup>390</sup> echoes a tension in his earliest fiction between the quotidian and the intrusion of fantasy spaces, discussed in Chapter 1, and continues to be resonant in his autobiographical texts where the intrusive presence of simulation and abstraction interrupts Ballard's reportage. Luckhurst's detection of the re-staging and doubling of events in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* is pertinent to the theatrical and cinematic images that pervade both. Early in *Empire of the Sun*, attention is drawn to British newsreels 'filled with lies' (*ES* 55), which are watched by British expatriates in Shanghai as part of their 'patriotic duty' (*ES* 4). Even as events occur, they are refracted and shifted through the lens of a nascent communications landscape. Aware of these images as propaganda, Jim, the protagonist, is nevertheless fascinated enough to internalise the concept of a mediated reality interceding in his perception of lived reality with his nights lit by 'newsreels inside his head' (*ES* 20).

Even before war arrives in Shanghai, it is anticipated as a re-staging of prior conflicts preserved by newsreels and merging seamlessly with the contemporary landscape: 'Fragments of his dreams followed Jim around the city; in the foyers of departments stores and hotels the images of Dunkirk and Tobruk, Barbarossa and the Rape of Nanking sprang loose from his crowded head' (*ES* 3). The circularity of repeating events echoing through newsreels is consolidated by the image of the Yangtze River continuously returning 'all the coffins set adrift from the funeral piers of the Chinese Bund' (*ES* 3). War, when it arrives, is anticipated as an inevitable and already rehearsed event. From the start the historicism of Ballard's account makes clear the contestation between the validity of personal memory, the official record, and its media representation. The hierarchical chain that reassures of the precedence of reality over fantasy in autobiographical writing is disturbed, with Jim investing heavily in a transformative fantasy world inside his head. The effect is particularly pronounced when the World War II arrives in Shanghai, signalled by the attack on HMS *Petrel*. At this critical juncture in the text, Jim believes his semaphore from a

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<sup>390</sup> Travis Elborough, 'Reality is a Stage Set' in *The Drowned World*, by J. G. Ballard (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), pp. 177-181 (p. 179).

window ‘had probably started the war’ (*ES* 30). Jim’s imagination contests the causality of events throwing the determinism of history into question.

*Empire of the Sun* starts with the ‘deserted newsreel theatre’ (*ES* 3) inside Jim’s sleeping mind, and Ballard’s second fictionalised autobiographical novel, *The Kindness of Women*, ends with Jamie<sup>391</sup> visiting a film set, echoing Ballard’s appearance in Steven Spielberg’s filmic version of *Empire of the Sun* in 1987. This episode represents a complex blending of spaces and times, with Jamie’s home in Shepperton chosen as the location to restage his Shanghai childhood:

My dream of Shanghai had materialised, like all dreams, in the least expected place. Among the imposing houses built around the golf course at Sunningdale, little more than a fifteen-minute drive from Shepperton [...] The city of memory whose streets I had redrawn within the limits of the printed page had materialised in a fusion of the real and the super-real. Memory had been superseded by a new technology of historical recovery, where past, present and future could be dismantled and reshuffled at the producer’s whim. (*KW* 273)

There is a complex negotiation between fact and fiction at work in this passage forcing the constant expansion of textual boundaries. The leakage of one space-time into another also signals a collapse of categories denoting past and present. Jim makes it clear that the film set is his dream of Shanghai as a city of memory. Rather than a faithful reproduction, new technologies of historical recovery are able to bring an imaginative past of redrawn streets into the present as super-real, exploding the limits of the printed page and materialising fictions. Ballard’s recognition of these new technologies fusing the real and super-real complicates the historicising process by superseding the authority of historical facts through the presentation of ever more convincing simulations of the past.

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<sup>391</sup> Although the protagonists of *Empire of the Sun* and *Kindness of Women* are both called Jim or Jamie and have an obvious resemblance to J. G. Ballard, it is important to note these fictional characters are not the same person and have different experiences. For convenience, I will call the protagonist of *Empire of the Sun* Jim and the protagonist of *The Kindness of Women* Jamie from this point forwards.

Ballard's knowing gesture towards the idea that events can be dismantled and reshuffled at the producer's whim has profound consequences for the process of historical recovery represented by autobiographical writing. Events do not need to be arranged chronologically and can be revisited at any time. The transformation of Shepperton into Shanghai is representative of the rearranging and insistent circularity of Ballard's autobiographical fiction. For Luckhurst, this film set episode creates a sense of completion in which closure comes from 'a textural incorporation of *Empire* into *Kindness* and the literalization of the figurative chain of the always already restaged, rather than any sense of "deeper being"'.<sup>392</sup> Ballard's autobiographical fiction therefore refutes the idea of a subject moving forward to a point of historical transcendence, preferring instead a continual and circular restaging. Furthermore, Ballard's concept of the super-real adds a mediating layer to the autobiographical text (reflective of the prevalence of the communications landscape acknowledged in *The Atrocity Exhibition*). At the end of *The Kindness of Women* the film-set of the adult Jamie reaches back to the newsreels of the boy Jim in *Empire of the Sun*, crossing a textual divide, emphasising the early constitution of his character through super-real technologies. Finding an apotheosis in the contemporary environment these technologies have a long development, destabilising the quest for the deep historical being of the autobiographical subject.

Published after *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, this complicating synthesis of real and super-real is also at work in *Miracles of Life*, a text in which Ballard describes a number of childhood memories including a beggar outside his childhood home of Amherst Avenue:

When I was 6, before the Japanese invasion in 1937, an old beggar sat down with his back to the wall at the foot of our drive, at the point where our car paused before turning into Amherst Avenue. I looked at him from the rear seat of our Buick, a thin, ancient man dressed in rags, undernourished all his life and now taking his last breaths. He rattled a Craven A tin at passers-by, but no one gave him anything. After a few days he was visibly weaker, and I asked my mother if No. 2 Coolie would take the old man a little food. Tired of my pestering, she eventually gave in, and said that Coolie would take the old man

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<sup>392</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 166.

a bowl of soup. The next day it snowed, and the old man was covered with a white quilt. I remember telling myself that he would feel warmer under this soft eiderdown. He stayed there, under his quilt, for several days, and then was gone. (ML 15-16)

At the end of the later chapter 'Return to Shanghai (1991)', describing his return to the childhood spaces of Shanghai and Lunghua, Ballard notices an old man squatting behind a small stool outside the entrance to the Cathay Hotel:

He seemed to have nothing for sale, and I couldn't help thinking about another old man under his eiderdown of snow in Amherst Avenue. But this old man seemed confident, and was eating his lunch from a small china bowl, using his chopsticks to fork in a modest portion of rice and a single cabbage leaf.

He was very old, and I wondered if this would be his last meal. Then I looked down at the stool and realised why he was so confident. Lying face up to the passing tourists and office workers, the titles in the Chinese characters of their Hong Kong distributor, were three Arnold Schwarzenegger videos. (ML 275-276)

This concluding paragraph in the penultimate chapter in *Miracles of Life*, seemingly intended to give a sense of closure through the reconciliation of past and present, reopens the text forestalling any sense of competition by gesturing towards a future not fully divested of the past. The old man is not only representative of the heterotopic space of Shanghai confidently looking towards the future, but also an unresolved image from Ballard's past, described as one of 'the ghosts inside my head, the old beggar under his quilt of snow' (ML 207).

The image of the old man outside Amherst Avenue in *Miracles of Life* is further compounded as an image repeated throughout Ballard's autobiographical texts, allowing it to fuse past and future, fact and fiction in a complicated way. In *Empire of the Sun*, Ballard describes the beggar as follows:

[...] as Yang swung the heavy car throughout the gates, barley pausing before he accelerated along Amherst Avenue, Jim saw that the front wheel had crushed the man's foot. This beggar had arrived two months earlier, a bundle

of rags whose possessions were a frayed paper mat and an empty Craven A tin which he shook at passers-by [...] Jim worried about the beggar, and his mother told him that Coolie had taken a bowl of rice to him. After a heavy snowfall one night in early December the snow formed a thick quilt from which the old man's face emerged like a sleeping child's above an eiderdown. (ES 11)

When they set off through the gates he looked down at the motionless figure of the beggar on his frayed mat. He could see the pattern of the Packard's Firestone tyres in the old man's left foot. Leaves and shreds of newspaper covered his head, and already he was becoming part of the formless rubbish from which he emerged.

Jim felt sorry for the old beggar, but for some reason he could think only of the tyre patterns in his foot. If they had been driving in Mr Maxted's Studebaker the pattern would have been different: the old man would have been stamped with the imprint of the Goodyear Company... (ES 24)

Multiple images of the same Chinese beggar highlight the complex synthesis of remembering and imaginative investment in Ballard's autobiographical texts. The fictionalised description in *Empire of the Sun* is a representation of a childhood memory, including details such as the Craven A tin and eiderdown of snow, which also incorporates imaginative elements such as the tyre imprint on the beggar's foot. The beggar represents a complex knot of meaning incorporating real and super-real elements, and simultaneously gesturing towards past, present, and future. The image of the beggar resurrected at the end of *Miracles of Life* is knowingly suffused with super-real elements, betrayed by the hidden cache of Arnold Schwarzenegger videos,<sup>393</sup> that undercuts the oppressive weight of the image of the old man outside Amherst Avenue. Coming after the fictionalised image in *Empire of the Sun*, images

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<sup>393</sup> By highlighting of Schwarzenegger as the star of these videos, Ballard further gestures towards the emerging super-real media landscape of the 1960s described in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Ballard famously predicted that Ronald Reagan would be a presidential candidate in the condensed novel 'Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan' (AE 165-170). When 'Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan' was first published in 1968, Reagan was governor of California, and Schwarzenegger's successful campaign to become governor in 2003 parallels Reagan's political career, as both were previously film actors.

of beggars in *Miracles of Life* have a sense of the always re-staged, endlessly deferring the authenticity of the final meaning of the image.

Similar knots occur in all three of Ballard's texts as images that refuse to be explained, incorporated, and rationalised. These images are also intrinsically linked to the difficult-to-understand spaces of Ballard's past. The imaginative twists that Ballard provides in his texts, such as the tyre imprinting, work to destabilise past events by investing them with unresolved and overdetermined meanings. This re-creates the process of recall as a heterotopic site of imaginative possibility, existing between historical reality, memory and fantasy. The vitality of Ballard's autobiographical texts comes not from the representation of dead history, but by interrupting the present with the past in a continual process of temporal negotiation. Ballard's autobiographical texts are cut through with contested and contrasting historical narratives. The newsreels constantly playing inside Jim's head compete with Ballard's own recollections in a super-real contestation of recall and memory.

The complexity of the relationship between *Empire of the Sun*, *The Kindness of Women*, and *Miracles of Life* problematises the space in which we can place Ballard's three texts, since they unsettle the autobiographical genre by highlighting fictive elements. This situation is made complex because *Empire of the Sun* signals a step-change in Ballard's career. For Francis, the text represents a new strain in Ballard's writing as a 'fruitful sally into fictionalized autobiography which cemented Ballard's acceptance as a literary writer'.<sup>394</sup> Well received, the book was famously shortlisted for the 1984 Man Booker Prize and adapted into a popular, \$35,000,000 budget film by Stephen Spielberg, bringing Ballard to a far wider audience. In *Miracles of Life*, Ballard comments:

*Empire of the Sun* was a huge success. The only one I have known on that scale, and outsold all my previous books put together. It revived my backlist, in Britain and abroad, and drew many new readers to my earlier books. Some were deeply disappointed, writing letters along the line of 'Mr Ballard, could you explain what you really mean by your novel *Crash*?' A question with no possible answer. (ML 251)

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<sup>394</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 126.



This highlights *Empire of the Sun* as a text unlike Ballard's previous fiction. *Crash* is interpreted as a fiction with no possible answer, opposed *Empire of the Sun* where it seems meaning is self-evident. Luckhurst notes *Empire of the Sun* is 'rendered generically safe'<sup>395</sup> or self-evidently meaningful in two ways, by proclaiming itself as an autobiographical work and a novel about World War II. Remarkably, it is really neither of these things, and yet manages the achievement of being accepted into the literary world as both.

This complexity problematises the textual positioning of *Empire of the Sun*. It is interesting to note that the first 1984 editions of the book, printed by Gollancz in London and Simon and Schuster in New York, carry the subtitle 'A Novel' that makes the fictional nature of the text more apparent.<sup>396</sup> Re-prints by Simon and Shuster in 2005, Harper Collins in 2006, and Fourth Estate in 2014 all drop this subtitle. This is perhaps a sign of the unpredicted popularity of Ballard's text. The emphasis of biography over fictive elements helps make *Empire of the Sun* generically safe as an account of war, avoiding stigmas of falsehood, sensationalism, and inauthenticity, and therefore suitable to be nominated for the Booker prize or used as the basis for a Hollywood film.

Whereas a text like *Crash* has no possible answer, *Empire of the Sun* utilises the sincerity of the autobiographical format. Unlike the complicated spatiality of Ballard's early novels and short stories, or the avant-gardism of later works like *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Empire of the Sun* seems to be an exercise in revelation rather than obscuration. The suspicion that a decoding cipher resides in the text is acknowledged by Ballard: 'The trademark images that I had set out over the previous thirty years [...] could all be traced back to Shanghai' (*ML* 251). The text is therefore rendered safe and accessible, lacking the speculative thrust found elsewhere in Ballard's work. *Empire of the Sun* appears to open up a number of previously hidden spaces in the personal history of its author, and yet the suspicion of a purposeful obscuration remains, with the text often coming into conflict with an established hierarchy of truths constituting the historical record.

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<sup>395</sup> Luckhurst, 'The Angle Between Two Walls', p. 154.

<sup>396</sup> McGrath, 'The Terminal Collection: J.G. Ballard First and Variant Editions'. David Pringle claims an edition by Granada, carrying the even more explicit subtitle 'The Twentieth Century's Greatest Novel of War's Nightmare Chaos', is the first printing of the text.

From a historical perspective, *Empire of the Sun* is interesting because it draws attention to the Sino-Japanese War, embedded within the context of World War II, which operates in the text as a conflict within a conflict. It focuses on 1940s Shanghai and internment centre of Lunghua, unfamiliar and strange to Ballard's predominately British audience. A mapping these exotic spaces is made possible by the character of Jim, living in a British expatriate community, with his interest in Contract Bridge as 'code within a code' (*ES* 7) marking him out as valuable guide and interpreter. The first chapters of *Empire of the Sun* are full of juxtapositions in which the exotic is concealed by a thin overlay of the uncannily familiar. Ballard explains: 'Although he liked to roam Shanghai on his bicycle, at home Jim always remained close to his mother' (*ES* 9-10). Jim's home life is a nostalgic and sentimental mix of garden parties, Latin homework and photograph albums, but during illicit bicycle rides around Shanghai, Jim lingers around liminal spaces such as checkpoints and speaks to British Tommies with 'weird voices full of talk about strange, inconceivable England' (*ES* 13). In a knowing reversal, England rather than Shanghai is made into a strange, inconceivable place for Jim. As I will argue in more detail below, Shanghai is a contested heterotopic space filled with contrasting discourses. It is ever-changing, difficult to fix in any definitive form. This mutable and malleable space allows Ballard to mould his story around Jim's 'unsettled dreams' (*ES* 3) and fantasies, whilst retaining a ring of realism.

Nevertheless, at certain junctures, *Empire of the Sun* is forced to negotiate with the historical record and contest a hierarchy of facts, particularly in its description of Lunghua camp. Critics such as Dennis Walder<sup>397</sup> and Jeanette Baxter<sup>398</sup> have drawn attention to protests by ex-internees of Lunghua printed in *The Listener* for whom *Empire of the Sun* was seemingly little more than a 'tissue of falsifications',<sup>399</sup> pointing out misrepresentations of British internee attitudes and mistakes in the text, such as a lack of graveyard near Lunghua. Given these testimonies, there is a difficult stigma of inauthenticity since 'Ballard has shifted the parameters of historical fact so considerably that his fellow prisoners cannot possibly

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<sup>397</sup> Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 150-151.

<sup>398</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 137.

<sup>399</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 137.

locate themselves within the text'.<sup>400</sup> Further omissions more personal to Ballard's story include the fact that he was not separated from his parents at Lunghua, that his younger sister was also interred, and that he did not witness the detonation of the atomic bomb at Nagasaki.

The bare facts of Ballard's account may be called into question, leading Baxter to read *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* as 'experiments within the Surrealist tradition of convulsive autobiography'<sup>401</sup> that incorporate invention, rewriting and dissemblance as tactics to liberate subjectivity and memory from overarching historicism. Discussing *The Kindness of Women* with Lynn Barber in 1991, Ballard seems to agree, stating: 'I couldn't publish the book if I said it was the truth! [...] It's *psychologically* wholly true. It's literally true half the time, and psychologically true the whole of the time'.<sup>402</sup> Ballard here introduces the paradoxical idea of a falsehood which can nevertheless reveal something that is psychologically true, or can disclose a truthful sentiment, feeling, or perception. Such a mutable concept of truth acknowledges its own internal divergences and points of tension in flux. Ballard's open acknowledgement of his psychological investment in the text, which codifies a compulsive need to rewrite and reinterpret events, keeps alive the idea of a subject in the present continually negotiating with the past by testing a series of alternative investigational orderings. There are similarities with *The Atrocity Exhibition* discussed in Chapter 3, in which events in the media landscape, such as the Kennedy assassination, are provisionally rearranged in a new way that makes sense to the T (It would not be overstatement to see the T, who modulates around a central core identity as a precursor to Jim in *Empire of the Sun* changing to Jamie in *The Kindness of Women*). Ballard's autobiographical project can therefore be seen as an attempt to acknowledge historical incongruities and contradictions, appreciating that the fullness of any past moment can only be approached through multiple perspectives as modulation around a core identity. In this way, the past operates as a heterotopia of imaginative investment where subjective fact and fiction are constantly synthesised, reconfigured, and reinterpreted by different facets of the personality.

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<sup>400</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 137.

<sup>401</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 138.

<sup>402</sup> Lynn Barber, 'Alien at Home' [*Independent on Sunday*, 15 September 1991, pp. 2-4] <[http://www.jgballard.ca/media/1991\\_sept15\\_independent\\_sunday\\_review.html](http://www.jgballard.ca/media/1991_sept15_independent_sunday_review.html)> [accessed 16 September 2015].

If the complexity of Ballard's text is wilfully passed over by publishers, then *The Kindness of Women*, advertised as 'The Sequel to *Empire of the Sun*' on the covers of the Harper Collins 1991 first editions, stretches the tenuous autobiographical pact to breaking point through the compulsive need to reconfigure events. *The Kindness of Women* begins in Shanghai and Lunghua, describing events taking place before the end of *Empire of the Sun*, engaging in a process of rewriting that unsettles the finality and conclusiveness of the original text. In addition, the text then plays with the concurrent meta-narrative of Ballard's professional life, collapsing and synthesising the textual spaces of fiction and autobiography. *The Kindness of Women* in large part structures itself around the writing of Ballard's books, and fiction cutting through the autobiographical space littering it with resonant words, phrases and titles. Examples include: 'The atrocity exhibition was more stirring than the atrocity' (*KW* 141), and 'my handkerchief waved to us from its drowned world' (*KW* 143).

In keeping with the focus on the influence of women on Jamie's life, *The Kindness of Women* introduces a new character, Peggy Gardner, into the space of Lunghua camp. She is the first in a succession of women who fascinate Jamie as maternal and sexual figures.<sup>403</sup> When Peggy Gardner is introduced, the power of women to unsettle the super-real repetitions and restaging of Jamie's fantasy life, the endless 'deep dream of war' (*ES* 21) established in *Empire of the Sun*, is apparent:

I lined my fingers on his shaven head, as if aiming Sargent Nagata's Mauser pistol, and snapped my thumb.

'Jamie, I heard that.' A Tall, 14-year old English girl, Peggy Gardner, joined me at the doorway, her thin shoulders hunched against the cold. She nudged me with a bony elbow, as if to make me miss my aim. 'Who did you shoot?'

'Private Kimura.'

'You shot him yesterday.' Peggy shook her head over this, her face grave but forgiving, a favourite pose. 'Private Kimura is your friend.' (*KW* 32)

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<sup>403</sup> Sex plays an increasingly important role in the Jamie's life, and, although he assumes 'When I made love for the first time it would be with Peggy Gardner' (*KW* 54), such a possibility is precluded by their forced 'child marriage that revealed too many flaws and limits' (*KW* 140).

Peggy Gardner, deliberately making him miss his aim, disapprovingly interrupts Jamie's repeated fantasy of shooting Private Kimura. At the end of the war she is described as: 'my closest friend, far closer now than my mother or father could ever be [...] in the dark times Peggy had learned to rely on me and control my leaping imagination' (*KW* 39). Later, as an adult, Jamie recalls: 'During my fevers in the children's hut she had talked to me in her sensible schoolgirl's voice, trying to explain away the eerie visions of delirium' (*KW* 139). This relationship with Peggy Gardner anticipates the repeated depicted of women as positive influences in *The Kindness of Women*, grounding Jamie and controlling his leaping imagination.

Different formative experiences signal important changes in the characters of Jim in *Empire of the Sun* and Jamie in *The Kindness of Women*, with perspectives moving from a third-person to first-person. This is more than a stylistic device, emphasising the greater continuity of *The Kindness of Women* with the non-textual present, with Jamie more representative of the adult Ballard than the lost child of Jim. New obsessions and fascinations (particularly around relationships with women and sex) force discontinuities between the texts, so that there is no easy transition from one to the other despite occupying some of the same spaces and times. This further problematizes the autobiographical continuity of a single subject moving easily and without resistance through the historical narrative. Moving between *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, Ballard creates a series of unresolved spaces and gaps into which are inserted different modulations of a core personality functioning as a complex extension of the author himself.

Diagnosed with prostate cancer, Ballard adds a further narrative to his life story in 2007. *Miracles of Life* discloses itself as pure autobiography, rather than a novel, clearly establishing an autobiographical pact with the reader by promising an account emptied of seductive imaginative and fictive elements. *Miracles of Life* makes a series of absences in *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* apparent, revealing Ballard was not split up from his parents at Lunghua camp, a space in which his younger sister (totally absent from the previous books) is now present. The premature death of his wife is the result of pneumonia rather than a fall as depicted in *Kindness of Women*. Many of the affairs depicted in *The Kindness of Women* are also absent, showing them up as probably fictitious. *Miracles of Life* is shorter than both *Empire of the Sun* and *Kindness of Women* despite covering a longer span of Ballard's life. Putting all three side by side, the reader is struck by what is left

out of *Miracles of Life* opening up the intriguing possibility that the fullness of one's life revealed in an autobiographical text is heavily reliant on fictionalisation. Paradoxically, *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women* are convincing texts because of fictive elements reliant on powerfully imaginative prose that seem to convey Ballard's revealing and comprehensive honesty about his past. Although *Miracles of Life* allows Ballard to revisit, reinterpret and reconceptualise his experiences, after *Empire of the Sun* and *The Kindness of Women*, the text produces an uncanny sense of recognition close to déjà vu. *Miracles of Life* continues to be highly selective and knowing in its appropriation of the J. G. Ballard myth. The text jumps decades, concentrating on familiar events revealed in fictions. Always already inscribed as partly fictive, these events further entrench the super-real qualities of the text as an overfamiliar simulation and negotiation of the past.

*Empire of the Sun* represents two spaces that are vitally important in Jim's childhood, and which Ballard returns to in all of his biographical texts. These are Shanghai in the early 1940s, and in particular the juxtaposition of the International Settlement and Amherst Avenue with the rest of the city,<sup>404</sup> and Lunghua Civilian Assembly Centre. Opposed to the quotidian and everyday, both can be considered heterotopic sites and spaces subject to significant imaginative investment.

At the start of *Empire of the Sun*, Ballard notes the persistent tides of the Yangtze that continually disperse and return the coffins of the dead (*ES* 3), and in *Miracles of Life*, Ballard notes Shanghai is a city of 'unending changes' (*ML* 275): Shanghai is a mutable space, liable to shift at any moment. Despite these unending changes, much like the mobile non-place of the motorway in *Crash*, it cannot fully remove uncanny recalcitrant traces, a return represented by the pile up of coffins. The newness of Shanghai, its 'foyers of department stores and hotels' (*ES* 3) is cut through

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<sup>404</sup> It should be noted that Ballard is explicit about Shanghai being an international settlement rather than British colony. As Paddy notes: 'When Ballard insisted that Shanghai was not a British colony we should not read this as a denial of Shanghai's colonial history. Rather, he was correcting a misperception: Shanghai was an imperialized and colonized zone, but it was not a wholly British one. As the same time, Ballard understated the importance of the British as informal imperial force in Shanghai -- via trade, diplomacy and the military. The decentering of British, however, is a central component of Ballard's self-portrait and his imagining of imperialism in the post-war world. Ballard's emphasis was on an internationalism that required a deflating of Britain's importance' (Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 22).

with persistent reminders of the past. It is simultaneously resistant to and constituted by the fixity of its historicism and traditions. The space of Shanghai is a palimpsest, with the present constantly trying to overwrite the past. In *Empire of the Sun*, Jim is profoundly influenced by the space in Shanghai, dreaming of upheaval and change. The fragments of these dreams converge in the department stores and hotels, merging the traumatic past with the future, tainting the incipient nowhere spaces of international capitalism. Jim's dreams, influenced by the continual newsreels in his head, concern trauma, conflict and war (Dunkirk and Tobruk, Barbarossa and the Rape of Nanking). The space of Shanghai is predicated on constant and continual conflict, in which war is an inevitable event. It is a space in which a continual state of expectation established during war becomes normative so that suspension, upheaval, and flux are constant. Jim at the beginning of *Empire of the Sun* anticipates the camp of Lunghua, not as an aberration, but as a space implicated by the larger containing space of Shanghai. Lunghua is always already located on the margins of Shanghai, ready to be brought into the centre.

Amherst Avenue, where Jim and his family live before the war, is represented as a kind of resistive outpost threatened on all sides by spatial encroachments. In *Empire of the Sun*, the British, and other expatriate nations located in the International Settlement,<sup>405</sup> have attempted a kind of colonial mapping in the indeterminate space of Shanghai. Ballard's text carries an illustration, a map of 'Shanghai in 1941' (*ES* 2), an example of a spatial mapping of power and the sort of regulatory governmental technology designed to make territory knowable. For Foucault, describing Jesuit colonies in South America where daily life is carefully mapped, controlled and regulated by the bell, colonies are an extreme type of ordered and regulated heterotopia of compensation.<sup>406</sup> The beginning of *Empire of the Sun* describes a

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<sup>405</sup> In the article 'The End of My War', which first appeared in *The Sunday Times* in 1995 and reprinted in the 2014 Fourth Estate edition of *Empire of the Sun*, Ballard clarifies: 'Amherst Avenue lay outside the International Settlement, and when artillery shells from rival Chinese and Japanese batteries began to fly over our roof we moved to a rented house in the comparative safety of the French Concession. Neglected by its owner, the swimming pool had begun to drain. Looking down at its sinking surface, I felt more than water was ebbing away' (*ES* 308). Despite being located outside, Amherst Avenue represents the same kind of regulatory spatial partitioning as the International Settlement. This passage also gives a hint about the genesis of the compulsively repeated image of the drained swimming pool in Ballard's work.

<sup>406</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 22.

compensatory spatial organisation that attempts to simulate a British colony in Shanghai by mimicking the space of homeland. The heterotopias of Amherst Avenue and the International Settlement are alternative orderings of space, making the spaces around them appear alarmingly messy and chaotic. In *Empire of the Sun*, at his home in Amherst Avenue, Jim exists in a knowable world, constituted by colonial hubris and moral certainty to the extent that Vera Frankel, Jim's Russian seventeen-year old governess, believes she can 'hear the voice of God in Amherst Avenue' (*ES* 8). In *Miracles of Life*, as the war encroaches on Ballard's childhood home he describes the revelation of a world existing beyond parental authority: 'As I watched my father putting his coloured pins into the map of Russia, smiling a little wanly as the radio announcer spoke through the static about captured German steam locomotives, I may already have realised that there were limits to how far I could depend on my parents' (*ML* 61). For Ballard, his father's actions show up the mapped, knowable world of his parents as limited.

The contrast between this mapped space and the rest of Shanghai is apparent when Jim takes a journey in his father's Packard chauffeured by the fast-talking Yang, technology that allows a defensible piece of Amherst Avenue to be moved around the streets of Shanghai:

[Yang] punched the Packard's powerful horn, carrying on his duel with the aggressive rickshaw coolies who tried to crowd the foreign cars off the Bubbling Road. Lowering the window, Yang lashed with his leather riding crop at the thoughtless pedestrians, the sauntering bar-girls with American handbags, the old amahs bent double under bamboo yokes strung with headless chickens. (*ES* 5)

The intrusion of a chaotic and exotic outside space containing aggressive rickshaw coolies, sauntering bar-girls, and old amahs is kept at a distance through the use of a powerful horn and riding crop. The horn also has the advantage of drowning out Jim's thoughts of war, 'the roar of the eight-gun fighters, the wail of the air-raid sirens in London and Warsaw' (*ES* 5) that also constitutes this threatening external environment.

The compensatory illusions of the British community in Shanghai are undercut internally by their incompleteness as simulations that incorporate uncanny



traces of death and decay. The British mastery of space in Shanghai is incomplete and contested at various points: Jim's beloved newsreels represent an unconvincing 'children's book landscape of English meadows' (*ES* 4), and Jim, having never been to England, is acutely aware of deceptions taking place. The expatriate community constantly try to compensate for the limitations of their fantasies. At the beginning of *Empire of the Sun*, Dr Lockwood's fancy dress party is a synthesis of colonial illusion and Eastern exoticism, complete with 'Chinese conjurors, fireworks and yet more newsreels' (*ES* 4). The fancy dress is appropriate, an unconscious acknowledgement of the roles its guests play in the sustaining myths, an artifice Ballard recognises describing the costumed Jim as resembling 'a film extra' (*ES* 7). Even the carefully designed and controlled space of the fancy dress party cannot cover up the presence of death, and when Jim arrives he notices 'The swimming-pool had been drained, and the Chinese gardener was quietly removing a dead oriole from the deep end' (*ES* 15). The drained pool containing a dead bird forces a gap in the regulated, controlled, and contained expatriate space.

Later, Jim leaves the party and wanders to the liminal space at the edge of Dr Lockwood's estate, stepping through a gap in the fence to notice a burial tumulus amongst the sugar-cane where 'rotting coffins projected from the loose earth like a chest of drawers' (*ES* 18). The simulated reality of the fancy-dress party is unconvincing because it must compete with other more vibrant realities in Shanghai. The fantasy of an imagined homeland cannot sustain itself against the unsettling space of Shanghai. Shanghai as a space constituted by anonymous death is evoked by a prevalence of dying beggars, coffins, and gravestones intruding on the sustaining illusions of the British expatriate community. The sustaining illusions of these enclaves are finally swept aside by the onset of war, which Jim believes to be an inevitable consequence of the Shanghai space. Ballard's text highlights a tension between the representation of the International Settlement and Amherst Avenue as heterotopias of compensation interrupted by the more threatening space of Lunghua, which is transformed by Jim into his own sustaining heterotopia of illusion.

Jim's suspicion of a space existing beyond the Shanghai map is confirmed with the onset of war, when Jim must make the transition from the security of the safe Amherst Avenue to Lunghua. Lost on his way to Lunghua, Dr Ransome remarks to Jim:

‘The Japanese have captured so much ground they’ve run out of maps [...] Jim, does that mean we’re lost?’

Jim thought about this. ‘Not really. They just haven’t captured any maps.’

‘Good- never confuse the map with the territory.’ (*ES* 102-103)

This resonates with the attempt by the British to map the space of Shanghai, and without a map, Jim has trouble approaching Lunghua. This also represents it as a space that refuses to be appropriated or approached directly. It is a space overdetermined to such an extent that Ballard must use multiple points of entry, spread over several texts, to capture its meaning.

The first conscious approach to Lunghua is perhaps enacted in *The Atrocity Exhibition* in the condensed novel ‘Tolerances of the Human Face’ in a paragraph sub-titled ‘Too Bad’. This first point of entry is also a departure, and the text begins: ‘Of the early part of his life, Travers wrote: “Two weeks after the end of World War II my parents and I left Lunghua internment camp [...]”’ (AE 112). T, standing in for Ballard, refuses to recall Lunghua, choosing to begin his biography as he leaves the camp, since it is an uncertain heterotopic space that is not easily disclosed.

The multiple beggars depicted in *Empire of the Sun*, foreshadow the erasure of identity and desperate subsistence occurring in the space of Lunghua. From inside his father’s Packard, Jim notices ‘Chinese beggars resting among the gravestones’ (*ES* 4), as if living corpses. The old man outside Amherst Avenue is ‘a bundle of living rags’ (*ES* 11), imprinted with tyre marks as part of the formless rubbish of the landscape from which he emerges. He is a figure given no definition, barely recognised as a human. This repeated image throughout Ballard’s autobiographical texts troubles the distinction between the living and dead (much like Ballard’s catastrophes considered in Chapter 2), and the graveyard-like space of Shanghai is slowly pared away to reveal the space of Lunghua underneath.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Foucault uses the example of the cemetery to illustrate his second rule of heterotopia, where the cemetery is removed from the city to become the other city: ‘Where each family possesses its dark dwelling’.<sup>407</sup> Western anxieties about proximity to death are reversed in *Empire of the Sun*. The dead are

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<sup>407</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 19.

brought into contact with the living, and the mass graves of Chinese peasants and the casualties of war also undermine the individuality of the corpse. The cemetery is once again brought back from the edges, and Lunghua is made into the other city of both the living and the dead.

The closeness of the living and the dead is emphasised by locating Lunghua next to a cemetery. As Baxter notes, this is one of the facts disputed by internees at the camp,<sup>408</sup> however this location clearly resonates with Ballard, even describing the airfield as a cemetery for planes, ‘For months crippled Japanese aircraft had fallen from the sky on to the graveyard of Lunghua airfield’ (*ES* 155), with the airstrip constituted by thousands of corpses:

He knew that the Chinese were being worked to death, that these starving men were laying their own bones in a carpet for the Japanese bombers who would land upon them. Then they would go to the pit, where the lime-booted sergeants waited with their Mausers. And after laying their stones, [Jim] and Basie and Dr Ransome would also go to the pit. (*ES* 129)

Although it is the Chinese who are casually worked to death (marking an important distinction with the European and American inhabitants) Jim recognises that he and his friends will be next to go into the pit, as the space of Lunghua progressively erodes the identity and subjectivity of its internees. The proximity of the dead in Lunghua unsettles the identity of the living, meaning that Jim sides with the dead: ‘Jim stared at his pallid hands. He knew he was alive, but at the same time he felt as dead as Mr Maxted. Perhaps his soul, instead of leaving his body, had died inside his head?’ (*ES* 233). There is uncertainty about who is alive and who is dead. Death is symbolically reconfigured as a loss and erasure of identity, and as *Empire of the Sun* progresses Jim is increasingly unsure of who he is.

Ballard’s approach to Lunghua resonates with Giorgio Agamben’s theorisation of the concentration camp as a site of thanatopolitics, and its space draws comparison with his description of the space of the camp as a state of exception and place of the *homo sacer*. Agamben traces the history of the concentration camp ‘born not out of

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<sup>408</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 137.

ordinary law [...] but out of a state of exception and martial law'.<sup>409</sup> The camp therefore embodies a certain state of exception in which otherwise normative preclusions are made into possibilities: 'In the camp, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order.'<sup>410</sup> Furthermore: 'Only because the camps constitute a space of exception [...] is everything in the camps truly possible [...] Whoever entered the camp moved in a zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer made any sense.'<sup>411</sup> For Agamben, the camp is a space of bare life, which he defines as 'the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*'.<sup>412</sup> A term from archaic Roman law, *homo sacer* designates a individual, cast out of the city, who can be killed with impunity by anyone but cannot be employed in sacrificial ritual requiring the taking of life.<sup>413</sup> The inhabitants of the concentration camps 'were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life',<sup>414</sup> representing human beings 'so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives that no act committed against them could appear any longer as a crime. (At this point, in fact, everything had truly become possible)'.<sup>415</sup> The *Muselmann* of the Nazi concentration camps described by Primo Levi,<sup>416</sup> are examples of bare life or life 'reduced to the barest condition of the experience of life'.<sup>417</sup> Agamben notes: 'That one cannot truly speak of "living beings" when

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<sup>409</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 166-167.

<sup>410</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 169.

<sup>411</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 170.

<sup>412</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 8.

<sup>413</sup> Leland de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 206.

<sup>414</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 171.

<sup>415</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 171.

<sup>416</sup> Primo Levi, *If This is a Man and The Truce* (London: Abacus, 1996), pp. 94-69.

<sup>417</sup> Jon Stratton, *Uncertain Lives: Culture, Race and Neoliberalism in Australia* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), p. 188.

referring to *Musselmänner* is confirmed by all the witnesses.<sup>418</sup> The *Muselmann*, at some limit point ‘while apparently remaining human beings, cease to be human’,<sup>419</sup> is referred to a type of living dead, or non-men, by Levi: ‘One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand.’<sup>420</sup> For Agamben, this disturbing threshold state is vital to understanding the function of the concentration camps: ‘They are not merely the place of death and extermination; they are also, and above all, the site of production of the *Muselmann*, the final biopolitical substance to be isolated in the biological continuum. Beyond the *Muselmann* lies only the gas chamber.’<sup>421</sup>

The concept of bare life and idea of the camp as site of biopolitical intervention and production gives a series of important insights into the space of Lunghua (with the important qualification that Lunghua was never designed to annihilate its inhabitants in the same way as the Nazi concentration camps). Like the camp that houses the *homo sacer*, Lunghua becomes a place where identity is suspended, and its internees come to resemble the living dead. However, although the space of Lunghua approaches bare life, it retains a residual trace of its former political and national existence under the law. Some care is taken to keep the inhabitants of Lunghua alive, contrasted with the Chinese that surround the camp. In one important scene in *Empire of Sun*, Ballard describes the casual murder of a Chinese coolie by the Japanese guards at Lunghua:

The coolie knelt on the ground, laughing to himself. In the silence Jim could hear the strange sing-song that the Chinese made when they were about to be killed. Around the parade ground the hundreds of prisoners watched without moving [...] The Japanese soldiers, Jim knew, would take ten minutes to kill the coolie. Although they had been confused by the bombing, and the prospect of the imminent end of the war, they were now calm. The whole display, like their lack of weapons, was intended to show the British prisoners that the

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<sup>418</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p. 54.

<sup>419</sup> Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p. 55.

<sup>420</sup> Levi, *If This is a Man*, p. 96.

<sup>421</sup> Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p. 85.

Japanese despised them, first for being prisoners, and then for not daring to move an inch to save this Chinese coolie. (*ES* 190-191)

The Chinese coolie is described as anticipating death with a strange sing-song, resembling the *Muselmann* of the Nazi camps as someone who can be killed with impunity. Japanese soldiers, anticipating the end of the war, carry out the murder as if to reinforce the state of exception within the Lunghua making such actions possible. It is a display acting as a threat and warning about the potential for the emergence of bare life amongst the prisoners within the space of Lunghua. Still retaining the right not to be killed without consequence, the prisoners nevertheless suffer the humiliation of seeing their humanity stripped away. Lunghua is therefore haunted by the presence of bare life (despite internees never quite reaching this abject state). For Ballard, this opens Lunghua as a troublingly ambivalent space.

De Cauter and Dehaene draw a distinction between the sanctuary and camp, describing the space of heterotopia as that of a sanctuary: ‘Just like the holiday is a suspension -- in time -- of political and economic activities, heterotopia is a refuge -- in space -- from the political and the economical.’<sup>422</sup> This is different from the space of the concentration camp: ‘the territorialisation or embodiment of the state of exception, the place of the ban, where the law is suspended’.<sup>423</sup> The difference between camp and sanctuary is a matter of who is housed there: ‘The concept of the *camp* (in the Agambenian sense of concentration camp) has its exact opposite in the concept of *sanctuary* (refuge). Both refer to ambiguous mythical territory: the camp is the “ban” of the *homo sacer*, while the sanctuary is the *temenos*, the holy ground and where those who flee from the law, power and violence can find asylum (for no human violence is supposed to violate holy ground).’<sup>424</sup> According to De Cauter and Dehaene, the sanctuary is the ultimate heterotopia because spatially it is ‘the absolutely discontinuity of normality, of the *nomos*, for those who flee the *nomos*: the *homines sacri*, the bandits’.<sup>425</sup> Sanctuary as heterotopic space is a shelter mediating

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<sup>422</sup> Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene, ‘The Space of Play: Towards a General Theory of Heterotopia’, in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 87-102 (p. 97).

<sup>423</sup> De Cauter and Dehaene, ‘The Space of Play’, p. 97.

<sup>424</sup> De Cauter and Dehaene, ‘The Space of Play’, p. 97.

<sup>425</sup> De Cauter and Dehaene, ‘The Space of Play’, p. 97.

between the *nomos* and the other. The camp shares with the sanctuary the quality of being neither economical nor political, but it is a very different type of space: ‘The camp [...] is the abject space of total rejection, a space devoid of mediation, unrelated in the sense of residing outside all relations. If the heterotopia is the place for otherness, for “alterity”, then the camp is the space where the other, all otherness, is abolished, annihilated (sometimes very literally).’<sup>426</sup> In the camp, otherness is housed only so that it can be annihilated. The spatial ambiguity of Lunghua in *Empire of the Sun* problematises categories of sanctuary and camp, redefining the camp in such a way that it appropriates certain qualities of the heterotopic sanctuary.

For Jim, Lunghua is both camp and sanctuary, and a place of rejection but also acceptance. Jim feels safer inside than outside:

The first of the traps was only a few feet from the perimeter fence, a distance that had seemed enormous to Jim when he first crept through the barded wire. He had looked back at the secure world of the camp [...] almost afraid that he had been banished from them forever. Dr Ransome often called Jim a ‘free spirit’, as he roved across the camp, hunting down some new idea in his head. But here, in the deep grass between the ruined buildings, he felt weighted by an unfamiliar gravity. (*ES* 134)

Paradoxically, despite being a ‘suffocating prison of nearly two thousand Allied nationals’ (*ES* 136), Jim is a free spirit within Lunghua, and the space inside the camp is contrasted with the unfamiliar and weighty gravity beyond its perimeter fence. Unlike its threatening exterior space, Lunghua is represented as familiar, knowable, and imaginatively fecund. It is therefore ambiguously a place of both restriction and possibility. The central ambiguity of *Empire of the Sun* is the ways in which Lunghua may be used as a site of imaginative investment and possibility, rather than causing the total erasure of identity. It becomes a place where, as Agamben notes, anything is possible. This deeply paradoxical understanding of Lunghua’s space is used by Ballard to describe the ‘welcoming world of the prison camps’ (*ES* 100) aligning principles of both sanctuary and camp in a troubling and unsettling way.

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<sup>426</sup> De Cauter and Dehaene, ‘The Space of Play’, p. 98.

Jim's gradual approach to Lunghua without a map allows for a stripping away of identity that is ironically an advantage once inside its space. Jim can approach Lunghua in a pragmatic way that lessens the trauma of identity loss. Ballard sees Lunghua as a space suspending normative social rules, and Jim's loss of identity is reformulated as an opportunity, allowing him to fantasise about taking on another nationality, identifying himself variously as British, American and Japanese: 'Already Jim felt himself apart from the others, who had behaved as passively as the Chinese peasants. Jim realized that he was closer to the Japanese, who had seized Sahnghai and sunk the American fleet at Pearl Harbour' (*ES* 108). Jim's essential pragmatism allows him to use a lack of identity to his advantage. In Lunghua, Jim willingly becomes a no one, refusing to finally align his subjectivity with a political identity or nationhood. This reconfigures the state of exception in Lunghua so that Jim can use it to his advantage. Despite disturbing and reconfiguring subject positions, Lunghua avoids generating the final biopolitical situation of bare life (represented by not having a subject position).

It is outside Lunghua's perimeter fence that a total and profound erasure of identity occurs. Expelled from the space of the camp, internees are forced to march to Nantao, leaving Jim in little doubt that they were being taken away to be killed (*ES* 209). Looking back at Lunghua, Jim notices the 'terrain of paddy fields and canals around the camp, and the road of return to Shanghai, which had been so real when observed through the fence, now seemed lurid and overlit, part of a landscape of hallucination' (*ES* 204). In contrast, the privations of the march are profound, and Jim imagines: 'Perhaps they were already dead? [...] This simple truth was known to every Chinese from birth. Once the British internees had accepted it they would no longer fear their journey to the killing ground' (*ES* 210). The assurances of nationhood are finally eradicated, and the British are suspended as living corpses without identity like the dead Chinese that haunt Ballard's text. The march ends at a football stadium near Nantao, transformed into an annihilating space that collects corpses and the detritus of former identities. At this point, not caring whether he lives or dies, Jim comes to resemble the bare life of the Chinese coolie killed with impunity by the Japanese soldiers at Lunghua:

Someone else was calling, as if he were a Chinese coolie running at the command of his European masters. Too light-headed even to sit, Jim lay



beside Mr Maxted. It was time to stop running his errands [...] At the detention centre, and in Lunghua, he had done all he could to stay alive, but now a part of him wanted to die. It was the only way in which he could end the war.

Jim looked at the hundreds of prisoners on the grass. He wanted them all to die, surrounded by their rotting carpets and cocktail cabinets. Many of them, he was glad to see, had already obliged him, and Jim felt angry at those prisoners still able to walk who were now forming a second march party. He guessed that they were being walked to death around the countryside, but he wanted them to stay in the stadium and die within sight of the white Cadillacs. (*ES* 225-226)

The rotting carpets, cocktail cabinets, and Cadillac's represent a stripping away of identity allowing prisoners to become anonymous corpses. The living, interlopers in this space of death, anger Jim who has approached bare life and decided to side with the dead.

Ironically, Jim is pulled back from the threshold of bare life collapsing into death by the flash of the Nagasaki atomic bomb, signalling the end of the war. Returning to Lunghua, Jim begins to fantasise about resurrecting the dead:

Flights of Mustangs circled Lunghua in close formation, their engines roaring at the exhausted grass. Waving to them, Jim ran to the perimeter fence of the camp. He knew that the American planes were coming in to land, ready to take away the people he had raised. By the burial mounds to the west of the camp three Chinese stood with their hoes among the eroded coffins, the first of those aggrieved by the war now coming to greet him. He shouted at two Europeans in camp fatigues who climbed from a flooded creek with home-made fishing nets. They stared at Jim and called to him, as if surprised to find themselves alive again with this modest implement in their hands. (*ES* 289)

Bringing the dead back to life also resurrects ethnicity (Chinese or European) gesturing towards recovered subjectivities threatened by the cataclysmic event of war and attendant shadows of bare life. Lunghua, problematically situated between a camp and a sanctuary, now becomes a space of resurrection. Disturbingly, however, this is a

limited resurrection, and Jim imagines ‘the first of the dead to rise from the grave, eager to start the next world war’ (*ES* 258). The space of Lunghua, where anything is possible, is unable to exist outside the state of exception created by war. Jim’s fantasy also tacitly acknowledges the dead and living dead can never recover the fullness of life. It is significant that Ballard does not continue Jim’s story after *Empire of the Sun*, modulating the character into a new character Jamie in *Kindness of Women* who is thrown back into the space of Lunghua. As constituted by the exceptional space of Lunghua, Jim is unable to continue existing once he leaves this problematic heterotopia.

Agamben notes: ‘What no one want to see at any cost [...] is the “core” of the camp, the fatal threshold that all prisoners are constantly about to cross [...] The space of the camp (at least of those camps, like Auschwitz in which the concentration camp and extermination camp coincide) can even be represented as a series of concentric circles that, like waves, incessantly wash up against a central non-place, where the *Muselmann* lives.’<sup>427</sup> The space of Lunghua is difficult to approach for Ballard, because it represents a site where subjectivity is diminished approaching the threshold of bare life and loss of being (in the sense of *Dasein*). The spatial core of Lunghua, although different from Auschwitz, is also a non-place that is difficult, perhaps impossible, to describe. Undeterred, Ballard incessantly washes up against the concentric circles of Lunghua in his writing, enacting multiple returns through multiple personalities as Jim, Jamie, and finally J. G. Ballard.

These compulsive returns to Lunghua are attempts to interpret a heterotopia that has played a vital role in the paradoxical erasure and constitution of Ballard’s subjectivity. In *Miracles of Life*, Ballard stages a final return. In the chapter ‘Return to Shanghai (1991)’, Ballard goes back to Shanghai and Lunghua. Significantly, ‘the former Ballard room [...] was now a kind of rubbish store. A clutter of refuse, like discarded memories, lay in sacks between the wooden bed frames’ (*ML* 273) and Lunghua is still problematically undefined as a clutter of refuse. Even at this late stage in Ballard’s life, access to the deep meaning and final fixity of the meaning of Lunghua is deferred as Ballard comments ‘Lunghua camp was there, but not there’ (*ML* 273), and suddenly digressing in his text to describe his arrival back at

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<sup>427</sup> Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, p. 51-52.

Heathrow, the start of the next ten ‘contented’ (*ML* 273) years. This final passing over Lunghua indicates it is still a difficult space for Ballard to negotiate.

*Empire of the Sun* describes a series of physical heterotopic spaces that influence its literary qualities, and the merging fact and fiction. The text has a complex relationship with the other autobiographical works that follow, and all three actively revise and rewrite the others. Ballard approaches history in a heterogeneous way, looking at it from multiple angles, emphasising discontinuity and contradictory stories, highlighting the overdetermined space of the historical record. *Empire of the Sun* is an elusive text that hides as much as it reveals. Ballard resists the transcendent subject moving through a totalised history, instead seeing his own identity fractured in the landscapes of his childhood. At a key moment, Jim sees himself in a broken mirror: ‘He fell asleep at the foot of his mother’s bed, rested by the scent of her silk nightdress, below this jewelled icon of a small exploding boy’ (*ES* 47). Heterotopias are mirrors, since ‘In the mirror I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal space that virtually opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives me my own visibility, that enables me to see myself there were I am absent.’<sup>428</sup> Ballard’s autobiographical texts are multiple mirrors, reflecting and doubling each other, different aspects of a subjectivity constituted by a heterotopic landscape of history.

Reading *Empire of the Sun*, *The Kindness of Women*, and *Miracles of Life* next to each other allows universality to splinter, transforming historical sameness into difference. Ballard’s texts echo Foucault’s genealogical model of history, resisting the insertion of a transcendent subjectivity into a homogenous historical field. In this way, *Empire of the Sun*, *The Kindness of Women* and *Miracles of Life* are different approaches to the formation of subjectivity, a process which remains open ended and incomplete. Ballard shows a desire to constantly revisit and reinterpret, to look from different angles and perspectives, so that bare facts become mutable concepts endlessly rearranged resisting the totality of historical understanding. It is this idea of rearranging and alternative ordering that highlights the past as heterotopic. Ballard’s narrative slips through official mappings of time, space, and history. Putting the memory and recall under scrutiny, he asks the reader to be cynical of all narration, including his own. Ballard’s success in *Empire of the Sun* lies in his refusal to see

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<sup>428</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 17.

only one possible history, instead tentatively keeping open the past as a space of flux in which contingencies and alternatives continue to be possibilities. The events of history refuse to disclose themselves in a way that can be grasped and makes sense in the present. Through retelling the final horizon of fixed meaning is constantly displaced and never reached.

The physical environment around him actively constitutes all the modulations of Ballard. His refusal to adopt a singular subject position is a response to the ambiguity of heterotopic space. Jim's and Jamie's subjectivities are folded with a dynamic environment, experiencing profound changes and upheavals both internally and externally. Heterotopias are experimental spaces with no single story to tell and totalised subject positions cannot be constructed within them. The wilful blending of fact and fiction in a text like *Empire of the Sun* is convincingly because it is set within a number of paradoxical and complex heterotopic spaces that resist normative ordering. Shanghai exists as an uncertain place that synthesises real and unreal elements, leaving a series of gaps that allow other realities to creep in. The compensatory illusion of the European colonial sections is ultimately shattered by the arrival of the Second World War, giving way to the space of Lunghua that slowly erodes identity. The uncertainty surrounding the space of Lunghua means that it is a space approached in different ways in all three of Ballard's autobiographical texts. Ballard's past as a heterotopic space is an alternative ordering and the fullness of meaning encoded within it can only be approached through multiple angles and discontinuities.

The admission that Ballard's trademark images (*ML 251*) can be traced back to the heterotopic space of Lunghua contained within Shanghai has disturbing consequences. Just as the subjectivity of J. G. Ballard constituted by Lunghua can only be described through the multiple approaches of *Empire of the Sun*, *The Kindness of Women*, and *Miracles of Life*, the space of Lunghua imbues Ballard's descriptions of the contemporary landscape operating throughout much of his fiction. Recognised by Ballard, the complex and disturbing space of Lunghua, suspended between camp and sanctuary, has consequences for all space coming after it as Agamben notes: 'The camp as dislocating localization is the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living, and it is this structure of the camp that we must learn to recognize in all its metamorphoses into the zones *d'attentes* of our airports

and certain outskirts of our cities'.<sup>429</sup> The ambivalent location of the camp (the territory without a map) allows it to be continually present in the border-zones that Ballard repeatedly crosses in his fictions. During a late blossoming of his career, it is the zone between airport and city outskirts (here identified by Agamben) that Ballard turns, describing a series of self-contained international communities. These spaces will be the subject of the final chapter of this study.

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<sup>429</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 175.

## Chapter 7

### Crime Fiction and Heterotopia in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*

Ballard's late novels, *Cocaine Nights* (1996) and *Super-Cannes* (2000) map developmental trajectories for two contemporary self-enclosed spaces, speculatively plotting the co-ordinates of possible coming communities. Baxter reads Ballard's texts as representing labyrinthine nightmare utopias where 'new and insidious forms of power and violence can operate and flourish' finding a visual metaphor in the self-enclosed landscapes of M. C. Escher.<sup>430</sup> For Tew, homicidal compulsion and sacrificial violence inform *Super-Cannes*' encoding of what he terms a radical sense of evil.<sup>431</sup> Both Estrella de Mar in *Cocaine Nights* and Eden-Olympia in *Super-Cannes* are community enclaves that oppose the rules of normalised society by sanctioning certain kinds of criminal activity. In these texts, Ballard investigates violence and aggression as endemic within contemporary society, unsettling a conventional sense of morality. This chapter investigates Ballard's communities as self-enclosed heterotopias that redefine crime, and spaces that lead to an experiment with the structural conventions of crime fiction questioning the social roles of the detective and criminal. Brown notes Ballard's writing is suggestive of the way in which the nature of contemporary or the millennial 'may be by nature *undecideable*',<sup>432</sup> an idea that unsettles the moral certainties, self-conscious structural plotting, and resolutions of crime fiction.

Critics such as Sarah Blandy<sup>433</sup> and David Ian Paddy<sup>434</sup> have understood the spaces of *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* to be representative of gated

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<sup>430</sup> Jeannette Baxter, 'Visions of Europe in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*' in *J. G. Ballard: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Jeannette Baxter (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 94-106 (pp. 96-97).

<sup>431</sup> Philip Tew, 'Situating the Violence of J. G. Ballard's Postmillennial Fiction: The Possibilities of Sacrifice, the Certainties of Trauma' in *J. G. Ballard: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Jeannette Baxter (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 107-119 (pp. 108-109).

<sup>432</sup> Brown, 'Reading J. G. Ballard After the Millennium', p. 129.

<sup>433</sup> Sarah Blandy, 'Enemies Within? Gated Communities Unhinged' (2001)

<[http://www.jgballard.ca/criticism/jgb\\_gated\\_communities.html](http://www.jgballard.ca/criticism/jgb_gated_communities.html)> [accessed 11 August 2015].

<sup>434</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard: An Imagined Geography*, p. 249.

communities, whilst Simon Sellars goes further seeing them as micronations.<sup>435</sup> Gasiorek notes the importance of defensible space in Ballard's late works including *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* where 'there is a shift from a concern with temporality to a preoccupation with spatiality, particularly with a defense of physical space, which is seen to be under threat from external aggression, and a retreat from outside space to psychological interiority'.<sup>436</sup> In her 2014 introduction to *Super-Cannes*, Ali Smith observes: '*Super-Cannes* is the keystone of Ballard's trilogy about gated communities, along with *Cocaine Nights* (1996) and *Millennium People* (2003), all three of which examine, via this gated microcosm, time, crime and psychopathology' (*SC* ix). As part of their unsettling of the crime fiction genre, *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* investigate a specific kind of space found in the contemporary landscape; the closed and self-regulating community in which certain normative rules can be suspended and experimented on.

Setha Low identifies gated communities as species of heterotopia defined as 'a residential development surrounded by walls, fences or earth banks covered with bushes and shrubs, with a secure entrance'.<sup>437</sup> Gated communities redefine traditional distinctions between public and private space by placing conceptual and physical borders between them and the external world. As Low notes, 'visible barriers that have social and psychological as well as physical effects'<sup>438</sup> work to impose a sense of haven or sanctuary by exaggerating inclusion and exclusion, insider and outsider distinctions. The heterotopic qualities of gated communities reside in the fact that they are potentially 'places where the technologies and discipline of social order are broken down, or at least temporarily suspended, and reordered [...] or reconstructed to create new spaces where microcosms of society are transformed and protected'.<sup>439</sup> The gated community comes to resemble a fortress and self-enclosed piece of space

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<sup>435</sup> Simon Sellars, 'Zones of Transition': Micronationalism in the Work of J. G. Ballard' in *J. G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions*, ed. by Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer (Hampshire: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2012), pp. 237-241.

<sup>436</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 186.

<sup>437</sup> Setha Low, 'The Gated Community as Heterotopia' in *Heterotopia and the City*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 153-164 (p. 153).

<sup>438</sup> Setha Low, *Behind the Gates* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 12.

<sup>439</sup> Low, 'The Gated Community', p. 153.

constituting its own rules and systems of regulation, often opposing or subverting the social order apparent in external space.

Gated communities as heterotopias highlight Foucault's fifth principle that 'Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing'.<sup>440</sup> Dehaene and De Caeter note the necessary connection and partial overlap between public space and heterotopian space:

Heterotopian spaces are necessarily collective or shared spaces. Their heterotopian character, as Foucault clearly explained in his fifth principle, was contingent upon a precise mechanism of opening and closing. That closing means excluding the public, a delineation of otherness and a closure vis-à-vis public space, while the opening is an opening unto the public domain.<sup>441</sup>

Despite being closed off to public access in some way, heterotopias are also paradoxically collective and shared, where a demarcated piece of the social can be experimented on.

Through a complex repositioning of crime as communal, Ballard asks a series of important questions about the nature of community in contemporary society. In their essay 'Heterotopia in a Postcivil Society', Dehaene and De Caeter draw attention to concerns in late twentieth century architecture and urbanism about the transformation of public space, a debate that they categorise as lamenting the end of public space on the one hand whilst advocating new forms of public space located in private spaces designated for public use on the other.<sup>442</sup> The closed community is one example of a privatised site containing and consisting of communal public space highlighting postcivil space in which 'The contemporary transformation of the city displays a profound redrawing of the contours of public and private space, bringing to the fore an equally treacherous and fertile ground of conditions that are not merely hybrid, but rather defy an easy description in those terms'.<sup>443</sup> A destabilisation and

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<sup>440</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 21.

<sup>441</sup> Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter, 'Heterotopia in a Postcivil Society' in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Caeter (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 3-10 (p. 6).

<sup>442</sup> Dehaene and De Caeter, 'Heterotopia in a Postcivil Society', p. 3.

<sup>443</sup> Dehaene and De Caeter, 'Heterotopia in a Postcivil Society', p. 3.



hybridisation of public and private is a feature of the spaces described in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, having profound implications for the normative rules of civil society encoded in crime fiction defining criminality as irregular activity.

The problematising of the clear demarcation between public and private space is relevant to Ballard's texts which unsettle the crime fiction genre by bringing into question the nature of the private criminal act carried out by the aberrant individual criminal so that crime is repositioned as a justifiable communal activity within self-enclosed heterotopic space (in contrast, the normative public space beyond the walls of the gated community still conceives of crime as dysfunctional). This helps make sense of the explanations of criminal activity espoused by Bobby Crawford in *Cocaine Nights* and Wilder Penrose in *Super-Cannes* as a service to the community, and also the way in which, as Brown notes about *Cocaine Nights*, 'the analytical voice of the narrator which offers the analysis gains urgency but loses rationality and reliability as it goes on'.<sup>444</sup> Immersion in heterotopic space begins to change the nature of public space, consequentially drawing out and redefining socially damaging and irrational criminal activity as urgent, necessary and communally useful.

*Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* are therefore spatial investigations, (and ultimately spatial immersions) as much as mysteries to be solved. In *Cocaine Nights*, Ballard's protagonist, Charles Prentice, is a travel writer rather than detective, emphasising the inquiry into space taking place in the text. The self-enclosed community of Estrella de Mar is approached via Gibraltar, emphasising particular liminal qualities as a space in-between nations and nationalities since Gibraltar is a disputed territory that has a complex national identity as a self-governing British Overseas Territory. Ballard describes access to spaces that defy normalised rules of land, nation and state. At the beginning of *Cocaine Nights*, Charles narrates:

Crossing frontiers is my profession. Those strips of no-man's land between the checkpoints always seem such zones of promise, rich with the possibilities of new lives, new scents and affections. At the same time they set off a reflex of unease that I have never been able to repress. (CN 9)

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<sup>444</sup> Brown, 'Reading J. G. Ballard After the Millennium', p. 140.

Ballard's text self-consciously enters a different, in-between space, a no-man's land full of possibilities slipping between authoritative regulations. Charles anticipates the complex open and closing mechanisms present in *Estrella de Mar*, a space that is located behind checkpoints and which experiments with new lives and affections. Charles' unease is recognition that these speculative strips of land are potentially disturbing in their suspension of social rules and acknowledges them as likely illicit or criminal spaces. This illegality is emphasised when Charles worries guards may unpack his mind to reveal 'a contraband of forbidden dreams and memories [...] eager to be sprung' (CN 9). The frontier crossed by Charles divides space constituted in public (visible checkpoint guards) and private (a confidential world of contraband dreams and memories). Moving physically and psychologically through the conduit-like 'darkened doorways' of the smuggling 'frontier town' (CN 10) of Gibraltar, Charles begins to desire the seductive, clandestine, and potentially deviant spatiality of Ballard's enclosed heterotopia.

As Baxter notes, *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* find antecedents in several short stories in which Ballard speculates about 'the shifting physical and psychological landscapes of postwar Europe'.<sup>445</sup> Stories such as 'The Concentration City' (1957), 'Having a Wonderful Time' (1978), 'The Largest Theme Park in the World' (1989), and the *Vermilion Sands* collection are all mappings of a possible future Europe, questioning a contemporary 'work/ play dialectic'<sup>446</sup> divided between public (work) and private (play) space. According to Baxter's analysis, Ballard's texts engage 'in a wide range of challenging debates which occupy modern Europe: the impact of global capitalism on physical and psychological landscapes, the transition of a Federalist Europe into a neo-liberal "super-state", the resurgence of racists and political extremism, the rise of immigrant labour forces and the rapid growth of the sex industry within Europe's markets of "free-trade"'.<sup>447</sup> Ballard's partitioned labyrinths are therefore self-enclosed communities in which possible public and private European communal futures are established and experimented on.

Since the early short story 'Prima Belladonna', part of the *Vermilion Sands* collection discussed in Chapter 1, Ballard has explored the idea of communities

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<sup>445</sup> Baxter, 'Visions of Europe', p. 94.

<sup>446</sup> Baxter, 'Visions of Europe', p. 95.

<sup>447</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 188.

structured around leisure. One of the greatest dangers in the *Vermilion Sands* resort, slumped with beach fatigue so that no one does any work, appears to be the onset of a pathological boredom which similarly threatens the inhabitants of Estrella de Mar and Eden-Olympia. Leisure is complexly abstracted and aestheticized as a form of work, so that boredom becomes subversive as a form of deviancy.

Before *Cocaine Nights*, Ballard's short story 'Having a Wonderful Time' also describes a leisured holiday space. The story is told as a series of postcards, beginning enthusiastically as a couple, Richard and Diana, enjoy a vacation at the Hotel Imperial in Las Palmas. A computer unexpectedly delays the flight home. As months drag on, the Hotel Imperial becomes a nowhere zone of displaced people in which 'Time moves like a dream. Every morning a crowd of bewildered people jam the lobby, trying to find news of their flights back' (CSS2 475). Diana joins an amateur theatrical company whose productions begins with Wilde's comedic *The Importance of Being Earnest*, shifting to the more serious tone of Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Sophocles' *Electra*, as increasing leisure time and boredom produce a corresponding seriousness in artistic output (the succession of these plays also begins to prefigure the treatment of the social effects of illicit acts and criminality that Ballard considers in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*). Eventually Richard, clashing with the hotel's management, attempts to form a resistance group after he finds more complexes like the Hotel Imperial being built. In a darkly comic way, 'Having a Wonderful Time' conflates the idea of the enclosed leisure society with that of the prison or camp: 'Apparently the entire island is being divided into a series of huge self-contained holiday complexes -- human reserves, Richard called them. He estimates that there are a million people living here already, mostly English working class from the north and midlands' (CSS2 476).

Foucault's first principle of heterotopia identifies heterotopias of crisis and deviation. A heterotopia of crisis, commonly occulting in primitive societies, is a sacred or forbidden place reserved for individuals in a state of crisis compared to the norms of society. Foucault mentions menstruating or pregnant women, adolescents and the elderly as individuals that at certain times have occupied heterotopias of crisis.<sup>448</sup> He also describes heterotopias of crisis as nowhere places (or places somewhere other than home) using the example of the honeymoon trip: 'For girls,

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<sup>448</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 18.

there was, until the middle of the nineteenth century, a tradition called the “honeymoon trip”; it was an ancestral theme. The young girl’s deflowering could take place ‘nowhere’ and, at the moment of its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers.’<sup>449</sup> In modernity, heterotopias of crisis are gradually replaced by heterotopias of deviation reserved for individuals whose behaviour is considered deviant to the required norm. Heterotopias of crisis are temporary spaces, disappearing as crises pass. The idea of deviancy indicates a state of being that is unlikely to cure itself with the passing of time. The deviant, unlike the individual in crisis, can expect to be separated spatially for a more indefinite span and worked upon. Examples of heterotopias of deviation include psychiatric hospitals and prisons that are defined geographical locations where the rules of society can be applied to those classified as deviant, suspending the liberalism present in the rest of society. Heterotopias of deviation can therefore be spaces used to house and work on criminality. Foucault also identifies heterotopias that are on the borderline between crisis and deviation, naming the retirement home since ‘old age is a crisis, but it is also a deviation since, in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation’.<sup>450</sup>

This idea of a borderline between crisis and deviation gives a significant insight into Ballard’s leisure communities structured around aestheticisation that places a heavy emphasis on artistic pursuits leading to recreation as a form work opposed to the deviance of doing nothing. As Diana comments about her husband in ‘Having a Wonderful Time’: ‘The trouble is that he’s found nothing with which to occupy his mind -- I wish he’d join our theatre group’ (*CSS2* 477). Ballard’s story speculates about the way in which traditional and temporary heterotopias of crisis are less tolerated in contemporary society leading to their integration as heterotopias of deviation cut through with rules, regulations, and prohibitions. The undisciplined idleness of the holidaymaker (previously tolerated as a temporary crisis breaking up working life) becomes a type of deviance. The regime of the Hotel Imperial is one of enforced leisure, resembling a prison where certain aberrant members of society (satirically the working classes from the north and midlands) can be rehabilitated

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<sup>449</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 18.

<sup>450</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 18.

through ‘a hundred and one activities’ (CSS2 477). The space of the holiday becomes subject to leisure activities designed to improve and normalise. Richard, idle because of his rejection of leisure activities, becomes a deviant member of a criminal resistance group. Ballard parodies a crossover between leisure and criminality, where the boredom of doing nothing potentially leads to deviant and criminal behaviour.

In *Cocaine Nights*, Ballard continues to explore the consequences of leisure communities situated between heterotopias of crisis and deviation and questioning the contemporary work/leisure dialectic. *Cocaine Nights* unsettles deeply engrained societal concepts of productive work and play. Paddy notes that Ballard’s text ‘plays on the now common trajectory of Britons who, on holiday or in retirement, set up zones of British settlement in Spain’.<sup>451</sup> In his 2014 introduction, James Lever suggests Ballard’s knowing subversion of the Spanish holiday space: ‘For a novel about leisure -- Ballard’s only full-length work explicitly about this lifelong preoccupation -- the subtly parodic chunky-thriller rhythms and unhurried mystery-story plotting are a perfect fit: it’s a holiday book satirizing the ritual of the holiday book’ (CN 3). Beyond a textual appropriation of a heterotopic holiday space, *Cocaine Nights* is also located on the Spanish Costa del Sol, an area nicknamed Costa del Crime since the 1970s due to its reputation as a haven for British criminals.<sup>452</sup> Ballard therefore knowingly synthesises spaces of criminality and leisure. Estrella de Mar is doubly deviant: a space of unstructured leisure where people do nothing and also a space exploring its own criminal past.

Arriving at Estrella de Mar, Charles Prentice encounters a thriving arts community differentiated from the rest of the somnambulist Costa del Sol. The Club Nautico treasurer David Hennessy tells him that “‘Estrella de Mar is a real community. At times I think it’s too lively [...] like Chelsea or Greenwich Village in the 1960s’” (CN 43). Film clubs, choral society, and cordon bleu classes (CN 43) seem to establish the kind enforced regime of leisure and normalising heterotopia of deviation Ballard describes in ‘Having a Wonderful Time’ keeping inhabitants in a permanent state of busy distraction: “[...] roped into a revival of *Waiting for Godot*” (CN 43). However, Charles proves himself to be an astute spatial observer noticing

<sup>451</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 265.

<sup>452</sup> Nadia Khomani, ‘Arraigned in Spain: UK Police Join Forces with Spanish to Catch Britons on Run’, *The Guardian*, 17 March 2015 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/17/uk-police-join-forces-spanish-catch-british-fugitives>> [accessed 17 October 2015].

recalcitrant traces of subversive activities. Sceptical about Hennessy, he comments: ‘I was curious why this fastidious man had chosen the Costa del Sol, and found myself thinking of extradition treaties or, more exactly, their absence’ (CN 43). Influenced by his eager contraband of forbidden dreams and memories, Charles anticipates illicit criminal acts secretly taking place in the resort.

During his spatial investigation of Estrella de Mar, Charles uncovers a regime of criminality initiated by tennis coach, Bobby Crawford, which is justified as useful to the community:

‘The crime wave continues -- someone shits in your pool, ransacks your bedroom and plays around in your wife’s underwear. Now rage and anger are not enough. You’re forced to rethink yourself on every level, like primitive man confronting a hostile universe behind every tree and rock. You’re aware of time, chance, the resources of your own imagination. Then someone mugs the woman next door, so you team up with the outraged husband.’ (CN 244)

According to Crawford, his brand of criminality sets up a communal experiment in anarchic primitivism. Francis has read *Cocaine Nights* next to Sigmund Freud’s *Civilisation and Its Discontents* and the assertion that contemporary civilisation is based on instinctual repression. The communal sanctioning of transgression ‘speculatively narrates a rebellion by the people of Estrella del Mar against Freudian civilizational repression in language implying a careful moral assessment of the gains and losses of untrammelled instinctual behaviour’,<sup>453</sup> so that violence becomes a ‘life-affirming power of death and danger’.<sup>454</sup> Despite a moral assessments of gains and losses, Francis also hints at an escalating ‘Freudian belief in the infantile urge towards gratification as never entirely surmounted’<sup>455</sup> as another motivating factor. Despite Crawford’s justification that crimes are designed to be like “[...] the devout Catholic’s wristlet that chafes the skin and sharpens the moral sensibility” (CN 244), there is an equally strong recognition that ““People are like children. They need constant stimulation. Without that the whole thing runs down. Only crime, or

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<sup>453</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 159.

<sup>454</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 160.

<sup>455</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 161.

something close to crime, seems to stir them” (CN 260). Crawford’s actions, intentionally or subconsciously, actively subvert the heterotopia of deviation established in Estrella de Mar, becoming a leisure society that resists and undermines a regime of productive hobbies (the film clubs, choral society, and cordon bleu classes) by tapping into the latent energies unleashed by deviant and criminal behaviours. Estrella de Mar is a space regressing to become an unstable and self-enclosed heterotopia of crisis that Foucault detects in ‘so-called “primitive” societies’,<sup>456</sup> that isolates and leaves individuals in a temporary state of crisis rather than attempting to normalise them.

Discourses of normalisation with Estralla de Mar’s emerging heterotopia of crisis are knowingly subverted thorough a process of regression and rebellion against authority figures. The ‘great crime’ (CN 317) that brings Charles to the resort is the burning of the Hollinger mansion, a crime that Charles’s brother Frank confesses to but which turns out to be an violent act sanctioned by certain members the community.<sup>457</sup> Mr Hollinger and his wife, killed in the fire, are representative of a passing world, and not the ‘mingling type’ (CN 53) they are burnt to death whilst celebrating the Queen’s birthday. For Francis, the crime is representative of way in which ‘Estrella de Mar attempts to bind itself together through the commission of a communal murder of its aristocratic head [that] echoes [a] Freudian sense of the transmission of social cohesion though compulsive repetition of the super-egoic self-aggression of Oedipally derived guilt’.<sup>458</sup> The incongruous mansion on the hill overlooking the resort was ‘one of the oldest properties at Estrella de Mar, its timbers and roof joists dried like biscuit by a hundred summers’ (CN 33), and inside the ‘Empire furniture and brocaded curtains, the tapestries and Chinese carpets were the décor of a drowned realm’ (CN 48). The Hollinger murder therefore represents the overthrow of the old social order and familial head by a community in rebellion and devoted to gratifying infantile desires.

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<sup>456</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 18.

<sup>457</sup> As Tew points out: ‘*Cocaine Nights* engages with the concealment of an essentially banal act which is intended to scare off criminal rivals but which accidentally kills them along with three members of the Hollinger family’ (Tew, ‘Sitting the Violence’, p. 108). Therefore, although the fire is incorporated as a source of communal guilt, for some of the conspirators it was never meant to kill absolving them from murderous intent and making it an unintended act of violence.

<sup>458</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 161.

Eliciting a confession from the resort physician, Paula Hamilton, Charles learns that the fire was planned as communal act:

‘A great crime was needed, something terrible and spectacular that would bind everyone together, seal them into a sense of guilt that would keep Estrella de Mar going for ever. It wasn’t enough to remember Bobby Crawford and all the minor crimes he committed -- the burglaries and drugs and sex-films. The people of Estrella de Mar had to commit a major crime themselves, something violent and dramatic, up a hill where everyone could see it, so we’d all feel guilty forever.’ (CN 317)

Hamilton acknowledges Estrella de Mar as a community in crisis, since the destructive minor crimes committed by Crawford aren’t enough to maintain the resort. Shifting the boundaries between a heterotopia of deviation and crisis, where a crisis is anticipated as a temporary state of affairs unlike the more persistent deviant state, Estrella de Mar approaches the crisis point of its own decomposition without the stimulus of a violent crime to bind the community together. The fire also troubles the boundary between public and private space as an action conceived as a private crime, but which is transformed into a public communal spectacle. The Hollinger fire becomes important in the maintenance of the community since it is an event dramatic enough not only to subvert the imposition of normative rules but also actively suspend them for a time.

Closing itself off from a public police investigation after the fire, Estrella de Mar establishes itself as a permanent heterotopia of crisis, where deviant inhabitants are effectively left alone, periodically renewing itself through the collective guilt of communal sacrifices. This suspension of normative rules is highlighted when the community psychiatrist, Irwin Sanger, is identified as the next intended victim by inhabitants and denigrated as “the one mad person in the whole of Estrella de Mar” (CN 64).

A leisure community, like Foucault’s retirement home where idleness is a deviance,<sup>459</sup> Estrella de Mar is located on the borderline between a heterotopia of crisis and a heterotopia of deviation (it is therefore appropriate that crossing border

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<sup>459</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p. 18.



and frontiers is the acknowledged profession of Ballard's protagonist). Crime works to restructure the resort, turning the idea of a heterotopia of deviance (where the deviant can be normalised over time) on its head by subversively tapping into the normative energies of an enforced productive leisure (the public not-so-real arts community established in the resort) and redirecting them towards illicit, private criminal activities. Estrella de Mar comes to resemble a primitive heterotopia of crisis (temporarily housing and leaving the individual in crisis) due to a process of regression and rebellion against paternal authority figures. In order to revitalise and perpetuate the community periodic spectacular and violent communal sacrifices are necessary to primitively 'seal the tribe into itself' (CN 324). Estrella de Mar therefore becomes a self-enclosed, indefinitely prolonged space of suspension where the normative rules of society are suppressed and sabotaged, and criminal energies tapped. This has implications for crime fiction as a literature concerned with the containment and diffusion of the criminal act, which will be considered in more detail later in this chapter.

As Paddy notes, *Super-Cannes* is a mirror shifting and subverting many of the themes of *Cocaine Nights*: '*Super-Cannes* follows very much the same pattern as *Cocaine Nights* [...] What *Super-Cannes* adds to the equation is a stronger economic element [...] Where *Cocaine Nights* looks at the role violence plays in the building of a community, *Super-Cannes* looks to the role violence plays in sustaining multinational, neoliberal capitalism.'<sup>460</sup> Similarly, for Francis: '*Super-Cannes* enacts a speculative interrogation of the psychology of postmodern corporatism'.<sup>461</sup> Whereas Estrella de Mar is constituted between a heterotopia of deviation and a heterotopia of crisis, subverting the normative social rules, the business park of Eden-Olympia in *Super-Cannes*, an elitist corporate enclave, reinforces the effective functioning of productive capitalism. Its heterotopic qualities exist not in its spatial alterity, but as a compensatory heterotopic space that is perfect, meticulous, and well arranged.<sup>462</sup>

Located at the opposite end of a contemporary continuum of work and leisure spaces, Eden-Olympia is very different from Estrella de Mar. Straight from the

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<sup>460</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 273.

<sup>461</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 162.

<sup>462</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 21.

‘drawing boards of Richard Neutra and Frank Gehry’ or ‘a humane version of Corbusier’s radiant city’ (*SC* 5), Ballard provides the following description:

[...] wealth at Eden-Olympia displayed the old-money discretion that the mercantile rich of the information age had decided to observe at the start of a new millennium. The glass and gun-metal office blocks were set well apart from each other, separated by artificial lakes and forested traffic island where a latter-day Crusoe could have found comfortable refuge [...] work and the realities of corporate life anchored Eden-Olympia to the ground. The buildings wore their ventilation shafts and cable conduits on their external walls, an open reminder to Eden-Olympia’s dedication to company profits and the approval of its shareholders. The satellite dishes on the roofs resembled the wimples of an order of computer-literate nuns, committed to the sanctity of the workstation and the pieties of the spreadsheet. (*SC* 7-8)

Eden-Olympia is a space constituted by a demanding, puritanical, and quasi-religious work ethic. Its architecture, mimicking old-school discretion, is simultaneously modest and practical. It is a space inspired by flow of global capital, triumphantly displaying connective conduits of wire. Satellite dishes are not used for watching television, but are constituent parts of the apparatus of a sacred order devoted to efficiency and performance. For Paddy, Eden-Olympia can be seen as representative of the way in which ‘the modern nation-state has been trumped by the postmodern corporation as the dominant form of social order’.<sup>463</sup>

The glass and gun metal space of Eden-Olympia contrasts with the somnambulant memory-erasing white architecture of the Costa del Sol in *Cocaine Nights* that entombs its inhabitants in an eventless world of sun and satellite television (*CN* 33). The difference between Eden-Olympia as a productive heterotopia and Estrella de Mar as a leisured heterotopia can be highlighted by the way in which Ballard’s protagonists access these contrasting spaces. In *Cocaine Nights*, Charles Prentice is gradually integrated into a community that never does any work and becoming manager of Club Nautico, he is advised “‘take as long as you want for lunch, dear boy, we can’t have you going mad with boredom’” (*CN* 224), whereas the

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<sup>463</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 278.

protagonist of *Super-Cannes*, Paul Sinclair, is an ex-pilot badly injured in a plane crash and his inability to work stigmatises him an outsider. The spatial investigations undertaken by Ballard's protagonists therefore have distinct approaches. Charles is gradually immersed in the space of Estrella de Mar, becoming part of the community (to the extent that he finally agrees to perpetuate the heterotopic regime of the resort by confessing to Crawford's murder). Paul does not become a communal member of Eden-Olympia in the same way, and although he responds to certain illicit desires made possible by its space (for example, his unsettling attraction to the underage Natasha) he is repeatedly positioned as an interloper critic by Ballard. Instead, it is Paul's younger doctor wife, Jane Sinclair, employed by Eden-Olympia's executives, who is immersed in the community.

This important structural difference between *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* (Charles' nascent support of Estrella de Mar versus Paul's entrenched scepticism) betrays the distinct types of crime sanctioned and encouraged spatially. In *Cocaine Nights*, Charles prefigures his own fate by concluding that his brother:

[...] had fallen under Crawford's spell, accepting the irresistible logic that had revived the Club Nautico and the moribund town around it. Crime would always be rife, but Crawford had put vice and prostitution and drug-dealing to positive social ends. Estrella de Mar had rediscovered itself, but the escalator of provocation had carried him upwards to the Hollinger house and the engulfing flames. (CN 324-325)

Crawford is a seductive character, representing for Francis 'the naïve focus of a certain inarticulate socially shared psychologically needs of the residents, their unconscious requirement for transgressive behaviour as a means of achieving a sense of community and agency'.<sup>464</sup> Crawford's revitalising crime spree, which turns inwards against the community of Estrella de Mar in a perverse analytical process identifying communal strengths, is provocative but attractive to Charles. In contrast, Wilder Penrose, the resident psychiatrist at Eden-Olympia, designs a more controlled, and cynical, regime, "more choreographed than you think" (SC 265), justifying crime as a form of controlled psychopathology:

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<sup>464</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 161.

‘I’m not advocating an insane free-for-all. A voluntary and sensible psychopathology is the only way we can impose a shared moral order [...] Here at Eden-Olympia we’re setting out the blueprint for an indefinitely more enlightened community. A controlled psychopathology is a way of resocializing people and tribalizing them into mutually supportive groups.’  
(SC 264-265)

Although Penrose also suggests he is tribalising people, his methods differ from Crawford attempting to seal Estrella de Mar’s tribe into itself (CN 324). Communal criminality directed internally, which forms a vital part of Crawford’s plan in *Cocaine Nights*, is not sanctioned at Eden-Olympia. For example, small acts of vandalism are disturbing: “‘all the graffiti at Eden-Olympia -- a fifty-million-dollar office building and a few francs’ worth of paint turn it into something from the Third World’” (SC 364). They become a sign of Penrose’s loss of control: ‘The first signs of revolt had appeared, but not in a way that Wilder Penrose expected [...] The pinpricks of the past weeks -- the graffiti and vandalised cars in the Eden-Olympia garages -- had begun to penetrate even the well-upholstered hide of the corporate elephant’ (SC 360).

Penrose directs criminality outside Eden-Olympia, accentuating Foucault’s fifth principle of heterotopia by highlighting opening and closing mechanisms, and exaggerating exclusions delineating otherness.<sup>465</sup> Rather than the internalisation of a tribe structured around the shared guilt of communal sacrifice, Penrose constructs a conformist tribe bound together through externally directed spectacular violence. This takes the form of vicious *ratissages*, disguised as bowling clubs, where the inhabitants of Eden-Olympia are “‘lords of the chateau, free to ride out and trample down the peasantry for their own amusement’” (SC 203). Whereas Crawford subverts the normative energies of Estrella de Mar’s arts community shifting societal focus to invigorating but deviant criminal behaviour, Penrose’s *ratissages* subconsciously highlight underlying European corporate concerns about globalisation, international competition, and waning economic power (the threat of fifty-million-dollar office buildings deteriorating into something from the Third World). Whereas internally directed violence, designed to confront the resources of the imagination (CN 244)

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<sup>465</sup> Dehaene and De Caeter, ‘Heterotopia in a Postcivil Society’, p. 6.

regenerates artistic production in *Cocaine Nights*, the planned violence of *Super-Cannes* is philistine, prioritising economic production over artistic output. Symbolically, a ‘special action’ (SC 220) is directed at the Pierre Cardin Foundation hosting a Tokyo advertising agency making a fur commercial (SC 216), and Eden-Olympia proves itself to be a vulnerable heterotopia anxious of losing cultural and economic status in a competitive globalised corporate world.<sup>466</sup>

Within *Super-Cannes*, Ballard draws a distinction between different functions of crime. The criminality encouraged by Penrose, directed away from Eden-Olympia and designed to triabalise its inhabitants and reinforce conformity, is differentiated from the random and unpredictable actions enacted by David Greenwood prior to the start of the text and predicted to be repeated by Paul at the end. Ballard articulates two forms of violence. Firstly, routinized violence and criminality seems to reflect the malignant functioning of an maximal form of capitalism, leading Paddy to note that Ballard ‘is intent on showing the malevolent political forces at work in the antiseptic, seemingly non-ideological spaces of contemporary business and consumption [...] Ballard shows the small cruel acts of Eden-Olympia to be a mere microcosm of the greater, international cruelty unleashed by their cold corporate “synergisms”’.<sup>467</sup> On the other hand, Paul and Greenwood’s actions posit a more irrational and dysfunctional form of criminality that is unintentionally encoded within the space of Eden-Olympia. As one character notes: ““David Greenwood nearly destroyed Eden-

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<sup>466</sup> It should be noted, Ballard also draws attention to a capitalism motivation for criminal behavior in *Cocaine Nights* when property developer Betty Shand’s role in organising the Hollinger murder is revealed: “[...] The Hollinger fire was good for the cash tills. No one lay around watching television, they went out and calmed their nerves by spending money”” (CN 323). This leads Tew to note the ‘conservative coordinates’ of *Cocaine Nights*, ‘The central mystery, it transpires, is underpinned by an organized criminality rather than a random or subversive pathology’ (Tew, ‘Situating the Violence’, p. 108), and Baxter to conclude that by confessing to Crawford’s murder, Charles is ‘Immolated in a violent capitalist logic which he helped perpetrate’ (Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 199). This means Estrella de Mar’s criminality is partly predicated on a form of predatory capitalism. Furthermore, for Tew, this is an important point of difference with *Super-Cannes* that describes groups committed to violent social behaviour ‘without any motive of financial gain’ (Tew, ‘Situating the Violence’, p. 107). However, Ballard does draw attention to a synthesis of capitalism and criminality in both texts, since crime is structured by underlying monetary motives: Shand’s hidden property syndicate in *Cocaine Nights*, and Penrose’s interest in maintaining the productive energies and community cohesion of the capitalist Eden-Olympia.

<sup>467</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 277.

Olympia. Huge amounts of corporate funding were pulled out” (SC 115). For Francis: ‘Greenwood’s enthusiasm for Lewis Carroll, precursor of the Surrealists [...] aligns him with the fantastic as a necessary subversive counter to Eden-Olympia’s affectless rationality’.<sup>468</sup> By repeating Greenwood’s intended actions, Paul also confirms his position as an outsider critic of the business park. Penrose’s rationalist plan of voluntary and sensible psychopathology therefore also contains within it the seeds of a random and insensible violence, in which a generalising trend of criminality becomes more extreme as graffiti gives way to killing sprees. In her introduction to *Super-Cannes*, Ali Smith suggests that ‘Penrose himself bears the name of one of the few truly revolutionary British surrealist artists of the twentieth century. But even here Ballard wants something beyond expectations. He wants a wilder Penrose, something more than surrealism itself [...]’ (SC x-xi). Along with Roland Penrose, Francis suggests the neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield as another possible origin for Penrose’s name emphasising the deliberate scientific nature of his experiments in psychopathology.<sup>469</sup> This is suggestive of the two forces of crime at work in *Super-Cannes*, with Penrose’s rationalised criminal regime also encoding latent irrational and violent impulses.

In *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, Ballard describes complex and ambiguous motives for the criminality resulting from heterotopic spatial forms. Ballard’s proposition that crime has distinct social functions (that can be viewed as positive and beneficial within certain types of community) leads his texts to interrogate many conventions of the crime fiction. John Scraggs suggests crime fiction is characterised as literature that ‘self-consciously advertises its own plot elements and narrative structure’,<sup>470</sup> features that Ballard subverts, pushing the genre to an alternative literary space. As Baxter notes: ‘More *why-* than *whodunits*, Ballard’s mock-detective fictions do not really ask to be solved, for there is no definitive truth or reality to be recovered.’<sup>471</sup> Gasiorek believes the centre of interest in Ballard’s detective fictions ‘lies not in identifying the perpetrator of the crime but in grasping its wider ramifications’.<sup>472</sup> By repositioning the inquiry of his texts to ask

<sup>468</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 163.

<sup>469</sup> Francis, *Psychological Fictions*, p. 162.

<sup>470</sup> John Scraggs, *Crime Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 2.

<sup>471</sup> Baxter, ‘Visions of Europe’, p. 97.

<sup>472</sup> Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard*, p. 171.

why, moral concepts of right and wrong and the question of what constitutes a crime can be reconfigured drawing attention to uncertain and experimental social circumstances that also has the consequence of questioning the primary figures of the detective and criminal in crime fiction.

*Cocaine Night* and *Super-Cannes* redefine traditions in crime fiction that have always attached great importance to place, from the bounded country house setting of the Golden-Age to the subterranean urbanism of the Hard-Boiled mode. These landscapes have been instrumental in practical considerations of opportunities to commit crime and also effective in hiding the activities of malefactors. For Ballard, the space in which crime is committed is more than an atmospheric backdrop or useful set-up, and his texts make an explicit causal link between crime and environment. The mapping of crime in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* is therefore an investigation of space as much as it is a reconstruction of temporal events. This means that although Ballard's protagonists may appear to be poor detectives, they are perhaps better investigators of space.

Emphasis on the spatial rather than temporal in Ballard's texts unsettles Tzvetan Todorov's two-story structure in detective fiction:

At the base of the whodunit we find a duality [...] the story of the crime and the story of the investigation [...] The first story, that of the crime, ends before the second begins. But what happens in the second? Not much. The characters of this second story, the story of the investigation, do not act, they learn. Nothing can happen to them, a rule of the genre postulates the detective's immunity [...] This second story, the story of the investigation, thereby enjoys particular status. It is no accident that it is often told by a friend of the detective, who explicitly acknowledges that he is writing a book; the second story consists, in fact, in explaining how this very book came to be written [...] We might further characterize these two stories by saying that the first -- the story of the crime -- tells 'what really happened' whereas the second -- the story of the investigation -- explains 'how the reader (or the narrator) has come to know about it.'<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 44-45.

In this temporal structure, the disturbing first story of the crime (purporting to be real life by telling what really happened<sup>474</sup>) is made safe by the temporal disjuncture of the second that reconstructs prior events. The safe containment of the first story is emphasised by the immunity of the second story to the troubling events of the first, and the way in which the second solves the first relegating it to the past. This enforces a *cordon sanitaire* around the realness of crime described in crime literature through the mediating figures of the detective (or the detective's friend adding a further sanitising layer) whose job is to retell, and thereby solve, past events.

If the protagonists of *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* are cast as detective figures, then their ability to contain past events is called into question by their compulsive repetition of the crimes: Charles admitting to murder echoing his brother's confession to ensure Crawford's 'mission would endure' (CN 329), and Paul's intent to 'finish the task' (SC 392) started by Greenwood. The first story of the crime is not regulated to the past and continues to have resonance in the present. The inadequateness of the detective figure is further highlighted by the ineffectual presence of professional detectives in both *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*: Inspector Cabrera fails solve Estrella de Mar's crimes despite 'a hundred seminars on the psychology of crime still fresh in his mind' (CN 29), and Pascal Zander, head of security at Eden-Olympia, is bracketed with criminals as "an unhappy man, driven by powerful resentments [...] He may well be the only natural psychopath in Eden-Olympia" (SC 299).

Charles's statement that crossing frontiers is his profession (CN 9) warns that he is likely to cross the border between Todorov's two stories, however, this also potentially positions him as an effective spatial detective. In *Cocaine Nights* or *Super-Cannes* this is an important quality since, as I have argued, spatial arrangements and particular aspects of heterotopias encourage and sanction crime. Foucault notes in his fourth principle that 'Heterotopias are most often lined to slices of time- which is to say that they open onto what might be called, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronisms',<sup>475</sup> suggesting that Estrella de Mar and Eden-Olympia

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<sup>474</sup> Martin Priestman, *Detective Fiction and Literature* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1990), p. 20.

<sup>475</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 20.



may encode temporality in their spaces resistant to conventional chronological readings.

The Hollinger mansion crime scene in *Cocaine Nights* demonstrates the idea of tricky temporalities encoded within heterotopic spaces. In the mansion, Charles discovers a pornographic video that proves to be an important conduit into the space of Estrella de Mar. Charles proves to be a poor detective by not recognising that the videotape is planted evidence. However, he is a better spatial investigator recognising the incongruous television set and videotape containing recorder in the burnt surroundings: ‘perhaps cooled by the inrush of cold air through the shattered glass, a television set and video-recorder had survived intact. The remote-control unit lay on the bedside table, melted like black chocolate, blurred numerals still visible in the plastic’ (CN 111). The videotape is a disruptive clue, initially acting as a distraction to the task of reconstructing the Hollinger murder. Against Charles’s hopes that it will have recorded a satellite programme enabling him to ‘fix the exact moment the fire engulfed the room’ (CN 124), the videotape instead displays an older crime, the recorded rape of the Hollinger’s niece, Anne, like a persistent ‘memory of a crime’ (CN 226). It appropriately represents the type of crime committed in Estrella de Mar that unsettles categories of public and private space so that the private sexual act can also be consumed communally in the public realm. At a structural level, the videotape disturbs Todorov’s two stories by allowing the first story of crime to leak back into the second, disturbing chronology by bringing the past into the present. This is apparent when, after recognising Paula Hamilton in the videotape, Charles fantasises:

I lay back and looked down at the scar, realizing that I had seen it before, in the closing moments of the porno-film [...] I raised myself on one elbow as I tried to smooth away the scar. In many ways the sex that had taken place between us was part of another film. I had imagined myself in Frank’s role, and Paula playing his lover, as if only the pornographic image of ourselves could really bring us together and draw out the affection we felt for each other. (CN 194)

Pornographic film (whether real or imagined) is resistant to temporal sequencing, by allowing images to be piled up and spliced together, enabling Charles to go back in time to play Frank’s role that is part of the first story of the crime opening *Cocaine*

*Nights*. Charles unconsciously grasps this complex temporality by trying to smooth Paula's scar away, as if he could move the physical evidence displayed by her body to an earlier point in time before her wounding (and participation in crime) took place.

Brown notes the videotape can also be taken as an affirmation of Ballard's millennial questioning of the nature of representation and the real in which the image of recreational pornographic film-making is 'an immediately compromised act that is itself a construction rather than representation of violent and abusive reality however complicit its victims may be'.<sup>476</sup> The videotape therefore has a tenuous relationship with the representation of reality, also compromising its effectiveness as a clue granting access to Todorov's real story of the crime. However, despite obfuscation, the videotape is able to act as an effective tool of recognition when, as Brown notes, Charles recognises Paula Hamilton's body and complicity by her distinguishing scar.<sup>477</sup> Another spatial recognition occurs when Charles discovers Crawford's apartment is the same as the anonymous 'art deco apartment, with white-on-white décor, ice-pale furnishings and recessed lights in porthole windows' (CN 124) displayed on the videotape. The videotape therefore links the Hollinger mansion and Crawford's apartment (both sites of criminal activity) and begins the process of decoding the space of Estrella de Mar. Although gesturing to a period outside the relevant narrative story of the criminal act itself, the complex way in which Ballard constitutes his clue as series of linking spaces means that the videotape is able to stand as an important piece of evidence. It effectively dilates the temporality of Ballard's crime fiction by depicting events external to the strict time frame of the murder itself, but which ultimately proves to be relevant to the task of solving the crime through spatial resonances.

The Hollinger mansion is therefore a complex site that resists temporal reconstruction of the crime that took place there. By drawing attention to spatial configurations motivating criminal activity that refuse to be safely contained and partitioned, Ballard surprisingly gestures to recalcitrant traces of gothic roots in his crime fiction. In *Cocaine Nights*, Crawford reassures Charles: "Chin up. This isn't the House of Usher" (CN 234), a knowingly reference to Edgar Allan Poe's gothic

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<sup>476</sup> Brown, 'Reading J. G. Ballard after the Millennium', p. 141.

<sup>477</sup> Brown, 'Reading J. G. Ballard after the Millennium', p. 141.

short story. Initially, the ruined Hollinger mansion on the hill resembles a gothic scene approached with trepidation by Charles:

An ashy dust cloaked the hill slopes as the nearside wheels of Cabrera's car raced through the verge, a chalky pall that swirled between the palms and floated up the drives of the handsome villas beside the road. When it cleared we could see the Hollinger house on its fire mountain, a vast grate choked with dead embers. Teeth clenched, Paula worked the gear lever, chasing the policeman's car around the bends and only slowing out of respect for my injured throat. (CN 101)

Ballard's description transplants Castle Dracula to the Costa del Sol with swirling ashy dust standing in for mist. Paula's rapid approach, slowing for Charles's injured throat (symbol of the vampiric), mimics Jonathan Harker's transport by the coachman: "Denn die Todten reiten Schnell" -- ("For the dead travel fast").<sup>478</sup>

At the burnt Hollinger mansion, 'The intense heat had driven a jagged fissure through the stone walls, the scar of a lightning bolt that had condemned the property to flames' (CN 48) resembling Poe's description of the 'blood-red moon which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure'<sup>479</sup> in 'The House of Usher', a physical signifier of corrupt spaces in both Poe and Ballard's texts, and also evocative of Paula Hamilton's 'faint surgical scar running from the small of her back and around the waist to her right hip' (CN 127) as surely representative of underlying trauma or violence.<sup>480</sup>

Evocative environments are important to gothic literature's unity of effect and movement towards climax. Martin Priestman has noted the dominance of metonymy in detective fiction (one thing is expected to stand for another in a temporal sequence) and synecdoche (a fragment stands as an exemplary instance of the whole) where the realistic narrative relies on the reader relating these fragments back to a whole. In contrast, the metaphoric orientation of gothic literature means a single image or situation is dwelt on with growing intensity. This difference in approach is

<sup>478</sup> Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 17.

<sup>479</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 109.

<sup>480</sup> Brown, 'Reading J. G. Ballard After the Millennium', pp. 135-6.

highlighted by the comparison between Poe's gothic stories and his tales of ratiocination featuring the detective Auguste Dupin in which the dominance of metonymy is hostile to metaphor: 'As a narrative procedure the analytic or "resolvent" approach to the "tale of ratiocination" radically denies the need for any symbolic explanation of its action and any further "resolution" of its images than that offered by Dupin'.<sup>481</sup> Clues investigated by the detective as metonymic fragments link to a chain of meaning that denies enticement towards deeper explanation: 'we are being taught to feel for a different order of meaning, where "direct" access to metaphorical depth is replaced by our willing acceptance of the horizontal metonymic surface of the narrative'.<sup>482</sup> This is in opposition to Ballard's interest in the resonance of the spaces he describes, allowing a gothic residue to resist the final closure and resolution of detective fiction.

The sense of misdirection in the process of investigation in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* exchanges the unity of detective literary form for a gothic disunity in which environments hint at ever more complex meaning and the 'synchronic uncovering of a unified meaning operating throughout the text becomes a diachronic juxtaposition of fragments whose originating contexts have no satisfying or "deep" meaning in themselves [...] only provide stepping stones to the next fragment and context'.<sup>483</sup> This is apparent in *Cocaine Nights* with the discovery of the pornographic videotape: rather than a clue towards the deep meaning of delineated story of Hollinger murder, it gestures towards the overdetermination and continuum of crime in Estrella de Mar's space, where recreational rape is complexly linked to the rest of the criminal activity taking place in the resort. This also elicits on-going fascination with the criminal since the story of the crime refuses to be contained, and access to the deep meaning of the crime is indefinitely suspended by moving to the next convoluted fragmentary context. In *Super-Cannes*, Paul's recovery of bullets used in Greenwood's killing spree resists telling their story as reconstruction of past events (as would be expected for a professional detective operating in the crime fiction genre), but rather entices Paul into Eden-Olympia's space and identification with Greenwood's actions. The business park doctor, Frances Baring, observes that the

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<sup>481</sup> Priestman, *Detective Fiction*, p. 48.

<sup>482</sup> Priestman, *Detective Fiction*, p. 49.

<sup>483</sup> Priestman, *Detective Fiction*, p. 51.

discovery of the bullets ““was a blessing in disguise”” by sparking Paul’s interest in Greenwood’s crime: ““You were playing detective. But Penrose guessed that wasn’t the only reason. You were starting to identify with David. You knew he’d changed since coming to Eden-Olympia. So you, too, wanted to change”” (SC 336). Paul is ineffectual at playing detective, but the more important consequence of investigating the crime is his transformation by immersion in the space of Eden-Olympia. By re-accommodating the buried first story of the crime, Ballard’s environments gothically refuse to be resolved and affect the protagonist of the second story, who should be immune since, according to Todorov, nothing happens to them.

Ballard’s spaces are constituted by diverse and fragmentary meanings and discourses that often refuse to resolve into a single deep meaning, limiting the ability of the detective figure to ascertain the meaning of crime, solving the case and containing the first story of the crime. As protagonists search physical environments for clues, Ballard suggests crime scenes are complex sites resistant to the containment of being solved.

Ballard’s protagonists are ineffective detectives, leading to a focus the criminal in his texts. Crawford and Penrose, as developments of Ballard’s critical hoodlum scientists with ‘mad ideas’<sup>484</sup> like Vaughan in *Crash*, are in many ways more interesting characters than Charles Prentice or Paul Sinclair who pursue them. The ability of Crawford and Penrose to provide convincing accounts for their actions (regardless of how problematic these explanation seem beyond the heterotopic spaces of the text) as confronting the resources of the imagination or as controlled psychopathology, takes the power of explanation away from the detective figure. Ballard focuses on the figure of the criminal as a source of meaning within the text, rather than highlighting the commentary given by the detective. Baxter believes Ballard’s crime literature evokes a tradition of sensationalist crime reporting, resembling a series of surrealist *fait divers* that reveal hidden histories.<sup>485</sup> In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes an early form of crime literature lingering over the gallows and punishment of the body of the criminal as a site of meaning:

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<sup>484</sup> Brown, ‘Reading J. G. Ballard After the Millennium’, p. 141.

<sup>485</sup> Baxter, *Surrealist Imagination*, p. 171-218.

Perhaps we should compare this literature with the ‘disturbances around the scaffold’ in which, through the tortured body of the criminal, the power that condemned confronted the people that was the witness, the participant, the possible and indirect victim of this execution. In the wake of a ceremony that inadequately channelled the power relations it sought to ritualize, a whole mass of discourses appeared pursuing the same confrontation; the posthumous proclamation of the crimes justified justice, but also glorified the criminal.<sup>486</sup>

The public display of punishment contains crime within the visible apparatus of sovereign and state power, what might be called the shadow of the gallows. At the same time, the common malefactor exaggerated through spectacular display of his torture, sparks an interest in what Foucault calls ‘the minor, everyday epic of illegalities’.<sup>487</sup> A new ‘aesthetic rewriting of crime’ beginning in the nineteenth century displaces this literature casting crime in a new light as ‘the work only of exceptional natures [...] because villainy is yet another mode of privilege’.<sup>488</sup>

[...] by his cunning, his tricks, his sharp-wittedness, the criminal represented in this literature has made himself impervious to suspicion; and the struggle between two great minds -- the murderer and the detective -- will constitute the essential form of the confrontation.<sup>489</sup>

This struggle between minds is a confrontation between superior criminals and detectives. The intelligent master criminal does not suffer in the same way as the common malefactor and the cycle of crime and punishment that is abstracted as a game and shifted behind closed doors. The activities of criminal and detective become opaque and hidden behind the mental processes of two great minds. Priestman notes the appearance of two great minds in crime fiction negates any sense of communal responsibility for crime: ‘one might argue that the detective story “proper” evolved negatively, out of the jettisoning of the old sense of communal responsibility for

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<sup>486</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 68.

<sup>487</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 68.

<sup>488</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 68.

<sup>489</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 69.

crime [...] as much as through the positive creation of brilliant detective such as Sherlock Holmes',<sup>490</sup> with detective therefore emerging as the important figure in the maintenance of social norms and correct behaviour always having a keen sense of right and wrong when applied at the wide social level.

*Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* complexly revisit Foucault's textual fissure in crime literature. Although originated in the individual mind of the criminal (Crawford or Penrose), crimes become collective confronting people as witnesses, victims and participants, and reconstituted as part of the ritual life of the community rather than as a series of individual, abnormal perversions. For Paddy in *Cocaine Nights* there is a shift whereby 'visible acts of "subjective" violence become invisible "objective" violence that becomes the ordinary systematic running of the community [...] Rather than being something perceived as an aberration that violates the social norm, violence becomes not just normal but the rule that keeps Estrella de Mar running',<sup>491</sup> proven by the lack of crime reporting than takes place in the resort. Ballard's crimes cannot be isolated and worked on by the detecting great mind since the reasons for criminality are not only individual, but also a communal expression of unconscious and violent impulses that destabilise societal issues of normal behaviour. Rituals of crime sufficiently woven into the communal fabric make clear the inability of the great mind of the detective to contain and neutralise criminality. The final actions of the detective figures in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* (taking the blame for murder or preparing a killing spree) are troubling repetitions of criminality, but also desperate attempts to re-assert power through spectacular acts of violence recalling state sanctioned torture of the criminal body. The two great minds model is compromised by the lack of normalising force of the part of Ballard's protagonists, finally implicated as criminals themselves. The loss of moral and critical faculties, along with an emerging desire for crime shared within the community, is a compelling feature that Brown notes as a recognisable part of Ballard's texts featuring 'fatally susceptible protagonists [...] who are seduced into the worlds they initially suspect'.<sup>492</sup> *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* therefore describe a series of crimes that refuse to be brought under control and purged from the social body. Ballard

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<sup>490</sup> Priestman, *Detective Fiction*, p. 32.

<sup>491</sup> Paddy, *Empires of J. G. Ballard*, p. 270.

<sup>492</sup> Brown, 'Reading J. G. Ballard After the Millennium', p. 129.

provides a form of crime literature directly concerned with the social functioning of crime, with the criminal intimately linked with the community, shifting focus away from the containment of the two great minds model back towards Priestman's old sense of communal responsibility for crime in which everybody (including the detective linked to the people) potentially shares in a dynamic of crime, guilt, and punishment.

*Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* describe self-enclosed heterotopias that trouble categories of public and private space by suspending normative, external rules in order to redefine the nature of crime as a public-minded expression of latent, disturbing, but also potentially positive, communal impulses. In *Cocaine Nights*, Estrella de Mar is a leisure society that troubles the boundary between a heterotopia of deviation and a heterotopia of crisis, where a regime of productive leisure activities staving off the 'far side of boredom' (CN 177) is subverted to uncover the revitalising energies of criminal activities. An anarchic 'escalator of provocation' (CN 325) carrying the community to a crisis point of deterioration held off by repeated acts of spectacular communal sacrifice, directed at paternal authority figures, that continue to suspend normative rules and seal the tribe into itself (CN 324). In *Super-Cannes*, the elitist space of Eden-Olympia, resembling a meticulous and perfectly organised heterotopia of compensation, encourages conformity and maximum productive energies by directing violence externally, exaggerating heterotopic systems of closure, which seal off its space. Despite being conceived as a rationally planned programme of psychopathology, criminality also encourages certain irrational, destabilising, and violent forces that internally threaten the business park. The partitioned spaces of Estrella de Mar and Eden-Olympia encode different forms of criminality, but in both cases crime has suggestive generative social functions with incentives buried inside internal spatial logics.

Structured as crime fictions, Ballard's texts compel their protagonists towards investigations of space in order to reveal the motives for crime, a process that threatens spatial immersion and the compulsive repetition of criminal activity. Approaching heterotopic spaces that suspend normative rules, Ballard experiments with the textual space of crime fiction. Operating his texts spatially rather than temporally, Ballard disturbs Todorov's traditional two-story structure, where the first, real story of the crime is safely contained by the second narration of the detective. In contrast, Ballard brings the first story back from the past to become spatially



commensurate and influential in the second. Protagonists, acting as detectives, are compulsively drawn into the story of the crime. The criminality enacted in *Estrella de Mar* and *Eden-Olympia* refuses to be easily resolved and spatially contained. This highlights a surprising gothic disunity in Ballard's environments, resisting simple resolution and clear reading, gesturing towards ever more complex, subterranean resonances within space. By setting his texts in closed communities that unsettle normative rules, Ballard draws attention to the idea of the lack of containment of crime, describing territories that refuse to be charted in a simple moral way and that perniciously pull investigators in. Ballard's ineffectual detectives, unable to contain and diffuse crime, highlight the criminal as a compelling figure uncovering and sanctioning communal impulses. Ballard unsettles Foucault's two great minds model of crime literature (hiding the operations of detective and criminal behind complicated mental processes) to place emphasis on the communal responsibility and collective guilt for crime. Ballard's crime fiction therefore posits a radical non-containment of crime and fascination with criminal activity inverting the normative spatial operation of the crime novel as steadily neutralising the criminal and his actions. His description of heterotopic space allow normative rules to be suspended so that crime can flourish as a vital critique and experimental paradigm interrogating social regulation and moral questions.

## Conclusion

As David James notes, awareness of space in the contemporary novel has reanimated a sense of ‘value and vulnerability of our surroundings’ allowing writers to take ‘responsibility for creating a *poiesis* of space that can re-envision the landscape of everyday life, receptive to the social and historical forces under which new habitats are forged’.<sup>493</sup> Ballard’s texts open an important spatial paradigm that actively interrogates certain physical spaces to reveal alternative orders, and also problematise the secure spaces of literary genre. Within Ballard’s work, spatially encoded normative social and cultural relations are destabilised and questioned. Considered chronologically, from the early aesthetic spatiality of *Vermilion Sands* that enables incongruous things to come together in a process of hybridity, to enclosed spaces in late novels like *Super-Cannes* that, as Tew notes, encode questions of traumatic violence and communal sacrifice as both destructive and redemptive,<sup>494</sup> Ballard’s spaces continue to develop radically unsettling qualities. The complex spatialities of his stories (their *poiesis* of space in James’ terms) also disturb several literary spaces and genre conventions, from science fiction (*Vermilion Sands*) to crime fiction (*Super-Cannes*), leading to opportunities to resituate Ballard within the landscapes of contemporary fiction.

This study has concentrated on Ballard’s descriptions of spaces, along with the equally important question of literary genre. Fantasy desert spaces contrasted with quotidian living rooms, along with linking balcony spaces, were considered in Chapter 1 as a way for Ballard to destabilise the confident predictions of 1950s science fiction by introducing a series of jump-backs as enclaves in which alternative versions of the social are articulated and experimented on. The literary containment of disaster through human symbolic efficacy was questioned in Chapter 2, with Ballard recognising the kernel of unreadability at the heart of catastrophe and representing post-catastrophic spaces as a threatening unmade graves traumatically returning the dead. The experimental and fragmentary texts ‘The Terminal Beach’ and *The Atrocity Exhibition* were considered in Chapter 3 as representing an always-already destroyed contemporary textual space precluding the possibility of totalised meaning and interpretation with Ballard’s texts resembling Foucault’s description of literary

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<sup>493</sup> James, *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space*, p. 168.

<sup>494</sup> Tew, ‘Situating the Violence’, pp. 116-119.

heterotopias that destroy syntax in advance and Blanchot's ideas of a radical external or outside literary space refusing to be mastered or worked to disclose meaning. As Tew writes of the disturbing spatiality of *The Atrocity Exhibition*: 'Ballard produces a layered irresolution. And however bold and provocative the narrative appears in topographical terms, it nevertheless combines paradox with an almost wilful multiplicity. Casual enjoyment is not the emphasis of this classic Ballard text, which synthesizes the trivia and mundanity of bourgeois existence with a palpable sense of trauma, pain, alienation, ennui, misplaced passion, pornography, and an underlying fear of culture's erupting meaninglessness which underlies the world's symbolic order'<sup>495</sup> so that the unreadability at the heart of catastrophe is developed and written into the fabric of contemporary existence. Chapter 4 returned to Ballard's questioning of science fiction spatiality in his Cape Canaveral fictions drawing on Blanchot's 1961 essay 'The Conquest of Space' which conceives of a vast extra-terrestrial void unsettling the assurances of familiar and localised human placements within space. *Crash* and *Concrete Island* were considered in Chapter 5 as literary representations of contemporary urban environments that set up a dialogue between heterotopia and Augé's concept of non-place in which rebellious enclaves of imaginative investment are opened up, recovering illicit recalcitrant traces of the past and leading to a process of engagement with alternative possibilities of space. Chapter 6 considered Ballard's complex engagement with the literary genre of autobiographical writing, emphasising discontinuity and rupture by enacting multiple arrangements of the past and compulsively returning to certain unresolved spaces. Ballard's reconfigurations show up a tension between officially sanctioned and ordered readings and subjective, individual understandings of the past as a mutable, ambiguous, and contingent heterotopia. Lunghua camp, contained within the wider heterotopia of Shanghai's 1940s internationalism, is represented in all three of Ballard's autobiographical texts as a spatial zone of normative suspension complexly situated in a continuum between sanctuary and camp available to be appropriated and reformatted through imaginative investment. Chapter Seven looked at the spaces of Ballard's late novels, *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*, that describe gated or bounded communities withdrawing from external space into enclaves where normative rules and regulations can be experimented on. Crime and deviancy take on a particular character within these

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<sup>495</sup> Tew, 'Acts of Reconsideration', p. 406.

spaces, and Ballard approaches the issue of criminality ambivalently, potentially reconfiguring it as a positive communal social stimulus or regenerative force. Ballard therefore shifts the focus of the crime fiction genre towards a questioning of crime, rather than its safe containment, eliciting a fascination with criminality.

Foucault's model of heterotopia has been used as a primary conceptual tool for conceiving of other spaces in Ballard's physical and literary environments. Ballard understands that space is never neutral and is inscribed with certain discourses, prohibitions and potentials. The experience of space in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century seems to indefinitely expand whilst at the same time closing down certain possibilities. Literature must be aware of its representations of space and the effect of spatial arrangements on behaviour and social relations. Although contemporary space is regulated, Ballard's texts focus on the way in which individuals often attempt to reshape their environments through imaginative investment in landscape and topography synthesising internal and external elements. As simultaneously mythic and real contestations of space,<sup>496</sup> heterotopias are situated on the border between real and imaginary spaces, resonating with Ballard's imaginative transformation of locatable physical spaces in his fiction. Foucault's concept takes a complex and multiform approach to spatiality describing a number of spaces as potential heterotopias that are alternate orderings, heterogeneous and alternative to the rest of normalised space around them. They therefore modify space in some way by drawing out latent possibilities. Unlike utopias that are idealised spaces that do not exist anywhere, heterotopias must exist in the real world and not transcend it.

Foucault's first principle of heterotopia describes the increasing prevalence of heterotopias of deviation in modern society where aberrant behaviour is isolated and worked on. *Cocaine Nights* is a text that interrogates a community of enforced leisure where idleness is a deviance, subverting it by tapping latent criminal energies resistive to the process of normalisation and contesting the rational foundations of contemporary space. The social utility of Foucault's second principle, taking the cemetery as an example of heterotopias utilised in different ways depending on societal needs, is unsettled in Ballard's writing describing catastrophes that bring marginal other spaces back towards the centre, as in *The Drowned World* where

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<sup>496</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 17.

London becomes a buried cemetery-like space. The third principle of heterotopia, describing emplacements that bring together several incompatible spaces, recalls Ballard's tactic of spatial juxtaposition that is a feature of several of his texts and particularly apparent in the fragmentary and experimental writing of *The Atrocity Exhibition* that positions different spaces side by side within the same landscape. The fourth principle describing heterochronisms as differentiated slices of time within heterotopias recalls Ballard's understanding of certain spaces allowing different experiences of temporality, anticipated in the transient jump-backs of 'Escapement' and a feature of Ballard's complex autobiographical literary experiments that engage with the accumulating archive of the past. In 'A Question of Re-entry', the figure of the astronaut, broadening his perspective by entering a vast outside space and able to encompass the whole planet in a single glance,<sup>497</sup> comes back down to Earth to be literally consumed by the pre-modern temporality of the South American jungle. Systems of opening and closing problematising ideas of public and private space expressed in the fifth principle of heterotopia becomes a feature of the closed communities described in Ballard's late text *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* which exaggerate systems of closure in order to internally redefine normative rules and reposition crime to potentially have positive social functions.

Foucault's sixth and final principle of heterotopia describes a tension between heterotopias of illusion and heterotopias of compensation that has been central to my argument about the way in which Ballard's spaces develop over the course of his career. Heterotopias of illusion are unruly, antagonistic and cut through with the potentials of the human imagination, showing up the rest of space as enclosed, partitioned, and illusionary. Heterotopias of compensation are meticulously arranged and perfected spaces showing up the messiness and disorder of space all around them. This dualism of compensatory order and imaginative disorder is central to Ballard's texts, and is a spatial tension developed throughout his career. Ballard's first stories, 'Escapement' and 'Prima Belladonna' contrast the order of everyday life against the heteroclitic fantasy spaces. *The Drowned World*, *The Drought*, and *The Crystal World* all consider the destabilising effect of post-catastrophe space revealing the illusionary enclosure and partitioning of the anthropocene world. The fragmentary structure of 'The Terminal Beach' and *The Atrocity Exhibition* unsettles normative spatial

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<sup>497</sup> Prieto, *Postmodern Poetics of Place*, p. 81.

ordering. *The Atrocity Exhibition* describes a contemporary landscape consisting of various institutional heterotopias of compensation disrupted by opening them up as disruptive and experimental heterotopias of illusion, leading to Margaret Travis's pertinent question: "Was my husband a doctor, or a patient?" (*AE* 6). Ballard's Cape Canaveral stories posit an unsettling heterotopic extra-terrestrial other space revealing the illusionary assurances and compensations of localised emplacement. *Crash* and *Concrete Island* open small enclaves that act as heterotopias of illusion within containing non-places, showing them up as constructed and ordered sites that attempt to expel certain aberrant spatial elements. In *Empire of the Sun*, *The Kindness of Women*, and *Miracles of Life*, Ballard interrogates the spaces of the past subjecting the compensatory historical record to imaginative interventions in order to access alternative spatial meanings. In *Cocaine Nights* and *Super Cannes*, Ballard isolates aspects of the contemporary to envision two self-enclosed communities that resemble a leisured, fantasy heterotopia of illusion and an elitist, productive heterotopia of compensation. Both suspend certain normative rules as experimental social spaces.

Ballard's shifting textual spaces, from speculative future heterotopias to the isolated spaces of past and present, are representative of a tension between ordered and disordered emplacements, often simultaneously situated in complex interstitial spaces revealing the incongruous order that reveals 'the linking together of things that are inappropriate' or the fragments of a large number of possible orders glittering separately 'in the dimension, without law of geometry, of the *heteroclite*'.<sup>498</sup>

Space is a primary concern for Ballard, an author who attempts to engage with the full range of spatial possibilities through an appreciation of the way in which local landscapes encode realities and shape subjectivities, but also recognising the far reaching complexities of the spatial engaging with a mesh of political, cultural, and historical concerns. A powerfully imaginative writer, Ballard's texts define a nexus in which physical spaces are subject to imaginative investment transforming them into heterotopic other spaces that can either set out to be proscriptive and regulatory, or fantastic and escapist. All of Ballard's spaces have heterotopic qualities as experimental 'counter-emplacements' that represent, contest and invert the cultures that constitute them.<sup>499</sup> The complex spatiality encoded in Ballard's writing also

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<sup>498</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xix.

<sup>499</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 17.

opens a series of literary heterotopias, interrogating the syntax holding the textual space together bringing issues of genre and structure into question. Ballard's heterotopias pose a series of important questions about the spaces of contemporary literature and representations of the spatial as a vital dimension in existence. Offering no simple utopic or emancipatory promises of better existence, Ballard's heterotopias juxtapose and clash different sites and emplacements characterised by incongruity, but always reaffirming the qualities of the imagination as a way through space.

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